

Epistles to the Thessalonians I

1-Thessalonians 1-3

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I was writing a letter and found something in 2-Thess. that changes the complexion of how we look at the things at the time of the end. Each of these small epistles are very personal and loving from the Apostle Paul's point of view of writing to the brethren.

The whole translation is not quite six pages long. 1-Thess. is supposed to be the first one written as epistles to the Churches. Then 2-Thess. is even shorter. Yet, in it is contained the key important events that tell us what we need to look for before the return of Christ.

The thing that got me was in 2-Thessalonians 2:1: "Now, we beseech you, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our **gathering together to Him**... [an interesting phrase, and we'll cover that in 1-Thess.] ...that you not be quickly shaken in mind, nor be troubled—neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by epistle, **as if from us, saying that the day of Christ is present**" (vs 1-2).

The *King James Version* reads a little differently: "...the day of Christ **is at hand**." When you read it, you don't get the same meaning and feeling that you do with this proper translation: "...**the day of Christ is present**."

"...**at hand**" gives the meaning that it's almost there, but that's not the meaning of the Greek. The meaning of the Greek is that it "...**is present**." Also, notice something very important about it. Why is this phrase different from other things concerning "...**the day of**..."? What do you hear '**the day of**' called most of the time? *The Day of the Lord!* This doesn't say *The Day of the Lord*. It says: "...**the day of Christ is present**." We're going to see that that is a really big key when we get there. It's going to have an awful lot of meaning for us. That was the major thing!

This all was translated into study translations with the goal of translating the New Testament. I was really surprised how touching and how personal 1st and 2nd Thess. is to the brethren, and how it applies so much to our little Christian Biblical Church of God group. We're scattered, troubled and we have difficulties and problems. We don't have the persecution like they did there, and what a reception the Apostle Paul had when he came to Thessalonica. Let's see a little bit of background of what happened there.

- You talk about dynamic preaching!

- You talk about a lively congregation!
- You talk about walking into the 'lion's den'!

When Paul went preaching, he walked into the 'lion's den' and it ended up in a riot almost every time!

Acts 17:1 "And after journeying through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica... [Greek: 'Thessalonike'] ...where *there* was a synagogue of the Jews. And as was the custom with Paul, he went in to them and for three Sabbaths..." (vs 1-2). You have to understand that Paul was the most hated person on the face of the earth by Judaism, because he was a traitor. He had renounced all of Judaism. That's why:

- there were false brethren
- those out to kill him
- robbers after him

His life was in peril all the time!

"...reasoned with them from the Scriptures, expounding and demonstrating that it was necessary for Christ to suffer and to rise from *the* dead, and *testifying*, 'This Jesus, Whom I am proclaiming to you, **is the Christ**.' Now, some of them were convinced, and joined themselves to Paul and Silas, including a great multitude of devout Greeks, and of the chief women not a few" (vs 2-4).

What Paul was accused of was that he was stealing for Christianity the universal religion that the Jews were ready to bring on the world. If anyone thinks that I'm too hard on the Jews, go online and go to jewsforjudaism.org and you will get your eyes and ears filled with their attitude toward Christianity.

Verse 5: "But the unbelieving Jews became envious and took to *them* certain evil men of the baser sort; and when they had gathered a huge crowd, they set the city in an uproar..." The way that they solved their problem was with a riot. How do the Jews in Jerusalem solve their problems today? *They have a riot!* They were using the same tactics back then. So, they thought that if they could stop Paul and those with him then they could preserve their synagogue, but it was never to be.

"...and they assaulted the house of Jason, looking for *Paul and Silas*, to bring them out to the people. And when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and certain brethren before the city

magistrates, crying out, ‘Those who have set the whole world in confusion have come here also’” (vs 5-6). The preaching of the Gospel was a tremendous and profound change.

I’ve watch on Discovery Channel *Terror X* and was about the religion of the Egyptians. Absolutely amazing! We don’t understand how these people were given over to demonism and idolatry and sex-worship of the absolute worst and basest kind. I was shocked that they were bringing those things out on public television. Absolutely the basest kind of religion, phallic worship of the worst kind. Now they’re bringing this out with these Eastern/Oriental religions. They’re bringing in the aspect of sexual love and bringing demon sex into America in a big, big way through these Eastern/Oriental religions.

The Gospel always turned the world upside down wherever it went, because it brought:

- truth
- morality
- dignity
- salvation

When they first came to the Jews and then to the Greeks they were turning the whole world upside down. Now they have to leave their idols, smash their idols, get rid of them. Remember that in Ephesus it caused such an economic depression—because of the Temple of Diana—that no one was buying the idols and the books in the Temple of Diana any longer.

What happened? Verse 7: “Whom Jason has received; and these all do *what is* contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying *that* there is another king, Jesus.’ And they caused *great* agitation among the people and the city magistrates, who heard these things. But after taking security from Jason and the rest, they let them go.... [here’s how bad it was]: Then the brethren immediately sent away **by night** to Berea both Paul and Silas...” (vs 7-10). They didn’t have streetlights and the local bus you could get on and get them out. They had to walk out! So, they sent them down to Berea.

1-Thessalonians 1:1: “Paul and Silvanus and Timothy, to the Church of *the* Thessalonians, *which is* in God *the* Father and *the* Lord Jesus Christ...” Notice how Paul always pointed them to God the Father and Jesus Christ. This is how you are going to know who a teacher of God really is. Not by his proclaiming that he is one, but by what he teaches.

We are seeing that God is separating and scattering and dividing today, and getting rid of those who use Scriptures to have a ‘religion’ to manipulate people to politick them or merchandise

them, and their end is going to be very short. I don’t think God is going to put up with it very much longer, especially those who are trying to manipulate back into the one-world religion. That’s what’s happening! You can be guaranteed that!

You will notice that Paul didn’t bring in any notoriety to himself. Always to God the Father and Jesus Christ!

“...Grace and peace *be* to you from God our Father and *the* Lord Jesus Christ. We give thanks to God always concerning all of you, making mention of you in our prayers. Without fail, we remember your **work of faith, and your labor of love, and your endurance in the hope** of our Lord Jesus Christ, before our God and Father” (vs 1-3).

Notice that right away he starts out with *faith, love and hope!* Note those key words as we go along, because you will see that filters through everything that the Apostle Paul does. It’s very personal and touching, very tender how he deals with the brethren.

A *work of faith* is something that ***you believe to the depth of your being that you act upon!*** That’s why if you believe God and His Word and you believe that the Sabbath is *His day*, keeping the Sabbath is *work of faith!* You ***believe God***, and that’s the most important thing that there is. It produces the *work of faith* and your *labor of love*. Love is difficult; you have to work at it. There are always obstacles in the way, whether it be personally between husband and wife, family and children, or whether it be between brethren that you know well and those you don’t know well and people you work with. You’re always confronted with something that is imperfect! All of these things come along ***to see whether you really love God*** or not, and that you’re willing to *express that love*.

- If it’s never returned to you, now what are you going to do?
 - Are you going to take a position then?
- If you take a position, you’ve lost love.*
- What do I mean by that?

Suppose you feel that you are giving and loving as much as you can, and it’s never, ***never, never*** returned? So, you say, ‘I am going to wait until I am loved back.’ You have just taken a position and you have lost love. *You think on that!* Christ never did that; He always loved the Father, and in spite of everything that went on, He always loved God and humankind.

Right when He was being crucified, what did He say? *Father, forgive them, they know not what they do!* Jesus never lost love, because He never took a position contrary to love. That’s

important to understand.

It's the same way in your relationship with God. 'God, I will love you if you bless me.' You just lost love.

- What if God's blessing to you is a trial?
- What if God's blessing to you is tribulation?

I don't mean the Great Tribulation, *just tribulation, anguish and affliction in life.*

- Are you going to love God less because that comes?

What Paul was doing here with the Thessalonians was showing them that in spite of all this persecution that they were going through—and they had a harder time of it than we have had—they had to come out of a completely pagan society.

Here is about Christ; everything the opposite of the success story of men, Isaiah 53:1: "Who has believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?" That's a very interesting question.

Verse 2: "For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground; He has no form nor comeliness that we should look upon Him, nor beauty that we should desire Him." Everyone wants to follow the handsome, the beautiful, the great and the marvelous. God came plain and ordinary, nothing outstanding. Yet, He could have come the most beautiful, handsome and so forth.

God wants you to have love based from your heart to Him, not based upon a physical view or some carnal thing.

Verse 3: "*He is* despised and rejected of men..." yet, still loved God. As we go through this, remember that He still loved God the Father. **When all else fails, remember that God still loves you!** Regardless if you suffer, even if you're in pain, agony, persecuted or rejected, **God still loves you!** That's why God called you, because He loves you! Christ set the standard for us:

"...a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and we hid as it were our faces from Him..." (v 3). Oh yes, everybody turns aside from Christ; 'that doesn't meet our fancy.'

"...He was despised, and we esteemed Him not" (v 3). What did He do in His love? Why did He do that?

Verse 4: "Surely He has borne our infirmities, and carried our sorrows..." When you have a trial or difficulty, just like the Thessalonians—they had persecution—you don't go screaming to God and say, 'God, why is it that I

have this?' *It's to develop Godly character in you!* Don't ask Him why. It's there! That's why it's important that when you pray, you don't seek a position, or seek a benefit per se. You seek God! Seek His love, then you'll understand.

I think that in it then, we can come to understand how the Apostle Paul even rejoiced in his afflictions. He loved us so much that "...He has borne our infirmities, and carried our sorrows..." Think of it this way: All the grief and all the sorrow of all humankind of all history was born by Christ all at once.

There's no sorrow, no pain, no grief, no anguish, no persecution that God cannot intervene to help and strengthen you. Even if it is 'God, make me faithful unto death.' Even if that is the last thought.

"...yet, we esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted" (v 4). That's what they said: 'If you be the Christ, come down off the cross. You've healed others, heal Yourself; show us!'

Verse 5: "But He *was* wounded for our transgressions; *He was* crushed for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace *was* upon Him; and with His stripes we ourselves are healed." That's what Christ wants to do with all of this.

Verse 6: "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned each one to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." You talk about an unfair circumstance. Have you ever suffered for something that you didn't do? *Those are the toughest ones—aren't they? But all of our iniquity was laid upon Him!*

Verse 7: "He was oppressed, and He was afflicted; yet, He opened not His mouth.... [not a complaint; not one] ... He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before its shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth."

Verse 10: "Yet, the LORD willed to crush Him and He has put Him to grief: You shall make His life an offering for sin. He shall see His seed... [the whole plan of God; through that is redemption] ...He shall prolong His days, and that the purpose of the LORD might prosper in His hand."

This is the whole example for us. Keep this in mind as we go through what the Thessalonians were going through and what Paul was bringing to them.

1-Thessalonians 1:3: "Without fail, we remember your work of faith, and *your* labor of love... [we just covered the labor of love that Christ had for us] ...and *your* endurance in *the* hope of our Lord Jesus Christ, before our God and Father." That's all with ***faith and hope and love.***

Verse 4: “Knowing your election, brethren, *as you are* beloved by God.” What does that mean? *God has called every one! God the Father Himself!* I think the more we think on that and the more we ask God to help us understand that, the greater that that becomes.

Who are we? Here we are in this little room, and if you would take a point of view from God looking down on the earth and here’s the earth going by and everybody traveling or in their homes and cars—whatever they’re doing—and God reaches down and says, ‘I’m calling you!’ He didn’t call the mighty, the great. That’s for sure, all you have to do is just look at us and we know that—don’t we?

There’s a reason for it. The mighty and the great would demand that God call them, because after all they’re so important. God couldn’t possibly get along without them. So, Paul is showing that, ‘yes, we’ll get along without them.’ This is why everything has to be based on:

- what God does
- the Truth of God
- the love of God
- the understanding God’s way

God is the One Who is involved in it. That’s how God is going to separate all these difficulties and problems. God is fully in charge! He knows what He’s doing! He’s given us all free choice that we can come to Him.

John 6:44: “No one can come to Me...” It’s not going to be an effort that a person makes toward God. God is the One Who has to do it. Look at all of the people down here in all of the Christian-professing churches. They go to church on Sunday so they can be better people. They go to church on Sunday so that God will have to accept them. They are good enough to come to God. They’re not because it’s on the wrong day, and ***no one is going to come to God to force God to do anything!***

That’s why Jesus said, v 44: “No one can come to Me unless the Father, Who sent Me, draws him...” God had to do something in each one of our lives, to draw us!

What it was in your life or my life is a little different in each of the circumstances as we go along. But certainly we can look back... I can look back and remember that day. I didn’t have a clue when it was happening, but I can look back and remember that day.

“...and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, ‘And they shall all be taught by God.’...” (vs 44-45). That’s what’s happening when we study the Word of God, when we go into it in depth, ***and with God’s Spirit God is***

teaching us!

- It’s His Word!
- It’s His Spirit!
- It’s His way!

The Father is teaching us!

“...Therefore, everyone who has heard from the Father, and has learned, comes to Me” (v 45). That’s why our calling, our election, is so profound! That’s why it’s so magnificent, brethren. That’s what Paul was telling them.

1-Thessalonians 1:4: “Knowing your election, brethren, *as you are* beloved by God. For our Gospel did not come to you in word only...” (vs 4-5). Of course, it’s the Gospel of the Salvation of God.

“...but also in power and in *the* Holy Spirit, and **with great conviction...**” (v 5). There’s something that happens when there’s trial and trouble and duress. It gives you *conviction!* That’s what God wants you to have, *great conviction!* In spite of every obstacle, in spite of everything, ***you have conviction of the Truth, that it is right!***

“...even as you know what sort of men we were among you for your sake. And you became **imitators** of us and of the Lord...” (vs 5-6). The *King James* says *followers*, but to be imitators is quite different. We’re to be as children.

Our granddaughter Sarah was about a year old and was walking around, and it was a perfect example of open innocence of a little baby learning by imitating. Whatever Sarah saw us do she would do. Hands on the head, hands over the eyes, bow the head and say, ‘Amen.’ Imitating, not just following. Imitating means a willful desiring of wanting to soak in all that there is. With a little baby, that’s the way that they do and walk around for approval. That’s what it means to be imitators.

How many times have we heard, ‘Follow me as I follow Christ.’ The Greek means *imitate me as I imitate Christ!* Here is the ultimate of what we are to do. At this point Paul did not say ‘imitate me as I imitate Christ’; here’s what he said:

Ephesians 5:1 “Therefore, **be imitators of God...**” Can you imagine that? You talk about a high goal, a tremendous standard! ***Imitate God!*** That’s a tall order! How do you do it?

“...as beloved children” (v 1). Just like little Sarah. That’s why with this kind of attitude toward God and toward each other that teaching and shepherding the brethren becomes a tremendous and wonderful thing. It takes away all of the trappings of what we have known as a minister in the past and puts it in that we are all working together with God.

- God is doing His work
- God is doing His way

That's a wonderful thing for us to understand. That's why the Sabbath becomes so important. We fellowship with God the Father and Jesus Christ on the Sabbath Day. God has said that for all from creation, remember the Sabbath, because:

- God is going to be there
- You keep it Holy because *I* made it Holy
- You fellowship *with Me* because *I'm* going to fellowship with you

When we understand that and put that all together, it just really means so much more.

Verse 2: "And walk in love, even as Christ also loved us... [we saw that, and how He did it] ...and gave Himself for us *as* an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor."

Here's the ultimate and here's where it's all pointing to; here's what it's going to be. God is going to do it; Christ is going to do it; He's going to make it happen. It's nothing that we can do on our own, it has to be done with the Spirit of God, with the Word of God, all of this being taught of God.

Matthew 5:48: "Therefore, you shall be perfect, even as your Father Who *is* in heaven is perfect." That's the full and complete standard.

- that's what all of this is all about
- that's why we exist
- that's why we live
- that's why God has given His Word
- that's why it's so important that we have it and follow it the way God wants us to

If you have that there isn't going to be anything that's going to hold us back. There's going to be nothing that is going to stop us.

1-Thessalonians 1:6: "And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, having accepted the Word in much persecution with *the* joy of *the* Holy Spirit." When you understand the things that I have just covered, ***then you have the joy of the Holy Spirit:***

- in the midst of persecution
- in the midst of sorrow
- regardless of the circumstances around you

Because God will give it!

Verse 7: "So that you became examples to all those in Macedonia and Achaia who are believers." That's what we are to the rest of the Church, brethren. There aren't very many people around anywhere to be an example to those who are wondering: What on earth is happening? You can be an example and you can help them. But I tell you

that God is going to show that it's going to be those who really love God and He's going to deal with them. That's what's going to happen.

Verse 8: "For the Word of the Lord has sounded forth from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every *other* place also your faith toward God has spread abroad, so that there is no need for us to say anything; because they themselves are relating how readily you received us when we *first* visited you, and how **you turned from idols to God, to serve the living and true God**, and to await His Son from the heavens..." (vs 8-10). They were waiting for Him to return.

When we get to some of these other prophecies, they did not understand. We are living in a time that is going to be so unique, that even in these epistles that Paul wrote we are going to see that God inspired him to write some things in there that we can only understand today. Isn't that amazing?

The Word of God is so living and powerful that he could write this over 1800 years ago and it will be for us today. They were waiting for Christ to return.

"...Whom He raised from *the* dead—Jesus, Who is delivering us from the coming wrath" (v 10). He *is* going to deliver us from the coming wrath. I don't know exactly how everything is going to fall out, but a little later I will present some things to you that may give us a different perspective on how the end-time is coming about.

- Has any of the end-time prophecies happened the way we thought?
- Does that make the prophecies not true?
- ***NO!***

It means that our understanding of them was not correct.

- Why was our understanding not correct?
Because we were trying to tell God what to do!
 - ✓ In 1972 we flee! *Ut oh! We're many years late!*
 - ✓ In 1975 Christ is going to return! *No! He's going to return precisely on time in the time that He has set with the events that He has set and they're going to be done that way!*

God is the One Who is going to give us the understanding. That's how it's going to be.

1-Thessalonians 2:1: "For you yourselves, brethren, know that the visit *we had* with you was not without effect." I am trying to relate that to all of you today.

Verse 2: "But before *we came*, we had

suffered and had been insulted at Philippi, even as you know; **but we were bold in our God to speak the Gospel to you...** [that's what it's going to take, courage in God because we're going to be confronting some desperate times] ...*even* in much conflict." There are those difficulties and problems that go on. Notice Paul's attitude and how he came to the brethren:

Verse 3: "For our exhortation *was* not out of error... [it was right according to the Truth of God] ...nor from uncleanness, nor with guile... [he didn't come in with a hidden agenda] ...but even as we were approved by God to be entrusted with the Gospel, we speak in this manner: as *those* who please not men, but God, Who proves our hearts" (vs 3-4). That's quite a thing!

- look at how Paul understood his relationship with God
- look at how he understood the relationship with the Gospel

Paul said that **he was approved of God to be entrusted** with the Gospel!

(go to the next track)

God let Saul, who became Paul, be all lifted up in *vanity, importance, pride, power and authority* and take the Christians to bind them, to shackle them, to throw them in prison, and to just make a total mess of his life. *Then God called him!* When God got done with him He said, 'Paul, I want you to preach the Gospel. You understand that there wouldn't be one single word that he would say contrary, without a doubt.

1-Timothy 1:6: "From which some, having missed the mark, have turned aside unto vain jangling." Isn't it amazing how we're reliving all of these things today. Never at a time in the whole history of my being in the Church of God have the Scriptures been more meaningful, almost every word, wherever you turn. We cannot keep up with the false prophecies and heresies fast enough to defend ourselves.

Verse 7: "Desiring to be teachers of *the* law..." Scores of them, you just can't keep up with it: websites, Internet, phones, faxes, newsletters and booklets, etc.

"...neither understanding what they are saying, nor what they are strongly affirming" (v 7). What they ought to do is stand up and say, 'Brethren, I affirm to you that I know absolutely nothing, though I'm totally convinced that I'm right.' It's that bad!

Verse 8: "Now we know that the law *is* good, if anyone uses it lawfully.... [there's a right way to use the Word of God] ...understanding this: that law is not enacted for a righteous man..." (vs 8-

9). You're not going to get a speeding ticket if you're going the speed limit.

"...but for *the* lawless and disobedient, for *the* ungodly and sinful, for *the* unholy and profane, for slayers of fathers and slayers of mothers, for murderers, for fornicators, for homosexuals, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers..." (vs 9-10). Sounds like we're talking about the ministry; sad indictment— isn't it? Sad that it's so sick that we can even laugh at that!

"...and for any other thing *that* is opposed to sound doctrine; according to the Gospel of the glory of the blessed God, **with which I was entrusted**" (vs 10-11). God has committed something to our trust, to each one of us: *His Holy Spirit and His Word!*

I'm sure that Paul knew Deut. 18, every word of that! He's going to speak the Word of God and that alone. He's **entrusted** with it! Isn't it interesting that Paul has more epistles preserved in the New Testament than any other apostle? We'll see why in just a minute.

Verse 12: "And I thank Jesus Christ our Lord, Who has empowered me, that He counted me faithful, putting *me* into the ministry, who was previously a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent person; but **I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief**" (vs 12-13).

Do you think that Paul can convince people that God can forgive their sins? Without a doubt! Look at what he did *and God forgave him!*

Verse 14: "But the grace of our Lord abounded exceedingly with *the* faith and love that *is* in Christ Jesus. *This is* a faithful saying, and worthy of full acceptance: that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief" (vs 14-15). He let that memory burn deep within him, that he would remain loving to God and faithful to always preach the Gospel.

Verse 16: "But for this reason I was shown mercy in order that in me first Jesus Christ might demonstrate all long-suffering, for an example to those who would afterwards believe on Him unto eternal life."

If there's any one thing that Paul did not have is political ambition. He could care less, because he didn't have a position. He wanted the Truth. Always remember this: ***In any difficulty, it is not who is right, it is what is right!*** Even if you are right, does that make you any less of a sinner by nature? *No!*

It's not who is right—***God is always right***—it's what is right! That way then you don't get

involved in politics, and you don't get involved in trying to please men. If you please God you will please all of those who are also trying to please God.

How many times have I said, concerning a position, that because the Christian Biblical Church of God is structured so that the whole congregation, or fellowship group—wherever it is—has input together to run things in decency and order the way that God wants it run. No one seeking power can stay in those fellowship groups!

Example: Someone came in and the congregation all got together and confronted this man and the congregation together took care of it in a wonderful way. That position of authority could not be exercised over them and squelch them. It's the same way with Paul; notice how he starts out:

Galatians 1:1: "Paul, *an* apostle, not *sent* from men... [that's the theme all the way through] ...nor *made* by man, but by Jesus Christ and God *the* Father, Who raised Him from *the* dead; and all the brethren who are with me..." (vs 1-2). All the brethren were involved in this letter; that's quite something to understand.

- he didn't say all the apostles
- he didn't say all the ministers

he said, "...all the brethren who are with me, to the Churches of Galatia: Grace and peace *be* to you from God *the* Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, Who gave Himself for our sins, in order that He might deliver us from the present evil world, according to the will of our God and Father" (vs 2-4). That's the most important thing: ***We must do and fulfill the will of God, and let it be done within us!***

Verse 5: "To Whom *be* the glory into the ages of eternity. Amen. I am astonished that you are so quickly being turned away from Him Who called you into *the* grace of Christ, to a different gospel" (vs 5-6). Aren't we amazed at all that today? How many people so soon removed? Why? *Because they all sought a position rather than God!*

Verse 7: "Which *in reality* is not another *Gospel*..." There can't be, there's only *one Gospel*, *there cannot be another gospel!*

"...but there are some who are troubling you... [we've all experience that] ...and are desiring to pervert the Gospel of Christ" (v 7). It didn't take him long to get right to the heart and core of it—did it? What a way to open a letter; not even a nice thank you in the first part. Then he really lays it out:

Verse 8: "But if we, or even an angel from heaven, should preach a gospel to you *that* is contrary to what we have preached, LET HIM BE ACCURSED!" That's how much he trusted in the

Gospel of Christ. Do you think Paul would dare try and please a man in spite of God? *No way!* He took on Peter one to one (Gal. 2)—the 'chief' apostle?

Verse 9: "As we have said before, I also now say again. If anyone is preaching a gospel contrary to what you have received, LET HIM BE ACCURSED! Now then, am I striving to please men, or God? Or am I motivated to please men? For if I am yet pleasing men, I would not be a servant of Christ" (vs 9-10).

That, brethren, is the simplest answer as to what happened to all the ministers and the WCG. They sought to please men in were no longer the servants of Christ. This is the way that the Apostle Paul always did. That's why you will find that his epistles are here. *He was faithful to God!*

Verse 11: "But I certify to you, brethren, that the Gospel that was preached by me is not according to man"—right at the beginning of the epistles that he was writing.

1-Thessalonians 2:4: "...we speak in this manner: as *those* who please not men, but God, Who proves our hearts."

- God is going to test the heart!
- God is going to prove the heart!
- God wants to know what's in your heart!

God is going to do it. That's why all the physical things that are done out here are of no consequence. Here's what Christ is doing now, and this is an ongoing thing that He is always doing.

Revelation 2:23—to the Church at Thyatira and all the false doctrines they had because of the false prophetess Jezebel: "And I will kill her children with death..." Why? *Because eternal life and the Truth of God is not going to be mixed with error and sin!*

"...and all the churches shall know..." This is what we have to learn and what we need to know today.

"...that **I am He Who searches the reins and hearts...**" The reins are likened unto God using the Holy Spirit to test us and try us to see how we're doing, to know what is in our heart. Now notice what He's going to do:

"...and I will give to each of you according to your works" (v 23). That's why the heart is so important. *Works motivated from the heart because you believe.* That comes back to the labor of faith and love. So, ***Christ is going to render according to what's in your heart!*** That is we need to know and understand. God is going to prove the heart. You can be, in many ways, a total failure, as people would

view things, but a complete success before God because your heart is right.

1-Thessalonians 2:5: “For neither at any time did we use flattering words *with you*, even as you know, nor a cover for covetousness... [they didn’t come in to merchandize, take and steal] ...God *is our* witness; nor were we seeking glory from men, neither from you nor from others...” (vs 5-6). Talk about independent! But that is good because he can serve God in Truth!

“...*though* as Christ’s apostles we had *the* power to be burdensome... [had the authority to take tithes and offerings from the brethren] ...but we were gentle among you, as a nursing mother cherishes her own children” (vs 6-7). Isn’t that something?

That’s how the ministry needs to be. We need to be persuaded because of love. Leadership in the ministry needs to be leading with the Word of God like Paul did. That’s how it is to be! I’m convinced that God is going to raise up elders from among us that are going to be far superior to anything we have ever known in the past. They will be taught the same way, and that’s the way it has to be. “...as a nursing mother cherishes her own children.”

Isaiah 40:11—this is the way the Church needs to be: “He shall feed His flock like a shepherd; He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry *them* in His bosom, *and* shall gently lead those with young.”

- You know what that will affect? *The greatest change within the brethren of God!*
- Why? *Because it gives the love, the desire!*
- Did you ever really change when you were attacked and ‘beat’ upon when you came to church?
- Did you go home with a loving desire to serve God? *No!*

If it’s like Paul does it here, you’ll want to; you’ll desire to because it will come from the heart, from your choice. That’s what God wants. God doesn’t have to come down and smash anybody. He’ll come down and save us.

As I’ve said before, *power cannot be in that environment*. Through all of this, what are we learning to do? *We’re learning how God wants us to run the Kingdom of God!* This is how God is going to heal the earth, but you can’t understand that unless you yourself have been loved of God.

Matthew 11:25: “At that time Jesus answered and said, ‘I praise You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent, and have revealed

them to babes. Yes, Father, for it was well pleasing in Your sight *to do* this. All things were delivered to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father; neither does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son personally chooses to reveal *Him*. Come to Me, all you who labor and are *overly* burdened, **and I will give you rest**” (vs 25-28)—regardless of what the trial is.

Verse 29: “Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls. For My yoke *is* easy, and My burden is light” (vs 29-30). If we can learn that, then that’s the greatest thing we can understand.

Notice how Paul felt about them, 1-Thessalonians 2:8: “Yearning over you in the same way, we were willing to impart to you not only the Gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you were beloved to us.” Notice *the whole attitude of service* toward the brethren:

Verse 9: “For you remember, brethren, our labor and *our* toil; for we were working night and day so as not to be a burden to anyone among you, *while* we proclaimed the Gospel of God. You *are* witnesses, and *also* God, how holily and righteously and blamelessly we conducted ourselves with you who believe; even as you know how we were exhorting and consoling each one of you, as a father *does* his own children, and *earnestly* testifying, **that you may walk worthily of God, Who is calling you to His own kingdom and glory**” (vs 9-12).

I want you to notice how the Apostle Paul always does this. He’s going to have a few things that he needs to say later on. But he always points the brethren *toward Christ and God the Father*, and to get your mind on that first. Then if there’s any correction that needs to come—which he has later—you understand it. So, he points them toward that, and it’s really quite a thing.

Peter did the same thing, and I’m convinced that the Apostle Peter learned some things from the Apostle Paul with their encounter in Gal. 2. Here in 2-Peter we have the same thing concerning the calling, calling you to His own kingdom and glory. Peter was talking about that very thing, how precious and great the calling is that God has given us.

2-Peter 1:3: “According as His Divine power has given to us all things that *pertain* to life and Godliness...”

After seeing the Library of Congress on one of my trips, it had exactly the reverse effect upon me than my host thought it would. I was so impressed

that God could put everything in one book. You can stand there in a building with millions of volumes of books on everything under the sun, **but God put it in one book!**

“...all things that *pertain* to life and Godliness, through the knowledge of Him Who called us by *His own* glory and virtue; through which He has given to us the greatest and *most* precious promises, that through these you may become partakers of *the* Divine nature... [That’s what God wants us to have, to be like Him! To be in glory as He is; to see Him as He is.] ...having escaped the corruption *that is* in *the* world through lust” (vs 3-4).

Verse 9: “But the one in whom these things are not present is *spiritually* blind—so short-sighted *that* he has forgotten that he was purified from his old sins. For this reason, brethren, **be even more diligent to make your calling and election sure...**” (vs 9-10).

That’s what God is doing with us now; it is sure; it is being perfected. That’s why the Word of God is so important.

“...because ***if*** you are doing these things, you will never fall at any time” (v 10). You are guaranteed success!

1-Thessalonians 2:13: “Because of this, we give thanks to God without ceasing: that when you received *the* Word of God, which you heard from us, you did not accept it as the word of men, but even as it is in truth—*the* Word of God, which is also working in you who believe.” This becomes a very important thing to understand.

You need to know the Word of God, and with the Spirit of God let the Word of God work *in you* so that it changes:

- your heart
- your mind
- your attitude

That’s the work of God, the inner working of the Spirit of God in you!

Verse 14: “For, brethren, you became imitators of the Churches of God in Judea which are in Christ Jesus; because you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen as they also *suffered* from the Jews; who killed both the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and drove you out, and do not please God, and *are* contrary to all men, forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles so that they might be saved...” (vs 14-16). Can you imagine that, that they didn’t want to share the Word of God with other people.

“...in order to fill up their sins always. But

the wrath has come upon them to the uttermost. Now we, brethren, having been separated from you for a short time, but not in heart, are making every effort to see you *again*, with much desire. For this reason we sought to come to you, even I, Paul, both once and twice; but Satan hindered us. For what *is* our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing?...” (vs 16-19). Notice what Paul focused on. He knew that if he taught them and they responded to God, that it would be!

“...*Is it* not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?” (v 19). Can you imagine what joy it’s going to be to see the brethren that are going to be there at the resurrection?

Verse 20: “For you are our glory and *our* joy.” That’s something! Coupled with our calling and with what God has given us, we need to always glorify God for everything that is done.

Let’s notice, again, *hope, joy, crown, glory, joy and encouraging.* Now he builds on this:

1-Thessalonians 3:1: “Accordingly, when we could not bear to wait any longer, we thought *it* best *for us* to be left in Athens alone; and we sent our brother Timothy, a servant of God and our fellow worker in the Gospel of Christ, in order to establish you and **to encourage you** concerning your faith” (vs 1-2). Notice the encouragement!

Verse 3: “So that no one might be unduly shaken by these persecutions.... [they were coming after them tooth and nail] ...(For you yourselves know that we are appointed to this very thing; and also, when we were with you, we told you beforehand *that* we would suffer persecutions, exactly as it also came to pass; and you are aware *of this.*)” (vs 3-4). And ‘yea, you sent us away at night.’

Verse 5: “For this reason, when I could not wait any longer...” No telephones! We are living in an age and time that is something! Imagine trying to operate with no phones, no fax, no computers, no electricity. Every book had to be hand-written. Getting together for the Sabbath as we do today would have been an absolutely utter impossibility.

Now I can just get on an airplane and it’s a routine thing. There’s a tremendous miracle going on every day. Then you get up in the plane and look down and here are all the cars, trucks, buses and people, and it’s going on everywhere in the world. What a time we live in. Paul didn’t have that.

“...I sent *Timothy*, in order to know your faith, lest perhaps the tempter had tempted you, and our labor might be in vain” (v 5). The temptations are going to come, and the arguments are going to be slick.

Verse 6: “But now, after Timothy came to us from you and told us the good news of ***your faith and your love***, and that you always keep us in mind, and are longing to see us, even as we also *long to see* you; through this *report* about you we were **encouraged**... [Paul needed to be encouraged] ...brethren, in all our persecution and trouble—**because of your faith**; for now we live... [Paul was really rejoicing] ...if you stand firm in *the* Lord. For what thanksgiving are we able to offer to God concerning you, for all the joy with which we rejoice before God because of you” (vs 6-9). This was his way of saying, ‘Thank you for the offering that you sent.’

Verse 10: “Praying day and night fervently that we might see you *again*, and might perfect the things *that are* lacking in your faith? But may our God and Father Himself, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way to you. Now may the Lord make you to exceed and to abound in love...” (vs 10-12). Notice how Paul is focusing on growing in love.

- What is the greatest? *Love!*
- What never fails? *Love!*
- What brings us to God? *The love of God!*
- What brings us together? *The love of God and each other!*

The love of God can never be preached enough, taught enough or exercised enough, because it is the greatest thing and it is to exceed and grow! That’s what he was encouraging them to do.

Verse 12: “...abound in love toward one another and toward all, even as we also *abound in love* toward you, that your hearts may be established blameless in Holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints” (vs 12-13).

We saw where we were commanded to be perfect (Matt. 5:48). That’s the ultimate goal. However, you are blameless. Did you ever think of that? ***You are without blame before God!*** Why does God give His grace to put you in this condition? *To inspire you!* That:

- ***if*** God—Who is perfect—called us who are imperfect, which He did
- ***if*** God the Father is the greatest Being of all that there is and there is no fault in Him at all
- ***then*** you look at us and we have all kinds of faults and weaknesses and carnal nature and things like this

God looks at you and you have ***no blame!*** That is all through Christ!

This will help you: I have letter from a man who wrote one of the saddest, most pathetic letters I have ever read from one of the brethren. I’ll just sort

of summarize it; he said:

I have never felt worth anything, nor loved, nor counted worthy of anything, and I see no hope. I don’t know why God has called me.

That’s a tough letter to answer, but I wonder how many brethren out there feel the same way. If they just knew one thing: ***that they are blameless before God!***

- that doesn’t mean that you don’t have time
- that doesn’t mean you don’t have to repent
- that doesn’t mean you don’t have more to overcome

You’ve got lots, and so do I. But it’s to inspire you that if God would put you in that relationship just think how much you want to overcome. Just think how much you want to get rid of all of the things that hold you back.

Ephesians 1:3: “Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly things... [not in heavenly places; you’re not in heavenly places] ...with Christ.” Everything you need for eternal life!

Verse 4: “According as He has personally chosen us for Himself... [God did the choosing] ...before *the* foundation of *the* world... [God had His plan all worked out] ...***in order that we might be Holy and blameless before Him in love.***” Let that sink in! *Without blame!* That’s how God considers you, so you can be inspired—to grow and overcome in love!

Verse 5: “Having predestinated us for sonship...” It’s not an adoption, which is when you take someone from another family and bring that person into your family. This is sonship because we have the very seed of God the Father in us and we will be His children; called *His children!*

“...to Himself through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of His own will” (v 5). Have you ever thought that God had His own good pleasure and delighted in calling you.

We may look at ourselves and say, ‘God, what for?’ If He could answer back He would say, ‘I know.’ His very own will and desire is why He has called you. Notice for what:

Verse 6: “To *the* praise of *the* glory of His grace...” That’s what Paul was saying, that you are our glory at the coming of Christ.

“...wherein He has made us objects of *His* grace in the Beloved *Son*” (v 6)—Christ.

It’s very important that we understand that

we are blameless!

All Scriptures from *The Holy Bible in Its Original Order, A Faithful Version* by Fred R. Coulter (except where noted)

Scriptural References:

- 1) 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2
- 2) Acts 17:1-10
- 3) 1 Thessalonians 1:1-3
- 4) Isaiah 53:1-7, 10
- 5) 1 Thessalonians 1:3-4
- 6) John 6:44-45
- 7) 1 Thessalonians 1:4-6
- 8) Ephesians 5:1-2
- 9) Matthew 5:48
- 10) 1 Thessalonians 1:6-10
- 11) 1 Thessalonians 2:1-4
- 12) 1 Timothy 1:6-16
- 13) Galatians 1:1-11
- 14) 1 Thessalonians 2:1-4
- 15) Revelation 2:23
- 16) 1 Thessalonians 2:5-7
- 17) Isaiah 40:11
- 18) Matthew 11:25-30
- 19) 1 Thessalonians 2:8-12
- 20) 2 Peter 1:3-4, 9-10
- 21) 1 Thessalonians 2:13-20
- 22) 1 Thessalonians 3:1-13
- 23) Ephesians 1:3-6

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Deuteronomy 18
- Galatians 2

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