



PT Butler

Bible Study Notebooks

Study of 1st and 2nd Thessalonians

Prepared by Paul T. Butler

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These Bible study notes are provided for your use in the preparation of teaching the holy scriptures. They were meticulously prepared over many years to serve the Kingdom of God and aid in the growth of Christians of any age. Please use them in combination with prayer and diligence to promote the clear and honest declaration of God's word.

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TEACHER'S NOTES 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

Prepared by Paul T. Butler

Macedonia and Thessalonica are just above the land of Greece on the Bible map. Macedonia of Paul's day would today include part of modern Greece, modern Macedonia (founded in 1991), and Albania, perhaps even a small part of Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria. Thessaloniki is today a city in Greece. Most of that region (old Macedonia) is religiously Eastern Orthodox and Moslem. Modern Macedonia, a very **small** country (slightly larger than Vermont) of 2 million people and has a population density of 206 people per sq. mile. It has a literacy rate of 90%; its chief industries are steel and cement but it is mostly rural and produces wheat, cotton, tobacco, and sheep. It is in an area which was ruled by Moslem Turks from 1389 to 1913. Its per capita GDP is \$2399.00. The form of government is a Republic with a President and Prime Minister. The U.S. (under the auspices of the U.N.) deployed military troops in 1993 to deter the warring factions of Serbia and Bosnia from carrying their disputes into modern Macedonia. The true Gospel has been totally banned from that area for centuries. IT NEEDS THE GOSPEL.

If Paul took the time each day to "go to his knees in prayer," by name, and for all the particular needs of **every Christian in Thessalonica** in the first century, he would have had little time to do anything else. We must assume he prayed every day for the Christians in Thessalonica as a **group**, and perhaps for individuals he might have known who needed some special providential help from the Lord. I know we should do more praying than we do today. However, there are lots of other activities in which we must involve ourselves for Christ and we cannot "go to our knees in prayer" 24 hours per day. That's what they did in the monasteries of the Middle Ages. And they got little else done for Christ. You will notice that while Jesus prayed at crucial moments in his earthly ministry, we do not see him "on his knees" 24 hours every day. Of course, there are times when we are driving, waiting for appointments, walking from one place to another, etc., etc., when we could be mentally praying (without "going to our knees") for people and for ourselves. Whoever said kneeling was the only way to pray?

You will notice throughout the epistles of Paul, especially in places like 1 Cor. 15, Acts 17, he always preached the evidences for the resurrection of Jesus Christ. That was the central theme of his gospel preaching, even in 1 Thessalonians he mentions it **twice** (1:10; 4:14). The "full assurance" of the **truth** of the **gospel** in which **Paul** had satisfied his **own** mind and heart is the **attitude** with which he preached it to the Thessalonians. Anyone **not** fully persuaded of the **historicity** and **factuality** of the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, should not be preaching in any church that professes to be "Christian." Like Paul said in 1 Cor. 15, "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins....if for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most to be pitied." Those who can't preach with "full assurance" of the truth of the gospel should "eat and drink for tomorrow they die." Recent example: German theologian Gerd Ludemann, prof. of N.T. at Germany's Gottingen Univ. (also taught several years at Vanderbilt Divinity School, Nashville,

TN) said, “We can no longer take the statements about the resurrection of Jesus literally...the tomb of Jesus was not empty but full, and his body did not disappear, but rotted away...the Bible’s portrayal of Jesus is a fairy-tale world which we cannot enter...the church must give up its faith in the risen Lord and settle for Jesus as a mere human being, but one from which much can be learned...” (See *World* magazine, Aug. 8, 1998, pg. 19). BUT WE DON’T HEAR ENOUGH OF “FULL ASSURANCE” PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL FACTS IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH TODAY. What we are hearing a great deal of today is “how to be nice, and how to have fun, and get along with the world.” Check the NT all you want to and you won’t find that theology being taught.

We know what kinds of afflictions the Thessalonians suffered by reading what other first century Christians suffered in the book of Acts and in the epistles (Acts 17:1-9; 2 Cor. 8:1-7, etc.). They were ostracized from society, they were beaten, falsely accused of crimes against Rome, jailed, tortured, killed. Being a Christian in the first century was not “politically correct” and was no “fun.” IT NEVER HAS BEEN “FUN” TO BE A REAL CHRISTIAN. The Christian message and Christian moral standards are diametrically opposed to the world. Being a Christian in America can even get you into trouble in many ways. But American Christians have NO CONCEPT of the suffering and affliction that people in the major portion of this world have to endure! I would recommend that every American Christian purchase the book, *By Their Blood*, by James and Marti Hefley, 1996, published by Baker Book House, and **read it!** Then get on their knees and pray for their Christian brethren all over the world.

The Greek word translated “example” (RSV) and “model” (NIV) is *tupos* from which we have the English word, “type” which originally described “a blow made to make an impression” i.e., minting coins, making seals on documents. In other words a “type” is an exact “example” of the original “die” or “stamp.” The Thessalonians had become “exact examples” of the Lord himself, and the apostolic evangelists, in their faith and suffering and witnessing. They were replicas of Jesus and Paul and Timothy, etc., to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. Now that’s a compliment worth aspiring to by any Christian, ancient or modern. Their example is specified in 2 Cor. 8:1-5 where they “gave themselves to the Lord” and then gave out of their own severe affliction and poverty, beyond their means, begging Paul to take their offering to give aid to their Jewish brethren down in Judea.

Like the Roman Christians, of whom Paul said, “Your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world” (Rom. 1:8), these Thessalonians had proclaimed, taught, preached, and presented the gospel **everywhere** they went! Such a message, founded on the historical facts of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection, was GOOD NEWS in that first century world of idolatry. Idolatry spawned nothing but cynicism, fear, depravity, social chaos, and human bondage. Idolatry in any form whether evolutionism, perverted patriotism, humanism, or hedonism, will produce the same thing in any society. Cases in point in our own lifetime are Nazi Germany and Communist Russia, Viet Nam, China, et.al. When the Thessalonian Christians took their message of **absolute truth and love** in the vicarious death and validating resurrection of Christ, they **sounded forth** the word of the Lord. Wherever there was a neighbor, relative, friend or stranger, in that idolatrous world of depression and

sadness and hopelessness, they boldly told the gospel. Wherever they traveled, they told of Jesus to anyone who would listen. They had no telephones, computers, televisions, automobiles, airplanes, and probably very few personal writing materials. They certainly did not have 4 or 5 New Testaments in each home---probably they had NONE. So they had to be persuasive and have their facts down pat, able to clearly and convincingly communicate them in order to get people to believe. The church today has the advantage of having a New Testament that has been put in the crucible of its critics and enemies for 2000 years and not one shred of evidence presented to contradict its historicity. SO WHAT IS THE CHURCH DOING WITH ALL ITS COMMUNICATION ADVANTAGES TODAY?

The gospel was **big news** in that 1st century world for the same reason it is *big news* in our 21st century world. In our “post-modern” world where even the old “liberalism” and “humanism” is defunct, it seems to most non-Christians that our world is going to hell-in-a-handbasket. “Nature has become god, and human beings have become “parasites, utterly dependent upon the rest of the food chain....nature would be much better off without us”— (*World* magazine, Aug. 16, 1998, pg. 22-23). “Science is attacked as a violation of Mother Earth, and reason is replaced by nature- mysticism. When God is left out of the equation, there is no longer a basis for saying that human beings have any particular value in themselves...Abortion, euthanasia, eugenics, and other compassionate ways of weeding out people’ are held up as the highest moral principles, as tenets of what is actually an emerging religious faith” (*op.cit.*). This description of our modern idolatrous “Earth Spirit Rising” philosophical and sociological milieu is identical to the ancient Roman civilization of the 1st century! AND THAT IS FRIGHTENING! Will Durant’s *Caesar and Christ*, 1972, pub. Simon & Schuster, is the classic work showing the parallels between today and the Roman empire of Paul’s day. **Christians have “big news,” GOOD NEWS** and we must trumpet it through every means and everywhere possible. Man is LOVED by his Creator. Man has been REDEEMED by his Creator. Man has an eternal destiny of hope or hell.

Paul connects the 2nd Coming of Christ to Christ’s resurrection because the **resurrection** is, as Peter says, the fact that gives Christian a **new birth to a living hope** that they have an imperishable inheritance reserved for them in heaven...ready to be revealed in the last time (1 Pet. 1:3). The **resurrection of Christ** validates all his promises. Jesus told the apostles that they would **see** Jesus come again, just as they **saw** him ascend from the grave into heaven (Acts 1:11). The **resurrection of Jesus Christ** IS the central point of every apostolic sermon recorded in the book of Acts. It is the central point of every epistle of the N.T. It is the central point of the Revelation given to John of the survival of the church from the Roman Empire (i.e., the “beast”). Throughout the Gospel accounts, Jesus made all his promises on the ONE PROMISE THAT HE WOULD DIE BUT BE RESURRECTED. It is, as Paul said at Athens, the “**assurance** unto all men” that Jesus is coming back to judge the world (Acts 17:30-31). Without the resurrection a promise to return to earth to judge all mankind would be ludicrous. Christianity would be utter foolishness---as foolish as Hinduism, Buddhism, humanism, or all the other “isms” man has made up for himself.

TEACHER'S NOTES 1 Thess. 2:1-20

prepared by Paul T. Butler

Paul says in the Greek text, *en pollo agoni*, “in much agony or struggle,” he had preached the gospel of God” to the Thessalonians (2:2). The Judaizers had “set the city in an uproar” (Acts 17:5) against Paul and all those who had responded to his message. Paul had to flee for his life (Acts 17:10). But he had preached “boldly” (Gr. *eparrusiasametha*, literally, “unreserved utterance, freely speaking”). Paul had held nothing back. He had not “soft-pedaled” when he laid out the whole Christian way to them. He, like Jesus, had told them to “count the cost” before signing up (see Lk. 14:25-35 and 1 Thess. 3:3-4). The church today must speak boldly (“unreservedly”) the gospel. Nothing must be held back. Just think how **constantly** Jesus, and the apostles, cautioned prospective Christians and those already Christians, to **count the cost!** Lots of “cheap grace” is being preached today. Grace is free, indeed, but keeping “covenant” with Christ is not easy. Jesus told his disciples that for a “rich man” to enter the kingdom was as difficult as putting a camel through the eye of a needle (and that’s a sewing needle, according to the Greek text, not some “gate” in the Jerusalem wall!). If you think that’s easy, just try it! Then ask the camel! Jesus said once that “everyone enters the kingdom **violently**” (Lk. 16:16). It is psychologically or spiritually **violent** to “put off the old man, and put on the new man in Christ.”

Preaching the gospel is not the work of pleasing people, it is the work of **pleasing God!** Of course, when people come to their senses and understand that accepting the gospel of God’s grace in Christ is the most pleasant thing they will ever do in life and then preaching will be “pleasantly received.” But remember, when the truth of God’s word is proclaimed, it won’t be received or accepted by the majority of people. Jesus said the way that leads to life is narrow and difficult, and few ever find it (Mt. 7:13-14; Lk. 13:22-30). Christians should never be surprised when the majority of people despise them for standing up for the truth. Jesus said, “Woe to you, when all men speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets” (Lk. 6:26). In other words, if **all** men speak well of you, most probably you are a **false prophet**. Or, to put it another way, if you speak the truth all men are never going to speak well of you. This is especially true if one speaks the truth of the Gospel! James wrote, “Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.” (Jas. 4:4). Paul wrote to **Christians** in Galatia, “Have I then become your **enemy** by telling you the truth?” (Gal. 4:16). Jesus told the Jews once, “**Because** I tell you the truth, you do not believe me” (John 8:45). They couldn’t “bear to hear his word” (Jn. 8:43). We must not be afraid of offending people by proclaiming the gospel because for the most part we shall! The majority of Jesus’ own people (even his own family) were offended when he preached the gospel. The same is true of the apostles and early Christians.

Paul must have been a very straight-forward personality. He was also transparent. He was a “true Israelite in whom there was no guile.” While he never slandered anyone, neither did he ever flatter anyone---not even himself. He called himself the “chief of sinners.” He transparently exposed his deepest inner being in Rom. 7:13-25, 2 Cor. 1:8-11; and 12:7-

10. Flattery is powerful and may bring about the desired end for those who have ulterior motives. Absalom stole the hearts of the Israelites by flattery (2 Sam. 15:2-6). But flattery is dangerous, and most intelligent people will soon see through it! There is a difference between “flattery” to promote one’s own agenda (see Psa. 5:9; 36:1-2; 78:36; Prov. 6:24; 26:28; 28:23; 29:5) and “giving honor where honor is due” (see Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Cor. 16:18; 1 Thess. 5:12; Heb. 13:7). The Greek word *prophasei*, and is translated “cloak” KJV and “mask” NIV and means Paul never disguised his aim to preach to the Thessalonians so as to profit financially from them. He apparently supported himself financially by working at his “trade” (tent-making) (see 2 Thess. 3:7-9) so that he could be free from any accusations that he preached just for the money that was in it. There is nothing wrong with a full-time preacher being paid for his labor (see 1 Cor. 9:1-18). Paul did receive support from the Philippians (Phil. 4:15-17).

The Greek word *trophos* denotes a “nursing mother.” Paul gently “nursed” the Thessalonian’s **souls**. He “mothered” them in their faith in Christ. He loved, protected, and served them **spiritually** like a mother does her babies. He also says he was to them like a “father” (2:11)---practical, realistic, and correctional. The question should be, “does **nursing** someone in the faith” turn them into “free-loaders?” No! It shouldn’t anyway! Following Jesus does not mean we don’t work for our living. When we lived in Oxnard, CA, as early as the 1950s there were “communes” of “flower-children and peace-niks” living out in the hills. Regularly they would come into Oxnard and go door to door begging money. They professed to be “following Jesus” who said “do not be anxious what you shall eat, wear, etc.” for God will supply it through generous people. One of the first commandments God gave mankind when he drove Adam from the Garden of Eden was, “in the sweat of your face you shall eat your bread.” (Gen. 3:19). Actually, God gave Adam and Eve something to work at **before** they sinned and were exiled from Paradise. One of the 10 commandments is, “Six days you shall **labor** and do all your **work**, but the seventh day is a Sabbath...in it you shall not do any work....” (Ex. 20:8-11). If you are a Christian you are “to aspire to live quietly, to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands...that you may command the respect of outsiders, and be dependent on nobody.” (1 Thess. 4:10-12; see also, 2 Thess. 3:6-15). Strangely enough, many people not associated with any religion (except humanism and evolutionism and agnosticism, etc.) believe, either openly and verbally or secretly and silently, that ministers of the Gospel or “paid” church workers, are all “free-loaders” who don’t really “work for a living.” I’ve even had some members of one of the congregations I served say that to me! They should follow a preacher around for just a week! Most preachers I know are expected to be “on call” 24 hours per day and usually put in far in excess of 8 hours per day “**nursing and fathering**” the congregation they serve. Give your preacher a break and tell him how much you appreciate the long hours he puts in!

So long as the Independent Christian Churches sustain the Bible-believing Bible colleges, the small, rural churches will have available “student preachers” to preach the gospel. But if the Bible colleges no longer emphasize preaching/missions/evangelism, that source will disappear for the 50-150 membership-congregations. Congregations that small cannot pay a sufficient salary to sustain a minister with a growing family. That is what happened (at least in Missouri) beginning in about 1920-1930 with the Disciples of Christ. Their “Bible colleges” became more and more liberal-arts and secular-oriented (and

modernist-liberal in doctrine) and their students no longer were interested in preaching. Thus the smaller churches could not afford salaries to support preachers and families. The Disciples began to close down the small churches and tell their members they would have to drive into the larger towns and cities and attend the larger churches. It was the Bible-believing, independent Bible college movement (e.g. Ozark Bible College) that resurrected the small rural churches in Missouri. It is either “student preachers” or “tent-making preachers” (i.e., preachers who have full-time jobs in other vocations and preach only on weekends) for the small rural churches in today’s economy! WE MUST NOT LET THESE SMALL RURAL CHURCHES DIE!

The word of God “begets” (Jas. 1:18). The word of God is “living and active...discerning the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Heb. 4:11-13). The word of God “sanctifies” us (Jn. 17:17). The word of God is the way we “partake” of Jesus or have Jesus live in us (Jn. 6:63; 14:23; 15:10-11; 2 Pet. 1:3-4; 1 Jn. 2:24; 3:23). The word of God guards the heart from sin (Psa. 119:11), and is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path (Psa. 119:105). The word of God is our “weapon” by which we bring every thought captive to obedience to Christ (2 Cor. 10:3-5). Remember, **the very words written in our English Bibles** are the words that fell (in Aramaic, Hebrew and Greek) from the lips of Jesus Christ the Son of God and from prophets and apostles. The word of God is the **seed** that falls on good and honest hearts and produces good fruit (Lk. 8:15; 1 Pet. 1:22-23). The written word of God is not just “dead” letters on a page. IT IS ALIVE! IT IS THE WILL OF, THE SPIRIT OF, THE LIVING GOD. It transforms (Rom. 12:1-2; Col. 3:10) the mind and soul of a sinner into the mind and soul of a saint. The word of God saves us (2 Thess. 2:13-14). Even human words are alive! The words your parents uttered live on in you! The words spouses say to one another live on in them. Words are more alive than human flesh or vegetation! Our words will live as part of us for all eternity.

The churches of God (note the title of the church here) in Judea had suffered unspeakable terrors. Even Paul had persecuted them before his conversion. Again, it isn’t politically correct to say it, but the Jews have done their share of persecuting and terrorism in history! Should anyone ever bring that up they are immediately castigated as “anti-Semitic.” First of all, to be anti-Semitic would mean one is “anti” Arab as well as “anti” Jew (both are Semites). Second, it **isn’t** anti-Semitism to look at history. If you think Jews do not bear their share of terrorism just take an unbiased look at the history of modern Israel versus the Palestinians who were occupying that land in 1948 when the U.N. mandated the state of Israel. Former Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin publicly admitted he was a “terrorist” in his early years in Palestine. So were scores of famous Israeli politicians and generals. Furthermore, try doing Christian evangelism or missionary work in modern Israel today! It is against the law of the Israeli Parliament and you would be incarcerated for doing so. This does not even take into account the persecution suffered by 1st century followers of Jesus in Judea (and Galilee, and Samaria, and Perea, and all over the Roman empire). True Christians suffer all over the world. Today Christians are being sold into slavery in the Sudan. Africans are selling their own people into slavery! It’s not “politically correct” to bring that up either. In August, 1998, one of the missionaries supported by College Heights Christian

Church, and supported by this author personally, told in the author's Sunday School class how Christians and those who wanted to become Christian were persecuted in south-east Asia. HAVE YOU NOTICED---NONE OF THIS MAKES THE "CBS, NBC, ABC EVENING NEWS?!"

Yes! The Jews killed Jesus. But then, so did Pilate and the Romans. Sin, the sins of all the world, is what killed Jesus. Your sins and mine killed Jesus. God allowed Jesus to be killed! (Acts 2:22-24), but God also raised Jesus up and exalted him above everything (Phil. 2:9-11). Paul says the Jews: **(a)** killed the Lord Jesus; **(b)** killed the ancient prophets; **(c)** persecuted Paul; **(d)** displeased God; **(e)** were contrary to all men; **(f)** forbade Paul to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. All these accusations are thoroughly documented in the O.T. and the N.T. The Jews continue to do all this today by rejecting Jesus as the Messiah. They "crucify the son of God afresh" (Heb. 6:6) by continuing in Judaism. They are still contrary to all men today if they believe what their Talmud says about Gentiles! They forbid the gospel to be preached, at least in modern Israel. **Anyone** who is not **with** Christ is **against** Christ (Matt. 12:30). There is no such thing as "middle of the road" with Christ! Sinners (both Jew and Gentile) either repent or face the wrath of God at the judgment day (Acts 17:30-31). God's wrath came upon the Jews "completely" (Gr. *en telos*, 1 Thess. 2:16) from 66-70 A.D. (even Josephus counted it as the "judgment of God upon the Jews") when their holy city, Jerusalem, was destroyed by themselves and the Romans, and the Jewish nation was dispersed throughout the world. Paul predicted it here, Jesus predicted it (Matt. 24:1-35 and parallels in Mk. & Lk.), Daniel (9:24-27) predicted, Jeremiah (3:15) predicted it. And modern Israel is clearly not the Israel of the Bible. Modern Israel has no Biblical mandate to be a "resurrection" of Israel as God's "chosen." They have no Biblical mandate to occupy Palestine. Modern Israel is not even close to being a genetically descended Israel! Modern Israel exists only by the grace of the U.N. and is sustained by the American taxpayers.

Paul uses the distinctive, **emotional** Greek word *aporphanistentes* to describe his feelings at being "taken from" KJV ("bereft" RSV or "torn away") the brethren in Thessalonica. Every preacher, evangelist, missionary has experienced the same emotional wrenching of their heart to leave congregations and peoples with whom they've served, suffered and rejoiced with in the ministry of the gospel. But Paul believed these brethren would be "stars in his crown" at the 2nd coming of the Lord! The Gospels and the epistles of the NT clearly teach that Christians will be rewarded according to their works---we did not say **saved according to their works**. Jesus meant what he said about those who "gained more for their master would be rewarded with more." But those who get to heaven will have become so mature in Christ on this earth that there will be no jealousy, no envy, no remorse, nor any malice about the rewards made!

TEACHER'S NOTES 1 Thessalonians, 3:1-13

Prepared by Paul T. Butler

Paul probably thought that returning to Thessalonica was God's will for his ministry. But it wasn't! Somehow, unexplained by Paul, Satan had blocked the way for his return. Only God could overcome the devil's barricade. Unable to stand the anxiety he had over those beleaguered Christians from whom he had been "orphaned," he sent Timothy back to Thessalonica from Athens. Paul had suffered in order to bring those people to Christ. He had labored among them with his own hands to support his ministry there. He had **invested his life in them**. That's what any Christian does when he/she brings another soul to Christ. It can't be done without **commitment** to invest one's life (whether it's time, money, suffering, or all three). Do you suppose that is why we are not having greater success in evangelism in the Christian Church today? Read the early history of the Restoration Movement and you will find how much time, energy, suffering, money, etc. those early "Christians-only" invested in bringing others to the simple N.T. Gospel.

We certainly need people who will study the Bible enough to **interpret** it correctly and teach to us. Paul told Timothy to make himself a workman in the Scriptures that did not need to be ashamed who was "**correctly handling the word of truth.**" (2 Tim. 3:15). The Greek word in 2 Tim. 3:15 is *orthotomounta*. It is translated "rightly dividing" in KJV. The first part of the Greek word gives us our English prefix *ortho* which means "straight, correct." It is used of physicians who "straighten bones." The second part of the Greek word *tomounta* means "to cut." Thus, "Timothies" are under apostolic order to take the word of truth and "slice it right." That doesn't mean, of course, that none but a special elite class of clergymen can understand the Bible. It does mean, however, God will not excuse sloppy, indifferent, biased, faulty **interpreting** of the Bible. However, Paul sent Timothy to Thessalonica to "establish them in the faith" because they had **no** New Testament scriptures from which they could all read at that time. Remember, 1 Thess. is the first book of the NT written. Only one Gospel account (Mark's) was probably written about the same time 1 Thessalonians was. And, of course, considering the amount of time and difficulty it took to copy the scriptures on papyrus, there probably was only one copy of Paul's letter to Thessalonica in circulation. Paul had laid hands on Timothy to impart the power of the Holy Spirit for him to preach the gospel inerrantly and give apostolic instructions to the Christians (with or without a copy of it available). We still need those today (trained "Timothies") to "slice the Bible straight." It takes hard work to learn hermeneutics (i.e., interpretive) and exegetical (i.e., explanatory) skills and takes full-time concentration. Our Bible colleges offer an unexpendable resource of trained "Timothies."

Everyone is moved by affliction---one way or the other. One either becomes bitter and cynical, or one becomes penitent and malleable. Paul means to say here that he is expecting none of the Thessalonian Christians to "cringe, or be drawn aside." The Greek word translated "moved" KJV & RSV and "unsettled" NIV, is *sainesthai*, describes a groveling dog wagging its tail. He doesn't want them to give in to affliction. Instead of "groveling like a

tail-wagging dog” they should “bare their fangs” and fight the good fight of faith. That’s easier said than done, as we all know! Paul was a constant “student” in the “school of affliction.” He learned how to cope with it (Rom. 8:18; 2 Cor. 1:3-11; 12:7-10). The way to cope with affliction is to keep the mind and heart focused on heaven. Because there’s no answer to affliction in this world, except that for the Christian it “produces character” (Rom. 5:3). The way to handle affliction is to remember that we are in this unjust, unfair, Christian-hating world for only a few years. In eternity Christians will see absolute justification for their faith and absolute justice upon those who afflicted them in this world. The church should gravitate with compassion and help toward those who are afflicted like iron gravitates to a magnet! We are told to bear one another’s burdens and thus fulfill the law (the will of God).

A good God permits evil in order to allow human beings to have freedom of choice. He also allows evil in a world of freedom of choice to give those who **do** evil, in most cases, to suffer “the due penalty of their errors” (Rom. 1:28) as one divine method to bring some to repentance. He also allows evil in a world of freedom of choice to act like a burnishing tool to “polish” into the image of Christ those who face it and suffer it by faith. (Rom. 8:29) **God works everything together for good** with those who love him. (Rom. 8:28). It is the only possible way God could allow creatures with freedom of choice to remain creatures of free choice. **Remember, there was freedom to choose good or evil in Eden the very moment God showed Adam and Eve the “tree.”** The **question** should be, in light of the magnificent demonstrations of the **love of God** for his creatures (through providence and through special divine revelations) why most of his creatures make the decision to **choose against God!** Even in “nature” God has revealed himself and the good to be chosen in sufficient measures that human beings are “without excuse” for choosing against God (Rom. 1:18-23). Atheists consider the evil in this world their greatest argument (evidence) that there is no God. If there was a **good God** who was all powerful, he would not allow evil to exist. The Bible gives the only answer to this question. It can’t be answered by logic, by science, or by philosophy---it has to be answered by **faith** in the historicity and inerrancy of the divine revelation of God---the Bible! C. S. Lewis says in his book, *The Problem of Pain*, “Pain plants the flag of truth in the rebel soul.” Evil and pain forces people to face the reality of truth vs. falsehood. I would recommend that all Bible School teachers get C. S. Lewis’ book and read it. I would also recommend they get the book *Have Atheists Proved There Is No God?* By Thomas B. Warren, pub. by Gospel Advocate Co., Nashville, TN. It will be of tremendous help in answering this question. Its theme is that affliction for the believer is God’s method of “soul-making.” Even the incarnate God, Jesus Christ, suffered affliction as he trod this earth!!! (Heb. 5:7-10; Matt 26:36-46).

Paul said his “labor” would be in vain should the Thessalonians succumb to the temptations of the “Tempter” (the devil). Paul did **not** say that because there are temptations faith is useless (vain). Faith, in reality, is the only defense against temptation. Only if a human being believes with his whole being that God exists, that Jesus Christ is his Son, that his Son died a vicarious death for his sins, arose from the dead to prove his vicarious death was efficacious, and that Jesus is coming again to judge the whole world, will that human being be fortified against temptation. A human being who does not have this belief is

vulnerable to the “Chief of Liars” (see Jn. 8:44) and his co-conspirators. The big lie is that there is no God, no resurrection, no after-life, therefore no judgment. With that as a perspective on life, one might as well eat and drink for tomorrow one dies (1 Cor. 15:32). That is basically the lie the devil deceived Eve with. He said, “Has God said...?” In other words, “Eh! Who is this God who says not to eat of the tree.....eat of it and you will be as gods yourselves.” Having taught Philosophy for many years in Bible college, having read one philosophical viewpoint after another, I may say with some experience and authority, **all human philosophies which exclude God are the same**. They all come out at the same place and that is exactly what the devil said to Eve in Paradise. Of course, “temptations are sure to come”---Jesus said so, and we know it as an experience of human life for as long as human beings have existed! But God has made us capable of resisting—he proved it by coming down here in full human form and doing so! The flesh **can** be controlled! Jesus did it! Not by miracles, but by faith! (see Rom. 8:3; Heb. 5:8-9; 1 Cor. 10:13). We’re held responsible for resisting temptation because God has demonstrated it can be done!

Paul says “tribulation is our (all Christian’s) lot.” Jesus said, “In the world you have tribulation...” (John 16:33). Paul said we enter the kingdom of God through much tribulation (Acts 14:22). The Thessalonians were “standing fast in much affliction and tribulation.” Timothy had returned to Paul with a report of the strong faith, love, and endurance of the Thessalonian Christians, and, they longed to see him again. Many a preacher’s heart and missionary’s heart has been warmed and made cheerful in the 21st century with the same kind of news from brethren they had to leave behind in order to serve Christ in another place. Why don’t you sit down, TODAY, and write to a former or present preacher, Sunday School teacher, elder, missionary, or Christian brother/sister and tell them of your struggles and their contribution to your faith and love in remaining steadfast. IT WILL WARM THEIR HEART! AND YOU’LL GET A REPLY THAT WILL WARM YOUR HEART!

Paul was rather *candid* in telling the Thessalonians that there was a **lack** in their faith---or was he? He knew that their lack could be supplied by **more and better instruction in the word of God**. Is your faith as strong as it ought to be. Faith is not a measured by quantity---it is **quality**. Faith requires only that it be **alive** and able to bear fruit. Jesus told the apostles that if they had faith like a grain of mustard seed they could move mountainous obstacles. A mustard seed is extremely *small* as far as *quantity* goes, but it is extremely **powerful** when you think of what it is able to produce when it is put to work! Jesus was saying it was the *quality of faith* that “moves mountains.” What all Christians need is constant, deep and correct “dipping into” the Bread of Life which is the word of Christ (Jn. 6:63). Remember, “faith comes by hearing the word of Christ” (Rom. 10:17). Sanctification comes through the word of truth (Jn. 17:17). Growth comes by learning the word so that one may distinguish good from evil (Heb. 5:11-14). Yes! We may **supply** what is **lacking** in our own faith and the faith of others by keeping our minds on the word of God. Peter wrote that **Christ has, by his divine power, granted to us ALL THINGS THAT PERTAIN TO LIFE AND GODLINESS through his precious and very great promises that we escape the corruption that is in the world and become partakers of the divine nature.** (2 Pet. 1:3-4). “ALL” is a pretty inclusive word!

Paul said, “may the Lord make you increase and **abound** in love to one another and to all men....**SO THAT** he may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness before our God....at the **coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.**” In other words, it is **love** that establishes the heart unblamably in holiness before God. LOVE is not theoretical---it is PRACTICAL. Love does! Love gives! Love sacrifices! Love sanctifies! Just like a marriage, the two who are being wed pledge “to keep themselves ONLY for the other.” We are **married to Christ** when we become Christians (Eph. 5:21-33). It was prophesied in the OT (Isa. 62:1-5, etc.). It is the “love of Christ that constrains (controls) us” (2 Cor. 5:14). LOVE PUT INTO ACTION IS WHAT MAKES A HUMAN MARRIAGE “HOLY” AND COMPLETE. **Love for Christ put into action will establish our hearts unblamable in holiness ANTICIPATING THE COMING OF CHRIST TO TAKE HIS “BRIDE” HOME!** Isn’t it thrilling to have assurance from the Scriptures that one day we will stand before God “unblamable”!!

This is almost a moot question! On the one hand it seems **we must ALL appear before the judgment seat of Christ** (2 Cor. 5:10; Rom. 14:10, 12) and “the books will be opened” (Rev. 20:12) and the “secrets of men” will be judged (Rom. 2:16), and on the other hand it appears that those who have believed in Christ, even though they stand at the judgment bar, will be pronounced guiltless (Rom. 2:6-11; 2 Cor. 5:10) and those whose names are written in the “book of life” will be justified. Paul does say here in 1 Thess. 3:13 that those who have their hearts established in holiness by love will be **unblamable** when Jesus comes. Paul says in 1 Cor. 1:8 that if we are faithful to Christ he will “sustain us to the end, **guiltless** in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Scriptures tell us in both O.T. and N.T. that if we believe in Christ, God will “remember our sins no more” (Heb. 8:12; 10:17; Jer. 31:31-34). And Paul’s great paean of rejoicing is that, even though he found himself doing what his mind doesn’t want him to do (Rom. 7), “there is **now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus**” (Rom. 8:1) and he concludes it by saying, “If God is **for us** who is against us?....Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect?...in all these things we are **more than conquerors...etc.**” (Rom. 8:31-39). MY FAITH TENDS TO CONVINC ME THAT THOSE WHO ARE FAITHFUL TO THE END OF LIFE will *not be exposed* as guilty of any sin because of their faith in the vicarious death of Christ. We will discuss this more in 1 Thess. 4 in connection with our “sanctification being the will of God.”

TEACHER'S NOTES 1 Thessalonians 4:1-18

Prepared by Paul T. Butler

Paul's bachelorhood, whether real or merely speculated, has nothing to do with his authority as an **apostle of Christ**. If Paul gives a command it is by the authority of, and inspiration of, the Holy Spirit of God. If he says "let each one of you know how to take a wife for himself in holiness and honor," (4:4), then if we decide to get married we had better do it "in holiness and honor." He begins this chapter by saying, "we (apostles) beseech and exhort you **in the Lord Jesus**, that as you **learned from us how you ought to live and to please God...**" Jesus promised his apostles that what they said would be from the throne of heaven and men should obey them as they would obey Christ. Paul, if never married, had no *experience* in rearing children, but he certainly tells us in Ephesians and Colossians that we must rear our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord and not provoke them to wrath, etc. Apostolic revelation, inerrantly from the Lord, is much better instruction about marriage (see 1 Cor. 7, 11, etc.) than all the human marriage counselors and child-psychologists put together.

"Sanctification" (holiness) or being "set apart for God's purposes and uses" is a life-long process. It doesn't happen immediately or over-night. Sanctification is God's will for all mankind. But only those who willingly choose it in accordance with God's revealed program for sanctification shall have it accomplished in their lives. It is not a miraculous overpowering of the human will by the Holy Spirit so that the human being has no work to do in order to be sanctified. Sanctification takes work on the part of God and on the part of man. Christians, born again according to the covenant terms of the New Testament (faith, repentance, immersion in water), must also "run the race" and die daily unto sin. But **ultimately** the ground of the Christian hope for full and final sanctification is the love of God through Jesus Christ's vicarious death. Judged by God's law, everyone, including Christians, are imperfect. If we say we are having no sin we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us (1 Jn. 1:8, and the Greek verb *echomen*, is 1st person, plural, active, indicative, meaning, "if we say we are not **having** sin now"). But judged by the love of God through Christ, Christians are sanctified, perfected. To illustrate, suppose a husband wishes to be kind to his wife, though he ends up being unkind. Judge by law, he stands condemned, whereas judged by love he is acquitted. The husband tells his wife he is sorry and he will make every effort not to be unkind again. With this penitent promise the wife is satisfied. The husband's remorse is a sign of love, and love seeks nothing but evidences of love. This is how Paul, the penitent sinner, sees himself in Romans chapters 7 and 8. Read it for yourself.

When Paul said, "...that each one of you **know how** to take a wife for himself in holiness and honor..." he did not necessarily mean that every man should get married. However, in 1 Cor. 7 Paul states more than twice that unless a man has the "gift" of celibacy like he does, a man *should get married* "because of the temptation to immorality" (7:2); "lest Satan tempt you through lack of self-control" (7:5); "...if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry...For it is better to marry than to be aflame with passion..." (7:8). Paul links

celibacy (when one does not have the “gift”) to **immorality** in this text just as he did in 1 Cor. 7!! Jesus spoke to this issue in Matt. 19:10-12. He said not all can be celibate. It stands to reason and experience that the huge majority of people, both men and women, could never remain celibate and resist the God-created urge for sexual intercourse. God made man and woman to procreate and “fill the earth.” (Gen. 1 & 2). But God also established clear, precise and unequivocal parameters for the sexual union of man and woman, the foremost being **marriage**. When Jesus spoke to the issue of marriage he said God intended one man for one woman for life (Matt. 19:4-6, and no man is to “put a marriage asunder.” Paul is reiterating the original law of God, as stated by Jesus, that **when a man marries** he is to do it in holiness and honor. Marriage is not **just** to fulfill the sexual drive! It has social, psychological, spiritual goals even more than sexual outlet. Teachers should refer to my commentary on *1 Corinthians*, pub. by College Press, in the Bible Study Textbook series, chapter 7.

A man could “transgress his brother” in the matter of marriage by seducing another man’s wife and committing adultery with her, or by seducing a single woman and committing adultery with her. Both are immoral and sexually illicit in the will of God!! “No one can commit fornication without defrauding and wronging someone” (*Thinking Through Thessalonians*, by Wilbur Fields, pub. College Press, pg. 107). By illicit sexual intercourse a seducing man or seducing woman can wrong someone’s spouse, or future spouse, someone’s sister/brother, daughter/son and thus ruin a future life and home. It is a sin against **God** and against **another human being**, and a sin against **one’s own body**. We have now reached a ratio of 65% of marriage failure (divorce) in America! We are now seeing public figures, role models, (politicians, sports “heroes,” movie stars, even **ministers of the Gospel**) **BLATANTLY** violating God’s will in the matter of sexuality and marriage without so much as a pinch of remorse **except that they were “caught.”** **GOD WILL JUDGE A NATION THAT DESPISES THE FAMILY!** (for example, Babylon, Israel, Rome, etc., etc.). God has only to let such a nation “suffer the due penalty of its error” (Rom. 1:27) in such matters and become its only “judge” and “executioner.”

The Greek verb *hesuchazein*, does not necessitate complete *silence*. It means primarily “a state of tranquility” and is so used in 1 Tim. 2:2, or “absence of disturbance to others.” It is used to describe the “tranquil” nature of a godly woman in 1 Pet. 3:4. It describes the person who is not flitting here, there, everywhere, to stir things up and keep everyone excited, on edge, testy, and quarrelsome. In Yiddish it is *yentel*—remember “her” in *Fiddler On The Roof*? The opposite of tranquility would describe a person who agitates, is restlessness, meddlesomeness, and nosey! The ancient Greeks were characterized by their own poets, historians and philosophers as “a restless people often given to meddling in the business of others.” The Athenians were characterized in Acts 17:21, as those who “spent their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new.” Have you ever noticed how the “Evening News” keeps the nation stirred up and agitated? Proverbs 20:3 says, “Every fool will be meddling.” Paul uses this same word (*hesuchazein*) in 2 Thess. 3:12 to warn **busybodies** (“busybodies” in 2 Thess. 2:11 is *periergazomenous*, “those working round about”) **to be “quiet” (stop stirring things up) and get jobs.** Evidently some of the church

members at Thessalonica didn't take heed the first time Paul wrote about this. It's in the Bible-----"Mind your own business!" But this admonition does not cancel the command of Paul in Gal. 6:2; and 1 Cor. 9:21, "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the *law of Christ*." We can bear one another's burdens without intruding into their lives where we have not been invited and should not trespass! Let the "Golden Rule" Matt. 7:12 apply!

The KJV translates, "...work with your own hands...that ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing." RSV translates, "...work with your own hands...that you may command the respect of outsiders, and be dependent on nobody." Free enterprise and self-support was stressed in the OT. It is also clearly a command of the NT (Eph. 4:28; 1 Thess. 4:12; 2 Thess. 3:10-12) and exemplified in the apostle Paul (Acts 20:34; 1 Cor. 9:15; 2 Thess. 3:7-9). The poet Robert Frost once said, "The world is filled with willing people; some willing to work, the rest willing to let them." Some people (perhaps many thousands) have never done a days work with their hands in their lives! They have the philosophy that someone else owes them a living. They learn to misuse, abuse and exploit the largess of the national treasury (welfare, etc.) to depend on "the government" (taxpayers) to take care of them. Any thinking individual should easily discern that if **everyone** had that attitude **everyone would soon starve to death**. It is illogical that **any** healthy, able-bodied person should not work. Years ago, on "Sixty-Minutes" I watched while Mike Wallace talked with a young black man on welfare and food stamps who said he was satisfied with the government largesse because he could not find work. Mr. Wallace took a Detroit newspaper "want-ad" section and pointed out to him literally hundreds of jobs. The young man said he wanted a "white-collar, up-scale, executive" job or he wouldn't work. **SUCH A PHILOSOPHY IS UNGODLY, UNCHRISTIAN, AND UNBIBLICAL!** Of course, those who have severe physical or mental impairments that they **can't** work must be sustained through some charitable agency (whether government or family or charity). I was always taught there was dignity in working hard, working well, and being dependent on nobody no matter how hard the work, as long as it was legitimate and not ungodly. I was always taught that while "the laborer is worthy of his hire," working to sustain oneself and one's family was more important than the position or the pay. All my ancestors (as well as I) were reared mostly on farms (not large farms). We worked for our bread by the sweat of our brow (and aching muscles). My tolerance factor for "gold-brickers" is very low!

He meant exactly what he said. Those who may be alive when the Lord comes the **2nd**, and **final** time to the earth (Heb. 9:28) **WILL NOT GO AHEAD OF THOSE WHO HAVE DIED BEFORE THE LORD'S COMING**. There is not going to be any "secret rapture." There will not be some who are alive (driving their cars, working in their shops, etc.) who will be caught up to meet Jesus in the air before all the rest of the saints are resurrected! That, in turn, shows there will be no **single "Antichrist"** whose appearance will usher in an alleged "7 years of tribulation" to precede the "rapture." There will be no "1000 year reign of Christ on a material throne in the city of Jerusalem with in a wicked world." This statement would also require the inference of the obverse----those who are dead will not precede those who are alive when the Lord comes.

There is never more than ONE BODILY resurrection spoken of in the N.T. Jesus spoke of a “*spiritual*” resurrection in John 5:25-26. That is taught in the epistles as well (Rom. 6:5ff; Eph. 2:4-10; Col. 2:12-15, etc.). This is the “resurrection” from death in sin to a new birth in Christ. This is the “FIRST RESURRECTION” referred to in Rev. 20:5. Revelation does not talk about the bodily resurrection at the end of the world. It does talk about the “*second death*” which is final separation from God for those wicked people of the Roman empire when they died in their sins. And it includes all who have not repented and obeyed God’s covenant terms under which they lived. When Jesus spoke of the *FINAL, BODILY* resurrection he said, “...the hour is coming when *all* who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come forth, those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment.” John 5:28-29 has it “resurrection” singular in the text, *not* “resurrections” plural. Paul emphasized only ONE BODILY resurrection in 1 Cor. 15. For much more information on the “millennial problem” see *26 Lessons on Revelation, Parts I & II*, by Paul T. Butler, pub. College Press, Joplin, MO; *Daniel, 3rd edition*, by Paul T. Butler, pub. College Press; and my latest book published 1998, *APPROACHING THE NEW MILLENNIUM--An Amillennial Look at A.D. 2000*, pub. College Press.

The word Greek word *parakaleite*, is translated “comfort” or “encourage.” It is the same word that is most often translated “exhort.” It most accurately means, “strengthen.” The Holy Spirit is called the *Paraclete* in the Gospel of John. He “strengthens” by “exhorting” in the N.T. YES! We clearly could use more preaching and teaching on the Second Coming of Christ inasmuch as it is going to be suddenly, at a time when the world does not expect it, and will slip up on the world like a thief at night slips up on his victims. It is a great source of solace to know that when the Lord Jesus comes again we will be reunited with all our Christian family members and brethren who have died in the Lord. And it is a great source of motivation to “love and good works” while we await his coming at any moment----PERHAPS TODAY! So why don’t preachers preach more about it? It is an ever recurring subject in the New Testament! Probably mentioned more times than morality, evangelism, singing, or a hundred other themes preachers preach about. One clear way to emphasize it as much as the N.T. does is for a preacher to begin in a single book of the N.T. and preach successive EXPOSITORY sermons from each succeeding chapter of the book.

TEACHER'S NOTES 1 Thessalonians 5:1-28

prepared by Paul T. Butler

If the Lord thought it wise for the world to know when he was coming back, he would have said so and would have given “signs” that are much clearer than the “generalized signs” we hear from so many alleged “prophecy-preachers.” The **entire** text of Matthew 24:1-35 (and parallels in Mark 13 and Luke 21) are concerning the destruction of Jerusalem A.D. 66-70. That is the “day approaching” that Paul refers to in Hebrews 10:25. Paul could not say that the Hebrew people to whom the book of Hebrews was written that they **could see the day approaching** if he had been referring to the Lord’s 2nd coming!!! Jesus repeated (in various ways) at least SIX times (Matt. 24:36; 24:39; Mk. 13:33; 13:35; Matt. 24:44; 24:50; 25:13) THAT NO ONE WILL KNOW! As a matter of fact Jesus said he was coming back when LEAST EXPECTED! (Matt. 24:44). When he was ascending into heaven he told the apostles, “It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority” (Acts 1:7). God said through Moses, “The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever that we may do all the words of this law.” (Deut. 29:29). If the Lord has spoken so emphatically that **no one will know**, why should anyone speculate, or pretend to know? Many people are persuaded that severe moral degeneration is a “sign” that the world is coming to an end. But what about the moral degeneration in Noah’s day? Jesus said he would come like the flood did, when no one knew! And, what about the degenerate world of the Roman empire A.D. 100-450? Using human reason alone, one might argue either way---it might be better to **have** signs, or it might be better **not** to have signs. But God’s revelation has settled the question so why should any Christian question God’s wise revelation?

Christians will not be surprised that Jesus **IS coming**, but they may be surprised **at the time he chooses to come back**. Christians will be **prepared** by the grace of God and the atoning blood of Christ. They will be wanting him to come and end all the injustices and wickedness, and take them home to glory. They should be praying that he will come soon even as the first century Christians did. But praying for him to come soon, and leaving the time up to him without trying to guess when it will be is the Christian way of anticipating his return.

The unbelieving are the ones who will be “asleep” when the Lord comes. Paul does not mean physically “sleeping” but Biblically, spiritually asleep. Millions are just as unaware of the existence of the Lord, that he died for the sins of the world and was resurrected AND IS COMING BACK TO JUDGE UNBELIEVERS, as physically sleeping people are unaware of the time of the day (or night). Physical sleep is a state of semi-consciousness in which the person is unaware of time and reality. Unbelievers are totally unconscious to the **REALITY** that Jesus is coming again. Paul confirmed it is as REAL as the historical death and resurrection of Jesus Christ in Palestine, some 2000 years ago (Acts 17:30-31). Paul gave sufficient evidence for Jesus’ resurrection that it must be classified as an **HISTORICAL REALITY**. The same is true of Jesus’ return except that it is an historical reality *yet* to be accomplished.

Paul used the Greek word *nephomen*, and it is translated “sober” most English versions. It means in its literal sense, “sober” from intoxication by alcohol. Paul is probably using it both literally, and metaphorically. He certainly is admonishing the Thessalonian Christians to abstain from drunkenness which is both anti-scriptural and unbecoming a disciple of Jesus. Metaphorically, in the context, *nephomen*, would mean the opposite of “sleeping at night.” Paul clearly would not exhort Christians to literally and physically stay awake all night without any sleep. So he is using *katheudousin* (“sleep”) in this context metaphorically of those who are “not awake” or “alert” or “watching” for the Lord’s return! It is possible for **Christians** to become **apathetic** and **unconcerned** that **the Lord could come at any moment**, catching them “asleep in darkness.” Paul clearly warns that Christ’s second (final) return to earth will be “like a thief in the night.” A thief comes to your house in the darkness, hiding himself—he slips up on you and you do not know he is there until you suddenly awake—AND THERE HE IS! **SO BE “SOBER” (ALERT, EXPECTANT, SERIOUS-MINDED, NOT FRIVOLOUS AND INDIFFERENT!** Don’t be a somnambulant-Christian, sleep-walking your way through life, off in “dream-land” about the realities of God’s word! **WAKE UP!** “John 9:4 We must work the works of him who sent me, while it is day; night comes, when no one can work.” There are some non-Christians who never get drunk, but they are “totally-out-of-it” as far as the Lord’s imminent return is concerned—they don’t believe it, and laugh off any warning about it! They are walking through life “asleep” to the reality of the **evidences that the Bible is an authentic, credible, historically verified, God-breathed-out revelation that Jesus is coming again, in flaming fire, with his angels, to render the vengeance of God upon all those who do not believe the gospel and OBEY him** (2 Thess. 1:5-10). They are deliberately ignoring the “facts” of God’s existence and his wrath upon sin (John 3:19-20; Rom. 1:18-32; 2 Thess. 3:5) as they walk in their “sleep” toward the fiery abyss! The church’s calling is to WAKE THEM UP! But, what if the church is “sleep-walking” too!!!

The Christian’s protection against “sleep-walking” into Hell is his Christian armor (see Eph. 6:10-18)—the “breastplate of faith and love,” and the “helmet of the hope of salvation.” The Christian is also to understand and put into action, the **fact** that he/she is “the light of the world” (Matt. 5:14-16); he/she is a “child of the light” (Luke 16:8; Eph. 5:8); Christians “come to the light” (John 3:21) because they love the truth; they are to “shine” as lights in the world (Phil. 2:15); to avail themselves of the light of Christ (Luke 8:16-18; 11:33-36); they have the light of life (John 8:12); they are to “walk in the light” to keep from stumbling (John 11:9-10; 12:36). **INDEED, IT IS TIME FOR THE CHURCH TO “WAKE UP” AND CAST OFF THE WORKS OF DARKNESS AND PUT ON THE ARMOR OF LIGHT!** (ROM. 13:11-14). Christians have been **called out of darkness into his marvelous light** (1 Pet. 2:9)...**What “communion” (partnership) does Light have with Darkness?** (1 Cor. 6:14) **NONE! Therefore**, Christians must “walk in the light as he (God) is light” by living according to the truth (1 Jn. 1:5-10; 2:9-10). **THE CHRISTIAN’S PROTECTION AGAINST “SLEEP-WALKING” IN DARKNESS, FALSEHOOD, UNGODLINESS—IS LIGHT, LIGHT, LIGHT! And Jesus, *through* his word is THAT LIGHT!** No one will find this LIGHT by “communing with God through nature,” or “within themselves,” or “in other great world religions.” **JESUS IS THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD, EXCLUSIVELY, AND HE IS TO BE FOUND IN HIS WORD** (e.g., John 6:63). It is **imperative** that the church evangelize to save

those billions of people “sleep-walking” Hell—some of them may be your own loved ones!

It is a person’s conviction of the death and resurrection of Christ that “controls” him/her! (2 Cor. 5:14, Greek, *sunechei*, lit., “locks-it-together” for us—metaphorically, “captures, seizes, arrests, imprisons” us) and demands of him/her a completely new perspective on reality (2 Cor. 5:16). So, the death/resurrection of Christ is **PRE-EMINENTLY SIGNIFICANT NOT ONLY FOR CONVERTING PEOPLE FROM UNBELIEF TO BELIEF, BUT ALSO FOR BUILDING UP (EDIFYING, STRENGTHENING, EQUIPPING) THOSE ALREADY CONVERTED!** Paul considered the “false teaching” about the resurrection of Christ, to be the MAJOR *cause* of all the other “troubles” in the Corinthian church (see 1 Cor. 15:1-58). Christ’s resurrection was the **central, pivotal subject of apostolic preaching** (don’t believe it?—read the sermons in Acts, and the doctrines of it in the Epistles). It is the ONE, FUNDAMENTAL, UNEXPURGABLE DOCTRINE OF CHRISTIANITY. It is the fact of the death and resurrection of Christ that proves his **deity**; it is the fact that proves every other promise of God will come true; it is what the Christian is “baptized into;” it is the fact that no other “great world religion” can lay claim to; it is the fact that brings us to a new birth to a living hope, to an inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for us. **THAT’S WHAT JESUS’ DEATH & RESURRECTION HAVE TO DO WITH “ENCOURAGING ONE ANOTHER AND BUILDING ONE ANOTHER UP.” So why don’t we hear it preached about more from our pulpits and taught more in our S.S. classes? WE SHOULD!**

The Greek word *kopiontas*, is translated with the rather sedate word, “labor.” It actually means, “toil, become weary, tired, emotionally—to “give up.” IT IS WORK TO BE AN “ADMONISHER” THROUGH THE LORD’S WORD. Many “working” people (laborers, farmers, mechanics, carpenters, plumbers, etc.) think being a “preacher” is a SNAP! **Let them try it for a couple of years!** Paul, in proclaiming Christ, “toiled, striving with all the energy which he mightily inspired within him” (Col. 1:27-29). Paul recounted his “labors” for the Lord (2 Cor. 11:21-29). Any volunteers to follow in the footsteps of Paul? Jesus *often* became tired and stressed and had to “come apart from the multitudes” for a rest, Mark 6:31; John 4:6. Tell me the great “admonisher” of the Israelite nation, **Moses**, had a “snap” of a job! And if you think the OT prophets “had it easy,” you “ain’t read ‘em, brother!” Jeremiah was so tired and weary and “down” with the toil of speaking out for the Lord, he cursed his birthday, the one who gave him birth, and the one who announced his birth (Jer. 20:7-18), but he found solace in the faithfulness of God to keep his promises! If you think being a parent “wears on you,” try being a “parent” (elder, preacher, deacon, teacher) to a congregation of Christian “babes!” Paul’s “sanctified exasperation” is pretty apparent in letters to Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Colossae, *etal.* He said to the Christians in Galatia, “Have I become your enemy because I tell you the truth?” He said to the Corinthian church, “I...could not address you as spiritual men, but as men of the flesh, as babes in Christ...for you are still of the flesh...” (1 Cor. 3:1ff). If anyone thinks the job of a preacher is relaxed, lackadaisical, or superficial, just go with him one day and experience the “roller-coaster” of emotions and experiences he has to endure. **Sit with him long hours of each day and into the night** at hospitals, weddings, funerals, broken homes, ambulance-chasing, studying for sermons, listening on his phone to complaining church members, trying to keep his own family fit and happy, etc., etc. **BEEN THERE! DONE THAT!** “It ain’t easy” folks, but then Jesus never promised any Christian, let alone preachers, a garden of roses minus the thorns! Those “admonishers” who really “work” at it, **deserve respect** (Greek, *eidēnai*, “recognition, to be known”) **and esteem** (Greek,

egeisthai autous huperekperissos, “give them exceeding consideration”). So many of them do not get it!

ataktous, is the Greek word translated “idlers.” It means, literally, “soldiers who will not obey orders.” It means people who are unruly, undisciplined, disorderly, **and those who seek to evade responsibilities**. Paul did a pretty good job of “admonishing” the “idlers” in 1 Thess. 4:10-12; 2 Thess. 3:6-15! There is no place in the Christian “family” for any who will not take their share of the work, the support, the helping of others, the responsibilities, the burdens, the “ups and downs.” Too many “idlers” in Christianity, quit and take their marbles home with them when the first troubles come in the church instead of taking their share of the responsibility, in love and tenderness, and in firmness and righteousness, getting the church through and over the troubles! Paul knew whereof he spoke. He not only supported himself in his ministry (most of the time) by his own physical labors, he also bore the daily burden of anxiety about the churches and Christians he knew and loved (2 Cor. 11:28). When a preacher or an elder or a deacon or other church member is trying to fend off the fiery darts of Satan (or one of his helpers) most other Christians tend to “sit idly by” while Satan’s “clay pigeons” are shot down and destroyed! **PAUL’S NOT TALKING HERE MERELY ABOUT “IDLERS” WHO WON’T GET A JOB AND PAY THE RENT—HE’S TALKING ABOUT THOSE “IDLERS” WHO WON’T ENCOURAGE, HELP, AND BE PATIENT!** He’s talking about those who just “drop in regularly to church services” but when they’re called upon to “help” always find some excuse to evade responsibility! Jesus had a lot to say about this kind of “fair-weather” discipleship in the Gospels. He said, “if you can’t pay the price, don’t sign up.” **SO, GET BUSY, AND THEN ADMONISH THOSE WHO AREN’T!** But don’t think you have to be physically active every minute of your waking hours lest you be an “idler.” God wants us to occasionally, “sit still, be quiet, and ‘know’ that he is Lord.” He wants us to take time to “sit down, lie down,” and read the word of God to children, grandchildren, to ourselves, and to think about what we’ve read! Of course he wants us to get needed rest for our bodies which are temples of the Holy Spirit. He doesn’t want us to abuse our bodies with lack of rest or sleep or food or exercise. So, sharpen your understanding of what Paul means here by “idlers.” **PRIMARILY, HE MEANS FOR CHRISTIANS TO STAY ALERT, WATCHING FOR THE LORD’S RETURN AT ANY MOMENT—AS DON DEWELT USED TO SAY—“PERHAPS TODAY!”**

hour-prayer” chains, or monks may tip-toe quietly through their monasteries, heads bowed, hands folded, intoning prayer after prayer, but unless they are **DEPENDING TOTALLY ON THE LORD AND HIS WILL, INSTEAD OF DEPENDING ON THE ACT OF PRAYING, they are not really praying at all!** And, I’m afraid that, too often, we fall into the trap of “believing in prayer” instead of believing in the Lord who **answers prayer according to his will.** The devil would like nothing better than to convince human beings that God can be manipulated or swayed to answer our prayers according to what we want, instead of what he deems our need to be (even if it is a resounding, “NO!”—see 2 Cor. 12:7ff). Jesus’ prayer in Gethsemane, “If possible, let this cup pass from me, nevertheless, not my will be done, but thine” was answered partially NO, and partially YES! David’s prayer for the life of his infant son by Bathsheba was answered, NO! Hezekiah’s prayer that he would not die was answered with a 15 year postponement. **GOD DOES NOT CHANGE HIS WILL NO MATTER HOW MUCH WE PRAY! HE ALWAYS ANSWERS PRAYER ACCORDING TO HIS WILL!** We have an almost satanic tendency to interpret, from a carnal, fleshly, worldly perspective, God’s providential governing of the universe and our lives. If we pray and the “good” we’ve asked for (from our perspective it’s “good”) then we think God “answered our prayers.” But if we are made to “bear our thorns in the flesh” after we’ve prayed and prayed and prayed, we tend to doubt that God has even heard our prayers, and if he has and hasn’t answered with taking the burden away, we tend to think we didn’t pray hard enough, or long enough, or say the right words, or no one else was helping us pray. Now if you want to see “praying without ceasing” take a look at 2 Corinthians ch. 8 & 9. Those ancient Christians, mocked and persecuted in the first century Roman empire, **HAD THE REAL ATTITUDE OF DEPENDENCE UPON THE LORD! That’s “praying without ceasing.”** While our “fleshly nature” may hurt and groan and shrink from many “circumstances” we have to endure as we are carrying out the Lord’s will in our lives, and we may not “like” them, and may even fall into the temptation to “complain” (Abraham, Moses, Job, Hezekiah, Elijah, Jeremiah, *etal*). We must **learn** to “rejoice” in all circumstances! **WHO EVER SAID IT WOULD BE EASY TO BE A CHRISTIAN?!**

The Greek word *dokimazete*, means, “prove by testing, examine, research, inspect, explore, investigate.” **CHRISTIANS NEED TO DEVELOP A “PROSECUTORIAL” STANCE TOWARD EVERY IDEOLOGY, ISM, TEACHING, DOCTRINE, VIEWPOINT, PHILOSOPHY AND “LIFE-STYLE” TO WHICH THEY ARE EXPOSED! Every time someone comes to you with a “new” philosophy of Christianity or religion, PUT IT TO THE TEST OF GOD’S WORD, THE NEW TESTAMENT (see 2 im. 3:16-17; 1 John 4:1-6).** *panta*, is the Greek word translated “everything” in 1 Thess. 5:21. We get the English word and sometimes prefix “pan” from it. **IT MEANS, ALL—NOT JUST SOME OF IT, OR MOST OF IT—BUT ALL! Everything, every circumstance, every thought, every action, every feeling, every “inner whisper,” every outside stimuli coming into our senses, MUST BE PUT TO THE CRUCIBLE OF GOD’S HOLY WORD!** That includes politics, religion, education, business, home, vocation, avocation, and EVERYONE! **Wow! WHAT A JOB IT IS TO BE A CHRISTIAN. THAT WOULD MEAN WE SHOULD BE “EXTREMELY” FAMILIAR WITH OUR BIBLES! IT MEANS WE SHOULD KNOW WHAT GOD’S WORD SAYS ON ALL THOSE SUBJECTS ABOVE AND MANY MORE!**

DO WE?

TEACHER'S NOTES 2 Thessalonians

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

2 Thessalonians 1:1-12

The Greek word for "boast" here is *egkauchasthai*, (pronounced eng-cow-cas-thigh) and is often translated "glory, rejoice." Thessalonica was in the province of Macedonia. The reception of the Gospel by these Thessalonians and their steadfastness---in spite of great persecution---became "an example in Macedonia and Achaia (1 Thess. 1:7-8) (which includes **all** the nation we know today as Greece and perhaps a part of Yugoslavia) **and everywhere!** The Thessalonians were probably those who "gave beyond their means, out of their poverty and affliction, begging Paul" to take their money to the hungry Jewish Christians (2 Cor. 8:1ff) and Paul "boasted" of them to the Corinthians.

There is nothing wrong with "boasting" about the faith and goodness of people other than oneself. In fact, Paul urged the Corinthians to "give recognition" to those who had done good deeds for the sake of Christ and the gospel (1 Cor. 16:18) "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver" (Prov. 25:11---see Prov. 15:23).

It should always be an encouragement and a stimulus to any Christian to hear of the good work of churches elsewhere. **We should communicate much more of such good news of gospel successes.** We know how uplifting it was to Paul's spirit to hear good news of the gospel and about Christians. Too often preachers and church members become envious and rather than rejoice they "bad-mouth" accounts of the progress of the gospel. AS A MATTER OF FACT, THERE IS NO NEED TO FEEL COMPETITIVE IN CHRISTIAN WORK BECAUSE THE GLORY ALL BELONGS TO GOD AND HIS WORD! "We have this treasure (the gospel) in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God." 2 Cor. 4:7

Endeigma (en-dygh-ma) is the word translated "evidence" (RSV & NIV) and "manifest" (KJV). It means "proof, guarantee, obvious." The steadfastness and faith of the Thessalonians in the face of "persecution and afflictions" was "evidence" to any person with a sincere conscience that some how, sometime, some way, by Somebody, the Thessalonians would have their steadfastness vindicated by a justice administered beyond this world. There is, after all, evidence plain enough for anyone to see, in creation (Rom. 1:18-21) that there is divine wrath that will eventually come upon wickedness. That is why God gave every human being a conscience (Rom. 2:12-16). THERE IS NO ESCAPING THE CONSCIENCE **EXCEPT BY THE GRACE OF GOD WHICH WE APPROPRIATE THROUGH OBEDIENCE TO THE GOSPEL** (1 Pet. 3:21). With all the unmitigated, Satanic, horrific evil we have seen perpetrated in our own lifetime (war, genocide, murder, rape, terrorism, destruction, blasphemy, thievery, **injustices**) and had to watch the perpetrators go unpunished, our **consciences** tell us there **has to be justice some day!**

Noah's steadfastness in obeying God, even when ridiculed and persecuted, apparently bothered the consciences ("condemned") of some people in his day (Heb. 11:7).

The venerable Jewish rabbi Gamaliel (Paul was one of his pupils, Acts 22:3) had a stricken conscience about persecuting the apostles (Acts 5:38-40). One of the thieves on the cross judged himself worthy of his punishment when observing the faith and forgiveness of Christ. Peter reminds us that when Christians are persecuted they give evidence that the world should anticipate the judgment of God (1 Pet. 4:12-19). See also Phil. 1:28.

Wilbur Fields writes in his book, *Thinking Through Thessalonians*, pub. College Press, pp. 169-170, "A remarkable case of how the patience and endurance of Christians convinced a man of the righteous judgment of God is the case of Justin Martyr (103-162 A.D.). As a youth he sought to find rest for his troubled soul by studying the philosophers, but found himself growing none the wiser with regard to God. He saw a good deal of persecution of Christians and admired the endurance they displayed. One night, while walking near the seashore, he met an aged Christian, with whom he conversed freely, and by whom he was convinced of the truth of Christianity. He spent his life seeking to win men to the gospel and writing articles to defend the faith. During the reign of Marcus Aurelius, he refused to obey a command to sacrifice to pagan idols. Hence he was condemned to be scourged, and then beheaded, which was executed with all imaginable severity. To Justin, the patient endurance and pure faith of the Christians was a proof of the divine nature of their religion. In our times the world is also looking for the proof in our lives that the gospel of Christ is true."

Did you notice? BOTH the rest and the affliction which the Lord Jesus shall recompense will be given "at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven." The saints are to receive their rest and the impenitent sinners their affliction BOTH AT THE SAME TIME. The church is **not** going to be taken out of the world **before** the world's tribulation and judgment! Final salvation and final judgment will be simultaneous!

In the first place, the Bible represents God as rewarding **everyone** according to their deeds, from Genesis to Revelation. Either the Bible is the divinely inspired revelation of God's will for mankind, or it is a book composed by charlatans and very good liars. Millions of people through the centuries have accepted it as God's divinely inspired revelation to man and have laid down their fortunes and lives in believing it. **So, if the Bible says God will "repay with affliction those who afflict" Christians, then either we believe it will come to pass or we must renounce the God of the Bible.** If one renounces the God of the Bible, then one renounces **all** that the Bible says about that God. One cannot have it both ways! One cannot accept the *merciful, loving*, character of God as revealed in the Bible and reject the *judgmental, retributive*, character of God.

In the second place, man himself is imbued with a character that demands **justice**. One has only to watch the TV news to listen to thousands of relatives of victims of murder, rape, terrorism, child abuse, fraud, etc., etc., and hear them demand that the perpetrators of such crimes be punished according to their crimes. Many of those who perpetrate such crimes never come to justice in this world. Can we worship and depend on a God who would allow those criminals to go unpunished? It is one thing to be a complete atheist and simply take a fatalistic view that some criminals like Hitler, Stalin, Dr. Mengele, et.al., who died

without receiving punishment commensurate with their crimes will "get away with it. "That's just how brutal life is. But it is another thing to profess a belief in a Creator, especially the Christian's Creator, and then say the Creator should not punish sin and crime.

Almighty God, if there is an Almighty God, must be **first**, just, fair, right, true, almighty and thus retributive toward any challenge of his almightiness (see Joshua 7:25) If an Almighty God is unable or unwilling to punish rebellion against his power, then he is not almighty! If, in turn, he wishes to be merciful to some who **repent** of their rebellion, so much the better for those!

In the third place, if God does not recompense affliction to those that afflict Christians, then Christ died a victim of his own stupidity. He clearly thought he was dying a vicarious, substitutionary death, at the hand of God (not of the Romans or Jews) as one suffering for the sins of all mankind, so that those who trust, repent, and obey him shall have the mercy of God rather than his retribution. And that is precisely where **liberal theology** stands in relation to the death of Christ. **Liberal theology** cannot abide a God who punishes anyone in hell forever, thus the death of Christ may only be attributed to his political *faux pas* with the Jews and Romans, or as Schonfield's preposterous book, *The Passover Plot*, hoodwinked millions into believing, Jesus was an eccentric, dim-witted, country-bumpkin who read the OT and thought it would be a nice thing if he would fulfill all those prophecies. So, according to Schonfield, he did, surviving the cross and later dying a natural death somewhere in an unknown place---and his few followers duped the world of their day into believing he had "risen from the dead" in their hearts.

You see how any attempt by man to rationalize away the judgmental, retributive nature of God makes it necessary to concoct incredible, foolish, irrational explanations for the rest of the Bible!

Indeed, yes! It could hardly be more apparent than, "He who says 'I know him' but disobeys his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him;" (1 Jn. 2:4). Many people are merely **acquainted** with God. They know he exists, and they have heard that he is a beneficent, forgiving God, and that's about all they're interested in knowing about him. They have equated God with a paternalistic civil government. They expect God to take care of them, but not to "butt-into" their lives as they wish to live them. Many are with God as they are with their neighbors. They acknowledge their existence but they do not want any responsibility toward them. Their attitude toward God is, "live and let-live." Then there are some who are willing to "know" God so long as life is pleasant, affluent, and non-confrontational. If ever unhappiness, struggle, affliction, injustice, or the slightest moral restraint comes their way, they "don't know that there even is a God." **Did you hear one of the eye-witnesses to the air disaster off Long Island say in national TV news that when something like this happens it makes you believe there is no God?**

It is one thing to be unable to comprehend the ways of God in history and everyday affairs, but it is another to **doubt** that there is a God! James says if we pray for wisdom we

must ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind...that person must not suppose that a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways, will receive anything from the Lord (Jas. 1:6-7). "He that cometh to God must believe that he exists and that he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him" (Heb. 11:6).

Did Jesus "know" God? (read John chs. 14-17). Did Jesus keep God's commandments? (Jn. 15:10). Where did Jesus find the commandments of God to keep? God may have spoken directly to Jesus on numerous occasions. However, I cannot think of any passage recording that God spoke audibly a "commandment" to Jesus. God did speak audibly that he was "well pleased" with his Son. But even if God did communicate directly something that Jesus was to do which was not in the OT, this was an exception to which we today are not privileged. But *most often* Jesus found the commandments of God to keep in the Law and the Prophets (the Old Testament) Matt. 4:4,7,10, shows that when "the chips were down," when Jesus faced one of the most crucial times in his earthly life, he "knew" God's commandments from the OT! Don't forget, Jesus quoted profusely from the Prophets (e.g. Lk. 24:25,45,46,47,48). **Everything** about Jesus' mission on earth, from his birth, to his death and resurrection, including the moral life one is to live in the flesh, may be found in the Law and the Prophets! To **know** God you must know what he **thinks**, how he **feels**, and how he acts in real situations within the human frame of reference. **THAT CAN BE KNOWN ONLY THROUGH GOD'S REVELATION OF HIMSELF IN WORD AND IN PERSON (AND WE KNOW ABOUT HIM "IN PERSON" THROUGH THE DOCUMENTS RECORDING HIS INCARNATION).**

The major question for some may be, however, what is there in the "gospel" to be "obeyed?" First, one must understand that the "gospel" as Paul is referring to it here is not to be limited to the Four Gospel records, Mt., Mk., Lk., & Jn. **The "gospel" is the good news of man's redemption!** Man, the condemned sinner, may be saved. His salvation consists in the meritorious work of Jesus and whatever Jesus has commanded his apostles to preach as the **parameters** of appropriating that covenant of meritorious work of Jesus. A gift is not a gift unless it is received in accordance with the stipulations of the giver. A will and testament is not actuated until the heir complies with the stipulations of the will of the testator. Primary obedience to the gospel consists in (1) believing (yes, believing is a "work" Jn. 6:29) and professing that Jesus is who he claims to be; (2) repenting of sin (i.e., changing one's mind about a "lawless" attitude); and (3) being immersed in water as commanded by Jesus (Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 2:38; 22:16, Rom. 6:3-5; 1 Pet. 3:15). Subsequent obedience to the gospel consists in keeping the remaining commandments of the New Testament (e.g. growing spiritually in the areas of evangelism, stewardship, worship, unity, works of love and compassion, etc.). **"For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments." (1 Jn. 5:3)** You want to really "know" God? Know how God feels, what God thinks, how God would act in any situation? **KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS AND YOU'LL KNOW!**

If words have no meaning in contradistinction from one another, i.e., if "eternal" can't be distinguished from "temporary," then it is useless for human beings to try to communicate with one another! Words, of course, are merely symbols used to express

experiences or describe objects outside of oneself. Words that might, in human language, be expressing something that human beings have not experienced, are words that would have to be taken "on faith" as they are used by someone who has had such an experience. In other words, the word "heaven" describing a "place" has to be taken "on faith" from the Bible as a word interjected into human language by God and his Son who have been to that "place" experientially! The word **eternal** would be in the same category. No human being (except the incarnate Son of God) has any experience of "time unending." You see---even in our description of eternity, we have to use the word "time" because that is the limit of our experience. Some philosophers say we can *transcend* time and space by mental exercise (i.e., taking ourselves backward in time, remembering events already transpired, and no longer spatial), but we still think of events within the parameters of "time." Eccl. 3:11 says that God "has put eternity into man's mind..." but the verse goes on to say, "yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end." I think Solomon meant, simply, that God has put a **yearning** for eternity in the mind of man. HAVE YOU EVER TRIED TO FIND A WORD OR EXPERIENCE ADEQUATE TO APPRECIATE WHAT TIMELESSNESS WILL BE? The best one I've ever come up with is a negative---timelessness, an experience where **death** an **decay** is forever absent; but then that is the best the Bible can do in trying to communicate it to us (Isa. 25:8; Rev. 21:4).

But that does, indeed, make the phrase "eternal destruction" sound like an oxymoron. The two words seem, in our human, temporal, experience to contradict one another! If a thing is destroyed, how can it be eternal? **Evidently** the word "destruction" in this instance is describing something **outside** the human experience of "destruction." It must mean that "hell" is a place where the **process** of being devastated, destroyed, demolished, shattered, wasted, unacknowledged, lost, useless, dismantled, and mangled **never ends!**

The Greek word *aionion* (pronounced, eye-own-ee-awn) is the generic word most often used to mean "eternal" for both blessedness and torment. The Greek word *olethron* (pronounced, oh-leth-ron) is **not** the word most often used for "destroy." W.E. Vine says *olethron* is more "personal" than the word *apollumi* (ah-poll-umee) which is most often used "abstractly" in the NT. "Destruction" is destruction, whether abstract or concrete!

What will hell be like? Are there any human words adequate to describe it? Not if we think of eternity there! The best we can do is take the usage of human words in the Bible, like "torment, flames, thirst, separation, darkness, weeping, wailing, gnashing of teeth, death, chains, lost" **never ending** and try to imagine it!

Clearly, Jesus never hesitated to talk about it and warn people they were going there if they did not repent (e.g. Lk. 16:19-31; 13:22-30; Matt. 18:9; 25:46). Nor did the apostles in their preaching "soft-pedal" hell for impenitent sinners.

WE THINK THAT THE EARTH HAS EXISTED SOME 10,000 YEARS, AND WE KNOW WHAT IT IS TO HAVE TO LIVE IN A WORLD WHERE WICKEDNESS, VIOLENCE, DECEIT, DISAPPOINTMENT, AND FRUSTRATION IS MORE PREVALENT THAN

RIGHTEOUSNESS FOR "THREE SCORE AND TEN..." OR PERHAPS FOURSORE. BUT WHAT WOULD IT BE LIKE TO DWELL **FOREVER, TIME WITHOUT END**, IN A PLACE WHERE WICKEDNESS IS ALL THERE IS!!!

R. C. Foster, late professor at Cincinnati Bible Seminary, in his monumental work, *The Final Week*, tells how the word *olethron* was used by the Greek dramatist Sophocles in his play, *Oedipus Rex*. (**ed**-eh-pus). Oedipus was a Greek king who became the instigator of a depraved moral relationship within his own family---**incest**. He married and had sex with his mother. Conscience-stricken he fell into deep guilt and depression. Instead of committing suicide, Oedipus put out his own eyes. Scholars agree that his tragedy was greater because he had to live on in the moral depravity he had created, than it would have been for him to have committed suicide and ended it all. Foster says: "In the light of our discussion of eternal punishment, it is of startling importance to find that Oedipus in his agony cries out, '*I am the great olethros (ton megan olethron)*' In other words, Oedipus is not saying that he is the great annihilation, but that he is the supreme example of **endless** suffering. Out of the midst of one of the most famous of all Greek dramas comes powerful evidence as to the meaning which this word carried."

Christ will be **glorified in his saints** when he comes to consummate history and time (bring it to an end) and when "**every** knee shall bow and **every** tongue confess that he is Lord..." Then all mankind, standing before the judgment seat of Christ, will be compelled to praise Christ because of what he, by his gracious love, has accomplished in "his saints." **The unmitigated truth will be published in all its stark reality, with no falsehood allowed to be present!** The world has yet to learn what a glorious work Christ has done in redeeming sinners! Stories of conversion, regeneration, and redemption of sinners do not make the desk of Dan Rather on CBS Evening News (nor your local newspaper, nor Newsweek magazine, etc.). The world of unbelief has gone out of its way to dishonor Christ and the work that he has done in the lives of converted sinners. The world of unbelief makes every effort it can to delude itself that Christ, the Church, and saints are, like Paul said of apostles, "the offscouring" (garbage) of the world.

No. Jesus does not yet have all the glory that is coming to him---BUT HE SHALL HAVE IT---**and the saints will be the reason that he shall have it!** All the great facts of saints being faithful, loving, caring, helpful, and true in spite of "dungeon and sword" will be published to all mankind---AND MANKIND WILL NOT BE ABLE TO SQUELCH THE TRUTH OR LIE ABOUT IT THEN! All the great facts of what Christians have contributed to the betterment of man's history on earth in medicine, government, business, the arts, moral uprightness, education, literature, science, and a thousand other areas, will be published to all mankind. Not even a cup of cold water in the name of Jesus will go unpublished! THE CHRIST WILL BE GLORIFIED BECAUSE ALL THE GOOD ANY SAINT HAS EVER DONE HAS BEEN DONE OUT OF LOVE AND OBEDIENCE TO HIM!

Worthy" is in Greek, *axiose* (ahk-see-o-say). From this Greek word we have in English, *axiom*, *axiomatic*, *axiology* (the latter word meaning "a study of values"). So the

Greek word means, "value, worth" or , literally, "of equal weight."

Wilbur Fields, *op.cit.*, says, "We must imagine a set of balances, with God in one side. On the other side of the balances, we must place our "walk" (or our "calling"), and it must be "worthy" (of equal weight of God. This may seem impossible. Whether it is impossible or not, it is certainly difficult...Probably we ought not to say that it would be impossible to be *worthy* of God, since Paul taught us to walk *worthy* of God (Col. 1:10; Eph. 4:1; Phil. 1:27; 1 Thess. 2:12)."

If God plans to count some "worthy" of his calling, then we ought not to say none will ever be worthy of the call. God will say to some, according to Jesus, "Well done, good and faithful servant, because you have been faithful in a very little, you shall have authority over ten cities"...etc. Lk. 19:11-27. Paul promised that "...this slight, momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison..." 1 Cor. 4:16-18

Any saint who looks not to the things that are seen, but to the things that are **unseen** is worthy of God's calling because that saint is "balancing" his life equal to God's will for him!

Eudokian (you-dock-ee-an) is translated "resolve" in RSV, "pleasure" in KJV, and "purpose" in NIV. W.E. Vine says of *eudokian*, "lit. good pleasure (*eu*, well, *dokeo*, to seem), implies a gracious purpose, a good object being in view, with the idea of a resolve, showing the willingness with which the resolve is made."

It is not enough to have "good intentions," or desire goodness, or make resolutions of goodness. Resolutions must be fulfilled in actions if they are to produce the good desired. Fields, *op.cit.* comments, "May God accomplish in you all that goodness would desire, and that faith can effect."

We shall only produce the good we intend if we "plug into" the **power of God**. And where is that **power**? It is in faith. And how do we energize faith in God? By the instrumentality of his **word**. Remember? "So then, faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." Rom. 10:17. **THE POWER OF GOD OPERATES THROUGH US WHEN WE BELIEVE, WITH ALL OUR MIND, HEART, SOUL AND STRENGTH, THAT WHAT GOD SAYS IS ABSOLUTELY TRUE AND DO IT!**

Remember? The **knowledge** of the glory of God in Christ is a "treasure we have in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us." 2 Cor. 4:6-7 The power is **in God**, but he makes it work through us when we resolve to do good and **do it**.

TEACHER'S NOTES 2 Thessalonians

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-17

Since we will be pointing to the Roman Catholic Church in this lesson as the probable fulfillment of the "rebellion" and the RCC Pope as "the man of lawlessness" **we must be reminded that NOT ALL THOSE WHO PROFESS ROMAN CATHOLICISM ARE CONSCIOUSLY GUILTY OF THIS GREAT APOSTASY! Many are followers of this "falling away" because they have not had the truth presented to them in such a way as to compel them to SEE the truth!** What God's judgment will be upon the RCC hierarchy for perpetuating this apostasy from New Testament Christianity in an overt and militant manner is God's business. What God's judgment will be upon the hundreds of millions of "lay" people of the "church" who practice it out of inherited ignorance and fear, is also God's business. **God will be fair and just in regard to the good that many RCC people have done (hospitals, schools, and many other benevolent works).** It is not our business to judge---BUT IT IS OUR BUSINESS TO SEARCH FOR THE TRUTH (AS GOD'S WORD DEFINES THE TRUTH) AND IT IS OUR BUSINESS TO "EXPOSE THE UNFRUITFUL WORKS OF DARKNESS" (Eph. 5:11). One thing is sure as far as salvation goes for **anyone**, it will be by the grace of God appropriated by faith.

Evidently there was someone claiming to be a representative of the apostle Paul (2:2) teaching erroneously about Christ's 2nd Coming. It appears that this "someone" was teaching that Jesus had **already** come and they had "missed out" on it. (False teaching in Corinth, later, would **deny** that Christ had even arisen 1 Cor. 15:12, which would also negate his second coming 1 Cor. 15:23-28).

The Greek verb *enesteken* translated, "has come," is a perfect active indicative verb which means the action being referred to has already taken place in the immediate past or is presently taking place. When Paul had preached the gospel there and saw that they would be severely persecuted for becoming Christians, he had spoken zealously of the Lord's return. The Lord himself taught that people should expect him to return at **any moment in history**. He said those who believe are to "be ready; for the Son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect" (Mt. 24:36,44,50; 25:13, etc.). The apostles taught that Jesus would come "as a thief in the night, suddenly, unexpectedly." These early saints longed for Jesus to come each day of their lives. The Aramaic phrase, *Marana tha*, in 1 Cor. 16:22, translated, "Come, O Lord!" indicates the apostles prayed for Jesus to return in their own lifetime (see also Phil. 4:5; James 5:8; 2 Pet. 3:8-13). Those living in difficult circumstances, persecution, poverty, chronic illness are anxious for the Lord to come momentarily. **Those enjoying liberty, affluence, and good health are the ones who are most vulnerable to the devil's temptation to want the Lord to postpone his return!**

These Thessalonians could not see an end to their poverty and persecution (2 Cor. 8:1-5) in sight. It was clear to them that their evil, pagan culture was entrenched and they were in for a lifetime of affliction unless Jesus came and took them to himself and destroyed

their enemies. So they were vulnerable to the false teaching that they had missed the 2nd Coming---i.e., Jesus had already come---someone had it straight from Paul's mouth or letter.

Paul had already written them (1st Thess.) that they should not concern themselves with trying to discern the "times and seasons" because the Lord was not going to pre-signal his 2nd coming---indeed he will "come like a thief in the night," **unexpectedly**, when everyone is saying "peace and safety." (1 Thess. 5:1ff).

So Paul has to "spell it out" for them about the Lord's return because someone was saying it had already happened. Paul has to prove to them they had not missed it. First, **a very crucial event** had to **yet** take place in history **before** Jesus' return. **That event, while it was "already at work" had not yet taken place---it was being "restrained."**

First, the Greek word *apostasia* (ap-ossta-**seeah**), is translated "rebellion" in the RSV, "falling away" in the KJV, and "apostasy" in the NASV. We have the English word, "apostasy" from this Greek word. In the Latin Vulgate the word used for "apostasy" is *discessio* which means, "division." The Latin church (later to become Roman Catholic) looked upon the "apostasy" as nothing more than a "division" when it translated the Greek texts into the Vulgate. But the Greek word literally means, "falling away from." It is a compound word, *apo* "far" and *stasis*, "riot, insurrection"---thus an "apostasy" is a "huge insurrection."

There are a number of opinions about **what** this "rebellion" is. One opinion holds that it is the depraved Roman empire itself and the emperor is the "man of lawlessness." Another opinion (held by B. B. Warfield) is that the "rebellion" is the Jewish rebellion against Jesus as the Messiah and it was being restrained until 70 A.D. when the Lord destroyed the man of lawlessness, i.e., the Jewish priesthood and temple. Warfield holds this view because of Paul's statement, "the mystery of lawlessness *is already at work*."

The third major opinion, and the one I tend to accept, is that the "rebellion" is the Roman Catholic **apostasy**. The Jewish priesthood (Sadducees) and rabbis (Pharisees) were **already apostates** when Jesus condemned them in his ministry. He called them "sons of the devil" long before 70 A.D. Let me recommend three books if anyone wants to investigate this in more detail: *The History of Apostasies*, by Rowe, Hudson, Bales, Bates, White, 1956, pub. Old Paths Book Club, and *Roman Catholicism*, by Loraine Boettner, 1962, pub. The Presbyterian & Reformed Pub. Co., **and**, *Halley's Bible Handbook*, by Henry H. Halley, 24th ed., 1965, pub. Zondervan Pub. House.

One of the very early "church fathers," **Ignatius (110 A.D.)** wrote about "the rise of the office a single **presiding minister**" (later called "bishop"). In the early 2nd century A.D. (100-200 A.D.) **Ignatius** acknowledged in a letter to the then "reigning bishop" of Rome the preeminence and special authority of the Roman Church. Toward the end of the 2nd century, **Irenaeus**, bishop of Lyons, wrote, "All churches everywhere must agree with this church (Rome) because of its more effective leadership, since in it Christians everywhere have preserved intact the apostolic tradition." (cf. *Abingdon Bible Dictionary*, American Bible Society

Reference Bible on CD-ROM). Apparently, while Paul was still alive, there was **already at work** a spirit of "rebellion" toward the Lord's teaching against "exercising authority over one another" that "it shall not be so among you." (Matt. 20:20-28). John mentions "Diotrephes, who likes to put himself first....and was putting some out of the church who were welcoming the brethren" 3 Jn. 9-10. Paul told the Ephesian elders there would be "fierce wolves come among them, not sparing the flock...from among your own selves...speaking **perverse** things, **to draw away** the disciples after them." (Acts 20:29-30) Paul wrote to the Philippians that "some indeed preach Christ from **envy** and **rivalry**...proclaiming Christ out of partisanship, not sincerely but thinking to afflict him..." (Phil. 1:15-17). Home Halley *op.cit.* pp. 629-630. writes, "The spirit of the thing (the apostasy) was already at work in Paul's day. The story of the Church as a whole, even to this day, makes a sorry looking picture. Taking a broad general view of the visible Church, as it has existed from the first century to the present time, it is not inaccurate to call it an Apostate Church."

Halley continues, "At the close of the Apostolic age Churches (90-100 A.D.) were independent one of another, each being shepherded by a board of Pastors. The main leader came to be called Bishop. The others, later, were called Presbyters. Gradually, the jurisdiction of Bishop came to include neighboring towns...The word 'Pope' means 'Papa,' 'Father.' At first it was applied to all Western Bishops. About A.D. 500 it began to be restricted to the Bishop of Rome, and soon, in common use, came to mean Universal Bishop. The Roman Catholic list of Popes includes the Bishops of Rome from the 1st century onward. But for 500 years Bishops of Rome were NOT Popes. The idea that the Bishop of Rome should have authority over the Whole Church **was a slow growth, bitterly contested** at every step, and Never Has, at any time, Been Universally Recognized." *ibid.* pp. 767-768

The conversion of Constantine, Oct. 27, A.D. 312, his Edict of Toleration, 313 A.D., and other governmental "regulations" for Christianity, paved the way for emperor Theodosius (378-398 A.D.) to officially make Christianity the state religion of the Roman Empire and make Church membership compulsory. Halley thinks that even Augustine's monumental work, *The City of God* in which he envisioned a universal Christian Empire, had vast influence in molding opinion favorable to a universal Church hierarchy under one head and naturally promoted Rome's claim for lordship. Halley's opinion is that Gregory I (A.D. 590-604), bishop of Rome, was the **first real, universal pope** of the Roman Catholic Church. The papacy reached the apex of its political power in **Innocent III pope from 1198-1216 A.D.** He claimed superiority over any emperor or king; he intervened in the internal affairs of the Holy Roman Empire, deposing an emperor and placing another in his stead. England and Sicily made their kingdoms fiefdoms of the papacy. The pope's political power was felt also in France, Spain, Portugal, Bohemia, Hungary, Denmark, Iceland and as far as Bulgaria and Armenia. (cf. *ABS CD-ROM, ibid.*). Second, this is not "the" Antichrist. There is no such thing as "the" Antichrist. John wrote that even in **his own time "many antichrists have come"** (1 Jn. 2:18). John said that **everyone** who would **not** acknowledge the **incarnation** of God's Anointed (Jesus) was an "antichrist" (1 Jn. 2:22; 2 Jn. 7). Now that includes a lot of people ---many Jews, many liberal theologians, atheists, Hindus, Bhuddists, Moslems, pagans, and lots of Americans!

The Greek phrase, *ho anthropos tes anomias*, is literally, "the man, the one of lawlessness." He is sometimes called, "the man of sin" since John defines sin as "lawlessness." While his predicted career identifies him as being against Christ's commandments, the phrase definitely does **not** identify him as "**the Antichrist.**" Actually, Roman Catholic dogma does **not deny** the **incarnation of the Lord's Anointed** (i.e., that Jesus Christ was God in the flesh on earth). And remember, John the apostle's definition of "antichrist" is one who denies God's incarnation in Jesus Christ.

Further, it is hard to imagine a Jewish priest or rabbi proclaiming **himself** to be **God**. That is what they allegedly crucified Jesus for doing. While Jewish religious leaders liked to be called "Rabbi, or Father" they would never self-proclaim themselves "God." But the Roman pope has!

Further, Jewish religious leaders did not engage in an activity of **pseudo** signs and wonders. While they occasionally claimed to exorcize demons, they did not overtly, nor repeatedly engage in "miraculous wonders." Roman popes and others of the church hierarchy have and still do so!

The papacy is founded on and supported by deliberate fraud perpetrated in the name of ancient Christianity---the *Pseudo-Isidorian Decretals*. Nicolas I (858-867) presented documents, supposedly letters and decrees of Bishops and Councils from 100-200 A.D., exalting the power of the Roman bishop (Pope). They were deliberate forgeries and spurious corruptions of ancient historical documents but they were not proved to be counterfeit forgeries until centuries later. They were accepted by most of Nicolas' contemporaries and many believed the papacy to have the sanction of the earliest Christians. It is perhaps the most colossal literary **fraud** in history!

The history of the papacy during the Middle-Ages is filled with political intrigue, fornication, homosexuality, rape, incest, adultery, murder, bribery, robbery, and nearly every kind of evil imaginable. All this by those claiming to be "Vicar ("in the place of") of Christ, "Vicar of God," "Supreme Sovereign over the Church and the World, with the right to depose kings and princes" and claiming that "All things on earth and in heaven and in hell are subject to" them.

Leo XIII (1878-1903) claimed that, as pope, he was appointed to be Head of All Rulers, and that he held on this earth the Place of Almighty God, that he, as Pope, was infallible, pronounced all Protestants enemies of the Christian name, denounced Americanism and the Masonic order.

Did you know the RCC helped scores of Nazi war-criminals escape Germany at the end of WW II? Did you know the RCC and the Mafia have been proved to have been in complicity in certain issues? Did you know the RCC has robbed numerous nation's treasuries through political and financial intrigue? **All these facts have been documented on the liberal, American TV media, which actually promotes the RCC!**

Halley, *ibid.* pg. 784, says, "The Papacy is not the Church, but a Political Machine that got control of the Church, and, by assumed prerogatives, interposed itself between God and God's people...However much Roman priests in our own country may cry "Tolerance," the official "Infallible" Law of the System to which they belong is against it."

If anyone thinks the Roman Catholic system has softened on its doctrines and dogmas they need to understand it is IMPOSSIBLE for this system to do so unless it be completely dismantled and disbanded.

We haven't time or space to list all the "apostasies" of the RCC, but here are just a few (which anyone can substantiate in numerous modern history books):

1. The Church as both a spiritual and temporal dictatorship.
2. The priesthood having the power of God is (alleged) to be able to remit sins, change the Lord's Supper into the actual body and blood of Jesus in the Mass,.
3. Elevation of RCC "tradition" **above** the Word of God (the Bible), and decreeing that no Roman Catholic, priest or lay-person shall interpret the Traditions and the Bible except as the Church (papacy) has done.
4. Mary (mother of Jesus) is "mother of God, conceived" immaculately (without sin), perpetually a virgin, and resurrected from the dead and ascended into heaven there to sit as "mediatrix" to whom all Catholics must pray in order to communicate with Jesus Christ and God.
5. The Mass---Jesus is sacrificed every time the Mass is said and only through the mass may Catholics have their sins atoned for. Makes a mockery of the teachings of Christ in the Gospels and the NT epistles.
6. The Confessional---sinning Catholics must confess their sins verbally to a priest to gain absolution.
7. Purgatory---deceased Catholics go to purgatory to be punished for sins, but may be released from purgatory by the payment of fees for masses to be said on their behalf by the priest.
8. Infallibility of the Pope. The contradictions of one pope against another pope and their doctrinal errors which were "corrected" by later popes would fill volumes!
9. Penance (paying for sin by performing certain assigned works); indulgences (special "dispensations" granted by the Church officials for people to commit sins and have forgiveness ahead of time for the payment of certain fees or favors---St. Peter's cathedral was mostly financed by the "sale of indulgences").
10. Rituals (images, rosaries, crucifixes, relics of the saints, pilgrimages, prayers for the dead).
12. Celibacy (what a devastating thing this has been to the priesthood and nunnery---it has been **in the news** over and over in our own time).
13. Marriage (all marriages outside the RCC are considered to be unacceptable to God).

- 14. Monasticism
- 15. Canonization of Saints
- 16. Infant sprinkling (contrary to Biblical immersion of penitent believers)

We know that John F. Kennedy stated that his belonging to the Roman Catholic Church would have no impact on any decisions he would make as a President of the United States of America. But we also know what the Roman Catholic Church holds to as dogma to this very day: it is spelled out in the *Syllabus of Errors*, issued by pope Pius IX, in 1864, and it is still in full force so far as the Roman Catholic Church is concerned---it says, in item 54: "Kings and Princes (which would include in 1864, Presidents, Prime Ministers, etc.) are not only not exempt from the jurisdiction of the Church, but are subordinate to the Church in litigated questions of jurisdiction."

SO WHO IS THE "**MAN OF LAWLESSNESS?**"----THE **ROMAN BISHOP** WHO QUICKLY BECAME, AS THE NEW YORK CATECHISM SAYS: "...the universal ruler of truth, the arbiter of the world, the supreme judge of heaven and earth, the judge of all, being judged by no one, **God himself on earth.**" quoted by Boettner, *op.cit.* pg. 127. If you think the RCC has changed its attitude toward its sovereignty over **everything and everybody**, have a look at this:

"*L'Osservatore Romano*, Vatican City daily, called attention last month to the hierarchy's 'duty and right to guide, direct and correct Catholics in politics....the following are excerpts from an editorial which appeared in the Vatican City daily newspaper, *L'Osservatore Romano*, on May 18, 1960: (*L'Osservatore*, means "The Watchword..."). There is a tendency to separate Catholics from the Church's hierarchy...an absurd distinction...as though the Catholic religion were a special and occasional phase of the life of the spirit and not the driving idea that binds and guides the whole of man's existence...'The Church, constituted with its hierarchy by Jesus Christ as a perfect society, has full powers of real jurisdiction over all the faithful and thus has the right and duty to guide, direct and correct them on the plane of ideas and of action in conformity with the dictates of the Gospel in what is necessary to attain the supreme end of man, which is eternal life...'A Catholic can never depart from the teachings and directives of the Church. In every sector of his activity, his conduct, both private and public, must be motivated by the laws, orientation and instructions of the hierarchy. 'Consequently, the Church cannot remain indifferent, particularly when politics touch the altar, as Pope Pius XI said. 'The problem of collaboration with those who do not recognize religious principles might arise in the political field. It is then up to the ecclesiastical authorities, and not to the arbitrary decisions of individual Catholics, to judge the moral licitness of such collaboration...'It is highly deplorable...that some persons, though professing to be Catholics, not only dare to conduct their political and social activities in a way which is at variance with the teachings of the Church, but also take upon themselves the right to submit its norms and precepts to their own judgment, interpretation and evaluation with obvious

superficiality and temerity." *Christianity Today*, June 20, 1960, p. 31

Yes! This plain statement of Paul referring in verse 5, refers back to vv. 3-4 (and also what he had taught them in his First epistle to them). How else are we to interpret his words, "Let no one deceive you...for that day (the Lord's 2nd Coming) will not come, unless the *rebellion comes first*..."

This *rebellion* seems clearly to be the Roman Catholic *apostasy*. That has been in existence over 1500 years now, and still the Lord tarries. Why? **We don't know!** It's that simple!

But if ever the Lord should have "raptured" the church out of a "great tribulation" it should have been sometime between 100-300 A. D. during the time when the pagan emperors of Rome were attempting to absolutely erase Christianity from the face of the earth. Tens of millions of Christians were "tribulated" in the most excruciating manners you could ever imagine---hacked to pieces and disemboweled while still alive; thrown into the arenas to be ripped asunder by lions, tigers, wild dogs; tied to poles, soaked in oil, and burned slowly as torches to light-up chariot races.

And, if the "rapture" was to occur **before** the "man of lawlessness" "tribulated" the church, why hasn't the "rapture" already occurred? The "man of lawlessness" has been **tribulating the *real church*** (those who would not conform to Catholicism) from 500 A.D. to this very century in which we live! There are the Middle Ages, the Crusades, the Spanish Inquisition, persecution of the Reformers, the Huguenot persecution and persecutions of evangelicals throughout today's world to add to the "rebellion." Space does not permit recounting the horrors of centuries gone by. *Christianity Today* has reported RCC persecution in our own lifetime:

"In Nutibara Hotel (in Medellin, Colombia), the World Vision team heard a **documented** (emphasis mine) report on Roman Catholic persecution and intolerance in Colombia. In the past 12 years (1948-1960) 116 Protestants were killed, 66 Protestant churches or chapels were destroyed by dynamite or fire, and 200 Protestant schools have been closed. Since 1948 there have been several thousand cases of persecution. A summary of 2000 statements **signed by victims and eyewitnesses** (emphasis mine) shows that Roman Catholic **priests** participated **directly** in 30 per cent (emphasis mine) of these cases. Believers (evangelical) have been beaten, made to move by threats against their lives, deprived of civil rights (civil marriage opportunities particularly), ejected from hospitals when in need of care, denied burial permits for deceased loved ones, their homes arbitrarily searched, their children discriminated against in schools, their church services interrupted by **priests** and police, and their cause publicly condemned by civil officials as well as **priests** using loud speakers stationed at Catholic churches (emphasis mine). A poll of the evangelical workers at the conference yielded its own sordid story of Romanist intolerance and persecution aimed at their pastoral activities. Sixty-two pastors have been imprisoned, 26 shot at, for preaching the Gospel. Twenty-three members of their congregations have been

martyred. Many reported that churches they had served were set afire or dynamited. The Christian and Missionary Alliance Bible Institute in Armenia, Caldas, will soon graduate as pastor-evangelist a lad who is the only survivor of an evangelical family of seven whose lives were brutally stamped out." -----*Christianity Today*, June 6, 1960, pp. 23-24. by Carl F. H. Henry.

1960 is *not*, of course, the last time evangelical Christians and others have been persecuted by the Catholic hierarchy--even in the USA! And this does not include all the other kinds of evils this "great apostasy" has perpetrated on mankind (sexual perversions, gambling, drunkenness, fear, superstition).

No, the *real church* has never been promised it will be "raptured" out of tribulation so long as this world exists. It is the plain and reiterated teaching of the Bible that the true church must suffer at the hands of the enemies of God until God decides to destroy this world and create a new one. It is, as a matter of the revealed word of God, that the church is "nourished" when it is thrust into the "wilderness" of tribulation (cf. Rev. 12:14, Acts 5:40--6:1; 8:1,4; Heb. 10:32-39; 12:7-11; 1 Pet. 4:1-2; 4:12-19; 5:6-11).

When Paul wrote to the Thessalonians that **affliction** was "to be **our** lot," he did not mean to restrict it only to the Thessalonian Christians of 51 A.D. It is the "**lot**" of all Christians, in all times, to suffer (e.g., Jn. 15:18-25, etc.) until the Lord comes "like a thief in the night, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and the works that are upon it will be burned up....but according to his promise we wait for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells." 2 Pet. 3:10,13

Just as it is appointed for men to die **once**, and **after** that comes judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him. Heb. 9:27-28. Just as there is nothing left in the redemptive work of Christ from human death until the judgment, so there is nothing left in the redemptive work of Christ until he comes the final, 2nd time!

Some *forceful man* (preceding the Greek verb, *katechon*, "restraining," is the Greek article *ho*, nominative, masculine, singular, therefore indicating a "male individual") living in Paul's time was hindering the appearance of "the man of lawlessness." J. B. Phillips translates vv. 5-7 this way: "You will probably also remember how I used to talk about a 'restraining power' which would operate until the time should come for emergence of this **man**." (emphasis mine). KJV and RSV translate the article, "he" --NIV translates the masculine article, "the one" as if it were neuter. In verse 6, the "restraining" is preceded by a **neuter** article, thus the power is neuter, but in verse 7, the "restraining" is preceded by a **masculine** article. Thus the force restraining the "man of lawlessness" even then was **both** an abstract force and a personal force---i.e., an idea (a universally powerful church, with a universally powerful "pope" over the universally powerful church).

Paul emphasizes that the "mystery of lawlessness" (the idea of the universally powerful church and pope) (something unknown until it is revealed---**not** something that can never be known) was **already at work** (Greek *evnergei/tai*, *energeitai* -- inner-**guy**-tye -- means "energized").

Please notice---if in the apostle Paul's day, some powerful man was withholding the coming of the "man of lawlessness," the "man of lawlessness" could not be some 20th (or 21st) century individual.

Who could have been "restraining" the idea of a "universally powerful church and pope" in Paul's day? It was the **Roman Emperor**. I refer you back to page 70 and question 2 about the fact that this "rebellion" was already focused on the bishop of the church in the city of Rome. Remember Paul's admonition to the Romans (ch. 16:17-20) about "those who create dissensions and difficulties in opposition to the doctrine which you have been taught...." Now I quote Wilbur Fields, *ibid* pp. 202-203

"...the restraining power was the *Roman empire* (and, I add, the Roman emperor). During the first three hundred years of the history of Christianity it was a persecuted illegal religion. This fact hindered any power-hungry 'Christian' bishop from assuming a lot of authority. In the years that followed the adoption of Christianity as the state religion (325 A.D.), emperors like Constantine and Theodosius considered themselves not only to be head of the state, but head of the church as well. For example, Constantine called the council of Nicea to settle the dispute about the nature of Christ. In the fourth century as the barbarians began to invade the Roman empire, it became weaker and weaker, and its emperors became less and less strong. In those times many of the bishops of Rome were strong-willed, capable men. Gradually the Roman bishops came to have more power and the emperors less. The Roman bishops were further strengthened when the capital of the Roman empire was transferred to Constantinople in the East, leaving the Roman bishop practically in charge of the city of Rome. When Leo the Great (bishop of Rome 440-461) saved the city of Rome from being sacked by the Huns and the Vandals, the Roman emperor gave Leo authority over the bishops and churches in **every** province. The Western Roman Empire fell in 486 A.D., and this gave the Roman bishops almost a free hand in all of Europe."

Answer: **No!** I cannot bring myself to believe the idea that any **apostate** human being (or **Satan** himself, for that matter) would be allowed by God to work **real** miracles on the scale and for the purposes stated here in 2 Thess. or in Rev. 13:13-18. To me it does not seem logical, nor do I find any indication in Scripture that it is permitted. For extended discussion of this matter please see, Special Study entitled, "Is There Demon Possession Today as There Was During the Time of Christ's Incarnate Ministry," in *The Gospel of Luke*, by Paul T. Butler, 1981, pub. College Press, pp. 153-156, and Special Study entitled, "Questions About Whether the Devil can Actually Perform Supernatural Deeds or Not," in *Second Corinthians*, by Paul T. Butler, 1988, pub. College Press, pp. 430-434. Needless to say, if Satan has not been given power to perform (or work, or do) **actual, real, miracles**, then Satan cannot **transfer** such power to the "man of lawlessness." Please permit me to quote

myself from *Second Corinthians*:

"The supernatural things done by God (and his representatives, the apostles and those to whom they imparted miraculous gifts) are said to be **moral facts** in themselves which in turn delineate in man's experience the existence and nature of God (Rom. 1:18-21); Acts 14:15-18; 17:21-31, et.al.). If there are other supernatural facts being done which are capable of competing on the same level, in the realm of the factual, what do they delineate---that there are two Gods? If these two manifestations (God's miracles and Satan's alleged miracles) are both **facts** how are we to decide to which one we surrender? The one who seems to have the most workable doctrine?

"Is Satan's power to deceive in the *reality* of a supernatural event *actually* done, or is it in the *interpretation* he wishes us to make of the event which *appears* to be a supernatural event? If it really is a supernatural event accomplished by the devil (or a human being today), what interpretation are we to make?

"Paul writes that we should not let the devil defraud us by being ignorant of his *devices* (the Greek word is *noemata*, which means "mentality, way of thinking" -- **not** "miracles") 2 Cor. 2:11. The mind is powerful. Ideas and thoughts have tremendous capabilities. Mental, psychological trauma has caused amazing effects over personalities and even over physical functions. Jesus stated that it is a logical impossibility that Satan would cast out demons, for Satan would be defeating himself. Therefore, when demons are really, actually cast out, only the Lord could be doing it. If alleged modern exorcisms and other miracles are **actual** then Jesus is working through Catholicism, witch-doctors, Hindus, New Age gurus, and a multitude of religious people whose doctrines are contrary to the New Testament!"

Shall we propose that **everything** which **appears** to be miraculous **is actually miraculous** --- and some are from God and some are from the devil? Then how do we decide which are which? Do we have to decide? Indeed, we do! We are told we should not permit ourselves to be deceived---if we do not decide which are from God and which are from the devil, we are in danger of being deceived. Again, if they are **equally**, factually, miraculous, how do we decide? If we are to decide on the basis of which doctrine or works are good or evil---how do we decide that? From the Bible? How do we decide the Bible is speaking the truth---**if both** Biblical miracles and miracles by Catholics, witch doctors, etc., are actual miracles?

Is the RCC priest able to **miraculously** change the wine and wafer into the actual body and blood of Jesus when he "elevates the Host" during the Mass? Are the alleged healings that take place at Lourdes, France, **real** miracles? Do statues of the virgin Mary cry **real, miraculous** tears; did Fatima see an **actual** vision of the virgin Mary? Do Catholic shrines of certain saints fly through the air and land miraculously at certain spots in Italy? Do Roman Catholic priests **really** cast out demons? (Remember the fiasco of exorcism supposedly taking place on "60 Minutes" or "20/20" a few years ago?). Did those canonized

"saints" all do at least two miracles?

The RCC's claim to **actually** perform such supernatural deeds and powers is really the fundamental point used by them to substantiate all their doctrines. If they did not claim **supernatural phenomena** as the proof of their claims, they would have nothing else to rely on.

NO! The RCC does not work **real miracles**. What they do are, as 2 Thess. 2:9-11 says, *pseudo, deceptive, delusive, falsehoods*. Just like all other alleged modern "miracles," they are fake, phony, counterfeits, attempting to prove they have God's sanction for their apostate doctrines---and with them (like all other religious bodies claiming them today) they are leading gullible, credulous, unthinking, Scripturally-ignorant people astray.

Jesus will destroy him at the **manifestation of his (Jesus') coming...** And surely this "coming" is to be equated with Jesus' coming "with his angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance upon those who do not know God and...who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus..." 2 Thess. 1:7-8 Both are in the same epistle and very clearly both are to be considered one continuous **context**. It would also be safe to assume the destruction of the "man of lawlessness" is to take place at the same time Jesus comes to take his saints and bring "sudden destruction" on the impenitent world (1 Thess. 4:13 through 5:24).

Clearly, the "rebellion" and the "man of lawlessness" will continue to exist until the Lord comes at the end of time, and clearly Christians will continue to be persecuted by and tempted to join with this "rebellion" along with the rest of mankind until Jesus comes to bring an end to this world and all his enemies.

If the "rebellion" and the "man of lawlessness" have to do with Jerusalem and the Jewish apostasy in rejecting the Messiah, then the "manifestation of his coming" was in 70 A.D. at that great holocaust by the Roman legions. Prior to his coming upon Jerusalem he gave plain signs so his disciples could tell when 70 A.D. would occur (Matt. 24:1-34). **But** if the "rebellion" is apostate Roman Catholicism, then **NO ONE KNOWS WHEN HE WILL BE MANIFESTED AT HIS COMING FOR HE HAS PLAINLY SAID HE WILL GIVE NO SIGNS BEFORE HIS FINAL COMING! He repeated that no one would know 7 or 8 times in Matt. 24-25; Lk. 21; Mk. 13.** And the apostles, when they speak of his second coming, all say it will be sudden, like a thief in the night----no one will be able to anticipate it.

The answer is in the text! They "refuse" to love the truth, and they "refuse" to be saved. The Greek phrase, *ouk edezanto* means "to reject by deliberate and eager refusal what is offered....to refuse to take hold of, give access to, or welcome..." It is a **deliberate, calculated, refusal to take hold of or welcome THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST.**

Now why would **anyone** refuse to welcome the truth to himself? **Because he takes PLEASURE in unrighteousness.** It is a matter of "stroking the flesh." It is a matter of

hedonism. "Hedonism" is the word James uses (4:1-4) to describe the lust of the flesh ("passions") with coveting and jealousy and friendship to the world that seduces people into rejecting the truth of the Gospel. No one forces a person to refuse to love the truth---people **hate** the truth because their **deeds** (their chosen actions) are **evil** (Jn. 3:20).

Anyone who loves evil hates the truth and is always, aggressively searching for falsehood by which he may justify or rationalize his evil deeds. The Old Testament is filled with examples, Potiphar's wife, Jezebel, Baalam, etc., etc. The Sadducees and Pharisees are classic examples in the NT. Jesus said of the Pharisees, "**Because** I tell you the truth, you will not believe me." Jn. 8:45. A man's soul is surely warped by wickedness when he will not believe something **because** it is the truth! The doctrines of apostate religions (including the doctrines of Roman Catholicism) lend themselves to allowing people to delude themselves into rationalizing evil behavior. Anyone honest and courageous enough to take **only** the Bible as God's divinely inspired, and finally authoritative will for all mankind will find **no** passport to justify wickedness.

When people "take pleasure in unrighteousness" and "refuse to believe the truth" **God gives them up**, i.e., God allows them free exercise of their will and choices. When people deliberately "exchange the truth of God for a lie," and "do not see fit to acknowledge God," God gives them up---that phrase is repeated 3 times in Romans 1:18-32. It may **astound** some people to think that God "gives man up" to the lusts of his heart, to dishonorable passions, to a base mind and improper conduct, **but he does!** It may **astound** some people to think that God "sends them an *energized* (Greek, *energeian*---see notes on question 4 above for definition of *energeian*---it means "energized, powerful, etc.") **error** (Greek *planes*, **plah-naes**, means, "a straying, an error, a fraud, a deception"). God does not violate anyone's power to freely choose. He created human beings with the **awesome power to choose** good. This he did so that he might have myriads of beings, higher than the angels, conformed to the image of his Son, Jesus Christ, that he might shower upon them his loving grace and goodness, and receive from them the adoration and gratitude worthy of his deity. But in order to do that he makes himself vulnerable to being hated, rejected, and disbelieved by allowing evil to be presented so that man might truly have a **choice**. And it is no fake truth and no fake falsehood that is presented. It is powerful truth and powerful falsehood made available for choosing! This is to demonstrate unequivocally to human beings they cannot trust their own wisdom to **distinguish** between truth and falsehood. Human beings can only know **real truth** by knowing God's revealed Word.

From the very beginning of the "Fall" of man, God **chose** and **foreordained** that all Gentiles as well as Jews who would receive his revealed truth would be saved. The only "privilege" God gave to Abram and his descendants was really a huge **responsibility!** **God did not save any Jew just because he descended genetically from Abram** (see Rom. 4:1-12; 9:6-8; 9:24-26; 10:12; 11:25-32; Eph. 1:4-10; 3:1-6). In fact, God "chose" Abram when he was a Gentile living in the land of Ur of Chaldea, and justified Abram because of Abram's faith while he was still an uncircumcised Gentile (Gen. 15:6). **Abraham** became the "spiritual progenitor" of **all the faithful**---for God's people are "chosen" on the basis of their faith in him

and not their human genetics!

So, how does God **"call"** people to himself or **"choose"** people to be "saved and sanctified"? The answer is very plain here in our text: **"by belief in the truth....to this he called you through our gospel...."** 2 Thess. 2:13-14. God's call is an **objectified call**. It can be found, read, believed, obeyed and appropriated by anyone and everyone who has access to a Bible or Biblical preaching. **THAT IS THE ONLY WAY GOD CALLS TO SALVATION AND SANCTIFICATION.** There is **nothing subjective** about it until **after** it has been answered! God is not going to "touch the heart" of a sinner **apart from the Gospel being preached or read to them** (Rom. 10:14-17). "How shall they believe if they have not heard, how shall they hear without a preacher, and how shall they preach unless they are sent.....Faith comes from **hearing** the word of Christ." The idea of a "mourner's bench" where one has to pray "through" and receive some kind of emotional, subjective, abstract, surrealistic, "experience" to have a call from God is UNSCRIPTURAL! God does **not** give "signs" or "feelings" to tell people how to be saved---God **tells** people how to be saved in his book, the Bible---the New Testament.

If a person has some particular "feeling" **AFTER** he has read, believed, and obeyed what God has told him to do in the New Testament, that is fine and dandy----but even then, the **assurance** of salvation is **not** to be based on a **"feeling"** but upon **THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD TO KEEP HIS WORD!**

God calls sinners to become Christians through his printed word (the Bible) and/or through his spoken word (preachers and teachers who verbalize the written word of God). God calls Christians to all ministries in his church in exactly the same way. No one has to "wait for a call from the Lord," or "wait for a sign from the Lord" to know that he should preach the gospel, become an elder or deacon, teach the word, serve mankind in Christian ministry in a thousand different ways. All one has to do is read the New Testament, know that God has called him to "spread" the gospel (Matt. 28:18-20), and use his own best judgment as to his capabilities and preferences, and **JUST DO IT! SO, JUST DO IT!**

The Greek word *paradoseis* (pa-rah-doh-seis) means literally, "those things which are handed-down." Paul clearly says the *paradoseis* in which he exhorts them to stand firm are verbalized teachings of the apostles. That would automatically make them *sanctum verbum* (Sacred Words)---the revealed word of God.

The fact is that the first century Church depended on both the written word from apostles and the apostolic verbal revelation (along with a few Christians in each congregation who were given special spiritual gifts, e.g. 1 Cor. 12,13,14). The New Testament was not all written down in its present, finalized, form until the end of the first century when John wrote his Gospel and Epistles and the Revelation (ca. 98 A.D.). The four Gospels themselves were not written until about the time Paul was writing to the Thessalonians (51 A.D.) or perhaps a few years later---so the historical account of Jesus' life itself had to be verbalized throughout the world for some 15-20 years. It took Paul from 50 A.D. to about 65 A.D. (15 years) to finish

writing all his 14 epistles. By the close of his life Paul wrote to Timothy, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God...that the man of God may be *perfect* (complete), thoroughly furnished unto *all* good works. 2 Tim. 3:16-17. If the Scriptures alone can make us perfect and thoroughly furnished unto ALL good works, we do not need any other traditions.

'Thus, the only apostolic *traditions* we now have are those in the Scriptures. This was not true of the Thessalonians. They had oral information, and at the time Paul wrote to them very few of the New Testament books had been written.

"Paul declared that if anyone preached a gospel different from what he preached (even if it was an angel) he was to be accursed. Gal. 1:8-9. Paul told us that when we *read*, we may understand his knowledge of the "mystery" of Christ, Eph. 3:4. Let no one be misled or intimidated by people who claim to know more of God's will than the apostles have left for us in the New Testament. Often we see things practiced by people who follow their traditions that are contrary to what we read in the Bible. Surely any tradition that contradicts what the New Testament says cannot be a tradition approved by God."

Thinking Through Thessalonians, Wilbur Fields, *ibid.* p. 215



TEACHER'S NOTES 2 Thessalonians

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

Teacher's notes 2 Thessalonians 3:1-18

Paul uses a simile of the Greek games here in verse 1. The combination of the Greek words *treche* **tre**-y-kay ("run")-----and, *doxazetai* dox-**ahdz**-aye-tie ("be glorified"), depicts a "runner" winning his race and "triumphing" or "being glorified." The "runner" in this case is "the word of the Lord." This simile is interesting in light of Paul's statement about "the word of God" in Heb. 4:12 where he depicts the "word" as "living and active...." See also Psa. 147:15.

Jesus was the **incarnation of the Word** (Jn. 1:1-18). All through the OT and the NT the **word of God** is depicted as "living." The Bible is not a "dead letter" book! When we hold the Bible in our hands and minds, we have a **living** entity in us. It **produces** life----**eternal life**. It is a "**seed**" that has **life** in it and when planted, it will reproduce and grow when nourished by God's word (Lk. 8:11; Mk. 4:26-29).

The **word of God** will also **be glorified, or triumph**. God's word will not return unto him empty, but will always accomplish that which he sends it to do (Isa. 55:10-11). Not the greatest, richest, most militarily-powerful nation or individual ever stopped God's word from accomplishing **exactly what he sent it to do**. Cases in point: Egypt and the Pharaohs; Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon; Rome and the Caesars! Fulfilled prophecies are **hard, objective, scientific evidence**, that even the "fool" should not err in comprehending that the Bible is God's word and that it shall forever triumph!

We really don't need to pray that God's word will triumph! That is *factum absolutus*. But it is certainly **imperative** that we pray for those **human beings** entrusted with it as **messengers**. This is, in fact, exactly what Paul said....."Pray for **us**... This is fitting because the Lord has seen fit to "run" his "glad tidings" into the inhabited world upon the feet of **human** messengers. **AND THAT IS AN AWESOME BIT OF INFORMATION!** In God's plan for redeeming the world he has laid upon believers the responsibility of getting his **word** to **every** unbeliever. So what are **we** doing about that? How much of our individual and corporate (church) resources are we committing to that? Percentage wise, what do we spend on ourselves as compared to **producing** and **sending** evangelists into the world of unbelief? **WE NEED TO PRAY FOR OURSELVES!**

Paul was not being "audacious." There was no effrontery in his attitude toward the Thessalonians. He was merely stating what true Christians of the first century accepted as a fact----an **apostle** of Christ spoke with the **authority** of Christ! Whatever an apostle of Christ wrote or said in matters of salvation, sanctification, or edification, was the **word of Christ**. Jesus had promised this to the apostles numerous times (Matt. 10:19-20; 10:40-42; 16:19; 18:18-19; Lk. 24:44-49; Jn. 16:12-15; 17:6-19; 20:21-23).

The apostles proved they were the only authorized spokesmen for Christ on earth by various miracles, signs, and wonders (Acts 3:1ff; 5:1-6; 8:9-13; 9:36-43; 13:4-12; 14:8-18; 19:11-20; 20:7-12). Paul told the Corinthians, "The signs of a **true** apostle were performed among you in all patience, with signs and wonders and mighty works." 2 Cor. 12:12. See also Rom. 15:18-19; Heb. 2:4. There was never any doubt by honest-minded, truth-seeking people that the apostles were authorized to speak and command on behalf of Jesus Christ and God. In a few instances it was demonstrated that **disobedience** to an apostolic command meant on-the-spot, dire consequences (Ananias & Sapphira; Elymas). **When an apostle "speaks" today to anyone (they speak now, of course, through the printed page--the Bible and the Bible only), "ANYONE" HAD BETTER TAKE HEED!**

The apostolic command is clear!

Command No. 1 is: **Keep away from any brother who is living in idleness and not in accord with the tradition (apostolic revelation) that you received from us.** (3:6)

Command No. 2 is: **If anyone will not work, let him not eat.** (3:10)

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's, *The Village Blacksmith*, has these lines:

"His brow is wet with honest sweat,
He earns whate'er he can,
And looks the whole world in the face,
For he owes not any man....
Toiling---rejoicing---sorrowing.
Onward through life he goes;
Each morning sees some task begin,
Each evening sees it close;
Something attempted, something done,
Has earned a night's repose."

God **sanctified work** for man even before man fell into sin (Gen. 1:28; 2:15). Remember, God **commanded**, "**Six** days shalt thou **labor**, and on the seventh day thou shalt rest." Work is **sacred**---there is nothing demeaning, dehumanizing, or sinful about honest work! (see Eccl. 2:24-25; 3:12,22; 5:18) Booker T. Washington in his book, *Up From Slavery*, wrote, "Nothing ever comes to one, that is worth having, except as a result of hard work." And Thomas A. Edison, when asked by what stroke of luck he came to invent so many things, said, "None of my inventions come by accident; they come by work."

If God has decreed that a Christian brother who is living in idleness should **"not eat"** he would certainly hold non-believers to the same standard. Our Congress has finally made a sincere attempt to undo the dehumanizing, financial disaster of the "Great Society" and its "hand-it-out-hand-over-fist" Welfare State. People who **cannot work** because of physical reasons should have some basic necessities provided---and no Christian will begrudge his taxes going to provide that. That would certainly be true of a Christian toward a Christian brother who is incapacitated.

But those living in idleness are **not** to be **supported** in their **idleness**. Idleness breeds many dire consequences. Benjamin Franklin said: "The busy man has few idle visitors; to the boiling pot the flies come not!" And Elbert Hubbard said, "Work is that which keeps us out of trouble and is a plan of God to circumvent the devil." Solomon wrote: "In all toil there is profit, but mere talk tends only to want." (Prov. 14:23)

Paul doesn't even deal here with the idle person who steals and robs, or "mooches." Here he deals with the *busybody*. The Greek word *periergazomenous* (perry-ergazd-ah-men-oos) is an interesting word. Just preceding this word in the sentence (v. 11) is the Greek word, *ergazomenous* which means "working." Literally Paul writes in verse 11, "For we hear of some walking among you idly, nothing working but working-around." W. E Vine says the word for "busybodies" (*periergazomenous*) makes the sentence translate something like this: "We hear of some who are not busied in their own business, but are over-busied in that of others." In other words, they could have worked at their own business but they decided to loaf around and butt-in to the affairs of others in order to keep **from** working. Remember, Paul wrote in 1 Thess. 4:10-11 "...we exhort you, brethren...to aspire to live quietly, **to mind your own affairs**, and to work with your hands as we charged you; so that you may command the respect of outsiders, **and be dependent on nobody.**"

It definitely does not "hurt" any preacher to work with his hands and perspire! In fact, physical labor can be *therapeutic* physically and psychologically. But **preaching is work! If you don't believe it---follow a preacher around for a week!** It is work that wears down the soul, the heart, **and** the body. **Stress**, the number one factor of a preacher's life (even Paul's, e.g., 2 Cor. 1:8-11; 11:28), not only "wears him out" psychologically, it can, and has in many instances, caused irreparable physical damage.

Aside from that, however, the Scriptures do not **demand** "tent-making ministries." It would be fine and dandy if our American culture would allow such ministries. Many a hard-working (at a vocation other than preaching) man has preached "on-the-side" and has brought success to the Kingdom and glory to Christ. We might be better off with many thousands of small churches ministered to by "tent-making preachers" instead of our tendency in America to think "big" is better (with gymnasiums, chapels, huge parking lots, and staffs large enough to operate a corporation, etc., etc., etc.). But the American culture (Americans don't like to worship in homes, storefronts, and school buildings) probably wouldn't tolerate it. So, the Lord made provision for **totally-Church-supported ministries** (cf. 1 Cor. 9:1-14; Matt. 10:10; Lk. 10:7-8; 1 Tim. 5:18; Gal. 6:6).

1. The New Testament epistles were composed under the inerrant guidance of the Holy Spirit.
2. The Holy Spirit would not contradict Himself.
3. Therefore, when an apparent contradiction exists, the fallible human reader must assume there is an inerrant explanation or resolution possible for what appears to be contradictory.

Granted, on the surface, for the NT to command Christians to forbid people to eat appears to contradict other passages which command people to feed those who are hungry.

However, looking closely at the text here in 2 Thess. 3, we see clearly that those forbidden to eat are those who could have been feeding themselves if they had simply worked at their jobs instead of spending their energies and time meddling in other people's affairs. There is no indication they were jobless, incapacitated, or victims of unforeseen circumstances beyond their control.

In some of his parables Jesus condemned "servants" who would not work to put their "master's" goods to use for profit. Nowhere in the Bible are believers urged to support lazy, indolent, shiftless, meddlers. The "good wife" of Prov. 31 "does not eat the bread of idleness" but is to be rewarded with "the fruit of her hands," while "her works praise her in the gates." (see Prov. 12:9,24; 13:4; 14:23; 16:26;

On the other hand the "sluggard" (one who will not work) is "like vinegar to the teeth, and smoke to the eyes" Prov. 10:26. Sluggards will always find some excuse for their laziness (Prov. 22:13; 26:13-16).

It is **not compassionate** to rob any human being of the dignity of constructive, honest labor, by "handing-it-out" to them while they have nothing with which to occupy their time but "busy-bodyness" or even worse, crime. BECAUSE AMERICAN POLITICIANS WOULD NOT LEARN THIS LESSON FROM THE BIBLE, THEY HAVE HAD TO LEARN IT THE HARD WAY DURING THE YEARS OF THE "WELFARE STATE." And America isn't the only country that has found this out by experience.

A further lesson recent history has confirmed. Those who work the hardest should be rewarded and not penalized by taking what they deserved for their initiative, talents, and work, to let a bureaucratic civil government "redistribute" it so as to equalize everyone's standard of living. Communism or socialism is a proven disaster! Not just in the USSR, but look at 20th century China and 21st century Greece

The Greek word *ataktos* (ah-**tock**-toes) is translated "idleness" in RSV, "disorderly"

in KJV, and "idle" in NIV. It is a military term for "**insubordination**" or "breaking ranks." (see also Prov. 6:9-11; 10:4; 19:15; 20:4,13; 21:25; 24:33; Eccl. 10:18). It describes an undisciplined, disorderly, person who is minding everybody's business but his own. The Church, and individual Christians, are warned to "have nothing to do with such persons that they may be ashamed."

Disorderliness is severely condemned in the Proverbs (6:12-15; 6:19; 11:13). "He who is slack in his work is a brother to him who destroys" Prov. 18:9 "It is not fitting for a fool to live in luxury, much less for a slave to rule over princes" Prov. 19:10; 19:24; 20:4; 24:30-34. Many more such statements may be found in the Scriptures!

Paul seemed to think that **idleness** was an **habitual** part of the character of the **Greek culture**. He wrote to Titus, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, **lazy** gluttons" ---also, "insubordinate...upsetting whole families...detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good deed." (Titus 1:10-16).

Everyone, Christian or not, a **few** times in life, lets down, becomes dilatory, or procrastinates in a "chore" here and there that has become drudgery. However, Paul is talking here about those who have made this kind of behavior a "walk"---a full-time vocation! They are what we call "professional moochers." They are also "rebels" against the realities of life---they don't want to work, they don't want to be told to work, and they insist they have a right to be supported in their rebellious laziness

a. Many Christians have families who could, and should (Matt. 15:4-9; 1 Tim 5:7-8; 1 Tim. 5:16) take care of their incapacitated relatives---and many have done so.

b. A Christian congregation should do all in its power to help any member **in need** who has **no other source of assistance**. If it takes sacrificial giving of money or time or talents, or hard work, it can be shared by the congregation so that **it gets done**.

c. In our American "way of life" there are many types of assistance available to truly incapacitated, provided for by the tax-payers. There is nothing dishonorable about Christians availing themselves of such assistance if the incapacitation is honest. Christians pay taxes just like every other American!

The OT saints were required by law to make **organized** provision ("tithes" or taxes) for the needy within their society (Deut. 14:22-29; 15:1-11). Christians, obligated by the law of God's love, should be prepared to exceed the righteousness of the law!

There are at least six types of sinners from whom we are to "withdraw"

1. those who cause divisions and teach doctrines contrary to apostolic revelation (Rom. 16:17)
2. those who are fornicators, covetous, idolaters, railers, drunkards, or extortioners (1 Cor. 5:11)
3. those will not consent to the words of Christ, but dispute perversely, and think that godliness is a way of gain (1 Tim. 6:5)
4. those who bring not the true doctrine about Jesus Christ as the incarnation of God (2 Jn. 10)
5. those who wrong you, if they will not make it right after you go and tell them (Matt. 18:15-17)
6. those who will not work but are insubordinate ("disorderly") (2 Thess. 3:6,10,11,12)

Wilbur Fields, *op.cit.* pg. 234 "...few people can bear the test of being left severely alone. Therefore Paul tells us that if any church member will not obey the instructions in this letter his Christian brothers are to take *notice* of him and have no company with him. If he will not repent because the apostles of Christ have spoken, he must be made ashamed of his course by seeing that it is repudiated by the Church." The Greek phrase *me sunanamignustha auto* (pronounced---may sunana-**mig**-noos-thigh owh-**toe**) means, "do not **mix up with** him." "Have no company with him," means not to get **mixed together in an intimate way with him as if he were an accepted member in good standing of the body of Christ.**

The object of **all** church discipline is to reclaim and save from sin. It is not to retaliate or punish judgmentally as if we were consigning such people to hell. We are not to hate the offending (in this case, "disorderly") brother or sister. He/she is **not** our enemy! This is even the teaching of the OT Law (Lev. 19:17-18). We should **reason** with heartfelt love to every brother or sister who falls into a life of idleness and disorderliness to bring them to a "death to their flesh so as to save their spirit" (1 Cor. 5:5).

THINK HOW MANY ONCE-UPON-A-TIME CHURCH MEMBERS MIGHT HAVE BEEN RECLAIMED HAD THE CHURCH THE FORTITUDE TO PRACTICE THE APOSTOLIC INSTRUCTIONS HERE AND ELSEWHERE CONCERNING "DISORDERLY BRETHREN."

But how would you react if you were the one isolated? **Be honest now**, you and I

would probably think of ourselves as the "offended one." It takes an unusually mature, humble, rational, Scripturally-versed person to "take it on the chin" and admit he/she is wrong and needs to correct his/her behavior.

And, it takes an unusually humble, sincere, Scripturally-versed, caring, loving, gentle-spirited congregation to administer such discipline and produce the kind of results expected by the New Testament (salvation of the soul of the "disorderly" brother). **THINK ABOUT IT!**

Introduction to Paul T. Butler Th.D

Paul was born in Springfield Missouri and graduated from Conway High School prior to enlistment in the US Navy. He began serious bible study with correspondence courses from San Jose Bible College. He later enrolled in Ozark Bible College and acquired his Bachelor of Theology degree June of 1961. He received a Master of Biblical Literature degree from Ozark in May of 1973. He received a Doctorate of Theology from The Theological University of America in October of 1990.

Paul taught at Ozark Christian College from 1960 to 1997. He also served many years as registrar for the college.

Introduction to the Sound Bible Study project.

The Sound Bible Study project is a cooperative effort of Christian educators and Jordan Media Enterprises LLC to provide the serious examination of the Scriptures for the conscientious student. All the teachers are experienced educators who have spent countless hours in the classroom on both sides of the lectern. The audio recordings and written notes are made available for those who wish to learn God's Word at a collegiate level but have been unable to matriculate. There is no intention to compete with the many faithful Bible schools, but rather to serve along side and strengthen both the student and the teacher for a stronger and more effective Kingdom of God that knows how to properly divide the Word of God.

