

1 Thessalonians

Table of Contents

[Introduction](#)

[Chapter One](#)

[Living Life Backwards – 1:1-3](#)

[The Power of the Gospel – 1:4-10](#)

[Chapter Two](#)

[Chapter Three](#)

[Chapter Four](#)

[Our Labor of Love – 4: 1-12](#)

[The Rapture – 4:13 – 5:11](#)

[Chapter Five](#)

[The Travelers – 5:12 – End](#)

Introduction

First Thessalonians, written approximately 52AD to the church in Thessalonians, is probably one of the oldest book in the New Testament, meaning it was the first letter written.

Paul himself founded the church in Thessalonica on his second missionary journey (Acts 17:1-9).

(Acts 17:1 NKJV) Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews.

(Acts 17:2 NKJV) Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures,

(Acts 17:3 NKJV) explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ."

(Acts 17:4 NKJV) And some of them were persuaded; and a great multitude of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women, joined Paul and Silas.

(Acts 17:5 NKJV) But the Jews who were not persuaded, becoming envious, took some of the evil men from the marketplace, and gathering a mob, set all the city in an uproar and attacked the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people.

(Acts 17:6 NKJV) But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, "These who have turned the world upside down have come here too."

(Acts 17:7 NKJV) "Jason has harbored them, and these are all acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king; Jesus."

(Acts 17:8 NKJV) And they troubled the crowd and the rulers of the city when they heard these things.

(Acts 17:9 NKJV) So when they had taken security from Jason and the rest, they let them go.

Paul was originally brought to this area of Macedonia by a vision given to him from the Lord. Macedonia is the area we call Greece today.

(Acts 16:6 KJV) Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia,

(Acts 16:7 KJV) After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not.

(Acts 16:8 KJV) And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas.

(Acts 16:9 KJV) And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us.

(Acts 16:10 KJV) And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.

In Greece they first went to Philippi, then after being driven out of there, they went west about 50 miles to Thessalonica. Paul was only in the city of Thessalonica a short time, just 3 weeks (3 Sabbaths) but in those short three weeks a church was birthed. As the story is told to us in Acts 16 Paul was imprisoned in Philippi, and then miraculously freed from jail - only to be kicked out of the city. Then he came to Thessalonica and after three weeks of prosperous ministry, he had to flee from an angry mob. The charge against him was that he turned their world upside down (Acts 17:6). He then moved on to Berea - again enjoying several weeks of ministry, but soon was driven out by the same Thessalonians mob after they heard he was there. His next stop was Athens, where he preached a classic sermon but had mixed results. By the time he came to Corinth, he was in weakness, in fear and in much trembling (1 Corinthians 2:3). Paul was a very discouraged missionary!

(1 Corinthians 2:3 KJV) And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling.

No doubt he was greatly concerned about the churches he had just founded - how were they doing? While at Corinth, Silas and Timothy came to him from Thessalonica with great news: the church there was going strong, and Paul got so excited that he dashed off this letter to the Thessalonians, probably his first letter to any church. He wrote it just a few months after he had first established the church in Thessalonica. After writing and sending this letter, Paul enjoyed a sustained and fruitful ministry in Corinth - and eventually returned to the Thessalonians.

Paul writes to them to encourage them, to commend them for their faith, to continue in their labor of love, and to remain hopeful of the imminent return of Jesus Christ.

Verse 3 of chapter one gives us the Outline Structure of this Epistle:

(1 Thessalonians 1:3 NKJV) remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father,

So you note takers, jot these three simple points down, and you will have the general outline of this book, and be able to recall the theme and purpose of this wonderful epistle every time it comes across your studies in the future:

The Faith of the Church – Chapters 1-3

The Love of the Church – Chapter 4

The Hope of the Church – Chapter 5

The Study of this book, is the study of the model church, and the mature Christian.

(1 Thessalonians 1:7 NKJV) so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe.

Chapter One

Living Life Backwards 1:1-3

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

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

Grace, the Gospel of grace, without God's grace then there would be nothing more to say.

*(Rom 5:1 NKJV) Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, (Rom 5:2 NKJV) through whom also we have access by faith into this **grace** in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*

No grace, then no salvation. Without God's grace then we would not have peace with God, because our sins would not be forgiven and we would still be at war with Him.

*(John 1:17 NKJV) For the law was given through Moses, but **grace** and truth came through Jesus Christ.*

Grace: You will never have real peace, until you get a handle on grace.

G - God's

R - Riches

A - At

C - Christ's

E - Expense

Grace. First mentioned in Genesis 6:8, Noah found grace in God's sight. Noah was spared God's wrath. Grace is last mentioned in the last verse of the Bible. Revelation 22:21, may the grace of God be with you always.....God promises us His Grace will keep us from wrath, and will keep us in His peace always.

Peace: When we understand His Grace is never ending, then we will quit wondering and doubting if He is upset with us. We will always know that he is for us, and then no matter what we have done we will run back into his arms, say we are sorry, and let Him comfort and hold us.

When the trials come, we won't worry what will become of us, we will trust that He is using them in our lives to shape us and mold us into His Image. As we realize we are in His hand, the Peace of God, like a military garrison, keeps our hearts and saves us from all doubt and fear.

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy:

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy: Paul was an amazing man and apostle of God, but he was not a "one-man show." Whenever he could, Paul worked with a team. Here, Paul mentions the men he worked with:

- Silvanus (also known as Silas) was a long and experienced companion of Paul. He traveled with Paul on his second missionary journey and was imprisoned and set free with Paul in the Philippian jail (Acts 16:19-24). When Paul first came to Thessalonica, Silas came with him (Acts 17:1-9), so the Thessalonians knew Silvanus well.
- Timothy was a resident of Lystra, a city in the province of Galatia (Acts 16:1-3). He was the son of a Greek father (Acts 16:2), and a Jewish mother named Eunice (2 Timothy 2:5). From his youth, he had been taught in the Scriptures by his mother and grandmother (2 Timothy 1:5; 3:15). Timothy was a trusted companion and associate of

Paul, and he accompanied Paul on many of his missionary journeys. Paul sent Timothy to the Thessalonians on a previous occasion (1 Thessalonians 3:2).

We need more Team Work in the ministry, God doesn't want one man shows or Lone Rangers. I love the new Army recruiting theme – "A Army of One". That is what the church needs to be if we are to be effective in turning our world "upside down." If you ever feel like you want to do more in this church, then come see me, and we will find you more to do, we will be an Army of One, serving the Great One.

To the church of the Thessalonians:

Thessalonica , originally called Therma because of all the hot springs in the area. In 315 BC Casander, who was one of the four generals who divided up the empire of Alexander the Great, took Macedonia and made Thessalonica his home base. He renamed the city in memory of his wife, Thessalonike, who was half sister of Alexander. The city is still in existence and known as Salonika. Again, Macedonia is the area we call Greece today.

Thessalonica was the prosperous capital of the province of Macedonia (northern Greece), located on the famous Egnatian Way (the main road from Rome to the East). It was a major commercial center, very prosperous, load with idol worship and very pagan, and it was a seaport slash beach town. We could liken it to Southern California or Ocean City today.

Paul was there for only three weeks and a church was started, elders were appointed, and it is only a few months later he is writing to see how they were doing.

People today try to disqualify people from ministry because they are only saved a few years, yet hear these leaders were only saved 3 weeks and are leading the ministry. People can be effective in ministry immediately if their heart is right and dedicated to the Lord. Yes we are not to lay hands on quickly but I believe everybody can start in some form of ministry immediately after they give their life to the Lord. You can serve in the soup kitchen, visit a shut-in, or serve in your community.

There is a time to sit and be taught the Word, before you go off and teach it, but you can start evangelizing immediately. Even if you don't know any Scripture, you can just tell people your testimony, once I was lost and now I see. I remember the story of a woman in California, she only knew one Scripture, John 3:16, and she would go to the same spot everyday and share that Scripture with passer-byers. One guy said so what, what else do you know, she said that is all I know, he told her she was a fool. This went on everyday for a week, then the man came by the next day and said I considered what you said and I too have given my life to the Lord.

This church only had three weeks with Paul, and a church was born. This church was making a huge impact on the region around them as we will read in a few verses. Young people, new believers, don't let anyone tell you that the Lord can't use you because you are too young or too young in the Lord. Remember this church in Thessalonians.

(1 Thessalonians 1:2 NKJV) We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers,

Paul was a man of prayer, as we read over and over. The power of his ministry was fueled by prayer. In 2 Thessalonians we will a specific study on how to have an "effective prayer life."

(1 Thessalonians 1:3 NKJV) remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father,

Here is the outline for this epistle, and it is the three marks of a mature church and believer. We saw these three in Colossians 1:4-5.

- ***your work of faith,***
- ***labor of love,***
- ***patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ***

Work of Faith

What shall we do, that we might work the works of God they asked Him that day. Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent. They were looking for a list, but Jesus said it isn't a list, but one thing - believe on Him. It is not all your works, your energy, your good intentions, but that the work on the cross is enough to see you into heaven.

(John 6:28 KJV) Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?

(John 6:29 KJV) Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.

It is said so beautiful in Jeremiah:

(Jeremiah 9:23 NKJV) Thus says the LORD: "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, Let not the mighty man glory in his might, Nor let the rich man glory in his riches;

(Jeremiah 9:24 NKJV) But let him who glories glory in this, That he understands and knows Me, That I am the LORD, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight," says the LORD.

Receive this simple truth, share this simple truth.

labor of love,

Once you see number one, love will naturally flow from you. Once you see that it is not your works, but His work, then you can rest and just enjoy serving the King for the shear joy of it.

In the late 1940's Life magazine went to Boy's Town and saw an orphan child 11 years old carrying a bigger boy, 13 years old who was crippled, the reporter said that is quite a burden you are carrying there, and we all know the reply - he ain't heavy, he's my brother.

True ministry is that, this isn't heavy, it is a labor of love. We see that we have been brought into the kingdom, God's forever family, it is not obligation, work or burden, but one of love.

I love ministry because I get to, not have to. I am so thankful that I get to play in the big game and not have to watch it from the stands.

and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ

Patiently hoping for what? For the return of the Lord. Not I hope that it will happen, but I know it is going to happen. This is a young church, less than a year and Paul is teaching them about the rapture and Second Coming. Churches today never touch on this subject because they say it is too hard to understand, Paul is teaching it to baby Christians, therefore we know it is for all to understand.

Here folks is the secret of life:

Live life backwards, when you realize you will spend forever in heaven, and you have that in your mind and in your heart, then you work back from that point and life makes tremendous sense.

Tragedy, difficulties, why is this happening, it all makes sense when we work backwards from heaven. We know the big picture - Christ Wins. We know this is preparing us to rule and reign with Christ during the millennial reign. We studied Revelation we know the craziness the world will go through for that seven-year period, and we know that it things will continue to get worse leading up to that. We can relax when everyone is bummed and depressed because we know the big picture. We have perspective in the face of tragedy and trials, while the world may be freaking out.

Jesus showed us this the night before His crucifixion. The very night before he was to go to the brutal Roman cross, what do we find Him doing, John 13.

(John 13:1 KJV) Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.

(John 13:2 KJV) And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him;

(John 13:3 KJV) Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God;

(John 13:4 KJV) He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself.

(John 13:5 KJV) After that he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.

He washed feet, lovingly. Jesus wasn't freaking out about tomorrow's trial, he loved in the shadow of the trial before Him. Jesus knew that after the trial and tragedy that He was heaven bound, and many would be too because of His sacrifice.

Friends, consider this, he even washed Judas' feet.

People will betray you, defame your name, attack your character, and/or sell you out.

But Jesus knew from whence He came, and where He was going. It is only when you know where you came from and where you are going can you live in peace.

(John 13:3 KJV) Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God;

Who has hurt you? Was it someone you loved and they traded you for another, maybe something as little as 30 pieces of silver. Was it someone you shared deep truths about yourself with, but in they end rejected your truths. Was it someone you spent night and day with for years, maybe even three, but they left you to go hang with another crowd, whose main topic was slamming you and plotting to hurt you. Was it someone so close to you they were family, that you broke bread together, counted as a brother, sister, mother or father, someone so close you would share a kiss with, but in the end they kiss your cheek as they press the knife in your back.

If you hurt, then your hurt is real, just saying get over it is not going to heal you. What will heal you? Your labor of love for them. That you loved them to the end as Jesus said;

(John 13:1 KJV) Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.

Jesus demonstrates to us that whatever evil is poured out on us we respond back in love, serving them in love. If we work backwards from heaven, we look at the person who hurt us, and if they have not committed their life to Christ, then the perspective of them not being in heaven, but doomed to eternity in hell, will break our heart, and when we look at them we will grieve for their soul. We see they are putty in the hands of the evil on.

(Luke 23:34 KJV) Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.

Well what if they are Christians and hurt me. Then back to the introduction of grace and peace. We have to shower them with grace, before we will have peace with them. Let your labor of love be a demonstration of your grace. We will study more on this in chapter four.

Heaven is near. This is the message of the Bible, we are heading out of here, we are just passing through, a short stay-over, the pain is but for a moment, trials or persecution, remember.....heaven is near.

(John 14:1 KJV) Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.

(John 14:2 KJV) In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

(John 14:3 KJV) And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

(John 14:4 KJV) And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.

The three marks of a mature church and believer: Faith, love, hope. The three must go together. Your faith will never be solid without the understanding of the hope of His return, and with this hope of His return we will be energized for a labor of love to those around us.

(James 2:20 KJV) But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?

But just the same, works without hope is powerless.

The Power of the Gospel 1:4-10

Recap: Paul himself founded the church in Thessalonica on his second missionary journey (Acts 17:1-9). He had received a vision to go to Macedonia, which is modern day Greece. They first went to Philippi, then after being driven out of there, they went west about 50 miles to Thessalonica. Paul was only in the city of Thessalonica a short time, just 3 weeks (3 Sabbaths) but in those short three weeks a church was birthed. Paul is now in Corinth, its only a few months later, less than a year later, and he writes to them to encourage and strengthen them.

Paul was very proud of this church, because they were already known through the region for three characteristics, their faith, their love, and their hope. The Study of this book, is the study of the model church, and the mature Christian.

Verse 3 of chapter one gives us the Outline Structure of this Epistle:

(1 Thessalonians 1:3 NKJV) remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father,

The general outline of this book follows the same:

The Faith of the Church – Chapters 1-3

The Love of the Church – Chapter 4

The Hope of the Church – Chapter 5

Every chapter in this book talks about the rapture and coming of the Lord.

Again, Here folks is the secret of life:

Live life backwards, when you realize you will spend forever in heaven, and you have that in your mind and in your heart, then you work back from that point and life makes tremendous sense. Tragedy, difficulties, why is this happening, it all makes sense when we work backwards from heaven. We know the big picture - Christ Wins. We know this is preparing us to rule and reign with Christ during the millennial reign. We studied Revelation we know the craziness the world will go through for that seven-year period, and we know that it things will continue to get worse leading up to that. We can relax when everyone is bummed and depressed because we know the big picture. We have perspective in the face of tragedy and trials, while the world may be freaking out.

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

(1 Thessalonians 1:2 NKJV) We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers,

(1 Thessalonians 1:3 NKJV) remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father,

(1 Thessalonians 1:4 NKJV) knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God.

We chosen before the foundation of the universe, yet we still have to respond.

(John 6:37 KJV) All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.

(Luke 9:23 KJV) And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.

(Luke 9:24 KJV) For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.

JB Phillips said, if God was small enough for me to understand everything about Him, then He wouldn't be big enough for me to worship.

Theologians have argued for centuries over this doctrine, but Election is a family secret. It is a promise of God to His children. Simply, you will know if you are elected or not by your response to the gospel.

Confirmation will come when the things you use to love to do, you forsake. There have been situations where I have walked away and said to myself, I've got to be saved, there is no other reason I am walking away from this.

(1 John 2:3 NKJV) Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.

(1 John 2:4 NKJV) He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

The characteristics of a believer – Faith, love and hope.

(1 Thessalonians 1:5 NKJV) For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake.

As we studied in Colossians, man's gospel, man's so-called good news, comes in word only, it has no power behind it. The gospel of Jesus Christ comes in word and power, the power to change lives.

Paul said: *(Romans 1:16 NKJV) For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.*

This message is powerful. This Bible is powerful because it is the very breath of God. A seminary student asked Charles Spurgeon how to defend the Scriptures against unbelievers, skeptics, and cynics. The 300-pound preacher laughed aloud and said, "How do you defend the Scriptures? Son, that's like asking how to defend a lion. Just let it out of the cage. It will defend itself.

What is the gospel? I will put it into 5 P's

1. Personal – God loves you and has a plan for your life

(Jeremiah 29:11) For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.

2. Problem – But there is a problem, and that is that your sin separates you from Him.

(Isaiah 59:1-2) Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear.

3. Penalty – You have offended the Holy God, broken His commandments, therefore you can not come into His presence or fellowship with Him.

(Romans 6:23) For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

4. Provision – But God doesn't want to leave us separated from Him. God devised a plan that would allow Him to be merciful to us, while at the same time judging sin. Jesus Christ took our place, took our punishment.

(John 3:16) "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

5 Profession – Our response, we make a profession of Faith.

(Romans 10:9) That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

- 1. Recognize** – Recognize we have offended the Holy God, and Jesus is the only way.
- 2. Repent** – Be willing to Turn from our sin, and follow the Lord and all His ways
- 3. Receive** – Ask Jesus to come into your life and be your Lord and Savior.

Now that is the gospel, and it comes to people in power as people see their need for a Savior, as people see the joy of forgiveness. Forgiveness means New Life, a New Beginning, forgiveness means Hope.....all of these are power. I can give you a drug that will wear off, I can give you a truckload of money, but it will eventually run out, but if I can give someone the gospel, and the Holy Spirit confirms it in peoples heart, lives are changed, and eternity in heaven is secured, now that is power.

We are called to be witnesses. A witness is one who goes into the courtroom and simply shares what he or she has seen. The Lord did not call us to be an attorney, arguing the case, or a judge, handing down a verdict. The Lord simply called you to be a witness - to tell people what He has done for you personally. If you are anything more than a witness you will diminish the power of the gospel.

If you want to move in the spirit, see the spirit move, - then start witnessing. The Lord says you will receive power to witness for me. Signs and wonders follow witnessing.

(Acts 1:8 KJV) But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

(Mark 16:17 KJV) And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;

(Mark 16:18 KJV) They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

The steam generated from the fore of the locomotive is to power the locomotive down the track, not toot the horn. Beware of people seeking the emotionalism of the Holy Spirit, for that is not why God gave it to us, not for self excitement, but for others.

(1 Thessalonians 1:6 NKJV) And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit,

Sounds like a contradiction, much affliction, with joy. In ministry you get beat up, rejected, have days when you just want to quit, but you push on through those hard times, and then you see the joy of lives being changed, marriages being healed, people living and excited about the Lord, then you say ahh its all worth it.

(1 Thessalonians 1:7 NKJV) so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe.

(1 Thessalonians 1:8 NKJV) For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything.

Sounded forth, means trumpeted. The whole region had heard about the radical faith of this little church in Thessalonica.

Paul only taught them for three weeks, and yet in that little time they grew so strong that the whole region heard of what was going on.

This word examples, the Greek word “tupos” meant to leave a mark by being struck. It was the word used to make coins. The metal had the everlasting impression of the image that was left on it. This little church that was only a few months old was changing the whole area around them.

A church with Faith, love and hope will be a trumpet to the whole area they live in, and leave a lasting mark.

(1 Thessalonians 1:9 NKJV) For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God,

(1 Thessalonians 1:10 NKJV) and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

Verses 9-10 are the three things the world was speaking about them, and we will see that these three are again faith, love, and hope.

They turned from Idols – Faith is to turn from what one see, to believing in what you can't see.

They served the Living God – service is the labor of love

They wait for His Son from heaven – waiting is the patience of hope.

how you turned to God from idols

They turned from idols, history tells us they had 100's of idols where they lived, and they turned from them.

More idols today than back then. People idolize these Hollywood and sports people. Parents you may not like what is on TV, but how about what is on the NFL or NBA. We esteem these stars who promote immorality. The balance is, there are Christian athletes in professional sports who promote the cause of Jesus Christ. I am so blessed by the Trent Dilfers and Kurt Warners in sports, always giving glory to God and not themselves. Trent by the way just lost his 5 year old son to heart disease in April 2003 –He said we grieve, but not as those without hope.

Sports kept me from drugs while most my friends were smoking weed, it taught me discipline and team playing. The balance for us parents is to counter our kids idolizing them, and tell them to admire their play, but not admire the player. Be honest with them, use this as an opportunity to teach the attributes of being a Christian. Does this player demonstrate faith in God, does he labor in love for his community or just himself, does he have the hope of Jesus.

As for Hollywood, you could say the same. Acting is acting, entertainment is just that, so there is nothing wrong with watching shows that entertain you, providing they don't fill your mind with the garbage of this world. Gang, these shows that are filled with sex and flesh will do your marriage no good or your walk with Jesus. Do you know the word entertain means “to provide distraction.” Beware of anything that distracts you from Christ.

Kirk Cameron and his wife are a blessing, I'm blessed to see they are using their talents to bring glory to God. Kirk Cameron and his wife were reading the Left Behind Book, and when they finished, that night they said, if they ever make into a movie, we want to be in it. He next day, their agent called and asked if they making a Movie called Left Behind, and if they would be interest in being in it. Now Kirk is touring the country teaching other Christians how to present the gospel, he just spoke at Calvary Chapel Ft. Lauderdale last month.

to serve the living and true God

They turned from their idols to serve the living and true God. Living and true, Jesus isn't just some story we read about, He is Alive. Budda is dead, Krishna is dead, Mohammed is dead, Curt Cobain is dead – there is no nirvana here on earth; there is only one true God – Jesus Christ, for to be the true God, you have to be the living God. A dead god produces dead works, a living God produces works that are alive.

and to wait for His Son from heaven

Every chapter in Thessalonians ends with the coming of the Lord. This book is about the coming of the Lord, Him meeting us in the air, before He sends forth His wrath on a Christ rejecting world. Before His wrath comes down, we must come up.

(Revelation 6:16 KJV) And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:

(Revelation 6:17 KJV) For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?

This is the key of the book, and the key of life, to work backwards from heaven and the imminent return of Jesus. Church History is horrible. Dark Ages and Crusader period, horrible. But, the model church lived in the expectancy of Christ imminent return and that heaven is near. The horrible periods of church history were because they didn't believe in the immediate return of Jesus or that heaven was near.

Today, marriages, relationships, personal lives are suffering the same because people don't believe heaven is near, they grow weary of doing good, laboring in love, serving the true and living God. Heaven is near, and let heaven put life in perspective.

and to wait

They wait, waiting is not to be passive. The Greek word here was used for a mother waiting for her child to be born. Like today, a mother while with child is getting the room painted, diapers stocked, baby bottles and blankets in house. She has an active waiting, preparing for the coming baby.

As we wait, let us wait actively, growing in our faith, and laboring in love for each other and the world around us. Lets work backwards from heaven.

Chapter Two

Recap: Paul himself founded the church in Thessalonica on his second missionary journey (Acts 17:1-9). He had received a vision to go to Macedonia, which is modern day Greece. They first went to Philippi, then after being driven out of there, they went west about 50 miles to Thessalonica. Paul was only in the city of Thessalonica a short time, just 3 weeks (3 Sabbaths) but in those short three weeks a church was birthed. Paul is now in Corinth, its only a few months later, less than a year later, and he writes to them to encourage and strengthen them.

Paul was very proud of this church, because they were already known through the region for three characteristics, their faith, their love, and their hope. The Study of this book, is the study of the model church, and the mature Christian.

Verse 3 of chapter one gives us the Outline Structure of this Epistle:

(1 Thessalonians 1:3 NKJV) remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father,

The general outline of this book follows the same:

The Faith of the Church – Chapters 1-3

The Love of the Church – Chapter 4

The Hope of the Church – Chapter 5

Every chapter in this book talks about the rapture and coming of the Lord.

Again, Here folks is the secret of life:

Live life backwards, when you realize you will spend forever in heaven, and you have that in your mind and in your heart, then you work back from that point and life makes tremendous sense. Tragedy, difficulties, why is this happening, it all makes sense when we work backwards from heaven. We know the big picture - Christ Wins. We know this is preparing us to rule and reign with Christ during the millennial reign. We studied Revelation we know the craziness the world will go through for that seven-year period, and we know that it things will continue to get worse leading up to that. We can relax when everyone is bummed and depressed because we know the big picture. We have perspective in the face of tragedy and trials, while the world may be freaking out.

(1 Thessalonians 2:1 NKJV) For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain.

(1 Thessalonians 2:2 NKJV) But even after we had suffered before and were spitefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much conflict.

(1 Thessalonians 2:3 NKJV) For our exhortation did not come from error or uncleanness, nor was it in deceit.

(1 Thessalonians 2:4 NKJV) But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts.

(1 Thessalonians 2:5 NKJV) For neither at any time did we use flattering words, as you know, nor a cloak for covetousness; God is witness.

Paul was run out of town in Philippi after he had been beaten and wrongly imprisoned. He comes to Thessalonica, starts preaching again, and comes under attack. His charge, verse 3 of Acts 17 – what he preached turned the world upside down, the result, he was run out of town again.

(Acts 17:1 NKJV) Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews.....

(Acts 17:6 NKJV) But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, "These who have turned the world upside down have come here too.

Paul called it what it was, sin. He called them to repentance. He called them from their idols and personal sins. The resultant, he was hated and persecuted by many.

There are people who are living contrary to God's word. We have compassion for them, but then.....they come against us, at that moment, our ministry to them is decided, how will we treat them, how will we respond to them. People living in their sin, will often be the person that rises up against us, maybe even attacking us. We present the word, and they call us judgmental, and then start to judge us, pointing out all of our failures or failings. It is funny, they say we are being judgmental, but truly isn't that what they are doing to us. They judge us saying we are Bible thumpers, they bring up all of our faults, they put us into a group and categorize us.

But hear O'Christian the lesson and application for us, Paul never changed his message, he never tuned it in to make it pleasing to all.

We have to call it for what it is, sin is sin, if we water it down, we do them the greatest injustice. Proclaim the full gospel, do not be afraid of man's reactions or upsetting them, or being disliked. When you live life backwards, from heaven – OR NO HEAVEN – the fear of them going to hell will supersede the fear of them being upset with you.

The young Jeremiah was called to preach:

(Jeremiah 1:1 NKJV) The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiyah, of the priests who were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin,

(Jeremiah 1:2 NKJV) to whom the word of the LORD came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign.

(Jeremiah 1:3 NKJV) It came also in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, until the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah the son of Josiah, king of Judah, until the carrying away of Jerusalem captive in the fifth month.

(Jeremiah 1:4 NKJV) Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying:

(Jeremiah 1:5 NKJV) "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; Before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations."

(Jeremiah 1:6 NKJV) Then said I: "Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, I cannot speak, for I am a youth."

(Jeremiah 1:7 NKJV) But the LORD said to me: "Do not say, 'I am a youth,' For you shall go to all to whom I send you, And whatever I command you, you shall speak.

(Jeremiah 1:8 NKJV) Do not be afraid of their faces, For I am with you to deliver you," says the LORD.

(Jeremiah 1:9 NKJV) Then the LORD put forth His hand and touched my mouth, and the LORD said to me: "Behold, I have put My words in your mouth.

(Jeremiah 1:10 NKJV) See, I have this day set you over the nations and over the kingdoms, To root out and to pull down, To destroy and to throw down, To build and to plant."

Later God warns him, to proclaim the whole message. He said Jeremiah if you pull punches, fail to share the whole story, are ashamed of the gospel, the Lord said Jeremiah I will not be with you

(Jeremiah 1:16 NRSV) And I will utter my judgments against them, for all their wickedness in forsaking me; they have made offerings to other gods, and worshiped the works of their own hands.

(Jeremiah 1:17 NRSV) But you, gird up your loins; stand up and tell them everything that I command you. Do not break down before them, or I will break you before them.

If you fail to proclaim the whole gospel, you will become ashamed, and they will find fault in your message, for the gospel is a unit. The gospel only works when it is presented in its fullness. Leave a piece out and it doesn't make sense. Now I'm not talking when you are wetting their whistle, giving them snippets of His love and wonderfulness. I'm talking when you get to that moment when they say what is this all about, what do you mean to be saved, that I need to be saved.

Leave holes and people will pick it apart. Example, the theory of evolution: there are so many holes and open loops in it, any student can blow it apart and leave them looking foolish (however the open loop works for them, so you can't nail them down on a specific point, and they can continue to revise it.).

The gospel is made to be presented in its entirety, leaves holes and people will pick it apart. Present it in its fullness and there are no loops, only those who refuse to repent and believe. It's the 5ps and nothing less Tell people Jesus died for you, they whats that mean? If you first didn't tell them there was a problem, and that was that they offended the Holy God, they don't see a need for a savior. Don't tell them about the penalty, then they see no need to escape it. Just presenting God as a nice guy, and someone you can count on, without telling them He is also a God of judgment, leaves Christianity as the crutch they accuse us need. Yes it is a crutch, but first it is a lifeboat, the crutch is the added benefit that comes in the deal.

Bottom line, trying to make the gospel acceptable to them will leave holes and leave us embarrassed. The gospel isn't to make God acceptable to man, but man acceptable to the Holy God.

(1 Thessalonians 2:5 NKJV) For neither at any time did we use flattering words, as you know, nor a cloak for covetousness; God is witness.

(1 Thessalonians 2:6 NKJV) Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, when we might have made demands as apostles of Christ.

Paul saying we weren't trying to gain anything from you, we came in honesty and sincerity. We could have, but didn't. Paul came to them, for them. God called him to them. Paul wasn't looking to build the Greater Paul Evangelical Organization, he wasn't seeking or coveting, he was just doing what God called him to do.

The simple definition of covetousness is to "desire something that is not from the Lord." How do I know when I am coveting? It doesn't line up with God's Word, and/or I won't pray about, and/or I don't have peace about it.

Be careful about getting yourself into something you weren't called for, but you coveted. Beware or you will be like King Jehosaphat that we read of in 2 Chronicles 17-20

Jehosaphat was a great king, but made a terrible mistake, his coveting made him do foolish things he wasn't called to do.. King Ahab the wicked king of Israel was having trouble with the Syrians, so he called king Jehosaphat the king of Judah and said lets join forces and fight the Syrians, Jehosaphat says ok, lets do it. Bad move king, here's his story:

Jehosaphat was the king of Judah, the scripture say that the Lord was with him. Jehosaphat we read planted churches and sent out missionaries:

(2 Chronicles 17:1 NKJV) Then Jehoshaphat his son reigned in his place, and strengthened himself against Israel.

(2 Chronicles 17:2 NKJV) And he placed troops in all the fortified cities of Judah, and set garrisons in the land of Judah and in the cities of Ephraim which Asa his father had taken.

(2 Chronicles 17:3 NKJV) Now the LORD was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the former ways of his father David; he did not seek the Baals,

(2 Chronicles 17:4 NKJV) but sought the God of his father, and walked in His commandments and not according to the acts of Israel.

(2 Chronicles 17:5 NKJV) Therefore the LORD established the kingdom in his hand; and all Judah gave presents to Jehoshaphat, and he had riches and honor in abundance.

(2 Chronicles 17:6 NKJV) And his heart took delight in the ways of the LORD; moreover he removed the high places and wooden images from Judah.

(2 Chronicles 17:7 NKJV) Also in the third year of his reign he sent his leaders, Ben-Hail, Obadiah, Zechariah, Nethanel, and Michaiah, to teach in the cities of Judah.

(2 Chronicles 17:8 NKJV) And with them he sent Levites: Shemaiah, Nethaniah, Zebadiah, Asahel, Shemiramoth, Jehonathan, Adonijah, Tobijah, and Tobadonijah; the Levites; and with them Elishama and Jehoram, the priests.

(2 Chronicles 17:9 NKJV) So they taught in Judah, and had the Book of the Law of the LORD with them; they went throughout all the cities of Judah and taught the people.

Jehosaphat was a spiritual; leader. I suggest to you, that Jehosaphat wasn't called to be a warrior, rather he coveted to be in the battle so he could say I am a battle proven king.

Up to this point he had never gone to battle:

(2 Chronicles 17:10 NKJV) And the fear of the LORD fell on all the kingdoms of the lands that were around Judah, so that they did not make war against Jehoshaphat.

(2 Chronicles 17:11 NKJV) Also some of the Philistines brought Jehoshaphat presents and silver as tribute; and the Arabians brought him flocks, seven thousand seven hundred rams and seven thousand seven hundred male goats.

Jehosaphat had all these mighty men of war around him (1.16 million man army), but no battles because everyone was afraid, not of him, but the Lord. Maybe he watched too many Rambo movies, or too much Rumsfeld interview, or too much CNN footage of how a mighty army rolls over its adversaries. I believe he desired to be a war hero, but that wasn't what God called him to be, for God clearly called him to be a spiritual leader, and God would cast fear into his enemies that they would not war against him.

(2 Chronicles 17:12 NKJV) So Jehoshaphat became increasingly powerful, and he built fortresses and storage cities in Judah.

(2 Chronicles 17:13 NKJV) He had much property in the cities of Judah; and the men of war, mighty men of valor, were in Jerusalem.

(2 Chronicles 17:14 NKJV) These are their numbers, according to their fathers' houses. Of Judah, the captains of thousands: Adnah the captain, and with him three hundred thousand mighty men of valor;

(2 Chronicles 17:15 NKJV) and next to him was Jehohanan the captain, and with him two hundred and eighty thousand;

(2 Chronicles 17:16 NKJV) and next to him was Amasiah the son of Zichri, who willingly offered himself to the LORD, and with him two hundred thousand mighty men of valor.

(2 Chronicles 17:17 NKJV) Of Benjamin: Eliada a mighty man of valor, and with him two hundred thousand men armed with bow and shield;

(2 Chronicles 17:18 NKJV) and next to him was Jehozabad, and with him one hundred and eighty thousand prepared for war.

(2 Chronicles 17:19 NKJV) These served the king, besides those the king put in the fortified cities throughout all Judah.

Here is a common mistake covetousness will do to you, to make unions with the ungodly. The Lord never called Jehosaphat to be in union, communion, or fellowship with Ahab. His first mistake was aligning himself with a king who did not follow the ways of the Lord. So his covetousness makes him do something foolish, he makes an alliance with the world, and he goes and follows after something that the Lord didn't call him to:

(2 Chronicles 18:1 NKJV) Jehoshaphat had riches and honor in abundance; and by marriage he allied himself with Ahab.

(2 Chronicles 18:2 NKJV) After some years he went down to visit Ahab in Samaria; and Ahab killed sheep and oxen in abundance for him and the people who were with him, and persuaded him to go up with him to Ramoth Gilead.

(2 Chronicles 18:3 NKJV) So Ahab king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat king of Judah, "Will you go with me against Ramoth Gilead?" And he answered him, "I am as you are, and my people as your people; we will be with you in the war."

He doesn't seek the Lord on his own, he asks the wicked to go seek the Lord. The world covets, it will always be easy to have them confirm and lead you into your covetousness. Covetousness will draw you away from seeking the Lord. Why didn't he inquire of the Lord himself, or call on the priests he had established.

(2 Chronicles 18:4 NKJV) And Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, "Please inquire for the word of the LORD today."

(2 Chronicles 18:5 NKJV) Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, four hundred men, and said to them, "Shall we go to war against Ramoth Gilead, or shall I refrain?" And they said, "Go up, for God will deliver it into the king's hand."

(2 Chronicles 18:6 NKJV) But Jehoshaphat said, "Is there not still a prophet of the LORD here, that we may inquire of Him?"

(2 Chronicles 18:7 NKJV) So the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "There is still one man by whom we may inquire of the LORD; but I hate him, because he never prophesies good concerning me, but always evil. He is Micaiah the son of Imla." And Jehoshaphat said, "Let not the king say such things!"

(2 Chronicles 18:8 NKJV) Then the king of Israel called one of his officers and said, "Bring Micaiah the son of Imla quickly!"

(2 Chronicles 18:9 NKJV) The king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah, clothed in their robes, sat each on his throne; and they sat at a threshing floor at the entrance of the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets prophesied before them.

(2 Chronicles 18:10 NKJV) Now Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah had made horns of iron for himself; and he said, "Thus says the LORD: 'With these you shall gore the Syrians until they are destroyed.'"

(2 Chronicles 18:11 NKJV) And all the prophets prophesied so, saying, "Go up to Ramoth Gilead and prosper, for the LORD will deliver it into the king's hand."

(2 Chronicles 18:12 NKJV) Then the messenger who had gone to call Micaiah spoke to him, saying, "Now listen, the words of the prophets with one accord encourage the king. Therefore please let your word be like the word of one of them, and speak encouragement."

(2 Chronicles 18:13 NKJV) And Micaiah said, "As the LORD lives, whatever my God says, that I will speak."

(2 Chronicles 18:14 NKJV) Then he came to the king; and the king said to him, "Micaiah, shall we go to war against Ramoth Gilead, or shall I refrain?" And he said, "Go and prosper, and they shall be delivered into your hand!"

(2 Chronicles 18:15 NKJV) So the king said to him, "How many times shall I make you swear that you tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the LORD?"

(2 Chronicles 18:16 NKJV) Then he said, "I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, as sheep that have no shepherd. And the LORD said, 'These have no master. Let each return to his house in peace.'"

(2 Chronicles 18:17 NKJV) And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "Did I not tell you he would not prophesy good concerning me, but evil?"

(2 Chronicles 18:18 NKJV) Then Micaiah said, "Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing on His right hand and His left.

(2 Chronicles 18:19 NKJV) "And the LORD said, 'Who will persuade Ahab king of Israel to go up, that he may fall at Ramoth Gilead?' So one spoke in this manner, and another spoke in that manner.

(2 Chronicles 18:20 NKJV) "Then a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD, and said, 'I will persuade him.' The LORD said to him, 'In what way?'

(2 Chronicles 18:21 NKJV) "So he said, 'I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.' And the Lord said, 'You shall persuade him and also prevail; go out and do so.'

(2 Chronicles 18:22 NKJV) "Therefore look! The LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouth of these prophets of yours, and the LORD has declared disaster against you."

(2 Chronicles 18:23 NKJV) Then Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah went near and struck Micaiah on the cheek, and said, "Which way did the spirit from the LORD go from me to speak to you?"

(2 Chronicles 18:24 NKJV) And Micaiah said, "Indeed you shall see on that day when you go into an inner chamber to hide!"

(2 Chronicles 18:25 NKJV) Then the king of Israel said, "Take Micaiah, and return him to Amon the governor of the city and to Joash the king's son;

(2 Chronicles 18:26 NKJV) "and say, 'Thus says the king: "Put this fellow in prison, and feed him with bread of affliction and water of affliction until I return in peace.'"

(2 Chronicles 18:27 NKJV) Then Micaiah said, "If you ever return in peace, the LORD has not spoken by me." And he said, "Take heed, all you people!"

(2 Chronicles 18:28 NKJV) So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went up to Ramoth Gilead.

The war was between Ahab's Israel versus the Syrian forces. Now they go to battle and King Ahab says you wear your gear (your robe and crown), but I'll go in disguise. Coveting will blind you.....in Jehosapahts case, stupid. Hey Beav I'm gona go in disguise, Gee Wally, ok that sounds like a great plan.

(2 Chronicles 18:29 NKJV) And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "I will disguise myself and go into battle; but you put on your robes." So the king of Israel disguised himself, and they went into battle.

Now Jehosaphat has what he coveted, a sword in his hand, riding high on his horse (cause everyone else would be on foot). Warriors are passing by all look at the king as they pass, he nods at them as his mind is entertained with what the history books will write about him, and the girls will be in awe when he comes home to a fanfare parade.

Now the Syrian commander gave the order, don't fight the other men, just go for the king, topple the head of the regime, and the rest of the regime will quit. Gulf War 2 battle strategy isn't new, its thousands of years old. I imagine Jehosaphat was looking pretty good, feeling pretty powerful, with everyone saying howdy king, until the battle started, and then everyone was flailing arrows at him, at that point he must have been saying wait a minute, I'm not the king of Israel, Ahab is the guy you want. His coveteous dream didn't include this reality, arrows by the thousands all for him.....reality never lives up to the dream and he cries get me out of here Lord.

(2 Chronicles 18:30 NKJV) Now the king of Syria had commanded the captains of the chariots who were with him, saying, "Fight with no one small or great, but only with the king of Israel."

(2 Chronicles 18:31 NKJV) So it was, when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, that they said, "It is the king of Israel!" Therefore they surrounded him to attack; but Jehoshaphat cried out, and the LORD helped him, and God diverted them from him.

(2 Chronicles 18:32 NKJV) For so it was, when the captains of the chariots saw that it was not the king of Israel, that they turned back from pursuing him.

*(2 Chronicles 18:33 NKJV) Now a certain man drew a bow at random, and struck the king of Israel between the joints of his armor. So he said to the driver of his chariot, "Turn around and take me out of the battle, for I am wounded."
(2 Chronicles 18:34 NKJV) The battle increased that day, and the king of Israel propped himself up in his chariot facing the Syrians until evening; and about the time of sunset he died.*

The Lord spares Jehosaphat, and then rebukes him.

*(2 Chronicles 19:1 NKJV) Then Jehoshaphat the king of Judah returned safely to his house in Jerusalem.
(2 Chronicles 19:2 NKJV) And Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him, and said to King Jehoshaphat, "Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the LORD? Therefore the wrath of the LORD is upon you.
(2 Chronicles 19:3 NKJV) "Nevertheless good things are found in you, in that you have removed the wooden images from the land, and have prepared your heart to seek God."
(2 Chronicles 19:4 NKJV) So Jehoshaphat dwelt at Jerusalem; and he went out again among the people from Beersheba to the mountains of Ephraim, and brought them back to the LORD God of their fathers.
(2 Chronicles 19:5 NKJV) Then he set judges in the land throughout all the fortified cities of Judah, city by city,
(2 Chronicles 19:6 NKJV) and said to the judges, "Take heed to what you are doing, for you do not judge for man but for the LORD, who is with you in the judgment.
(2 Chronicles 19:7 NKJV) "Now therefore, let the fear of the LORD be upon you; take care and do it, for there is no iniquity with the LORD our God, no partiality, nor taking of bribes."
(2 Chronicles 19:8 NKJV) Moreover in Jerusalem, for the judgment of the LORD and for controversies, Jehoshaphat appointed some of the Levites and priests, and some of the chief fathers of Israel, when they returned to Jerusalem.
(2 Chronicles 19:9 NKJV) And he commanded them, saying, "Thus you shall act in the fear of the LORD, faithfully and with a loyal heart:
(2 Chronicles 19:10 NKJV) "Whatever case comes to you from your brethren who dwell in their cities, whether of bloodshed or offenses against law or commandment, against statutes or ordinances, you shall warn them, lest they trespass against the LORD and wrath come upon you and your brethren. Do this, and you will not be guilty.
(2 Chronicles 19:11 NKJV) "And take notice: Amariah the chief priest is over you in all matters of the LORD; and Zebadiah the son of Ishmael, the ruler of the house of Judah, for all the king's matters; also the Levites will be officials before you. Behave courageously, and the LORD will be with the good."*

And here is my point that Jehosaphat wasn't called be a warrior, because the next battle comes, Jehosaphat is terrified, he remembers the last battle, and knows that is not where he wants to be, so what does he do? He Seeks the Lord, he proclaims a fast throughout the whole kingdom.

*(2 Chronicles 20:1 NKJV) It happened after this that the people of Moab with the people of Ammon, and others with them besides the Ammonites, came to battle against Jehoshaphat.
(2 Chronicles 20:2 NKJV) Then some came and told Jehoshaphat, saying, "A great multitude is coming against you from beyond the sea, from Syria; and they are in Hazazon Tamar" (which is En Gedi).
(2 Chronicles 20:3 NKJV) And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah.
(2 Chronicles 20:4 NKJV) So Judah gathered together to ask help from the LORD; and from all the cities of Judah they came to seek the LORD.
(2 Chronicles 20:5 NKJV) Then Jehoshaphat stood in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the LORD, before the new court,*

Now he is not coveting something He wasn't called to, instead he calls on the power of the Lord:

*(2 Chronicles 20:6 NKJV) and said: "O LORD God of our fathers, are You not God in heaven, and do You not rule over all the kingdoms of the nations, and in Your hand is there not power and might, so that no one is able to withstand You?
(2 Chronicles 20:7 NKJV) "Are You not our God, who drove out the inhabitants of this land before Your people Israel, and gave it to the descendants of Abraham Your friend forever?
(2 Chronicles 20:8 NKJV) "And they dwell in it, and have built You a sanctuary in it for Your name, saying,
(2 Chronicles 20:9 NKJV) "If disaster comes upon us; sword, judgment, pestilence, or famine; we will stand before this temple and in Your presence (for Your name is in this temple), and cry out to You in our affliction, and You will hear and save."
(2 Chronicles 20:10 NKJV) "And now, here are the people of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir; whom You would not let Israel invade when they came out of the land of Egypt, but they turned from them and did not destroy them;
(2 Chronicles 20:11 NKJV) "here they are, rewarding us by coming to throw us out of Your possession which You have given us to inherit.
(2 Chronicles 20:12 NKJV) "O our God, will You not judge them? For we have no power against this great multitude that is coming against us; nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are upon You."*

And here we clearly see what Jehosaphat was called to be, to lead his nation to stand before the Lord. Stick with what lines up with the Word, and what works in your life.

(2 Chronicles 20:13 NKJV) Now all Judah, with their little ones, their wives, and their children, stood before the LORD.

(2 Chronicles 20:14 NKJV) Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, in the midst of the assembly.

The resultant, God's power in their lives, and an enemy that would be defeated:

(2 Chronicles 20:15 NKJV) And he said, "Listen, all you of Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem, and you, King Jehoshaphat! Thus says the LORD to you: 'Do not be afraid nor dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God's.

(2 Chronicles 20:16 NKJV) 'Tomorrow go down against them. They will surely come up by the Ascent of Ziz, and you will find them at the end of the brook before the Wilderness of Jeruel.

(2 Chronicles 20:17 NKJV) 'You will not need to fight in this battle. Position yourselves, stand still and see the salvation of the LORD, who is with you, O Judah and Jerusalem!' Do not fear or be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them, for the LORD is with you."

(2 Chronicles 20:18 NKJV) And Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground, and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem bowed before the LORD, worshiping the LORD.

(2 Chronicles 20:19 NKJV) Then the Levites of the children of the Kohathites and of the children of the Korahites stood up to praise the LORD God of Israel with voices loud and high.

(2 Chronicles 20:20 NKJV) So they rose early in the morning and went out into the Wilderness of Tekoa; and as they went out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, "Hear me, O Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem: Believe in the LORD your God, and you shall be established; believe His prophets, and you shall prosper."

(2 Chronicles 20:21 NKJV) And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed those who should sing to the LORD, and who should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army and were saying: "Praise the LORD, For His mercy endures forever."

They didn't even have to battle, the Lord battled for them

(2 Chronicles 20:22 NKJV) Now when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushes against the people of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah; and they were defeated.

(2 Chronicles 20:23 NKJV) For the people of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of Mount Seir to utterly kill and destroy them. And when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, they helped to destroy one another.

(2 Chronicles 20:24 NKJV) So when Judah came to a place overlooking the wilderness, they looked toward the multitude; and there were their dead bodies, fallen on the earth. No one had escaped.

When you are doing what God called you to do, things just work, they flow, and we get to take the spoils:

(2 Chronicles 20:25 NKJV) When Jehoshaphat and his people came to take away their spoil, they found among them an abundance of valuables on the dead bodies, and precious jewelry, which they stripped off for themselves, more than they could carry away; and they were three days gathering the spoil because there was so much.

It leaves you singing for joy, doing what the Lord has established you to do, and to be. If you are in a place you have coveted and strive to be in, things won't flow, things won't work, you will constantly be struggling to stay where you are at, and there will be no joy, no song in your heart:

(2 Chronicles 20:26 NKJV) And on the fourth day they assembled in the Valley of Berachah, for there they blessed the LORD; therefore the name of that place was called The Valley of Berachah until this day.

(2 Chronicles 20:27 NKJV) Then they returned, every man of Judah and Jerusalem, with Jehoshaphat in front of them, to go back to Jerusalem with joy, for the LORD had made them rejoice over their enemies.

(2 Chronicles 20:28 NKJV) So they came to Jerusalem, with stringed instruments and harps and trumpets, to the house of the LORD.

Finally Jehosaphat is back where he started from in the beginning, people feared the Lord, and left them alone:

(2 Chronicles 20:29 NKJV) And the fear of God was on all the kingdoms of those countries when they heard that the LORD had fought against the enemies of Israel.

(2 Chronicles 20:30 NKJV) Then the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet, for his God gave him rest all around.

(2 Chronicles 20:31 NKJV) So Jehoshaphat was king over Judah. He was thirty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Azubah the daughter of Shilhi.

(2 Chronicles 20:32 NKJV) And he walked in the way of his father Asa, and did not turn aside from it, doing what was right in the sight of the LORD.

Unfortunately, how quickly he forgot:

(2 Chronicles 20:33 NKJV) Nevertheless the high places were not taken away, for as yet the people had not directed their hearts to the God of their fathers.

(2 Chronicles 20:34 NKJV) Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, first and last, indeed they are written in the book of Jehu the son of Hanani, which is mentioned in the book of the kings of Israel.

(2 Chronicles 20:35 NKJV) After this Jehoshaphat king of Judah allied himself with Ahaziah king of Israel, who acted very wickedly.

(2 Chronicles 20:36 NKJV) And he allied himself with him to make ships to go to Tarshish, and they made the ships in Ezion Geber.

(2 Chronicles 20:37 NKJV) But Eliezer the son of Dodavah of Mareshah prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, "Because you have allied yourself with Ahaziah, the LORD has destroyed your works." Then the ships were wrecked, so that they were not able to go to Tarshish.

Watch out for coveting someone else's position, it could be a position of ministry, or someone else's job, someone else's spouse, or on the football team. The wife you want may be based on the measurements you desire, not the quality of spirituality she has blessed you with over the years. That job you want may cause you nothing but stress and struggle, because it will never flow or work for you because it wasn't meant for you, there for you strive to get and have to strive to maintain it. The unsaved boy's arrows may come in the form of STD.

You may say I will use whatever flattery, treachery, or whatever it takes to get that position. What you will find is that you become a great big target, and all of sudden arrows are coming at you, and the enemy coming at ya. You then say I didn't ask for this, but you did when you coveted that position, and used means other than the Lords way to get there. Let God raise you up.

(1 Thessalonians 2:7 NKJV) But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children.

(1 Thessalonians 2:8 NKJV) So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us.

(1 Thessalonians 2:9 NKJV) For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God.

Paul ministered full-time, and worked full-time. No one can deny the heart of a volunteer

(1 Thessalonians 2:10 NKJV) You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe;

(1 Thessalonians 2:11 NKJV) as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children,

Notice, here is family

Three things he remembers of them:

v.7 - Like a mother up all night

v.9 - We were working brothers, so we can be relatable to you

v.11 - We were a challenging father, sometimes we have to be tough and exhort.

v.7 - Like a mother – sometimes up all night

(1 Thessalonians 2:7 NKJV) But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children.

The word nurse here means "a nursing mother," like a mother hen. This is Paul's expression to them, I've been a nursing mother, a mother bird to you. Oh the gentleness of Paul. He was a tender as a mother to them.

Jesus said, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" (Matt. 23:37). Jesus identifies Himself in many ways in

Scripture. He calls Himself the Good Shepherd who gave His life for the sheep. He protects His sheep, and someday He is going to gather them all into a fold where they will be safe with Him. Then He also uses this idea of the mother hen with her little chicks.

I read a story about a farmer who had a fire and lost all his livestock. In the morning he was walking the burnt area and came across his hen. He said he kicked the hen with his foot, and out came from underneath her outstretched wings, all her little chicks. How many times the Lord Jesus says to us, "Just come in under My wings."

Paul was that kind of minister. He loved the Thessalonians with a mother's love. They were dear to him. There are still ministers like that today. Maybe they aren't all great expositors, but they believe the Word of God and preach it. Such godly and experienced pastors are able to counsel people who are in need of help. You don't need to be afraid to sit down and open your heart to such a man and let him help you

v.9 - We were working brothers - so we can be relatable to you

(1 Thessalonians 2:9 NKJV) For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God.

I remember growing up, me and my brother, we shared everything. We shared a room, clothes, bikes, sports equipment, everything. We would fight and compete to the point we were warring. But now if someone else came against my brother, or me, look out for the lion was unleashed – no one touches my brother. Brothers/sisters have a bond, united by the same blood, they can relate to each other. Paul came and worked side by side with the people of this church. He was relateable to them. There are some things my mother just doesn't understand, nor my father, but immediately my brother does. Paul lived among the people, he hung out with them. There is special place for that in our Christian relationships today.

v.11 - We were a challenging father - sometimes we have to be tough and exhort.

(1 Thessalonians 2:11 NKJV) as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children,

Paul charged them. This has a note of severity in it – it involves discipline.

It is tough to be the tough guy. I would love to just be the brother to my son, just hanging out, at times we do, but first and foremost God has called me to be a father, therefore I have to correct and speak the hard truth – why, for the next verse, that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

We need to be all of these to each other. Sometimes just comforting as a mother, other times just being there as a brother, and other times being stern and direct as a father.

(1 Thessalonians 2:12 NKJV) that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

(1 Thessalonians 2:13 NKJV) For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.

Received not as from man, but from God. When you receive it as from God, then it works, it works effectively in you.

Two receives in this verse.

One is to accept - paralambano, par-al-am-ban'-o

The other means to embrace whole heartedly - dechomai, dekh'-om-ahee.

When you receive (#2, and say yes I embrace this, I need this in my life, I believe it, you will guarantee move into maturity if you do this.

Those who won't make time for the word will not grow in maturity and are destined to make the same mistakes over and over. You will dry up in your walk. The church here in Thessalonica did so well because they embraced it wholeheartedly.

Give me patience people pray, they someone says ohh don't ask for that because then God will give you trials. It makes god sound like some cosmic bully who likes to see people suffer. Your patience will come from peace, your peace will come from embracing god fully. Live life backwards and you will find amazing patience.

(1 Thessalonians 2:14 NKJV) For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus. For you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen, just as they did from the Judeans,

(1 Thessalonians 2:15 NKJV) who killed both the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they do not please God and are contrary to all men,

(1 Thessalonians 2:16 NKJV) forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved, so as always to fill up the measure of their sins; but wrath has come upon them to the uttermost.

(1 Thessalonians 2:17 NKJV) But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavored more eagerly to see your face with great desire.

(1 Thessalonians 2:18 NKJV) Therefore we wanted to come to you; even I, Paul, time and again; but Satan hindered us.

Couldn't wait to see you so we could fellowship, but Satan hindered us. We have a very real adversary that can hinder us from reaching others, he can make us ill, our kids ill, or have the best TV shows on the same night as bible study. Don't underestimate his ability to hinder us.

Remember the story of Daniel, he had to wait on his prayer answer.

(1 Thessalonians 2:19 NKJV) For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?

There are 5 crowns spoken of in the bible:

Incorruption –

(1 Corinthians 9:25 NKJV) And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.

Life –

(James 1:12 NKJV) Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

Rejoicing –

(1 Thessalonians 2:19 NKJV) For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?

Glory –

(1 Peter 5:1 NKJV) The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed;

(1 Peter 5:2 NKJV) Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly;

(1 Peter 5:3 NKJV) nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock;

(1 Peter 5:4 NKJV) and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.

Righteousness –

(2 Timothy 4:8 NKJV) Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus

(Hebrews 12:2 NKJV) looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

The greatest joy in the world is seeing others come to Christ because of our witness, To watch people mature and break free from bondage and go forth in their walk.

Hey take your lumps and bruises, it will be worth it.

If you are grumpy and down all the time, ask yourself have I been giving out the word, or do I get with family and friends and not talk about the Lord because it upsets them, so that when you leave nothing has been added to you that lifts you up. Once we reach the point where we are afraid to offend people, we quit sharing, then we get bummed, lose our joy, and become stagnant.

Then we say I need some experience to renew my joy, then you are open top all kinds of stuff

at His coming?

Paul wrote this believing the Lord was coming soon, read his letters years later, and He believed it just the same.

I've only been saved 12 years but have been listening to Pastor Chuck for 25 years. One thing that stands out to me is how I listen to his tapes from 1977, and sure in his voice was the soon return of Jesus, you can sense the excitement in his soul. I met him, and talked with him, listen to him teach, and he is even more excited about the soon return of Jesus Christ

(1 Thessalonians 2:20 NKJV) For you are our glory and joy.

Chapter Three

Recap: Paul himself founded the church in Thessalonica on his second missionary journey (Acts 17:1-9). He had received a vision to go to Macedonia, which is modern day Greece. They first went to Philippi, then after being driven out of there, they went west about 50 miles to Thessalonica. Paul was only in the city of Thessalonica a short time, just 3 weeks (3 Sabbaths) but in those short three weeks a church was birthed. Paul is now in Corinth, its only a few months later, less than a year later, and he writes to them to encourage and strengthen them.

Paul was very proud of this church, because they were already known through the region for three characteristics, their faith, their love, and their hope. The Study of this book, is the study of the model church, and the mature Christian.

Verse 3 of chapter one gives us the Outline Structure of this Epistle:

(1 Thessalonians 1:3 NKJV) remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father,

The general outline of this book follows the same:

The Faith of the Church – Chapters 1-3

The Love of the Church – Chapter 4

The Hope of the Church – Chapter 5

Every chapter in this book talks about the rapture and coming of the Lord.

Again, Here folks is the secret of life:

Live life backwards, when you realize you will spend forever in heaven, and you have that in your mind and in your heart, then you work back from that point and life makes tremendous sense. Tragedy, difficulties, why is this happening, it all makes sense when we work backwards from heaven. We know the big picture - Christ Wins. We know this is preparing us to rule and reign with Christ during the millennial reign. We studied Revelation we know the craziness the world will go through for that seven-year period, and we know that it things will continue to get worse leading up to that. We can relax when everyone is bummed and depressed because we know the big picture. We have perspective in the face of tragedy and trials, while the world may be freaking out.

**(1 Thessalonians 3:1 NKJV) Therefore, when we could no longer endure it, we thought it good to be left in Athens alone,
(1 Thessalonians 3:2 NKJV) and sent Timothy, our brother and minister of God, and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you and encourage you concerning your faith,**

We ended chapter two with Paul saying I wanted to come to you but Satan has hindered me. Paul say's we couldn't stand it anymore, we have to know how are you doing, therefore even though I can't come I'm sending Timothy, I just have to know how you are doing.

Here we have a description of Timothy: A Brother, A Minister of God, A Fellow Laborer:

A Brother:

We studied what it was to be a brother last study. A brother can relate like no one can.

A Minister of God:

The word minister, diakonos, dee-ak'-on-os; (to run on errands;); an attendant, i.e. (gen.) a waiter (at table or in other menial duties); a teacher and pastor (a deacon or deaconess):--deacon, minister, servant.

The word minister means servant. Our culture has it all wrong, people like to be called Reverend, which means to be respected, it means servant. Now we don't call waiters Reverend, we don't call Flight Attendants Reverend, the guy who pumps our gas at full service, or the bellhop at hotels. Unfortunately the world, and much of the church, has lost the true meaning of what a minister truly is, he/she is a servant.

Ministers are not meant to be served, but to serve others. We are all ministers, for we are all to be servants of others.

First use of this word in the Bible:

(Matthew 20:25 KJV) But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them.

(Matthew 20:26 KJV) But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister;

(Matthew 20:27 KJV) And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant:

(Matthew 20:28 KJV) Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

This is a mistake by people who want to be used by the Lord for they can fall into the trap of taking advantage of the Title and position – and be served rather than serving; they lose relatability to the people they are to be serving. Timothy was a brother, he related to the people.

I remember the first funeral I did. I called to talk to the funeral home, and they asked me what is my official name so they can put it on the “officiating record”. I said Ray Bollas, they said is that Father Ray, I said no, they said is it Reverend Ray, I said no, they said, is it the most Most Reverend Ray Bollas. Obviously they were looking for a Title. I said well if you want to be real formal, you can call me Raymond.....of course he replies, Reverend Raymond.

A Fellow Laborer:

Literally means to be a Team Player. You will never be a team player if you are not first a brother, and servant. These are three essential qualities to have if you want to be use by the Lord in your home, workplace or at your school. As we studied in our first study, Paul was no lone ranger, nor should we be. There has to be a linkage between the body. I might also add, if God has a future ministry for you, be faithful to the one He has you in now. If you know God is moving you out of one ministry and into another, be faithful to the one you are in, be a team player until your season is over

(1 Thessalonians 3:3 NKJV) that no one should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this.

(1 Thessalonians 3:4 NKJV) For, in fact, we told you before when we were with you that we would suffer tribulation, just as it happened, and you know.

Paul says don't be bummed nor surprised when you hear we have afflictions and problems. Paul is going to dispel the ole “of course you're happy, why shouldn't you be happy, you got it all.” Then they go on with the; you got that job, that mate, those looks, that.....

Nobody is gona charge Paul with those things, he knows hard times, he can relate to those who are joyous, and those who are suffering,

yourselves know that we are appointed to this

Appointed, it was scheduled in Paul's Day Planner that he would suffer much tribulation.

The Lord told Paul from the beginning that he would suffer many things for the Lord:

*(Acts 9:13 KJV) Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem:
(Acts 9:14 KJV) And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name.
(Acts 9:15 KJV) But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:
(Acts 9:16 KJV) For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.*

Why did Paul face so many trials and problems,? To increase his ministry. How can we comfort others, if we first don't need comforting and have experienced it for ourselves.

*(2 Corinthians 1:3 NKJV) Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort,
(2 Corinthians 1:4 NKJV) who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.
(2 Corinthians 1:5 NKJV) For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ.
(2 Corinthians 1:6 NKJV) Now if we are afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effective for enduring the same sufferings which we also suffer. Or if we are comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation.
(2 Corinthians 1:7 NKJV) And our hope for you is steadfast, because we know that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so also you will partake of the consolation.*

Here is the deal, we live in a fallen world – that is fact, even if you live in America; if you doubt that still, let me take you to Nicaragua or Russia. We live in a world that is a result of man rejecting God from ruling over them. We have all done it. I remember a Pastor friend of mine telling me about when he was like 20 and got saved in the Hippie movement of the late 60's. He said he and all his buddies were just loving their new life in Christ, finally found peace and joy that they couldn't find in their drugs and free love (they called it). Well they lived in communions, had Bible studies every night, and got jobs on a apple orchard in Oregon. As they were helping harvest, the owner said ok today we are going to pick this orchard, but don't pick that tree that is fenced in, we are doing a special study trying to cross-seed it with another type of apple to see if we can produce a better apple. So not long after the owner drives off, and they are on break, they say I wonder how that apple tastes, so John jumps the fence, snags an apple, and slices it up for everyone. As they ate, he said guys.....we did it again.

The truth is, if it wasn't Adam and Eve in the garden, and you and me, the result would be the same.....our free choice would say what's the big deal it only and apple. But you see it is more than that, it is about free choice, it is about obedience to the One who created us.

We have all chosen to rule ourselves, and now we find that wasn't such a good idea. Jehosaphat – ahh help me Lord all these arrows are coming at me.

The pain and suffering in this world is the result of man wanting to and trying to govern themselves and others without the help of the Lord. The result is a fallen world filled with wars, famine, diseases, sufferings, and darkness.

Our role now as ones who have seen the light, is to lead the others out of darkness into His marvelous light.....because we know the way.

Paul says to the church in Thessalonica, hey these trials are all part of the program and the plan. The world is fallen, they are searching, and God wants to use you to help them. But He has to make you relateable to them, or they won't connect with you.

We've all been there, when we meet someone we just instantly click with them because we have something we have both experienced. Where on the other end, there are people we just don't connect with because we have nothing we can relate to. How relateable would I be to you if I had Hollywood looks and the money to go with it. I could never sit and comfort you because the whole time you would be thinking what do you know about struggle.

I remember doing street ministry in an area in Orlando Florida, it was all drugs and prostitution. I met this guy who sinned had devoured him, rotted teeth, smell, sores. He really like me, but we

couldn't relate, he said to me, man you got it made, you could have any woman on this strip with those looks, for free (now that really wasn't saying much considering I was only a few yards away from a crackhouse). You got the life he said. He wouldn't let me share, he didn't think there was anything I could share with him. He'd say you don't understand. My prayer was that God would bring someone he could relate to, someone who lived in that darkness but saw the light, and be able to lead him out.

Little side story, nothing to do with this verse: He was a nice guy, but later he kinda of became like that girls that hindered Paul when he was ministering in Phillipi. Remember Acts 16 she kept following Paul and annoying him saying He preaches the way to salvation, even though she was demon posed.

(Acts 16:16 KJV) And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying:

(Acts 16:17 KJV) The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation.

(Acts 16:18 KJV) And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour.

I would be sharing and he would come jump in the conversation and try to help me out, and totally blow my ministry. I'm sharing, and he jumped in the middle and said listen to this man, he is going to tell you about the God of love, the God of heaven, the big God, G...O....T.....what? Anyways, Ray being greatly grieved, turned to the spirit.....

(1 Thessalonians 3:5 NKJV) For this reason, when I could no longer endure it, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter had tempted you, and our labor might be in vain.

(1 Thessalonians 3:6 NKJV) But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always have good remembrance of us, greatly desiring to see us, as we also to see you;

(1 Thessalonians 3:7 NKJV) therefore, brethren, in all our affliction and distress we were comforted concerning you by your faith.

I had to find out, did the tempter take you down, did he get to you. Ahh what comfort it was when the report came back that they were doing well.

A struggle me and Renee have is we are always saying, I wonder how so and so is doing, I wonder how such and such went. Lets call (but there is never enough time), or we can't wait until Thursdays Bible Study to catch up. I can relate to how Paul is feeling here. He had to hear how they were doing. If you ever get busy or drift away and we don't see you for a while, and you receive a call form me or Renee, its not that we are sin-sniffing, but to make sure that the tempter didn't get you.

Your strength strengthened us. It is one big chain link. A link can't move without effecting the rest of the chain. A weak link or broken link, will effect the whole chain. We are not island as we started with, or lone rangers. Also, you can't drop out of this thing called Christianity and think it will only effect you, and not others. It is amazing when someone falls how many people it effects, it is quite wonderful in a sense that when one person grieves or suffers personally how many people grieve with them for their sake.

(1 Thessalonians 3:8 NKJV) For now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord.

(1 Thessalonians 3:9 NKJV) For what thanks can we render to God for you, for all the joy with which we rejoice for your sake before our God,

Paul is saying nothing satisfies him more than to know they are doing well.

(3 John 1:3 KJV) For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth.

(3 John 1:4 KJV) I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.

Paul always did well because he was others-centered. It wasn't how am I doing, is everything all right for me, he didn't sing the me song. Do you want to make yourself miserable, I mean truly deep down depressed and miserable? Then think about yourself. If that doesn't depress you, nothing will.

Paul says here, when you live, we live, Paul lived for others.

(1 Thessalonians 3:10 NKJV) night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face and perfect what is lacking in your faith?

(1 Thessalonians 3:11 NKJV) Now may our God and Father Himself, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way to you.

Paul only knew them for three weeks yet he had this depth of love for them, why? Because here in verse ten, he prayed for them night and day.

See prayer will cause you to action, you can't sit idly by, you have to do something. Verse 5, Paul says, *For this reason, when I could no longer endure it, I sent to know your faith.* When you pray for that loved ones salvation you will be lead to share with them, or pray for that missionary you will be lead to go join them for a week or two, or send finances to help them. Prayer will lead you to action.

If I am not others centered, than it is because I am not praying for others.

(1 Thessalonians 3:12 NKJV) And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you,

(1 Thessalonians 3:13 NKJV) so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.

may the Lord make you increase and abound

Paul want them to increase and grow in their walk with the Lord. Paul all along has been saying it is great where you have come are and have come from, but what he is also saying is, Don't get comfortable. I am so proud of you, you have been a beacon to the whole region, you are known for you faith, labor of love, and hope of His return, but don't get comfortable and start to slow down – God wants to increase you.

(Jeremiah 48:11 NKJV) "Moab has been at ease from his youth; He has settled on his dregs, And has not been emptied from vessel to vessel, Nor has he gone into captivity. Therefore his taste remained in him, And his scent has not changed. (Jeremiah 48:12 NKJV) "Therefore behold, the days are coming," says the LORD, "That I shall send him wine-workers Who will tip him over And empty his vessels And break the bottles.

The Lord was speaking to a group that was getting real comfortable, settling into their ease, and God says I'm going to pour them from vessel to vessel. Pouring from vessel to vessel was how they made wine in that day. They would stomp the grapes, then pour the juice into a vessel and let it sit and settle. As the impurities would settle into the bottom, the wine maker would pour the wine into another vessel leaving the impurities behind. If he left it too long with the impurities it would take on the flavor of the dreges – which isn't good. They would do this over and over, until the wine was pure, and sparkling.

Imagine the wine saying I was just getting comfortable, and you stirred me up, agitated me. It doesn't know that the end result is wine that is pure. How often everything is the way I like it, then the boss says your fired, the coach says you're benched, the boyfriend says bye-bye. As uncomfortable as these things are, sometimes He allows them in our lives to move us out of our comfort zones, so that we may increase and abound.

Trials don't make or break you, but reveal what is already inside you. My mind can deceive my self, I can think all is well until I get moved out of my comfort zone, moved into a trial. The trial and the way I deal with it will show me, wow I've really grown; or I say my, I thought I was past that thing, over that thing, stronger than that.

Moving me out of my comfort zone may reveal to me how greatly my prayer life has dropped off, or how inconsistent my church going has been, or how "seven days without reading the Bible has made one weak." A dark bottle has to be turned upside down to see what is in it. A bump in the road spills coffee on my lap, the bump just showed what was in the cup, it didn't create what was in the cup, rather the bump revealed it. Trials bring out bitterness, anger, and depression – ohh you don't know what that person did to me. Fact, those things were already in me, the trial or person just gave the opportunity to see what was really in my heart. You will be a wise woman or man when you realize your reaction isn't the result of what they did, but what was in you.

We say use me Lord, make me more like you. He says ok, but for that to happen, at times I have to upset you, move you from your comfort zone, so I can make you a purer wine, I can only do that by pouring you from vessel to vessel, lest you take on the flavor of the dregs. You parents, don't you be afraid of upsetting your children, moving them out of their comfort zone, lest they take on the flavor of the dregs.

God says I want you to abound in love, increase in the spirit, so I can pour you out on this world.

so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.

Live life backwards, and as the Lord pours you from vessel to vessel, you will see that it is all worth it, and part of His plan, as He prepares you to rule and reign with Him in the millennial period, and today in the trying times we live in.

Chapter Four

Our Labor of Love – 4: 1-12

Recap: Paul himself founded the church in Thessalonica on his second missionary journey (Acts 17:1-9). He had received a vision to go to Macedonia, which is modern day Greece. They first went to Philippi, then after being driven out of there, they went west about 50 miles to Thessalonica. Paul was only in the city of Thessalonica a short time, just 3 weeks (3 Sabbaths) but in those short three weeks a church was birthed. Paul is now in Corinth, its only a few months later, less than a year later, and he writes to them to encourage and strengthen them.

Paul was very proud of this church, because they were already known through the region for three characteristics, their faith, their love, and their hope. The Study of this book, is the study of the model church, and the mature Christian.

Verse 3 of chapter one gives us the Outline Structure of this Epistle:

(1 Thessalonians 1:3 NKJV) remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father,

The general outline of this book follows the same:

The Faith of the Church – Chapters 1-3
The Love of the Church – Chapter 4
The Hope of the Church – Chapter 5

Every chapter in this book talks about the rapture and coming of the Lord.

Again, Here folks is the secret of life:

Live life backwards, when you realize you will spend forever in heaven, and you have that in your mind and in your heart, then you work back from that point and life makes tremendous sense. Tragedy, difficulties, why is this happening, it all makes sense when we work backwards from heaven. We know the big picture - Christ Wins. We know this is preparing us to rule and reign with Christ during the millennial reign. We studied Revelation we know the craziness the world will go through for that seven-year period, and we know that it things will continue to get worse leading up to that. We can relax when everyone is bummed and depressed because we know the big picture. We have perspective in the face of tragedy and trials, while the world may be freaking out.

(1 Thessalonians 4:1 NKJV) Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God;

(1 Thessalonians 4:2 NKJV) for you know what commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus.

Chapter four, Our “labor of love” according to the outline we have been following. Paul says continue on, but keep going deeper. Paul has been a nursing mother to them, a relatable brother, now he is going to be the exhorting father. He is going to say here hard words here, you reject this word, you reject God. Here in Chapter four God is going to refocus them on their present, their love. In chapters 1-3 he is talking about their past, their faith, here in four he focuses them on their present, then later in four and into five he focuses them on their future, the coming of the Lord to receive them in the rapture.

Now It is good for us to reflect on our past to remember where God has taken us from, to see how far we have come, but we can't live in the past and we have to translate our past

experiences into present day living. Also, as we have been emphasizing that to live in today we need to live life backward from heaven to keep life in its proper perspective.

This is the rapture chapter, one of the most read chapters in the bible because we all want to know about the rapture, but here in verse 1 and 12 Paul calls us to walk pleasing and properly before the Lord, for you see gang, you have to walk before you can fly.

Paul will give us six "you" statements in these twelve verses. These "you" statements Paul calls the "will of God." Six things God wants you to do so that you are set apart for Him and His use. Six things we as believers need to be doing here and now, daily, our labor of love.

The Will of God for your life:

1 - that you should abstain from sexual immorality;

(1 Thessalonians 4:3 NKJV) For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality;

Your attention please. Who is Paul talking to? The model church, yet he has to refocus them and direct their attention to the specific point that they are not to be sexually intimate with anyone but their spouses. Why does Paul have to refocus them, because they lived Thessalonica which was a place of major idol worship. Study history and you will see that practically all worship included sexual practices. Thessalonica history tells us had 100's of idols and temples. Sex was everywhere. You could buy on the corner, you sell it at the temple. Paul is warning the people of the church in Thessalonica that just because you see it all around you, just because it is so easy to get, don't be lured into it for this is not the will of God for your life.

Why does God call fornication sin, when it is so enjoyable? Because God wants to protect and provide for you. Protect you from what? AIDS, herpes, unwanted pregnancy. I know, you heard all those, and besides you use protection. But there is more to it than your body that God wants to protect you from, He wants to protect your soul:

(Proverbs 6:32 NKJV) Whoever commits adultery with a woman lacks understanding; He who does so destroys his own soul.

The issue is not only AIDS, VD, or pregnancy, it is that you are losing a piece of your soul. The world says it is two bodies, God says it is two souls. Every time you enter into that union with another person out side of the bounds of marriage, you are giving a piece of yourself away, a piece of your very soul. Enough times, and you become a shell of a person, never being able to truly give and receive love.....just an empty shell.

Consider this article in the USA Today:

Study links depression, suicide rates to teen sex - By Karen S. Peterson, USA TODAY – 04June2003

A controversial new study links teen sexual intercourse with depression and suicide attempts.

The findings are particularly true for young girls, says the Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank that sponsored the research. About 25% of sexually active girls say they are depressed all, most, or a lot of the time; 8% of girls who are not sexually active feel the same. The study comes in the midst of a flurry of new reports on the sexual activity of teenagers. Such research is fodder for the growing debate on sex education in schools. The Bush administration backs abstinence programs.

The Heritage study taps the government-funded National Longitudinal Survey of Adolescent Health. The Heritage researchers selected federal data on 2,800 students ages 14-17. The youngsters rated their own "general state of continuing unhappiness" and were not diagnosed as clinically depressed. The Heritage researchers do not find a causal link between "unhappy kids" and sexual activity, says Robert Rector, a senior researcher with Heritage. "This is really impossible to prove." But he says that study findings send a clear message about unhappy teens that differs from one portrayed in the popular culture, that "all forms of non-marital sexual activity are wonderful and glorious, particularly the younger (teen) the better," he says.

The Heritage study finds:

- About 14% of girls who have had intercourse have attempted suicide ; 5% of sexually inactive girls have.
- About 6% of sexually active boys have tried suicide; less than 1% of sexually inactive boys have.

Tamara Kreinin of the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS) says "we need to take depression among the young very seriously." But it is a "disservice" to blame sexual activity and ignore "divorce, domestic violence, sexual

abuse, substance abuse, lack of parental and community support and questions about sexual orientation," she says. SIECUS supports school programs with information on birth control and abstinence.

But what does God want to provide for you? Love without shame or pain. When you wait and get marriage, and you and your spouse come together, it is a union of two souls becoming one, so much so that they become a part of one another.

Have you failed in that area (again I remind you Paul is talking to the model church here), then repent today, and ask the Lord to make you new. I will speak from experience, I was once an empty shell, I feared that I could never be able to give love or receive love because of my past; but God.....is always ready to work His wonders in us. I love the "but God" statements in the Bible because something big is always coming after:

(Romans 5:8 KJV) But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

But God did a great work in my life in that area, however the price I paid was heavy, it took several years of purity, and the washing of the Word, but the Lord restored my heart and mind so that I was able to actually love and be loved.

The Will of God for your life:

2 - that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor.

(1 Thessalonians 4:4 NKJV) that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor,

(1 Thessalonians 4:5 NKJV) not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God;

The simple definition of vessel – to contain and carry contents. What contents do we carry in these earthen vessels?

(1 Corinthians 3:16 NKJV) Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?

(1 Corinthians 3:17 NKJV) If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.

Now we have seen this word sanctification twice, what does it mean. Simply sanctification means to be "set apart", for the Christian, it means to be set apart to God.

There is sanctification the "Position", and that is when we receive Jesus and we are set apart for Him, and He is in us and we are in Him, done deal no reversing that. Believer hear this, you will never be more holy than you are once you believe; the good works and obedience will not make you any better before God – for you are in Christ, and when the Father looks at you, all He sees is Jesus – perfection.

Now secondly, there is sanctification the "Process". And that is the Holy Spirit in you, conforming you more and more into the image of Jesus Christ, for the everyday walk and use of God. The Holy Spirit in you is the only means by which you can live for God.

Why the two, for god lives outside our time domain, so He sees the completed, sanctification the Position. But as we live in inside this time domain, we live sanctification the – Process.

God says a vessel of honor, He is saying this child is mine, this child belongs to me, I have set this child aside for holy purposes, and I will see these purposes come to pass.

The question here is, what are you filling your vessel with daily? The Lord wants our vessels to be in sanctification and honor, filled with things that are pleasing to the Lord.

Now I could take a cup and fill it with coffee, soda, water, tuna, etc. But I need to wash it out before I fill it with the next thing or else it will take on the flavor of what was left in it. If I am not taking in the things of God, everything else I bring into my body will take on the flavor of whatever junk I left in it. That fresh water will take on the taste of the tuna unless I first clean the cup/vessel out. Paul is calling this model church to keep the vessel clean, and not just in terms of sexual immorality.

Might I add, if you put nothing into this cup, but just leave it sit out, that is what we call an antique. A cup is to be filled up and poured out. Filled up with Gods love, and poured out unto the world. That is why God sets us apart, so we may pour His love out on those around us. If it were not so, He would take us to heaven the moment we receive Him as Lord and Savior – Sanctification the Position. On the Mount of transfiguration, Jesus was shown in His perfection, he had lived a perfect life and could have entered into heaven, but instead He stayed for the appointed time to be poured out unto the world, a vessel of honor.

The Will of God for your life:

3 - that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter,

(1 Thessalonians 4:6 NKJV) that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified.

(1 Thessalonians 4:7 NKJV) For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness.

(1 Thessalonians 4:8 NKJV) Therefore he who rejects this does not reject man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit.

Defrauding his brother in this matter, what matter does he mean?, verse 6 is still talking about sexual matters. Defraud means to rip-off. Beloved, if you are involved in sexual immorality, you are defrauding your brother, you are ripping them off. You are robbing them of their future relationship, even if that future is with you, because once it is destroyed, it is gone.

How?

1.) Brother and sister, you have sex outside of marriage, you are causing another to sin before God.

You don't make love but lust, the world doesn't get it, to them it is all about bodily expression, but it is souls coming together, two people becoming one. When it is done outside of marriage, it is a defrauding, a ruining, you are ripping them off.

God isn't messing around in this matter, and I recommend we all memorize this verse, Hollywood may sell it all as no harm, no foul, nobody is getting hurt, but look what the Lord says to those who do:

(1 Thessalonians 4:6 NKJV) that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified.

(1 Thessalonians 4:7 NKJV) For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness.

(1 Thessalonians 4:8 NKJV) Therefore he who rejects this does not reject man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit.

2.) Another way you defraud, rip someone off in terms of sexual matters: Here is something you may never have considered.

If you buy that magazine, go to that movie, that promotes immorality, you are defrauding your brother or sister, you are supporting them and others to go deeper and deeper into this deception. When you invest your money, it says this is what the world wants, lets give them more. You may say well it doesn't effect me,,,,,,,,,,,,,and we will argue that later, but consider this, how many young guys and girls get sucked into this deception and become a slave to trying to look and live like what they see on TV, the movies, or the Vogue magazine.

Also, If a brother or sister dresses provocatively for the reason of attention, and you compliment them, you are encouraging them to go deeper into this deception.

3.) Thirdly, you will rip-off, and defraud more than just the other person. So even if your partner is willing, know that it will go deeper than just the two of you.

2 Samuel chapters 15-17 is the story of when King David's own son, Absalom, stole the Kingdom from him. Absalom planned it so perfectly, he ended up sending David on the run. Ultimately God would protect David and He would return to his throne, but first he had to go through a lot of pain.

*(2 Samuel 15:13 KJV) And there came a messenger to David, saying, The hearts of the men of Israel are after Absalom.
(2 Samuel 15:14 KJV) And David said unto all his servants that were with him at Jerusalem, Arise, and let us flee; for we shall not else escape from Absalom: make speed to depart, lest he overtake us suddenly, and bring evil upon us, and smite the city with the edge of the sword.*

The interesting verse in this whole story is about Ahithophel, David's counselor for some twenty years. He sided with Absalom, and gave counsel on how to defeat and overthrow David. Imagine the insight he would have on how David thinks and reacts after 20 years of giving him counsel.

(2 Samuel 15:12 KJV) And Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counsellor, from his city, even from Giloh, while he offered sacrifices. And the conspiracy was strong; for the people increased continually with Absalom.

But why did Ahithophel rebel against David, take Absalom's side. David must have asked, why turn against me. What have I done to you that you would turn against me after 20 years? We went to war together, fought in the trenches together, I confided in you, we faced evil people trying to steal this kingdom together, why turn against me?

Follow the genealogy and you will see why:

(2 Samuel 11:3 KJV) And David sent and inquired after the woman. And one said, Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?

(2 Samuel 23:34 KJV) Eliphelet the son of Ahasbai, the son of the Maachathite, Eliam the son of Ahithophel the Gilonite,

Ahithophel was Bathsheba's grandfather.

Decades earlier David killed Uriah and cover his sin with Bathsheba. Ahithophel was David's counselor at the time. So for years he watched David cover his sin, get away with it, Ahithophel felt defiled, defrauded, ripped off by David for defiling his grand daughter. So he struck when opportunity came. If Absalom had followed Ahithophel's advice, David most likely would have been overthrown.

You defraud a brother or sister, and the day will come when your sin will find you out. It is not God getting you, for He already forgives, but you sin never forgives you or forgets you, it will find you, it will seek you, and it will try to do you in.

*(Galatians 6:7 KJV) Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.
(Galatians 6:8 KJV) For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.
(Galatians 6:9 KJV) And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.
(Galatians 6:10 KJV) As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.*

Its 20 years after David's sin and he is still paying for it. 20 years from now you may be paying for it with AIDS, or having to tell your true love, I have something you need to know before we get too serious, I have

But as I said defrauding isn't just about you and your partner, it is about others – aka Ahithophel. So we also see that defrauding isn't just about sex, it is also about anger, bitterness, hate, and spitefully treating someone.

Ahithophel felt so defrauded by David he wanted to kill him:

(2 Samuel 17:1 KJV) Moreover Ahithophel said unto Absalom, Let me now choose out twelve thousand men, and I will arise and pursue after David this night:

(2 Samuel 17:2 KJV) And I will come upon him while he is weary and weak handed, and will make him afraid: and all the people that are with him shall flee; and I will smite the king only:

When you defraud someone, the Lord will not be with you, but against you. Ahithophel told Absalom how to overthrow David, but when Absalom rejected him, he went and hung himself.

(2 Samuel 17:23 KJV) And when Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled his ass, and arose, and gat him home to his house, to his city, and put his household in order, and hanged himself, and died, and was buried in the sepulchre of his father.

But, a word of warning and caution to you who have been defrauded by a brother or sister, you who are on the opposite end, the receiving end, you may say ahh I have a right to be upset and bitter. But remember Ahithophel swinging from the rope; we can create a greater sin than what that person did to us, that of bitterness. Your bitterness will lead to more casualties, more than you were hurt,Let it Go.

The Will of God for your life:

4 - to love one another;

(1 Thessalonians 4:9 NKJV) But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another;

(1 Thessalonians 4:10 NKJV) and indeed you do so toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, that you increase more and more;

Paul told them you are doing great, but don't stop there, increase and abound. Do these things God has commanded in these past verses and you will increase and abound in love.

The Will of God for your life:

5 - that you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands.

(1 Thessalonians 4:11 NKJV) that you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you,

Aspire to be quiet. Don't be a busybody, talking about everybody else. Recognize this, people talk about others so as to elevate themselves. If you are doing this, then ask yourself what am I not facing up to in my own life.

A tell-tale sign you are being a busybody, you are getting into other peoples business; you talk about them, you talk about how they are messing –up, but you do nothing about it. You don't intercede for them in prayer, you don't call to encourage them, invite them to lunch, etc, you just talk about them.

How do you quit being a busybody, by getting your hands busy, get into something other than just sitting around.

The Will of God for your life:

6 - that you may walk properly toward those who are outside, and that you may lack nothing.

(1 Thessalonians 4:12 NKJV) that you may walk properly toward those who are outside, and that you may lack nothing.

Walk properly, both with your brothers, and the world. Inside the church, and outside the church. Paul told us in verse one to “walk to please the Lord” and here in verse twelve, to walk properly towards those who are outside.

Walking properly is not for extra-credit, it is the minimum requirement

(Luke 17:7 NKJV) "And which of you, having a servant plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come at once and sit down to eat'?"

(Luke 17:8 NKJV) "But will he not rather say to him, 'Prepare something for my supper, and gird yourself and serve me till I have eaten and drunk, and afterward you will eat and drink'?"

(Luke 17:9 NKJV) "Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not.

(Luke 17:10 NKJV) "So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.'"

Gang, before we can fly, we have to walk first.

Paul the exhorting father.....

The Rapture – 4:13 – 5:11

Recap: Paul himself founded the church in Thessalonica on his second missionary journey (Acts 17:1-9). He had received a vision to go to Macedonia, which is modern day Greece. They first went to Philippi, then after being driven out of there, they went west about 50 miles to Thessalonica. Paul was only in the city of Thessalonica a short time, just 3 weeks (3 Sabbaths) but in those short three weeks a church was birthed. Paul is now in Corinth, its only a few months later, less than a year later, and he writes to them to encourage and strengthen them.

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The Hope of the Church – Chapter 5

Every chapter in this book talks about the rapture and coming of the Lord.

Again, Here folks is the secret of life:

Live life backwards, when you realize you will spend forever in heaven, and you have that in your mind and in your heart, then you work back from that point and life makes tremendous sense. Tragedy, difficulties, why is this happening, it all makes sense when we work backwards from heaven. We know the big picture - Christ Wins. We know this is preparing us to rule and reign with Christ during the millennial reign. We studied Revelation we know the craziness the world will go through for that seven-year period, and we know that it things will continue to get worse leading up to that. We can relax when everyone is bummed and depressed because we know the big picture. We have perspective in the face of tragedy and trials, while the world may be freaking out.

Here in this study, Paul is writing them because he has told them about the “rapture”, but they were worried about their loved ones who had died recently, that since they had died, they would miss the rapture. Paul is going to comfort those that have lost loved ones, and wondered of they will see them again by teaching them more doctrine about the rapture. Although they were a little confused about the rapture, their worry showed how much they believed the rapture was near, and how focused they were of it in their daily life. They truly are a model church, a model believer, for their faith, labor of love, and hope of Jesus return.

Gang, Jesus is coming back, 300 times in the New Testament we are told Jesus is coming back.

I am thoroughly convinced from watching people and studying the Word that the people who are truly content are those who constantly realize that this world is not where it's at. On the other hand, those who try to find happiness here are perpetually frustrated. The possessions they purchase are never quite what they were supposed to be. The relationships they form are never as satisfying as they thought they would be. The dreams they pursue are never as fulfilling as they hoped they would be. Nothing is ever quite right until we realize, `Hey, it's not here!'

I believe this is why the Lord constantly tells us in the Word to set our hearts on things *above*. People are bogged down, with stomachs churning, brows furrowing, and hearts breaking because they are taking life on earth far too seriously. When a person finally understands heaven is where it's at, he is free to enjoy life. It doesn't matter where he lives, what he does vocationally, what kind of car he drives, bike he rides, or skates he gets around on. All of that is irrelevant because he sees the finish line — he realizes that heaven is near.

Set your heart on things above. It's a central message not only of Paul's teaching, but throughout all of Scripture. Live for heaven and you'll enjoy life. How does that happen? How do we set our hearts upon heaven? Why should we and do we look forward to heaven and work backwards from heaven? Many ways, but I'll suggest three . . .

One – Treasure:

Jesus said,
(Matthew 6:21 NKJV) "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

When Jesus tells us to lay up treasure in heaven, it's not God's way of raising money.

*(Matthew 6:19 NKJV) "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal;
(Matthew 6:20 NKJV) "but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.*

Knowing that where our treasure is, our heart will follow, it's His way of raising our hearts and minds out of this world and up into heaven. You see, if you invest your treasure in mutual funds, that's where your heart will be. If you put your treasure in your house or hobby, your heart will be there as well. Your heart follows your treasure — so one of the ways we get our hearts on things above is by investing in the Kingdom.

Secondly – Trials:

We live for heaven through our trials. I am convinced God will send a trial a day your way just to keep you homesick for heaven, from getting too comfortable in this world. If He didn't, we would become bound up in this earth, and would miss out eternally on what He has in store for us.

Suicide bombers, Iraq, Iran, North Korea, Afghanistan, terrorist level orange, a new strain of influenza, cancer, aids, overdoses, kidnapping.....oh Lord come quickly.

Thirdly – Transfers:

The Lord gets me to set my heart and mind on things above is by transfers — when the people we love precede us into heaven. This process is very important because when you have transferred friends, parents, and spouses in heaven, your heart longs to be there all the more keenly.

Treasures, trials, transfers — three ways our hearts can be constantly set on things above. And no matter what happens down here, we can deal with it because our hearts are up there.

The “Transfers” are what was worrying the church there in Thessalonica, so Paul writes to comfort them.

(1 Thessalonians 4:13 NKJV) But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.

Paul says I don't want you to be ignorant. There are 4 areas many people are ignorant about today in the church.

1. Spiritual Gifts – 1 Corinthians 12
2. Spiritual Warfare – 2 Corinthians 2:11 / Ephesians 6
3. The Plan of God for Israel – Romans 11

4. Eschatology (Future things) – 1 Thessalonians 4 / Revelation

We see ignorance today, but Paul is saying don't be ignorant. This church was less than a year old, all new believers, yet Paul is teaching them about the Rapture.

People today will say this is too controversial, too confusing to get into, but Paul says don't be ignorant, God doesn't want you to be confused about these things, so let me share with you about this glorious future event, the rapture.

To fully understand the rapture, what it is, and what its purposes are, we have to encompass it into four main areas:

- The Resurrection
- The Rapture
- The Readiness
- The Reason

(1 Thessalonians 4:13 NKJV) But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.

This word "fallen asleep" is the first phrase that causes many to get confused, and have a hard time understanding this passage on the rapture, so let's clarify this first.

Fallen asleep: This word is used in the Bible, both Old and New Testament, about believers that have died. This is not a reference to "soul sleep" or purgatory.

The word "sleep" means koimao, koy-mah'-o; to put to sleep, i.e. (pass. or reflex.) to slumber; fig. to de cease:--(be a-, fall a-, fall on) sleep, be dead.

(Acts 7:60 NKJV) Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not charge them with this sin." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

(John 11:11 KJV) These things said he: and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep.

(Acts 13:36 KJV) For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption:

(1 Kings 2:10 KJV) So David slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David.

The early Christians adopted a very wonderful word for the burying places of their loved ones – this Greek word *koimeterion* (notice the root of *koimao*), their word meant "a rest house for strangers, a sleeping place." It is the same word from which we get our English word cemetery. The same word was used in that day for inns, or what we would call a hotel or motel. A Hilton Hotel, a Ramada Inn, or a Holiday inn – they are places where you spend the night to sleep. You expect to get up the next day and continue your journey.

For us believers, getting up the next day to continue our journey, that is the resurrection, but for us that journey continues into heaven the moment we take our last breathe on earth, for our next breathe will be in heaven.

The Resurrection

We have to apply the resurrection to these next verses or everything will get confusing for us. The statement made in verse 16 leads to much confusion..... **And the dead in Christ will rise first.....then we who remain shall join them.**

If you just read it by itself, it leads us to think that these are dead Christians who are in the grave somewhere and that God resurrects them from the dead first, and then call us who are alive right now up into heaven. That is not so. Before we read this, let me just tell you that all believers in Christ who have died up to this very moment of this Bible Study, are in heaven right now. They are not rising from the dead in verse 16, they are standing to their feet to go with Christ and receive us. We know this is so because we read these verse in the knowledge of the resurrection, which a key to understanding the whole rapture.

(1 Thessalonians 4:14 NKJV) For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

(1 Thessalonians 4:15 NKJV) For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep.

(1 Thessalonians 4:16 NKJV) For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

(1 Thessalonians 4:17 NKJV) Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

Again, don't be tripped up by the word sleep here, the main point here is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The resurrection of Christ is the power of the gospel. Buddha died, Mohammed died, Krishna died, Joseph Smith died, they all died but none ever rose again. Jesus Christ suffered, died, was buried, but rose again on the third day.....and therein lies the power of the gospel. Anyone could have been willing to take your place on the cross, take your punishment for sin, but only the Lamb of God had the power to Raise from the dead. The resurrection is proof that God accepted Jesus' sacrifice, substitution, for your sin. When you share the gospel friends, don't leave the resurrection out, for it is the power of the gospel.

Christ's resurrection is the demonstration that you and I will rise again, that death has no power over us. As Christ rose again, so too will we. The resurrection is our hope, without it we have no hope like the people Paul mentions at the end of verse 13.

(1 Corinthians 15:16 NKJV) For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen.

(1 Corinthians 15:17 NKJV) And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!

(1 Corinthians 15:18 NKJV) Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.

(1 Corinthians 15:19 NKJV) If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.

(1 Corinthians 15:20 NKJV) But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

(1 Corinthians 15:21 NKJV) For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead.

The confusion with this passage to us, **And the dead in Christ will rise first.**

The wording can leads us to think that those who die before the rapture are not in heaven yet. We have to couple this with 1 Corinthians 15, which is the other Rapture Chapter, and can lead us to the same thought.

(1 Corinthians 15:50 NKJV) Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption.

(1 Corinthians 15:51 NKJV) Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed;

(1 Corinthians 15:52 NKJV) in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

(1 Corinthians 15:53 NKJV) For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

(1 Corinthians 15:54 NKJV) So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

(1 Corinthians 15:55 NKJV) "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?"

Don't let there be any confusion that the dead are not already in heaven – they are. Again, that is why the resurrection is such an important part of understanding the Rapture.

2 Corinthians 5:8 is the whole summation of what I will say in the next five minutes:

(2 Corinthians 5:8 NKJV) We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.

When Jesus rose from the dead, everyone who had died and was in "Paradise", were lead from there right into heaven:

(Ephesians 4:8 KJV) Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.

(Ephesians 4:9 KJV) (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?

(Ephesians 4:10 KJV) He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)

The grave was opened the captives were set free, some even appeared to their family and friends to prove the resurrection:

(Matthew 27:51 KJV) And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent;

(Matthew 27:52 KJV) And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose,

(Matthew 27:53 KJV) And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.

Upon death we immediately go to heaven to be with the Father, Jesus promises us that:

(John 11:25 KJV) Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:

(John 11:26 KJV) And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?

Now some teach that the bodies that are raised are our actual physical bodies we lived in on earth. That just before, but in conjunction with this Rapture, all of the physical bodies of believers in Christ who have died in the past will be resurrected to join their disembodied spirits in heaven.

I don't see that in the Scriptures for once we die, we immediately receive our new bodies in heaven. Why?

Jesus said,

(John 14:1 KJV) Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.

(John 14:2 KJV) In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

The popular thought is that Jesus is actually building a house for us, a mansion. But that thought is really contrary to the whole nature of Jesus. Nowhere do we ever find Jesus trying to appeal to man's flesh. On the contrary He is always telling us to crucify the flesh. The word mansion means "abiding place."

I find it very hard to apply a physical application especially in the context of this statement; Right before he tells Peter that he will deny Him, and then right after one of the most powerful, spiritual, statements in the Bible, John 14:6:

(John 14:6 KJV) Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

(John 14:7 KJV) If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.

We are told that the bodies we live in today our mere tents (2 Corinthians 5:1). Tents and mansions are just illustrations. Jesus Himself used an illustration to describe His body, that it was a temple (John 2:18). The illustrations are to convey that these bodies are temporary, and that we will be receiving new bodies that are incorruptible (1 Corinthians 15:42) and fit for the new environment we will live in – heaven.

(2 Corinthians 5:1 NKJV) For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

(2 Corinthians 5:2 NKJV) For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, **(2 Corinthians 5:3 NKJV)** if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked.

(2 Corinthians 5:4 NKJV) For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life.

(2 Corinthians 5:5 NKJV) Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

(2 Corinthians 5:6 NKJV) So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord.

(2 Corinthians 5:7 NKJV) For we walk by faith, not by sight.

(2 Corinthians 5:8 NKJV) We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.

(John 2:18 NKJV) So the Jews answered and said to Him, "What sign do You show to us, since You do these things?" **(John 2:19 NKJV)** Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

(John 2:20 NKJV) Then the Jews said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?"

(John 2:21 NKJV) But He was speaking of the temple of His body.

(1 Corinthians 15:42 NKJV) So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption.

(1 Corinthians 15:43 NKJV) It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power.

(1 Corinthians 15:44 NKJV) It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.

Just a side note, lets say the others are right about that God will raise our old bodies up at the Rapture, and lets say that should I die before the rapture and I'm in heaven in my incorruptible perfect body, and then I'm told I have to put on this old body again, I'm going to be like my 9 year old is with me when I try to get him to go to bed on the weekends. He will find every excuse and reason why it isn't bedtime.....that be me with Jesus, I really don't want to put this body back on once I'm dead.

So, with all that said, then what does it mean that **the dead in Christ will rise first?** The word rise in the Greek simply means to "stand up." Jesus is saying to the saints in heaven, "It is time, everybody up, lets go get our loved ones. Those in heaven miss you as much as you miss them, they can't wait to hold you again, to look in your eyes again.

The Rapture

(1 Thessalonians 4:17 NKJV) Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

(1 Thessalonians 4:18 NKJV) Therefore comfort one another with these words.

If you can believe in the resurrection, then you can believe in the Rapture.

It is often argued that the doctrine of the church being raptured in unbiblical because the word "rapture" does not appear in the Scriptures, which is true if, and only if, one is referring to the English translations of the Scriptures. However, the Latin translation of First Thessalonians chapter four and verse seventeen reads: *17 deinde nos qui vivimus qui relinquimur simul rapiemur cum illis in nubibus obviam Domino in aera et sic semper cum Domino erimus.* The word translated "caught up" is a Greek word rendered *rapiemur* in the Latin, and is the word from which we get the English word "rapture". The word literally means to violently seize up, snatch up, suddenly catch away, as if a pair of giant hands were to grasp you by the shoulders and snatch you off the earth. This event will occur suddenly, in less than the time it takes to blink an eye; in fact, the Greek word translated "in a moment" in First Corinthians 15:52 means "an atomic moment", i.e., a moment of time so small it cannot be subdivided further. So regardless of what one may call the event - the "rapture", "being caught up", "being snatched away", it is clear that the event will occur.

One day Noah told everyone to get ready, rain is coming upon the land soon, people would have said are you crazy, what are you talking about, what is rain.

(Matthew 24:37 NKJV) "But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.

(Matthew 24:38 NKJV) "For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark,

(Matthew 24:39 NKJV) "and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.

Another argument, that Jesus never spoke of it, wrong again:

(John 14:1 KJV) Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.

(John 14:2 KJV) In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

(John 14:3 KJV) And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

(John 14:4 KJV) And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.

Even another is that it is not mentioned in the Old Testament, wrong again:

(Isaiah 26:16 NKJV) LORD, in trouble they have visited You, They poured out a prayer when Your chastening was upon them.

(Isaiah 26:17 NKJV) As a woman with child Is in pain and cries out in her pangs, When she draws near the time of her delivery, So have we been in Your sight, O LORD.

(Isaiah 26:18 NKJV) We have been with child, we have been in pain; We have, as it were, brought forth wind; We have not accomplished any deliverance in the earth, Nor have the inhabitants of the world fallen.

(Isaiah 26:19 NKJV) Your dead shall live; Together with my dead body they shall arise. Awake and sing, you who dwell in dust; For your dew is like the dew of herbs, And the earth shall cast out the dead.

(Isaiah 26:20 NKJV) Come, my people, enter your chambers, And shut your doors behind you; Hide yourself, as it were, for a little moment, Until the indignation is past.

It can be seen with pristine clarity that the Bible clearly teaches that at some time in the future, Jesus will descend into the earth's atmosphere and catch away all living born-again believers off the earth and take them to join the saints in heaven.

At the sound of the trumpet, we are gone, praise the Lord:

(Revelation 4:1 KJV) After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter.

(Revelation 4:2 KJV) And immediately I was in the spirit; and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne.

Imagine the havoc the world will be in when that happens. Some Nations will collapse in a very moment, others will rise up to be world powers overnight. The world will be freaking out, and the stage will be set for the Man of Peace, the Anti-Christ to come and make it all right again. As I have mentioned before, I do not necessarily believe that our bodies go up in the rapture. It is not absolutely for sure that bodies are Raptured and clothing left, it could just be that the spirit is Raptured and bodies left, the world can easily explain that one away. I say this because (Matt 24:40 (two in field, one taken) speaks about 2nd coming, not the rapture. Imagine a billion or so dead bodies laying in the streets, just that alone will cause a health epidemic.

Why does the Lord meet us in the air? I believe because He has been waiting 2000 years for this moment, and He can't contain Himself, he has to run out and meet us part way. We see Him running in Luke 15, the story of the prodigal son coming home to his father.

(Luke 15:20 NKJV) "And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.

(Luke 15:21 NKJV) "And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

(Luke 15:22 NKJV) "But the father said to his servants, 'Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet.

That story is immediately preceded by:

(Luke 15:10 KJV) Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.

Gang, who is standing in the presence of angels? It is Jesus, He is the one who is rejoicing, jumping for joy when you repent, and become His child for ever. He loves you, he can't wait to see you, He is crazy about you.

The rapture is a word to comfort each other, especially during hard times.

Side note, if this is the seventh trumpet spoken of in Revelation, then these sure aren't words to comfort one another. We go out in trumpet of Revelation 4:1. Just read your Bible carefully please.

The Readiness

Don't let the chapter break trip you up, chapter 5 is still in the context of the Rapture.

(1 Thessalonians 5:1 NKJV) But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you.

(1 Thessalonians 5:2 NKJV) For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.

The day may be unknowable, but the season is, we see the signs around us.

Are we in the Last Days?

Some would depart from the faith and go into devil worship-1 Tim 4:1.

People would mock about the last days and not believe-2 Pe 3:3; Jude 18.

People would become lovers of themselves-2 Tim 3:1,2.

People would be disobeying their parents-2 Tim 3:1,2.

People would be grateful for nothing-2 Tim 3:1,2.

Homosexuality would increase-Lk 17:28,30; ref Gen 19:5; Ro 1:24,26,27.

People would be without self-control in sex-2 Tim 3:1,2,6; Rev 9:21, Lk 17:28,30; Jude 7.

People would love pleasures more than God- 2 Tim 3:1,2,4.

False Teachers/Religions will be many – Matt 24:5

Wars – Matt 24:6 – not a single day of peace on earth since before WW1

Rumors of War – Matt 24:6 – Cold War most expensive war ever fought, and not one bullet fired

Famines – Matt 24:7 – the Oil prices have cause world-wide inflation, and countries like Africa can't feed their people

Pestilence – Matt 24:7 - Aids, SARS

Earthquakes – Matt 24:7 – Life Magazine says in last 15 yrs 500, 000 people died in earthquakes.

Knowledge will Increase – Daniel 12:4 – look at the Technology world around us.

The greatest sign, the nation Israel.

The rapture will end the church period, this period of grace, and then God will start dealing with Israel and their salvation.

(Romans 11:25 NKJV) For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

(Romans 11:26 NKJV) And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob;

(Romans 11:27 NKJV) For this is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins."

May 14th, 1948 Israel was rebirthed. For 2000 years they lived without a homeland, yet kept their nationality, and today we see them in the news every day. Israel is the prophetic clock, Jesus said be ready, you have seen all the signs.

(Matthew 24:32 KJV) Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh:

(Matthew 24:33 KJV) So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.

(Matthew 24:34 KJV) Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.

(Matthew 24:35 KJV) Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

(Matthew 24:36 KJV) But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.

(Note: some think these verses direct references to the rebirth of Israel because throughout Scripture the "fig tree" is a reference to Israel. Maybe so, but if not, do we really need anymore signs than we already have?)

(1 Thessalonians 5:3 NKJV) For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape.

Why should we believe that the rapture is near if its 2000 years later and He still hasn't come.

Peace and Safety

Here is something exciting, the world is talking peace and safety all around us. Lets stop the wars. America stay out of Iraq, they've done nothing to anyone. Never mind the mass grave sites, never mind the buried mobile chemical labs. Give peace more time. I can share something exciting about peace, or should I say peace for those who are expecting the rapture. As we know Russia will play a key role in the end times. They will move against Israel but God will intervene and defend Israel miraculously. A violent evil attempt to wipe out Israel. May I point something out to you, today besides what's going on in Chechnya, Russia has no true enemies. They are friends with everyone, selling arms to Iraq, nuclear technology to Iran, friends with China. Everyone is saying Russia, Russia, the Cold War is over, they are not a threat, they are economically anemic. But we know, that in the last days they will rise-up against Israel, they play a key role in end times prophecy militarily. That's what makes this verse so exciting; do you know that at least into the late 1990's, Russia was producing 9 Typhoon class submarines every year, at 2 billion dollars a pop. Each submarine has 10 missile bays, each equipped with nuclear missiles that have the capability to be programmed to hit up to 20 different targets. So they can launch 10 missiles almost at once, and they can select final destination while it is in flight, thus they can hold up to 200 cities hostage – and that is just one submarine. One nuke will have the precision to hit within a city block, and will destroy everything within 30 miles of it. They were producing 9 a year, and by the way, they are silent, we can't track them, and have no idea where they are. The world can say we are at peace with Russia, but we know end times prophecy, and they are by no means going to play the peacemaker in end times.

(1 Thessalonians 5:4 NKJV) But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief.

There are two distinct coming of the Lord. First the Lord to get His church in the rapture, and then secondly, His physical return to the earth at the end of the seven year tribulation period to bind Satan in the bottomless pit, and establish His millennium kingdom. We will talk more about the "Day of the Lord" in 2 Thessalonians.

(1 Thessalonians 5:5 NKJV) You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness.

(1 Thessalonians 5:6 NKJV) Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober.

(1 Thessalonians 5:7 NKJV) For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night.

Children of light don't be asleep in the darkness, don't get drowsy, the days are close. Don't get intoxicated with this world, walk wisely, redeem the time.

Parents be sober. Sports and extracurricular activities are great, but do you notice how they always fall on Bible Study night. Don't let those things take you away from the Word and Fellowship. I believe even if your children are not totally getting it, you are still developing a pattern for life, that will pay huge dividends when they are older. Show them now that the Word and Fellowship are the priorities in life, and that nothing supersedes them. Now if the Rapture happens today, a year from now, how important were those things, how important were those things that took you away from growing in the Word, increasing and abounding in love.

Why do I say this, because I've seen kids get wiped out down the road because mom and dad thought that other things were more important than bringing the kids to church. The children watched their parents and learned what was more important and when they grew, soccer and baseball were replaced in their life with college, and then work, and then, and then.....

Verse 8, Paul reinforces this

(1 Thessalonians 5:8 NKJV) But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation.

A breastplate protected the heart, and a helmet protected the head. God wants to protect our heart and mind, the things that enter our mind, effect our heart. How do we guard our mind and increase our faith?

(Romans 10:17 KJV) So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

God manifests His Word through preaching that is the reason we go to Bible Studies. God will show you things in the Word, that He spoke to His teachers to bring to your ears.

(Titus 1:3 NKJV) but has in due time manifested His word through preaching, which was committed to me according to the commandment of God our Savior;

The Reason

**(1 Thessalonians 5:9 NKJV) For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,
(1 Thessalonians 5:10 NKJV) who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.**

This wrath is meant for those who have rejected the Lord, this is the reason for the Rapture, to take His children out before he pours His wrath out. We experienced God's wrath on the cross, but Jesus took our place, that should have been me on that cross. The wrath I experience today is all from Satan who is the Prince of this world, as we live in a world that says I don't need you God to rule over me, I'm just fine without you. God's wrath will come against them in the seven year tribulation period.

(Revelation 6:16 KJV) And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:

(Revelation 6:17 KJV) For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?

If my house was infected with termites and I had to fumigate, even if my kids were being a bit rebellious or difficult, I would still make sure they were out of the house before the tent went up and the gas pumped it. Therefore if we earthly parents are concerned about our children's safety, how much more is our heavenly Father concerned about the safety of His children.

Before the Iraqi war, America called all their ambassadors out of Iraq.

(2 Corinthians 5:20 NKJV) Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.

(1 Thessalonians 5:11 NKJV) Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.

We won't be here for this wrath to come, we will be in heaven with the Lord celebrating at the Marriage supper of the lamb (we will talk about that in 2 Thessalonians), we escape this period.

Comfort each other with these words brethren. These words are the comfort to every heart problem.

Again folks, the key to life is to live life backwards from heaven, and everything else will fall into perspective.

As Paul wrote the Colossian church,

(Colossians 3:2 NKJV) Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.

(Colossians 3:3 NKJV) For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

(Colossians 3:4 NKJV) When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

The days are going by rapidly, gang. We are going to see Jesus soon, and when we do, we will say, `This is it! This is what we've been craving and longing for all our lives

That is why I believe we can't talk too much about heaven. And that's why Paul says, `That's where your heart should be because when Christ appears, it's going to be glorious. Talking about heaven daily, will make heaven a reality.

The three R's to understanding the Rapture:

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ and all believers.

The Rapture itself.

The Readiness, for he is coming soon.

And the Reason – to get His kids.

Chapter Five

The Travelers – 5:12 – End

Recap: Paul himself founded the church in Thessalonica on his second missionary journey (Acts 17:1-9). He had received a vision to go to Macedonia, which is modern day Greece. They first went to Philippi, then after being driven out of there, they went west about 50 miles to Thessalonica. Paul was only in the city of Thessalonica a short time, just 3 weeks (3 Sabbaths) but in those short three weeks a church was birthed. Paul is now in Corinth, its only a few months later, less than a year later, and he writes to them to encourage and strengthen them.

Paul was very proud of this church, because they were already known through the region for three characteristics, their faith, their love, and their hope. The Study of this book, is the study of the model church, and the mature Christian.

Verse 3 of chapter one gives us the Outline Structure of this Epistle:

(1 Thessalonians 1:3 NKJV) remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father,

The general outline of this book follows the same:

The Faith of the Church – Chapters 1-3
The Love of the Church – Chapter 4
The Hope of the Church – Chapter 5

Every chapter in this book talks about the rapture and coming of the Lord.

Again, Here folks is the secret of life:

Live life backwards, when you realize you will spend forever in heaven, and you have that in your mind and in your heart, then you work back from that point and life makes tremendous sense. Tragedy, difficulties, why is this happening, it all makes sense when we work backwards from heaven. We know the big picture - Christ Wins. We know this is preparing us to rule and reign with Christ during the millennial reign. We studied Revelation we know the craziness the world will go through for that seven-year period, and we know that it things will continue to get worse leading up to that. We can relax when everyone is bummed and depressed because we know the big picture. We have perspective in the face of tragedy and trials, while the world may be freaking out.

Before we get into 1 Thessalonians, lets take a quick look a 1 Peter 2:11

(1 Peter 2:11 NKJV) Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, (1 Peter 2:12 NKJV) having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.

Gang we are travelers, sojourners, pilgrims here on this earth.

Sojourners/strangers - paroikos, par'-oy-kos; having a home near, i.e. (as noun) a by-dweller (alien resident);--foreigner, sojourn, stranger.

We are just passing through, our next destination is heaven, either through age, accident, circumstances, or the rapture, but we are heaven bound as we have been talking through this whole epistle of Thessalonians.

Until we see Jesus face to face, arms embraced, we are not home. Our citizenship is in heaven, up there, not down here. Set your eyes on the things above, look to your heavenly home. God through the apostle Paul in this study, is going to tell us how we ought to be traveling while we are here on this earth. He is going to break these remaining verses-out into how we are to travel on this earth, through this life, just as if we were traveling to Florida for vacation or business.

When we travel we deal with those working in the travel industry, we deal other people who are traveling, and we face the unexpected and the expected; tonight these verses cover those same areas. A series of short concise exhortations, New Testament Proverbs, some 17 just in these few verses.

1. The Workers (5:12-13):

As I travel on this earth, through this life, as I am heading towards heaven, God wants me to recognize the Workers He puts in our travel to get us to our final destination:

there are certain people in my travels, that if they were not there I may never reach my final destination, or without them it may take me days, weeks, or even months longer to get where I was planning on going. I need the pilot to fly the plane, I need the reservations to book my flight, I need the security folks to see to it that my flight is safe. All these people help me to get where I'm going. They are doing a job that provides for me, even if they don't provide the perfect service. There are times when I praise them for their service, others when I am not pleased with them.

God does the same for us in our spiritual travel here on earth, as we travel through to heaven, and God wants us to recognize the Workers that He puts in your life to help you reach you final destination.

God gives us workers to help perfect us as we are told in Ephesians 4:

(Ephesians 4:11 KJV) And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

(Ephesians 4:12 KJV) For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

Paul says to recognize and esteem their work in your life

(1 Thessalonians 5:12 NKJV) And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you,

(1 Thessalonians 5:13 NKJV) and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves.

Even if you don't like the person, respect, esteem the work they do. These people, in love, are doing the stuff nobody really wants to deal with, stuff we hope others deal with it. Its not a comfortable place to correct or admonish someone, but those that do, they do it for the others well being. Sometimes you just have to step back and ask yourself, does anyone else care for me like this person does.

We are to esteem the workers of God, but at the same time I warn you not to let lose your ear for hearing from God Himself, or that their ears takes the place of your petitions before God. Sometimes it is easier to go to them, than it is to go to the Lord.

(Jeremiah 33:3 NKJV) 'Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.'

Years ago there was a great violinist, he played for the thousands and they all loved his playing. Then along came the Stradivarius, people would praise this wonderful top of the line violin, to the point that people started to come just to hear the Stradivarius. The Master Violinist was getting somewhat offended at this. It reached a point that upon completion of a set people would stand and applaud, clapping and cheering out his name, and mixed in they would also cheer and

applaud and yell Stradivarius, Stradivarius. One concert he came and played a set that brought tears to the peoples eyes, upon completion they again yelled his name and Stradivarius, he then took the violin off his shoulder, smashed it off the ground into little pieces, and the crowd was in shock. He then walked over, opened his other violin case, pulled out another violin, and said, this is the Stradivarius, the violin I just played I bought for twenty dollars.

We are to esteem the workers of God, but at the same time i warn you not to let lose your ear for hearing from God Himself, or that their ears takes the place of your petitions to God. Also, when the Lord uses you as a worker for Him, be careful not to forget that you are just an instrument God uses to make beautiful music.

2. The Other Travelers (5:14-15):

As I travel on this earth, through this life, as I am heading towards heaven, God wants me to recognize the Others who are traveling also:

Millions of people travel in and out of BWI every year, 1.5 million in December 02. Tens of thousands everyday, all have one thing in common, they want to get from point A to point B, safely.

Traveling wears on you, it is exhausting both physically and mentally, and both of which effect a person emotionally/mentally. Strangers traveling among you can add to this stress. People cutting in front of you in line, their body hanging over into your seat, their feet in your space, then they crawl over you to get to the bathroom every 15 minutes. As bad as they can be, often it is your very traveling companions that push you to the last nerve. The reason is because all day you are crammed in small quarters, rushing or waiting, hey traveling can really wear you out, and then we react, in the wrong way. Hey we are on our way on vacation, a mission trip, or for my job that pays the mortgage, what are we getting upset with them.

The same is true for our spiritual travel here on earth, as we travel through to heaven, and God wants you to recognize the other people that are traveling with you, and how much better the travels would be if we all considered the other person.

(1 Thessalonians 5:14 NKJV) Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all.

(1 Thessalonians 5:15 NKJV) See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all.

1 Peter 2:11, we are Pilgrims here on this earth.

(1 Peter 2:11 NKJV) Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, (1 Peter 2:12 NKJV) having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.

Pilgrims - parepidemos, par-ep-id'-ay-mos; an alien alongside, i.e. a resident foreigner:--pilgrim, stranger.

Pilgrims founded this country, they were ones who were on a sacred quest. The great myth is that they came to America for religious freedom, but the fact is they already had it in Holland. The pilgrims came to this country to lead others to Christ, to prepare the way for others to follow.

We are to help others in their travels, we are to have good works we were told in 1 Peter 2:11

Good Works - kalos, kal-os'; of uncert. affin.; prop. beautiful, but chiefly (fig.) good (lit. or mor.), i.e. valuable or virtuous.

Pilgrims remember, not everyone is going to the same final destination.

I love BWI because I know it so well. I love it when I am walking through the terminal and I can just see that look of bewilderment on someone's face. I love it because I know I know I have the answers for them. I can direct them to their appropriate gate, I can tell them where the Starbucks is, I can direct them to where to pick up their luggage, get a rental car, to meet their loved ones, or how to get out on the Maryland roads and continue their travel.

God wants us warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all.

There are many believers who are struggling in their walk, in their life, and the Lord wants us to help them along.

(1 Thessalonians 5:15 NKJV) See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all.

Forget playbacks, forget getting even, let God handle them. Listen god can defend you much better than you will ever do. Once you start defending your character, you will spend a lifetime doing it. Either you can defend your rights, or let God do it.

One of the most violent crimes committed in the church today is "Character Assignment". When a person assignates my character to you, the next time you see me, I become to you that which they said I was. My character will always be tainted for you will always be wondering or looking to see if what they said about me is true. It may very well be true, but you would never have noticed it had they not pointed it out to you.

I remember a husband and wife that I esteemed so highly at I church I use to attend. But then one day I was robbed when I was just talking great things about them, and then someone blurted out, yeah its hard to believe she had an affair on him. I was robbed because every time I would see them my mind would flash to that statement.

Maybe you have rendered evil for evil, have hurt someone, maybe hurt someone who did no wrong to you, well there is still time to make it right. Alfred Bernhard Nobel invented Dynamite. He amassed fortunes through the sale of dynamite. Dynamite was used in many wars as one of the main weapons, and as a result many people died.

Mr. Noble's brother died some years after his invention of dynamite, and mistakenly the newspaper confused the death of his brother with his own death and printed the following obituary: "Mr. Nobel died, he invented a weapon of mass destruction called dynamite, and made millions of dollars as a result of that." Mr. Nobel was horrified when he read his own epitaph.

He soon concentrated his millions of dollars to bring about peace. Today he is known for reward of human ingenuity for peaceful purposes. When he died, he left \$9 million to establish a series of prizes in his name...today we know these prizes as The Nobel Peace Price.

He had the opportunity to change his epitaph. So do we!

3. The Uncontrollable (5:16-18):

As I travel on this earth, through this life, as I am heading towards heaven, God wants me to recognize that not everything is in my Control:

Lost luggage, flight delays, stormy weather, equipment failures, so many things to go wrong in my travels, all of which make my plans fall apart, causing me to have to readjust my travel plans, in order that I make my final destination.

The same is true for our spiritual travel here on earth, as we travel through to heaven, and God wants you to recognize that the Unexpected and Uncontrollable will arise in our travels that we will have to face. Although they may disrupt our travel plans, we are not to let them keep us from our final destination, nor take our eyes off the final destination.

Loved one lost, lives trials, spiritual attacks, and health problems, what are we to do when they arise in our travels here on earth, on the way to heaven? 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18.

(1 Thessalonians 5:16 NKJV) Rejoice always,
(1 Thessalonians 5:17 NKJV) pray without ceasing,
(1 Thessalonians 5:18 NKJV) in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

It doesn't say give thanks FOR everything give thanks, but IN everything. We don't give thanks for the loses, but in the loses we can give thanks because we know that God is still in control and He will still do great things through the loss.

(1 Thessalonians 5:16 NKJV) Rejoice always,

Know this Christian, God is always for you, no matter how bleak the situation is, even if it is your fault, He is still for you and desiring to make all things work together for good in your life.

(Romans 8:28 NKJV) And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

God is on the throne, when I remember that, then everything comes into perspective, and I can fix my eyes on Him, not my circumstances.

We don't always know the rest of the story, we think the circumstances we are in are the end of all, nothing good will come out of it, but we don't see how God may be putting you in a place or position for something better to come along.

A lawyer had successfully handled a difficult law case for a wealthy friend. Following the happy outcome of the case, the friend and client called on the lawyer, expressed his appreciation of his work and handed him a handsome Moroccan leather wallet.

The lawyer looked at the wallet in astonishment and handed it back with a sharp reminder that a wallet could not possibly compensate him for his services. "My fee for that work," acidly snapped the attorney, "is five hundred dollars." The client opened the wallet, removed a one-thousand dollar bill, replaced it with a five-hundred dollar bill and handed it back to the lawyer with a smile.

(1 Thessalonians 5:17 NKJV) pray without ceasing,

Traveling with God

I find that I seem to pray more on travel day than most other days. I need things to go in order if I am to make my final destination.

I have learned to pray without ceasing; people ask me questions that I need to seek the Lord for wisdom to respond, to pray the Lord to help me at work, on my drive. The door is always open, it isn't just our morning devotion. Start with your morning devotion, start your day off with an attitude of prayer, and then let it carry you through the day. Start the day with prayer and then never cease talking to the Lord throughout the day.

(1 Thessalonians 5:18 NKJV) in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

Here we go again, what is the will of the God. Right here, giving thanks always.

It's the trials that make me look forward to heaven and the Rapture, I can thank God through the trials because I know that soon and very soon I'm going to see the King.

4. The Controllable (5:19-22):

As I travel on this earth, through this life, as I am heading towards heaven, God wants me to recognize that there are things that are in my Control.

When I travel checkout the financial aspect, the departure and arrival times, the transfers, the layovers, the food, I check into all these things and determine do they fit and line-up with my travel plans, will they get me to final destination safe and sound.

The same is true for our spiritual travel here on earth, as we travel through to heaven, and God wants you to recognize that there are things in my very control, things the Lord wants me to control and apply to my travels.

In these verses we are told to test, hold, abstain, plus a few do not, all of which are action verbs.

(1 Thessalonians 5:19 NKJV) Do not quench the Spirit.

(1 Thessalonians 5:20 NKJV) Do not despise prophecies.

(1 Thessalonians 5:21 NKJV) Test all things; hold fast what is good.

(1 Thessalonians 5:22 NKJV) Abstain from every form of evil.

Do not quench the Spirit

A lot of people use this Scripture to allow all kinds of foolish activities in the church, but we are to quench the flesh, not the Spirit.

I remember being in a church in Louisiana, I worked some guys who when they found out that I was a Christian, they said you have to come check out our church, it is awesome. Now I received it immediately that it must be a good church because of the powerful witness these guys were in the workplace. We worked in a tough-tough environment. Lots of pressure to succeed, we were in jeopardy of having our program shutdown because of being behind schedule and over-cost by a few hundred million dollars. Guys were lying, cheating, and stealing to keep face. Everyday was a barrage of vulgarity to get the workers to perform over and above, but not these guys, they never used vulgarity, they never inflated or deflated their numbers, they always performed in honesty and uprightness, and they were always prim and proper at work. I said their church has to be good, cause these are good men – and they were. So I go to visit, good worship, then the Pastor came out, started to teach, I said good teaching I like him, but then.....

But then after his teaching, it was time to get weird. The Pastor started to get them all riled up emotionally, he started running up and down the stage, yelling and screaming, saying the spirit is going to descend, come Lord Jesus, ohh fall on us Holy Spirit, we need a fresh touch from you, an anointing from you. Then all of a sudden people started to roll around on the floor, somebody started screeching like an eagle, this lady right in front of me started to convulse. Could you picture Jesus doing this, no. the sad part was there was a bunch of youth in front of me, you could tell their parent made them go, and they were bumping each other pointing to people acting all weird, laughing to one another....my heart broke. I said this doesn't line up with Scripture, this isn't the gifts of the Holy Spirit spoken of in 1 Corinthians, the steam from the fire is to move the locomotive, not toot the horn.....this is too weird. I said to myself about my coworkers, you are so prim and proper at work, how can you get so weird here. If you acted like this at work everybody would say you were a nut case.

I didn't want to make a scene and get up and leave and cause attention to fall upon myself, I thought I could ride it out, but they just kept going and going, I said I can't take much more of this, then it came, the Pastor said, there is someone here and you think this is all weird, your unbelief is keeping the Lord from filling this place, your unbelief is keeping the Lord from doing a work here today, YOU ARE QUENCHING THE SPIRIT, you need to leave. I took my que.....

Now from the Scriptures how do we quench the spirit by lack of love. The fruit of the spirit is love, if we don't open our selves up to love to quench the spirit. You want to quench the Spirit? Have resentment and discord for the workers God has put in your life, repay evil for evil, don't rejoice but be angry at the world and God, don't give thanks but be bitter, quit praying..and allow Satan to have his ways with your thought life.

(1 Thessalonians 5:20 NKJV) Do not despise prophecies.

Prophecies – someone forth telling the word of the Lord. Someone telling you or a group of what the Lord wants them to do.

It is easy to despise prophecies because there are so many nuts out there walking around pretending to be so spiritual.

Listen and apply the word of God to it, and go pray about it.

When I was unemployed for 9 months I had all kinds of people telling me what they thought the Lord wanted me to do, go be a missionary, go help this start his church, etc, etc. All of their words may have lined up with Scripture, but not what God was speaking to my heart about. they all this great plan for me serving the Lord, but I often wished that the Lord would have told them to take me out to dinner, cause I had to go 9 months without eating an Outback steak.

In the next two verses we will be told to Test, Hold, and Abstain.

(1 Thessalonians 5:21 NKJV) Test all things; hold fast what is good.

Test all things

You don't have to receive all prophecy, first match it against Scripture, prophecy will never be contrary to the Scriptures.

One of the failures the church in Thessalonica made was that they didn't test all things, in Acts we are told this. The resultant was that people came in told them all kinds of wild stuff and they got all confused and troubled over it. We, more so with the whole counsel of God banded together in our hands should never be dinged for not searching the Scriptures.

(Acts 17:11 NKJV) These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.

hold fast what is good.

Don't let the ungodly sway you from what you know is right.

Don't go into business with the ungodly, don't date the ungodly, don't go against what you know the Word is telling you. Hold fast to what is good, no matter how much the world may try to sway you away from it.

Remember King Jehosaphat, he went into business with the ungodly Ahab, what happens the Scriptures tell us, his whole fleet of ships went down:

(2 Chronicles 20:35 KJV) And after this did Jehoshaphat king of Judah join himself with Ahaziah king of Israel, who did very wickedly:

(2 Chronicles 20:36 KJV) And he joined himself with him to make ships to go to Tarshish: and they made the ships in Eziongaber.

(2 Chronicles 20:37 KJV) Then Eliezer the son of Dodavah of Mareshah prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, Because thou hast joined thyself with Ahaziah, the LORD hath broken thy works. And the ships were broken, that they were not able to go to Tarshish.

Abstain from every form of evil.

(1 Thessalonians 5:22 NKJV) Abstain from every form of evil.

(1 Thessalonians 5:22 KJV) Abstain from all appearance of evil.

Remember we are the Kings kids, we are His Ambassadors, His Pilgrims. We are to abstain from the appearances of evil, therefore we are to carry the appearance of godliness. Anytime God tells us not to do something, then on the flip side there is something He wants us to do. If He wants us to abstain from the appearances of evil, then on the flip-side He wants us to put on the appearance of godliness.

We are a Kingdom kid, my son Wayne has certain behavior expected of him, because he is part of this family, and Our heavenly father expects a certain behavior from us, because we are part of His family.

Don't justify it. If you want to be used by the Lord, you have to be concerned what people think of you. Even if what you are doing is innocent, it can nullify your ministry. What will the neighbor think when they see your boyfriend's car in the driveway at 3am?

I had to quit drinking IBC Root Beer because it looked so much like beer that I quit so not to trip someone else up. Working with Youth, they look up to me, that what I do is acceptable for them, I quit drinking so there could be no doubt.

The Closing of the Epistle:

(1 Thessalonians 5:23 NKJV) Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The tricotomy of man – body, soul and spirit.

(1 Thessalonians 5:24 NKJV) He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.

Remember you are in the Masters Hands; He will take the twenty dollar violin and make it sound like a Stratavarious.

If you ever doubt His faithfulness, then go back to the cross.

(1 Thessalonians 5:25 NKJV) Brethren, pray for us.

(1 Thessalonians 5:26 NKJV) Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss.

(1 Thessalonians 5:27 NKJV) I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read to all the holy brethren.

We are still reading it today.

(1 Thessalonians 5:28 NKJV) The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

Verse 1 we started with grace and we end here with grace. It's all about grace.