

LESSONS FROM THE LETTERS TO THE THESSALONIANS
November 30, 2008

A BLESSED AND INFORMATIVE SALUTATION

1 Thessalonians 1:1

Introduction:

- A. Both Thessalonian letters should have special interest and appeal to God's saints at this point in time since they contain so many references to the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ**
- B. Every day seems to cry out, "The coming of the Lord is very near, look up for your redemption draws near."**
- C. The instructions Paul wrote to this church could well be the best for us in our day.**
- D. Let us enter into this study with prayerful hearts and open minds learning what is best for us in light of His soon coming.**

I. LEARN THAT PAUL UNDERSTOOD THE WORD CHURCH TO IDENTIFY AN ASSEMBLY OF PEOPLE LOCATED IN A SPECIFIC PLACE.

- A. Nothing has contributed to the confusion in the religious world more than the false concept of a universal, invisible church.**
- B. Paul spoke of "the church of the Thessalonians." This identified a local visible church located in a certain place.**
- C. Paul used the Greek word *ekklesia* which is made up of two words *ek* meaning "out of" and *kaleo* meaning "to call." Thus, the word church means "called out of" – called out of the world.**
- D. The Greek never used the word *ekklesia* to refer to a religious body until the planting of New Testament churches among them.**
- E. The word was used to refer to political bodies as noted in Acts 19:39-41.**
- F. A right understanding of the nature of a church is necessary to a right understanding of most Bible teachings. Being wrong on the church question will cause one to be wrong on many other teachings.**
- G. Many times I heard Dr. A.J. Kirkland say, "If you are right on the church question, you will be right on most other teachings; if you are wrong on the church question, you will be wrong on most other Bible teachings."**

II. LEARN SOME THINGS PAUL BELIEVED ABOUT JESUS.

- A. Paul was careful to use all three names in his references to Jesus. He knew Him as Jesus of Nazareth who was also Lord of his life and the anointed One. Acts 22:8; Acts 16:31.**
- B. Paul knew Jesus to be one with the Father – God incarnate in human flesh. “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father. “I and the Father are ONE.”**
- C. He knew Him and taught others believe on the Lord Jesus Christ —the One God anointed to be our savior and Lord.**
- D. Jesus of Nazareth was born of woman, but He is Lord and Master.**

III. LEARN HOW MEANINGFUL IS PAUL’S GREETING.

- A. Grace be unto you.**
 - 1. Grace is a great Christian word meaning that which gives pleasure and joy.**
 - 2. It expresses the friendly feelings of the one from which it comes. God in this case.**
 - 3. It also refers to the thankful feelings of the one who has received the favor – the saved.**
 - 4. Paul uses it to refer to the feelings of those who are saved and are members of one of the Lord’s churches.**
 - 5. It is also the feelings of pleasure and joy brought on because of the kindly acts of our God for which we display our thankfulness by our joyful Christian living.**
- B. Peace is the companion of grace.**
 - 1. Peace does not just mean the absence of war.**
 - 2. It means wholeness – soundness – prosperity in referring to the Christian life expected from God’s people.**
 - 3. It means that the enmity between you and your God has been removed and that you are enjoying a flourishing state of soul health.**
- C. Paul states very clearly that both grace and peace come from God.**
 - 1. It does not, it can not come from within man.**
 - 2. God, the Father is the first source for from Him comes all good things.**
 - 3. God, the Son is the avenue through which all grace and peace comes.**
- D. Paul also established the order in which these graces come to any person.**

- 1. Grace comes first.**
- 2. Only then can we be at peace with God. When God's grace has settled our sin debt, peace comes.**

CONCLUSIONS:

- A. God has already settled the sin debt of the whole world. His grace sent His Son to die to pay your sin debt. His grace extends to you deliverance from sin and peace with God.**
- B. To be at peace with God, you must recognize that you are an enemy to God – you are guilty of sin that separates you from God.**
- C. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.**
- D. Admit your sin to God, ask Him to forgive you and trust Him to save you and you will be at peace with God.**

ATTITUDES AND ACTIVITIES

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 1:2-4

Introduction:

- A. In these verses Paul still does not get into his message to this church; but he does establish two basic lessons that hold the key to the development of a strong, viable church.
- B. These lessons deal with attitudes and activities of the pastor and the membership.
- C. Attitude has to do with feelings and emotions one toward another.
- D. Activities have to do with demonstrating our feeling and emotions by our doings.
- E. The lessons of these verses of Scripture learned well and practiced will build strong churches.

I. LEARN SOMETHING OF THE ATTITUDE PASTORS SHOULD DISPLAY TOWARD THE MEMBERSHIP.

- A. Think of them as “brethren beloved.” V. 4
 - 1. Brethren means near kinsmen – all born of God – brothers.
 - 2. Beloved is the *agape* love – the kind of love that God has for me. That is the kind of love pastors should have for their people – church members.
- B. Knowing your election of God. V. 4
 - 1. Election is not unconditional – it is in Christ.
 - 2. Knowing comes from the Greek word *oida* which means to have knowledge by observation.
 - 3. Here it means that Paul had been fully persuaded of this people’s salvation by having observed their lives.
 - 4. Not only had he heard them make professions of faith, he has seen their changed lives.
- C. We make mention of you in our prayers. V. 2
 - 1. Pastors should pray for the sheep of the flock God has given them to lead.
 - 2. Petitions of all kinds should be poured out to God on behalf of the membership of the church, individually and collectively.
- D. We give thanks to God for all of you all the time. V. 2

1. Thanking God for each other will do more to bind people together in love than anything else possible.
2. It is impossible to voice complaints against others and thank God for them at the same time.

E. We should remember without ceasing the commendable things in the lives of our people.

1. **Your work of faith – the faith – the definite article before faith broadens the meaning. Not only did faith in God precipitate work; it caused the work to be done in defense of the faith once delivered to the saints.**
2. **Your labor of love – the love – This is the *agape* love – Divine love – love that accompanies salvation. This love produces LABOR for its object.**
3. **Your patience of hope – the hope – hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. Patience of hope simply means that we never give up – we keep on laboring in our love for Jesus and working in the faith delivered to us by God Himself.**

II. LEARN WHAT MANNER OF LIFE CHURCH PEOPLE SHOULD LIVE TO HELP PASTORS HAVE THE RIGHT ATTITUDE.

A. They should be involved in THE work of THE faith.

1. **Paul always set faith and works in sharp contrast – Ephesians 2:8-10**
2. **Scripture addressed to saved people always teaches the faith works, faith is busy – faith behaves Godlike.**
3. **James taught that saving faith is working faith. If it doesn't work, it is dead being alone.**
4. **A living, working, behaving faith founded on the faith once delivered to the saints will cause any pastor to have the right attitude.**

B. A labour of love by God's people will contribute to the pastor's right attitude.

1. **Labour means TOIL – toil brings about weariness. The Greek word is sometimes translated weariness.**
2. **Love as used here is the divine love *agape*.**
3. **All saved people possess this kind of love – they may not express it all the time, but they do possess it.**
4. **Labour of THE love means that God's people toil to the point of weariness in serving God by serving others – in**

seeking the salvation and the good of others FOR LOVE'S SAKE.

5. Such a demonstration in the lives of God's people will surely cause any pastor to have a good attitude toward God's people.

C. Patience of hope in the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. Patience is not a negative, passive recognition to our lot in life; but an active, manly endurance moving to accomplish a set purpose.
2. Patience is not the resignation of the passive suffer so much as the fortitude of the stout-hearted soldier.
3. Hope presents the air of certainty – confidence – expectation.
4. Patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ means that we are enduring suffering while actively moving to accomplish God's purpose in our lives -- and all the while expecting the Lord to come for us.

D. Knowing your election of God.

1. Seeing the proof of your salvation – a changed life – a life different to the world around us.
2. You do not for long call someone “a beloved brother” just because he says he is saved.
3. Knowledge of election is rooted in the actions of those who profess to be saved.
4. After any person has demonstrated through *the work of faith – the labour of love – and the patience of hope in the >Lord Jesus Christ* – then we know by observation that he is saved and we call him Brother, beloved.

CONCLUSIONS:

When the membership of a church of the Lord Jesus Christ demonstrates such behavior as to cause the pastor to be confident of their salvation; the pastor then in turn thinks of them as BRETHREN, BELOVED and prays to God unceasingly for them, THERE EXISTS A CHURCH THAT WILL GIVE GOD THE GLORY DUE HIM.

SUCCESSFUL GOSPEL PRESENTATION

1 Thessalonians 1:5-7

Introduction:

- A. God's Word defines the gospel as – How that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried , and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.**
- B. The Bible also declares that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth, to the Jew first and also to the Gentiles.**
- C. The Bible clearly teaches that a person repent of his sin and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ to be saved.**
- D. It has been said, “The gospel is not only the presentation of an idea, but also the operation of a power.”**
- E. In the verses of this lesson Paul gives a clear explanation of all that is involved in a successful presentation of the gospel.**

I. LEARN WHAT THE MINISTER MUST DO.

- A. He must present the word of the gospel – How Jesus Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and how that He was buried and that He rose again the third according to the Scriptures.**
- B. The minister must present this with much assurance; fully persuaded that the message is true and that it truly is the power of God unto salvation.**
- C. He must have the confidence of the hearer. “as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.” You accept what I preach because you have confidence in me.**

II. LEARN OF GOD'S PART IN A SUCCESSFUL PRESENTATION OF THE GOSPEL

- A. The gospel came in Power and in the Holy Ghost.**
 - 1. When the word of the gospel is preached, the Holy Spirit begins to convict the lost of their sin and of judgment to come.**
 - 2. The Spirit drives the message into the mind and heart of the lost person.**

- B. Verse 6 speaks of these having received the word in much affliction. It is true that afflictions would come on them after**

salvation, but this refers to strong convicting work of the Spirit of God seeking to break down your resistance.

1. Jesus said, “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.” (John 6:44)
2. When Paul preached to Felix and reasoned with him of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled. (Acts 24:25)

III. LEARN WHAT IS MAN’S PART IN A SUCCESSFUL PRESENTATION OF THE GOSPEL.

- A. Verse 6 points out that those who were followers of Paul were those who had received the word of the gospel by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- B. No person is forced to accept the word of the Lord. The term “receive” always means freedom to give and freedom to get.
- C. When the word of the gospel has been preached and the Spirit of God has applied the pressure of conviction, the lost person still must choose to receive the promised salvation. Until he willingly repents toward God and trusts the saving of his soul to Jesus, the gospel presentation is a failure.
- D. The lost person finally determines whether the gospel presentation will end in success.

IV. LEARN WHAT IS THE RESULTS OF A SUCCESSFUL GOSPEL PRESENTATION.

- A. Verse 6 There will be joy, joy joy. The person who is saved will be filled with joy; the person who presented the word of the gospel will rejoice; God people will rejoice and there will be joy in heaven in the presence of angels over one soul that repents.
- B. Verse 6 also speaks of the saved people becoming followers of those who preached the word of the gospel to them
- C. Verse 7 declares that these became examples to all that believed in their area.

CONCLUSIONS:

- A. These lessons have instructed people on how to be saved. Are you saved? Have you made a public profession of it?
- B. Have you become true followers of those who helped you?
- C. Are you being a good example to those who know you?

THE EVIDENCE OF A SUCCESSFUL GOSPEL PRESENTATION

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 1:8-10

Introduction:

- A. In our last lesson we studied the making of a successful gospel presentation.**
- B. We now study the evidence of a successful gospel presentation. Evidence means “an outward sign, something that furnishes proof.”**
- C. Someone has posed the question – If you were arrested and charged with being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?**
- D. That is the import of our present study. The Thessalonians to whom Paul had presented the gospel message gave proof that his gospel presentation had been successful.**

I. THE EVIDENCE WAS SEEN IN THEIR SOUNDING OUT THE WORD OF THE LORD. V. 8

- A. To sound out carries two meanings:
 - 1. These spoke the word of the gospel**
 - 2. They also lived changed lives that displayed the success of the gospel presentation.**
 - 3. These, like the woman at the well to whom Jesus presented the gospel message, began to sound out the gospel message to those around them.****
- B. Also, their faith was shed abroad in every place. Faith is an abstract characteristic which must be displayed in works.**
- C. So convincing was their changed lives that Paul did not need to speak anything.**

II. FURTHER EVIDENCE WAS THE REPORT OF OTHERS.

Vs. 9, 10

- A. The “they” in verse 9 refers to the people of Macedonia and Achaia and in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad.**
- B. These people showed Paul and Silas and Timothy what manner of entering in they had had with the Thessalonians.**
- C. They spoke of how the Thessalonians had turned to God from idols. This was a public display of their having repented of their sin – especially idolatry.**

- D. They also gave evidence of the success of the gospel presentation by serving the living and true God.**
- E. The word “serve” comes from the root word meaning slave – a bond slave; one bought and paid for. 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20.**
- F. As good as it is to attend church services; it is very low on the list of what serving God really means.**

III. THE EVIDENCE OF A SUCCESSFUL GOSPEL PRESENTATION IS ALSO SEEN IN THEIR EXPRESSED HOPE. V. 10

- A. These new converts proved Paul’s successful gospel presentation by identifying themselves with God’s Son and by letting people know that they were waiting for Jesus to come back and take them home.**
- B. They based their hope on the death – burial – and resurrection of God’s Son.**
- C. They understood that Jesus had already delivered them from the wrath to come.**

CONCLUSIONS:

- A. Let each of us ask self, “Do I feel deep in my soul that I am the product of a successful gospel presentation?”**
- B. And does my life, my pattern of living, cause others to believe that I truly am a born again person?**
- C. With these questions waiting for an answer, we will have an invitation song and give you an opportunity to any decision the Holy Spirit may lay on your heart.**

THOUGHTS ON A GOD-HONORING MINISTRY

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 2:1-6a

Introduction:

- A. The content of chapter one dealt primarily with the successful presentation of the saving gospel of Jesus Christ.
- B. Chapter two begins with a revelation of the kind of ministers whom God uses to accomplish successful gospel presentations.
- C. Permit me to read my interpretative translation of these verses.
Brethren, you know that our coming among you was not fruitless. You know that even though we had suffered shameful treatment at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak the gospel of God unto you in spite of much opposition. And ye know that our preaching was not in error, nor immoral, nor did we try to bait or snare any of you. You also know that God who tries our hearts approved us and trusted us with His gospel; therefore, we speak to please God and not men. And you also know that we did not at any time try to win you with flattery; and you know that we never at any time tried to cover up any selfish motives; and you know that we did not at any time seek glory and honor for ourselves from you or from any other people.
- D. Let us note what is herein revealed about God-honoring ministers – their message, their work, and their attitudes.

I. THE MESSAGE OF A GOD-HONORING MINISTER IS THE GOSPEL OF GOD.

The gospel of God is how Christ died for our sin according to the Scriptures and how He was buried and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.

V.4 reveals that God puts His ministers “in trust with the gospel.” God trusts us with the gospel; and trusts us to protect it and keep it pure.

All of the Bible and every teaching of the Bible is in some way attached to these words – the words of the gospel.

Paul wrote, *I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.* (1 Cor. 2:2)

There are many subjects set forth in the Bible that we are to study and teach; but each is in some way an enlargement of the message of the Gospel of God.

Verse 3 points out that our message will never be deceitful – never unclean – never tainted with untruths.

II. THE WORK OF THE GOD-HONORING MINISTER IS IN SOME WAY TIED TO THE MESSAGE OF THE GOSPEL.

It goes without saying, “You can’t teach, nor preach, what you do not know; thus we are commanded *study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of God.*

Verse 1 teaches that the work of a God-honoring minister will never be in vain. The word and the work sent out will never return empty – it will accomplish God’s purpose in sending it forth.

Verses 1, 2 reveal that Paul and Silas and Timothy were on the move spreading the Gospel message wherever they went. That is the work to which God calls men – then and now.

III. THE ATTITUDE OF GOD-HONORING MINISTERS

Verse 2 They will not permit trouble, suffering, or shameful treatment to keep them from the work.

Verse 3 They will leave the results to God and not use unlawful means in their evangelism – no baits and no snares

Verse 5 They will not use flattery or a cloak of covetousness to gain the favour or approval of people.

Verse 4 They will not concerning themselves with pleasing men; but will seek to please God who is the witness of all.

CONCLUSIONS:

I feel that you all know that you have to God-honoring ministers who serve God by serving you.

Now, I again call attention to the message of all God-honoring ministers. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every who believes that Jesus Christ died to pay the sin debt of all the world; and that He was buried and rose again the third all according to the Scriptures.

Have you ever admitted to yourself and then to God that you are sinful and lost and condemned to hell? Have you ever trusted the saving of your soul to Jesus Christ?

If not; why not now, right now, confess your sin to God and ask Him to forgive you and trust Jesus to save you?

REVIEWING AND REMEMBERING A GOD-HONORING WORK

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 2:6-12

Introduction:

- A. This an inspired letter written by Paul and Silas and Timothy to a church they had planted in the city of Thessalonica a few years before.**
- B. We must take note of the tense of the verbs used in this letter. In verse 6 “sought” and “might have been” are both past tense. In verse 7 “were” is past tense. The language of verses 9-12 are all spoken in the past tense. Thus, these verses are reviewing and remembering past actions.**
- C. This helps us understand some of the language and actions of the three missionaries – they were referring to their attitudes and actions while dealing with babes in Christ – not with mature Christians.**
- D. Both terms in our title relate to the past. The Scripture for this message covers the way these missionaries lived and worked and preached while planting a church in a city given over to idolatry.**

I. A CALL TO REVIEW THIS GOD-HONORING WORK (vs. 6-8)

- A. v. 6 We sought neither glory nor recognition neither from you nor from anyone else. We are apostles of the Lord; but we did not display our authority before you. When we could have sought recognition and financial support, we did not.**
- B.v. 7 We were gentle among you even as a nurse cherishes her own children – her own babies. Nursing mothers are mild and kind, never harsh and high-handed. Nursing mothers care for and protect their babies without seeking profit or honor from their babies. Nursing mothers are interested in giving of themselves without expecting self gain.**

This is the way we conducted ourselves toward you while you were babes in Christ.
- V. 8 expresses the deep loving relationship that developed between the missionaries and their converts. We were affectionately desirous of you; you were very dear to us. Desirous comes from the Greek word Agagae which is Divine love. We loved you with a deep, abiding Divine love.**

We loved you so much that we were not only willing to share the gospel of God with you; but to lay down our lives for you.

II. A CALL TO REMEMBER THE GOD-HONORING MINISTERS (vs. 9-12)

- A. The Thessalonians are no longer thought of as “babes in Christ”; they are now addressed as “brethren.” Brethren who are now called on to remember God’s messengers and what they had done for them.
- B. V. 9 Brethren, remember how we preached the gospel of God unto you; but also remember that we were laboring night and day supplying our own physical needs so that we would not be chargeable unto any of you babes in Christ.
- C. V. 10 Brethren, we call you to witness and remember how we behaved ourselves among you that believe. You need to also remember that God is our witness.
- D. Brethren, remember that we lived holy, inwardly moral lives, lives seen only by God.
- E. Brethren, remember, we lived just lives, outwardly right lives seen by both God and men.
- F. Brethren, remember that we lived lives that were unblameable before you.
- G. Brethren, we call both God and you to witness our claim to have lived a God-honoring life in your presence.
- H. V. 11 Brethren, remember that we dealt with you just like a good father deals with his children. (1.) We *exhorted* you – we strongly begged you to adopt a God-honoring way of life. (2.) We *comforted* you – this is the soothing and encouraging side of exhorting. (3.) We *charged* you – we solemnly insisted.
- H. v. 12 begins by stating the purpose for exhorting, comforting and charging the brethren – *that you may walk worthy of God – the God who is calling you unto his kingdom and glory.*
- I. The tense in verse 12 is present – *God is now calling you, His people to the kind of walk outlined in the verses of this lesson.*

CONCLUSION:

- A. The gospel of God was the primary message these missionaries preached to the people of Thessalonica. While preaching this message, they were living God-honoring lives. People were saved.
- B. You all have heard the gospel; you have witnessed God-honoring lives of this people.
- C. Let each of us question our own soul – am I saved?

D.Let each saved person question self – am I maturing as a child of God or am I still a babe in Christ?

EFFECTUAL GOSPEL PREACHING

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 2:13-20

Introduction:

- A. The gospel is the good news of “how Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and how He was buried and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.**
- B. Preaching means that the truth of the gospel is proclaimed by word either spoken or written.**
- C. Effectual means that the preaching of the gospel produces the desired results – that God is glorified in the lost being saved and in the saved living their lives within the will of God.**

I. EFFECTIVE GOSPEL PREACHING REQUIRES A RIGHT ATTITUDE CONCERNING THE WORD OF GOD. V. 13

- A. The preacher must preach the Word of God in truth.**
 - 1. The word of God which Paul preached “was in truth the Word of God.”**
 - 2. He did not preach out of the 67th book of the Bible. The book of “what I believe.” He preached what God said.**
- B. The hearers must accept and welcome the preached word as the word of God in truth.**
 - 1. The English word “received” as found in verse 13 is translated from two different Greek words.**
 - 2. “When you received the word of God” simply speaks of their having heard the preaching of the word.**
 - 3. “Ye received it not as a word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God” Received here is translated from a different Greek word which means “accepted” – Accepted as having come straight from God -- God speaking to us.**

II. EFFECTIVE GOSPEL PREACHING WILL PRODUCE DESIRED RESULTS.

- A. V. 13 “which (the true word of God) effectually worketh also in you that believe.”**
- B. These people were lost worshippers of idols.**
 - 1. When they accepted -- believed the preached word as the word of God, the word of God worked effectually in them and they were saved.**

2. Furthermore, their accepting the truth preached by Paul caused them to change their way of living and to become followers of the churches of God.

3. It caused them to begin to live Christian lives even in the face of severe persecution. Vs. 14-16

C.V. 13 The results of the preached gospel caused Paul to thank God without ceasing.

D. Isaiah well prophesied “So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.”

III. EFFECTIVE GOSPEL PREACHING WILL BE MET WITH RESISTENCE. Vs. 14-16

A. These verses reveal that the preaching of God’s word in Judaea had been met with severe persecution from the Jews who killed Jesus and their own prophets – prophets that had believed the preached word and been saved.

B. They also reveal that the Jews who had been saved had forbidden Paul and his co-workers to preach to the Gentiles.

C. Verse 18 reveals that Satan was behind all of this persecution.

IV. EFFECTIVE GOSPEL PREACHING WILL DEVELOP STRONG BONDS OF LOVE WITHIN AND BETWEEN THE CHURCHES OF GOD.

A.v. 17 Separation for a short time is only in presence – not in the heart. And such love for the brethren causes “us to endeavour more abundantly to see their face with great desire.

B.V. 18 These bonds of love creates a deep desire to come together for the common good of all.

V. EFFECTIVE GOSPEL PREACHING CAUSES US TO LOOK WITH GREAT JOY FOR THE COMING OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

A.v.19 Those who have accepted the preached word as God’s true word and have responded to it in salvation and service shall meet with those who have preached the word for a time of rejoicing.

B.V. 20 Meetings of God’s people with their teachers and preachers during this life is but a foretaste of the glory and joy awaiting us when Jesus comes to take us home with Him.

CONCLUSION;

- A. You have heard the gospel preached in truth; have you accepted it as truly the word of God?**
- B. Have you ever asked God's forgiveness and trusted Jesus to save your hell bound soul?**
- C. If not, you need to do so in this service.**
- D. Let each of us who is saved ask self "Am I accepting the preached word as God's word to me?"**
- E. Am I following in the walk of life that displays my acceptance of His word as my guide for living? If not, why not?**

LITMUS TEST OF CHURCH PLANTING

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 3:1-5

Introduction:

A. A review of the first two chapters of this letter to the church of the Thessalonians reveals some important truths either stated or implied.

- 1. The gospel of Jesus Christ has been preached in word and in power of the Holy Spirit and in much assurance.**
- 2. Souls had been saved and the saved baptized.**
- 3. A new church had been planted in that wicked city.**
- 4. The church had been taught to observe all things whatsoever Jesus had commanded.**
- 5. That church had become a good example to other believers in Macedonia and Achaia.**
- 6. The church had been warned of the opposition that would come upon them in the form of persecutions and afflictions from both the Jews and the Gentiles.**

B. Circumstances had forced Paul and his party to leave earlier than they had intended.

C. Now, some time later they become concerned about the stability of the young church and Paul sends Timothy to visit them and offer his help.

I. LEARN THAT IT IS RIGHT FOR MINISTERS TO BE CONCERNED ABOUT THE SPIRITUAL WELFARE OF CHURCHES. Vs. 1, 5

A. Paul's anxious concern over this young church that he could stand it no longer. He had to have some relief.

B. Likely there is no test so penetrating as for a minister to ask himself: Why do I preach to this people? Am I truly concerned about their needs more than my own? Do I really care about their maturity? Their spiritual growth?

C. Preachers, like Paul, should have as their primary concern the good of those to whom they preach and minister.

II. LEARN THAT IT IS POSSIBLE FOR THE LABOR OF A CONCERNED MINISTER TO BE IN VAIN. V. 5

A. Paul had no fear of these losing their salvation. He knew that all who were saved were secure in Christ Jesus.

B. But he did have some anxious thoughts about the stability of this young church and about her witness in that wicked city. He feared for the life of this young church.

C. It is well to note what Paul considered to be successful mission work.

- 1. Winning the lost to salvation is important, but in itself is not successful mission work.**
- 2. Establishing a new church is a part, but there is more.**
- 3. Indoctrinating a people so they can stand the pressures and remain strong and true to the faith is the real test of successful mission work.**

III. LEARN OF THE PROMISE TO STRENGTHEN AND ENCOURAGE THE LORD'S CHURCHES. V. 2

A. Verse 2 tells that Paul sent Timothy to establish and comfort this new church.

B. In our mission language, the church was already established; what they needed was strength in the faith – They needed a strong dose of THE FAITH once delivered to the saints.

Without this they could be led astray by every wind of doctrine.

C. Verse 2 also called for them to be comforted in the faith.

- 1. The Greek word meant to call along side of to help – to fit for battle.**
- 2. There is comfort in knowing you have help right along side of you. (Illustration of my shore patrol duty walking along between to large sailors.)**

D. Jesus has made this same promise to all His churches. John 14:16-18;

IV. LEARN THE NEED FOR STRENGTHEN AND ENCOURAGING THE LORD'S CHURCHES. Vs. 3-5

A. Because of the temptations of the tempter. V. 5

B. That no member should be moved by the afflictions.

- 1. They needed to remember that these afflictions were appointed – set for faithful believers.**
- 3. Jesus spoke of this appointment in John 15:18, 20 *If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. Remember the word I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his Lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you:***

4. Peter wrote in 1 Peter 4:12 *Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:*

C. Needed so no member would be moved.

1. The Greek meaning of the word translated “moved” carries the meaning of “sweet talked” into some bad decision.
2. The Greek classic writers used the word to speak of a dog wagging its tail to show friend.
3. It means that someone flatters you to get you to make a wrong decision.
4. Satan’s workers were likely telling these young Christians that if they would return to their old ways, the afflictions would cease.

D. Needed so the labor of the missionaries would not have been in vain. V. 5

CONCLUSIONS:

- A. This is an old church; a church that has stood the tests of the devil for well over a century.
- B. But there are individual members who are not fully established in the faith – those who have troubles and questions concerning the basic doctrinal teachings on which we Associational Baptists hang our hope.
- C. It all starts with salvation; Let each of us make sure we are saved and then let each of us commit ourselves to learning the teaching that make up what we call OUR FAITH.

A CALL TO REMEMBER

1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

Introduction:

- A. Timothy's report on the church of the Thessalonians has pleased Paul. The church is well established in doctrinal soundness; the membership demonstrates love for each other and they continue to think highly of Paul and his companion workers.**
- B. Paul now turns his attention to the moral conduct expected of the membership of this young church serving God in a very immoral society.**
- C. Paul also knew the conflict that goes on within the mind and body of all who have been born again.**
- D. Because of all this, Paul felt compelled to call the membership of this young church to remember his previous warnings and instructions concerning the dangers of failing the Lord who bought us and paid for us with His own precious blood.**

I. SOME FIRST THINGS TO REMEMBER. Vs. 1, 2

- A. Remember that we have already instructed you on how "ye ought to walk and to please God."**
- B. v. 2 Ye KNOW what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus.**
- C. V. 1 Now, my brethren, we beseech you and exhort you to abound in all these, more and more.**
- D. I am quite sure that all of us know a great deal more about God's will in our lives than we practice.**

II. A CALL TO REMEMBER THE WILL OF GOD. VS. 3-7

- A. God wills that you be sanctified – separated from the world and separated unto God.**
- B. God wills "that ye should abstain from fornication (sexual intercourse outside of the marriage bed)."**
- C. Positively, God wills that all His children possess their own bodies in sanctification and honor.**
- D. Negatively, God wills: (1) that none of His children possess their bodies in the passionate lust of the flesh like the Gentiles which know not God -- those who are lost.**

- E. God wills that no person shall defraud his brother in this matter. To engage in the act of fornication is to defraud others – It is stealing that which belongs to another.**
- F. God has called us –NOT unto uncleanness but unto holiness; thus God wills that we live holy lives.**

III. A CALL TO REMEMBER THAT GOD IS IN CHARGE. Vs. 6, 8

- A. V. 8 sets forth a truth that all should remember – God is in charge, the work is the Lord’s work; the message is the Lord’s.**
- B. Despise means to look lightly upon or to reject. Those who reject truth preached from the Word of God are not rejecting the preacher, they are rejecting God.**
- C. V. 6 declares that the Lord is the avenger of all such things – and Paul reminds these people that they have already been told and forewarned of what to expect from God if you do not follow His will.**

CONCLUSIONS:

- A. Those of you who might yet be lost are encouraged to get your minds off the present with its problems and think for eternity. Heaven and hell are the two options – if you were to die right now; where would you spend eternity?**
- B. All of us need to face up to the truth – to reject the truths preached from God’s Word is to reject God and God shall have the last word.**

LIVING ON LOVE

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12

Introduction:

- A. It seems wise to review a few things as we study the lessons set before us in our text.**
- B. Acts 17 records the teaching and preaching that resulted in the forming of the church of the Thessalonians. Paul spent only three Sabbath days reasoning with the Jews in their synagogues and three weeks preaching the gospel to the Jews and the Gentiles.**
- C. Acts 17:4 records the results of three weeks' work. Some of the Jews believed and consulted with Paul and Silas and of the devout Greeks a great multitude and of the chief women not a few.**
- D. Acts 17:5-10 records the opposition by the Jews forced Paul and Silas to leave the young church and flee for their lives.**
- E. 1 Thes. 3:1-5 reveals Paul's concern for the young church serving God in the very wicked community. Thus, Paul sent Timothy to visit the church and "to establish you and to comfort you concerning your faith."**
- F. 1 Thes. 3:6-13 reveals how Paul was comforted by hearing the good tidings of their faith and love and that they had good remembrance of the missionaries and desired to see them again.**
- G. Chapter 4 begins by warning the membership of the young church to guard against being involved in the evil life style of the community in which they lives and served.**
- H. Paul now turns attention to the most important characteristic of a strong, viable church – love.**
- I. It is of interest to note that the downgradeism of the Lord's churches set forth in Revelation chapters 2 and 3 began with the churches losing their first love. When the membership of any church loses their love, she will soon cease to be a church in the eyes of God.**

I. LOVE IS GOD-TAUGHT. V. 9

- A. Paul said, "As concerning brotherly love; I do not need to write unto you. You know, within yourselves, that you are taught by God, Himself, to love one another.**

- B. Saved people are born of God and are partakers of His Divine nature. Like Father, like son. 2 Peter 1:4**
- C. The old outer man is selfish, full of self-love and jealousy. But, The born again spirit, the inner man born of God loves just like God loves.**
- D. The absence of any inner feeling of love for the brethren plainly reveals that a person is yet dead spiritually, lost and on the road to hell. (1 John 3:14, 15; 1 John 4:20, 21)**
- E. God does teach the inner man; but the inner man must teach the old outer man.**
- F. God expressed His love in the giving of His Son to die for our sin; Jesus expressed His love for the Father by dying on the cruel cross of Calvary.**
- G. Our love for the brethren must be expressed in our dedication of our lives in service to God by serving the brethren.**
- H. Only then can it be said of us that we have accepted the teaching of God to love one another.**

II. GOD-TAUGHT LOVE EXTENDS BEYOND OUR CHURCH. V. 10

- A. Verse 10 records that the love of the Thessalonian brethren had extended to all the brethren of the churches in Macedonia.**
- B. Macedonia was the Roman province where the city of Thessalonica was located. The churches of Philippi and Berea were in Macedonia.**
- C. But, then there were churches in many other places and this gave rise for Paul to call on the Thessalonian brethren to increase their love more and more.**
- D. Love can be increased in loving those near at hand more and more; but love can also be increased by expanding and stretching our love to all the brethren wherever they are.**

III. GOD-TAUGHT LOVE DISCIPLINES OUR LIVES. Vs. 11, 12

- A. The verb discipline means to train or develop by instruction or exercise especially in self-control; it also means to punish or penalize for the sake of discipline**
- B. Paul sets before this church three areas of life for them to study:

 - 1. to be quite – to lead a quite life; to be calm instead of permitting yourselves to become involved in fanatical excitement. This is needed in our present time.****

2. **to do your own business – to mind your own business.
Don't meddle in the affairs of others.**
 3. **to work with your own hands – you work because work will keep you busy in your own business and nothing calms a person more than getting busy**
- C. Paul now reminds them that he has already commanded them in these things.**
- D. V. 12 points out that our love-disciplined lives will help to win the confidence of the lost people around us. An honest life lived by God-taught people is the basis on which soul winning is built.**
- E. V. 12 also adds the promise that a life lived according to God-taught love will have lack of nothing that the inner man desires.**

CONCLUSIONS:

- A. There is no lessons greater than these to develop God-honoring lives.**
- B. Living on love, God-taught love, will give any person a happy, satisfying stay on planet earth and a glorious eternity.**
- C. Do you have that kind of life? Do you want it?**
- D. It begins with repentance toward God and trusting faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.**
- E. It is developed and continued in following the teachings of our loving God.**

THE COMING HEAVENLY ASSEMBLY

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Introduction:

- A. Remember that this letter was written by the Apostle Paul to a very young church – a church that was formed in the wicked city of Thessalonica after only three weeks of preaching the gospel.**
- B. Paul and his mission party were forced to flee the city long before they wished; but they left this church behind.**
- C. Paul grew concerned about the stability of the church and sent Timothy to establish them and to comfort them concerning their faith.**
- D. Evidently, the brethren had some questions concerning life after death and the promised coming of Jesus.**
- E. Paul did not want them to be ignorant concerning the death and future life of God's saints. Therefore, He wrote them this section of Scripture which I have named The Coming Heavenly Assembly.**
- F. Assembly is defined as a company of persons gathered for some special purpose.**
- G. Heavenly is defined as that which relates to heaven the dwelling place of God; that which is sacred – divine – delightful.**
- H. The word "Coming" recognizes the reality of something yet to come.**
- I. Thus, we are looking at the company of the redeemed being gathered together in what I have called the Heavenly Assembly.**

I. THE COMING ASSEMBLY SHALL BE HEAVENLY BECAUSE OF THOSE WHO SHALL BE PRESENT.

- A. Have you ever attended a reunion and thought, "I sure wish _____ could have been here."**
- B. Most times when any assembly meets there will be missing members. That is true in family reunions and it is true in church services.**
- C. God's Word tells us that now, some of the family of God is in heaven and some are on earth.**
- D. When the heavenly assembly has assembled, there will be no empty seats. All the family of God shall be present including our elder Brother, the Lord Jesus Christ.**
- E. Verse 14 declares that those who sleep in Jesus "will God bring**

with him.” Then, verse 17 declares that “we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds.”

II. THIS ASSEMBLY SHALL BE HEAVENLY BECAUSE OF THE DURATION.

- A. Have you ever attended an assembly – family reunion or church service – and enjoyed it so much that you thought how great it would be if we could just stay here forever?**
- B. Or some problem arose and you had to leave early and you expressed your feelings by saying, “I wish I didn’t have to leave.”**
- C. Verse 17 expresses another reason why the coming assembly shall be heavenly – “so shall we EVER be with the Lord.”**
- D. Jesus has already promised the eternal endurance of this coming heavenly assembly. John 14:1-3.**

III. THIS COMING ASSEMBLY SHALL BE HEAVENLY BECAUSE OF THE COMING CONDITIONS OF MY BODY AND MY FEELINGS.

- A. Have the conditions of your body ever caused you to think or say, “I could enjoy this assembly much more if it were not for the pain or weariness of my body”?**
- B Verse 16 declares that the dead in Christ shall rise first and verse 17 added “then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air....”**
- C. In his letter to the Corinthians, Concerning this, Paul taught that as we have born the image of the first Adam we shall also bear the image of the heavenly, the second Adam who is the Lord from heaven. He went on to say “I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, in the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. (1 Corinthians 15:49-52)**
- D. Paul also taught that the Lord shall change our vile bodies, that they may be fashioned like unto His glorious body. (Philippians 3:21)**
- E. When we assemble with God’s family and the Lord Jesus Christ in the heavenly assembly, our changed bodies will enjoy the assembly as much as the new spirit that dwells within.**

CONCLUSIONS:

- A. We could find many other reasons why the coming heavenly assembly will truly be heavenly, but these we have noted should be sufficient to cause us to be sure we are prepared for the great HEAVENLY ASSEMBLY.**
- B. Have you repented of your sin and trusted the Lord Jesus Christ with the saving and keeping of your eternal soul? If not, there is still time.**

A SPIRITUAL CHECK UP

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

Introduction:

- A. Paul has answered the troubling question concerning those who die before the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ – Will we miss seeing Him? Will we just be left in the grave? Is there true hope for us if we die before the Lord’s return?**
- B. Paul has well answered these questions and challenged them to comfort each other with the words which he has spoken.**
- C. Paul now reminds God’s people that they really don’t need more information concerning the coming of the Lord --- you know perfectly that the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night.**
- D. Paul then writes how the attitudes and actions of individuals within the human race reveal each person’s eternal destiny.**
- E. This revelation is expressed in the use of the pronouns – ye and you; we and us all referring to God’s saints then they and them referring to the lost of the world.**

I. LET US TAKE NOTE HOW PAUL CHARACTERIZED THE UNBELIEVING WORLD. VERSES 3 AND 7

- A. V. 3 The unbelieving world will be saying peace and safety. While they deny the teachings of the Bible sudden destruction shall come upon them and there will be no escape.**
- B. V. 7 points out that these who cry out “peace and safety” live lives that are insensible to the teaching of the Word of God – they live lives that are stupefied through sleep and drunkenness.**
- C. v. 3 Paul spoke of the awful destruction that shall come on them.**
- D. V. 9 By implication Paul taught that the people of the unbelieving world are appointed unto wrath – the wrath of God out of which they shall not be delivered.**
- E. Revelation 16:1 marks the beginning of the wrath of God and this is after the saints of God have been raptured out of this old world.**

II. PAUL ALSO ADMONISHES THE SAINTS OF GOD.

- A. Vs. 4, 5 The saints of God are not in darkness. We are children of the day and the light; we are not of the night nor of darkness.**
- B. Thus, we should not be overtaken by that day. This does not mean that a sleepy saint would be left behind; only that he could be caught outside of God’s will and be ashamed at His coming.**

F.V. 6 Paul includes himself in this warning – Let US not sleep as do others; but let US watch and be sober.

D.V. 8 Paul again places himself in the family of the saints and says Let US who are of the day, be sober by putting on some defensive armor. ---Breastplate of faith and love; the hope of salvation as an helmet.

III. PAUL POINTS OUT THAT OUR DESTINY IS BY APPOINTMENT

A. The word “salvation” in verse 9 is not the same as the word “salvation” in verse 8. In verse 8 soul’s salvation is in view; but in v. 9 deliverance from the wrath of God brought upon a unbelieving world following the rapture of the saints is in view.

B. God’s saints are appointed to salvation or deliverance while the unbelieving world is appointed to the end time wrath.

C. Paul is careful to point out the appointment is based on each person’s attitude toward the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

CONCLUSIONS:

A. Paul concludes this discourse the same way he ended the last one but with one additional charge – comfort yourselves together AND EDIFY ONE ANOTHER.

B. Look deeply into your own soul and answer these questions.

1. Am I completely sure I am saved?

2. Am I living as a child of the day or a child of the night?

HEAVEN SENT INSTRUCTIONS ON CHURCH CONDUCT

1 Thessalonians 5:12-15

Introduction:

- A. This letter was written to a very young church Paul had formed from newly saved individuals.(Acts 17:1-4) After only three weeks, Paul was forced to leave before he had time to fully instruct the membership in God-expected attitudes and actions toward church leaders, toward each other and toward the outside world.
- B. Paul had not left the new church without spiritual leaders to help guide the membership in God's will for their new lives. Acts 14:23 makes clear how Paul was guided by the Holy Spirit to provide this leadership. *And when he had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed, after this they passed on.* This is also proved by Paul's instruction to one of his church planting helpers, Titus. Titus 1:5 reads *For this cause left thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I have appointed thee.*
- C. In the early part of Paul's letter to the Thessalonian church he revealed his concern for their stability. This caused him to send Timothy to strengthen and comfort the membership.
- D. Timothy's report that the church was standing strong in the faith caused Paul to turn his attention to instructing the church in what God expects of His churches concerning relationships and attitudes within the church membership and to them without.

I. PAUL FIRST ADDRESSES HIS INSTRUCTIONS TO THE MEMBERSHIP IN GENERAL. V. 12, 13.

- A. Paul does not command, He does beseech; he respectfully requests the membership to follow God's instructions given by God's messenger. These instructions are not Paul's. God is using Paul to instruct. In like manner God uses God-called pastors and elders as His messengers to use the Bible to instruct His churches in the things of God.
- B. Paul first calls on the membership "to know them which labor among you." Other translations make clear Paul's

- instructions. “to value them “ “to respect them” “to appreciate them” them that work hard among you.
- C. The them referred to are the spiritual leaders whom Paul has set in the church before leaving them. They are the God appointed elders, God ordained leaders which every church must have if she is to mature in the work of the Lord.
 - D. Paul adds *and are over you in the Lord and admonish you*. Where there is no leadership, there is confusion. The Lord has ordained that all of His churches have pastors or elders.
 - E. These elders are there to admonish the membership. Admonish carries the idea of presiding over you, giving you counsel and carries the thought of warning for wrong doing;
 - F. Paul also called on the membership to esteem and respect the pastors very highly in love because of the work they do among you.
 - G. Paul ends these instructions to church members by calling on them to be at peace among yourselves – be at peace with each other.

II. PAUL NOW GIVES HEAVEN’S INSTRUCTIONS TO THE PASTORS. Vs. 14, 15

- A. Paul began by addressing them as *brethren*, the same address he used in addressing the membership. “We be brethren” is the idea – Paul, the church members including the pastors and elders are brethren.
- B. He then entreats the pastors –he urges them – to deal with certain members of the church who need help to fit in and fill their places of responsibility as members of the church family.
- C. He urged the pastors to *warn the unruly*. Those who are idle – those who are not pulling their part of the load the Lord placed on His churches – the Great Commission work of going and telling the gospel to the lost.
- D. The Amplified Translation reads *warn and seriously advise those who are out of line*. Pastors want each member of each church to hear the Lord say, “Well done.”
- E. Paul then urges the pastors to comfort the feeble-minded – the timid -- encourage those who are fainthearted – cheer up the despondent. Those who are timid about sharing the gospel message with the lost NEED to be strengthened and encouraged.

- F. Pastors are also instructed to support the weak – the weak in the faith but also the weak physically. Other translations read “help the weak – support those who are wavering between truth and error – between dedicated living and worldly living.
- G. Pastors need to be “a rock” to those who are weak – something they can hold on to so they will not feel alone.
- H. Pastors are also instructed to be *patient with all people*. Very likely this is the most difficult of the instructions. It is so easy to lose patience with our brethren for various reasons, but for the Christian longsuffering is the rule. –Love suffers long.

III. PAUL NOW ADDRESSES THE WHOLE CHURCH WITH SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS. V. 15

- A. You, all of you members of the church, SEE that none of you render evil for evil unto any person.
- B. Each member is to pay attention to his own personal conduct toward other members and to those out side the church.
- C. This instructs us to never retaliate – never to repay evil with evil.
- D. These negative instructions are followed with the positive *but ever follow that which is good*. Return good for evil.
- E. It is the attitude of returning blessing for cursing. It is being actively friendly in the face of hostility.(Leon Morris)
- F. We are instructed by God to make this our way of living our lives as representatives of our Lord while we live upon this earth.
- G. These instructions include “all men.” *Both among yourselves, and to all men.*

CONCLUSIONS:

- A. Brethren, members of this church, we have been well instructed by the Holy Scriptures. These words are as much for us today as they were for the membership of the Thessalonian church.
- B. These were not the words of your pastor; these are the words of the One who loved us and died to pay our sin debt, the One to whom we owe our very lives; the One before whom each of us shall one day stand and give an account of the life we have lived since being saved.
- C. Let each of ask self the question, “How will it be for me in that day?”

HEAVEN'S COMMANDS TO CHURCH MEMBERS

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Introduction:

- A. Our last lesson concerned heaven's instructions for church members. They were preceded with "we beseech you" and "We exhort you".**
- B. The short, very pointed statements found in the next few verses are commands – commands from heaven.**
- C. We will study the first three in this lesson. "Rejoice evermore", "Pray without ceasing", and "In everything give thanks."**
- D. It seems that the last part of verse 18 is meant to express God's will concerning all three commands.**
- E. It was not by chance that Paul issued these commands in connection with his teachings on the second coming of Jesus Christ. Nor was it by chance that your pastor chose this time to discuss with you these commands. Storm clouds connected with the second coming of Jesus Christ are rapidly building up across our nation and around the world.**
- F. In these times, we need an Anchor and verse 18 identifies our Anchor as the Lord Jesus Christ.**
- G. In these times we need guide lines for living within the will of God. Therefore, Paul by inspiration gives us three things that will help us meet the challenges that will come on God's people in the days just before Jesus comes for us.**

I. YOU REJOICE EVERMORE.

- A. Other translations are "rejoice always", be happy in your faith at all times", "always be joyful."**
- B. Our first reaction to this command is "That's not possible."**
- C. The answer to this dilemma is found in the basis of real joy.**
- D. Real, lasting joy is not bound up in outside circumstances, but in inward truths. Joy is one fruit of the Spirit produced in the inner man who is born of the Spirit. Galatians 5:22.**
- E. The key to understanding this is found in Luke 10:17-20.**
 - 1. The seventy disciples had returned from a mission trip and were rejoicing in what we humans call success.**
 - 2. What if the mission had ended in a different way – no visible results; would they have returned with joy? It**

seems that Jesus' answer indicated that they would have been down, down, down and in a sorrowful spirit.

3. Jesus told them to rejoice because their names are written in heaven.

- E. Joy that depends on physical, outside circumstances is surface, superficial joy that is as changeable as the Texas weather.
- F. This is the kind of joy that Jesus spoke of in John 16:22 when He said, "your joy no man taketh from you."
- G. This is the kind of joy spoken of in Acts 5:40, 41 when Peter and John with beaten, bloody backs went down the street rejoicing that they were counted worth to suffer for the sake of Jesus.
- H. Hebrews 12:2 records – that Jesus for the joy set before Him endured the humiliation, the pain and suffering of the cross.
- I. Brethren, if your joy depends on outside circumstances, your joy will come and go and really be gone most of the time, but if it depends on eternal things, you can rejoice evermore.
- J. This is a good thing to remember in these last days – days that can well try your very soul. Your name is written in heaven, REJOICE!

II. PRAY WITHOUT CEASING.

- A. This does not mean uninterrupted praying, nor does it mean that we spend all our time uttering words of prayer. God's purpose for our lives on earth would be voided if that were the meaning.
- B. We can live in the spirit of prayer as we go about performing the duties of life. Lord, help me – Father, make this to work out for your glory – Thank you, Lord are all utterances of prayer in connection with work and other happenings in any given day.
- C. This command seems to mean – do not give up praying – keep on talking to God about your blessings, your needs and just to visit Him in thought and conversation.

III. IN EVERYTHING GIVE THANKS.

- A. This is likely the hardest one of the three commands to accept and obey. We can think of many things in our lives that humanly speaking we could say, "Surely, God, you don't want me to thank you for that."
- B. Someone has pointed out that *in everything* is not the same as *at every time*.

- C. Sometimes we may need to wait a while to be able to thank God for something that has happened in our lives. If we could see the end, we could thank God right then; but since we can't, we at a later time thank God for what seemed bad at the time.**
- D. A right acceptance of Romans 8:28 would make this possible. *We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose.***
- E. According to God's Word, whatever happens to me will in some way be good for me—therefore thanks God for it. (I now thank God for a crop failure that put me far in debt. – A man in Pine Bluff, Arkansas fell off a train car and broke his back. Latter, he thanked God for that broken back because it brought about his salvation -- A woman thanked God for be bedfast because it gave her time and occasions to win her children to salvation.**

CONCLUSION:

- A. ALL THREE ARE THE WILL OF GOD IN CHRIST JESUS.**
- B. All who are in Christ Jesus can fulfill these commandments.**
- C. They will not come easy, but they will come to those who will to do God's will.**
- D. Doing these will help us through the hard times that are upon us.**

MORE OF HEAVEN'S COMMANDS FOR CHURCH MEMBERS

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22

Introduction:

- A. It needs to be noted that these are commands from our God in heaven to those who are members of His churches which constitute the only God-ordained authority for doing heaven's business on earth.**
- B. These are not suggestions; they are commands to be kept or ignored by each member's own choice.**
- C. Let each of us be reminded that God is keeping a record by which He will judge each member at the Judgment Seat of Christ.**
- D. It should be noted again that the Holy Spirit moved upon Paul to issue these commands in connection with his teaching on the second coming of Jesus Christ. Nor was it by chance that your pastor chose this time to discuss these commands. In this the year of 2009 storm clouds connected with the second coming of Jesus Christ are rapidly build across our own nation and around the world.**
- E. In times like these we need guide lines for living within the will of the great Judge of all mankind. In this message we will study the last four commands of the seven God's holy Word gives God's special people – the members of His churches.**

I. YOU QUENCH NOT THE SPIRIT.

- A. The Spirit is the Holy Spirit – the Spirit of God which indwells every person who has been born again.**
- B. The Spirit is the life of the inner man who is begotten of the incorruptible Seed of God and is thereby born of God. Just as my earthly father lives within this old sinful fleshly body; my heavenly Father lives within my spiritual body. This is true of every person born of the Spirit.**
- C. Then in a very special way the Holy Spirit indwells the members of each true church. (John 14:15-17) Jesus was speaking to His disciples who already were indwelled by the Holy Spirit. He now promises to come and dwell with them in a special way.**
- D. Jesus also states His purpose for giving the Spirit to His church. (John 16:13) "Howbeit, when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself;**

but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: He will show you things to come.”

(John 14:26) But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

- E.1 John 2:20, 27 further reveals God’s purpose in giving the Spirit in a special way to His church people. Verse 20 teaches “ye have an unction (anointing) from the Holy Spirit and you know all things.” Verse 27 teaches “the anointing which you have received of him abideth in you, and you need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, you shall abide in Him.”**
- F. Luke 24:49 records the Lord instructing His church to tarry in Jerusalem until they had been endued with power from on high. They obeyed Him and the Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost and baptized the church with power from on high. This power continues until this day and shall continue Jesus returns.**
- G. The Book of Acts has much to say about the Spirit commanding God’s people to do His will. Peter was commanded to go and preach to the Gentiles; he went. Phillip was commanded to go and preach to the Ethiopian eunuch and he went.**
- H. Our New Testament is full of commands given to church members, to me and to each of you.**
- I. The Holy Spirit within us will impress us to speak to some person about being saved or living for Jesus; the Spirit will impress upon our minds the need to assemble with our church at the appointed time; the Spirit will remind us to give liberally to the many needs our church supports.**
- J. What will we do? Will we obey them or will we quench the Spirit?**

II. YOU DESPISE NOT PROPHECYINGS.

- A. Prophecy can be interpreted as “forth telling” called preaching the Word of God or it can be interpreted as “fore telling” referring to revealing the future.**
- B. It makes little difference which interpretation is involved; the command stands strong in either case. Do not despise the**

preaching of the Word of God whatever subject is under discussion – Christian living or the gospel of Jesus Christ or end time things.

- C. “Despise not the preaching of the Word of God” is what Paul has said. Commentator Edmond Hiebert wrote --“Despise” is a strong word meaning “to set down as of no account, to set at naught, to treat with contempt.”
- D. How do people treat the preaching of the Word of God with contempt? By placing more importance on things, on people and/or self interest than on the preaching of the Word of God. Contempt is also shown by a person’s failure to practice the truths preached,
- E. The verb arrangement of this command indicates that such was going on and the command then means “Stop despising prophesying.”
- F. Williams’ translation reads, “Stop treating the message of prophecy with contempt.”
- G. In reality, to despise OR to view with contempt OR to consider no good the preaching of the Word of God IS TO FEEL THE SAME ABOUT THE GOD OF THE WORD.

III. PROVE ALL THINGS; HOLD FAST TO THAT WHICH IS GOOD.

- A. The negative side of this is – Don’t be gullible; don’t believe everything you hear. This preacher continues to say, “The poorest reason for believing anything is because I said it.”
- B. Paul commands God’s people to prove everything you hear preached; everything you read; everything others may say about the things of God or the teachings of the Bible.
- C. Put all things to the test! How? With the Word of God.
- D. The Spirit of God within each child of God will help you. 1 John 2:20 “you have an unction – and understanding from the Holy Spirit” that will throw up a red flag in your mind to question some new thing you hear.
- E. Then you can prove the new teaching by the perfect Word of God.
- F. When a thing has been tested or proven to be true, THEN hold fast to it. Let your life be guided by it.

IV. ABSTAIN FROM ALL APPEARANCES OF EVIL.

- A. Evil may fall under one of three headings;

- 1. Spiritual evil – our mental thinking and our private relationship with God.**
 - 2. Doctrinal evil – our stand for the faith once delivered to the saints.**
 - 3. Moral evil – our physical conduct among those with whom we have contact day by day.**
- B. Abstain means to separate from; stay away from.**
- C. Appearances refers to outward form without any notion of reality -- semblance as opposed to reality. Conduct that may cause others to think you doing wrong. Ill. My going into a liquor store to purchase medicinal liquor for my father-in-law. GOING to the boat to eat is another illustration.**
- D. The commands of verses 21 and 22 might well be joined together. Prove all things; hold fast to the good and abstain from all appearances of evil.**

CONCLUSION:

- A. Let us remember that these commands come from heaven as Paul wrote down what the Holy Spirit gave him.**
- B. They are to pastor and deacon and to all other members of this church.**
- C. God expects us to keep them and will remind us of that at the judgment seat of Christ.**

WHOLLY HOLY

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 5:23, 24

Introduction:

- A. This letter was written to a very young church, a church Paul and his mission planting partners had formed after only three weeks of preaching and teaching. (Acts 17:1-4)**
- B. The church was formed out of some Jews that believed and of a great multitude of devout Greeks and of the chief women not a few.**
- C. Paul was forced to leave and continue to flee for his very life until he reached Athens.**
- D. His deep concern for this very young church caused him to send Timothy to establish them and to comfort them concerning their faith (3:2).**
- E. After hearing the good news from Timothy, Paul wrote this letter to the church setting forth God's will in the lives of the members.**
- F. The Holy Spirit moved Paul to write of the second coming of Jesus Christ as a strong insensitive to Christian living. It continues to do this in our time.**
- G. Chapter five contains some very strong warnings against being deceived by false teachers – against careless living as though we will never be called into account for our sins.**
- H. Following these warnings, Paul issues a number of direct, pointed commands our heavenly Father expects us to obey. Verses 16-22.**
- I. When we view these commands and reflect on our response to them, how do we rate ourselves? As we think of the soon coming of the Lord, how do we feel? Can I hope to stand in righteousness and holiness before Him?**
- J. We right thinking people see and confess our failures and cry out what shall I do?**

I. RIGHT HERE THE SPIRIT OF GOD INJECTS A MOST WELCOMED PROMISE.

- A. What we can not do; God shall do for us.**
- B. The very God of peace shall sanctify you wholly. He will make you wholly, holy.**
- C. That is, He will make the whole person holy – the spirit man holy; the soul of man holy – the body of the person holy.**
- D. He will make each child of God wholly holy.**

E. God shall accomplish this AT the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

F. The spirit of the saved person is holy as soon as he is born again; but the soul and the body of the saved person remains disobedient to God's commands until the very God of peace sanctifies them.

G But at the coming of Jesus the whole man shall be changed and made like the body of the Son of God. 1 Corinthians 15:51, 52 We shall all be changed, In a moment in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. Philippians 3:20, 21; 1 John 3:1,2

II. TAKE NOTE OF THE POWER THAT ACCOMPLISHES THIS.

A. V. 23 the God of peace shall accomplish this – by His power we be made wholly holy.

B. V. 24 establishes how sure this is to come to pass. He that called us shall do it. He shall make the whole man holy.

C. V. 24 sets forth the proof of this being accomplished. Faithful is He that calleth you, who will do it.

D. What God has promised, He will do. Philippians 1:6 Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. ----- 2 Timothy 2:13 If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.

CONCLUSION:

A. How does the truth of this message affect you?

B. It should comfort you and encourage you to take up your cross and bear it before men until the God of peace makes you wholly holy.

MEANINGFUL POST SCRIPT TO A DIVINE LETTER

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 5:25-28

Introduction:

- A. Paul has concluded his first letter to the young church located in the wicked city of Thessalonica. This was and is an inspired letter; a letter from God written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.**
- B. We must understand and accept the truth that this letter has been preserved by power of God and is as much a letter to Long Branch MBC as it was to the Thessalonians in their day and time.**
- C. Let us complete our study of this first letter to the Thessalonians by accepting this Divine post script as to us as individual members of this church.**

I. PAUL EXPRESSED HIS OWN PERSONAL NEED TOGETHER WITH THE NEED OF HIS CO-WORKERS.

- A. Paul had prayed much for this church; he now calls upon the church to pray for us.**
- B. We are as you are – weak and needy. We depend on God; but we need you to be our prayer partners asking God to protect us, to direct us and to bless our work.**
- C. It is a true axiom – you support what you pray for. Paul needed their support.**
- D. Men of God are just weak and needy human beings. We face the same temptations and struggles in life as do the people to whom we preach.**
- E. Please, pray for us.**

II. COMMANDED TO BE GREETERS OF ALL THE BRETHREN

- A. With an holy kiss. The word holy rules out any and all expression of physical emotions.**
- B. In the early days of this church age men and women were separated during church services – thus men kissed men and women kissed women.**
- C. According to church history, many regulations were written concerning the holy kiss.**
- D. In our time the holy handshake has replaced this command.**
- E. It should be noted that the command called for the greeting to be to ALL the members.**

F. There is no room for partiality in our greetings, all or none at all.

III. A CHARGE TO KEEP

A. You are charged to read this letter to ALL the holy brethren.

B. The Greek word translated “charge” is the strongest word in the language; and is used only here in the New Testament. It carries the idea of an oath as Christians bound by an oath.

C. It seems to also command all the members of the church to be present for the reading. Only then could this command be fulfilled.

IV. A BLESSING EXPRESSED

A. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ – the loving kindness of the Lord Jesus Christ – the pleasures and loving joy of the Lord Jesus Christ.

B. Paul began this letter with “grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

C. Basically, he ended the letter the same way. Therefore, I wish the grace of God to be with you always.

CONCLUSIONS:

A. As your pastor, I encourage each of you to accept this inspired letter as the Holy Spirit’s letter to the Long Branch MBC as a whole and to each of you personally.

B. With that thought in mind, let us all read and study this letter and do our best to follow these inspired instructions.