

A STUDY
OF
1 THESSALONIANS

Genuine faith produces good works

By
Mary Duchow

Introduction

I find in Mary's writings simplicity of thought, yet a depth of truth that flows from a sincere walk with Jesus. Each thought is carefully weighed in the balance of God's word and then has been tried in the fires of adversity. In spite of much personal trial, there is no bitterness. There is a sweet reminiscence of what God has done from the perspective of one who has experienced much. Scripture references are abundant and offered in context. You never get the feel that she is searching for a text to prove or justify her position or opinion. Her writings are simple, profound, and refreshing.

Living in the Glory

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Acknowledgements:

Throughout this study, Scripture is taken from the New International Version Study Bible, unless otherwise indicated, in the left margin. Also, in the left margin Scripture references are listed, as are additional source materials. Occasionally, to implement the text with personal experience or viewpoint, the words, Personal Comment, will occur in the left margin, indicating that the material to the right is from the author of this study.

Footnotes are primarily based upon those that appear in the NIV Study Bible, and are written in the left margin. The author paraphrases most of the footnotes, in order for them to be read more easily. Hence, quotation marks are rarely used. The object is to get the material before the reader with as few interruptions as possible.

The text of this study is typed in **boldface**, and quotation marks are not used.

Since the author was blessed with salvation, her desire to share this gift of redemption is strong. The memory of her past weakness, bitterness and sin, prompted her to tell others how the Lord brought her through repentance and forgiveness, and to the place of trust in Him. The Lord laid out all that was needed to accomplish this Bible Study. Scattered throughout this work are Personal Comments, which tell of her own experience. These show others a little of her life before she was able to accept the forgiveness and peace the Lord gives, in hope that her readers will be able to truly trust in God. She encourages the reader to come to Jesus, let Him into your heart and He will do the rest. Just follow His lead, learn from the Lord and live in the freedom of His peace.

Dedication

These Bible studies are dedicated to my children and grandchildren: Christine Palafox, her husband Nick, their children, Tahlia and Jansen; Robin Schickert and her husband Norb; and Mark Duchow. With gratitude, in the name of Jesus, these studies are written by your loving mother.

Sources:

Scripture taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version ® NIV ®
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THE KING JAMES OPEN BIBLE, Expanded edition, published by Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, 1985.

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NIV QUEST STUDY BIBLE, revised, Published by Zondervan, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49530, USA

Mary

Her hair is gray.
The years of her life are evident
In the lines of her face.
Her hands show the delicate tracery of veins
That mark their aging.
She is now in her 75th year.

But this façade is deceptive.
For many, at this stage of life,
The light within is growing dim.
But, not so for this unique person;
For this woman has,
In the not so distant past,
Just begun to live.

The events of her life
That have aged her physically,
Were a necessary prelude
To the wisdom and insight
She has gleaned from them.

It has become her mission in life
To use this precious gift
That was bestowed on her
By God's Holy Spirit,
To help as many hurting people
As He sends her way.

What words can I use
To describe her?
I sat across the table from her
On that first day,
Never dreaming that I was about to embark
On one of the most meaningful journeys
Of my life!

I looked at her there,
An ordinary woman,
At first glance.
How could I know
What wisdom and insight were stored
Within that all too human frame?

How could I know, then,
That God would use this
Ordinary, extraordinary vessel
To free me from the bondage
Under which I had lived
All of my life!

*The woman who was counseled by the writer
Of these Bible studies, wrote this poem.*

<p>Introduction to 1 Thessalonians</p> <p>See Ac 17:1-18</p> <p>(v.3.) (v.12)</p> <p>(v.5) (v.7)</p> <p>(vv. 14-18)</p> <p>See 2Co 15:51-52</p> <p>American Heritage Dictionary</p> <p>1 THESSALONIANS 1 : 1 - 5</p>	<p>Some believe 1 Thessalonians to be Paul's earliest canonical letter. (The word, canon, refers to the books of the Bible that are officially recognized as Holy Scripture. Canonical books are authorized, approved, and accepted as conforming to established doctrine.) Paul was living in Corinth (AD 51-52) when he wrote First and Second Thessalonians. The city was a bustling seaport and an important communication and trade center. With a population of 200,000, at the time, it was the largest city and the capitol of the province of Macedonia, Greece. It had among its population, a colony of Jews and a synagogue. Paul had spent a considerable amount of time there at the synagogue, reasoning with the Jews and explaining from Scripture and there-by proving that "Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead." Some Jews and a large number of God-fearing Greek men and some prominent Greek women were persuaded to believe. However, most Jews were jealous of the acceptance of Paul and his teaching. They formed a mob and started a riot, accusing Paul of treason against Caesar. The brothers, Christian men, then sent Paul to the coast and escorted him to Athens. Eventually, Paul's journeys brought him back to Corinth where he wrote 1 and 2 Thessalonians.</p> <p>The recent converts from Paganism had little support in the midst of persecution and they needed encouragement to withstand their trials and to understand how to live godly lives. These letters from Paul were sent to bolster their spirits.</p> <p>However, the thrust of this letter deals with the teaching about our final destiny, referred to by Biblical scholars as eschatology, (pronounced, <i>es-cha-tol'-ogy</i>.) Paul writes, "Listen, I tell you a mystery." He is referring to things about the resurrection body that were not understood which he now reveals. He continues, "We will not all sleep, but we will be changed." By this, Paul meant, that some future believers will not experience death and the grave, for they will be taken from this earthly life by Christ in His second coming. Some refer to this as the rapture. "In a flash, in the twinkling of an eye at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable and we will all be changed."(The change to an imperishable body will occur instantly, like the blink of the eye. Paul uses the Greek word, <i>rhipe</i>, which means, the jerk of an eyelid, which appears to be instantaneous. The primary Greek verb, <i>rhipto</i>, denotes a sudden, involuntary motion, like the blink of an eye. The dictionary has some interesting meanings for the word, blink: the time it takes to blink; a flash of light; to twinkle; twinkling.)</p> <p>And now to the study of Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians. As was customary in ancient times, correspondence began with the name or names of the sender. Our custom is to begin our letters with a salutation, naming the recipient—Dear John or Mary or Sirs or whatever—and we end the correspondence with our name. This letter is basically from Paul, but his close associates, Silas and Timothy, also send their greetings and join with Paul to encourage, spiritually, the new, small community of Christians in Thessalonica.</p> <p>Paul, Silas and Timothy. To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace and peace to you. We always thank God for all of you, mentioning you in our prayers. We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake.</p>
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<p>Footnote: 1Th 1:4 Read Jn 3:16; Ro 8:28; 2Pe 1:3-11</p> <p>See Rev 3:20</p>	<p>The reasons for Paul's conviction regarding the Thessalonian believer's election are stated in verses 5-10. It is believed that one's election means that one is chosen or elected by divine will for salvation. Election comes from the Hebrew word, <i>ba'har</i>, meaning, to chose. Christians were chosen before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless in the sight of God. Here, that idea of election is combined with the responsibility of the elect, or chosen, to live accordingly, in faith and deeds. (Yes, Christians are the elect, but one must make the choice to open one's heart and ask Jesus to come in. One must believe in Christ's salvation. God's gift of grace is given so that we might repent; be forgiven, be re-born spiritually, and receive the indwelling Holy Spirit. Then we are able to begin to live in faith in Christ, and with that blessing we are able to mature and become more "Christ-like.")</p>
<p>Footnote: 1Th 1:5</p>	<p>The term, brothers, refers to those men who were united to each other through union in Christ. The gospel that was preached by Paul, Silas and Timothy is the same gospel that they themselves received by faith. It is first of all God the Father's, because He originated it and Christ's because it springs from His atoning death...the power that delivered them from spiritual bondage...is the power of the Holy Spirit but it also resides in the gospel itself. Such deep conviction found in these preachers and also in the Thessalonians themselves, was also of the Holy Spirit.</p>
<p>Personal Comment:</p>	<p>Then there were as now there are heated discussions among various Christian groups about "faith and deeds." Martin Luther said, "a man is justified, (declared righteous before God) by faith alone, but not by faith that is alone. Genuine faith will produce good deeds, but only faith in Christ saves."</p>
<p>See Jn 15:1-8 Jas 2:14-26</p>	<p>It is the gift we receive of the indwelling Holy Spirit, after we believe in the salvation of Christ Jesus, and are spiritually re-born, that enables us to do "good deeds" and "produce fruit." Jesus said, "no branch (no believer) can bear fruit (do good works) by itself; it must remain in the vine (in Jesus Christ)." And these "good works" are from the Spirit Himself.</p> <p>In my life, (especially here I speak of the talents God has given me,) I have occasionally spoken or recorded profound words and depictions. In doing so, I recognized that it was God who uses the talents He gives us, in combination with the empowering of His Holy Spirit, for the words written, were not entirely of my doing. At these times the words came from a wisdom I did not know! This enabling of the Holy Spirit happened to me prior to my own repentance, rebirth and salvation, and on occasion, it happens now that I am a Christian. It is a humbling and profound experience to realize that I pushed the pen, but the words didn't come from me!</p> <p>In my experience, it has not been just the written word, but also the spoken word. One time in particular, I remember that I had visited a relative, Olivia, whose mother had been buried that morning. She was weighted down by grief and loss. I did not attend the funeral, being in my late teens and having no idea what to say. However, that afternoon I found myself walking up to Olivia's front porch as she was coming down the steps. I know I said words to her but I have no recollection of what they were. Yet, after I had spoken to her for a while, I could literally see the weight of her sorrow lift from her. She smiled at me with her eyes and she was at peace. The Holy Spirit spoke to her through my words. I was merely His instrument. But the incident left an indelible impression held in wonder in my memory.</p>

<p>Mt 6:10</p> <p>Isa 6:9-10; Lk 12: 16-21; Mt 13:1-23 Isa 42:6-7,16 See Jn 12:37-50</p> <p>1 THESSALONIANS 1 : 6 – 7</p> <p>Footnote: 1Th 1:6-7</p> <p>See 1Co 11:1</p> <p>Personal Comment: 1Co 11:23-26; Jn 5:19; 14:6</p>	<p>This is but one occurrence; there have been many. In this way, the Holy Spirit gives us a little bit of foreknowledge, also. For instance: often I have left for work or school in the morning. The day was bright, warm and beautiful. In my mind is this thought: “take a jacket in case the weather turns cold.” In my typical human ego, I rationalize this bit of foreknowledge with disbelief. I do not go back in the house to get the jacket. During the day, however, the north wind blows in an unseasonal snowstorm. It is May 6th; it is Wisconsin. So, when I am trudging home in six inches of wet, cold snow, I remember the foreknowledge and wonder, “how come I knew I might need a jacket but paid no attention to such information?”</p> <p>After many such incidences in which I get a foreknowledge that comes true, I have come to believe it is one of the innumerable ways in which the Holy Spirit works in our hearts and minds. These words of mine are not meant to explain what Paul has written (in verse 5), but to show that God uses the occurrences in everyday life to acquaint us with His will. The Holy Spirit who indwells believers is actively at work in our lives. In most cases we experience His gentle goading and regretfully, we don’t always pay attention! We have our own agenda!</p> <p>The writers of Scripture were powerfully led to speak and write the very word of God in Scripture. In the Lord’s prayer, we say, “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” The Lord brings about His will, in power, in ways we humans simply do not always realize. But the more we read Scripture, pray and live accordingly, the clearer this relationship between God and His instruments becomes. These bits of enlightenment we may experience on our own, fill us with awe and become the assurance of the greater wisdom we encounter in Scripture. Thus our conviction of the reality of truth grows and matures.</p> <p>Sometimes Jesus taught by using common occurrences enhanced by the light He shown upon them. Those to who He spoke, either chose to see the saving truth of His words or they hardened their hearts and refused to be healed. The Parable of the Sower is not only an example of Christ’s wisdom in using common things to teach, but it is the fulfillment of prophecy written by Isaiah and other prophecy found in the Bible.</p> <p>The first letter to the Thessalonians continues:</p> <p>You became imitators of us and the Lord, in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with joy given by the Holy Spirit. And so you became a model to all believers in Macedonia and Achaia.</p> <p>Paul indicates here the order in Christian imitation. Believers in Macedonia and Achaia imitated the Thessalonians, just as the Thessalonians imitated the churches in Judea; the Thessalonians imitated Paul, just as the Corinthians did and just as all believers were to imitate their leaders. At that time, Greece was divided into Macedonia and Achaia which were two Roman provinces.</p> <p>During the “last supper,” Jesus said to His apostles, “do this in remembrance of Me.” Indicating that while remembering Him, they do it through imitation of what He did. And in John, Jesus teaches the way to the Father is to follow, that is, to be imitators of Him. We are often given instruction in Scriptures to “go and do likewise.” It is the way God designed the animals and the human beings. The mother bear teaches her cubs how to survive and human mothers and fathers teach their children how to live temporal and</p>
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<p>Comment continues:</p> <p>Jn 14:26</p> <p>1Th 1:6</p> <p>Ac 17:5-14 Gen 3:15-24</p> <p>Dt 8:5; 2Sa 7:14; Job 1:6-22; 2:1-10; 5:17;6:24 Ps 94:12; Pr 3:11-12; La 3:38-39; 1Co 11:32; James 1:12; 5:11</p> <p>Isa 29:14; 40:13; 64:4</p> <p>Lk 17:21; Ro 5:1-11; 1Th 1:3</p>	<p>spiritual lives—or at least they are supposed to! Jesus said of Himself, “I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by Himself; He can do only what He sees His Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.”</p> <p>What a powerful link Jesus had with His Father! And we are instructed to follow His example. I often come up short when I contemplate this instruction. It is so profound and yet should be as ingrained and natural as breathing, but we humans are not able to maintain that level of consciousness at all times. Our gracious Lord knows this about us and therefore when we become re-born believers, we are given the indwelling Holy Spirit, not only to remind us of all these things, but to be with us and in us at all times!</p> <p>The severe suffering indicated here (v.6) was similar to the suffering recorded in the book of Acts. The faith, the churches and fellowship that we, in this century, in this country, take for granted, was fought for! However, those freedoms are now threatened because of the condition of the world. Suffering for the “right” has been an integral part of the Bible story. Because, at one time we chose disobedience and we have a longing to reestablish our relationship to our Father ever since, whether we recognize this separation or not. We suffer in many ways; it is part of being human.</p> <p>I have not suffered for the faith to the degree indicated in verse 6. In a small way I have received ridicule from my sister and her husband because of my belief and consequent actions. Also, I took upon myself some difficult circumstances to help my nephew come to faith. However, the greater kind of suffering I experienced in and for the spiritual walk has come about during years of repentance while I was desperately trying to change from my life-long, habitual, sinful thought-patterns and actions. That was very hard! I prayed and read my Bible. I wrote copiously and studied and sought answers from the mentors God placed in my life, and I received much support and direction from the Holy Spirit. I walked miles every day, often with tears streaming down my face, for I knew I had to change and yet I did not want to give up my sin!! In my heart I felt I was gripping on to God’s hand just to survive this catharsis. The battle was between me, my delicious sin, the devil and God.</p> <p>Though this conflict was “my battle,” those with whom I lived thought I was quite insane. The whole of myself became so locked into my struggle that I was not able to respond normally to my adult children, to my students, to my siblings or to anyone else. This was the way God designed for me to come through repentance to rebirth. There are other types of suffering, however, which are given to us by God to demonstrate His power, presence, love, patience, graciousness and provision, all in order that we might come from the sins that held us so tenaciously. (In the margin to the left are but a few Bible references that deal with this subject.) The point is, that when we allow our heart and spirit to recognize God’s presence in our lives—moment by moment—by being aware of His Omniscience, we continue to struggle to become more Christ-like and less empowered by our carnal and worldly desires. Also, we are more and more aware of the deceptiveness of the many habitual, sinful ways in which we are prone to conduct ourselves in this world—in our public life and in our private life.</p> <p>We are born with a sinful nature. We don’t teach our children to be naughty, they do it naturally! And we adults, too, do our sinning naturally! Once we repent and are reborn, our Savior, Christ, gives us the indwelling Holy Spirit of God!! Imagine, truly: God within us!!</p> <p>The Old testament book of Leviticus deals with many laws by which the Israelites were to</p>
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<p>Comment continues: Ex 30:10; Lev 23:7 Mt 5:17</p>	<p>recognize sin, avoid sin and what to do when they didn't avoid it and sinned. It is evident that we humans cannot, on our own, avoid sin or deal with it. We cannot wash our hands and hearts with our own "sin-nature" dirty water. Actually, much of the OT deals with this dilemma. The laws God gave to Moses to give to the Israelites, showed beyond a doubt that human beings cannot attain righteousness by trying to follow laws—I say, "trying to follow laws," because no one was ever able to follow those laws perfectly, except the Son of God, Jesus Christ. Jesus came to fulfill the law.</p>
<p>1 THESSALONIANS 1 : 8 – 10</p>	<p>The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it, for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.</p>
<p>Personal Comment: Jn 3:16</p>	<p>Remember, it is because Jesus was forsaken by His Father when He took upon Himself all of mankind's sin so that believers, in His sacrifice of redemption, never have to fear that we will ever be forsaken by God our Father. "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life."</p>
<p>Mt 27:46; Mk 15:34</p>	<p>Jesus speaks to the heart of sinners when He cries in anguish to His father from the cross. He sobs, "My God, My god, why have You forsaken Me?" This is the only time in the NT where Jesus calls His Father, "God," and not "Father." These words were spoken in Aramaic, one of the languages commonly spoken in Palestine in Jesus Christ's day. The words, "<i>Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?</i>" reveal how deeply Jesus felt His abandonment by God as He bore the sins of mankind. Literally, Jesus Christ became "sin" for us at that point in time and thereby He was forsaken by God, at that moment in time! What an awesome severance between God the Father and God the Son! And it was planned this way from before the beginning of time, so God Himself as the only begotten Son of God would, at this point in time, take upon Himself our sins and redeem us.</p>
<p>See Ps 22:1</p>	<p>Psalm 22 depicts the anguished words of David who was a victim of vicious enemies whom he had not provoked, and from whom the Lord had not yet delivered him. No other Psalm so aptly fitted the circumstances of Jesus at His crucifixion. Hence, on the cross He took to His lips, and the Gospel writers, especially Matthew and John, frequently alluded to it in their accounts of Christ's passion. They saw in the passion of Jesus the fulfillment of this cry of the righteous sufferer. No other Psalm is quoted more frequently in the NT.</p>
<p>Footnote: 1Th 1:1-8</p>	<p>In Paul's words, we are given three marks of true conversion: (1.) turning from idols (2.) serving God and (3.) waiting for Christ to return. In his two short letters to the Thessalonians, Paul speaks much of the second coming of Christ. And in verse 10 we are again made aware of who Jesus is. Matthew identifies Jesus as the One who "will save His people from their sins." The name, Jesus, is the Greek form of Joshua, which means: the Lord saves.</p>
<p>Personal Comment:</p>	<p>An idol can be anyone or anything which takes on more importance to you than God. Anything that fixates your mind to the exclusion of your awareness of and reliance on God's presence in your heart is an idol to you. For instance, when you are livid with anger, there is no place for God in your heart. When you worry or let petty grievances</p>

<p>Comment continues:</p> <p>1 THESSALONIANS 2 : 1 – 12 v.3 Ac 14:19; 16:22-34; 17:1-9; 20:32-35 v.5 2Co2:17; 4:2 Jn 5:41-44 v.8</p> <p>Ac 18:3; 2Co 1:12; 11:9; Gal 4:18-20 v.10</p> <p>v.12 Ro 8:28; Eph 4:1</p> <p>Footnote: 1Th 2:1-12</p> <p>Dr. Lutzer</p> <p>Personal Comment: Eph 1:18; 1Pe 2:9</p>	<p>control your thinking and actions, there is no room for God in your mind. Any addiction, fixation, abusive habit, etc., are idols to those of us who allow them to rule our hearts instead of being submissive to God and giving Him the right to rule over our weak human nature.</p> <p>To clarify what an idol may be for us in the 21st century is that it does not necessarily mean some ugly old statue that was someone's concept of a god. An idol means very much more because of the vast ability we have to use our imagination, which has been called "the devil's playground." From birth, we are aware of the ability our minds have to imagine and how often we act upon those ideas. Idolatry is not limited to craven images—rather anything real or fictional is idolatry when it takes precedence over God in one's heart and mind and life. All you have to do is turn on your TV or internet or read the publications available to realize the extent to which evil dominates. It permeates everything and stretches all the way to hell.</p> <p>You know, brothers, that our visit to you was not a failure. We had previously suffered and been insulted in Philippi, as you know, but with the help of our God we dared to tell you His gospel in spite of strong opposition. For the appeal we make does not spring from error or impure motives nor are we trying to trick you. On the contrary, we speak as men approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please men but God, who tests our hearts. You know we never use flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed—God is our witness. We were not looking for praise from men, not from you or anyone else. As apostles of Christ, we could have been a burden to you, but we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children. We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us. Surely you remember, brothers, our toil and hardship; we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you. You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed. For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into His kingdom and glory.</p> <p>These words from Paul, the apostle of Christ, are a manual for a preacher or minister. Paul's message is God's good news, the gospel, and his motives are not to please people but to please God. His manner is not one of trickery or flattery, but of courage, gentleness, love, toil and holiness. It would be well if preachers were to follow Paul's instructions.</p> <p>Dr. Lutzer relates a personal experience: He sat down in front of the TV one Sunday evening to relax after a long, hard day of performing his pastoral duties. His daughter said, "Dad, is that what Jesus would do?" Ouch!</p> <p>Preachers are expected to live better, holier lives than the rest of us. If we examine that concept we find flaws because all believers are to live as models of good Christian living—not just our pastors and preachers. However, we do isolate them and place them in an exemplary position. It is human nature to expect more morality and righteous living from our leaders than we expect from ourselves. The fact is that they are human and imperfect as we are!</p> <p>There are, however, "men of the cloth" who do fall from grace. As we have seen, there</p>
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<p>Rev 2:23</p>	<p>are ministers, priests, TV evangelists, etc., who seem to be trying to please men and women, but more especially and sinfully, they often concentrate on pleasing themselves. In their ministries, I wonder if they ever consider that they are to please God? Fortunately, there are not many who are in it for the money, or to stroke their own egos, thus becoming an idol in their own minds. It is sad and destructive to those who honor God that the “self-seekers” often become idols and “special” in the eyes and hearts of their supporters. Eventually, these “preacher-actors” come up against Almighty God. Sometimes they are convicted while they are yet on earth. Once caught and exposed in their sin they may make a big show of confession. Often, this public and dramatic display results in a repentance that may or may not be sincere. However, judgment will come in the next world. “It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”</p>
<p>Heb 10:31</p> <p>Mt 4:19; Jn 12:26; 14:6; 1Co 11:1; 2Th 3:9</p>	<p>But, thank the good Lord that the greater majority of ministers of God’s word are God-fearing, devoted to teaching and evangelizing to bring the truth to as many as possible. Most of those who have lived their lives—after spiritual re-birth—closely follow Christ their Savior. And those whom I have known, personally, are examples of how to live the Christian life.</p>
<p>Ac 10:34-43, Esp. v. 39</p>	<p>None of us, no matter how “good” we learn to be, are ever free of our sin nature. It is always bitterly sad to see these wayward and deceptive personalities linked with Christians in general. All the more reason for each of us to live our own lives in such a way as to show true Christian values and why we live them, to those who find fault, especially with those who are at fault!</p>
<p>Background of this letter that Paul wrote to the Thessalonians</p>	<p>The world and the devil want to discredit believers because they recognize we are different. They feel threatened and go on the defensive. In the language of the carnal world, <i>different</i>, is always ridiculed, slandered, abused and destroyed. All <i>hate</i> groups ascribe to this evil...and so they hung Him on a tree.</p> <p>It must be remembered that when Paul wrote his Apostolic Epistles or Letters, he was often persecuted and physically punished and imprisoned for evangelizing Hebrews and Gentiles. (The word, <i>epistle</i>, is from the Greek word, <i>epistole</i>, which means <i>to send a message or letter</i>.) the following is a little history on the writing of the Thessalonian Letters, and what Paul, Silas and Timothy went through to spread the seeds of faith throughout the region—an ultimately, the world.</p>
<p>The region:</p> <p>Ac 17:10-15; 18:1-5; Ro 8:35; 2Co 11:26; 1Th 3:1-6</p>	<p>(Through Judea, Syria, Cilicia, Galatia, Pamphylia, Cyprus, Lydia, Phrygia, Crete, Thrace, Macedonia, Achia, Malta, Sicily, and Rome.)</p> <p>Paul and Silas fled from Thessalonica to Berea. Timothy later rejoined them. Paul then fled to Athens from Berean persecution, where he sent word, telling Silas and Timothy to come to Athens. They spent some time with Paul there but went back to Thessalonica. It is assumed that Silas had gone back to Philippi. Paul moved on to Corinth and later, Timothy and Silas joined him there, where Paul wrote his first letter to the Thessalonians and sent it to them. Six months later, (AD 51-52) he sent the second letter.</p>
	<p>Few debate whether Paul wrote these letters to Thessalonica, because of Paul’s characteristic writing and the historical evidence compares to secular known facts as well as to Luke’s account in the Book of Acts.</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">1 THESSALONIANS 2 : 13 – 16</p> <p style="text-align: center;">v.15 Mt 5:12; Ac 17:4-5</p> <p style="text-align: center;">v.16</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Footnote: 1Th 2:13-16</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(v. 14) See Ac 17: 1-9</p> <p style="text-align: center;">vv. 15-16</p> <p style="text-align: center;">1Co 22</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Personal Comment:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Ac 7:54 - 8:3</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Rev 1:1-3</p> <p style="text-align: center;">1 THESSALONIANS</p>	<p>We will continue now with the text of Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians, Chapter 2, verses 13-16.</p> <p>And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe. For you, brothers, became imitators of God's churches in Judea, which are in Christ Jesus: You suffered from your own countrymen the same thing those churches suffered from the Jews, who killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets and also drove us out. They displease God and are hostile to all men in their effort to keep us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved. In this way they always heap up their sins to the limit. The wrath of God has come upon them at last.</p> <p>Paul writes a letter of thanksgiving to the Thessalonians for their faith and patience under persecution, especially since they accepted the "word" of God from Paul and the brothers. It was not tailored to fit the popular knowledge of the times but as the word of truth inspired by God Himself in the person of the Holy Spirit.</p> <p>The Gentile Thessalonian church had suffered much because of the unbelief of their fellow countrymen as did the Christian churches who were comprised, mainly, of former Jews.</p> <p>All through the books of the OT, the Israelites had persecuted and killed their own prophets who were chosen by God to tell them His words. Now, Paul emphasizes that the final outpouring of God's wrath on sinful mankind, for unbelieving Jews and Gentiles alike, had begun. The Jews had hounded Paul relentlessly in Asia, Greece and Rome. They drove him from Thessalonica and Barea and were persecuting him in Corinth. Bigoted, single-minded Jews hated the growing Christian church and Paul especially because at one time he was considered a model Pharisee! And the secular world hated the Jews because of their narrow exclusiveness. This hatred was a bitter trial for Paul because he loved his Jewish heritage, though he loved "Jesus Christ and Him crucified," more!</p> <p>In Paul's letters we recognize a gentleness which is often superseded by his basic defense of the staunch actions of all Christ's apostles and bold lay Christians as well. In many ways he had to be emphatic about the pure truth of his teaching because of his background as a Pharisee and his presence at Stephan's stoning. He had much to overcome as do many converts to Christianity today.</p> <p>Christians must be brave. They must know Who, why and what they believe. It is so very important to study Scripture! Not only for content but for the very blessing of the word! The Holy Spirit inspired the words written from Genesis to Revelation, and He also inspires everyone who is willing to read, understand and receive the Word from Scripture. The more one reads to know the wisdom of the Lord, the more one is at peace with the Word, and within one's self. The more we know God the Father, God the Son, and the Holy Spirit, (whom we receive into our hearts when we believe,) the more we are able to love God, Father, Son and Spirit. Wisdom from the Word (Christ and the Scriptures) is most blessed and a beautiful fountain of life.</p> <p>But brothers, when we were torn away from you for a short time (in person, not in thought), out of our intense longing we made every effort to see you. For we wanted to come to you—certainly I, Paul, did, again and again—but Satan stopped</p>
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<p>2 : 17 – 20 v.19 v. 20</p>	<p>us. For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of Our Lord Jesus when He comes? Is it not you? Indeed, you are our glory and joy.</p>
<p>Personal Comment:</p>	<p>When I was laboring to learn the answers to many questions, regarding the meaning of terms used in Scripture, there were several words I just did not understand as to how they were used and what they meant. <i>Crown</i> and <i>Reward</i> were among those words.</p>
<p>1Co 9:25</p>	<p>Paul compares the imperishable crown of the Christian’s reward to the perishable crown of the (first century Greek) athlete. The “crown” is often mentioned as a <i>reward</i> Christians will wear in eternity. The crown that athletes wore was a perishable wreath of laurel leaves. This type of crown of laurel leaves was also a mark of honor in ancient times that was conferred upon poets, heroes and victors in athletic contests, etc. However, the “crown” a Christian is given in heaven is to honor the “fruit” or “good works” he or she did “in Christ” on earth.</p>
<p>Read Jn 15:1-8</p>	<p>Isaiah wrote the following description which will occur in the end times at the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. (He is addressing the Jews, often referred to in the OT as “the Daughter of Zion.”) “The Lord has made proclamation to the ends of the earth; ‘Say to the Daughter of Zion. See your Savior comes! See, His reward is with Him, and His recompense accompanies Him. They will be called the Holy People, the Redeemed of the Lord; and you will be called Sought after, the City No Longer Deserted.’ “</p>
<p>Isa 62:11-12</p>	<p>Recompense means a payment in return for something given or done. Here it refers to the Redeemed—those who have believed in the salvation of Christ!</p>
<p>Dt 30:4; Isa 4:10; Rev 22:12</p>	<p>In this passage from Isaiah, he writes about those with the “crown’ who are Jesus Christ’s “reward.” They are the “Redeemed!” Not just believing Jews but believing Gentiles as well.</p>
<p>American Heritage Dictionary</p>	<p>In 1Thessalonians, Christ is the believer’s hope of salvation both now and at His second coming, (and throughout all eternity!). In that day, He will deliver His redeemed people; He will reward them, complete and perfect them; Christ will resurrect and sanctify all who trust in Him. Through this Thessalonian letter is an unmistakable emphasis upon steadfastness in the lord. And a continuing growth in faith and love in view of the return of Christ. The theme is not only the returning of Christ, but also the life of the believer in every aspect of living the Christian life, in following the example of Christ Himself.</p>
<p>Isa 62:11-12</p>	<p>So when we could stand it no longer, we thought it best to be left by ourselves in Athens. We sent Timothy, who is our brother and God’s fellow worker is spreading the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith, so that no one would be unsettled by these trials. You know quite well that we were destined for them.</p>
<p>KJ open Bible Paraphrased from The introduction to 1Thessalonians</p>	<p>Paul uses an editorial “we” in referring to himself alone, here in the Thessalonian letters and in his other epistles, also. Paul first went to Athens, and then to Corinth where he wrote these two letters to the Thessalonians. After much travelling, Silas and Timothy eventually came to be with Paul in Corinth. It is not easy for us to imagine the hardships these itinerant apostles and brothers in Christ experienced during those difficult first century years. Perhaps it is somewhat similar to what missionaries deal with today,</p>
<p>Jn 13:6; 15:1-8</p>	<p>1 THESSALONIANS 3 : 1 – 3</p>
<p>Personal Comment:</p>	<p>Paul uses an editorial “we” in referring to himself alone, here in the Thessalonian letters and in his other epistles, also. Paul first went to Athens, and then to Corinth where he wrote these two letters to the Thessalonians. After much travelling, Silas and Timothy eventually came to be with Paul in Corinth. It is not easy for us to imagine the hardships these itinerant apostles and brothers in Christ experienced during those difficult first century years. Perhaps it is somewhat similar to what missionaries deal with today,</p>

<p>Comment continues:</p> <p>Mk 3:34-38; 2Ti 3:12; 1Pe 4: 12-19 Jn 16:33</p> <p>1 THESSALONIANS 3 : 4 – 5</p> <p>Footnote: 1Th 3:5</p> <p>Jn 16:11; Mk4:13-20; 2Co 4:4-6; Eph 6:16 Jn 16:33</p> <p>Personal Comment:</p> <p>Good News Bible TEV</p>	<p>especially those who bring the Word of Christ to areas in the world who persecute Christians. Most of us have not suffered religious or cultural persecution as those of the young Christian church did. Also, in our times, travel and communications are certainly different...or are they? Our freedoms in the USA are being threatened. Many of us have suffered persecution of one sort or another. And because of terrorists, travel is less and less safe or easy. It would be wise to think of the hardships of Paul and the others who spread Christianity to the world, and thank God that He made it possible for us to come to know Him, to know the Holy Word of God!</p> <p>Here, Paul speaks of the opposition and persecution suffered by the Thessalonian converts. Christians must expect troubles. In a sense, these are not disasters. I often wonder how much of the world's trauma in recent years is not related to God's purpose and economy. For it seems we are living the prophecy text of Scripture in our times. John quotes Jesus: "I have told you these things, so that in Me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."</p> <p>In fact, when we were with you we kept telling you that we would be persecuted. And it turned out that way, as you well know. For this reason, when I could stand it no longer, I sent to find out about your faith. I was afraid that in some way the tempter might have tempted you and our efforts might have been useless.</p> <p>Paul used the Greek emphatic pronoun, "I," to bring out his deep concern. Elsewhere, he used, "I," only in 1Thessalonians 2:18.</p> <p>Satan, the tempter, is spoken of in every major division of the NT. He is supreme among evil spirits. His activities can affect the physical and spiritual. He tempted Jesus and he continues to tempt Jesus Christ's servants. Satan hinders missionary work. But he has already been defeated and Christians need not be overwhelmed by him. His final overthrow is certain.</p> <p>Often, while reading the epistles of Paul, I am reminded of similar experienced. His words are most encouraging; because it is very hard to spend time, effort and prayer on behalf of someone else, in the desire to help that person repent, truly and thoroughly embrace the Christian life. The reason it is so hard is because this means that person must give up control of his or her own heart, mind and spirit into the hands and will of God. And that is very hard to do! Our sin-nature and ego-centric pride and stubbornness can see no reason to change that intimately or completely.</p> <p>The child stamps his or her foot, puts hands on hips and shouts, "I wanna do it myself!" We grow and mature, in time, but that "I wanna do it myself" remains untouched and very controlling as our innermost, determinate and resolute, primitive need and response. Psychology calls this characteristic need, the "id." It is associated with the instinctual satisfaction in our base sense of reality.</p> <p>1Thessalonians 3:5b: "Surely it could not be that the Devil had tempted you and all our work had been for nothing." It takes concentrated effort and hard work to help someone see the "light" in order to see his or her habitually accepted sin. It is necessary to look into oneself, deeply, to understand the power of the negative and self-protecting armor one builds. It begins in infancy with our desire to protect ourselves from abuse, especially abuse perpetrated by those who were supposed to nurture and love us.</p>
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<p>Gen 3:1-5</p>	<p>Adam and Eve didn't have a clue as to how the deception of the devil works to prevent us from having a true relationship with God—and neither do we! It is something like what some marine organisms do to build protective “sea” shells. However, the sea mollusk's shell is uniquely designed armor, grown (as designed by God) to house and protect each individual organism. Instinct provides the way to fulfill that need. The devil desires to deceive us into choosing a way of self protection that is contrary to God's intention. As unsaved infants we have no idea that we are being tempted away from a true, effective and dependant relationship with God. We believe we are protecting our vulnerable, tender and naked self in any way we can!! However, this habitually oriented armament becomes so accustomed to the deception we believed, that we consider it to be our individuality and personality. This is who we perceive ourselves to be! But, it is not who God designed us to be!</p> <p>The negativity that seethes just below the surface that we present to the world, fuels our inability to fully and openly embrace the Christian life. This inner armament has to be abandoned in order to expose our inner child to the grace, love and protection of God Himself.</p> <p>Holding back a part of your control because you don't trust God the Father completely, prevents you from growing and maturing spiritually. You may believe in the Salvation of Christ. You may quote Bible verses. You may evangelize and do missionary work and help out at church—but you are not at peace!</p> <p>Dear, hurting believer, I pray you will be able to recognize that your “yes but” conditions and rationalizations are the deception of the devil that you are hanging on to desperately. They are the very cause of your continued unrest, lack of peace and your need to blame everyone else for your problems.</p> <p>These personal comments that I write are mostly from my own past and how God gave me trials and tests designed for me to see the evil in my life—and how He has blessed me with the ability to trust in Him and be at peace. And now, I am determined to tell others of the experience and what I learned.</p>
<p>1 THESSALONIANS 3 : 6 – 9</p>	<p>But Timothy has just now come to us from you and has brought good news about your faith and love. He has told us that you always have pleasant memories of us and that you long to see us, just as we long to see you. Therefore, brothers, in all our distress and persecution we were encouraged about you because of your faith. For now we really live, since you are standing firm in the Lord. How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you?</p>
<p>Footnote: 1Th 3:6</p>	<p>This is the only place where the Greek for this phrase, “brought good news,” is used by Paul for anything other than the gospel. Three things caused him joy: 1. “your faith,” meaning a right attitude toward God; 2. “your love,” meaning their right attitude toward their fellow man; 3. “you long to see us,” meaning a right attitude toward Paul. Remember, Paul often uses the editorial “we,” when referring to himself. He does not want to appear boastful in his work for the Lord, or in anything else, so he frequently writes, “we,” when he means, “I.”</p>

Footnote: 1Th 3:9	The preceding words show that Paul's work of evangelism had been effective. He might have congratulated himself on work well done, but instead he thanked God for the joy he had from what God had done!
Personal Comment:	Paul writes, "How can I thank God enough?" When first becoming a Christian, I was advised to "thank God in all things." My response at that time was, "How in the world can I give thanks in everything all the time?" As far as Christian faith was concerned for me in those beginning years, I was quite pragmatic. The word, <i>pragmatic</i> , means, "a course of action lies in its observable consequences and that the sum of these consequences constitute its meaning." I wasn't seeing the consequences of the Christian life for me or for others. It seemed to me that most Christians were so, in name only. At that time I didn't comprehend the true meaning of being thankful in everything.
American Heritage Dictionary	After the Lord took me through some trials where the power of the Holy Spirit enlightened my mind, I finally knew how much the Lord does for me (and everyone) all the time in big and little ways. Prior to this awakening, I didn't even notice His constant blessings! This awareness took my stubborn heart years to accept and understand. But once I did, I could see the hand of God in everything. I came to realize that giving thanks to God in everything does not always mean we have to say or even think the words. What is a greater gratitude is in living life in the joy of God's blessing. "Thanks in everything" is not a litany of words, it is a way of life.
See 1th 3:9	I found to my surprise, after I understood this concept, that not all Christians live their lives in the joy of God's blessing. They may be saved and believe in the atonement of Christ but they aren't happy about it. Their life continues being grim: they find fault, blame others for their own (same) faults, grumble and get very angry about the dumbest things! They wear themselves out worrying about everything. The list goes on. I know how all this works because that is a description of who I was before the miracle of trust in God became real in my life.
Job 1:1-12; 2:1-6 Mt 4:1-11; 2Co 12:7-10; Lk 22:31	Once I was able to trust God to direct and bless my life in all ways that were best for me, I found myself in an almost constant state of joy, peace and happiness. There are still problems to face but the clouds seem to have "silver linings." In the very midst of the trauma life brings, I now realize the presence of God is there also and that whatever is occurring, it is of His will, ultimately. If I felt that the devil was involved, I also know that the devil is God's devil. God created Satan and his angels, knowing full well how and why they would become fallen angels. And Satan and his evil spirits can only operate within the limits God sets.
	It is not that I understand why God set up His creation the way He did—it is that I simply take it in faith that God understands why. He is Omniscient (all knowing)!
	In fact, while writing this section on the work of Satan, I have experienced difficulty in wording the sentences. The scrap of paper on which I had listed some pertinent Bible references, disappeared under the movement of my arm, cascaded off the table and fluttered somewhere. I looked for it without success. Obviously Satan did not want me to use those references! However, I checked the concordance again and found the verses I sought.
	I see God's hand in this little example. Satan couldn't make me angry. He couldn't deter

<p>See Lk 22:31-35</p> <p>Eph 6:12</p> <p>See 1Th 3:9</p> <p>1 THESSALONIANS 3 : 10 – 13</p> <p>Dictionary of the Bible See Php 2:19-22</p> <p>Footnote: 1Th 3:10</p> <p>See Eph 3:20</p> <p>Footnote: 1Th 3:11-13</p> <p>Personal Comment:</p>	<p>my writing. He did not thwart my thought. The incident made me aware of God's presence and will in what we do, but also Satan is there, too, looking for any opportunity to get our attention away from God and on to any negative available!</p> <p>Not only Peter as described in Luke, but also we, even in spite of our belief in our steadfastness, are ready fodder of the devil. The more thankful we are for the blessings of God and how He cares and provides for us, the more we must come to realize that most of our battles are really being fought more viciously and powerfully in heavenly realms, than the lesser battles we experience here on earth.</p> <p>Another thought from this study is how effective Paul's evangelism to the Thessalonians was. Yet, he did not congratulate himself. Instead, he thanked God for the joy he had from what God had done!</p> <p>Night an day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith. Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus clear the way for us to come to you. May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as our does for you. May He strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all His holy ones.</p> <p>Timothy, the disciple and companion of Paul, was one of Paul's most intimate and trusted associates. Paul had no offspring and his feelings toward Timothy were those of a father to his son. In the same light, since Paul was "childless," he felt toward the people he brought to Christ the same as a father feels toward his sons and daughters.</p> <p>By praying "night and day," Paul did not mean specific times of prayer, rather, that his thoughts and prayers were like those of a parent concerned for the needs and faith of his children. This is evidenced by his use of a strong and unusual Greek compound word that bring out Paul's passionate longing: <i>most earnestly</i>, which translates in the Greek to mean, <i>beyond measure and complete</i>. Again, as a father's love and concern. By "what is lacking," Paul refers to moral and disciplinary matters. Paul's other concerns for the Thessalonians were their confusion about when Christ will return. However, this is the fifth time Paul speaks of their faith.</p> <p>In the middle of a letter, Paul may break into prayer, as he does here. When he writes, "the Lord," Paul usually is referring to Jesus rather than to the Father. He prays that the Lord may "strengthen" the hearts of the Thessalonians. The basic idea is for their hearts to be set apart for the God, but here it refers to the completed process of sanctification.</p> <p>The phrase, "holy ones," is used of saints, that is, Christians, in many NT passages. However, here it may mean the departed saints who will return with Jesus, or it may mean the angels, or perhaps both.</p> <p>I may have mentioned before about the confusion I had years ago when I first began asking questions of believers—their answers to me at that time were confusion! In some instances it took years of study to discover the answers without the confusion. Thank the Holy Spirit! When I finally began to understand, I was amazed at how logical is the meaning and I couldn't believe how dense I was! Of course, I know now that the devil will deceive and cloud our minds so that we are confused. But the devil cannot withstand the</p>
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<p>Rev 22:12 See 1Th 3:13</p> <p>Isa 40:10; 62:11-12</p>	<p>power of the Holy Spirit when one desires to really and truly know what the Scriptures mean!</p> <p>(I have been a Bible reading believer for many years now, and I continue to be amazed by the truth and beauty I read in the Scriptures. It is a never-ending unfolding of God's word, for each time one goes back and re-reads the Word, one is viewing it from a different perspective. As one grows and matures spiritually, one is able to comprehend the Word of God more fully and deeply. What a gift is the indwelling Holy Spirit!)</p> <p>So, eventually I found what the term, <i>reward</i>, means. The term is used in the Book of Revelation and has the same meaning as the phrase, "<i>all who belong to Him</i>," as written here in 1Thessalonians. It seems so simple and understandable when the Holy Spirit enlightens! In Isaiah we read, His reward is with Him." Jesus Christ's delivered people, the flock of the Lord—these are His <i>reward</i>.</p>
<p>1 THESSALONIANS 4 : 1 – 2</p> <p>Footnote: 1th 4:1 See Ro 6:4; Eph 5:17</p> <p>1Co 2:16 Ac 9:1-16</p>	<p>Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more. For you know what instructions we have you by the authority of the Lord Jesus.</p> <p>The main section of the letter is finished, though much is yet to come. Paul uses the term <i>live</i> which he means literally to <i>walk</i>. He uses this metaphor of the Christian life and means we are to live the Christian way of life. It is characterized by the way we act. It points to steady progress. Paul writes, "we ask and urge you," because he is speaking with authority in the Lord Jesus. He has the "mind of Christ," as do all believers! But Paul, especially, was given a special mission by Christ Himself, on the road to Damascus and at other times, when the Lord appeared to him in a vision.</p>
<p>Personal Comment:</p> <p>1 Thessalonians 4 : 3 - 8</p> <p>v.6</p> <p>v.8</p> <p>Footnote:1Th 4:3-8</p>	<p>Walking or living the Christian way means we are to do as Christ did while He was on earth, that is, to follow the pattern He gives us in the NT, as closely as we are able. We are warned not to follow the secular world or the religious bigots. When we are able to live our lives in such a way as to be pleasing to God, then, within our innermost self, we experience the awareness of God's moment-by-moment blessing! This peace and inner happiness is so wonderful because it is such an obvious contrast to the misery of our former lives! We find, by pleasing God, we also become pleasing to ourselves, because our lives have been cleansed, through the atonement of Christ, of the weight and clutter of sin.</p> <p>It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God; and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you. For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God who gives you His Holy Spirit.</p> <p>In the first century moral standards were generally low, very much like our times today, and chastity was regarded as an unreasonable restriction. Paul, however, would not compromise God's clear and demanding standards. The warning was needed, for</p>

<p>Isa 30:21</p> <p>1 THESSALONIANS 4 : 9 – 12 v.11 v.12</p> <p>Footnote: 1Th 4:9</p> <p>Personal Comment:</p> <p>Mt 15:21-28; 26:7-13; Mk 7:25-30; Lk 7:36-50; Jn 4:7-42; 8:3-11; 19:26-27; 20:10-18</p> <p>See Lk 24:1-12; Jn 20:16</p>	<p>Now about brotherly love we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other. And in fact, you do love all brothers throughout Macedonia. Yet, we urge you, brothers, do so more and more. Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind you own business and to work with your hands just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.</p> <p>The phrase, “brotherly love,” is translated from the Greek word, <i>philadelphia</i>, which usually means the mutual love of children of the same earthly father. However, here in the NT it always means the love of fellow believers in Christ, all of whom have the same heavenly Father.</p> <p>And women are just supposed to know that these words apply to them, also. I guess it would be ludicrous to think that this could be written as it is in some Bibles published today, as, <i>brothers and sisters</i>. I am told that, <i>sisters</i>, are included in the intention of the text, even though the original Scripture is not written that way. Being a woman, I must admit that it is often unsettling to my psyche to read only about <i>brothers</i> in so much of the NT writings. You expect it in the OT and in fact in much of the world. Nevertheless, I contend that Christ Jesus did not treat women as lesser than human, worthy only of that which men and culture gave them to be.</p> <p>I know this. I also know the lessons I learned early in life, (I was born in 1931), out of self preservation, to act and pretend in such a way as not to offend whatever man or boy was present or involved in some way. No wonder Scripture speaks of being submissive-to-God mainly to men. Women, from birth, at that time, were taught that they were value-less except as a possession and whatever definition that provided. They were of lesser value than any man, so <i>submissive</i> was not a great issue for most women. In reality, that hasn't changed that much! But in just about all His dealings with women, in Scripture, Christ is kind, understanding, gentle, patient, fair and just. He does not treat women as though they were simply possessions and otherwise relatively worthless.</p> <p>Now, as a Christian, I have learned to accept my place as a woman with a bit more grace. Mainly, because I have been helped by many God-fearing, good Christian men who do not treat me as an object or put me down in any way. I appreciate that, and through their treatment of me, I have been able to grow spiritually, mentally and emotionally beyond being hurt by this age-old prejudice.</p> <p>As you read the references listed to the left, consider the tone of voice, facial expression, and body language of Jesus as characterized by Isaiah in the first of the Servant Songs; Isaiah, chapter 42, verses 1 through 4. The words of Jesus may seem harsh to our culture. For instance, the dogs spoken of in Matthew, (15:26) were not the vicious scavenger-curs that roam in packs. Jesus spoke here of pet puppies, with a gentle smile and understanding grace. His use of the word, <i>woman</i>, in these and other passages, was the common address used in those days. Again, consider His tone of voice and deep concern for these women. It is interesting that God chose a woman, Mary Magdalene, to be the first human being to see and talk to the risen Christ!</p> <p>Some Thessalonians, probably because of idleness, were taking undue interest in other people's affairs. The Greeks in general thought manual labor degrading and fit only for</p>
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Footnote: 1Th 4:11	slaves. Christians took seriously the need for earning their own living, but some of the Thessalonians, perhaps as a result of their belief in the imminent return of Christ, were neglecting work and relying on others to support them.
Footnote: 1Th 4:12	Obedient Christians are dependent on God while they work to support themselves. Christians who are in need because of their idleness are not obedient Christians.
<p style="text-align: center;">1 THESSALONIANS 4 : 13 – 18 Ro 9:14</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Mt 24:31 1Co 15:22-23 Rev 11:12;14:13</p>	<p>Brothers, we do not want to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in Him. According to the Lord’s own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words.</p>
Footnote: 1Th 4:13	For the Christian, sleep is a particularly apt metaphor for death, since death’s finality and horror are removed by the assurance of resurrection. Some of the Thessalonians seem to have misunderstood Paul and thought all believers would live until Christ returns. When some died, the question arose, “Will those who have died have part in that great day?”
1Co 15:55-57	Inscriptions on tombs and references in literature show that first-century pagans viewed death with horror, as the end of everything. The Christian attitude was in strong contrast.
Footnote: 1Th 4:14 See 1Co 15:14-22	Paul does not say that Christ “slept,” perhaps to underscore the fact that He bore the full horror of death so that those who believe in Him would not have to! For the importance of the resurrection read what Paul writes in 1Corinthians. “Those who have fallen asleep,” refers to Christian believers who have died, trusting in Jesus.
Footnote: 1Th 4:15	“According to the Lord’s own word,” means the doctrine mentioned here is not recorded in the gospels and was either a direct revelation to Paul or something that Jesus said which was passed along by Christians by word of mouth. “We who are still alive,” refers to those believers who will be alive when Christ returns. The “we” does not necessarily mean that Paul thought that he would be alive then. He often identifies himself with those to whom he wrote. Elsewhere he says that God will raise “us” at that time.
1Co 6:12; 2Co 4:14	
Footnote: 1Th 4:16 Dan 10:13; Jude 9 Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary	The only archangel who was named in the Bible is Michael. In Scripture, (Lk 1:19, 26), Gabriel is simply called an angel. Then Paul writes these very important words: “the dead in Christ will rise first,” before the ascension of believers mentioned in the next verse. According to the dictionary, in the Hebrew tradition, there were four archangels, and in the Apocryphal Books, in the Book of Enoch, there are seven archangels who stand before God. I have not found the names of all these beings. They are mentioned here only as an interesting addenda. There is much in man-made tradition, in differing religions that is “interesting.” The question is, “is it true?”
Funk & Wagnall, 1913, Dictionary	The word <i>rapture</i> is originally from the Latin Vulgate, meaning, “rendering.” I did some research and found that the actual word, <i>rapture</i> comes from the Latin, <i>raptio</i> , meaning to snatch. And the word, <i>rend</i> comes from the Latin word, <i>red</i> , meaning, <i>back</i> and the Latin word, <i>do</i> which means, to give; therefore, <i>rend</i> in this context means to give back or

<p>Footnote: 1Th 4:17-18</p> <p>Jn 14:3; Col 3:4</p>	<p>restore. The more complicated explanation is to make or change to a specified character by some modifying action or influence, that is, to cause to be— or to cause to give back. This is all very interesting but the meaning of the word rapture, as we know it and use it from Scripture, means to be bodily carried away, transported! And what a wonderful concept and reality that is!</p> <p>This is the only place where “rapture” is clearly referred to in the NT. Some hold that this will be secret, but Paul seems to be describing something open and public with loud voices and a trumpet blast...”To meet the Lord in the air” is the chief hope of the believer. The primary purpose of verses 13-18 is not to give a chronology of future events, though that is involved, but to urge mutual encouragement as shown in these verses.</p>
<p>Personal Comment:</p> <p>1 THESSALONIANS 5 : 1 – 3</p>	<p>I do not want to get into one of the many complicated discussions as to how and when this rapture and second coming of Christ will occur. According to what is indicated above, the dead will begin the rapture, and then those believers who are living will follow, immediately, so that it may be one continuous “rising.” The mechanics of how the Lord God will accomplish all this are not what is important. The fact that the Lord God will accomplish it...that is of the greatest importance!</p> <p>Now brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, “Peace and safety,” destruction will come suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.</p>
<p>Footnote: 1Th 5:1-3</p> <p>See Amos 5:18</p> <p>Eph 4:30; 2Pe 3:12; Php 1:6;Jn 6:39; Jude 6; 2Rh 1:10</p>	<p>There have always been some Christians who try to fix the date of our Lord’s return, but apparently the Thessalonians were not among them. The expression, “the day of the Lord,” goes back to the book of Amos in the OT, where it is described as the time when God will show Himself victor over the world, vindicating His claims to be the Lord over all the earth, and when God will intervene with judgment and/or blessing. In the NT the thought of judgment continues, but it is also called the “day of redemption;” or “the day of God,” or “the day of Christ” and “the last day,” or “the great day,” or simply, “the day.” It is the consummation of all things. There will be some preliminary signs, but the coming will be as unexpected as that of “a thief in the night.”</p>
<p>Personal Comment:</p> <p>Ac 1:6-7</p>	<p>In the first chapter of Acts, written by Luke, who was a doctor, writer and friend of Paul, we read about what concerned the apostles, prior to when Jesus was taken up to heaven. They asked Jesus, “Lord, are You at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” Then Jesus answered them, “It is not for you to know the times and dates the Father has set by His own authority.” At different times in the past, the Israelites were dominated by others such as the Assyrians and Babylonians. The apostles, like their fellow countryman, were looking for the deliverance of Israel from Roman domination.</p> <p>It is interesting that the Israelites, including the apostles, didn’t seem to connect that if they had remained faithful to God Almighty as their King, there never would have been domination or oppression from any other nation. The reason that the Jews were in the predicament of the current domination by Rome, was their own idolatry, sin and arrogance. Jews had come to believe they were “chosen” because they were special. They didn’t realize that God chose them and then blessed them and then they were “special” because He blessed them. Prior to His blessing the Jews were just another nomadic tribe. God could have chosen any group of people, Semitic or otherwise, but for</p>

<p>The Dictionary of the Bible</p> <p>Gen 3:8; 17:7; Ex 6:7;Lev 26:12; Dt 26:18;Jer 7:23;Zec 13:9; 2Co 6:16</p> <p>Ex 32:9</p> <p>Lev 26:1-13,14- 39,40, 42</p> <p>Luke 2</p> <p>Zec 12:10;Rev 1:7</p> <p>Mt 24:8</p>	<p>His purposes, He chose them!</p> <p>The name, "Semitic" has been applied to the languages and peoples of the Near East. Included in this very large group, under "Hamitic" peoples (Ham, the son of Noah), those who ethnically and linguistically are Semitic. The Hebrews were of the Northwest Semitic group. It is not known why God chose them. But prior to God's choosing, they were just a typical group of nomadic people of that culture. It was after God chose them and blessed them—because He chose them—that they became special. Somehow, in their now-blessed-specialness, they became arrogant, forgetting they were no different from the people around them, except that they were now blessed of God and that made them chosen and special. They were His people and He was their God. But..."they are a stiff-necked people." God knew what kind of people they were, like the rest of us...they were sinners! If the Jews would remain obedient and faithful to God, He would continue to bless them and protect them. If they did not, God would punish them and they would be scattered throughout the world. But if they were to "confess their sins and the sins of their fathers..." God said, "I will remember My covenant."</p> <p>So Jesus is born unto them and the greater majority of the Jews reject Him. The majority of the Jews to this day does not accept and believe in Jesus Christ as their Messiah! One day the number of Jews whom God has chosen will believe in His Son, Jesus the Messiah. That is in the future. And the way things look on the TV News today, Matthew 24:4-14 is happening before our eyes. The Jewish Rabbis who studied the Scriptures spoke of "birth pains," that is, sufferings, that would precede the second coming of the Messiah.</p>
<p>Comment continues:</p> <p>Mt 25:41; Rev 19:20; 20:14</p> <p>Gen 3:4-6, 14-24; Eph 2:2</p> <p>Ro 5:1-6; Eph 2:13-18; Php 4:7; Col 3:15-17</p> <p>1 THESSALONIANS 5 : 4 – 11</p> <p>v.8</p> <p>v.10</p> <p>v.11</p>	<p>We, in our culture and in our times, talk about and pray for peace, world peace. If we were to absorb the words of the Bible on the subject, we would realize world peace cannot happen until Messiah comes again and takes the devil from being in power on earth and casts him into the eternal lake of fire. Then there will be peace on earth. In Genesis, we (as a race of humans) first listened to the devil instead of God, and the devil came into power on earth...because human beings paid more attention to the deception of the devil than to the truth of God.</p> <p>Now, however, pray rather for peace to come into our hearts; that the Lord's peace will be our inner life and how we live it; that we will exhibit His peace within us to others so that they will see the effects of true peace in a world that does not understand the meaning of the word!</p> <p>But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be self controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with Him. Therefore encourage one another; and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.</p> <p>Believers no longer live in darkness, nor are they of darkness. In the Semitic languages,</p>

<p>Footnote: 1Th 5:4-11</p> <p>(v.6)</p> <p>See Mk 13:32-33</p> <p>(v.8)</p> <p>(v.10)</p> <p>American Heritage Dictionary (v.11)</p> <p>Personal Comment: See Mk 3:17; 10:37</p> <p>Acts 2:4; 1Th 5:5</p> <p>See Lk 24:13-35</p>	<p>such as Hebrew, to be “a son of” a quality meant to be characterized by that quality. Christians do not simply live in the light; they are characterized by the light. When Paul refers to those who are “asleep,” he means unbelievers who are spiritually insensitive, or spiritually “asleep,” but this kind of sleep is not for “sons of the light.” Believers are to “be alert,” which means, literally, Christians are to be self-controlled and to “watch,” which is in keeping with the emphasis Paul places upon the second coming of Christ. A reference to the light of “the day,” is like that light which characterizes believers. Perhaps it also refers to the “day of the Lord.” Essentially, Paul is telling Christians that whether we live or die, we are to be Christ’s—we are to have entered into a relationship with Jesus Christ that nothing can destroy. The verb, “build up,” basically applies to the building of houses, but Paul frequently used the concept to edify Christians. The term, “edify,” means to instruct or to enlighten so as to encourage intellectual, moral or spiritual growth and improvement.</p> <p>The sons of Zebedee, James and John (apostles of Christ), were given the nickname, “sons of thunder” by Jesus. It was a description of their disposition, their temperament, personality, character and nature. Later, typically, they were seeking a position of prestige and power with the Lord. This gives us an idea of what Jesus meant when He called them, sons of thunder! And at that point, prior to the crucifixion, resurrection and the receiving of the indwelling Holy Spirit, these two apostles, chosen by Christ, had not yet become spiritually alert and awake, even though they were with Jesus daily. They were still spiritually carnal and asleep! It wasn’t until after Christ died on the cross, after His resurrection and after they received the Holy Spirit, that they were truly “sons of light.”</p> <p>In the evening of the day of Christ’s resurrection, two of His disciples met (the resurrected) Jesus on the way to the village of Emmaus, a small town, several miles from Jerusalem. Something kept them from recognizing that this man was Jesus. But later, at supper, Jesus opened their eyes and their hearts were brimming with the light of Christ within them. Then, they were burning with the joy of comprehension! Christian believers do not simply live in “the light of the Lord,” they are characterized by it because it is burning within them.</p> <p>Christians may show this “light” in a number of ways. I had been recently baptized and consequently became a member of Calvary Bible church (in Midway, AR). I was so grateful for the encouraging words from a woman of that church, who showed me so much about living life as a Christian woman. I had asked her how and why she encouraged people with her kind words, the tone of her voice and the love shining from her eyes. She said that she had lived a hard life and at one point in her spiritual growth, someone had given her the words of encouragement she needed desperately to hear. She decided to do the same for others, and as she did so, she felt the weight of her past abuse and difficulties being replaced by the light of the Spirit. It was then that she experienced the beauty of God’s promised joy and peace. (This woman who taught me so much wisdom is now at home with the Lord in heaven.)</p> <p>It is at the moment, when we feel in our heart that wonderful absence of the weight of our past, that we feel buoyant with joy and peace. It is the life-giving, indwelling Spirit of God in us and we are fairly bursting with the desire to share this gift with others. If we do not feel this way, I question, “how far along in spiritual growth are we?” Always strive to learn why your heart is heavy. Read the Bible regularly and study it prayerfully, asking the Holy Spirit to open your heart to receive the healing you need.</p>
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<p>Lk 12:31</p>	<p>A really good way to begin your daily study is to pray for two things in particular: 1. Ask God to help you forgive those who have hurt you; and 2. Ask the Lord to help you take as medicine for your spirit the words you read in Scripture. And always, seek to know the Lord. For when you have a steady diet of time, actively spent with the Lord by studying, digesting and utilizing His word, He will change you! The Lord will take the mess you were and heal you and bring you to become the person He designed you to be!</p>
<p>1 THESSALONIANS 5 : 12 – 22</p> <p>v.15</p> <p>v.19</p> <p>Footnote: 1Th 5: 12-13</p>	<p>Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other. And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone. Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always try to be kind to each other and to every one else. Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus. Do not put out the Spirit’s fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil.</p> <p>Not much is known about the organization and leadership of the church at this period, but the reference here is probably to elders. Paul cautions the brothers and sisters to treat those who are in leadership positions, not merely because of personal attachment to them or respect for their high position, but in appreciation for their work.</p>
<p>Personal Comment:</p>	<p>It occurs to me, that at this early time period in the fellowship of Christians, there were no designated priests or bishops, or any real hierarchy of successive ranks of organized clergy. There were apostles, disciples, elders and fellowship—brothers and sisters. However, man’s desire to “improve upon God’s design,” I believe, is what brought about organized religion. This may be a good thing as long as the members realize that Christ is the head of His church. In organized religions, that basic command sometimes seems to get lost.</p>
<p>Footnote: 1Th 5: 14-15</p>	<p>Paul does not want anyone to be idle, or to be loafers! It seems that some Thessalonians were so sure that the second coming of Christ was about to occur, that they had given up their jobs in order to prepare for it. But Paul says that they should work and continue to support themselves and usual. He also tells them that the “timid” and the “weak” are to be helped, not rejected by the strong! And, certainly, retaliation is never a Christian option! Christian believers are called to forgive—as they have been forgiven!</p>
<p>Personal Comment:</p> <p>See Php 4:2-3</p> <p>Jas 5:20; Isa 42:3</p>	<p>This always seems like a given—that Christians are to forgive and get along with each other, especially at church! Yet, so often that is the very arena where seething anger and festering bitterness ripple through a congregation like a contagious disease. I have seen it and have heard about it from others who have experienced it. And very often the circumstance which perpetrates such anger is virtually of little or no consequence—it is frequently a trifling matter. Also, there may be a “pecking order” and cliques in some churches and I wonder, why? Of course, it is that basic given of our sin nature that just doesn’t want to be quiet! I have walked away from churches that have that particular character pervading their fellowship like a bad smell! I suppose I should have stayed to help them see the “error of their ways,” but I was a “bruised reed” and feared I would be crushed in those power churches which were bent on tradition and control. In my journeys, when I found a church that welcomed me in Christian (agape) love, the moment I</p>

	<p>first came in the door, I knew that was where I wanted to be. It felt like what a fellowship should be. I knew I had found a home in that church.</p>
<p>Footnote: 1Th 5: 16-22 (vv. 17-18)</p>	<p>People are naturally happy on some occasions, but the Christian's joy is not dependent on circumstances. It comes from what Christ has done and it is constant. Christian believers are differentiated from the natural man because of what God has done in the rebirth of their spirits. They are continually thankful, prayerful and joyful—or they should be—in whatever circumstances life may bring.</p>
<p>(vv.19-20)</p>	<p>In the Holy “Spirit’s fire,” there is a warmth, a glow about the Spirit’s presence that makes Paul’s language here appropriate. The kind of conduct Paul is opposing may include loafing, immorality and other sins that he has already denounced. On the other hand, he may be warning against a mechanical attitude toward worship which may discourage the expression of the gifts of the Spirit in the local assembly. By the gift of prophecy Paul indicates here, is that it is a communication of the mind of God imparted to a believer by the Holy Spirit. It may be a prediction or an indication of the will of God in a given situation. In a sense, it is a gift of explaining the meaning of and application of Scripture in daily life.</p>
<p>See 1Co 12:10</p>	
<p>(v.21)</p>	<p>We are to test everything by referring to Scripture. The approval of prophecy (v.20) does not mean that anyone who claims to speak in the name of the Lord is to be accepted without question. Paul does not say what specific tests are to be applied, but it is clear that every teaching must be in accordance to and in agreement with the gospel.</p>
<p>Personal comment:</p>	<p>Remember, in the early years of the church, there was no printed Bible as we know it. Letters and other documents were written on papyrus or sometimes vellum (stretched, cured and dried calf or lamb skin), and even on thin slabs of wood, (like shingles, covered with gesso, a plaster-like substance, smooth and white) were rare and were copied and recopied and circulated among the churches. The churches then, were small groups of believers who met in each other’s homes, or in caves, catacombs, etc., places hidden from the civil authorities. We must stop to consider the freedom and convenience with which we Christians in this time, in this country are able to exhibit our faith. And even now, those freedoms are again being threatened. The devil is alive and well and in the world. This epistle speaks longingly of the second coming of Christ; after which there will be peace on earth and only then!</p>
<p>1 THESSALONIANS 5 : 23 -28</p>	<p>May God Himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The One who calls you is faithful and He will do it. Brothers, pray for us. Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss. I charge you before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.</p>
<p>Footnote: 1Th 5:23-28</p>	
<p>(v.24)</p>	<p>Verse 23 begins a typical prayer and “the God of peace” is a fitting reference to God in view of what Paul had written in verses 12-15. But Paul often refers to God in this way near the end of his letters. When Paul uses the terms, “your whole spirit, soul and body,” he is emphasizing the whole person, not attempting to differentiate the parts. Paul’s confidence rests in the nature of God, who can be relied upon to complete what He begins. Paul sent a warm greeting to everyone, even those he had corrected. A kiss was a normal greeting of that day, and still is in some cultures, and is similar to our modern handshake. Paul writes, “I charge you...to have this letter read...” which, surprisingly,</p>
<p>(v.26)</p>	
<p>(v.27)</p>	

<p>(v.28)</p> <p>Personal Comment:</p>	<p>may seem like strong language, but what he means is "I put you to oath!" This, too, is strong language but he clearly wanted every member of the church to read or hear his message and to know his concern and advice for them. Paul always ended his letters with a benediction of grace for his readers, sometimes adding others blessings as well.</p> <p>Recently, our church celebrated Pastor Appreciation month, for which I wrote the following poem, entitled, "This Man."</p> <p style="text-align: center;">THIS MAN</p> <p style="text-align: center;">At times he teaches Christian values Wrapped in humanly comic pages Of laughter, games and the joy of faith. He is an intercessor in a happy hat Who plays with the offspring of his flock.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">This man also displays a serious nature And feels our deepest pain and distress, So keenly, that he knows simple words Do not reach into the gap formed By the chasm of our own inadequacy.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">He comes, speaking faith and hope, Quenching our thirst while the Lord heals, For he is heard by our gracious God. In humble assistance, he is the support, Bolstering the lonely need of our singleness.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Sometimes, his words from the pulpit, Are direct, calling us to account. In them our weaknesses are mirrored, Life's tragedies and misfortunes laid bare, As he cradles us gently to the foot of the cross.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Where he, a mere man, stands with us, Accompanying our embrace of repentance. In the stillness of our huddled group Together we wait in patient, trusting belief, Praying for answers no vocabulary can fathom.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">He is our brother, son, dad, confessor; Our available, understanding yokefellow Who brings us his personal spiritual peace, To teach, preach and encourage our hearts. This man is Pastor Steve and we love him.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">By Mary Duchow</p>
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Comment continues:

I thought this epistle would be a relatively short study. Not so! It is packed with information, spiritual knowledge and wisdom. It shows us how to open our hearts to spiritual healing and gives directions on how to conduct our Christian lives.

Dear Heavenly Father, it is with heart-felt thanks that we receive the blessing of Your Word. What a beautiful and miraculous book is the Bible. Every time we read it to gain wisdom, we are given new understanding, which fills us with wonder and joy. It is like our life's journey brings us up the mountain of living. At periodic stops along the way, we turn and look back into the Bible and we read words we had read before, often many times before. But each time we are given new meaning or new application. This seems so amazing to us, yet it is because as we live and mature, we look back into the same words yet we see them and comprehend them from the changing condition of our "now!" God, all of our "now" experiences are already known by You! It is truly wonderful for us to view in Your word what you already know about us! Thank You, Lord, for this "new" understanding, which fills us to overflowing with Your love! In the name of Jesus. Amen.

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