

# **Bible Commentary on 1 Thessalonians**

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# **Bible Commentary on 1 Thessalonians**

by Jonathan Cooper

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The dates before each chapter reflect the date it was written, and the dates it was edited or expanded.

# Introduction

This is not your typical commentary, so I'd like to give a few words of explanation before you begin. As a child I was taught to read the Word of God on a daily basis. Our goal as a family was to read through the Bible once a year, and that is what we did. When I became an adult I kept reading the Bible from cover to cover.

One day, however, I realized that I wanted something more. Reading the Bible was good, but I wanted to actually *study* it. Could I explain what each verse meant? Did I really understand what each chapter was saying? I decided to start writing daily commentary instead of just reading the Word.

This commentary was put together to help me study the Bible. I have no plans to release it, for there are far better commentaries out there that were written by much wiser men. This document is simply a tool to help me understand what the Word of God has to say.

Jon Cooper  
4/14/2019

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## **Introduction to 1 Thessalonians**

Scholars believe that the book of 1 Thessalonians was written around 51 AD (see Resource 2, "Timeline"). This means Paul wrote it about 21 years after the resurrection, and 17 years after the apostle encountered Jesus on the road to Damascus. It was the 2<sup>nd</sup> book that Paul wrote and the 3<sup>rd</sup> book of the New Testament to come into existence.

1/18/2011, 9/8/2018, 6/19/2019

### **I Thessalonians 1**

"1 Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ." (I Thessalonians 1)

This letter was written by Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy. Usually Paul gets the credit for these letters, but as we can see he is not the only one in this list! The letter was written to the church at Thessalonica, which means it was written specifically to Christians.

Why do so many of these letters start out with "grace and peace"? Because those are two things we desperately need. We need grace in order to believe God, have faith in His Word, and walk in obedience and boldness. We need peace as well, for we are beset on every side with difficulties and trials. Where do grace and peace come from? The grace and peace we need comes from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. If we seek these things then that is where we must go! The peace that the

world offers is not sufficient.

"2 We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; 3 Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father;" (I Thessalonians 1)

Paul spent a lot of time praying for the churches – he was a firm believer in the power of prayer. Why was he thankful for this particular church? As we can see, it was because of their faith, love, and patience. This church believed the promises of God, they loved one another, and they were patient. Our walk with God will often rely heavily on patience as we wait on Him to rescue us from our troubles, or answer our prayers, or give us the wisdom that we seek. We must learn to wait upon the Lord, for only then will our strength be renewed (Isaiah 40:31).

Our hope is not in ourselves, nor do we depend on our own strength! Instead we wait patiently on the Lord Jesus for all our hope is in Him. There are many times when we must wait longer than we would like, but God will always keep His promises.

"4 Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. 5 For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. 6 And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost." (I Thessalonians 1)



How was Paul sure of their election? How was he sure that they were saved? It was because of their actions. You are not saved by your works, but your works do reveal the state of your heart (James 2:18)! This church received the gospel under intense persecution, and they accepted it and believed it and lived it. They not only did what was right, but they did it with joy and under very terrible circumstances. They were such devoted and passionate Christians that they became examples to others! That is why Paul said he was sure of their salvation – he could see it in the way they lived their lives.

This goes back to "you shall know them by their fruits" (Matthew 7:16-20). If a tree bears evil fruit then it is an evil tree. If a person lacks the fruit of the Spirit then they lack the Spirit as well, which means they are lost. A genuine Christian will be radically different from the world.

The gospel has enormous power – the power to change lives in an astounding way. Today there are many people who have a form of godliness but who deny the gospel's power (2 Timothy 3:5), and claim that the gospel cannot change a person (in spite of 2 Corinthians 5:17), or give them a new heart (in spite of 1 Corinthians 6:11), or overcome the sin in their life (in spite of Romans 6:7). That is why they claim we should just expect wicked people to continue their wicked lives, because the gospel can't do anything about it. But that's not what the Bible teaches!

"7 So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. 8 For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing." (1 Thessalonians 1)

This is a remarkable statement! The Thessalonian church was clearly a strong, vibrant church; verse 6 speaks of their joy in the midst of *persecution*. This was a church that was dedicated to the Lord. They loved Him, served Him, and obeyed Him even in the midst of terrible affliction. On top of that, this was a highly effective church: they had a reputation for being a Jesus-centered church. Notice in verse 7 that Paul said that they were examples to all the believers "in Macedonia and Achaia" – and beyond.

I have to wonder: what will be said about our churches when the time comes? Will people say that we were followers of the Lord, joyful in affliction, filled with power, an an example to all? I know of a few churches like this, but not many. Instead I see a great many Laodicean churches: churches that don't seem to care very much about the Lord. These churches may be busy but they aren't effective. Doctrine is not taught, and instead of being an example they seek to simply get along with everyone and avoid controversy. Instead of standing up for the truth they avoid it. Many sermons are so generic that they could have been from any religion.

It is high time for churches to repent and strive to become more like the Thessalonian church. If we seek the Lord we will find Him, if we seek Him with all our heart (Deuteronomy 4:29).

"9 For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God;" (I Thessalonians 1)

How do we know that the salvation of this church was genuine? They proved it through their actions! Before they served idols, but once they received the gospel they turned from

their idolatry and served the Lord. That is what repentance looks like – it involves a turning away from sin and a turning toward God (Ezekiel 18:21).

"10 And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come." (I Thessalonians 1)

This is a reference to the rapture. There will come a day when (as 1 Corinthians 15:52-54 and 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 explains) the trumpet will sound, the Lord will descend, the dead will be resurrected, the living will be transformed, and we will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air!

The New Testament speaks in a number of places of the Lord delivering the church from "the wrath to come" (for example, Luke 21:36, I Thessalonians 5:9, and Revelation 3:10). Now, we know that all Christians are delivered from eternal torment in the lake of fire; that is the wrath of God, and we will never experience it. However, there is another time of God's wrath, and that is the time of the tribulation – a seven-year period when God will pour out a series of judgments upon the world to punish it for its wickedness (Revelation 16:1-6) and to purify and save the nation of Israel (Daniel 9:24).

The Lord has not only promised to deliver the church from damnation, but He has also promised to deliver us from the time of the tribulation (Revelation 3:10). We will not be in this world when the tribulation begins, because the Lord will return before it starts to take us out of this world to Heaven so that we will not have to endure that terrible time. (For more information on the rapture see Appendix B – "Pre-Tribulation Rapture".)

1/19/2011, 9/8/2018, 6/19/2019

## I Thessalonians 2

"1 For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain:" (I Thessalonians 2)

I think what Paul means here is that they came to the church with much sincerity. They didn't come to make much of themselves or to take something from the church; they came with a genuine desire to share the gospel with them. They had no ulterior motives.

"2 But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention." (I Thessalonians 2)

There is a good lesson here. Even after Paul was persecuted time and again for preaching the gospel, *he kept preaching it*. He didn't let what happened in the past affect what he did in the future. He didn't carry around baggage – he just kept boldly proclaiming Jesus. He persevered in the face of much opposition.

Notice that Paul did *not* compromise his message. He did not "dialog" and compromise with those who were upset with his message in order to find "common ground". He did not avoid controversial passages and just teach on things that everyone agreed upon. No, he kept on preaching the whole counsel of God, because *that is what people needed to hear*. He did what God commanded him and endured the persecution. (Can that be said of our churches? Are we as fearless as Paul, or is our

message being watered down so it might be appealing to the world?)

"3 For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile: 4 But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts. 5 For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloak of covetousness; God is witness:" (I Thessalonians 2)

I fear we are getting away from this. I have heard reports of pastors actually *paying* people to attend church and offering prizes to come to the altar! *These things do not honor God.* The Bible commands us to preach the gospel and proclaim Jesus alone. There is nothing Biblical about using covetousness to reach people!

Paul's whole point here is that he came to them with *just Jesus* – nothing more, nothing less, and nothing else. Yet today some churches are filled with stupid gimmicks that are intended to manipulate people and draw them in. (If you have removed "Christ" or "Church" from the name of your church in order to be more appealing then that is a *really* bad sign.) So many churches today aren't interested in a gospel-only approach; they want to use all sorts of guile, tricks, and clever marketing to draw people in. *This is not Biblical!* God commands us to preach the gospel *and leave it at that* – not find clever tricks. God does not call us to pragmatism; He calls us to preach the pure, unadulterated gospel.

If your church has a lot of "programs" and "activities" but very little gospel then you have lost your way. Get back to Christ and stick with that.

"6 Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ." (I Thessalonians 2)

There are many people who spend their lives seeking glory. They want to be famous, well-liked, and highly respected. They want book deals and speaking engagements and invitations to all the right parties. Those are very easy things to want – but that is not where our hearts should be! God commands us to serve Him, not ourselves – to seek the things of God and have our heart set on Heaven (Matthew 6:20-21). We are commanded to spread the gospel all over the world and make disciple of all nations (Matthew 28:19-20). We would be seeking His glory, not ours!

The apostles never had the attitude "You owe me" or "I deserve these things, and so you ought to give them to me". Paul had astounding credentials and was used by God to write a lot of the New Testament, and yet he labored so that he would not have to be financially supported by the churches! He acknowledged that he had the right to be supported (1 Corinthians 9:1-15), but he would rather work for a living than burden any of the churches that he cared so much about. If only modern pastors had that same sort of attitude! (If even *Paul* worked for a living, can you really claim that you are better than Paul and are entitled to more than he got?)

"7 But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children: 8 So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God

only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us. 9 For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God." (I Thessalonians 2)

Why did Paul labor night and day? Because he loved them and did not want to place a financial burden upon them! He viewed the church as a parent might view their children – and what parent would charge their children for the care and love that they bestow upon them? Paul gave them the gospel and nurtured them, and he was not about to charge them for his services. He was there to give to them as much as he possibly could, and was unwilling to burden them.

Notice how different this attitude is from the modern pastors who demand that everyone in the congregation gives them ten percent of their gross income! Paul never made any such demands. Yes, he did say that those who labored in spiritual things had a right to receive material things in return (1 Corinthians 9:1-15), but he did not exercise that right. Instead he worked hard because his primary concern was the welfare of the church. (For more information about tithing see Appendix S, "The Modern Practice Of Tithing Is Not Biblical".)

I have seen the budgets of churches, and the cost of the full-time staff and the building is enormous burdens. How much better off the church would be if the leadership had jobs in the private sector and the people met in homes! Then the money could go toward missionary work and the spread of the gospel.

"10 Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe: 11 As ye

know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children," (I Thessalonians 2)

Paul did not take advantage of this church. He did not burden them, or charge them anything, or put them in a bad position. He acted with great courtesy and care and took pains to do what was right at all times. He spent his time teaching them the doctrines of God, telling them to do what was right, and nurturing them as dear children whom he loved. He did not view this small, poor, persecuted church as a steppingstone to some greater career elsewhere; instead he poured himself out so that he might help them however he could.

I find it interesting that the Bible keeps talking about the way a father nurtures his children, and loves them, and cares for them, and raises them, and teaches them. Our society is completely the opposite: it hates fathers, and tries to keep fathers away from their children, and views fathers as dangerous and harmful. Even churches do this, praising single mothers as the highest form of holiness (even going so far as to blasphemously call Mary the mother of Jesus a "single mom"), and condemning fathers as miserable failures at every turn. The truth is that children need a father, and children without a father are at a great disadvantage (as statistics bears out time and time again). When courts take children away from their fathers in divorce and gives them to their mothers (as is routine), they are usually not doing them any favors. Fatherless children are far more likely to get into trouble.

"12 That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory." (I Thessalonians 2)



I think at times it's easy to get caught up in the problems of this life and lose sight of the fact that all of this is *real* – that there really is life after death, that Heaven is real, that the resurrection is coming, that we will inherit everlasting life, and that we will one day live in the millennial kingdom. *These are not fantasies or fairy tales*; they're quite real! When we lose sight of this we also lose the ability to make good decisions, for we start thinking in the short term when we should be thinking in the long term.

The Lord tries our faith and tests us so that we can see if we are real or not. (God, of course, already knows our heart, but it is easy for us to fool ourselves.) We must not lose sight of what is to come! Patience is so important. For now we may suffer and our lives might be filled with pain. This is simply something that we must go through (Matthew 18:7). But one day it will be over and a new life will begin.

"13 For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." (I Thessalonians 2)

This makes all the difference in the world! When this church heard the words of God they received it as the divine, infallible, perfect and holy Word of God – something to be honored, obeyed, and studied. They didn't mock it, or reject it, or criticize it, or say "Well, times have changed and all that stuff no longer applies." They didn't refuse to believe it or say that it was full of error. They didn't try to reinterpret it to make it say the opposite of what it actually said. They didn't mock the apostles as losers. Instead they believed it and accepted it – and that is

why they were saved.

It's no wonder that Paul thanked God for them without ceasing! This belief in the words of God is very rare, especially today. Many people would rather criticize God than obey Him, which is why so many people will be left behind at the rapture when Jesus returns – they were never really saved at all (Matthew 7:21-23).

"14 For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews: 15 Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men: 16 Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost." (I Thessalonians 2)

Paul was always very clear that the Jews were the enemies of the gospel (Romans 11:28). They hated it, and they hated Jesus, and they hated Christianity, and they did their very best to put the apostles to death along with all Christians they could find (for example, Acts 9:23, 12:3, 13:45 and 50, 14:2 and 5, 14:19, 17:5, etc). They were relentless and ruthless in their persecution. This should not come as a surprise; the people who hated Jesus would naturally hate His followers as well (John 15:19).

Yet in spite of all that they are still God's chosen people (Romans 11:2). Paul explained in Romans 11:7-12 that the Jews have been blinded for a time, but God has not abandoned them forever. One day all Israel will be saved (Romans 11:26). They will

finally repent of their sins and accept the Messiah (Zechariah 12:10). This will not happen until the very end of the seven-year tribulation, but it will happen.

God has poured out His wrath upon the Jews for their disobedience. Jesus said that because they rejected Him and relentlessly persecuted all those Jesus sent to save them, the Jews would be held accountable for all the righteous blood that was shed during Old Testament times (Matthew 23:34-38) - and in 70 AD that is exactly what happened when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem. Ever since then the Jews have been hated by all nations. Although the nation of Israel has been reborn, the truth is the Jews have been regathered for the purposes of God's judgment. During the seven-year tribulation He will pour out His wrath upon the world and will finish the punishment of Israel for their wickedness. Once the tribulation is over they will turn to Him and they will never turn away again – their rebellion will be over, never to return (Daniel 9:24).

"17 But we, brethren, being taken from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavoured the more abundantly to see your face with great desire. 18 Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us." (I Thessalonians 2)

It was very important for the apostles to visit the churches in person so that they could minister to them! When they couldn't visit in person they would send a letter, but an in-person visit was viewed as the best option. There were even times in the letters when they would say that they would talk more about a particular topic once they were there and could do it in person (III John 1:13-14). There is just something better about actually being there.

I find it interesting that Paul wanted to be there but the devil actually prevented it. We do have an adversary, and there are times when he causes problems and prevents us from pursuing some opportunities. The devil has not been bound yet or rendered harmless, and we need to remember that. Does the devil sometimes prevent us from going places, or seeing people, or having conversations? Absolutely. Does that mean we should just give up? Of course not! (For more information on this topic see Appendix 13, "Demons".)

"19 For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? 20 For ye are our glory and joy." (I Thessalonians 2)

Paul was proud of the churches the way a parent might be proud of a talented child. The churches were like family to him and he was proud of their love and faith. The fact that they were faithfully walking in the truth in spite of terrible persecution gave him great joy. He knew that when the Lord returned (which could happen at any time) that church would not get left behind with the rest of the lost world. They would be taken out of this world, and that gave him joy.

The apostles never said "Don't think about the rapture. Ignore prophecy. None of that stuff matters." Yet that is exactly what many modern churches teach! Not only did the apostles keep referring to it, but they used it as a source of motivation (2 Peter 3:11). Since the return of the Lord is at hand we ought to pursue holiness and spread the gospel. End-times prophecy was seen as highly relevant to one's day-to-day life! The apostles never presented it as an optional thing that didn't really matter.

1/20/2011, 9/8/2018, 6/20/2019

## **I Thessalonians 3**

"1 Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone; 2 And sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellowlabourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith:" (I Thessalonians 3)

Paul wanted to go see them in person, but the devil prevented him from making the trip. So he did the next best thing: he sent Timothy (who, remember, is one of the authors of this letter) to check on them. As we will see in verse 5, the reason Paul did this was because he wanted to make sure that they had remained grounded in the faith. During Timothy's visit he was going to spend time establishing them in the doctrines of the Word, and comforting them (because they were a very persecuted church).

The apostle clearly knew the church and their specific needs, and he was working to meet them. Since they needed comfort he sent Timothy to provide it (and he would have gone himself if he could have). If you want to minister effectively to your fellow believers then you need to know them personally.

"3 That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto. 4 For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know." (I Thessalonians 3)

This is a point the Bible makes over (Acts 14:22) and over

(1 Peter 1:7 *and over again* (Revelation 2:10): in this life we *will* have tribulation (John 16:33). We *will* suffer. We will be persecuted and hated and despised for the sake of Christ. This is simply the way things are.

The solution is *not* to forsake Christ or to water down the gospel so it becomes acceptable to the world. No, the answer is to stand up and be the light of the world (Matthew 5:14). We are called to be witnesses, the salt of the earth (Matthew 5:13). Too many churches want to compromise when instead we should be boldly proclaiming the truth!

In this life there will be afflictions. The key is to hold fast to God and remain unmoved. God will be with us through the trial (Hebrews 13:5), and the trial will not last forever (2 Corinthians 4:17). Things may not go well for us in this life, but we are strangers and pilgrims here; this world is not our home. We are heading for a better country (Hebrews 11:16).

I have been impressed with the faith of people in remote places like Papua New Guinea. They embraced the Word, they believe it and know it, and it fills them with great joy. They were so passionate about Christ that they left their homes and went to other villages to teach the gospel. They were transformed by the Word and became a light to those around them, even in the face of hardships! It makes me wonder if perhaps *we* are the savages and they are the civilized ones. We may have technology, but so many of our churches are dead and filled with people who don't care very much about God. Those remote tribes may be primitive but they love the Lord and seek Him passionately. Their churches are *real* churches, not just country clubs. I can't help but feel that they have got it right and we are the ones that are poor, primitive, and lost.

I suspect that in the long run a spiritual savage will eventually turn into a physical savage if given enough time. Once the fear of the Lord is gone it is only a matter of time before the moral code vanishes as well and society descends into horrors.

Western "civilized" countries all over the world already murder their unborn children by the millions, and have started to kill their sick and elderly too. How long will it take before they start killing others as well?

"5 For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain." (I Thessalonians 3)

Why was Paul so concerned about them? Because he feared that they had given in to the temptation to abandon the gospel for a more comfortable (and less persecuted) way of life. He knew that they were in terrible circumstances. Since he was concerned he sent Timothy to check on them and establish them in the faith.

The gospel is a very serious business. If the church had abandoned the gospel and went back to serving idols, then all of Paul's labor really would have been in vain. Being sincere is not enough to save your soul! There are not many roads to God; there is only one (John 14:6). If the church had left the faith then all of Paul's labor and sacrifice would have been for nothing.

Notice how specifically Paul says that the devil was the one who was fighting against them and trying to destroy their church. He knew who he was really fighting! Paul wasn't battling Rome or Caesar; his real enemy was spiritual wickedness in high (heavenly) places (Ephesians 6:12).

"6 But now when Timotheus came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to

see us, as we also to see you: 7 Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith: 8 For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord." (I Thessalonians 3)

Did you notice that the Thessalonian church was not told to find common ground with their enemies, or establish dialog, or see where they could compromise? The disciples never suggested any of those things! Instead they went to great lengths to encourage the churches to stand fast in the Lord and remain unmoveable. Not a single doctrine was *ever* sacrificed to support unity. That was the attitude they had: they viewed the Word of God as fixed, immovable, and non-negotiable.

Timothy reported that the church had stood fast in the midst of terrible persecution, and Paul was glad to hear it. That was a source of great joy to him.

"9 For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God; 10 Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith?" (I Thessalonians 3)

Why does Paul want to see them so badly? So that he might help them where they need help, build them up, and deepen their faith. In other words, he wants to see them for *their* benefit! He isn't trying to take anything from them or use them for his own purposes. This isn't a fundraising trip. He knows that there is some part of their faith that's lacking and he wants to visit them so he can fix it. He sincerely desires for them to be perfect and complete. He never says "No church is perfect; all



that matters is that you get the basics right."

"11 Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you." (I Thessalonians 3)

Remember, the reason why Paul couldn't visit them was because the devil had hindered him from doing so. Paul knew it would take the power of God to overcome that obstacle, so he prayed that the Lord would do exactly that.

"12 And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you:" (I Thessalonians 3)

If you think about it, the defining characteristic of Christians should be love! The greatest commandment is to love God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to love our neighbor as ourselves (Matthew 22:36-40). To see what love looks like in action, just study the commandments that God gave to us. Love does no harm to others, but instead seeks their welfare. Love speaks truths that people need to hear, even if people don't want to hear it. Jesus even said that the world would recognize us by our great love for one another (John 13:35).

Is that what our churches are like? Are they characterized by love? So many are full of strife, ambition, and hostility. So many of those who attend church are strangers to one another. People drift from one church to the next because they have no real attachment to any of them. That is not the way it should be.

"13 To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints." (I Thessalonians 3)

I suspect Paul is talking about the Second Coming here, not the rapture. In the rapture the Lord comes *to get* His saints and take them away so they will be spared the horrors of the tribulation (as discussed in Appendix B). It isn't until the Second Coming that Jesus returns to Earth *with* His saints in order to establish His millennial kingdom (Jude 1:14-15).

1/21/2011, 9/8/2018, 6/20/2019

## **I Thessalonians 4**

"1 Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more." (I Thessalonians 4)

Our walk with the Lord is something that ought to grow over time. As we obey God, pray, study His Word, and live by faith, we should grow. We should learn more about the Scriptures and about God, and we should turn from our sins and walk in ways that are pleasing to God. In fact, this process should continue our entire lives.

The only way this will happen, though, is if we put time into it. If we just sit on the couch and watch TV then our faith is going to go nowhere. If we seek the truth then we will find it, but we have to make that investment. It has to be important to us – something we pursue. We should never stop learning, studying,

or growing. There is always something more!

God spoke through the apostles to tell us what we ought to be doing. Are we willing to listen to God and obey, or do we think that we know better?

"2 For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus. 3 For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: 4 That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour;" (I Thessalonians 4)

This is clear, direct, and pointed, and it is repeated all throughout the New Testament. The Lord does not want Christians to be engaged in adultery or any form of sexual immorality! He requires us to be faithful to our husbands and wives. Not only are we to abstain from the *act* of sexual immorality (in all its various forms), but we must also abstain from the desire as well. If the act is sinful then a desire to commit that act is also sinful (as Jesus explained in Matthew 5:28).

In today's culture it is very common for people to commit adultery (even in churches, and even among pastors). It is also extremely common for people to have sex with someone they are not married to. Chastity is *not* prized; in fact, it is mocked. Even Christians are unconcerned about it (which can be seen from the fact that they aren't virgins when they are married) but this is *not* how it should be. God didn't save us and then tell us to go out and do whatever we wanted; instead He called us to holiness. He wants each of us to "possess his vessel in sanctification and honor". He commanded us to *flee* fornication and to choose faithfulness instead.

This is not an easy thing to do. This was a snare to King David (2 Samuel 11:2-4), Samson (Judges 16:1), and many others.

It has brought down mighty men. Even though the culture is against us and there are temptations are on every side, and even though many churches have stopped preaching against it, God still commands us to abstain from all sexual immorality and *be holy*.

The common standard today is "does it feel good?" or "does it feel right?" But the truth is *none of that matters!* Our feelings have *absolutely no bearing* on whether an act is right or wrong. What really matters is what the Bible has to say about it. Flee fornication! Run from it. Don't play with it or fantasize about it. Instead die to it. Seek holiness, not lust.

"5 Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God:" (I Thessalonians 4)

Concupiscence is another word for sexual desire. The Gentiles spent a lot of time engaging in all sorts of sexual immorality. Christians are commanded to not do those things; instead we ought to earnestly desire the things of the Spirit and walk in obedience to God. Sex *within* marriage is a great blessing; sex *outside* of marriage (which many people routinely engage in) is a terrible sin and is something that Christians should not be involved in. The Bible has many warnings against it (Acts 15:20, 15:29, 21:25; Romans 1:29; 1 Corinthians 5:1, 6:13 and 18, 10:8; Galatians 5:19; Ephesians 5:3; Colossians 3:5; Jude 1:7 – and that is not an exhaustive list by any means).

"6 That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified." (I Thessalonians

4)

It should be obvious that Christians shouldn't defraud one another! Jesus commanded us to love one another and treat each other as we want to be treated (Luke 6:31). Do you want to be defrauded? Do you want to have things stolen from you? Do you want to be robbed of what is rightfully yours? Of course not! *So don't do those things to other people.* God hates fraud (Psalm 5:6), and lying (Proverbs 6:16-17), and stealing (Ephesians 4:28), and He will avenge those who have been defrauded. It may not happen in this life but you can be sure that it will happen. We will all have to stand before God and give an account of our lives (2 Corinthians 5:10), and God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:35). You have been warned.

"7 For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness. 8 He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit." (I Thessalonians 4)

Seeking holiness is not a popular pastime these days, but it is God's will for our lives. We are called to be holy, and there is nothing holy or right about fornication (or any other sin). Engaging in any form of immorality (or fantasizing about it) is an offense against God. As verse 8 says, it is despising the God who gave us the Holy Spirit in the first place! Let me repeat that: those who despise *any* of the commandments of God are despising God Himself.

We cannot look to our culture to get a sense for what is right and wrong, or whether an act is good or bad. The Bible alone sets the standard, and its standard is clear.

"9 But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another." (I Thessalonians 4)

One of the great tragedies of our time is that many churches no longer have brotherly love. Instead many people take advantage of others and use them for their own ends. People lie, steal, and make other people's lives miserable in order to enrich themselves. There are so many wives who openly despise their husbands, and children who act hateful toward their parents. Love is absent – but it should not be that way.

"10 And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more;" (I Thessalonians 4)

It is not enough to just do the right thing one time; you need to keep doing it. Christianity is not something you only do once! We need to keep at it – and to keep growing, and to keep getting better at it.

"11 And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; 12 That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing." (I Thessalonians 4)

The principle is clear: God commands us to be *quiet* people who *mind our own business*, and who work so that we can have enough to give to those who are in need. It is a very

simple concept.

The problem is that some people aren't interested in doing this. Instead they want to force other people to work so that they can steal from them. They have no desire to work themselves, but they don't mind taking everything they can get from their neighbor. They don't give; they take. They don't prepare for a rainy day; instead they lead irresponsible lives and then expect their neighbors to bail them out. We should call this stealing (for that is what it is), but instead society calls it "welfare". I have news for you: if it's wrong to break into your neighbor's house and steal his money in order to pay your bills (and it is) then it's equally wrong to use the power of the government to steal his money and have it given to you. Using the government, the IRS, and the police to take your neighbor's money through taxes and laws *does not make it moral!* It is good for a person to *willingly* give to those who are in need and who are deserving, but it is a very *wicked* thing to take what you need by force from others. You have absolutely *zero* right to take things that belong to someone else, no matter how great your need is.

Some people are completely self-centered. They don't care how much their actions hurt others as long as they get what they want. They have no love or empathy – only selfishness. God's response to this is clear: *love* the brethren (Galatians 5:13), do good to those who hate you (Luke 6:27), and overcome evil with good (Romans 12:21). Work with your own hands and give to those in need. Do not let the haters overcome you and do not become bitter, for God will judge them in time (Deuteronomy 32:35). We are called to do what is right even when the world is against us. God will judge the world.

"13 But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep,

that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. 15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. 16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." (I Thessalonians 4)

Here we are given a glorious picture of the rapture! This passage is where the word "rapture" comes from, for the phrase "caught up" in verse 17 is translated "rapturo" in Latin. People complain that the word rapture doesn't appear in the Bible, but it is actually a *Latin* word and appears in Latin translations. When we speak of the rapture we are speaking of the time when we will be "caught up" to meet the Lord in the air. This is something that all Christians should believe. The events described in these verses *are going to happen*, and the time draws nearer with every passing day.

This passage gives us a lot of information but it does not tell us when it will occur in respect to the tribulation. We need to go to other passages in order to determine whether it will occur before or after the seven-year tribulation. But it does tell us a number of very important things.

First, we are commanded to have hope. After all, death has no victory! Those who have died believing in Jesus *will be resurrected*. This means that death is not the end! When Jesus returns He will raise from the dead all those who died believing



in Him. Once that is done, all Christians (both the resurrected *and* those who had not yet died) will be "caught up" to "meet the Lord in the air". After this happens we will "ever be with the Lord." (Interestingly, the dead are resurrected *before* the living are caught up.)

This means that there are some people who will never die! The Lord will return while they are alive and He will catch them up to be with Him. (I would very much like to be in that group. I have a feeling I am not the only one who has that desire!) The Lord will descend "with a shout", "with the voice of the archangel", and "with the trump of God". The trumpet will sound, the dead shall be raised, and we will all be changed.

After this happens the Lord will take us to Heaven, while on Earth a terrible time of darkness will begin. At the end of the seven-year tribulation period the Lord will bring us back to Earth, where He will defeat the antichrist and reign for a thousand years – and we will reign with Him. (See Revelation 19 and 20 for more information about these events.)

I believe that the rapture is rapidly coming upon us. A lot of prophecy has been fulfilled in the past century. When Israel became a nation again in 1948 the clock started ticking. God has been merciful and has delayed His return so that all might be saved (2 Peter 3:9), but He will not tarry forever.

As Christians we should be longing for the rapture and eagerly looking for the return of Christ. We should passionately long for the moment He returns and takes us to forever be with Him. We should long for Him to reign over the Earth with righteousness and truth (did not Jesus command us to pray in Matthew 6:10 that His kingdom might come?). I long for His will to be done on Earth as it is in Heaven, and I look forward to that great and mighty day.

"18 Wherefore comfort one another with these

words." (I Thessalonians 4)

What did Paul offer as comfort to a church that was being fiercely persecuted for their faith? He offered them the very thing that so many modern churches avoid as much as possible: *end-times prophecy*. He held out *the rapture* as a source of great comfort! This makes a lot of sense to me, because it will truly be an awesome moment when Christ returns for His church to deliver them from the wrath of the coming tribulation. In that moment all of the dead in Christ will rise again to life, and the living will be transformed and made incorruptible and immortal. In an instant we will be perfected once and for all, never again susceptible to sickness or sin or death. As if that was not glorious enough, Jesus will then take us all to Heaven – to the dwelling place of God. We will not have to be on Earth while the seven-year tribulation plays out (a time so terrible that Jesus said it was the worst thing that would *ever happen* – see Matthew 24:21). The rapture really is a source of tremendous hope and encouragement! One day it will take place, and that will be a glorious day (although it will be a lot less glorious for those who did not know the Lord Jesus and were left behind).

Sadly, many Christians are so in love with the world that they actually view the return of Jesus with horror. They don't want Jesus to come back and interrupt whatever it is they have going on. No, they want Jesus to stay away, because whatever they are doing is clearly much more important than the Lord! But that's *not* how the apostles saw it. They never wanted Jesus to stay away as long as possible – instead their prayer was "Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Revelation 22:20).

1/25/2011, 9/8/2018, 6/21/2019

## **I Thessalonians 5**

"1 But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you." (I Thessalonians 5)

It would have been really nice if Paul had given us a date for the rapture (or even a time of year), but that didn't happen. However, the Bible does say that we can see the day approaching (Hebrews 10:25). As we see world events begin to fall into place for the tribulation, we know that the rapture has to be near because it precedes the tribulation. There are a number of end-times prophecies that take place before the tribulation begins (such as the rebirth of the nation of Israel, as foretold in Isaiah 66:8, and the recapturing of Jerusalem by the Jews), and when they are fulfilled we know time is growing short.

The problem is there's no way to know the exact day or year. It's possible to make a strong case for the rapture happening on many different days and in many different years. There have been many compelling theories that have been proven wrong. Based on the signs it seems that time is growing short, but there's no way to know exactly how short. God could cause things to play out in a lot of different ways! People have been searching through the Bible for decades for clues, but so far every theory has been wrong. I suspect that's why Jesus said we need to watch, for we know not what hour our Lord is coming (Matthew 24:42). We just have to keep watching and keep waiting patiently. One day He is going to return, and it's important to not lose heart. There is a special crown reserved for those who long for His return (2 Timothy 4:8), and that is going to be an easy crown to miss if we become distracted by the cares of this world.

Notice that Paul spends a lot of time talking to this church about the return of Christ, the rapture, and end-times prophecy! He doesn't tell them "None of that stuff matters; just live your life and you will be fine". No, he thinks it's very important.

"2 For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. 3 For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. 4 But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief." (I Thessalonians 5)

First, it's important to realize that the phrase "the day of the Lord" is found in numerous Old Testament passages and always refers to the seven-year tribulation period (see Joel 1:15, 2:1 and 31; Amos 5:18; Obadiah 1:15; Zephaniah 1:7 and 14; Zechariah 14:1; Malachi 4:5 – just to list a few). Paul is not speaking of the rapture here, but of the tribulation. That is what will come upon the world "as a thief in the night". People will think that there is peace and safety all around when suddenly God's judgment fall upon them and "they shall not escape". However, note verse 4: we are not in darkness! That terrible time of suffering and pain will affect the world, *but not us*. The reason the day will not overtake us is because we will be in Heaven when it happens!

"5 Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness." (I Thessalonians 5)

When the rapture happens all genuine Christians will be taken out of this world. All those who were *not* Christians will be left behind (and that will include many people who thought they were Christians but who were sadly mistaken). Since we are

children of the light, the day of the Lord (the tribulation) will not come upon us and harm us because we will not be here when it happens! When God pours out His wrath upon the world we will be in Heaven, safe from harm.

"6 Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober." (I Thessalonians 5)

Notice that Paul does not endorse pan-millennialism – the idea that "It will all pan out in the end and it doesn't really impact your life, so just ignore all that prophecy stuff." This church was facing intense persecution and yet Paul took the time to tell them about end-times prophecy and urge them to be watching for the return of Christ! This was a topic he expected them to know about, understand, and care about. He did not want the church to "sleep" and be indifferent so he commanded them to watch.

Since we don't know exactly when the Lord will return we have to be watching for it. We have to pay attention to the world around us and be watching for the signs. We have to live with care and pursue holiness, knowing that at any moment the Lord might return and catch us in the midst of our day. (What sort of life do you want to be caught living when Jesus returns?)

"7 For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. 8 But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation." (I Thessalonians 5)

The world continues on pursuing the desires of the flesh,

not knowing about the return of Jesus and not caring. But we know that the Judge is at the door (James 5:9) and the end is near, and we need to watch and be ready. We need to live sober lives because we may not have tomorrow – and what sort of life is Jesus going to catch us living when He comes for us? The Bible warns that some people will be ashamed when He returns (1 John 2:28). If we are watching and ready then that does not have to be us.

Verse 8 says we need faith, love, and one other thing – the hope of salvation. This is *not* talking about salvation from Hell, because that isn't what Paul has been talking about. This chapter is talking about salvation from the tribulation, the terrible seven-year period when God will pour out His wrath upon a very wicked world. That is what the rapture is going to save us from, and that is what our hearts should be longing for.

Do we need faith? Of course – for without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). We must have faith in God, in the Messiah, in the Word, and in the promises that God has given to us. We must have love as well, for if we lack love then we clearly lack the Spirit (because love is one of the fruits of the Spirit – see Galatians 5:22).

"9 For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ," (I Thessalonians 5)

The Tribulation will come upon the lost world, *but it will not come upon us* because God has not appointed us to wrath. This isn't the wrath of final judgment and the lake of fire because *that isn't what this passage is talking about*. In the context of this passage the Lord is talking about the wrath of the tribulation. That day will not come upon us as a thief because we will not be here when it happens!

The message is clear: when the world thinks that everything is going well, the tribulation will begin and plunge the world into horror and destruction. They won't see it coming and they won't escape. However, the church will be spared because the rapture will take us home to Heaven before that terrible time begins. This will happen is because God has not appointed us to endure that terrible time of His wrath. (For more information about this see Appendix B, "Pre-Tribulation Rapture".)

"10 Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. 11 Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do." (I Thessalonians 5)

This verse is talking about death. Whether we live or die we are with Christ, for He will never leave us or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). When we die we will not remain in the grave; instead our soul will go to the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:6-8) and we will be with Him until the resurrection. When the resurrection happens at the rapture the Lord will take us with Him to Heaven. At the end of the tribulation, when the Lord returns to Earth to defeat the antichrist and his armies (Revelation 19:11-21), the Lord will take us back to Earth with Him so we can live with Him there and reign over the world. We truly will forever be with the one who shed His own blood and died to save us – and that should be a source of great comfort.

The apostles thought that end-times prophecy was a source of great comfort and edification. It isn't something that we should neglect or ignore!

"12 And we beseech you, brethren, to know

them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; 13 And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves." (I Thessalonians 5)

Who are we supposed to get to know? Those who labor over us and who are over us in the Lord – in other words, our deacons, elders, and pastors. Not only should we get to know them, but we should honor them and give them great esteem for the sake of the work they are doing. Pastors who are executing their job faithfully (as opposed to hirelings who are just fleecing the sheep and who refuse to preach the truth) are rare indeed and should be helped, encouraged, and shown great respect. They have a hard job and we ought to do what we can to make it easier for them.

One thing the church can do to make their pastor's life easier is to be at peace with one another! It is much easier to minister to a church that is at peace.

"14 Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men." (I Thessalonians 5)

There may be those in the congregation who are unruly and misbehaving; if so then the church leadership should tell them to stop. We are ambassadors for Christ in a lost and dying world and souls are on the line, so act like it! This is not a game. The stakes are unbelievably high.

There may also be those who are feebleminded, frail, and infirm. Go and comfort them; they need help. The weak are in danger of being crushed by an evil and cruel world, so we must



do what we can to prevent that from happening. Care for one another and support them, for they are our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ.

Finally, treat one another with patience. It is our job to help one another, not to run people over. Some may need additional help, or they may have needs that others do not. All of us are in need of some sort of help, and we should support one another as one unified body – not look down upon one another. If the hand attacked the eye the whole body would suffer; the same is true of the church. We are not here for our own personal gratification! It is our job to serve Christ, and since Christ humbled Himself to serve us (and we are infinitely less than Christ!) then we can do the same for others. It may be hard for to be patient with some people, but have we thought about how they must bear with us as well?

"15 See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men." (I Thessalonians 5)

God has commanded us to love our enemies and do good to those who hate us (Matthew 5:44). This does not mean we should let thieves and murderers go unpunished and not prosecute them; there is a huge difference between the police prosecuting a criminal, and getting personal revenge on an enemy. If someone is treating us poorly then we must not treat them poorly in return. God would have us do good to those who treat us badly for that honors Him, and He will reward us for it (Proverbs 25:21-22). Remember, vengeance belongs to the Lord and He will repay all things in due time (Romans 12:19). How can we show the love of Christ to someone and share the gospel with them if we are trying to get our own personal vengeance upon

them?

"16 Rejoice evermore." (I Thessalonians 5)

The Bible really emphasizes rejoicing! We need to rejoice more often because we have a lot to rejoice about. Even in the hardest times God is still with us and has given us a long list of astonishing promises. We have a lot to be thankful for, if only we will stop and give it some thought.

"17 Pray without ceasing." (I Thessalonians 5)

This doesn't mean that the only thing we should do is pray 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Christ spent a lot of time in prayer but even He did other things with His time. What this *does* mean is that we should not stop the practice of praying. Prayer is not something we should do once or twice in our lives and then quit. It ought to be a lifelong practice (for as James 5:16 says, the fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much).

"18 In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." (I Thessalonians 5)

If (1 Samuel 22:50) you (1 Chronicles 16:8) were (1 Chronicles 16:34) to (Psalm 18:49) go (Psalm 30:4) through (Psalm 30:12) the (Psalm 35:18) Bible (Psalm 75:1) and (Psalm 79:13) make (Psalm 92:1) a (Psalm 97:1) list (Psalm 105:1) of (Psalm 106:1) all (Psalm 107:1) the (Psalm 118:1) places (Psalm 118:29) where (Psalm 119:62) God (Psalm 136:1-3, 26) said (Psalm 140:13) to (Mark 14:23) give (Luke 22:19) thanks (John

6:11), it (Romans 14:6) would (Ephesians 1:16) be (Colossians 1:3) quite (1 Thessalonians 1:2) an (2 Thessalonians 2:13) impressive (Revelation 4:9) list (Revelation 11:17)! I get the feeling that this is *very* important to God and we ought to be doing a lot more of it than we actually are.

Have you ever wondered what God's will was for your life? Here it is: God's will is for you to give thanks – not just in some things, but "in every thing".

### "19 Quench not the Spirit." (I Thessalonians 5)

First, let me say that this does *not* mean if someone comes to you and says that God personally revealed to them certain things, that you should believe them and sell your house and join their cult. It does not mean that we should stop exercising discernment or start believing everything we hear! The Bible warns us to not believe everything but instead put things to the test (1 John 4:1).

However, it is true that the Holy Spirit does dwell within us. The Spirit guides us to truth (John 16:13) and give us opportunities (Acts 8:29), and He does work through people (Acts 11:28). It is all too easy to ignore the truth of the Word, to refuse to listen to someone who we know is speaking the truth, and to not take opportunities that were given to us by the Lord. It's also easy to find people who are serving God and discourage them or shut them down. We ought to be doing everything we can to encourage the work of the Lord (and those who are engaged in it), instead of trying to impede it.

### "20 Despise not prophesyings." (I Thessalonians 5)

In the days of the early church the New Testament had not yet been written, so God gave what are now called "establishing gifts". One of these was the gift of healing, and another was prophecy. This gift was active in the early days of the church and we can find examples of it in the book of Acts (for example, see Acts 11:28). However, now that the Bible has been completed and contains everything that we need (2 Timothy 3:16-17), there is no longer a need for this gift and so it has been discontinued. If prophecy was still around then that would mean the Bible was insufficient and we needed other information not found in the Bible. However, we know that is impossible because God promised us that the Bible *is* wholly sufficient, so therefore there is no room for prophecy in this age. (For more information about this see Appendix F, "God Is Not Giving You New Revelation".)

At the same time, we still should take care not to despise prophecy. In this case, though, the prophecy we should listen to are the prophets in the pages of Scripture. Many churches ignore end-times prophecy, but we should not have that attitude! Instead we should study it and take heed to it, which is exactly what Paul commanded the Thessalonian church to do.

"21 Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." (I Thessalonians 5)

In other words, do not just believe everything you are told (1 John 4:1)! Always compare doctrines and teachings and sayings to the Word of God to see if they are true or false. Do not just trust pastors; check the Scriptures for yourself to see if what they are saying is true (Acts 17:11). We must learn to exercise discernment so that we aren't tossed around by every wind of doctrine (Ephesians 4:14). There is a lot of error in the world, and if we are not careful it can derail us.

Once we find out what is right and true and good we must hold onto it and never let go. Many people will come to us and tempt us to cast away our doctrines so that we might find "unity", but that is a terrible thing to do. The truth cannot be compromised!

"22 Abstain from all appearance of evil." (I Thessalonians 5)

There are some churches that have secret budgets and refuse to tell the congregation (who is supplying the money) how it is being spent. Now, it's possible that the money is being spent wisely and nothing is wrong, but this practice looks terrible. It makes the leadership look corrupt and guilty, and that is what this verse condemns. Churches need to be careful to avoid any appearance of evil.

Another example would be a man who visits someone else's wife while her husband is away, and spends several days at her house. Now, it may be that they are not doing anything sinful, but from the outside it looks like they are in sin. We need to avoid situations like this so that we are above reproach in all that we do. If it is "shady" or looks bad then don't do it!

"23 And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." (I Thessalonians 5)

When the Lord comes at the rapture He will raise the dead and transform the living. In that moment we will become perfect, incorruptible, and immortal (1 Corinthians 15:52). From

that day onward we will no longer struggle with sin or evil or temptation! We will be new creatures.

Until that day comes, though, we are fallen people who live in a fallen world, and there are temptations on every side. That is why we must pray to God that He will protect us, deliver us from evil (Matthew 6:13), and keep us from wickedness. We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us (Philippians 4:13), but we really do need to go to Christ in order to overcome our spiritual adversaries.

Notice that Paul wants our spirit, soul, and body to be preserved blameless. It is possible to defile our bodies through sexual sins (1 Corinthians 6:18-20) – that is one of the reasons why we are told to flee from sexual immorality. The world may encourage it but God condemns it. We need to remember that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, and we must live with care.

"24 Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it." (I Thessalonians 5)

We did not call ourselves; instead God called us. We did not choose God; instead God chose us. The Lord did not call us and then abandon us to our own devices; instead He is always with us and will never forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). He will be with us and will make sure that we reach Heaven – and it will be by His power, not ours.

"25 Brethren, pray for us." (I Thessalonians 5)

If even the apostles desired the prayers of the church, then how much more should we pray for one another!

"26 Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss." (I Thessalonians 5)

This sounds very strange to us, doesn't it? In the days of the apostles this is how people greeted one another (as opposed to modern handshakes). It wasn't inappropriate or sexual, the way it would be today. Paul isn't saying "Make sure you go around kissing people", but instead "Greet people warmly and make sure they know you love them and care about them".

"27 I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren." (I Thessalonians 5)

When the apostles wrote letters to the churches they weren't just writing to that one church. They not only knew that their letters would be passed around, but they commanded it! They wanted the letters to one church to be read by other churches (Colossians 4:16), and they wanted these letters to be read aloud to everyone. The apostles and the churches recognized these letters as Scripture from the very beginning (2 Peter 3:16). When we read and study these letters we aren't reading someone else's mail; these letters were always intended to be used this way.

"28 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen." (I Thessalonians 5)

Amen!

## Appendix B: Pre-Tribulation Rapture

Within the church today there is a great deal of debate regarding the subject of end-times prophecy. There are some people who believe that prophecy should be ignored entirely. There are others who believe that prophecy is largely symbolic, and is not intended to be taken in a literal way. There are others, though, who think that prophecy should *not* be "spiritualized". They think that it means what it says and we should take the subject seriously.

This topic is far too vast to be covered in a single paper. In other places I have already discussed why prophecy should be studied, why preterism is false, why amillennialism is an error, and why covenant theology (also known as replacement theology) is wrong. Because of that I am going to focus on just one thing in this paper, and that is the subject of the Rapture.

Today the idea of the Rapture is widely ridiculed. People simply don't believe in it anymore, which is a great tragedy. However, I *do* believe in it. I think that one day, before the Tribulation begins, the Lord will return to Earth and take His Church back to Heaven. This is *not* the same thing as the Second Coming, which happens *after* the Tribulation. The Rapture is a separate event, and is the time when when we will all be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air. I believe this happens before Israel signs the seven-year covenant with the Antichrist.

There are a number of reasons why I believe this, but let's start at the beginning. After the Last Supper took place and Judas left to betray Jesus, the Lord told His disciples that He was about to leave them. He told them not to be afraid, though, because He had a reason for leaving them:

**John 14:1:** "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.

2 In my Father's house are many mansions: if it



were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

In other words, Jesus was going away so He could prepare a place for His disciples. Once He finished He would come back and get them so that they could be with Him forever.

In ancient Jewish courtships, after the bride and groom were engaged the groom would leave his bride-to-be and go prepare a home for the two of them to live in. After he completed it he would return for his bride and they would be married. Jesus is doing the same thing for us. It is not for nothing that the Church is called the Bride of Christ.

In verse 28 Jesus tells us where He is going:

**John 14:28:** "Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I."

Jesus is going to His father, and one day He will come back and get the Church. Nothing more is said at this point. This is all very straightforward: Jesus left us to prepare a home for us, and one day He will come back and get us. There is nothing complicated about this.

The next passage of interest is found in I Thessalonians:

**I Thessalonians 4:13:** "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus

will God bring with him.

15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

This passage goes into more detail about the time when Jesus will return for His Church. Without repeating everything the passage says, those of the Church who died before the Lord returns will be raised from the dead – their bodies will be brought back to life. (That, after all, is what "resurrection" means. In order to have a resurrection you must first have something that died, and it then has to come back to life. When we die the only part of us that stops living is our bodies. *That* is what gets raised from the dead when Jesus returns.) After the dead saints have been resurrected, the living saints will be transformed. In an instant they will become immortals, and all that is sinful or unclean about them will be banished forever. Next, everyone will meet Christ in the air, after which we will "ever be with the Lord".

So here we have a picture of what it will be like when Jesus returns for the Church. There will be a resurrection of the dead, a putting on of immortality, and a grand meeting in the air. After this has happened we will "ever be with the Lord". This passage adds a lot of detail to Christ's return, but it doesn't give us any information about its timing. When does this happen in relation to other end-times events? Based on this passage alone

we cannot say, but there are other verses that provide some context for the Rapture.

Incidentally, the word "rapture" comes from verse 17. The phrase "caught up" in Latin is very similar to the word "rapture". For centuries the only version of the Bible that was available was the Latin version, and that is where this word came from. When people speak of the Rapture they are merely speaking of the time when the Church will be "caught up" to meet the Lord in the air. (This is why it is unfair to say that the word "rapture" never appears in the Bible. It actually does appear in *Latin* Bibles because it's a Latin word.)

There really should be no debate among Christians about whether or not there will be a Rapture. The Bible is quite clear that one day we will be "caught up" (or "raptured") to meet our Lord in the air. The only real question is one of timing – when does this happen? Is this the same thing as the Second Coming that is spoken of in Matthew 24 (which happens after the Tribulation), or is this something separate?

The next passage can be found in I Corinthians:

**I Corinthians 15:50:** "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.

51 Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

54 So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on

immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

55 O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

56 The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.

57 But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

This passage also speaks of the resurrection. Those who have believed in Jesus but died before His return will be raised from the dead (meaning, as we said earlier, that their dead bodies will be raised back to life). Next, those who are still alive will be transformed; the mortal will put on immortality and we will be changed. (Some more details about this can be found in the preceding verses, I Corinthians 15:35-49). These teachings are quite clear and are not tied to any particular interpretation of end-times. The verses simply teach that one day the Lord will return and get His church and they will be forever with Him. However, this still does not answer our question: just when does this occur? Does this happen before, during, or after the Tribulation?

First, it should be noted that the Church began on the day of Pentecost and will be completed at the Rapture. Before Pentecost there were Old Testament saints, but none of them were a part of the Church. If you will recall, John the Baptist referred to himself as a friend of the bridegroom (John 3:29); he did not consider himself to be a part of the Bride. John was beheaded long before the day of Pentecost occurred, so although he was saved he was not a part of the Church. The word "church"

never appears in the Old Testament, and the reason for this is because the church is a new concept that began after the death of Christ, and not before. There was no such thing as the Church before the day of Pentecost.

As was explained earlier, when the Lord returns at the Rapture He will gather the Church to Himself and the Church will then be gone. Since the Church is being taken to Heaven, they will obviously no longer be on the Earth. It is worth noting that the Church appears in Revelation 1-3, which takes place *before* the Tribulation, but there is no mention of the Church being on Earth in Revelation 6-18, which takes place *during* the Tribulation. There are saints mentioned in chapters 6-18 but they are never referred to as the Church (just as the saints in the Old Testament are never referred to as the Church). *Nowhere* does the Bible speak of the Church going through the Tribulation.

This, however, is not the strongest evidence that the Rapture takes place before the Tribulation. In Luke 21 Jesus says this:

**Luke 21:34:** "And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.

35 For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.

36 Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man."

This passage is one of the strongest evidences for placing the Rapture before the Tribulation. The Lord said that the Tribulation will be a snare to *all* those who dwell on the *whole Earth*. In other words, *everyone who is on Earth will be forced to*

*suffer through it*. However, the Lord tells us to watch and pray so that we can escape this time of suffering that will afflict *everyone on the entire planet*. If it afflicts everyone on the planet with no exceptions, then the only way to escape it is to not be on the planet. If we should pray so we can escape it, then we must be praying that the Lord will come and get us before it happens! This strongly implies that the Rapture will occur prior to the Tribulation and remove the Church from Earth so that we can escape it.

Some people get upset at Christians who teach a pre-Tribulation Rapture and accuse them of being easy-living Christians who just don't want to suffer or get their hands dirty for Christ. It's worth noting that Jesus *commands* His disciples to pray that we won't go through this period. He *did not want His children to endure it*. Praying to escape the Tribulation is not evidence of a weak will; it is *obedience* to the command of Christ.

There are others who say that "watch and pray" means that only the "worthy" will escape the Tribulation, and all backslid Christians will have to endure it. That is not what Jesus is talking about. The Lord is not going to leave part of His Bride behind for *any* reason. When the Church is complete *all* of it will be brought home. What Jesus is talking about are people who think they are saved but are not. Jesus spent a lot of time warning people to examine themselves to see if they were in the faith. All of those who are saved will be in the Rapture, but not everyone who says "Lord, Lord" is among the saved. That is the point.

1 Thessalonians expands upon this idea of a pre-Tribulation Rapture:

**1 Thessalonians 5:1:** "But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you.

2 For yourselves know perfectly that the day of

the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.

3 For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and **they shall not escape.**

4 But **ye**, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.

5 Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.

6 Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.

7 For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night.

8 But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for a helmet, the hope of salvation.

9 For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,

10 Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.

11 Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do."

First of all, it's important to note that Paul is talking about the "day of the Lord" (verse 2), which is *not* Judgment Day. The "day of the Lord" is a phrase used throughout Scripture that refers to the Tribulation. (Many Old Testament passages talk about the Tribulation, but that is outside the scope of this discussion.) Paul is warning the Thessalonian church that the Tribulation will catch the lost world by surprise and they will not escape. However, Paul goes on to say that the Church is not in darkness and will *not* be surprised. While the world will be caught up in the Tribulation, the Church will not because *it was not appointed to wrath*. In this context the word "wrath" is not

referring to Judgment Day (since that is not what's being discussed!) but is instead the wrath that God will pour out upon the world during the Tribulation. The world will have to endure that terrible period of time, but the Church will be spared.

In verse 9 Paul mentions the "hope of salvation". This is not salvation from our sins – after all, that is *not* a hope. Christ has already forgiven our sins and paid our debt with His own blood. Besides, Paul is not discussing salvation from our sins. The "hope of salvation" is salvation from the wrath that is mentioned in the first verses of this chapter – *the wrath of the Tribulation*. This passage provides clear, direct evidence that God has not appointed His Church to suffer through the wrath of the Tribulation. Instead He will deliver us from it – and since the Tribulation will afflict *everyone* on the *whole Earth*, He must be planning to take His Church *out* of the Earth before the Tribulation begins. Since the Marriage of the Lamb takes place in Heaven *before* the Tribulation ends (see Revelation 19:7), that is even more evidence that the Church must be in Heaven during the Tribulation. Since the Rapture is what moves the Church to Heaven, the Rapture must happen before the Tribulation.

Another mention of this same idea can be found in Revelation 3:10:

**Revelation 3:10:** "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth."

In this passage, the Tribulation is the hour of trial that will try everyone that dwells upon the Earth. Notice that this passage does not say that the Church will be kept *safe* during this hour of trial, but that *it will be kept from the hour of trial altogether*. Given that the verse goes out of its way to explain that the



Tribulation impacts *all the world* to afflict *everyone that lives on the Earth*, this is more evidence that the Church will not be on the Earth when the Tribulation happens.

Some have said "Oh, that just means the Church will be protected from persecution during that period". If you read the rest of Revelation you will see for yourself how ludicrous that statement is – God gives the beast the power to make war with the saints and overcome them (Revelation 13:7), and the beast kills *millions* of believers. There is no possible way that "being kept safe" is the same thing as "the antichrist will hunt down all of you and behead you". The *Church* is kept safe because it's not on the Earth anymore and so it is out of the antichrist's reach. However, all those who come to Christ after the Rapture are not a part of the Church and are not kept safe. Many millions of them will be hunted down and brutally murdered.

How close are we to the Rapture? Well, the Bible teaches that the Rapture can happen at any moment. For example:

**Romans 13:11:** "And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.

12 The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light."

The salvation mentioned in this verse cannot be referring to salvation from sins, because that was finished when Christ died in the cross. Salvation from sins is *not* something that we are still looking forward to in the future. Paul is speaking of salvation from the Tribulation and being saved from the hour of wrath that will come upon the whole Earth. *That* salvation is "nearer than when we believed". The imagery in these two verses depicts something that is drawing closer and is near at

hand. You can almost hear Paul saying "It won't be long now". Nowhere does he say that it's a long way off or that other things must happen first. It can literally happen at any moment. There are no other signs or events that must take place before the Rapture happens.

James 5 also speaks of this:

**James 5:7:** "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.

8 Be ye also patient; establish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.

9 Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the Judge standeth before the door."

Like Paul, James says that the coming of the Lord is drawing near and he urges us to be patient until Jesus comes. James goes so far as to say that "the Judge standeth before the door". If He is standing at the door then He is very near indeed! Revelation also makes this same point:

**Revelation 22:20:** "He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen, Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

Even Jesus says that He is coming quickly! This can only be true if the Rapture happens before the Tribulation. If the Rapture happens in the middle of the Tribulation then it is always at least 3.5 years away. If it happens at the end of the Tribulation then it's at least 7 years away. In neither case is the Rapture imminent. It is only imminent if it occurs *before* the Tribulation.

The Bible does not say exactly when the Rapture will

happen. What it does say is that the coming of the Lord is drawing near and we should be sober and watch for it. Amen!

## Appendix F: God Is Not Giving You New Revelation

Have you noticed how many Christians claim to have received direct, divine revelation from God Himself? It's become very common for Christians to claim that God told them to do whatever it is they're doing. People say things like "God told me to preach this message" or "God told me to phone that person" or "God told me to make that decision". In each case people claim that they were not acting of their own accord; instead God Himself ordered them to do whatever it was they did. They were acting under Divine Command.

This phenomenon greatly disturbs me because it is completely unbiblical. Whenever someone begins a sentence with "God told me..." I inwardly wince. Stop and think about it for a minute. As soon as someone claims that they are acting under the direct command of God, they make themselves unaccountable and it becomes impossible to criticize them. After all, it wasn't *their* idea; they were just doing what God told them to do! God told them to jump, so they jumped. You can't even have a rational discussion with them because any criticism of their actions becomes criticism of God. After all, if God told them to do it then who are you to question God?

However, does God actually speak to people in that manner? Does God *really* talk to people and send them Divine messages telling them what to do and when to do it? I am convinced that the answer is a resounding *no*. In this era of history God does *not* speak to us directly. He may use our consciences to convict us and He may use those around us to remind us of the truth, but God is no longer in the business of talking directly to His people. Instead He has given us the Bible, and He expects us to learn what it has to say and apply it to our lives. God wants us to guide our lives *by the Bible*.

## All Means All

You see, the Bible tells us that it is all the divine revelation that we need:

**2 Timothy 3:16:** "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

This passage says that the Scriptures have been given to us so that we can be perfect. It tells us that the material it contains within its pages is enough to *thoroughly* furnish us for *all* good works. In other words, there are no good works that are outside its scope. The Bible claims that it has 100% of the divine revelation that we need in order to live in this era. No other revelation is necessary. This means that *we do not need extra messages from God in order to live our lives and do God's will, because God has already told us everything that we need to know.*

Now, the Bible's claim to be sufficient is either true or false. If it is true then we do not need a "personal word from God". We don't need God to speak to us because the Bible already contains everything that we need to know. In other words, it means that God has *already* spoken and all we need to do is read the Word that He has given to us.

However, if God *does* speak to His people today then 2 Timothy 3:17 is a lie. It means that the Bible is *not* enough and

that we need additional information that God failed to supply. It means that the Bible does not fully equip us for life but instead leaves us unprepared for many situations, and our only hope is for God to speak to us directly and fill in the critical information that He left out of the Bible. Since this train of thought is utterly ridiculous (because every word in the Bible is true, including 2 Timothy 3:17), that means that *there are no such things as personal words from God*.

But, some may say, isn't it true that God used to speak directly to His people? Didn't God speak to men through dreams, angels, and so forth? Yes He did, but the Bible tells us that He no longer does that. His method of speaking to us has changed:

**Hebrews 1:1:** "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,  
2 Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;"

As you can see, things are different now. In the past God spoke to mankind in many different ways, but now God only speaks to us through His Son Jesus Christ – and Christ's teachings can be found written in the New Testament. The Bible that God gave to us is complete. He did not leave anything out.

## **Even In The Old Testament, God Rarely Spoke To People**

I realize that people think that God has always led His people by speaking directly to them, but that is not the case. The

truth is that very few people in the Bible were *ever* spoken to by God. According to Dr. Sam Kurien:

"The only individuals who heard from God more than twice in the Old Testament are Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jacob, Aaron, Joshua, David and Solomon. These eight and no more!"

Think about what that means! People commonly assume that God has always talked to His people to tell them what to do whenever they were faced with a decision, but that is not the case. Even in Bible times it was an extremely rare thing to hear from God. The Lord simply did *not* communicate with His people on a regular basis in order to guide them through life's decisions. There are large numbers of prominent Bible characters who never heard from God *even one time*, as Gary Gilley points out:

"Below are some of the important characters found in the Old Testament who never heard directly from God as far as we know: Caleb, Esther, Mordecai, Ruth, Joab, Hezekiah, Josiah, Jehoshapat, Jonathan, most of the judges, Ezra, Nehemiah, Shadrack, Meshach and Abd-nego (although they may have been comforted by the Son in the fire). In addition whole categories of key leaders never heard from God personally, including none of Jacob's sons except Joseph, none of the kings of Judah after Solomon, none of the judges except for Gideon, none of the returning exiles and none of David's mighty men or military leaders. This is just a sampling; many more could be cited." (Gary Gilley)

On top of that, when God did speak He *never* spoke through an "impression" or "feeling". As Dr. Sam Kurien pointed

out:

"When God spoke, it was in an audible voice, or on occasions through a vision or dream. There is not a single instance of God speaking to the mind or heart inaudibly through an inner voice."

People today like to say that "God spoke to my heart", but *nowhere in the entire Bible does God ever speak to anyone in that manner.* There is zero Biblical evidence that God communicates that way. It is true that the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin and helps us understand the Scriptures, but even the Spirit is never depicted as whispering to a person's heart. There is not one case of that anywhere in the Bible.

Moreover, when God did speak He talked about big-picture issues, not personal life decisions:

"When God did speak in Scripture it almost always dealt with the big picture of what God was doing in the outworking of His redemption program or the life of His people in general. You will search in vain to find God telling people what job to take, how many donkeys to buy, or what land to purchase — except as it was related to the bigger issue of God's dealings with His people." (Gary Gilley)

Today people believe that when they are faced with a decision they can ask God what to do and God will personally tell them what choice is right. The problem with this idea is that the Bible does not support it. That type of divine advice is exceedingly rare in the Bible. There were a couple men (like King David) who had the ability to inquire of God, but few people ever had that privilege, and those who did only used it in the most extreme circumstances. It has *never* been the ordinary course of



action for the average believer.

You will simply not find any verses in the Old or New Testament that say "When you are faced with a decision, ask God about it and He will divinely impress the correct decision upon your heart." Nor will you find any verses that say "Sometimes God will impress an action on your heart, and whenever God does that you should obey it immediately." I realize how common these two beliefs are, but they are not Biblical. It is true that God guides us, but He speaks to us through His Word, *not* through "impressions" or direct revelation. It is true that God shapes our lives, but He does so by His divine power – the same power He uses to raise up nations and cast them down. God is *not* sitting in Heaven hoping that you will make the right decision so that His plans will work.

## **But What About The Apostles?**

Some might say, weren't there times in the Bible when God guided the lives of the apostles? Yes, there are – and in each case He did so through angels or supernatural revelation, *not* through speaking to their heart:

"...all of the examples which are selected to support individual guidance are clearly instances of *supernatural revelation*. In the book of Acts, such guidance came through visions (Acts 9:10-16; 10:3-8; 10:17; 16:9-10; 18:9; 22:17-21), angelic messenger (Acts 8:26; 12:7-8; 27:23), physical miracle (Acts 8:39), an audible voice from God (8:29; 9:3-6; 10:19-20; 23:11) or a prophet who had received direct

revelation (Acts 21:10-11). Are there other recorded examples where detailed guidance was given through some means other than supernatural revelation? No. . .

"At no point in Scripture do we read of a believer asking, "What is God's individual will for me in this matter?" Much of the terminology found in presentations of the traditional view is absent, either in vocabulary or on concept, from the pages of the Bible. One does not read of the "specific will," "center of God's will," "right decision," "putting out a fleece," or even "finding God's will."

"But even more startling is the fact that no decision is ever explained on the basis that it was "God's individual will." Today we commonly hear people say, "I did thus and such because I knew it was God's will for me." Or, "I felt in my heart God wanted me to do it." The apostles often gave reasons for their decisions, but never in such terms." (Garry Friesen, *Decision Making and The Will of God*, p. 91-92)

Many people believe that God has an individual will for their lives, and it's up to them to seek that will and figure out what God wants them to do. Does God want them to go into this profession, or that one? What house does God want them to buy? What car does God want them to own? People pray about it, get an impression in their mind, and assume that their impression is God's command for their life.

Yet people ignore the fact that *no one in the entire Bible ever lived their life that way*. Gideon's fleece was a real, actual fleece and a real, actual supernatural miracle. The still small

voice that spoke to Elijah was an actual, audible voice, not an "impression" or "feeling". Even in those miraculous cases there is no evidence that either of them spent the rest of their lives living out that example. Gideon did not spend his life putting out more fleeces. No Bible character ever sought a divine word from God for every decision that they faced in life – and the reason is because *that's not how God works*. Instead God gave us His Word and He wants us to live by its principles. Sadly, the modern generation has decided that the Bible isn't good enough for them. Instead they want God to "whisper the right decision to their heart" – even though God never promised to do that. God guides our life by His power, His providence, and His Word – *not* by "impressions" or "feelings".

## **Do Not Reject God's Word Based On Your Personal Experiences; Instead Judge Your Experiences By God's Word**

But, you might say, isn't all of this negated by the fact that these "personal words" really do exist? After all, God really does speak to people and tell them to do things! People pray for guidance and then they suddenly know what to do. Sometimes people get the urge to call someone, and lo and behold something good comes of it. Isn't that proof that God really does speak to His children today?

I'm afraid not. You see, there is an enormous difference between "I suddenly knew what to do" and "God Himself told me which choice was right". Likewise, there is a big leap between "I heard a voice" and "That voice was definitely God". In each case *you* are deciding that the voice must be from God. You are ruling out the notion that it might have been your own idea, and the

reason you are ruling it out is because of *your belief* that God talks directly to His children. Therefore, if you ask God what to do and you suddenly think of something, your belief leads you to conclude that whatever you just thought of must have come from God. *But that is not the only possible explanation.*

There is an easy way to prove that these "impressions" do not come from God. You see, God cannot lie and *God cannot be wrong*. Whenever God speaks He speaks authoritatively. In fact, the way prophets were tested was by evaluating the outcome of their predictions. If they ever got *anything* wrong then they were false prophets, and God demanded that they be executed for lying:

**Deuteronomy 18:20:** "But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die.

21 And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken?

22 When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him."

That is how serious it was to claim that God spoke to you. People who stood up and said "This is what God told me" were literally putting their very life on the line. If anyone ever claimed to be speaking for God when God had not actually spoke to them, *God commanded that they be executed*. This means that whenever you stand up and say that God told you something when it wasn't God at all, you are committing a sin as serious as murder. If you are wrong about the source of your "impressions" then you are committing a *very, very serious sin*. You may take it

lightly, but *God does not*. It is a very serious business to say "God told me".

It is even worse when you realize that there is no record of God ever talking to someone through "impressions" or "feelings". People who say "God told me" have invented an entirely new method of divine revelation that has no Biblical support whatsoever. That is a very dangerous thing to do. If you are wrong and that inner voice isn't actually God then *you are in a whole lot of trouble*.

So what about these "impressions" – are they 100% accurate 100% of the time? Absolutely not! Sometimes they work out and sometimes they don't. When something good happens people use that as proof that it was from God, but when things go terribly wrong they say that they "misunderstood" – or they blame God for giving them bad advice! On top of that, there are times when one person claims the Holy Spirit told them one thing while another person claims the opposite. Is God divided? Do you really think that God is so confused that He can't even figure out His own will for people? Of course not! The truth is that God isn't speaking to anyone. He doesn't do that anymore *because He wants us to live by the Bible*.

Since these "impressions" cannot be trusted 100% of the time, that means they cannot possibly be from God. A prophet that had that kind of track record was labeled a false prophet and was to be *put to death* for the serious crime of claiming that God said something *when God had not said anything at all*. Putting words in God's mouth is *that serious* to God.

The Bible has a lot of negative things to say about these "personal words from God". It says that the Scriptures are all we need in order to thoroughly furnish us for all good works. It says that we do not need *any* other revelation. It says that God has stopped speaking to people through dreams and visions and direct revelation. It says that very few people in all of history have ever heard directly from God Himself, and that God has

*never* talked to *anyone* by impressing something upon their mind. It also says that anything that is not 100% accurate 100% of the time is not the voice of God.

All of this makes it crystal clear that "personal words from God" are just our attempt to dodge responsibility for our own actions. Instead of being honest and saying "I decided to do that", we claim that it was God's doing. Instead of admitting that our dream really was just a dream (and not an actual guided tour of Heaven), we claim that God is giving us extra information that He did not include in the Bible – information that we *have* to have, even though 2 Timothy 3:17 says that the Bible is enough to cover all situations that we will ever encounter.

## **The Bible Is A Finished Book**

That last point often gets overlooked. If personal words from God exist, then the Bible is an open book that can be added to at any time by anyone who claims to have heard from God. It means that the Bible isn't finished but is a work in progress that is being constantly enlarged. After all, it's impossible for Jesus to speak with anything less than absolute authority! If Jesus Christ, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, told someone something then whatever He said is absolute truth and we should add it to our Bibles. If Jesus gave someone a tour of Heaven and revealed all kinds of new information about it then we should add a new book to the Scriptures. After all, Jesus has spoken and every one of His words is flawless. It means that we should be busy collecting all of this new revelation and adding it to our Bibles so that everyone can know what *else* Jesus had to say.

I realize that line of reasoning is ridiculous, but that is exactly where belief in "personal words from God" leads. The

Bible simply does not support the idea that the Word is an open book that can be added to as the need arises. After all, we are told that we should contend for the faith that was *once* delivered to the saints:

**Jude 1:3:** "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was **once** delivered unto the saints."

You can search your Bible from cover to cover and you will never find any verse that says "The Scripture is a work in progress. God is going to add a lot more to this as time goes on, so stay tuned!" The Bible is a closed book; you cannot add a Book of Mormon, a Book of Tours of Heaven, or a Book of Things That Jesus Revealed To Me. I realize how popular the "God gave me a tour of Heaven" books are, but guess what: that constitutes *new revelation from God*, and God is not in the business of giving people new revelation.

This is how one person put it:

"The doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture does not imply that God cannot add any more words to those he has already spoken to his people. It rather implies that man cannot add on his own initiative any words to those that God has already spoken. Furthermore, it implies that in fact God has not spoken to mankind any more words which he requires us to believe or obey other than those which we have now in the Bible." (Grudem)

Does this mean that God will never speak to His people again? Of course not. But it does mean that for now, in this era

and in this life, the Bible is all that we need. When we crave a "personal word from God" we are telling God that His Word is not enough – that God omitted important information that we cannot live without. We are telling Him that His Word does not thoroughly equip us for all good works and that we need something more in order to get by. That does not honor God or His Word.

The truth is that God did *not* tell you to make that choice and God did *not* speak to you and give you new revelation. There are no personal words from God! The Bible is all that God has given to us, and it really is all that we need.



# Appendix S: The Modern Practice Of Tithing Is Not Biblical

If you have been going to church for any length of time, you have probably heard a sermon about tithing. Pastors commonly teach that Christians must give 10% of their pre-tax income to their local church. They even go so far as to say that the curse of Malachi rests upon those who refuse to pay it:

**Malachi 3:8:** "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.

9 Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.

10 Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

However, is this really true? Are Christians really commanded to do this? Does God actually curse believers if they don't give their local church ten percent of their pre-tax income?

Before I answer these questions, let's take a look at the context of these passages. We need to understand what the Biblical tithe actually was before we can explore whether it still applies today.

## Tithing in the Old Testament

In Numbers 8 the Lord gave a series of ordinances

regarding the Levites. In case you're not familiar with them, the Levites were given the job of maintaining the tabernacle:

**Numbers 8:19:** "And I have given the Levites as a gift to Aaron and to his sons from among the children of Israel, to do the service of the children of Israel in the tabernacle of the congregation, and to make an atonement for the children of Israel: that there be no plague among the children of Israel, when the children of Israel come nigh unto the sanctuary."

The reason the Levites were given this job is because in the Old Testament, before Jesus came, the Israelites were not allowed to interact directly with God. This was because they (like everyone else) were sinful and unholy, and if they approached God in their unholiness they would die. In order to save their lives the Lord appointed the tribe of Levi to take care of the tabernacle.

The Levites were divided into two groups. Aaron and his sons were made priests, and became responsible for offering the sacrifices. The rest of the tribe was charged with taking care of the tabernacle (and later, the Temple). The priests and the Levites were the *only ones* who were authorized to serve in the tabernacle. The Lord was quite strict about this:

**Numbers 18:22:** "Neither must the children of Israel henceforth come nigh the tabernacle of the congregation, lest they bear sin, and die.  
23 But the Levites shall do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they shall bear their iniquity; it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations, that among the children of Israel they have no inheritance."

If you were not of the tribe of Levi then you were not allowed to serve in the tabernacle, and the penalty for breaking this commandment was *death* (Numbers 18:22). Your eligibility to serve was determined by your ancestry. Although the Temple had an outer court that non-Levites could enter after they purified themselves, no non-Levite was ever allowed to enter the Temple itself. (There were no exceptions to this: when King Uzziah broke this commandment the Lord immediately struck him with leprosy.) Even the High Priest (the oldest son of Aaron of each generation) could only enter the Holy of Holies *once a year* to make atonement on behalf of the people, and before he could enter he had to offer a sacrifice to cleanse his own impurities (Hebrews 9:7).

Even if you *were* of the tribe of Levi, the requirements for being involved in Temple service were very strict. As Numbers 8 and Leviticus 21 explains, not only did Levites and priests have to come from the tribe of Levi, but they had to be of a certain age (starting at 25 and forcing mandatory requirement at age 50), have no physical handicaps (Lev. 21:17-21), and abide by certain purification laws. These were the people that interacted with God on behalf of the nation of Israel, and they had to do things God's way all of the time or God would strike them dead. There was no margin allowed for error or personal flair. Nothing less than absolute holiness and perfection could enter His presence. (Incidentally, those requirements have never changed; the only reason we can enter God's presence is because we are clothed in Jesus' righteousness. His absolute perfection cleanses us of our sins and grants us entrance to Heaven. Those who try to enter on their own merits, or apart from Jesus, will find themselves damned. There simply is no other way.)

All of this brings up a question: if you were a priest or Levite then where did you get your income? Well, when the land of Canaan was given to the Israelites the tribe of Levi was not given a portion of the land (Numbers 18:20). Instead they were

to dwell in a series of cities that were set aside for them throughout the land of Israel (Joshua 21). The tithe was given to them as their inheritance:

**Numbers 18:21:** "And, behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation. ...

24 But the tithes of the children of Israel, which they offer as a heave offering unto the Lord, I have given to the Levites to inherit: therefore I have said unto them, Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance."

However, the Levites did more than just maintain the Temple. God designed Israel to be a theocracy, and the Levites served as the nation's government. They were the judicial system: cases were brought to them and they issued judgments (Deuteronomy 17:9-12). The Levites also served as the nation's education system, who were supposed to teach the people and guide the nation. They were not just holy men: *they were the government*. Even in the time of the kings they still functioned as judges and teachers.

As was mentioned earlier, not all Levites were priests. The only Levites that were allowed to serve as priests were the descendants of Aaron. The priests operated the Temple and offered sacrifices. When Israel gave the Levites the tithe, the Levites were to give a tenth of what they received to the priests:

**Numbers 18:25:** "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,

26 Thus speak unto the Levites, and say unto them, When ye take of the children of Israel the tithes which I have given you from them for your

inheritance, then ye shall offer up an heave offering of it for the Lord, even a tenth part of the tithe.

27 And this your heave offering shall be reckoned unto you, as though it were the corn of the threshingfloor, and as the fulness of the winepress.

28 Thus ye also shall offer an heave offering unto the Lord of all your tithes, which ye receive of the children of Israel; and ye shall give thereof the Lord's heave offering to Aaron the priest."

It's interesting to note that the tithes were not given directly to the priests. Instead the tithes were given to the Levites, who gave a tenth of what they received to the priests. The priests themselves tithed to no one; they kept everything they received. In other words, the priests *only received 10% of the tithe!*

Another interesting fact is that every three years, the entire tithe was given to the poor. In those years none of it went to the priests:

**Deuteronomy 26:12:** "When thou hast made an end of tithing all the tithes of thine increase the third year, which is the year of tithing, and hast given it unto the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that they may eat within thy gates, and be filled;"

Also, do you notice how it says "of thine increase"? One important fact that is often overlooked is that the tithe was *not* an income tax. The Israelites were not required to keep detailed financial records of all their income so that at the end of the year (when tithes were paid) they knew how much to give God. Instead the tithe was calculated based on *the increase of their*

*net worth*. If their net worth did not increase then they paid no tithe. This is how one person described it:

The ancient Israelite calculated and paid his tithes only once per year, after the harvest. During the year, he bought and sold, exchanged his labour for other men's goods, and his goods for other men's labours; on none of this income did he pay any tithes. All year long, he and his family ate of the increase of the land and of the livestock. What he consumed in the course of the year was not recorded and added to his total harvest for the purpose of calculating his tithes. If he went fishing and caught ten fish in the middle of the year, he ate them all; he didn't save one of them to the end of the year in order to pay tithes on his fish. If he received some gold or silver in an inheritance, he was not required to pay tithes on his inheritance. . . The Israelite was not commanded to tithe on everything he obtained and used throughout the year, but only on his increase at the end of the year. (apostasy now)

So let's stop and take a quick review. Because the Israelites were not holy enough to interact directly with God, the Lord took one of the tribes of Israel and dedicated them to serving in the tabernacle on behalf of the people. Since they were dedicated to Temple service the Lord gave them no inheritance in the land; instead the Israelites were to give the Levites one tenth of their increase (*not* their income!), and the Levites were to live off of that. The Levites then gave a tenth of what they received to the priests so that they could operate the Temple and perform the sacrifices.

This tithe was very important because it was the priests'

entire livelihood. If the priests didn't receive the tithe then they couldn't do their job, and that was bad news for the nation because in order to approach God in the Old Testament *you had to go through a priest!* No one else could offer sacrifices or enter into the Temple to inquire of God with the Urim and Thummim. When people neglected the tithe the priests were forced to abandon the Temple to find another means of survival, which that meant that the only people who were allowed to approach God were gone. That is why God became so angry when the tithe was neglected, and that is why Malachi 3:9 (which was quoted at the beginning of this chapter) says what it does.

Although the Levites as a whole received the full tithe, the priests only received 10% of it. However, every third year the entire tithe was given to the poor and the priests didn't receive anything.

So, how does this compare to the modern practice of tithing? Do we still go through the tribe of Levi in order to approach God? Do Levites tithe to priests so that they can offer sacrifices on our behalf? The answer, of course, is *no*. The sacrificial death of Christ on the cross changed everything.

## **Christ's Sacrifice Changed Everything**

You see, when Jesus died and rose again He replaced the Levites as our bridge to God. We no longer need a High Priest to make atonement for our sins each year in the Holy of Holies, because Jesus has finished our salvation. Jesus is now our high priest. We no longer need to offer sacrifices because Jesus offered Himself once and for all as the perfect sacrifice:

**Hebrews 9:11:** "But Christ being come a high

priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building;

12 Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. ...

24 For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:

25 Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others;

26 For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."

The reason Christians no longer need a class of Levites to interact with God on their behalf is because Christ's death has consecrated us as a nation of priests:

**Hebrews 10:19:** "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,

20 By a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh;"

**Revelation 1:5:** "And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the price of the kings of the earth. Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood,



6 And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."

**1 Peter 2:9:** "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that He should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light:"

It is very important to realize that there is no longer a tribe of Levi ministering to God on behalf of His people. Jesus bridged the gap between man's sinfulness and God's holiness. Christians are a royal priesthood and are able to boldly approach the throne of grace (Heb. 4:16). In the past this would have brought instant death, but Jesus changed that forever.

In the Church Age pastors minister to the body of Christ, *but they are not Levites*. In order to be a Levite and serve in the Temple you had to prove the purity of your lineage (that is, present documented evidence that all of your forefathers were from the tribe of Levi), you had to be ordained in a certain way, and you had to meet certain physical characteristics. The Levites pointed the way to what Christ would accomplish in His sacrifice, and that sacrifice has been made. Pastors today do not approach God once a year to atone for the sins of their congregations. They do not sacrifice animals on behalf of anybody. Their job is *completely different* from the Levites.

It's also worth noting that tithes were to be brought *into the Temple*. This can be seen in Malachi 3:10, in which the Lord says "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house". In the Old Testament God did not dwell within His people. Instead the glory of God resided in the Holy of Holies in the Temple. When the High Priest entered into the Holy of Holies once a year he was going before the *actual presence of*

God to intercede on behalf of the nation. God Himself dwelt within the Temple, which can be seen passages such as 1 Kings 8:10-11. The reason that the Jews no longer offer sacrifices is because they no longer have a Temple. Modern Jews also do not tithe because tithes can *only* be given to the Levites, *and there are no Levites today*.

As Christ predicted when talking to the woman at the well (John 4:21-23), Christians do not gather at a single Temple in order to approach the presence of God. This is because Christians *are* temples of the Living God, for God dwells within us, not inside a building in the Middle East:

**1 Corinthians 3:16:** "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"

17 If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are."

In other words, things are different now. The sacrifice of Christ changed everything – including the way that giving works. As we are about to see, what the apostles taught the Church about giving is quite different from the system of tithing in the Mosaic Law.

## **Tithing Is No Longer Possible**

It should be apparent by now that it is *impossible* for Christians to tithe according to the Law of Moses. The tithe could only be given to the Levites (Numbers 18:24) and there are no Levites today because Christ fulfilled the sacrificial system and brought it to an end. Even if the Levites still existed it would still

be impossible for Christians to bring tithes into the Temple because *there is no Temple*. Instead Christ dwells within us, making our bodies the temple of the Lord (1 Corinthians 3:16).

I want to emphasize this last point, because it is easily glazed over. It is *impossible* for Christians to offer the tithe that the Lord instituted in Numbers 18. It *cannot* be done. The only people who were allowed to receive the tithe were the Levites, not some random Gentiles from your local community (or even random Jews, for that matter). The job of Levites was to offer sacrifices for the forgiveness of sins, which is something that pastors do not and cannot do. Pastors are *not* the same thing as Levites.

The curse and blessing of Malachi 3 simply cannot be applied to modern Christians. God was concerned about providing *the Levites* with a livelihood, but that group of people no longer exists. God no longer has a Temple in which goods can be stored and given to a priestly class. *That entire system is gone*. Even if Christians wanted to bring food into the Temple, it isn't possible because *there is no Temple anymore*. The death and resurrection of Jesus changed everything.

To put it as plainly as possible, Christians today cannot tithe as instructed in the Law of Moses. It is not possible. They can give a portion of their income to their local church, yes, *but that is not tithing*. Tithing involved giving to Levites and there are no Levites. It involved bringing food into the Temple and there is no Temple. Have you ever met *anyone* who gave a tenth of their increase to a Levite? The truth is that no one has tithed according to the Law of Moses since the Temple was destroyed in 70 AD. You *cannot* simply swap out pastors for Levites and churches for the Temple and then say that it's all the same thing. The New Testament simply *does not allow this* (which we'll get into a bit later.)

Many pastors (in fact, virtually all of them) teach that Christians are required to give a tenth of their pre-tax income to

the Church. I hope you can see by now that this is not even close to the Mosaic Law of tithing. The Israelites tithed *of their increase* – that is, of the increase of their net worth at the end of the year. On top of that, the tithe went to the Levites, who functioned as Israel's government. The priests themselves only received a tenth of the tithe, or 1% of the increase of Israel's net worth. There is simply *no way* you can turn "1% of the increase of your net worth" into "10% of your pre-tax income". They're not even close.

But there's more. In the Old Testament, the priests never tithed because *the entire point of tithing was to support the priests*. I have yet to hear any pastor say that pastors are exempt from tithing. There is also the fact that every third year the entire tithe went to the poor and the priests received nothing. I've never seen any church try to implement *that* part of the Law either.

There's also something else. If the Temple was too far away, you were allowed to spend the entire tithe on whatever you wanted:

**Deuteronomy 14:22:** "Thou shalt truly tithe *all the increase of thy seed*, that the field bringeth forth year by year.

23 And thou shalt eat before the Lord thy God, in the place which he shall choose to place his name there, the tithe of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the firstlings of thy herds and of thy flocks; that thou mayest learn to fear the Lord thy God always.

24 And if the way be too long for thee, so that thou art not able to carry it; or if the place be too far from thee, which the Lord thy God shall choose to set his name there, when the Lord thy God hath blessed thee:

25 Then shalt thou turn it into money, and bind

up the money in thine hand, and shalt go unto the place which the Lord thy God shall choose:  
26 And thou shalt bestow that money for whatsoever thy soul lusteth after, for oxen, or for sheep, or for wine, or for strong drink, or for whatsoever thy soul desireth: and thou shalt eat there before the Lord thy God, and thou shalt rejoice, thou, and thine household,  
27 And the Levite that is within thy gates; thou shalt not forsake him; for he hath no part nor inheritance with thee."

Did you notice that verse 22 once again mentioned that the tithe was only *of their increase*, and not of their net income? Did you see how God said that if the **one** place that was allowed to receive the tithes (the Temple) was inaccessible or too far away, you were allowed to spend the money on whatever you wanted and literally eat it before the Lord? In other words, since there is no longer a Temple, people who *really* wanted to keep the Mosaic Law of tithing should spend their entire tithe on steaks and have a big barbeque. After all, *that is what the Mosaic Law commands!* But no pastor is *ever* going to say that, even though that is exactly what the Bible teaches.

So does the Mosaic Law *really* command Christians to give a tenth of their pre-tax income to their local church? It should be obvious by now that the modern practice of tithing is not in any way similar to the tithe specified in the Law of Moses. Pastors are not Levites, the local church is not the Temple, and 10% of your pre-tax income is not the same as 1% of the increase of your net worth.

Is there a commandment in the New Testament stating that all Christians must give ten percent of their income to support their local body of believers? The answer is *no*. As it turns out, the New Testament model of giving is actually quite

different.

## Are There Other Examples of Tithing?

Before we get into that, though, there is one other point I need to address. Some people claim that there are other examples of tithing apart from the Law of Moses. Take Jacob as an example:

**Genesis 28:20:** "And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, if God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the Lord be my God, and this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee."

This passage has been used to support tithing, but I believe it actually does the opposite. If Christians are required to tithe then why is Jacob offering to tithe if he returns in peace? After all, if God *already* required Jacob to give a tenth then this whole vow is meaningless! *This is only a gift if Jacob was not required to give it.*

Plus, how did Jacob give the offering to God? There were no priests in those days because Levi had not yet been born (much less Aaron or the other priests). Jacob, a shepherd, must have sacrificed one-tenth of his flocks on an altar. He did *not* give the animals to his local tabernacle. Are Christians required to take their money into their backyard and burn it, *as Jacob did?*

I've never heard anyone suggest that, but it's worth noting that the animals that Jacob gave did *not* go to support the local priesthood – instead they were slaughtered and burned. (It's worth noting that the tithe in Scripture was always a portion of crops or animals, not money; Lev 27:30-32 is a good example of this. There was a monetary tax called the temple tax but that was completely different from the tithe.)

What is entirely missed is that Jacob's vow shows how little faith he really had in God. The Lord had already given Jacob fabulous promises, but instead of believing them Jacob tried to bribe God by saying that *if* God lived up to His end of the bargain then Jacob would pay God back for it. Jacob's tithe was intended to *bribe God into fulfilling His promise*. Is that really an example that Christians should follow?

Another example that people sometimes use to support tithing appears in Genesis 14:

**Genesis 14:18:** "And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God.

19 And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth:

20 And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all."

After Abraham returned from conquering the armies that attacked the king of Sodom, he gave a tenth of the spoils to Melchizedek. Some people have claimed that this proves that Christians are required to tithe, but it should be noted that Abraham *gave* tithes. If they were required then he would have *paid* them, which is quite different. A gift is not required – it is given freely. If it is required then it is the payment of a debt, not

a gift. Nowhere in this passage is it even suggested that Abraham was required to do what he did.

There is also the fact that Abraham was not tithing *his* property. The loot that he was tithing consisted of things he had recovered through his military victory. After Abraham gave the tithe he returned the rest of the loot to the kings of Sodom, which is who the goods had been stolen from. The loot he had tithed belonged to *them*, not to Abraham. There are *no* examples of Abraham actually tithing *things that belonged to him*.

In other words, when an enemy nation invaded a neighboring country, Abraham defeated the invaders with an army of his own, recovered the loot they had stolen, gave 10% of that loot to a third party, and returned the rest of it to its original owners. If you are determined to follow Abraham's "tithing" then *that* is how you need to do it.

Some people support the idea of mandatory tithing through this verse in Matthew:

**Matthew 23:23:** "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and arise and cumin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone."

What we need to remember is that when Jesus said this He had not yet died, and so the Mosaic law was still in force. Jesus had to perfectly fulfill the entire Mosaic Law, and He did. It's worth noting that Jesus also commanded the lepers He healed to go show themselves to the priests. I have never heard *anyone* suggest that those who have been healed of skin cancer should go to their local pastor before re-entering society – and yet that is also a command found in the Mosaic Law. The reason that people don't do that anymore is because the entire Mosaic



Law has been ended – and that includes the sacrificial laws, the ceremonial laws, the dietary laws, and tithing. Since Christ put an end to the Mosaic Law, the only commands that apply to the Church are the ones that were given to the Church in the New Testament.

## **What Does The New Testament Actually Teach About Giving?**

If Christians truly are required to give a tenth of their income to the local church then you would expect that fact to be mentioned *somewhere* in the New Testament, but it's not. *There is not one verse anywhere in the New Testament that commands Christians to tithe.*

Let me give a few examples. In Acts 4:32-5:11 the Bible talks about the financial support of the new church. Instead of tithing, though, Christians did something quite different:

**Acts 4:34:** "Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold,  
35 And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need."

There is also the case of Ananias and Sapphira. This couple sold a piece of property and gave part of the proceeds to their local church. When they gave the money, though, they lied and said that they were giving the entire amount that they had received. Although the Lord killed them for lying, it's interesting

to notice what Peter said:

**Acts 5:4:** "Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? ..."

Nowhere did Peter even hint that they owed a tithe on it to the church. If tithing was required this would have been a great place to mention it, but the passage is silent.

Another passage that has been used to support tithing is this one:

**1 Corinthians 16:1:** "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye.

2 Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.

3 And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem."

It is important to notice that Paul is asking the Corinthian church to gather together a sum of money that he can send to *destitute people in Jerusalem*. This is *not* being collected for the support of the local church, nor is any amount or percentage specified. Paul is simply asking the Corinthians to get together and provide for the needs of their brothers and sisters in a distant country. This is *not at all* the same thing as being required to give ten percent of your income to the local church. Once again, if tithing was required then this would have been a good place to mention it, but it wasn't mentioned.

In 1 Corinthians 9 Paul talks at length about giving, and he discusses the fact that it is perfectly right for pastors to receive their income through the generosity of other Christians. Since

pastors minister to people's spiritual needs, it makes sense for people to meet the pastor's physical needs:

**1 Corinthians 9:9:** "For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen?"

10 Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. ...

14 Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel."

This would have been a perfect time for Paul to bring up tithing, *but he didn't*. Tithing isn't mentioned anywhere in this chapter. Such a teaching is *entirely absent* from this rather lengthy discussion of giving – and, in fact, it is also absent from *all other discussions on giving in the New Testament*. Do you know how many characters in the Bible followed the modern version of "tithing" and gave 10% of their pre-tax income to their local church? **Zero.** There is not a single case in the Bible of anyone ever doing that.

So what is going on? The answer to this riddle can be found earlier in that very same chapter, which says this:

**2 Corinthians 9:6:** "But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully,

7 Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver."

In the Old Testament the Israelites were *required* to give a tenth of the increase of their crops and herds to the Levites. Anything that they gave above the tithe was a freewill offering, but the tithe was required. If the tithe was given then God would send blessings, and if the tithe was withheld then God would send curses and famine. The tithe was *not* a gift.

In the New Testament things are completely different. God simply wants us to give as we have purposed in our heart, out of love. There is no fixed amount specified, nor does it say that a tenth must be given to the local church before anything can be given to other causes. God wants us to have a heart to meet the needs around us and to give cheerfully out of love. The real issue is the heart, not percentages.

The truth is that *everything* that we have belongs to God. We are stewards, not owners, and are commanded to use our possessions for the honor and glory of God. All of our wealth and energies and hopes and dreams are to be focused on the Lord's kingdom. God doesn't want a tenth of us; He wants *all* of us.

Christians should look at the financial resources they have been given and use them wisely for the Lord's glory. This doesn't just encompass tithing, but everything – paying bills, raising children, investing in education, buying groceries, and so forth. Can't God be glorified when we pay our debts? When we raise our children? When we instruct others in wisdom? When we provide for those in need? When we bring the gospel to those who need it? God made the oceans, the rivers, the trees, and the fields, but too often Christians view life as being mostly secular with a few religious moments here and there. Being a Christian isn't something that you just do at church; it's the way you live your entire life. It affects how you manage your money, what entertainment you choose, what you do with your free time, how you raise your children, and how you treat your neighbors. For the Christians there is nothing that is purely secular. The Lord has

laid a claim to every facet of life, and there is a time for everything.

God wants us to love and enjoy Him with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to be passionately devoted to following Him and loving our neighbors. That is what life is all about, and that is what life will *always* be about for the rest of time. God does not want a tenth of us; He wants all of us, devoted completely to Him in every way.

It may be that some people can give more and others can give less; in Christ's parables some servants were given more talents than others. God is not nearly as concerned with the *amount* as He is with the *heart*. That is what it is really all about.

## **Freely Have You Received; Freely Give**

The truth is that there is nothing even remotely Biblical about the modern practice of tithing, and pastors who preach tithing are preaching error. The modern practice of tithing bears no resemblance to what the Mosaic Law commanded. No Bible character in the Old or New Testament ever tithed the way that modern pastors command, and no passage in the New Testament commands Christians to give 10% of their pre-tax income to the local church. I think this quote puts it well:

It is very difficult to come up with an exact set of figures on who got how much of the tithes in the end; but one thing is sure: the Temple in Jerusalem was not collecting 10% of the total income of the people, and at least 1/3 of the tithes were given to support education and poor people in their own community. How anyone

with an honest mind can take the Mosaic Law of Tithing and come up with, "10 cents out of every dollar that passes through your hands belongs to the local church", eludes me. (apostasynow)

The great tragedy is that the New Testament actually has a lot to say about how Christians should give, but modern Christians have completely ignored its teachings in order to impose a system that has no Biblical foundation. The truth is that God doesn't want 1% of our net increase, or even 10% of our pre-tax income. Instead God wants us to see ourselves as His servants. He wants us to spend our life working for Him, using everything we have and everything we are for His glory. He wants us to think "I exist to glorify God and advance His kingdom, so how can I use my assets and talents to further that purpose?"

God has entrusted us with many things. What He really wants us to do is to realize that we are *managers*, not owners. Think of your assets as something that God has given to you so that you can invest it for His kingdom. What kind of a return are you giving God? When you settle accounts with Him, is He going to be pleased with your decisions?

## **Preach The Word**

There is one final point that I want to mention. One of the reasons pastors continue to teach tithing, despite its blatantly unbiblical nature, is because they believe they have to have tithing in order to survive. They think that if they taught what the Bible actually said, giving would drop and they would be unable to make ends meet. In other words, the heresy of tithing brings in a lot of money and no one wants to jeopardize that cash flow.

But God has called us to preach the truth, not hide from it. Refusing to preach the truth because of its potential impact on your bottom line is a very, very dangerous stance for a pastor to take. Am I supposed to believe that you would gladly give your very life for the sake of the gospel, but you find it impossible to preach the truth because it might impact weekly offerings? If your sermons are based around their impact on the church's budget then there are many things you will never say for fear of offending people and driving them off. You will find yourself compromised, unable to preach the entire truth of the Word for fear of how people will respond. The only "hard truths" you will be willing to preach are the socially-acceptable ones that you believe people won't mind hearing.

And make no mistake – God really *does* require you preach the *entire* counsel of God, and to do so both in season (when people want to hear it) and out of season (when it won't go over well). Jesus never hesitated to do this, even though it drove many people away (for example, see John 6:60-66).

That is a very serious matter because God does hold pastors accountable for what they teach (James 3:1). The job of a pastor is to faithfully preach the entire counsel of God, no matter what the consequences. Pastors may fear what would happen if they were honest with their congregations about the Bible's teachings, but I assure you that the wrath of a congregation is a small thing compared to the wrath of an angry God. Each one of us will stand before God and give an account of our lives. The day will come when the truth will be revealed:

**1 Corinthians 4:5:** "Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God."

When that day comes will you have praise of God, or will you instead find yourself explaining why you sold out your congregation for money? Do you actually trust Him enough to preach the entire Word and let come what may? The apostles preached the whole truth and were willing to die for it. What are you going to do?



## Appendix 13: Demons

In this discussion we are going to take a close look at the subject of demons. This actually overlaps our previous discussion about angels because demons are actually fallen angels, and Satan was originally the highest created angel – and that is where we will begin our study.

### Only One-Third Of Angels Fell

The Bible tells us that demons are *not* a separate class of creatures. Demons are actually fallen angels – angels that rebelled against God. We find the account of this in the book of Revelation:

**Revelation 12:3:** "And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.

4 And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born."

There is a great deal going on in this passage, and what makes things even more challenging is its heavy use of symbolic language. Thankfully, the Bible explains the terms that it uses. Later on in the chapter we are told that the dragon is actually Satan:

**Revelation 12:9:** "And the great dragon was

cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him."

Notice that the verse mentions "his angels". This makes it clear that the beings we refer to as demons are actually fallen angels. They are angels who have gone bad and allied with Satan. They are now the devil's angels, not God's angels.

Verse 4 tells us that when Satan rebelled he took one third of all angels with him. The phrase "stars of heaven" symbolizes angels. We saw this same usage earlier in Job 38:7. When the Bible speaks of stars in a symbolic way, it is referring to angels (either good ones or evil ones). Since one-third of the angels rebelled with Satan, that means that God has twice as many angels as Satan does (two-thirds vs one-third).

Angels have what theologians refer to as a "fixed will". The fallen angels (also known as demons) are evil and will always be evil. The holy angels are good and will always be good. When Satan launched his rebellion against God, each angel chose to either side with God or side with the devil. That choice, once made, was permanent.

It should be noted that fallen angels *cannot* be saved. Salvation only applies to mankind. The reason for this is because in order for salvation to be possible, an innocent party has to suffer on behalf of the guilty party. Mankind can be saved because Jesus Christ became *a man* and died in our place, suffering for our sins. Since He did not become an angel and die in *their* place, forgiveness is not possible for angels. Jesus died for mankind, not for the angels. We can be saved, but they cannot.

## Satan Was Once The Highest Angel

The reason that demons exist is because of Satan's rebellion against God. The Bible tells us that Satan was once the highest classification of angel:

**Ezekiel 28:12:** "Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord God; Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty.

13 Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created.

14 Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire."

Even though this passage seems to be talking about the King of Tyrus, it is actually referring to Satan, not to a human king. No human king in Ezekiel's day had ever set foot in Eden! This passage is talking about what Satan was like *before* he fell and became the devil. As you can see, God created him as a perfect being. He was full of wisdom and perfect in beauty, and he was arrayed in precious stones.

Verse 14 tells us that he was "the anointed cherub that covereth". As we mentioned in our last lesson, cherubs are one of the types of angels. All of the cherubs were stationed below the throne of God, except for the covering cherub. That angel was stationed *above* God's throne and acted as a covering. This

means that the covering cherub was the highest rank of cherub – which means that Satan was created to be the highest ranking angel.

At first Satan was perfect, but then he became proud and that led to his downfall:

**Ezekiel 28:15:** "Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee.

16 By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire.

17 Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee."

His beauty led to pride, and he decided to exalt himself still further:

**Isaiah 14:12:** "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!

13 For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north:

14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High."

The devil (who was originally called Lucifer, which according to Strong's Concordance means "light-bearer") decided that he wanted to be God. The gifts, beauty, position, and wisdom that God had given him were not enough; he demanded more. His pride led to his rebellion, and one third of the angels joined him.

No one knows when this happened, but it was apparently pretty soon after the angels were created. There doesn't seem to be much time between the creation of man on day six and Satan's temptation of Eve in the Garden of Eden. By the time that happened Satan had already fallen and become the deceiver.

## **Satan's Doom Is Assured**

We have discussed that Satan rebelled against God and created an army of demons, so now let's take a look at how God is going to punish the devil. God did not stand idly by while Satan worked his work; the book of Isaiah tells us what God is planning on doing to him:

**Isaiah 14:15:** "Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit."

The devil tried to exalt himself above God, but he will be brought down to Hell. This will happen after the Millennial Kingdom is over. When the thousand-year reign of Christ has ended, God will release Satan from his prison. The devil will then launch one final war against God, but he will be defeated and cast into the Lake of Fire:

**Revelation 20:7:** "And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his

prison,

8 And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog, and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.

9 And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.

10 And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever."

That is the ultimate fate of the devil – he will be cast into the Lake of Fire, where he will be tormented day and night, forever and ever. He will no longer be able to spread evil, or deceive the nations, or accuse believers. His reign of terror will be over forever.

This brings up an important point. Many people have this idea that Satan is the CEO of Hell and spends his time managing Hell and tormenting the people who are there. However, the Bible tells us that that is *not* the case. Satan actually spends his time roaming around the Earth:

**Job 1:7:** "And the Lord said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it."

Notice that Satan did *not* say "Oh, I've been in Hell tormenting all the new arrivals." You see, Hell is not a fun playground for demons. The truth is actually the opposite: Hell was instead created *to torment them*:

**Matthew 25:41:** "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:"

Hell was created as a place to torment the devil and his angels. The demons are very aware of their fate and they are terrified of it. When Jesus walked the Earth the demons had a question to ask him:

**Matthew 8:28:** "And when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way.

29 And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time?"

The demons are *not* going to spend eternity tormenting all of the lost souls that they have managed to deceive. No, their future is quite different: they are going to spend eternity *being tormented* in the place of eternal fire that God has prepared for them. They are not going to be Hell's management, but Hell's *occupants*. They will be tormented along with everyone else.

One day Satan's power will be utterly broken. The book of Isaiah speaks of this time:

**Isaiah 14:9:** "Hell from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming: it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations.

10 All they shall speak and say unto thee, Art

thou also become weak as we? art thou become like unto us?

11 Thy pomp is brought down to the grave, and the noise of thy viols: the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee. . .

16 They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, and consider thee, saying, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms;

17 That made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof; that opened not the house of his prisoners?

18 All the kings of the nations, even all of them, lie in glory, every one in his own house.

19 But thou art cast out of thy grave like an abominable branch, and as the raiment of those that are slain, thrust through with a sword, that go down to the stones of the pit; as a carcase trodden under feet."

Notice what happens when Satan finally is cast down to Hell! He is not greeted as some sort of dignitary. Instead people look at him in amazement that his power is finally broken and he has become as weak as the rest of the tormented dead. He is not reigning over Hell; instead he is described as a carcass trodden under foot that is covered by worms. He is not reigning; he is suffering along with everyone else. The one who made the world tremble and who destroyed cities will one day become nothing more than another tormented soul in Hell.

## **The War In Heaven Has Not Happened Yet**

The book of Revelation speaks of a time when there will



be a great war in Heaven, and the devil and his angels will be cast out:

**Revelation 12:7:** "And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,  
8 And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.  
9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.  
10 And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.  
11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death."

Here we see that Michael and his angels fought against Satan and his angels. When Satan lost, he and his angels were cast out of Heaven forever. Now, when people read this they commonly assume that this event happened long before mankind was created, but that is *not* the case. This is a *future* event, not a past one. It has not yet taken place.

There are several reasons for this. First of all, this passage tells us that when this war happened the "accuser of our brethren is cast down". Satan had been accusing Christians to God day and night, but when he is evicted from Heaven he loses the power to do that. However, if Satan was thrown out of Heaven before mankind was created then it would have been impossible for him to accuse anyone *because no one existed for*

*him to accuse!* If you read the book of Job you will see that Satan actually *does* still have access to Heaven, and he uses that access to accuse the brethren – just like Revelation 12:10 says:

**Job 1:6:** "Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them.

7 And the Lord said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.

8 And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?

9 Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought?

10 Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land.

11 But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face."

Here you can see Satan going before God Himself and accusing Job. The devil accused believers back in Job's day, and he is still doing it today – but one day there will be a war in Heaven and his access will be revoked. He will be cast down to the Earth.

If you study Revelation 12 (which is well outside the scope of this lesson) you will see that this event happens immediately after the rapture. As I have discussed elsewhere, before the Tribulation begins the Lord will come to Earth, Rapture the Church, and take them with Him to Heaven. This

means that when the war in Heaven happens and Satan is cast out, *we will actually be in Heaven*. We will not participate in the battle (as verse 7 explains, it is a war among angels), but we will be there.

## **The Devil Is Our Adversary**

There are many people today who do not believe in the devil. They think of him as some sort of ridiculous cartoon character. However, the Bible paints a very different picture. It teaches us that the devil is very real – and very dangerous. We are told in no uncertain terms that the devil is our adversary, and he will try to destroy us if he can:

**I Peter 5:8:** "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:  
9 Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world."

The devil is not imaginary. He exists, he is real, he opposes us, and he searches the world for people that he can destroy. Peter urges us to be sober and to watch vigilantly, and to resist him by remaining steadfast in the faith. We really *do* have an enemy, and we should take him seriously. We are told to *resist* him, not ignore him. If we resist the devil he will flee from us:

**James 4:7:** "Submit yourselves therefore to God.  
Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

We must fight him, because he is exceedingly dangerous.

Jesus told us that when the gospel is preached, Satan and his minions are standing by so that they can snatch the word out of people's hearts:

**Mark 4:4:** "And it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the way side, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up. . .

15 And these are they by the way side, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts."

The devil actively opposes the spread of the gospel. He wanted to destroy Peter:

**Luke 22:31:** "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat:"

He persuaded Ananias to lie:

**Acts 5:3:** "But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?"

He is actively seeking to gain an advantage over us:

**2 Corinthians 2:11:** "Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices."

He actively seeks to hinder us:

**1 Thessalonians 2:18:** "Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again;

but Satan hindered us."

He provokes us to do evil:

**1 Chronicles 21:1:** "And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel."

There are even some illnesses that are his handiwork:

**Luke 13:11:** "And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself.

12 And when Jesus saw her, he called her to him, and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity.

13 And he laid his hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.

14 And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the sabbath day, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath day.

15 The Lord then answered him, and said, Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering?

16 And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?"

There are also trials and tribulations in our life that are a

result of his work:

**2 Corinthians 12:7:** "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure."

In fact, there are times when Satan not only strikes people with disease, but even kills them outright:

**Job 1:12:** "And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord.

13 And there was a day when his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house:

14 And there came a messenger unto Job, and said, The oxen were plowing, and the asses feeding beside them:

15 And the Sabeans fell upon them, and took them away; yea, they have slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.

16 While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep, and the servants, and consumed them; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.

17 While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The Chaldeans made out three bands, and fell upon the camels, and have carried them away, yea, and slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am

escaped alone to tell thee.

18 While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, Thy sons and thy daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house:

19 And, behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee."

As we know, Satan later struck Job with a terrible disease:

**Job 2:6:** "And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life.

7 So went Satan forth from the presence of the Lord, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown."

Not only does Satan tempt people to do evil, but he also has the power to strike people with diseases – and *he can even kill people*. The case of Job makes this very clear.

As if all of that were not enough, the devil and his minions can even perform miracles:

**2 Thessalonians 2:9:** "Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,"

**Revelation 16:14:** "For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty."

Paul explains that our chief problem in life is not other people or wicked men, but the evil spirits of darkness. He warns us that we are not wrestling against flesh and blood (that is, against human enemies) but instead we are fighting demonic powers and darkness:

**Ephesians 6:11:** "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."

Now we will take a look at how to fight the devil.

## **Fighting The Devil**

The book of James tells us that if we resist the devil, he will flee from us:

**James 4:7:** "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

How do we resist the devil? By doing the other activity the verse talks about – we need to submit ourselves to God. When we submit ourselves to God and choose to do His will, we are taking a stand for what is right and against what is wrong. We are choosing to side with God and against the forces of darkness.



Submitting ourselves to God is an active measure – it attacks that which is evil.

The book of Ephesians has a lot more to say about this. Paul tells us to take on the whole armor of God so that we can resist the devil and fend off his attacks (because he is going to attack us). This is a long passage, so I'm going to take a look at each piece.

First, we are told to put on the armor of God:

**Ephesians 6:11:** "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."

As we saw earlier, we *do* have an adversary. The devil is going to attack us, and when he attacks we will need to put up a fight. Putting in the armor of God will help us stand against him. Paul goes on to explain that the real problem in our life is our struggle against the forces of darkness:

**Ephesians 6:12:** "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

When the Bible says "spiritual wickedness in high places", it actually means spiritual wickedness in *heavenly* places. Think back to the book of Job. Do you remember how Satan went before God Himself and accused Job? That is the sort of "spiritual wickedness" that the verse is talking about. Our real enemy is the devil and his minions. Our real problem are his attacks against us. We are not wrestling against flesh and blood, but against the rules of the darkness of this world. Our true enemy – whether we realize it or not – is demonic.

In order to fight them we must take the whole armor of God, so that we may stand against them:

**Ephesians 6:13:** "Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."

It *is* possible to stand against them. It is possible to overcome their attacks and find victory. In order to get that victory, the first thing we need is the truth:

**Ephesians 6:14:** "Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;"

The truth is a critical defense against evil. The Bible tells us that the devil is the father of lies (John 8:44). Satan often uses lies in his attacks – for example, look at the lies he told to Eve in order to tempt her to eat the forbidden fruit. When he tempted Jesus in the wilderness he used half-truths and deception. We need to possess the truth and understand it, so that we can spot his lies and reveal them for what they truly are. Knowing the truth is a solid defense against evil.

However, just knowing the truth is not enough. It is possible to know the truth and still do evil. That is why we also need the second thing the verse talks about – righteousness. We must not simply know the truth; we also have to live in the truth. It is not enough to just understand the truth; we must walk in it. If we seek righteousness, do what is right, and submit ourselves to God, then that is a very powerful defense against evil. That is how Jesus Himself defeated Satan – He revealed Satan's lies for what they were, and He refused to fall into temptation but instead chose the path of righteousness. Walking in

righteousness – and seeking righteousness – is a powerful defense against evil.

But that is not all that we need. There is still more:

**Ephesians 6:15:** "And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;"

It may seem strange that the gospel is part of the equipment that we need, but remember that we are called to do more than simply withstand attacks – we must be on the offensive! We are not called to simply stand still and let evil attack us; we need to be on the move, preaching the gospel and spreading the message of Jesus Christ far and wide. The gospel should be literally moving us to action – in fact, it should be *the very reason why we are moving*. If we have left it behind then we have lost something critical. Jesus has called us to spread the gospel to every person, and that is exactly what we should be doing.

Another critical part of our armor is faith:

**Ephesians 6:16:** "Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked."

When evil attacks it tries very hard to spread fear and doubt. Fear is one of the greatest tools of demons – they try very hard to terrify people and make them so full of fear that they are unable to do anything productive. Fear, however, does not come from God. God has not given us a spirit of fear! When we are afraid and are in doubt, we should take up the shield of faith in use it. Faith is the antidote to fear. When we are in fear we *must* choose to trust the promises of God. When things look dire we *must* take God at His Word and believe. Fear can be conquered by faith. Doubt can be destroyed by faith. It is our shield, and it is

well able to quench the devil's fiery darts. We will not get very far without faith.

There are a few other things that we need:

**Ephesians 6:17:** "And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:"

Salvation is *vital* when fighting the devil. If you are not saved then you have already lost. No one can successfully fight the devil without the Holy Spirit. If you have rejected God and are out on your own then you are guaranteed to lose. Your only hope is to become a Christian. All Christians in this age are sealed with the Holy Spirit – and it is impossible to be possessed by the Holy Spirit and by an unholy spirit at the same time. Not only are Christians immune to demon possession, but since they have the Spirit of God in them they have the power they need to resist the devil and actually defeat him. Salvation is *essential!* It is the only way to achieve victory.

We also need the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Note that while shields are defensive, swords are offensive weapons. The Bible tells us that this sword is a very powerful and potent weapon:

**Hebrews 4:12:** "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

When the Bible is preached – when we tell others what it has to say – it has an enormously powerful impact. It changes hearts and minds. It turns sinners into saints. It convicts and

chastises. It is *powerful*, and it should not be abandoned. We should stand by the Bible and use it at every opportunity. There is a great power in the Word – a power that is often neglected in our time. The devil very much wants to move us away from it, and there is great pressure on the Church to neglect the Bible and talk about something else. This is a tremendous mistake. The devil is not threatened by other things; he is threatened by God's words. It is the Bible that is a threat to him, and it is the Bible that we should be using.

Finally, we must also remember to pray – not just for ourselves, but for all the saints:

**Hebrews 4:18:** "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;"

There is great power in prayer. We should cast all our cares upon God, for He cares for us. We should ask, so that we might receive. We should pray for one another so that we might be healed. Prayer is not futile; it is vital. When a Christian prays he is making a request to an all-powerful God – a God who not only loves him, but who sent His Son to die on his behalf. The book of James tells us that the prayer of a righteous man avails much.

Armed with the armor of God, we will have what it takes to stand in the evil day and to resist the wiles of the devil. He will attack us, but God has given us what we need to withstand him. We have the ability to overcome him – but the lost do not. They are utterly helpless, and that is what we will look at next.

## Demon Possession

As was said earlier, it is impossible for any Christian to be possessed by a demon. This is because, in this age, all believers are sealed with the Holy Spirit:

**Ephesians 1:13:** "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,

14 Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory."

**Ephesians 4:30:** "And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."

This is so important that Paul said that if you do not have the Holy Spirit then you are not a Christian at all:

**Romans 8:9:** "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

Having the Holy Spirit within us does *not* make us immune to the devil's attacks, but it *does* make us immune to demon possession. Satan may still attack us, tempt us, and perhaps even make us sick (as he did to the apostle Paul) and kill us (as he did to Job's children), but he *cannot* possess us. It is utterly impossible for the devil to force us to do his bidding. He can tempt us to sin, but he cannot *force* us to sin. That is a very

big deal. Thanks to the Holy Spirit, we *can* resist the devil and we can overcome him. We do not have to give in to temptation and we do not have to do evil. We have the power to win.

The lost, however, are in a very different situation. Since they are not filled with the Holy Spirit, there is nothing in their lives that is keeping demonic influences out. They actually *can* be possessed by demons, and that is a very serious matter.

Demon possession is a rare thing, especially in this country. Possession is not the same thing as being tempted to do something that is wrong. In cases of possession, demons (which, remember, are actually spirits, so they are not physical beings) take up residence inside a person and force them to do their bidding. They act like parasites – powerful, evil parasites. The effects of this are catastrophic.

We can find a number of cases of this in the New Testament. For example:

**Mark 5:2:** "And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit,  
3 Who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains:  
4 Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him.  
5 And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones."

This passage gives quite a ghastly description of demon possession. First, we see that this man had incredible, supernatural strength. People had tried to bind him with chains, and the man utterly tore them apart. There was simply no way to bind or imprison this person. Supernatural strength is not

unusual in cases of demon possession; we see it in other cases as well. For example:

**Acts 19:14:** "And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests, which did so.

15 And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?

16 And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded."

This demon-possessed man was able to overcome *seven other people* and abuse them to such an extent that they fled from him naked and wounded. Seven people should have been able to restrain one man, but not this time. Likewise, in the case that Mark related, chains should have been able to imprison him, but they were useless because he had supernatural, demonic strength.

This man was also wild and out-of-control. He dwelt among the tombs and spent night and day howling. He was out of his mind and utterly out of control. He could not dwell among civilized people; he was wilder than any animal and was extremely dangerous. Not only was he dangerous to others, but he was also dangerous to himself – the Bible says that he cut himself with stones. He was possessed with an evil spirit of destruction.

Also notice that in these cases, when the person spoke the people were actually talking with the demon. In Acts 19:15 we see that it was the *evil spirit* who answered him.

Now, in some cases demon possession results in a *loss* of senses:



**Matthew 9:32:** "As they went out, behold, they brought to him a dumb man possessed with a devil.

33 And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake: and the multitudes marvelled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel."

Since the man was possessed he could not talk. That does not always happen, but it did happen in this case.

Adults are not the only people who can be possessed. Children can be possessed as well:

**Mark 9:17:** "And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit;

18 And wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not.

19 He answereth him, and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him unto me.

20 And they brought him unto him: and when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming.

21 And he asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child."

Here we find out that this particular person had been possessed *since he was a child*. Children are *not* immune to this. You can see that this child exhibited many of the same symptoms of the case we looked at earlier – the same violent, out-of-control, self-destructive behavior.

It turns out that even animals can become possessed:

**Matthew 8:31:** "So the devils besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine.

32 And he said unto them, Go. And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine: and, behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters."

Demons prefer to possess people, but when that is not an option they are willing to possess animals as well.

To the best of my knowledge, there are no cases of demon possession mentioned in the Old Testament. All of the cases that we read about are in the New Testament. This may seem strange, but it makes sense if you think about it. Demonic activity was at its height when Jesus walked the Earth. During that time Satan concentrated all of his efforts on the places where Jesus was located. The reason why he would do this is obvious – he wanted to hinder Jesus from carrying out His ministry. It's really not at all surprising that Jesus would constantly be coming across people who were possessed.

Jesus explained this when He said that He was binding the strong man so that He could loot his house:

**Matthew 12:29:** "Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house."

Jesus went through the countryside, casting out demons and driving the darkness away – and then He sent out His disciples, who preached the gospel. Since Jesus had first bound the strong man, His followers were able to spoil the devil's

house. Since Satan had already been pushed back, the disciples were able to be much more effective and met with much less resistance. Yes, they were still persecuted, and yes, they still had problems, but things were not as bad as they could have been.

However, demon possession has not gone away. It still exists. The difference is that it is rare – just like it was in the Old Testament. Satan is no longer concentrating all of his efforts on one tiny piece of real-estate, the way he did back in the time of Christ; now he has an entire world to trouble.

Demon possession is much more common in countries that either have a heavy occult presence or that worship demons. They are very rare in Christian nations or in areas with a strong Christian presence. Think of it this way: Christians are the light of the world, and demons cannot stand the light – they vastly prefer the darkness. In places that are saturated with the light, there is very little room for darkness to exert its influence and power. However, places that are filled in utter darkness are very inviting. Those are the sort of places where you would expect to find possession – and that is why possession is rare in all but the very darkest of places.

Now, it is possible to *invite* demons into your life. There are real Satanists who actually do delve into the occult, and who worship demons and invite them into their lives. These people actually *try* to become possessed. I am not going to go into the details of this because there are some things that should not be discussed. You are *much* better off not knowing how to worship or summon demons. The Bible says that we should be wise concerning righteousness and ignorant concerning the deep things of evil. It is a very bad idea to know the deep things of Satan.

So, unless you spend a great deal of time in parts of the world that are filled with devil-worship, you will probably not come across anyone who is actually possessed. Remember, mental illness and demon possession are two very different

things. It is possible to be mentally ill without being possessed. When it comes to possession, it is really best to let a seasoned professional study the case and make a determination. How that determination is made is a question that is well outside the scope of this paper.

## **Exorcism**

Let me say right up front that it is probably a bad idea for you to try to perform an exorcism. If this is the first time you have ever studied this subject then I can say with confidence that you have no idea what you are doing. The reason I bring this subject up is *not* so that you can go out there and start trying it on your own; it is so that you will have an understanding of the Biblical principles that are involved. I want you to know enough about this subject so that the next time you see an exorcism performed on television, you will be able to point at it and laugh at how ridiculous it is. I want you to understand the truth.

However, exorcisms are a serious business. It takes a professional to diagnose true possession (and tell it apart from mental illness), and actually casting the demon out is not something to be taken lightly. All demons are not the same, and all cases of possession are not the same either. Some demons can be cast out immediately while others require fasting and prayer. If you are not experienced in this sort of thing and if you do not have a really good grasp of the finer details then you should avoid this as much as you possibly can. Do not perform exorcisms yourself; instead have someone do it who is trained and who knows what they are doing.

Exorcisms are not a joke. In true cases of possession you are dealing with a person who has supernatural strength, demonic fury, and who is absolutely out-of-control. When the

seven sons of Sceva attempted an exorcism in Acts 19:14 they were very nearly beaten to death by a single possessed man. Trying and failing this can injure or even kill you. It can be done – and Christians have the power to do it – but it is *not* a game and it should *not* be treated lightly.

To understand how exorcisms work, let's take a look at how Jesus cast out demons. During His ministry Christ actually used a couple different methods. The common method in His day for casting out demons was to ask the demon its name and then use that name to cast it out. For example:

**Mark 5:6:** "But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him,

7 And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not.

8 For he said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit.

9 And he asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many."

The reason Jesus asked its name was so He could use its name to cast it out by saying something along the lines of "Legion, come out of the man". In order to do that, though, you had to find out the demon's name. That meant it was impossible for anyone to cast a demon out of a man who couldn't talk – and that was why people were shocked when Jesus did exactly that:

**Matthew 9:32:** "As they went out, behold, they brought to him a dumb man possessed with a devil.

33 And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake: and the multitudes marvelled, saying, It

was never so seen in Israel."

When Jesus cast a demon out of a man who could not talk, He amazed Israel. What He had just done was impossible without the power of God; Jesus had just done something that had never been done before. According to their traditions, the only person who had that kind of power was the Messiah. By doing this Jesus was demonstrating that He really was the Messiah, the Son of God. This miracle was every bit as astonishing to ancient Israel as raising Lazarus from the dead. It was proof that Jesus was exactly who He said He was.

As you can see, the way Jesus cast out demons was simply by ordering them out. Jesus would say "Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit", and the demon would come out. It was not any more complicated than that. Unlike what you see on television, there was no fancy ritual that had to be performed. You did not need a crucifix or holy water or a special incantation. Jesus simply told them to come out, and they came out. There was no special magic words involved. What made it possible was the power that Jesus had. Since *He* told them to come out, the demons had to obey. They had no choice.

Jesus gave His followers the power to cast out demons:

**Matthew 10:7:** "And as ye go, preach, saying,  
The kingdom of heaven is at hand.

8 Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give."

The disciples cast out demons the same way that Jesus did – they just commanded the demon to come out, and it did:

**Acts 16:16:** "And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit

of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying:

17 The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation.

18 And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour."

The reason that Paul was able to cast our demons was because he did it in the name of Jesus Christ. Now, let me be clear about something. The reason it worked was *not* because he uttered the words "Jesus Christ" in his exorcism. As we saw earlier with the seven sons of Sceva, the phrase "Jesus Christ" is not a magical incantation. The reason it worked was because Paul did it as a Christian, *on behalf* of Jesus Christ. It is like when the American ambassador to France does something in the name of (or on behalf of) the United States. Since he is the American ambassador, he has the power to do things in the name of our country. Since we are Christians, we have the power to do things in the name of (or on behalf of) Jesus Christ. *That* is what "in the name of Jesus" means. It means we are taking that action on Christ's behalf. It is as if Christ was there doing it Himself – and since demons cannot resist Christ, they could not resist Paul either.

The reason the seven sons of Sceva failed is because they were not Christians. Since they were not Christians, they could not do things on behalf of Christ. They just invoked the name of Jesus like some magical good-luck charm – and that mistake very nearly killed them.

Does that mean that all we have to do is walk up to

someone who is possessed and order the demon to depart? Sometimes that works, but sometimes it is more complicated than that. Jesus told us that there are certain demons that can only be removed by fasting and prayer:

**Mark 9:28:** "And when he was come into the house, his disciples asked him privately, Why could not we cast him out?

29 And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting."

There are times when it is possible to battle a demonic presence by casting it out in the name of Christ, and that alone is enough to defeat it. There are other times when it cannot be done without fasting and prayer. It simply depends on the type of possession. Of course, before any of this will work at all you must make sure that you really *are* dealing with demons, and not with something else entirely. You will never be able to cast a demon out of a man who is just confused or mentally ill, and that is where wisdom comes into play.

One critical thing to remember when dealing with this is that casting a demon out of someone can have very serious consequences if the person does not become a Christian afterward. In fact, it can actually make their lives much worse. Jesus explained why:

**Matthew 12:43:** "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none.

44 Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished.

45 Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of



that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation."

As you can see, demons are different, and some demons are more wicked than others. All of them are bad, but some are much *more* wicked than others. When a demon is cast out, the person's body is emptied of the evil spirit that used to be in it. If that person becomes a Christian then the house (or "body") becomes filled with the Holy Spirit, and that defends the house against invaders. However, if the person does *not* become a Christian then the house stays empty – and an empty house is defenseless against evil spirits. In that case, the spirit that was cast out goes and finds other spirits that are even more evil than itself, and they *all* take up residence inside the person. In the final end, the person becomes much worse off than they were originally. The problem is not that the exorcism failed; it is that the person did not take advantage of the cure to fill himself with the Spirit. If you have the Holy Spirit then you can defeat the devil, but if you lack the Holy Spirit then you are defenseless against him.

# Resource 1: Chapter Summary

## 1 Thessalonians

### I Thessalonians 1

- PAUL, SILVANUS, AND TIMOTHY TO THE THESSALONIAN CHURCH
- PAUL SPEAKS OF THEIR ELECTION OF GOD
- THE GOSPEL CAME TO YOU NOT JUST IN WORD, BUT IN POWER
- THE CHURCH RECEIVED THE WORD IN MUCH AFFLICTION; THEY WERE EXAMPLES TO ALL THAT BELIEVE IN MACEDONIA AND ACHAIA
- THEY TURNED FROM IDOLS TO SERVE THE LIVING AND TRUE GOD, AND THEY WAIT FOR HIS SON JESUS FROM HEAVEN, WHO DELIVERED US FROM THE WRATH TO COME

### I Thessalonians 2

- PAUL BOLDLY PREACHED THE GOSPEL TO THEM; HE SPOKE NOT TO PLEASE MEN BUT TO PLEASE GOD
- WALK WORTHY OF GOD, WHO CALLED YOU UNTO HIS KINGDOM
- PAUL GIVES THANKS THAT THEY RECEIVED IT NOT AS WORDS OF MEN BUT AS THE VERY WORD OF GOD
- THE THESSALONIANS HAVE SUFFERED AT THE HANDS OF THEIR COUNTRYMEN
- THE JEWS TRIED TO STOP THE APOSTLES FROM PREACHING TO THE GENTILES
- PAUL LONGS TO SEE THEM BUT SATAN HINDERED HIM
- THEY ARE PAUL'S CROWN OF REJOICING, AND HIS GLORY AND JOY

## **I Thessalonians 3**

- PAUL SENT TIMOTHY TO ESTABLISH AND COMFORT THEM
- PAUL TELLS THEM NOT TO BE MOVED BY AFFLICTIONS, FOR WE ARE APPOINTED TO SUFFER
- PAUL WANTED TO KNOW IF THE THESSALONIANS HAD STOOD STRONG, AND WAS ENCOURAGED BY THE TIDINGS OF TIMOTHY
- THE LORD ESTABLISH YOUR HEARTS UNBLAMEABLE IN HOLINESS BEFORE GOD, AT THE COMING OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST WITH ALL HIS SAINTS

## **I Thessalonians 4**

- ABSTAIN FROM FORNICATION AND POSSESS YOUR VESSEL IN SANCTIFICATION AND HONOR
- DO NOT DEFRAUD YOUR BROTHER, BUT LOVE ONE ANOTHER
- HE THAT DESPISES DOES NOT DESPISE MEN, BUT DESPISES GOD
- WORK WITH YOUR OWN HANDS SO THAT YOU CAN WALK HONESTLY TOWARD THOSE WHO ARE WITHOUT
- PAUL SPEAKS OF THE RESURRECTION AND THE TIME WE WILL BE CAUGHT UP TO MEET THE LORD IN THE AIR

## **I Thessalonians 5**

- PAUL SPEAKS OF THE DAY OF THE LORD AND URGES THE CHURCH TO WATCH AND BE SOBER
- PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF FAITH AND LOVE, AND FOR A HELMET THE HOPE OF SALVATION
- GOD HAS NOT APPOINTED US TO WRATH BUT TO OBTAIN SALVATION
- COMFORT AND EDIFY ONE ANOTHER
- ESTEEM THOSE WHO ARE OVER YOU IN THE LORD VERY

HIGHLY FOR THEIR WORK'S SAKE

- WARN THEM THAT ARE UNRULY, COMFORT THE FEEBLEMINDED, SUPPORT THE WEAK, AND BE PATIENT TOWARD ALL MEN
- DO NOT RETURN EVIL FOR EVIL
- REJOICE EVERMORE; PRAY WITHOUT CEASING; IN EVERYTHING GIVE THANKS; QUENCH NOT THE SPIRIT; DESPISE NOT PROPHECYINGS
- PROVE ALL THINGS AND HOLD FAST TO THAT WHICH IS GOOD
- ABSTAIN FROM ALL APPEARANCE OF EVIL
- THE VERY GOD OF PEACE WILL SANCTIFY YOU WHOLLY

# Resource 3: The Teachings Of The Bible

## 1 Thessalonians 1

- This letter was written to the Thessalonian church (v1)
- This letter was written by Paul (v1)
- This letter was written by Silvanus (v1)
- This letter was written by Timothy (v1)
- In Paul's time there was a church in Thessalonica (v1)
- The church is in God the Father (v1)
- God is our Father (v1)
- The church is in the Lord Jesus Christ (v1)
- Jesus is our Lord (v1)
- Jesus is the Christ (the Messiah) (v1)
- Paul prayed for grace for the Thessalonian church (v1)
- Paul prayed for peace for the Thessalonian church (v1)
- Grace comes from God (v1)
- Grace comes from Jesus (v1)
- Peace comes from God (v1)
- Peace comes from Jesus (v1)
- Paul gave thanks to God for the Thessalonian church (v2)

- Paul prayed for the Thessalonian church (v2)
- It is good to pray for churches (v2)
- It is good to give thanks to God for the existence of godly churches (v2)
- Paul wanted the church to know that he was praing for them (v2)
- Paul wanted the church to know that he was thankful for them (v2)
- Paul continually remembered the Thessalonian church (v3)
- Paul remembered the faith of the Thessalonian church (v3)
- Paul remembered the labor of love of the Thessalonian church (v3)
- Paul remembered the patience of the Thessalonian church (v3)
- Paul remembered the hope that the Thessalonian church had in Jesus (v3)
- Churches should be characterized by faith (v3)
- Churches should be characterized by love (v3)
- Churches should be characterized by patience (v3)
- Churches should have hope in Jesus (v3)
- Our hope should be in Jesus (v3)
- Paul says that all these things that the Thessalonian church had done (their faith and love and patience and hope) were done in the sight of God; this means God saw

all of these things as well (v3)

- God knows what is going on in the churches (v3)
- The only person the Bible calls our Father is the Lord; that title is never given to a pastor or priest (v3)
- Paul wanted the church to look up to God as their Father, not to anyone else (v3)
- Paul refers to the church as his brothers (v4)
- Even though the church contained women as well as men, Paul did not think it was wrong to refer to them as his "brothers" instead of his "brothers and sisters" (v4)
- Paul calls the people in the church "beloved"; this is not seen as inappropriate (v4)
- Paul is very affectionate toward the church (v4)
- Paul says that the church is composed of the elect of God; the Lord had chosen them (v4)
- Paul speaks of election (predestination) (v4)
- God is the one who has chosen the church to be saved; it was His decision (v4)
- Paul wanted the church to remember the doctrine of election; he wanted the church to remember that God had chosen them (v4)
- Paul preached the gospel to the church (v5)
- When Paul preached the gospel to the church, he did not just speak the words; instead he preached with power (v5)
- Paul preached the gospel to the church with the power of

the Holy Spirit (v5)

- Paul gave the church much assurance of the gospel (v5)
- It is important to preach the gospel with power, and not just with words (v5)
- It is important to preach the gospel with the Holy Spirit (v5)
- Paul says the church knows how he, Timothy, and Silvanus behaved when they were among them; the things that they did were done for the sake of the church (v5)
- Preaching the gospel with power requires the Holy Spirit; it is not something that comes about by using clever words or tricks, or manipulating the audience in some way (v5)
- Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy had visited the Thessalonian church before writing this letter (v5)
- The church became followers of Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy (v6)
- The church became followers of the Lord (v6)
- Paul set an example, and the church followed it (v6)
- The Thessalonian church received the gospel in the midst of much affliction (v6)
- The church had been greatly afflicted (v6)
- The Thessalonian church received the gospel with joy (v6)
- The church experienced joy in the midst of affliction (v6)
- The joy of the church came from the Holy Spirit (v6)
- The Holy Spirit can give us joy (v6)



- Sometimes churches are greatly afflicted (v6)
- It is possible for a church to be greatly afflicted, and yet still joyful because the Holy Spirit gives them joy (v6)
- The Thessalonian church set an example for other churches to follow (v7)
- The Thessalonian church was an example to all believers in Macedonia (v7)
- The Thessalonian church was an example to all believers in Achaia (v7)
- In the time of Paul, Macedonia existed (v7)
- In the time of Paul, Achaia existed (v7)
- Before Paul wrote this letter, there were already believers in Macedonia (v7)
- Before Paul wrote this letter, there were already believers in Achaia (v7)
- When a church suffers great affliction, they can be an example to other churches (v7)
- The Thessalonian church spread the gospel to others (v8)
- The Thessalonian church spread the gospel to Macedonia (v8)
- The Thessalonian church spread the gospel to Achaia (v8)
- The Thessalonian church spread the gospel beyond Macedonia and Achaia; they spread it abroad (v8)
- The church should spread the gospel far and wide (v8)
- Other people heard of the faith of the Thessalonians (v8)

- The faith of the church was so great, and they had spread the gospel so far, that Paul did not need to speak to them about that subject (v8)
- The Thessalonian church spread the gospel in the midst of great affliction (v8)
- Great affliction did not stop the Thessalonian church from spreading the gospel (v8)
- Great affliction did not destroy the faith of the Thessalonian church (v8)
- The Thessalonian church turned from idols to serving the Lord (v9)
- In the past, the people in the Thessalonian church had served idols (v9)
- The God of the Bible is the living God (v9)
- The God of the Bible is the true God (v9)
- Other believers outside of Thessalonica testified to Paul how the Thessalonians had turned away from idols to serve the Lord (v9)
- It is good to turn away from idols and serve the Lord (v9)
- In order to serve the Lord we must turn away from our idols; we cannot serve both God and idols (v9)
- Paul knew that the faith of the Thessalonians was genuine because they turned away from their idols; their faith was accompanied by repentance (v9)
- It is good for believers to testify of the faith and good deeds of other churches (v9)
- Paul wanted the Thessalonian church to know what a

high regard he had for them (v9)

- Paul wanted the Thessalonian church to know how highly they were regarded by other churches, and what an impact their faithfulness was having on other churches (v9)
- The Thessalonian church was waiting for the return of Jesus (v10)
- Jesus is the Son of God (v10)
- Jesus is in Heaven (v10)
- One day Jesus will return to this world (v10)
- We must wait patiently for the Lord Jesus to return (v10)
- The church should be looking for the return of Jesus (v10)
- The doctrine of the end times was important to Paul; he wanted the church to know that Jesus was going to come back one day, and he wanted the church to be actively and patiently waiting for His return (v10)
- Paul did not think that end times doctrines were irrelevant to a church that was being persecuted; instead he wanted those doctrines to be actively on their minds (v10)
- Jesus is the Son of God (v10)
- God raised Jesus from the dead (v10)
- Jesus has already delivered us from the wrath to come (v10)
- There is wrath to come (v10)
- The reason we are delivered from the wrath to come is

because of Jesus (v10)

- At one point Jesus died, but now He is risen and is alive (v10)

[Last updated 9/23/2022]

## **1 Thessalonians 2**

- Paul refers to the Thessalonian believers (both men and women) as "brethren" (v1)
- Paul reminded the Thessalonian church how he had acted when he visited them previously; he had not preached to them in vain (v1)
- Paul did not consider himself to be a success or failure based on whether people accepted the gospel and were converted; instead he considered himself to have succeeded if he was able to faithfully present the gospel to people (v1)
- Paul did not want to preach in vain (v1)
- Paul did not preach in vain (v1)
- Paul preached to the Thessalonian church (v2)
- Paul presented the gospel to the Thessalonians (v2)
- Paul was persecuted at Philippi (v2)
- Even though Paul was persecuted at Philippi, that didn't stop him from preaching the gospel to the Thessalonians (v2)

- Paul preached the gospel boldly (v2)
- Paul preached boldly in spite of the persecution that he suffered; the persecution did not cause him to lose his boldness (v2)
- Paul preached the gospel to the Thessalonians in the midst of persecution (v2)
- Paul was treated shamefully at Philippi (v2)
- Philippi existed in the time of Paul (v2)
- The gospel should be preached (v2)
- The gospel should be preached with great boldness (v2)
- The gospel should be preached even in times of persecution (v2)
- Persecution should not cause us to lose our boldness when we preach the gospel (v2)
- The gospel is the message of God, not the message of men (v2)
- The gospel comes from God (v2)
- When we preach the gospel, we are proclaiming the message of God (v2)
- Paul reminded the persecuted Thessalonian church that he had also suffered persecution, and he had preached the gospel to them in the midst of persecution (v2)
- Paul exhorted the Thessalonians (v3)
- Paul was not deceitful to the Thessalonians (v3)
- Paul was not unclean when he was among the Thessalonians (v3)

- Paul did not use guile when dealing with the Thessalonians (v3)
- We must not be deceitful (v3)
- We must not be unclean (v3)
- We must not use guile when dealing with others (v3)
- The gospel must be presented honestly - without deceit or guile (v3)
- It is possible to be unclean (v3)
- The church must never employ deception; God has not called us to lie on His behalf, or to lie about the gospel, or to lie about what the Bible teaches (v3)
- God hates deceit (v3)
- God hates guile (v3)
- God is the one who entrusted Paul with the gospel (v4)
- Paul spoke the truth of the gospel (v4)
- When Paul presented the gospel he tried to please God, not men (v4)
- Paul didn't modify the gospel or the teachings of the Bible in order to please anyone; instead he preached the truth (v4)
- It is a wicked thing to modify the gospel in order to please people (v4)
- It is a wicked thing to modify any Biblical teaching in order to please people (v4)
- The church must seek to please God, not men (v4)

- We must preach the gospel (v4)
- God has entrusted us with the gospel (v4)
- God tries (tests) our hearts (v4)
- God tests us (v4)
- God tests us, to see if we will speak the truth or not (v4)
- God wants us to speak the truth (the whole truth) (v4)
- Paul did not use flattery when speaking to the Thessalonians (v5)
- Paul was not covetous in any way when he was among the Thessalonians (v5)
- The church must not use flattery (v5)
- The church must not be covetous (v5)
- God was Paul's witness that he had not used flattery and had not been covetous (v5)
- God watches what we do; He is a witness to our behavior (v5)
- It is wrong to use flattery (v5)
- It is wrong to be covetous (v5)
- Paul did not try to emotionally manipulate people into accepting the gospel, and he also didn't try to make the gospel more acceptable to people; instead he preached the whole truth, with the intent to please God and not people (v5)
- Paul did not seek glory from anyone - not from the Thessalonian church, and not from other people as well (v6)

- Paul did not impose any burden on the Thessalonian church at all (v6)
- We must not seek glory from others (v6)
- It is wrong to seek glory from others; that must not be our goal or desire (v6)
- It is bad for us to seek our own glory (v6)
- Paul was an apostle (v6)
- Paul was an apostle of Christ (v6)
- It is good to seek to avoid being a burden to the church (v6)
- Even though Paul was persecuted, and even though he suffered while presenting the gospel to the Thessalonians, he sought to not be a burden to them (v6)
- Paul put the needs of the church ahead of his own needs (v6)
- Paul did not present the gospel in order to glorify himself (v6)
- Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy are all called apostles of Christ (v6)
- Paul treated the Thessalonians gently (v7)
- The apostles were gentle (v7)
- We must treat each other gently (v7)
- It is good to be gentle (v7)
- Even though Paul was an apostle, he acted with great gentleness (v7)



- Even though Paul was persecuted and preaching in the midst of affliction, he acted with great gentleness (v7)
- Paul saw the Thessalonians as his dear children that he was caring for (v7)
- A nurse should cherish the children that she is taking care of (v7)
- A nurse is someone who cares for children (v7)
- Children should be treated with gentleness (v7)
- Children should be cherished (v7)
- A nurse should be gentle with the children that are in her care (v7)
- Paul compares the apostles to nurses, who cherish children (the churches) and gently care for them (v7)
- Paul had great affection for the Thessalonian church (v8)
- We should have affection for one another (v8)
- The reason why Paul was willing to share the gospel with the Thessalonians in spite of persecution was because he loved them and had great affection for them (v8)
- The apostles shared the gospel because they loved others; it was about love, not personal glory or fame (v8)
- The apostles were willing to endure persecution in order to share the gospel because they loved others; they were driven by love (v8)
- Paul loved the Thessalonians so much that he was willing to sacrifice a great deal for them (v8)
- The gospel is of God (v8)

- Paul refers to the gospel as the gospel of God (v8)
- The Thessalonians were very dear to Paul (v8)
- The church should be characterized by love for others (v8)
- Paul asked the Thessalonian church to remember how hard he had labored on their behalf; he wanted the church to remember what he had done for them (v9)
- It is not wrong to ask other people to remember the good things that you had done for them in the past (v9)
- Paul worked day and night so that the Thessalonian church would not have to support him financially (v9)
- Paul did not receive money from the Thessalonian church; instead of doing that he worked a job night and day so that he could pay his own way (and he did that while being persecuted) (v9)
- It was very important to Paul that he not put any sort of financial burden on the churches; he wanted to pay his own way (v9)
- It is good for preachers to work a full time job so that the church does not have to have the burden of financially supporting them (v9)
- It is good for preachers to put the welfare of the church ahead of their own welfare (v9)
- Paul did not charge the church for preaching the gospel to them; he preached it free of charge, and paid his own way (v9)
- Paul worked day and night (v9)
- Paul preached the gospel to the Thessalonians (v9)

- Paul cared about the Thessalonians, and loved them so much that he put their needs ahead of his own (v9)
- The Thessalonian church was a witness to the way that Paul behaved (v10)
- God was a witness to the way that Paul behaved (v10)
- God is watching our behavior (v10)
- Paul was aware that God was watching him (v10)
- While Paul was among the Thessalonians, he acted in a holy manner (v10)
- While Paul was among the Thessalonians, he acted in a just manner (v10)
- While Paul was among the Thessalonians, he was blameless (v10)
- We must act in a holy manner (v10)
- We must do what is just and right (v10)
- We must be blameless (v10)
- The Thessalonian church believed the gospel (v10)
- Paul exhorted the Thessalonian church (v11)
- Paul comforted the Thessalonian church (v11)
- Paul charged (instructed) the Thessalonian church (v11)
- We should exhort one another (v11)
- We should comfort one another (v11)
- We should instruct one another (v11)
- Paul compared himself to a father, and the church to

children; he saw himself as a father taking care of children (v11)

- Fathers should exhort their children (v11)
- Fathers should comfort their children (v11)
- Fathers should teach their children (v11)
- Paul told the Thessalonian church to walk worthy of God (v12)
- We must walk worthy of God; we are not at liberty to act as we please or to live in sin (v12)
- There are some who walk worthy of God, and there are others who do not (v12)
- God has called us unto His kingdom (v12)
- God is the one who called us; we did not call ourselves (v12)
- God has called us unto glory (v12)
- The kingdom belongs to God (v12)
- Paul was very concerned about the obedience of the Thessalonian church; even though they were being persecuted, he still believed it was important for them to be obedient and faithful (v12)
- Paul did not teach that churches and individuals have a license to sin; he did not teach that faithfulness didn't matter (v12)
- Paul continually thanked God that the Thessalonians received the gospel as the word of God and not the word of men (v13)

- The reason the Thessalonians received the gospel was because of God; He is the one that caused them to believe it (which is why Paul thanked God for their belief) (v13)
- Paul gave God all the credit for the fact that the Thessalonians received the gospel (v13)
- The Thessalonians received the gospel from Paul and believed it (v13)
- The gospel is the word of God; it is not the words of men (v13)
- The gospel is the truth (v13)
- The gospel effectually works in those who believe it (v13)
- The gospel changes those who believe in it (v13)
- If a person has not been changed by the gospel then they have not truly believed it (v13)
- We must receive the gospel as the words of God, not the words of men (v13)
- It is wrong to look at the gospel as a message that came from mere men (v13)
- It is wrong to say that the gospel has no power to change people (v13)
- The Thessalonian church became followers of the other churches that already existed (v14)
- The churches that believe in the gospel are churches of God (v14)
- Paul speaks of churches (plural); he is referring to the groups of believers that existed in each geographic

location (v14)

- Paul saw the church as divided by geography, not by doctrine; there were no denominations in the early church (v14)
- In the early church there were churches in Judaea (v14)
- The church is in Christ Jesus (v14)
- Jesus is the Christ (the Messiah) (v14)
- The Thessalonian church was like the Judean church because the Judean church suffered at the hands of the Jews, and the Thessalonian church suffered at the hands of their own countrymen (v14)
- The Jews persecuted the church in Judaea (v14)
- The Thessalonian church was persecuted by other people in Thessalonica (v14)
- The Thessalonian church suffered (v14)
- The church in Judaea suffered (v14)
- Both Jews and Gentiles persecuted the church (v14)
- In the apostolic era there were Jews who did not accept the gospel, but who persecuted the church (v14)
- In the apostolic era there were Gentiles who did not accept the gospel, but who persecuted the church (v14)
- Paul said that the Jews killed the Lord Jesus (v15)
- Paul said that Jesus is Lord (v15)
- Paul said that the Jews killed their own prophets (v15)
- God sent prophets to the Jews (v15)

- Paul said that the Jews had persecuted the apostles (including him) (v15)
- Paul said that the Jews did not please God (v15)
- Paul said that the Jews were contrary (against) all men (v15)
- The Jews had tried to stop the church in Judaea from speaking to the Gentiles, in order to prevent them from being saved (v16)
- The Jews opposed the spread of the gospel to the Gentiles (v16)
- The Jews opposed the salvation of the Gentiles (v16)
- The Jews "filled up their sins" by opposing the spread of the gospel to the Gentiles (v16)
- The wrath of God has come upon the Jews to the uttermost (v16)
- Paul had only been able to spend a short time in person with the Thessalonian church (v17)
- Even though Paul was no longer with the Thessalonian church, he still loved them and had a heart for them (v17)
- Paul greatly desired to visit the Thessalonian church again (v17)
- Paul described his departure from the Thessalonian church as being taken away from them; he does not seem to have left them willingly (v17)
- Paul endeavored to see the Thessalonian church again (v17)
- Paul placed great value on visiting churches in person and

seeing the people face to face (v17)

- Paul tried to make another visit to the Thessalonian church (v18)
- The reason Paul was unable to make another trip to visit the Thessalonian church was because Satan prevented it (v18)
- The devil was opposed to Paul visiting the churches (v18)
- Sometimes the devil was able to prevent Paul from visiting churches (v18)
- There are times when the devil is able to successfully prevent us from doing something that we want to do (v18)
- There are times when the devil is able to successfully prevent us from doing something that would benefit the church and the kingdom of God (v18)
- The devil is our enemy (v18)
- The devil is opposed to the church, and to anything that might benefit it (v18)
- The devil fought against the apostle Paul (v18)
- There are times when the devil was able to hinder Paul and thwart him (v18)
- The devil is real (v18)
- The devil is actively fighting against the churches (v18)
- The Thessalonian church was a source of hope for the apostle Paul (v19)
- The Thessalonian church was a source of joy for the



apostle Paul (v19)

- It is good to be encouraged and find hope in the faithfulness of a persecuted church (v19)
- It is good to find joy in the testimony of a persecuted church (v19)
- Paul said that the Thessalonian church was a crown to him - a crown of rejoicing (v19)
- Paul compared the Thessalonian church to a crown (v19)
- Even though Paul was only with the Thessalonian church for a short time, he had taught them end-times doctrines and expected them to be looking forward to the return of the Lord Jesus Christ (v19)
- Jesus is Lord (v19)
- Jesus is the Christ (the Messiah) (v19)
- Jesus is going to return (v19)
- Paul said that when the Lord returned, the Thessalonian church would be a source of joy in that moment (v19)
- Paul expected the persecuted Thessalonian church to look forward to the return of Jesus and to find hope and joy in it (v19)
- Paul thought that end times doctrines were a source of hope and joy (v19)
- Paul encouraged the Thessalonian church by telling them that they were a source of hope and joy (v19)
- Paul said that the Thessalonian church was a source of glory for him (v20)

- Paul said that the Thessalonian church was a source of joy to him (v20)
- Churches can be a source of glory (v20)
- Churches can be a source of joy (v20)
- It is not wrong to find joy in a church (v20)

[Last updated 9/26/2022]

### **1 Thessalonians 3**

- Paul and Silvanus remained behind in Athens; no one else was with them (v1)
- Athens existed at the time of Paul (v1)
- Even though Paul was being persecuted, and was suffering for the gospel, he cared so much about the churches that he sent help to the churches instead of keeping it for himself (v1)
- Paul sent Timothy to the Thessalonian church (v2)
- Timothy was sent to the Thessalonian church in order to establish them in the faith (v2)
- Timothy was sent to the Thessalonian church in order to comfort them (v2)
- When the Thessalonian church was suffering, Paul sent Timothy to comfort them (v2)
- It is good to provide comfort to persecuted churches (v2)
- Timothy was a minister of God (v2)

- Paul called Timothy a fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ (v2)
- Paul thought that Timothy had the skills needed to establish the Thessalonian church in the faith (v2)
- It is important to nurture new churches and firmly establish them in the faith (v2)
- God has appointed Christians to suffer (v3)
- Suffering is a normal part of the Christian life (v3)
- We cannot escape suffering; it is something God has appointed for us (v3)
- We should not be surprised when we suffer; instead we should expect it (v3)
- Paul suffered; the Thessalonian church suffered; and we will suffer as well (v3)
- It is important to not be moved away from the faith by afflictions (v3)
- Paul sent Timothy to establish the Thessalonian church in the faith, so that the afflictions they were suffering would not cause them to fall away from the gospel (v3)
- Paul's goal was to strengthen the church so that they could endure afflictions (v3)
- It is God's will for us to be afflicted (v3)
- It is God's will for us to endure afflictions (v3)
- God has not promised to prevent bad things from happening to us (v3)
- Paul did not tell the Thessalonian church that their

afflictions were going to end; instead he tried to strengthen them so they could endure them (v3)

- When Paul visited the Thessalonian church he warned them that they were going to suffer tribulation (v4)
- Paul told the Thessalonian church that they were going to suffer tribulation, and they did (v4)
- Paul told the new Thessalonian church, which had just accepted the gospel, that they were going to have to suffer for it; he did not hide that fact from them, but made it plain from the beginning (v4)
- The Thessalonian church accepted the gospel and were faithful in spite of the fact that Paul warned them they were going to be persecuted for it (v4)
- Paul wanted the Thessalonian church to faithfully endure afflictions; he did not tell the church that they could modify the gospel to make it acceptable to the world, or that they should find some way to compromise with the world in order to make the world like them (v4)
- It is not unusual or strange for churches or Christians to be afflicted (v4)
- Paul sent Timothy to see if the persecution that the Thessalonian church had suffered had caused them to fall away from the faith (v5)
- Persecution comes from the devil (v5)
- Persecution is a form of temptation (v5)
- Paul saw persecution as something that comes from the devil in order to tempt the church; he did not see it as something that came from God (v5)

- Paul was concerned that the Thessalonians had fallen away from the faith; if that had happened then the work that Paul put into establishing that church would have been in vain, since the church would have been gone (v5)
- Paul was very concerned about the health and faithfulness of the Thessalonian church, so he sent someone to check on them (v5)
- Timothy visited the Thessalonian church (v6)
- After Timothy visited the Thessalonian church, he returned to Paul with a report of how the church was doing (v6)
- Timothy reported that the Thessalonian church demonstrated faith (v6)
- Timothy reported that the Thessalonian church demonstrated charity (v6)
- Timothy reported that the Thessalonian church greatly desired to see Paul again (v6)
- The Thessalonian church was faithful in the midst of persecution; they held on to their faith and they showed charity (love) to others (v6)
- Persecution should not cause us to lose our faith (v6)
- Persecution should not cause us to stop showing love to one another (v6)
- When the Thessalonian church was persecuted for accepting the gospel that Paul shared with them, they did not turn on Paul; instead they earnestly desired to see him again (v6)
- Paul wanted to see the Thessalonian church again (v6)

- Paul told the Thessalonian church that he was concerned about them, and that's why he sent Timothy to them (v6)
- Paul told the Thessalonian church that Timothy had brought a good report back to him (v6)
- The faithfulness of the Thessalonian church in the midst of their afflictions comforted Paul (v7)
- Paul was afflicted (v7)
- Paul was in great distress (v7)
- The Thessalonian church endured affliction by their faith; faith was what got them through it and enabled them to keep going (v7)
- It is very important for a church to have faith (v7)
- Paul wanted the Thessalonian church to stand fast in the Lord (v8)
- The testimony of the faithful Thessalonian church, standing fast in the midst of persecution, greatly encouraged Paul; he would have been devastated if they had fallen away (v8)
- Paul thanked God for the faithfulness of the Thessalonian church (v9)
- Paul gave God the credit for the faithfulness of the Thessalonians (v9)
- God is the one who strengthens us and gives us the grace to endure persecution (v9)
- The faithfulness of the Thessalonian church gave Paul joy (v9)
- Paul and the Thessalonian church served the same God

(v9)

- It is good to rejoice when a persecuted church stands fast in the faith (v9)
- It is good to thank God for the faithfulness of persecuted churches (v9)
- Paul prayed night and day that he might be able to visit the Thessalonians again, and see them face to face (v10)
- There was something lacking in the faith of the Thessalonians (v10)
- Paul wanted to visit the Thessalonians again so that he could perfect their faith (v10)
- It is possible to have faith, and yet still have something lacking in that faith (v10)
- Since Paul wanted to visit the Thessalonians again, he prayed that God would give him that opportunity (v10)
- Paul believed that God was in control of whether he was able to visit the Thessalonians again (v10)
- Paul earnestly prayed that God would send him back to the Thessalonian church; he didn't just pray once about it, but prayed night and day (repeatedly) (v10)
- Paul prayed that God the Father would send him back to the Thessalonian church, and let him visit them again (v11)
- Paul prayed that Jesus would send him back to the Thessalonian church, and let him visit them again (v11)
- God is our father (v11)
- Jesus is our Lord (v11)

- Jesus is the Messiah (the Christ) (v11)
- God is the one who directs our path in life (v11)
- When Paul wanted something, he prayed about it and asked God (v11)
- Paul believed that his life, and his future, and his path, was directed by God; he did not believe that he was in control (v11)
- Paul wanted the Thessalonian church to abound in love toward one another (v12)
- Paul believed that the Lord was the one who had the power to cause the Thessalonians to abound in love (v12)
- Even though the Thessalonian church was being persecuted, Paul wanted them to abound in love to one another; their afflictions and suffering did not give them the excuse to no longer be loving (v12)
- Paul believed that God had the power to cause the Thessalonians to abound in love even in the midst of persecution (v12)
- Paul wanted the Thessalonian church to abound in love toward all men; Paul did not limit this love to just fellow Christians (v12)
- Paul said that he loved the Thessalonian church (v12)
- It is good to have love for others (v12)
- It is good to have love for all men (v12)
- We should still have love for others even in the midst of suffering and afflictions (v12)
- Paul wanted the Thessalonian church to be characterized



by love - a love that abounded and increased (v12)

- God is the one who establishes our hearts (v13)
- God wants us to be unblameable (v13)
- It is important for us to strive against sin, and be unblameable in His sight (v13)
- God seeks a pure church (v13)
- God seeks a holy church (v13)
- The church must pursue holiness (v13)
- The church must seek to cleanse itself from all sin, and walk faithfully and obediently before God (v13)
- The church must never tolerate sin (v13)
- Jesus is going to return to this world (v13)
- When Jesus returns to this world, He will bring all His saints with them (v13)
- Paul kept bringing up end-times theology when talking to the persecuted Thessalonian church; he kept reminding the church of the return of Christ (v13)
- Paul thought it was very important for the church to be found unblameable and holy at the moment when the Lord Jesus Christ returned to this world (v13)
- Paul kept teaching end-times theology to the persecuted Thessalonian church (v13)

[Last updated 9/28/2022]

## 1 Thessalonians 4

- Paul beseeched (urged) the persecuted Thessalonian church to become ever more faithful to the Lord, and to walk in the faith the way that he had taught them to walk (v1)
- Paul had taught the Thessalonian church how to walk in the faith (v1)
- It is good for churches to be taught how to walk in the faith (v1)
- Churches need to understand how to walk in the faith (v1)
- Churches need to be taught how to walk in the faith (v1)
- Churches need to walk in the faith (v1)
- Churches need to grow in faithfulness over time (v1)
- If a church is not growing in faithfulness over time then there is a problem (v1)
- Paul exhorted the church in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (v1)
- Churches should strive to please God (v1)
- Paul taught the Thessalonian church how to please God (v1)
- As time goes on, churches should become better at pleasing God (v1)
- The goal of the church should be to please God more and more, not to please the culture or the world or sinful pagans (v1)

- If the church is not trying to please God then something is very wrong (v1)
- Paul told the persecuted Thessalonian church that they needed to grow in their ability to please God, and to grow in their faithfulness (v1)
- Paul wanted the Thessalonian church to focus on faithfulness and pleasing God; he did not suggest that the church could sacrifice those two goals in order to grow and attract new members (v1)
- Paul taught the Thessalonian church the commandments of God (v2)
- The way to please God is to keep His commandments (v2)
- The commandments that Paul taught came from the Lord Jesus (v2)
- Jesus is our Lord (our master) (v2)
- It is very important for the church to obey the commandments of God (v2)
- Churches need to know the commandments of God and keep them (v2)
- Jesus is Lord over the church (v2)
- The church should be striving to obey Jesus (v2)
- It is the will of God for people to abstain from fornication (sexual immorality) (v3)
- It is important for our sanctification to abstain from fornication (v3)
- God does not give Christians a license to sin (v3)

- God's will is for us to obey His commandments (v3)
- God's will is for us to be sanctified (v3)
- Being sanctified means abstaining from sin and doing what is right (v3)
- Fornication is a sin (v3)
- Paul told the persecuted Thessalonian church that they needed to abstain from sexual immorality (v3)
- All Christians should know how to abstain from sexual immorality (v4)
- Those who abstain from sexual immorality are possessing their bodies in a sanctified and honorable way (v4)
- It is dishonorable to engage in sexual immorality (v4)
- Paul refers to our bodies as a vessel (v4)
- It is honorable to refuse to engage in sexual immorality (v4)
- Paul wanted each Christian to make the choice to not engage in sin (v4)
- Christians must not be controlled by sinful sexual desires (v5)
- Christians must learn to rule over their bodies and control them, and not engage in sexual immorality (v5)
- Christians must be different from the unsaved people around them (v5)
- Christians do not have a license to sin (v5)
- The unsaved are controlled by their sinful desires; Christians must not be like that (v5)

- There should be a difference in lifestyle between those who know God and those who do not (v5)
- Christians are not allowed to defraud one another in any way (v6)
- It is a terrible thing for a Christian to defraud a fellow believer (v6)
- It is a sin to defraud others (v6)
- God avenges all Christians who are defrauded (v6)
- The day will come when God will avenge Christians who have been defrauded (v6)
- God specifically said that if one Christian defrauds another, God will avenge the Christian who has been defrauded (v6)
- A Christian will experience consequences from God if he defrauds a fellow Christian (v6)
- God punishes fraud (v6)
- Fraud should have no place in the churches (v6)
- Churches should not engage in fraud (v6)
- God is the one who will avenge us when we are defrauded (v6)
- Paul warned the Thessalonian church that God avenges those who have been defrauded (v6)
- God has not called us to uncleanness (v7)
- God has called us to holiness (v7)
- Christians must pursue holiness (v7)

- Christians must flee from anything that would make them unclean in the sight of God (like sin and sexual immorality) (v7)
- Churches must pursue holiness and obey God's commandments; they must have nothing to do with sin (v7)
- God does not give Christians permission to live as they please (v7)
- There are certain things that make Christians unclean (v7)
- Those who despise God's commandments are actually despising God Himself (v8)
- The commandments do not come from men; instead they come from God (v8)
- God has given us His Holy Spirit (v8)
- The Holy Spirit is a gift from God (v8)
- Those who break God's commandments are despising God (v8)
- It is a wicked thing to despise God (v8)
- Christians should have brotherly love for one another (v9)
- Christians should be characterized by love (v9)
- Churches should be characterized by love (v9)
- Paul didn't need to write to the Thessalonian church about loving one another because they already knew that (v9)
- God commands us to love one another (v9)
- The commandment to love one another comes from God

(v9)

- The Thessalonian church had brotherly love toward all Christians who live in Macedonia (v10)
- The love of the Thessalonian church toward other believers was so apparent that Paul knew about it (v10)
- Even though the Thessalonian church was characterized by love, Paul wanted their love to increase more and more (v10)
- Churches should be characterized by an increasing amount of love; their love for other Christians should grow over time (v10)
- Paul told the persecuted and suffering Thessalonian church that it was important for their love to grow; he wanted them to love others even though they were suffering and being afflicted (v10)
- If a church is not characterized by love then there is a problem (v10)
- If the love of a church is not growing then there is a problem (v10)
- Paul wanted the Thessalonian church to learn to be quiet (v11)
- Paul wanted the Thessalonian church to learn to mind its own business (v11)
- Paul wanted the Thessalonian church to learn to work with its hands (v11)
- It is good for Christians to be quiet (v11)
- It is good for Christians to mind their own business (v11)

- It is good for Christians to work with their hands (v11)
- There are some virtues that do not come naturally, and that we have to learn; it is important for us to learn them so that we may please God (v11)
- Paul commanded the persecuted Thessalonian church to be quiet, mind their own business, and work with their hands, so that they could treat people outside of the church honestly and fairly (v12)
- Paul commanded the persecuted Thessalonian church to work with their hands, so that they would lack nothing (v12)
- It is important for Christians to treat people outside of the church honestly and fairly (v12)
- Christians do not have the right to treat people outside of the church dishonestly or unfairly (v12)
- Paul taught the Thessalonians to meet their material needs by working with their hands; he taught them to work in order to support themselves, instead of giving them a handout (v12)
- Paul referred to the dead as those who were asleep; he compared death to sleep (v13)
- Paul did not want the Thessalonian church to be ignorant of end times doctrines (v13)
- Paul did not want the Thessalonian church to be sorrowful over those who had died (v13)
- Those outside of the church experience great sorrow when a person dies; Christians do not have to experience those same depths of sorrow (v13)



- Those who are outside of the church have no hope (v13)
- Those who are inside of the church have hope - a hope that is greater than death (v13)
- Jesus actually died; His death was real (v14)
- Jesus rose from the dead; His resurrection was real (v14)
- Just as Jesus died and rose again, so those who are dead in Christ will one day rise again (v14)
- God has promised a resurrection for all Christians who have died (v14)
- The reason we can have hope is because of the resurrection to come (v14)
- The reason we do not need to be sorrowful over death to the same degree that the unbelieving world does is because we know there is a resurrection to come; the dead will live again (v14)
- Paul said that when Jesus returns He will bring the dead in Christ with Him (v14)
- The dead will be raised when Jesus returns (v14)
- For Christians, death is not the end; there is a resurrection to come (v14)
- Paul refers to Jesus as God (v14)
- Jesus is going to return (v14)
- Paul thought it was very important for the persecuted Thessalonian church to know about the resurrection to come, and to focus on it; he thought that the doctrines of end times were very important and relevant for them (v14)

- The doctrine of the resurrection comes from God, not from men (v15)
- The doctrine of the return of Jesus comes from God, not from men (v15)
- There are some Christians who will still be alive when the Lord Jesus returns to this world (v15)
- When Jesus returns, some Christians will be alive and some will be dead; the fact that some will still be alive will not impair the resurrection of those who are dead (v15)
- The day is coming when the Lord Jesus will descend from Heaven with a shout (v16)
- When the Lord Jesus descends from Heaven, the voice of the archangel will be heard; the archangel will speak (v16)
- There is only one archangel (v16)
- Jesus is currently in Heaven (v16)
- When the Lord Jesus descends from Heaven, the trumpet of God will sound (v16)
- There is an archangel (v16)
- There is a trumpet of God (v16)
- Jesus is not going to return secretly; when He comes, the archangel's voice will be heard and the trumpet of God will sound (v16)
- When the Lord Jesus returns, those who are dead in Christ will rise first (v16)
- The people who will be resurrected when the Lord Jesus returns are those who are dead in Christ (v16)

- The day is coming when those who are dead in Christ will be resurrected; they will rise again (which is why Paul compared them to people who are asleep) (v16)
- The Bible teaches that there will be a resurrection of the dead; it does not teach reincarnation (v16)
- Paul believed that the resurrection was a core doctrine that the church needed to know; he referred to it often (v16)
- The reason Christians can have hope is because the dead in Christ will rise again (v16)
- After Jesus has raised those who are dead in Christ, we who are alive will be caught up (harpazo / raptured) to meet the Lord in the air (v17)
- After Jesus has raised the dead, both the living and the resurrected will be caught up to meet Him in the air (v17)
- The place where we will meet Jesus is in the air (v17)
- After the resurrection, we will ever be with the Lord; we will not be parted from Him again (v17)
- At the rapture, we will be caught up with the living in the clouds; the place where we will meet Jesus in the air seems to be in the midst of clouds (v17)
- Paul believed that the doctrine of the rapture should be a source of great comfort to the Thessalonian church (v18)
- Paul wanted the Thessalonian church to use the doctrines of the return of Christ and the rapture to comfort one another (v18)
- Paul did not say that the doctrines of end times were irrelevant and a distraction; instead he taught that they

were an important source of comfort (v18)

- Paul wanted the church to teach the doctrine of the rapture; he didn't want them to ignore or disregard it (v18)
- The rapture should be something that brings us comfort, not a source of fear or anxiety (v18)

[Last updated 9/29/2022]

## **1 Thessalonians 5**

- Paul did not need to explain to the Thessalonian church the times and seasons of the Lord's return (v1)
- There is a time of the Lord's return (v1)
- There is a season of the Lord's return (v1)
- It is possible to know the times and seasons (v1)
- The persecuted Thessalonian church had a solid understanding of end times prophecy; this included knowledge of the times and the seasons (v1)
- The day of the Lord (the tribulation) will come upon the world unexpectedly; they will not see it coming (v2)
- Paul compares the coming of the tribulation to a thief breaking in unexpectedly at night (v2)
- The Thessalonian church understood that the tribulation period would catch the world by surprise (v2)
- When the tribulation happens, the world will not see it

coming; they will have no idea that terrible times are at hand and things are about to get very bad; this strongly implies that life will be very good right before the tribulation (v2)

- Paul talks about the season of the day of the Lord (the tribulation), but he doesn't say anything about the times and seasons of the rapture (v2)
- The church should have a good understanding of the times and seasons, when it comes to end times theology; Paul expected the church to know these things (v2)
- Right before the tribulation happens, the world will be at peace (v3)
- Right before the tribulation happens, the world will experience great safety (v3)
- The world will be completely surprised by the tribulation because before it begins the world is experiencing peace and safety (v3)
- The day of the Lord (the tribulation) will be sudden destruction; the world will be suddenly destroyed (v3)
- The world will not escape the destruction of the tribulation (v3)
- Paul compares the day of the Lord to the birth pains of a pregnant mother; they unexpectedly come out of nowhere, and are very intense (v3)
- Paul describes a pregnant woman as a woman with child; he very clearly says that the unborn life within the mother is a child (a human being) (v3)
- The destruction of the tribulation will be very sudden (v3)

- Although the tribulation will overtake the world as a thief in the night, it will not be a surprise to the church (v4)
- The reason the church will not be surprised by the tribulation is because we are not in darkness (v4)
- Paul compares the tribulation period to a thief who brings sudden and unexpected destruction (v4)
- The church is not in darkness; God has revealed the times and seasons to us (v4)
- The tribulation period will not overtake the church; we will not have to endure that time (v4)
- When it comes to the end times, Christians have an enormous advantage over the world (v4)
- It is bad to be caught by surprise by the tribulation (v4)
- It is bad to be in darkness when it comes to the tribulation (v4)
- Christians are the children of light (v5)
- Christians are the children of the day (v5)
- Christians are not of the night (v5)
- Christians are not of the darkness (v5)
- Those who are not saved are of the night (v5)
- Those who are not saved are of the darkness (v5)
- It is good to be of the light, and of the day (v5)
- It is bad to be of the night, and of the darkness (v5)
- Christians are fundamentally different from the world (v5)
- The nature of a Christian is completely opposite of the

nature of a non-Christian (v5)

- Paul commanded the church to not fall asleep when it comes to the end times; he expected the church to be fully aware of the subject, to know the times and the seasons, and to be actively watching (v6)
- Paul did not want the church to ignore the subject of end times prophecy; he thought it was very important (v6)
- Paul thought that even the persecuted Thessalonian church should be very aware of end times prophecy and should have a perfect knowledge of it (v6)
- Some people had fallen asleep when it came to end times prophecy and were ignoring it; Paul said that was a bad thing, and we must not do that (v6)
- Christians must soberly watch for the Lord's return (v6)
- When it comes to the Lord's return, there is something specific we can be watching for (v6)
- Paul wanted Christians to be alert and sober, and keep watch; he wanted Christians to remain on guard (v6)
- Christians should be characterized by watchfulness (v6)
- Paul said that sleep should be reserved for the lost world, who are living in the night; it is not appropriate for Christians to stop watching (v7)
- Paul said that drunken behavior should be reserved for the lost world, who are living in the night; it is not appropriate for Christians who are watching for the return of the Lord Jesus (v7)
- A lack of watchfulness regarding the Lord's return is a characteristic of the lost; it should not be a characteristic

of Christians (v7)

- Drunken behavior is a characteristic of the lost; it should not be a characteristic of Christians (v7)
- Christians must lead sober lives (v8)
- Christians must pursue faith (v8)
- Christians must pursue love (v8)
- It is good to lead a sober and watchful life (v8)
- It is good to have faith, and to hold on to faith in the midst of persecution (v8)
- It is good to pursue love, even in times of great affliction (v8)
- Paul said that faith and love were a breastplate (a piece of armor that protects us) (v8)
- Paul said that salvation was a helmet (a piece of armor that protects us) (v8)
- We must not lose hope; our salvation gives us great hope, because of the promise of the resurrection to come (v8)
- Since we are watching for the Lord's return, we must be sober; we must pursue faith and love, and hold on to our salvation (v8)
- Christians must not lose hope (v8)
- Our salvation should give us great hope, for it speaks of a resurrection to come (v8)
- God has not appointed the church to wrath (v9)
- God has not appointed the church to face the wrath of the tribulation (v9)



- The tribulation is the wrath of God, which He is pouring out upon the world (those who are in darkness) (v9)
- Christians are saved through the Lord Jesus Christ (v9)
- Salvation is only possible through Jesus; there is no other path to salvation, and no other way to be saved (v9)
- The Lord Jesus is the one who is going to save us from the tribulation (v9)
- God has appointed the world to wrath, but not the church (v9)
- The Lord Jesus Christ died for us (the church; those who are in the light) (v10)
- Our salvation was purchased by the death of the Lord Jesus (v10)
- The only way we can be saved is by the death of the Lord Jesus (v10)
- Those who are dead in Christ (who Paul says are "sleeping", since their body is dead) are together with Jesus (v10)
- Those who are alive in Christ (who Paul says are "awake", since their body is not dead) are together with Jesus (v10)
- Whether we are alive or dead, we are with Christ; He is with us in this life, and when we die we will go to be with Him (v10)
- We are with Jesus no matter where we are (v10)
- Jesus died so that we might always be with Him (v10)
- Jesus wants us to be with Him (v10)

- We should want to be with Jesus (v10)
- Jesus paid a very great price to save us (v10)
- Jesus loves us (v10)
- Christians should comfort one another (v11)
- Christians should edify one another (v11)
- The doctrine of the rapture should bring comfort to the church (v11)
- The Thessalonian Christians were already comforting one another; Paul urged them to continue to do that (v11)
- It is good to comfort others (v11)
- It is good to edify others (v11)
- It is good to talk about the rapture, and the doctrines of end times prophecy (v11)
- There are those who labor among Christians in the church (v12)
- There are those who are over other Christians in the church, and who have authority over the church (v12)
- There are those who admonish other Christians in the church (v12)
- There should be people in the church who have authority over the church, and who admonish those within the church (v12)
- It is good for Christians to be admonished (v12)
- Christians should know their leaders; they should know the people who have authority over them in the church (v12)

- It is the responsibility of those who have leadership over the church to admonish those who are within it (v12)
- Christians should highly esteem those who have authority over them in the church (v13)
- Christians should have great love for those who have authority over them in the church (v13)
- The reason Christians should esteem those who have authority over the church, and have love for them, is for the sake of their work (v13)
- Christians in the church should be at peace with one another (v13)
- The church should be characterized by peace (v13)
- Paul exhorted the Thessalonian church (v14)
- Those who are unruly in the church should be warned (v14)
- It is wrong for Christians to be unruly (v14)
- It is good to warn Christians to behave and do what is right (v14)
- The church must not allow people to be unruly in the church; they should warn people who are misbehaving and put a stop to that behavior (v14)
- Christians should comfort those who are feeble minded (v14)
- There are some people in the church who are feeble minded (v14)
- Christians have a responsibility to comfort those who need it (v14)

- Christians should support those who are weak (v14)
- There are some people in the church who are weak (v14)
- Christians have a responsibility to help those who are in need of help (v14)
- Christians must be patient toward everyone (v14)
- It is good to be patient (v14)
- It is wrong to do evil to someone who has done evil to you (v15)
- Christians must do that which is good, even when other people do evil things to them (v15)
- Christians must do good to everyone - those who are in the faith, and those who are outside it (v15)
- Christians are not allowed to do evil to those who are within the church (v15)
- Christians are not allowed to do evil to those who are outside the church (v15)
- Christians must always follow that which is good, no matter the circumstances (v15)
- Christians must always rejoice (v16)
- Paul told the persecuted and suffering Thessalonian church to rejoice (v16)
- It is possible to rejoice in the midst of persecution, suffering, and affliction (v16)
- The church must be characterized by rejoicing; this is true regardless of the circumstances that the church is going through (v16)

- Christians must not stop praying (v17)
- Prayer is important; Christians must not neglect it (v17)
- Christians should give thanks for everything (v18)
- Christians should be thankful (v18)
- Paul told the suffering and persecuted Thessalonian church to be thankful (v18)
- It is possible to be thankful in the midst of persecution and affliction (v18)
- Being persecuted does not give us the right to stop being thankful (v18)
- It is God's will for us to be thankful, regardless of our circumstances (v18)
- It is an evil thing to not be thankful (v18)
- Christians must not quench the Holy Spirit (v19)
- It is possible to quench the Holy Spirit (v19)
- It is an evil thing to quench the Holy Spirit (v19)
- Christians must not despise prophecy (v20)
- It is an evil thing to despise prophecy (v20)
- Paul believed that prophecy was real, and Christians should take it seriously (v20)
- Paul commanded the persecuted Thessalonian church to prove all things (v21)
- Christians must test all doctrines; we are not allowed to believe everything we hear (v21)
- Christians must learn how to be discerning (v21)

- Christians must reject false teachings and hold fast to teachings that are good and right and true (v21)
- Christians are not allowed to reject or compromise doctrines that are good and right and true (v21)
- Even churches that are persecuted must learn to exercise discernment (v21)
- It is good to put doctrines to the test, to see if they are true or false (v21)
- It is bad to accept a doctrine without testing it first (v21)
- It is good to hold on to doctrines that are true (v21)
- A good church will test all doctrines; it will hold on to all doctrines that are true, and reject all doctrines that are false (v21)
- Christians must abstain from all appearance of evil (v22)
- It is not enough for Christians to abstain from evil; we must also not do anything that seems to be evil (v22)
- It is bad for Christians to do things that appear to be evil (even if it is not actually evil) (v22)
- Christians must care about appearances; we have to be careful not to appear to be doing evil (which is very different from doing something that is good, but that the world hates and condemns) (v22)
- God is the one who sanctifies us (v23)
- God is able to wholly sanctify us (v23)
- Christians should seek to be sanctified (v23)
- God is a God is peace (v23)

- People have a spirit, a soul, and a body; those are three different and separate things (v23)
- The spirit and soul are different; they are not two different words for the same thing (v23)
- Paul prayed that our spirit would be blameless (v23)
- Paul prayed that our soul would be blameless (v23)
- Paul prayed that our body would be blameless (v23)
- It is possible for our spirit to not be blameless (v23)
- It is possible for our soul to not be blameless (v23)
- It is possible for our body to not be blameless (v23)
- Christians must seek to be blameless in all things; no amount of sin is acceptable in the sight of God (v23)
- Paul prayed to God that we would be blameless (v23)
- Paul wanted us to remain blameless until the Lord Jesus returns (at the rapture) (v23)
- Paul continually makes references to the rapture; he keeps bringing up end times doctrines as something that was very relevant and important for the persecuted Thessalonian church to be focused on (v23)
- God is the one who is able to preserve us and make us blameless until the Lord Jesus returns for us (v23)
- One day the Lord Jesus Christ is going to return for us (v23)
- It is important for us to be found blameless when the Lord Jesus comes for us (v23)
- We have a spirit (v23)

- We have a soul (v23)
- We have a body (v23)
- Jesus is the one who has called us (v24)
- Jesus is faithful (v24)
- Jesus will keep His promises; He will return for us, and raise us from the dead, and save us from the wrath to come (v24)
- We have been called (v24)
- We did not call ourselves; instead Jesus called us (v24)
- We did not save ourselves; instead Jesus saved us (v24)
- The reason we are saved is because Jesus called us (v24)
- Jesus is the one who will make His promises come to pass; He will perform them with the power of His might (v24)
- Paul asked the persecuted Thessalonian church to pray for him (v25)
- Paul valued the prayers of others (v25)
- Paul sought the prayers of others (v25)
- Paul believed there was great value in having other people pray for him (v25)
- Paul believed that prayer mattered, and made a difference (v25)
- It is good to pray for others (v25)
- It is good to ask other people to pray for you (v25)
- Paul believed that it was appropriate to greet other



Christians with a kiss; this was not seen as inappropriate or sexual (v26)

- It is important to greet other Christians (v26)
- Paul wanted this letter to be read to everyone at the Thessalonian church (v27)
- Paul wanted this letter to be read to all Christians (v27)
- Christians are holy (v27)
- It is good and important for Christians to read this letter (v27)
- Paul thought that this letter was important; he wanted all Christians to know what it said (v27)
- Christians should not ignore this letter (v27)
- It is good to read God's word aloud to others, so that they may hear it (v27)
- Paul did not want this letter to be kept secret (v27)
- Paul prayed that the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ would be with the persecuted and suffering Thessalonian church (v28)
- Jesus is able to give us grace (v28)
- It is good for us to pray that Jesus would give grace to others (v28)
- It is good to receive grace from Jesus (v28)
- Paul ends this letter with "Amen" (let it be) (v28)

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