

COMMENTARY ON SAINT PAUL'S FIRST LETTER TO THE THESSALONIANS

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CONTENTS

PROLOGUE	CHAPTER 3
	3-1: 1 Thes 3:1-
CHAPTER 1	13
1-1: 1 Thes 1:1-	CHAPTER 4
10	4-1: 1 Thes 4:1-
CHAPTER 2	11
2-1: 1 Thes 2:1-	4-2: 1 Thes
12	4:12-17
2-2: 1 Thes	CHAPTER 5
2:13-20	5-1: 1 Thes 5:1-
	13
	5-2: 1 Thes
	5:14-28

PROLOGUE

The waters increased, and bore up the ark and it rose above the earth (Gen. 7:17).

These words are appropriate to the contents of this letter. The Church is symbolized by the *ark*, as is stated in 1 Peter 3, for as in the ark a few souls were saved, the others perishing, so also in the Church a few, that is, only the elect, will be saved.

The "waters" signify tribulations. First, because flooding waters strike like

tribulations: "And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house" (Matt. 7:25). Yet the Church is not shaken by the force of the floods; so Matthew adds, "but it did not fall.

Secondly, because water extinguishes fire: "Water extinguishes a blazing fire" (Sir. 3:30). Similarly, tribulations diminish the force of desires so that men do not follow them at will; but they do not diminish the true charity of the Church: "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it" (Cant. 8:7).

Thirdly, because waters inundate by flooding: "Water closed over my head" (Lam. 3:54). Yet the Church is not overcome by them: "The waters closed in over me, the deep was round about me; weeds were wrapped about my head" (Jon. 2:6). And just before this, "Yet would I again look upon your holy temple."

Therefore, the Church is not destroyed but uplifted: first, by lifting the mind to God, as is clear from Gregory: "The evil things which bear down upon us here compel us to go to God." "And in their distress they seek me" (Ho. 6: 1).

Secondly, the Church is raised up through spiritual consolation: "When the cares of my heart are many, thy consolations cheer my soul (Ps. 94-19); "For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too" (2 Cor. 1:5). Thirdly, the Church is upraised by increasing the number of the faithful; for God has spread the Church in time of persecution: "But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and the more they spread abroad" (Ex. 1: 12).

It seems then that these words are appropriate to this letter because the Thessalonians stood firm after suffering many tribulations. Let us, therefore, look at the text.

1-1

1 Paul, Silvanus and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace. 2 We give thanks to God always for you all, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, 3 remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. 4 For we know, brethren beloved by God, that he has chosen you; 5 for our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. 6 And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with joy inspired by the Holy Spirit; 7 so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. 8 For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that

we need not say anything. 9 For they themselves report concerning us what a welcome we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God, 10 and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

The Apostle wishes to strengthen the Church in the face of tribulations. First, in the face of present tribulations, and Paul does this in the first letter to the Thessalonians. Secondly, Paul warns against tribulations to come in the time of the Antichrist, and he does this in the second letter to the Thessalonians.

The first letter is divided into the greeting and the message, which begins at the words, *we give thanks to God always for you all*. First, Paul mentions the people who send the greeting; secondly, the Church which is greeted; thirdly, his hope for blessings. It should be noted that since we are all equal if we do not fail in our duties, the Apostle, in writing to these good people, does not mention his title, but supplies only his humble name which is *Paul*. He also adds the names of two persons who preached to them with him: *Silvanus*, who is *Sylas*, and *Timothy*, whom he circumcised, as is mentioned in Acts 16.

Paul greets the Church, which is the assembly of believers, *in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*, that is, in the faith of the Trinity and of the divinity and humanity of Christ, because our beatitude will consist in knowing them. He mentions only the person of the Father and the incarnate Son, in which two is understood the Holy Spirit who is the bond between the Father and the Son.

The blessings he asks are *grace*, which is the source of all good things: "But by the grace of God I am what I am" (I Cor. 15: 10); and *peace*, which is our end: for there is peace when desire is totally at rest.

Then when Paul says, *we give thanks*, he begins the letter's message: first, he commends them for their past perseverance; secondly, he urges them to act well even in the future (4:1). In addition, Paul first gives thanks in general for their blessings; secondly, he remarks upon their blessings in particular matters (1:4). In treating the first point he does two things. First, he offers thanksgiving; secondly, he indicates the reason for the thanksgiving (1:3). Again, Paul first gives thanks for them; secondly, Paul prays for them (1:26).

In treating the first point, Paul mentions three things that ought to be present in thanksgiving. First, thanksgiving should be directed to God: *we give thanks to God*. "He bestows favor and honor" (Ps. 84:11). "Every good endowment and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights" (Jas. 1: 17). Thanksgiving should be unceasing; so Paul says, *always*. It should also be universal, so Paul says, *for you all*; and later Paul adds, *give thanks in all circumstances* (5:18).

Then he prays for them saying: *constantly mentioning you in our prayers*; as if saying: Whenever I pray I am mindful of you: "Without ceasing I mention you always in my prayers" (Rom. 1: 9).

Then when he says, *remembering... your work of faith*, Paul mentions the blessings for which he offers thanks, that is, faith, hope, and charity: "So faith, hope, love abide, these three" (1 Cor. 13:13). First, he mentions faith because it is an essential condition for obtaining the things to be hoped for, a means of revelation not based on appearances: "For whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him" (Heb. 11:6). This, however, is not sufficient unless the person practices good works and makes an effort; so Paul says, *your work of faith and labor*. "Faith apart from works is dead" (Jas. 2:26). The person who gives up while laboring for Christ is worth nothing: "They believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away" (Lk. 8:13). Paul uses the words, *work* and *labor*, implying that he is mindful of their active and struggling faith.

Paul also gives thanks for the love in which they abounded. Later (4:9), he says: *but concerning love of the brethren you have no need to have any one write to you*.

Then he gives thanks for their *hope*, which enables them to endure sufferings patiently: "Rejoice in your hope, be patient in tribulation" (Rom. 12:12). In addition, Paul gives thanks for the *steadfastness* of their hope: "You have heard of the steadfastness of Job" (Jas. 5:11). Finally, Paul gives thanks for *hope in our Lord*, that is, the hope we have in Christ, or the hope Christ gave to us: "We have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Pet. 1:3). This hope is, *before our God*, not before the eyes of men; "Beware of practicing your piety before men in order to be seen by them" (Matt. 6:1). "We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul" (Heb. 6:19). For hope in the old dispensation did not lead to God.

Then when Paul says, *For we know, brethren beloved by God, that he has chosen you*, he recalls their blessings in particular matters. First, he congratulates them for having received the gospel devoutly and willingly in spite of tribulations; secondly, Paul congratulates them because they did not fan away from the gospel in time of trial (2:1). Again, the first part is divided into two. First, Paul points out the kind of preaching that had been given to them; secondly, he points out how this preaching was received by them (1:6). In treating the first point Paul does three things. First, he tells what he knew about them; secondly, he indicates the manner of his preaching (1:5); thirdly, he remarks upon what they knew about the Apostle (1:5).

So Paul says, *brethren, beloved by God*, not only generally, insofar as God gives existence to all of nature, but specifically, insofar as you are each called to an

eternal reward: "Yet I have loved Jacob" (Mal. 1:3). "All those consecrated to him were in his hand" (Deut. 33:3). *He has chosen you*, as if implying: I am certain that you are among the elect, although you did not merit this election; rather you are freely chosen by God. And I know this because God granted me abundant evidence of this in preaching, that is, that those to whom I preach are chosen by God, for God gives them the grace to listen profitably to the word preached to them; or else, God gives me the grace to preach rewardingly to them.

What is said in Ezekiel (3:26) would seem to contradict this: "And I will make your tongue cleave to the roof of your mouth, so that you shall be dumb. To counter this Paul first calls to mind how powerfully he preached to them; secondly, he calls upon their own witness with the words: you *know*... Powerfully, because he came not in loftiness of speech, *but in power*: "And my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and power" (1 Cor. 2:4). "For the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power" (1 Cor. 4:20). Now this may have reference either to the authentication of his preaching or to the manner of his preaching. If it is the first alternative, then Paul's preaching to them was authenticated not by arguments but by the power of signs, and so it is said in Mark (16:20): "The Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by the signs that attended it"; and by the giving of the Holy Spirit; so Paul says, *and in the Holy Spirit*. "While Peter was still saying this, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word" (Ac. 10:44). "While God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit" (Heb. 2:4). *And with full conviction*. Paul adds this so that they would not believe that they received less than the Jews, indicating that the Holy Spirit does not discriminate among persons; but that the preaching was in the same fulness among them as among the Jews: "And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit" (Ac. 2:4).

But if it is the second alternative, then *in power* seems to mean "showing you a virtuous life." "Jesus began to do and teach" (Ac. 1:1). *And in the Holy Spirit* who brings things to mind; "For it is not you who speak but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you" (Matt. 10:20). *With full conviction*, because I have instructed you in everything necessary for the faith. And he appeals to their testimony on this point when he says: *You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake*, that is, what kind of gifts and powers we have exhibited among you: "I hope it is known also to your conscience" (2 Cor. 5:11).

Then when he says, *and you became imitators of us*, he shows how creditably they received his preaching and did not fall away in time of trial. First, Paul shows their excellence in that they have imitated others; secondly, because they made themselves an example to others (1:7). In treating the first point Paul does two things. First, he shows whom they have imitated; secondly, he shows in what things they have imitated them (1:6).

In treating the first point, Paul says that they have imitated the ones they should, namely, their prelates; so he says: You *became imitators of us*, "Brethren, join in imitating me" (Phil. 3:17); that is, you imitated me not in my human failings but in those points in which I have imitated Christ by patience in the midst of suffering: "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Matt. 16:24). "Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps" (1 Pet. 2:21). Therefore, Paul says, *in much affliction, with joy*, that is, although a considerable amount of tribulation threatened you because of the gospel, nevertheless you have accepted that with joy: "Count it all joy, my brethren, when you meet various trials, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness" (Jas. 1:2). "Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name of Jesus" (Ac. 5:41). *With joy*, Paul says, *inspired by the Holy Spirit* who is the love of God, and who imbues joy in those who suffer for Christ because they love Him: "If a man offered for love all the wealth of his house, it would be utterly scorned" (Cant. 8:7).

And you are our imitators to such an extent that you can be imitated by others; therefore he says: *so that you become an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia*. In making this point, Paul does three things. First, he shows that they can be imitated; secondly, he shows how their fame has spread (1:8); thirdly, Paul shows how they were praised by all peoples (1:9).

So Paul says: you have imitated us so perfectly that you *became an example*, that is, an example of life not only in your own surroundings, but in other places as well: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16). You became an example to all believers to whom your faith has become known. Your goodness was added to this, *for the word of the Lord sounded forth from you*, that is, the Lord has been preached; in other words, your fame was diffused not only in Macedonia and Achaia, who are your neighbors, *but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere*, that is, a faith which God accepts, which joins you to God, and which is edifying everywhere: "Your faith is proclaimed in all the world" (Rom. 1:8). And proof exists for all this, *so that we need not say anything*. It is the practice of a good preacher to use as an example the blessings coming to others: "Your zeal has stirred up most of them" (2 Cor. 9:2).

Then when Paul says: *for they themselves report concerning us*, he remarks on the praise which they had received from others, because, *they themselves report concerning us what a welcome we had among you*. A similar point is made in Prov. (31:31): "Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her works praise her in the gates." Those who commend you praise my preaching and your conversion. *They themselves report concerning us what a welcome we had among you*, since our entry was visited with great difficulty and genuine tribulations; but they also praise your conversion.

Finally, Paul makes known how, from whom, and to what they have been converted. In regard to the first point Paul says: and *how you turned to God*, that is, how readily and completely. "Return to me with all your heart" (Joel 2:12). "Do not delay to turn to the Lord, nor postpone it from day to day (Sir. 5:7). In regard to the second point, Paul says, *from idols*, as is mentioned in 1 Cor. (12:2): "You know that when you were heathens, you were led astray to dumb idols." In regard to the third point he says, *to serve a living and true God* by the practice of adoration, not of creatures, but of God, which is in contrast with what is stated in Romans (1:25): "They worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever." And Paul says, *living*, in order to exclude the cult of idolatry, because the idolators worshipped certain dead people whose souls they regarded as deified, such as Romulus and Hercules. And so Paul insists on *living*. "As I live forever" (Deut. 32:40). Also, since the Platonists considered some separate substances to be gods by participation, he says *true*, meaning, not by participation in the divine nature.

Since those who serve Him deserve a reward, and because this is the case with the Thessalonians, it remains for them to expect a reward; so Paul says to them, *to wait for his Son*, that is, God, descending *from heaven*. "Be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the marriage feast" (Lk. 12:36). "Blessed are all those who wait for him" (Is. 30:18). These, however, are the men who girded their loins. We, however, are waiting for two things: first, for the resurrection, in order that we may clearly conform to Christ; hence Paul says: *whom he raised from the dead*. "He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies" (Rom. 8: 11). "Who will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body" (Phil. 3:21). Secondly, we are waiting to be freed from the punishment which awaits the guilty. For we shall be freed by Christ from sin, the cause of punishment. So Paul says: *Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come*. "Hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb" (Rev. 6:16). No one can free us from this wrath but Christ: "Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" (Matt. 3:7).

2-1

1 For you yourselves know, brethren, that our visit to you was not in vain; 2 but though we had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we had courage in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the face of great opposition. 3 For our appeal does not spring from error or uncleanness, nor is it made with guile; 4 but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please men, but to please God who tests our hearts. 5 For we never used either words of flattery, as you know, or a cloak for greed, as God is witness; 6 nor did we seek glory from men, whether from you or from others,

though we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. 7 But we were gentle among you, like a nurse taking care of her children. 8 So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us. 9 For you remember our labor and toil, brethren; we worked night and day, that we might not burden any of you, while we preached to you the gospel of God. 10 You are witnesses, and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our behavior to you believers; 11 for you know how, like a father with his children, we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you 12 to lead a life worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.

Before, Paul commended the Thessalonians for having received God's word amid tribulations; now he praises them because they did not fall away as a result of difficulties; in mentioning this he does three things. First, he recalls their troubles; secondly, Paul points out the kind of remedy he applied to them (3:1), thirdly, the reason for the praise is given (3:8).

Paul said before that everybody talks about them and about the role of the Apostle in their conversion. So Paul first treats of his visit; secondly, of their conversion (3:13). In treating the first point Paul does three things. First, he recalls the perseverance which he had maintained before he came to them; secondly, he recalls the sound character of the doctrine with which he converted them (2:3); thirdly, he recalls the genuine quality of his dialogue with the converts (2: 10). Again, Paul divides the first point into two parts. First, he mentions the hardships which he had endured before he came to them; secondly, how he did not lose his confidence as a result of these hardships (2:2).

He remarks then: I say that other believers are telling of our visit to you, which you are familiar with, for it *was not in vain*, in the sense of not worry-free, but rather arduous in the face of many hardships. Or perhaps, *not in vain*, in the sense of not inconsequential but rather rewarding: "The earth was without form and void" (Gen. 1:2). Or *not in vain*, meaning not transitory but rather enduring. I did not run in vain or labor in vain" (Phil. 2:16).

But we had already suffered bodily trials: "Good sense makes a man slow to anger" (Prov. 19:11): "Vigorous and sturdy shall they be, declaring how just is the Lord" (Ps. 92:15). In addition to this, Paul suffered spiritual trials because of injuries in Philippi, where he endured insults because of the cure of the possessed woman. This city was in Macedonia. In spite of all this his confidence in his preaching was not diminished: "God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid" (Is. 12:2); rather it proved itself in preaching *to you the gospel of God in*

the face of great opposition for your conversion: "He who presides, gives aid with zeal, with carefulness" (Rom. 12:8). "And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure upon me of my anxiety for all the churches" (2 Cor. 11:28).

Then when he says: *for our appeal does not spring from error*, he shows the sound character of his preaching; and in showing this, Paul does two things. First, he exhibits the sound character of his doctrine; secondly, he explains certain matters he had remarked upon (2:4). In treating the first point, Paul does two things. First, he rules out the possibility of error in the doctrine; secondly, he imputes integrity to his doctrine (2:4).

A doctrine, however, may become corrupt either because of the matter taught or because of the teacher's intention. In relation to the first point, a doctrine may be corrupted in two ways: through error, for example, to teach that salvation is through Christ according to the Law: "Evil men and imposters will go on from bad to worse, deceivers and deceived" (2 Tim. 3:13). So Paul remarks, *our appeal does not spring*, like that of some, *from error*. Or the corruption may occur through adulteration, as is the case with those saying that one should indulge in pleasures. This teaching is derived from a certain Nicolaus who permitted promiscuous marriages and even gave his wife to others. So Paul adds, *or uncleanness*: "But I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and beguiling my servants to practice immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols" (Rev. 2:20). "Is there any wrong on my tongue?" (Job 6:30).

Furthermore, his preaching is not *with guile* as it is with some who, though speaking the truth, nevertheless have a false intention; for they do not will the development of their listeners nor the honor of God, but they desire their own honor; and against this Paul says: *nor with guile*. "Their tongue is a deadly arrow; it speaks deceitfully" (Jer. 9:8).

Thus his preaching is not tainted, but rather sound. But something is sound because it serves its nature. As a result, preaching is sound when someone teaches in that manner in which Christ taught; and so Paul says, *but just as we have been approved*, that is, in that manner and with that intention with which God chose and approved us for the preaching of the gospel, so *we speak*. "I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised" (Gal. 2:7). "For he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel" (Ac. 9:15).

Then when Paul says, *not to please men*, he shows that his preaching is not meant to be deceptive. First, by ruling out the manner in which it might appear to be misleading; secondly, by making this point evident through a sign (2:5); thirdly, he shows the same thing by reason of a causal consideration (2:5b).

In elaborating the first point Paul says: My preaching is not of such a nature that it is ultimately pleasing to men. [God has scattered the bones of those who please men" (Ps. 52:6).] "If I were still pleasing men, I should not be a servant of Christ" (Gal. 1:10). Sometimes, however, Paul and his companions sought to please men for the sake of God's glory, so that their preaching might be more fruitful, as is remarked in 1 Cor. (10:33): "Just as I try to please all men in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved." *But to please God who tests our hearts*: "All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes" (Prov. 16:2). A sign of this, however, is that we did not employ flattery, that is, only speaking of pleasant things to them. "Do not deceive with your lips" (Prov. 24:28). "Prophecy not to us what is right; speak to us smooth things, prophesy illusions" (Is. 30:10).

And Paul makes the same point with a causal analysis. For someone wishes to please men for two reasons, that is, for the sake of advantages, or for the sake of glory; however, he excludes these from consideration here. He rules out the first possibility by saying: *for we never used words of flattery*: we avoided not only any flattery, but every occasion of *greed* as well: "There is great gain in godliness with contentment" (1 Tim. 6:6). "Every one is greedy for unjust gain" (Jer. 6:13). Then he rules out the other possibility when he says, *nor did we seek glory from men*, whether from you or from others, by reason of our teaching; although we might have been pampered, accepted favors and even been a burden to the Thessalonians, for they owed him attention and support. Thus Paul says, *though we might have made demands as apostles of Christ*. Paul terms it a demand because those preaching heretically to them sought to acquire favors from them beyond measure: "It is you who have devoured the vineyard, the spoil of the poor is in your houses" (Is. 3:14).

Then when Paul says, *but we were gentle [as children] among you*, he makes two points: first, that he is not desirous of human glory; secondly, that he does not wish to appear avaricious (2:9). In handling the first point Paul does two things. First, he gives evidence of his humility; secondly, he shows his concern by a simile (2:7).

Paul makes the first point by saying that *we were as children*, that is, humble. "If they make you master of the feast, do not exalt yourself; be among them as one of them" (Sir. 32:1). Then he employs the simile saying, *like a nurse taking care of her children*, who bends down to an infant and speaks to the stammering child, so that the child may learn to speak; the nurse even makes use of gestures: "I have become all things to all men" (1 Cor. 9:22); "As babes in Christ, I fed you with milk, not solid food" (1 Cor. 3:1). So, *being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves*. "The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (Jn. 10: 11). *Because you had become very dear to us*. "I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls" (2 Cor. 12:15).

Then when Paul says: *for you remember our labor and toil, brethren*, he proceeds in accordance with what he had said above, that is: *we never used... a cloak for greed*, for we have asked nothing of you, but an effort, *for you remember our labor and toil*. And some do indeed labor, but out of comfort seeking; but we do not labor in that manner, but rather with honest hard work. So Paul comments: *our labor*, not merely for the sake of discipline of the body, but with genuine toil. Therefore Paul adds, *you remember our toil*. Some people work during the day, but we in reality work *night and day*. By this remark Paul wishes to protect them from the misleading people who were over-receptive and also from the lethargic people among them: "And we labor, working with our own hands" (1 Cor. 4:12).

Then when Paul says: *you are witnesses*, he remarks on the orthodoxy of his discourse. First, he speaks about the sanctifying influence it may have on a person's life; secondly, he shows how full of concern his teaching was (2:11). So Paul remarks: *you are witnesses... how holy*, that is, how innocently, we conducted ourselves: "Be holy, for I am holy" (Lev. 11:44 and 19:2); *and righteous* toward our neighbor, as is made evident by "to live sober, upright and godly lives in this world" (Tit. 2:12); *and blameless was our behaviour to you believers*, which means that you believed because we have done nothing that could have caused anyone to be scandalized. To you *believers*, individually. It should be noted that sometimes a singular predication has considerable import.

Like a father, "For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel" (1 Cor. 4:15); *we exhorted each one of you*. A similar example is found in Philemon (1:8): "Though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do what is required, yet for love's sake I prefer to appeal to you." *And encouraged you*, through soft spoken words: "To comfort all who mourn; to grant consolation to those who mourn in Sion (Is. 61:2). In contrast to this it is stated in Ezechiel (34-4) "With force and harshness you have ruled them."

And what were you told? *To lead a life worthy of God*, that is, that your conduct should be such that it might reflect favorably on the ministers of Christ. "To lead a life worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him" (Col. 1:10). *Who calls you into his own kingdom and glory*, as is evident also in "Honor wisdom, that you may reign for ever" (Wis. 6:21).

2-2

13 And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers. 14 For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus which are in Judea; for you suffered the same things from your own countrymen as they did from the Jews, 15 who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove

us out, and displease God and oppose all men 16 by hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles that they may be saved—so as always to fill up the measure of their sins. But God's wrath has come upon them at last! 17 But since we were bereft of you, brethren, for a short time, in person not in heart, we endeavored the more eagerly and with great desire to see you face to face; 18 because we wanted to come to you—I, Paul, again and again—but Satan hindered us. 19 For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you? 20 For you are our glory and joy.

In what has gone before the Apostle disclosed the character of his coming to them; here he indicates the character of their conversion. In treating this Paul makes two points. First, he shows that they have been perfectly converted as a result of their steadfast faith; secondly, he shows how courageously they persevered amidst tribulations (2:14). Paul first remarks upon their blessings, for which he offers thanks, and then he supplies a reason for this.

So Paul says, *and*, since I have carefully preached to you, as a father to his children, I therefore *thank God* as a father does for the welfare of his children: "No greater joy can I have than this, to bear that my children follow the truth" (3 Jn. 1:3). "With thanksgiving" (Phil. 4:6). But for what reason? *For this, that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God.* The preacher should give thanks when his preaching proves to be effective in the lives of his congregation. Paul tells them, *you heard the word of God from us*, that is, through us: "Let me hear what God the Lord will speak" (Ps. 85:8). "Faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ (Rom. 10: 17). *You accepted it*, that is, you kept it firmly in your heart, *not as the word of men*; for the words of man are empty: "You desire proof that Christ is speaking in me" (2 Cor. 13:3). "No prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (2 Pet. 1:21). And why does he give thanks? Because the fact that you have believed, God has worked in you. "For God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13). "Thou hast wrought for us all our works" (Is. 26:12).

Then when he says, *for you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus which are in Judea*, he shows how courageously they persevered in the midst of tribulations; and in treating this he makes two points. First, he speaks of their trials, in which they stood firm; secondly, of the remedy he proposes to apply (2:17). Again, the first point is divided into two parts. First, Paul commends them for their patience in the face of difficulties; secondly, he reprehends those responsible for the difficulties (2:15).

Consequently, Paul says: you received the word not as the word of men, *but as what it really is, the word of God*, for you exposed yourselves for its sake even to death. The fact that a man dies for the sake of Christ is testimony to the fact that the words of the faith are the words of God; and, therefore, "martyrs" means the same as "witnesses." *In Judea*, for it is there that the faith of Christ was first proclaimed: "For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Is. 2:3). In addition, it was also there that the first persecution of the faith occurred, as is evident from Acts (8:1): "On that day a great persecution arose against the church in Jerusalem." "But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings" (Heb. 10:32). The Thessalonians endured similar difficulties, so Paul remarks: *for you suffered the same things from your own countrymen*, that is, from the incredulous Thessalonians: "And a man's foes will be those of his own household" (Matt. 10:36).

Then when Paul observes, *who killed both the Lord Jesus*, he rebukes the Jews who started the persecution. First, he recalls their sin, and then the reason for the sin (2:16). In regard to the first point Paul does three things: first, he treats their sin in relation to God's ministers; secondly, with reference to God Himself; and thirdly as relating to the entire human race.

The ministers of God are those who preach, namely, Christ, the prophets and the apostles. Preaching is performed by Christ as the one from whom the doctrine originates, by the prophets who prefigured this doctrine, and by the apostles who carry out the injunction to preach.

Paul first makes reference to Christ when he says: *who killed the Lord Jesus*, as is clear from Matthew (21:38): "This is the heir; come, let us kill him." That it was the Gentiles who killed him is not a valid objection, for the Jews with their own words asked Pilate to kill him: "My heritage has become to me like a lion in the forest, she has lifted up her voice against me" (Jer. 12:8). Paul then speaks of the prophets when he mentions: *and the prophets*. "Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered" (Ac. 7:52). Paul next speaks of the apostles when he comments: *and drove us out*, that is, the apostles. "Beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils, and flog you in their synagogues" (Mt. 10: 17).

Secondly, Paul mentions the sin of the Jews in its relation to God, with the words: *and displease God*, although they may think that through this they do a service to God, as is evident in John 16. Actually, because they do not have zeal for God in accordance with knowledge, they are not pleasing to God, since they do not act in keeping with right faith and "without faith it is impossible to please him" (Heb. 11:6); "therefore the anger of the Lord was kindled against his people, and he stretched out his hand against them and smote them" (Is. 5:25).

Thirdly, Paul considers their sin in its relation to the whole human race, when he says: *and oppose all men*. "His hand against every man and every man's hand against him" (Gen. 16:12). And they are antagonistic, because they prohibit and impede the preaching to the Gentiles, and also the conversion of the Gentiles. In Acts 10 and 11 Peter is criticized for having gone to Cornelius; also in Luke 15 the elder son, the Jewish people, is disturbed because the younger son, the Gentile people, is received by the father. "Woe to him who says to a father, 'What are you begetting'" (Is. 45:10). "Would that all the Lord's people were prophets" (Num. 11-29).

The reason for this sin is found in the divine permission, by which God wills that they fill up the measure of their sins. Indeed, for all things which come about, either good or bad, there is a certain measure, because nothing is infinite; and the measure of all these things is in [God's] foreknowledge. The measure of good things is what it prepares, for "grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift" (Eph. 4:7); the measure of evil things, however, is what it permits, for if some are "evil, they are not as evil as they want, but as God permits. And, therefore, they live until they attain that which God permits: "Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers" (Matt. 23:32). So Paul says: *so as always to fill up the measure of their sins*. For after the suffering of Christ, God gave the Jews forty years to repent, but they were not converted; rather they multiplied their sins. God did not permit this to go on, so Paul states: *but Gods wrath has come upon them until the end*. "For great is the wrath of the Lord that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not obeyed the words of this book, to do according to all that is written concerning us (2 Kg22:13). "For great distress shall be upon the earth and wrath upon this people" (Lk. 21:23). And you should not think that this wrath shall last for one hundred years only, but *until the end* of the world, when all the Gentiles will have embraced [the Christian religion], and then all of Israel shall be saved, as it appears from Rom. 10, Lk. 19:44, 21:6, and Matt. 24:2: "There will not be left here one stone upon another, that will not be thrown down."

Then when Paul says, *but since we were bereft of you, brethren, for a short time*, he shows the remedy that he proposed to apply for them, namely, that he will personally go to them. In regard to this he makes three points: first, he discusses his proposed visit; secondly he treats the obstacle to his visit (2:18); thirdly, he gives the reason why he wanted to go (2:19).

So Paul says: *but since we were bereft of you*, either on account of your tribulations, or because we were separated from you [*in conversation*], that is, missing the opportunity for conversation, and *in person*, that is, not being able to enjoy your company. Both of these things require the presence of a friend because it is consoling. But *not in heart*, for we are present in heart, as is evident from 1 Cor. (5:3): "For though absent in body I am present in spirit." *We*

endeavored the more eagerly and with great desire to see you face to face, that we may be present also in body as we are in our heart; “I have longed for many years to come to you” (Rom. 15:23). When Paul says *we*, he intends a plural meaning, because he writes in the name of three persons, that is, in his own name, and that of Silvanus, and of Timothy. Therefore Paul says: *we wanted to come to you*, all of us perhaps once, but I *Paul, again and again*, that is twice, as I proposed; *but Satan hindered us*, that is, set up obstacles, perhaps through violent winds, as in: “Four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth” (Rev. 7:1).

Then when Paul says: *for what is our hope*, he gives the reason for his proposal. First, in regard to the future; secondly, in regard to the present (2:20). Paul says: I desire to see you and I give thanks for your blessings which are our *hope*; for it is on account of these blessings that we hope for rewards from God, when He shall come to render to every one according to his deeds. For the greatest reward of the preacher comes from those whom he has converted. *Or joy*, because their joy is the Apostle’s joy, just as their goodness is the Apostle’s goodness; for the goodness of the effect is accounted for by the goodness of the cause. *Or crown of boasting*, because as a result of their struggles he who encouraged them to struggle shall be decorated; for the commander who led the soldiers to combat is decorated: “He who disciplines his son will profit by him, and will boast of him among acquaintances” (Sir. 30:2). I ask what is this hope; is *it not you*? Yes, assuredly: in the future, that *is, before our Lord Jesus at his coming*; but also in the present, *for you are*, among all the faithful, *our glory*: I would rather die than have any one deprive me of my ground for boasting” (1 Cor. 9:15); *and joy*, for which reason Paul rejoices over their good fortune in the present.

3-1

1 Therefore when we could bear it no longer, we were willing to be left behind at Athens alone, 2 and we sent Timothy, our brother and God’s servant in the gospel of Christ, to establish you in your faith and to exhort you, 3 that no one be moved by these afflictions. You yourselves know that this is to be our lot. 4 For when we were with you, we told you beforehand that we were to suffer affliction; just as it has come to pass, and as you know. 5 For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent that I might know your faith, for fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you and that our labor would be in vain. 6 But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us the good news of your faith and love and reported that you always remember us kindly and long to see us, as we long to see you—7 for this reason, brethren, in all our distress and affliction we have been comforted about you through your faith; 8 for now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord. 9 For what thanksgiving can we render to God for you, for all the joy which we feel for your sake before our

God, 10 praying earnestly night and day that we may see you face to face and supply what is lacking in your faith? 11 Now may our God and Father himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way to you; 12 and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all men, as we do to you, 13 so that he may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

Paul mentioned the trials they had endured and the relief he intended to supply for them. Here he recalls how he came to their assistance through the visit of Timothy. First, Paul deals with the task of his messenger; secondly, Paul talks about the contact established through Timothy (3:6); thirdly, Paul writes on the effect of this contact on the Apostle (3:7). Paul divides the first part into three parts. First, he mentions the reason why he sent him; secondly, he mentions the person whom he sent; thirdly, he speaks further about the reason for sending him.

Paul comments: Therefore, although Satan hindered us, you are still our glory, consequently, *when we could bear it no longer*, that is, the influence of our love prompting us to go to you: "They have become a burden to me, I am weary of bearing them" (Is. 1:14), and "Joseph could not control himself" (Gen. 45:1), *we were willing*, Paul and Silvanus, *to be left behind at Athens alone, and we sent Timothy*, who was the one most in accord with the Apostle: "I have no one like him, who will be genuinely anxious for your welfare" (Phil. 2:20). "I sent to you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord" (1 Cor. 4:17). *Our brother*, sustained by charity. "A brother helped by a brother is like a strong city" (Prov. 18:19), *and Gods servant*, for he is an important person in the Church: "Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one" (2 Cor. 11:23).

And so Paul sends Timothy to strengthen the Thessalonians and to report to Paul about them. When Paul says *to establish* you, he shows that Timothy is sent to strengthen them. So Paul first states this, and second the reason for the strengthening is stated (3:3). Paul says, *to establish and to exhort you*, for the soul of a man is strengthened through encouragement: "Your words have upheld him who was stumbling" (Job 4:4). When you have turned again, strengthen your brethren (Lk. 22:32). And you are in need of encouragement in *your faith, that no one be moved by these afflictions*. "If the anger of the ruler rises against you, do not leave your place" (Ec. 10:4). And there is a twofold consideration strengthening them. The first is related to a divine ordination: You *yourselves know that this is to be our lot*, almost as if implying that God ordained that you shall enter into heaven through tribulations: "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God" (Ac. 14:22). "All who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2 Tim. 3:12). Christ Himself traveled this path as is shown in Luke (24:46): "Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer

these things and enter into his glory?"

The other consideration strengthening them is a prediction concerning the future, for anticipated difficulties are less harmful. So Paul tells them: *for when we were with you, we told you beforehand that we were to suffer affliction*, that is, Paul had warned them about the tribulations they would go through in their time. *For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent that I might know your faith*, how firm you are in your faith: "Know well the condition of your flocks, and give attention to your herds" (Prov. 27:23); *for fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you*, that is, the devil: "And the tempter came" (Matt. 4:3). There is a commentary which says: "Whose business it is to tempt."

But on the contrary, both the world and the flesh also tempt, as is seen in James (1: 14): "Each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire." Also in Genesis (22: 1): "God tested Abraham." It is necessary to point out that "to tempt" means to make a test of something. And in this matter the purpose must be considered for which one wants to test something, and in what manner one wants to test something. For this occurs in two ways: either so that the person testing may know about it, or so that he may make it known to another. God does not need to tempt in the first way, for He knows what is in man as is stated in John 2. Rather in the second way: for God tempted Abraham so that others might know of his faith. A temptation in the first manner may occur in two ways, that is, it leads towards some good, as when the bishop examines those to be promoted; or else, somebody tempts in order to deceive, and this is the work of the devil; for the devil tests the condition of men in order that he may lead them to the various sins to which they are prone in accordance with their various dispositions: "Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking some one to devour" (Pet. 5:8). Therefore, it is the devil's business to tempt in order to deceive. The world and the flesh are said to tempt in a material way, for through them and the things to which they lead a knowledge is achieved about man as to whether he is really steadfast in God's commandments and in the love of God. Because if concupiscence triumphs, the person does not love God in a perfect manner, nor does he love in a perfect manner when the concerns of the world either frighten him or exert an undue influence upon him.

And that our labor would be in vain, because if you do not resist temptation our labor would be in vain: I am afraid I have labored over you in vain" (Gal. 4:11). "None of the righteous deeds which he has done shall be remembered" (Ez. 18:24). The labor is regarded as "in vain" with respect to an eternal reward; nevertheless the good deeds performed prior to sin profit a person, for they shall live again after repentance, and also because they readily dispose one towards conversion.

Then when Paul says: *but now that Timothy has come to us from you*, he

comments that Timothy spoke of their good practices towards God and towards the Apostle: *faith and love* towards God: "For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation" (Gal. 6:15); faith also towards the Apostle, so Paul says: *you always remember us kindly*. "The memory of Josiah is like a blending of incense prepared by the art of the perfumer" (Sir. 49:1). "The memory of the righteous is a blessing" (Prov. 10:7). *And reported that you long to see us, as we long to see you*. Augustine wrote: "Hardened is the soul that does not requite love, even if it does not wish to bestow it." "Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you" (Is. 51:2).

Then when Paul says: *we have been comforted about you*, he speaks of the threefold effect of their relationship, namely, of spiritual consolation, of the spirit of thanksgiving, in the words: *for what thanksgiving can we render to God for you*, and of the resultant frequent prayer, in the words: *praying night and day*. And so Paul tells them: because we have heard such things about you, we are encouraged, although the demands of temporal concerns are pressing, as well as bodily trials. "When the cares of my heart are many, thy consolations cheer my soul" (Ps. 94:19). "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort" (2 Cor. 1:3). And this occurred *through your faith*, that is, having heard about the reliable character of your faith. *For now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord*, as if saying: I value your condition so highly that I think it sustains me: "It is enough; Joseph my son is still alive" (Gen. 45:28).

Then when Paul says, *for what thanksgiving can we render to God for you*, the second effect of their existent relationship is treated, namely, the spirit of thanksgiving, as if implying: I am not worthy to supply fitting thanks to God for you: "With what shall I come before the Lord?" (Mic. 6:6). "What shall I render to the Lord for all his bounty to me?" (Ps. 116:12). However, the prayers of thanksgiving are offered *for all the joy*; a joy which is not entirely visible, but *which we feel for your sake* in our conscience *before our God* who beholds this; or perhaps *before God* in that those close to God please God: "Love does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right" (1 Cor. 13:6).

Then when Paul says, *night and day*, the third effect of their relationship is explained. First, he points out the frequency of his prayer; secondly, he shows what he desires while praying (3: 11). So Paul insists: We give thanks for things past; nevertheless we do not fail to pray also for future concerns, indeed, [we do so] *night and day*, that is, in adversity and prosperity. "Evening and morning and at noon I utter my complaint and moan" (Ps. 55:17). To *supply what is lacking in your faith*: not matters that pertain to the fundamentals of the faith, but some special teachings which the Apostle did not preach to them at their [spiritual] birth: "I, brethren, could not address you as spiritual men, but as men of the flesh" (1 Cor. 3:1). "I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now" (Jn. 16:12).

Then when Paul says: *may our God ... direct our way to you*, he makes known what he desires for them; in regard to this he first shows what he is asking for (3:13). And Paul is asking for two things: One on his own behalf—that he may go to see them—and so he says: *may our God and Father himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way to you*. “I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God” (Jn. 20:17). “The plans of the mind belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord” (Prov. 16:1). The other is for their welfare, so Paul asks: *and may the Lord make you increase*, that is, in faith: “May the Lord add to his people a hundred times as many as they are” (1 Chr. 21:3). And Paul prays also that their merits may increase; so he says, *and abound in love, which* can always increase in this life: “Above all these put on love, which binds everything together” (Col. 3:14). And, first, *charity to one another*, secondly, *charity to all men*. “Let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of faith” (Gal. 6: 10). And Paul gives an example of himself when he comments: *as we do to you*, as if to say: just as I also love you: “You are in our hearts, to die together and to live together” (2 Cor. 7:3).

But for what purpose does Paul pray? So *that he may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness*, that is, that nobody can complain about you; “...righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless” (Lk. 1:6). *In holiness before our God* who sees the heart: “In holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life” (Lk. 1:75). And this shall be manifest *at the coming of our Lord Jesus*, that He may find you holy, who shall come *with all his saints*; that you might be in His presence, just as all the saints are before Him.

4-1

1 Finally, brethren, we beseech and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you learned from us how you ought to live and to please God, just as you are doing, you do so more and more. 2 For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus. 3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from immorality; 4 that each one of you know how to take a wife for himself in holiness and honor, 5 not in the passion of lust like heathen who do not know God; 6 that no man transgress, and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we solemnly forewarned you. 7 For God has not called us for uncleanness, but in holiness. 8 Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you. 9 But concerning love of the brethren you have no need to have any one write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another; 10 and indeed you do love all the brethren throughout Macedonia. But we exhort you, brethren, to do so more and more, 11 to aspire to live

quietly, to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we charged you; 12 so that you may command the respect of outsiders, and be dependent on nobody.

Earlier, the Apostle Paul commended the faithful for their loyalty in the face of trials and for other good practices; here Paul cautions them to act well in the future. First, Paul presents a general warning; secondly, Paul makes it more specific (4:3). In regard to the first point, Paul does two things. First he presents what he is intent upon; secondly, he indicates a reason for the warning (4:1b). So Paul says: I heard about your good practices of the past, but in the future we will continue to exhort you. So Paul prevails upon them, first, on his own behalf when he remarks, *we beseech you*, "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem" (Ps. 122:6). In addition, Paul prevails upon them on behalf of Christ, and so he says, *and we exhort you in the Lord Jesus*. And he exhorts them, because they are holy: "Do not rebuke an older man but exhort him as you would a father" (1 Tim. 5: 1).

But what does Paul ask? *That as you learned from us how you ought to live and to please God, just as you are doing, you do so more and more*. The Apostle had taught them how they should conduct themselves in the practice of common justice, which is by keeping the precepts; that is why he says: *you learned from us how you ought to live*. "I will run in the way of thy commandments" (Ps. 119:32). Paul had also taught them how they might be pleasing to God in the practice of the counsels: "There was one who pleased God and was loved by him" (Wis. 4: 10); or *how you ought to live*, that is, by virtuous actions. "Walk while you have the light" (Jn. 12:35); *and to please God* through the forming of good intentions. *just as you are doing*, that is, that they might remain steadfast in the original teaching, without falling away from it: "But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we preached to you, let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:8).

The reason for the warning is based on the benefit to be derived from heeding the warning; secondly, from the warning itself (4:2). Paul remarks: although you are good, nevertheless you shall grow markedly and improve through the repeated practice of the precepts and counsels. "God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance" (2 Cor. 9:8). For charity is so encompassing that there will always be something left through which one might improve himself. Also, if difficulties are removed because of the warning, it is both proper and useful. "The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul" (Ps. 19:7). "For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching a light, and the reproofs of discipline are the way of life" (Prov. 6:23). Paul then says: *what instructions*, that is, what kind of commandments, and he tells us that they are *through the Lord Jesus*, in that they are given through Him: "For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you" (1 Cor. 11:23). "It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard him" (Heb. 2:3). The precepts are as follows:

this is the will of God, your sanctification, as if saying: All the commandments of God are for the purpose of making you holy; for sanctity means purity and constancy, and all of God's precepts lead thereto, so that a person may be cleansed from evil and constant in good: "That you may prove what is the will of God" (Rom. 12:2) which is made known through the precepts.

Then when Paul says: *that you abstain*, he warns them in particular; and, first, he corrects them in regard to certain inordinate practices prevalent among them; secondly, he urges them to maintain their virtuous actions (5:1). There were three inordinate practices prevalent among them, namely, carnal vices among a certain number of them, curiosity, and an inordinate grief for the dead. For these reasons Paul speaks about these matters. About the second inordinate practice Paul remarks in (4:9); the third inordinate practice he treats in (4:13).

In treating the first inordinate practice he does two things. First, he instructs them to refrain from the inordinate desire for carnal things; secondly, he provides a reason for this (4:6). And so he divides the first point into two. First, he forbids lust; secondly, he forbids greed. He always associates these two, for each one has reference to a corporeal object, although the latter culminates in spiritual delight.

Paul first teaches them to beware of lust in regard to a woman who is not their wife; secondly, in regard to one's own wife (4:4). Therefore Paul insists, *that you abstain from immorality*, for it is God's will to abstain from immorality. Therefore, it is a mortal sin, for it is contrary to the commandment and the will of God. "Beware, my son, of all immorality" (Tob. 4:12). But also with regard to your wife, deny yourself honorably; *that each one of you know how to take [his vessel]*, that is his wife, *in holiness*, denying yourself pleasure for a time, *and in honor, not in the passion of lust*, that is, do not let passion be the stimulus; *like heathen*, for it is characteristic of heathens to desire immediate pleasures instead of those of the future life. *In holiness and honor*, because this is the proper use of marriage, since it is for the good of the offspring or for fulfilling an obligation; and so marriage may be without sin. But sometimes a venial sin is involved, if concupiscence is not exercised beyond the limits of marriage, that is, when, although having concupiscence, a person does not indulge it except with his own wife. But when this takes place outside the bonds of marriage, the action becomes a mortal sin; and this happens when he would perform the action, even if she were not his wife, and more willingly with another woman. "Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled; for God will judge the immoral and adulterous" (Heb. 13:4). "Likewise you husbands, live considerately with your wives, bestowing honor on the woman as the weaker sex, since you are joint heirs of the grace of life, in order that your prayers may not be hindered" (I Pet. 3:7).

Then when Paul says, *that no man transgress*, he forbids greed, and insists *that*

no man transgress, that is, no one should exert violence by taking another's property through brute strength. "Is it not the rich who oppress you?" (Jas. 2:6). *And wrong his brother* through fraud. "Like a basket full of birds, their houses are full of treachery" (Jer. 5:27).

When Paul says: *because the Lord is an avenger in all these things*, the reason for the warning is mentioned. First, Paul attributes it to the divine vengeance; secondly, he shows that this vengeance is justifiable (4:7). Paul exhorts them to refrain from these things, for *the Lord is an avenger*. *I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God*" (Gal. 5:21). For God certainly takes vengeance justly. One reason for this is that God has called us, and a second reason is that such actions are contrary to God's gifts to us. If the Lord calls you to one thing and you do something contrary, then punishment is due. So Paul points out that *God has not called us for uncleanness*. "As he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him" (Eph. 1:4). "Those whom he predestined he also called" (Rom. 8:30). And so Paul concludes: *therefore, whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God*, as if saying: This is the one special reason that I mentioned. The other reason is that these vices are opposed to the Spirit who was given to us. And he who does these things offends the Holy Spirit; so Paul says, *who gives his Holy Spirit to you*. "A man who has violated the law of Moses dies without mercy at the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment do you think will be deserved by the man who has spurned the Son of God, and profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and outraged the Spirit of grace?" (Heb. 10:28).

Then when Paul remarks: *But concerning love of the brethren you have no need to have any one write to you*, he discourages them from remaining idle. It should be realized, as Jerome says in the letter to the Galatians, that the Thessalonians were generous, and that it was the custom among the rich to give away a great deal; as a result the poor idly depended on their benefits without looking for work, but rather wasted time in their homes. And so Paul first commends the generosity of the donors, but he is then critical of the idleness of the recipients of the welfare (4: 11). And first then, Paul adds that they do not need to be reminded of the need for charity, but secondly he also advises that they make progress in it (4:10). Paul observes, *but concerning love of the brethren*, that is, in regard to your love for your brothers, *you have no need to have any one write to you*. "Love one another with brotherly affection" (Rom. 12: 10). "Let brotherly love continue" (Heb. 13: 1). And the reason for this is that, *you yourselves have been taught by God*, that is, through the precept in the Law: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Lev. 19:18). Also, it is clear from the gospel of St. John (13:34) "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you." Or, *you yourselves have been taught* this by an interior teaching, as is found in John (6:45): "Every one who has heard and learned from

the Father comes to me." And this lesson is gained through the help of the Holy Spirit.

When Paul says: *but we exhort you, brethren, to do so more and more*, he is urging them to make progress in charity. He seemingly insists that since you have charity towards all men, we urge you to make progress in it. And though others may ridicule you, nevertheless devote yourself to charity: "In the house of the righteous there is much treasure" (Prov. 15:6).

Paul next says: *aspire to live quietly*. He is correcting the idle. First, he criticises their idleness; secondly, he indicates how they ought to curtail it; and finally, he provides a reason why they ought to curtail it. He says therefore, *aspire to live quietly*. "...loud and wayward, her feet do not stay at home" (Prov. 7: 11). "We were not idle when we were with you, we did not eat any one's bread without paying, but with toil and labor we worked night and day, that we might not burden any of you- (2 Thess. 3:7). Paul desires that they combat idleness by performing daily tasks; hence he remarks: *to mind your own affairs*. "Prepare your work outside, get everything ready for you in the field; and after that build your house" (Prov. 24:27).

Paul specifies *your own affairs*. Does this mean that they should take no part in other's affairs? If so, he would be opposing what is clear in Romans (16:2) "Help her in whatever she may require from you." I elaborate by pointing out that things occur in a disorderly manner if they are not governed within the limits of reason, for example, when somebody drives himself excessively; they occur in an orderly manner if the dictates of reason are observed in regulating them. The latter is commendable.

To work with your hands. "Idleness teaches much evil" (Sir. 33:27). "This was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, surfeit of good, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy" (Ez. 16:49). And this is a precept for all those who have no other means of getting the things which enable them to live properly; for it is a law of nature that man care for his body. "If any one will not work, let him not eat" (2 Thess. 3: 10). Now, there are two reasons for this. The first one comes from the duty to set an example for others; so Paul says: so *that you may command the respect of outsiders*. For the unbelievers see your idle life and they detest you. "He must be well thought of by outsiders, or he may fall into reproach and the snare of the devil" (1 Tim. 3:7). The second reason comes from the fact that you should not covet those things that belong to others, and so it is said, *and be dependent on nobody*. "The desire of the sluggard kills him" (Prov. 21:25). "Let the thief no longer steal but rather let him labor" (Eph. 4:28). And therefore, if this idleness is overcome, it will result both in good example and in the repression of desire.

13 But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. 14 For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. 15 For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel's call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first; 17 then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so we shall always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

In what went before Paul aimed at bringing them to the practice of continence in place of their concupiscence, and at curtailing their idleness. Now he urges them to lessen their inordinate sorrow. First, he provides a warning; secondly, he assigns a reason for the warning (4:13b). Therefore, he forbids them to indulge in inordinate sorrow when he tells them, *you may not grieve*. It seems, though, that the Apostle views sorrow for the dead benignly. Nevertheless, he cautions them not to grieve overmuch, *as others*. Someone who grieves for the dead does possess compassion. A person grieves first because of the dissolution of the frail body; for we ought to take care of the body for the sake of the soul. "O death, how bitter is the reminder of you to one who lives at peace among his possessions" (Sir. 41:1). Secondly, a person grieves because of the separation and departure which is so painful to friends. "Surely the bitterness of death is past" (1 Sam. 15:32). Thirdly, we mourn because death reminds us of our own sin. "For the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). Fourthly, because death reminds us of our own death. "For this is the end of all men, and the living will lay it to heart" (Ec. 7:2). So moderate sorrow is permitted. "Weep less bitterly for the dead, for he has attained rest" (Sir. 22:11). Therefore, he says, *as others do who have no hope*, that is, because these people believe that these negative aspects of death are eternal; but we do not believe so. "Our commonwealth is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body" (Phil. 3:20). So he says clearly, *concerning those who are asleep*. "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep" (Jn. 11:11).

A person who decides to go to sleep does three things. First, he lies down with the hope of eventually getting up: "Shall he that sleeps not rise again from where he lies" (Ps. 40:9). A person who passes away abiding in the faith feels the same way. Secondly, the soul in a sleeping person remains vigilant. I slept, but my heart was awake" (Cant. 5:2). Thirdly, after sleep a man gets up much more refreshed and restored. In this same manner the saints will rise incorruptibly, as we read in 1 Cor. 15.

Then when Paul says, *for since we believe*, he provides a reason for the warning he had given. First, he establishes the resurrection; secondly, he rules out the faint suspicion of a delay (4:15); thirdly, he outlines the order of resurrection (4:16). It should be realized that the Apostle constructs the case for our resurrection on the basis of the resurrection of Christ (1 Cor. 15), for Christ's resurrection is the cause of our resurrection. So Paul makes his point here by a causal analysis. Christ's resurrection is not only the cause but also the pattern of our resurrection. The Word made flesh revives our bodies, while the Word as such revives our souls. Christ is the pattern of our resurrection in that Christ assumed flesh, and also rose embodied in flesh.

Nor is Christ only the pattern; He is also the efficient cause of our resurrection, for the things done by Christ's humanity were done not only by the power of His human nature, but also by virtue of His divinity united in Him. just as His touch cured the leper as an instrument of His divinity, so also Christ's resurrection is the cause of our resurrection, not merely because it was a body that arose, but a body united to the Word of life. So the Apostle, firmly presupposing this, declares, *for since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep [those who have fallen asleep through Jesus]*. Those have slept *through Jesus* who were conformed to His death through baptism; or he says *through Jesus*, because God will bring them with Him, that is, with Christ Himself. "The Lord your God will come, and all the holy ones with him" (Zech. 14:5). "The Lord enters into judgment with the elders and princes of his people" (Is. 3:14).

Then when he says, *for this we declare to you by the word of the Lord*, he rules out a delay in regard to the resurrection, as if saying: We know that they shall rise and shall come with Christ; therefore, we ought not to grieve so much. For those who shall be found alive will not achieve the glory of resurrection before those who are dead. And for this reason he says: *for this we declare to you*, not as the conjecture of a man, but *by the word of the Lord*, whose words do not fail. *That we who are alive*, that is, those who are living, shall not receive the consolation accompanying the coming of Christ before the dead. As a result Paul says, *we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep*.

It would seem to those who do not fully understand what the Apostle is saying here that all this shall come about while the Apostle is still alive; it seemed this way to the Thessalonians. Because of this misunderstanding he wrote them a second letter in which he says: "Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ... we beg you, brethren, not to be quickly shaken in mind or excited, either by spirit or by word, or by letter purporting to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come" (2 Th. 2:2).

But he is not talking at present about himself and his contemporaries, but about

those who shall be found alive at the time of Christ's coming. *We who are left*, that is, those who shall be left after the persecution of the Antichrist, *shall not precede those*, that is, those who are living shall not receive their consolation first. "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet" (1 Cor. 15:52).

Then when he says, *for the Lord himself will descend from heaven*, he shows the order and manner of the resurrection. First, he discusses the cause of the resurrection; secondly, he presents its order and manner (4:16); thirdly, he ends with a consideration of their mutual consolation (4:18).

He proves his first point by saying, *the Lord himself*. It should be noted here, as was already mentioned before, that the cause of the general resurrection is Christ's resurrection. But if you should say: since it has already occurred (that is the resurrection of Christ), why does not its effect follow? I would reply to this by saying that it is the cause of our resurrection according to the activity of the divine power. God, however, acts according to the order of His wisdom. Therefore, our resurrection will occur when the order of divine wisdom shall determine it.

In order to prove that Christ is the cause of the resurrection, he shows that all the dead shall rise in the presence of Christ. Three causes cooperate in the accomplishment of the general resurrection: the principal cause is the divine power; the second cause is instrumental, that is, the power of the humanity of Christ. The third cause might be termed a ministering cause in that the power of the angels will have some effect in the resurrection. For Augustine shows that the things that occur now by virtue of corporeal creatures actually occur through God, by their mediation. In the resurrection, some things shall be done through the angels, such as the collection of the dust. But the restoration of the bodies and the sours reunion with the body will be accomplished immediately through Christ.

Paul then presents these three causes. First, he sets forth the glorious humanity of Christ when he says, *the Lord himself*. "Jesus... will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven" (Ac. 1:11). *With a cry of command*. In the first coming, he came as obedient. "He became obedient unto death" (Phil. 2:8). And that happened because it was the coming of humility; but this one will be the coming of glory. "Coming with power and great glory" (Lk. 21:27).

Secondly, he presents the power of the angels when he says, *with the archangel's call*, not that anything is done by his voice, but rather by his ministry. He says, *archangel's* for all angels minister to the Church under one archangel. "This is Michael, the prince of the Church" (Rev. 12). [There is no accepted text that has this reading for a verse in the 12th chapter of the Revelation.] Or perhaps, *with the archangel's call*, that is, Christ's, Who is Prince of the angels. "Wonderful Counselor" (Is. 9:6). And the resurrection shall be through Christ's

voice, corporeal or spiritual. "(They) shall hear the voice of the son of God" (Jn. 5:28); in other words, the dead shall rise and come to judgment, and they shall obey the bodily voice.

Thirdly, he considers the divine power when he says, *with the sound of the trumpet of God*. This is the divine power which is referred to as the voice of the archangel insofar as it will act through the ministry of the archangel. It is called the trumpet of God since the resurrection does come about by divine power. It is called a trumpet because of its resonance, which is derived from God who raises the dead. In addition, the trumpet, which had many uses in the Old Testament, brings people together for war: "And creation will fight alongside him" (Wis. 5:20). The trumpet was also used for celebrations, as it will be employed in the heavenly Jerusalem. In addition, the trumpet was used for deploying the armies; in this way holy men assisted in the movement of troops. And so if it is a sound that you can hear, it is called a trumpet; but if it is not a sound, then it is the divine power of Christ present and manifest to the whole world.

Then when Paul says, *and the dead in Christ will rise first*, he mentions the order that the resurrection will follow. In doing so he makes three points. First, he treats the resurrection of the dead; secondly, he considers the meeting of the living with Christ (4:17); finally, he refers to the happiness of the saints with Christ (4:17b).

Because of these words some people believed that the last people alive would never die, as Jerome mentions in his letter. For Paul has said, *then we who are alive... shall be caught up together*. It might seem that there would be no other reason for distinguishing the living from the dead. But on the contrary: ["We shall all indeed rise"] (1 Cor. 15:51). "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Cor. 15:22). "So death spread to all men" (Rom. 5:12).

And so I say that some shall be alive at the time when Christ shall come for judgment, but in that moment they shall die and immediately afterwards they will rise. Because of the minimal time involved they are regarded as living. But then another problem presents itself because it is said: *and the dead in Christ will rise first* and *then we who are alive*. So it seems that the dead will rise before the living will meet Christ, and that the living will die when they meet Him. So it appears that some will rise ahead of these others, and that there will not be a resurrection of everyone at the same time. This is contrary, however, to what is found in 1 Cor. (15:22): "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet."

I wish to point out that there are two opinions on this matter. For some say that the resurrection will not take place at the same time for everybody, but that first the dead will come with Christ, and during the time that Christ is coming the living will be taken up into the clouds and they will die and rise while they are

being taken up. So that what is said to happen in a moment may be understood as occurring in a brief amount of time. And if you insist that it will happen in an instant, then it should not be applied to the total resurrection of all, but rather to the resurrection of individuals, for every individual will rise in an instant. But there are others, who maintain that everyone will rise at the same time and in an instant. They feel that where Paul says *will rise first*, he denotes the order of dignity, not the order of time. This does seem difficult to maintain for many still alive will suffer in the persecution of the Antichrist and be more distinguished than those who had died before.

And so it seems necessary to answer the question in a different way, saying that all will die and all will rise at the same time. For the Apostle does not say that the dead will rise first and then the living, but that the dead will rise before the living will meet Christ. Therefore he is not speaking about the resurrection in terms of the order in which they shall rise, but of the order in which they will be taken up to meet Christ. For when the Lord does come, first those who are found alive will die and then, immediately together with those who had died before, they will rise up and be taken up into the clouds to meet Christ, as Paul clearly says.

But there is a difference between the good and the evil people, because the evil people will remain on the earth that they loved, while the good people will be taken up to the Christ whom they had sought. "Wherever the body is, there the eagles will be gathered together" (Matt. 24:28). In the time of the resurrection the saints will be conformed to Christ, not only with regard to the glory of the body (Phil. 3), but also with respect to place, for Christ will be in a cloud. "A cloud took him out of their sight" (Ac. 1:9), and "Jesus will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven" (Ac. 1:11). And so the saints too will be taken up into the clouds.

The reason for this is to show their likeness to God. For in the Old Testament the glory of the Lord appeared in the form of a cloud. [The Lord said that he would dwell in a "cloud"] (1 Kg. 8:12). These clouds will be prepared by divine power in order to show the glory of the saints. Or, the resplendent bodies of the glorified will appear as clouds to the evil people who will remain on earth. "Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him" (Matt. 25:6).

Then when Paul says, *and so we shall always be with the Lord*, he shows the beatitude of the saints, for they shall always be with the Lord and derive constant enjoyment from Him. "I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also" (Jn. 14:3). The saints desire this: "My desire is to depart and be with Christ" (Phil. 1:23).

Then when he says, *therefore comfort one another with these words*, Paul concludes that they should comfort one another about the dead. He feels that since the saints will rise without suffering any loss, the Thessalonians should

comfort one another about the dead. "Comfort, comfort my people, says' your God" (Is. 40:1).

5-1

1 But as to the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need to have anything written to you. 2 For you yourselves know well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. 3 When people say, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them as travail comes upon a woman with child, and there will be no escape. 4 But you are not in darkness, brethren, for that day to surprise you like a thief. 5 For you are all sons of light and sons of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness. 6 So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. 7 For those who sleep sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. 8 But, since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. 9 For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us so that whether we wake or sleep we might live with him. 11 Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing. 12 But we beseech you, brethren, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, 13 and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves.

In what he had written before, Paul corrected them in matters which needed to be improved upon, and now he begins to instruct them concerning the future. He first gives them a warning and then provides a prayer with the words, *may the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly*. These two things are indeed necessary for us. For the good deeds that we do are the result of free will, and so a man could profit from a warning. And since these deeds are also the result of grace, man needs prayer as well.

Concerning the first point he does two things: Paul first urges the Thessalonians to prepare themselves for the coming judgment; secondly, he shows them how they should prepare themselves (5:11). In addition, he divides the first part into two: he points out a feature of the coming judgment and then he shows in what manner they ought to prepare themselves for the judgment (5:6). There is also a subdivision of the first section into two further parts that include this feature of the coming judgment and then an explanation (5:3). In the first part Paul puts to rest their concern for knowledge about the future coming, and then treats what they did know about it (5:2).

First then, Paul says it was necessary for me to write about the preceding matters

because you needed to know about them. *But as to the times*, that is, of summer, winter, or rather of what the future times will be, it was not necessary to write. Because certain of these things are reserved for only the divine knowledge: "But of that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father" (Mk. 13:32). "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority" (Ac. 1:7). "The more words, the more vanity, and what is man the better? For who knows what is good for man while he lives the few days of his vain life, which he passes like a shadow? (Ec., 6:11). And so it is not necessary to write about this, for you *yourselves know* what ought to be known, *that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night*.

In fact, all days depend on the Lord: "By thy appointment they stand this day" (Ps. 119:91). But this day especially belongs to the Lord, because His will is fulfilled in everyone: it is accomplished in the good people who are led to salvation as an end foreknown by God: "Who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4); and in the evil people that are punished: "At the set time which I appoint I will judge with equity" (Ps. 75:2).

It will come like a thief, that is, unannounced: "If the householder had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would have been awake" (Lk. 12:39). "The day of the Lord will come like a thief" (2 Pet. 3: 10). "I will come like a thief" (Apoc. 3:3). But why is it said that the day shall come during the night? It should be understood that both are involved because He comes during the day for the uncovering of our hearts: "Before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart" (1 Cor. 4:5); but He comes at night because of the surprise element: "Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him" (Matt. 25:6). Actually, it is not certain at what hour it will occur.

Then when he says: *When people say 'There is peace and security'*, he explains the things he had mentioned. First he refers to the evil people; secondly, to the good people (5:4). In regard to the first division he does two things. He first describes the false confidence of the evil people and secondly he refers to the danger of a delay. So Paul says: *the Lord will come like a thief*, because He shall come unexpectedly: *When people say 'there is peace'*, they shall be deceived in regard to the present time when they are living tranquilly: "But they live in great strife due to ignorance, and they call such great evils peace" (Wis. 14:22). *Security* has reference to the future: "Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink, be merry" (Lk. 12:19).

But in contrast: "Men fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world" (Lk. 21:26). Thus there is no security to be had. There are two explanations for this. The one offered by Augustine is that at that time some shall be good, but they will be afflicted, they will mourn and they will wait expectantly;

and this is referred to in the quotation as “fainting” because of the absence of pleasures and the multiplicity of evils. But there will be peace and security among the evil people. The other explanation is found in the Gloss.

Then when he says, *then sudden destruction will come upon them*, he presents four aspects of the peril. First, that it will be unexpected, where he says: *sudden*, “like a break in a high wall,... whose crash comes suddenly, in an instant” (Is. 30:13). Secondly, he describes the peril as bringing death when he says *destruction*. [Destruction will tread upon him as a King” (Job 18:14)] Thirdly, he refers to the peril as distressing, and he uses the word *travail*: “Anguish as of a woman in travail” (Ps. 48:6). Fourthly, he presents the peril as inevitable when he comments: *and there will be no escape*. Now is the time to escape from the wrath of God to the mercy of God, for the end of the world will not be a time of mercy but of justice.

Then Paul says, *but you are not in darkness, brethren*, and explains what he had mentioned in regard to the good people; and he does this by making two points: first, he excludes the good people from the company of the evil people and secondly, he provides a reason for this (5:5). And so he remarks, *you are not in darkness*, for you have been enlightened by Christ concerning that day; this is not an unexpected event for you. “He who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (Jn. 8:12). And the reason for this is given at the words: *for you are all sons of light*. He also makes the point that they are the sons of the light *and of the day*. According to the Scriptures, someone is said to be the son of something because he abounds in that thing. “My beloved had a vineyard on a [hill, the son of oil, i.e., a] very fertile hill” (Is. 5:1), that is, it was land which was very rich. Those who participate to a great extent in the day and in the light are called their sons. And this light is the faith of Christ. “I am the light of the world” (Jn. 8:12), and again: “Believe in the light, that you may become sons of light!” (Jn. 12:36).

In addition he says, *of the day*, for just as out of the early light comes the fullness of the day, so out of the faith of Christ comes the day which is the brilliance of good actions. “The night is far gone, the day is at hand” (Rom. 13:12). And because of this, you are not sons *of the night*, that is, involved in infidelity; *or of darkness*, that is, of sins. “Let us then cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light” (Rom. 13:12).

Then when he says: so *then, let us not sleep*, he shows them how they should prepare themselves for that coming. First, they should prepare themselves for it by keeping away from anything evil; secondly, they should prepare themselves by regularly doing something virtuous (5:8).

In making the first point he does two things. First, he provides a warning, and next he sets down the reason for the warning (5:7). Paul says, therefore, that for

this reason the day of the Lord is like a thief: "If the householder had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would have been awake" (Lk. 12:39). And so you know you ought to be vigilant. He adds: so *then 'let us not sleep* in the sleep of sin: "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead" (Eph. 5:14). "How long will you be there, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep?" (Prov. 6:9).

But let us keep awake out of solicitude. "Watch therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming" (Matt. 24:42). And to this end it is necessary that we *be sober* in order that both the body and the mind be sober, that is, free from the pleasures and cares of the world. "But take heed to yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness" (Lk. 21:34). "Be sober, be watchful" (1 Pet. 5:8). And the reason for this is the suitability of a certain time; those who sleep or get drunk do so at night. But the night is not for us: so *then, let us not sleep, as others do*. And so Paul says: *for those who sleep, sleep at night*, that is, at night they get some rest and during the day they are active. "When the sun rises, they get them away and lie down in their dens" (Ps. 104:32). And again "Man goes forth to his work and to his labor until the evening" (Ps. 104:23).

There are also some who do not drink during the day because of the business which must be accomplished; but they are not so careful at night. "The eye of the adulterer also waits for the twilight- (Job 24:15). So sleep and drunkenness are suitable to nighttime, since drunkards are occupied with sin during the night of unbelief and the darkness of sin without having any regard for the future because of the love they have for present concerns. "They have become callous and have given themselves up to licentiousness, greedy to practice every kind of uncleanness" (Eph. 4:19). *But, since we belong to the day*, that is, belong to the daytime of honesty and faith, *let us be sober*. "Let us conduct ourselves becomingly as in the day" (Rom. 13:13).

Then when Paul says: *Let us put on the breastplate of faith*, he shows how they should prepare themselves through good actions. First, he sets down a general admonition, and then he issues a special admonition (5:11). He divides the first point into two aspects; he first sets down the admonition itself and then he gives a reason for it (5:9). There are in man two important parts of the body which were protected in wars-the heart, which is the source of life, and the head, which governs the body's movements and is the seat of the senses and the center of the nervous system. The heart is protected by a breastplate and the head by a helmet. The life of the spirit in us is Christ, through whom the soul lives and the Lord dwells in us: "That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, that you, being rooted and grounded in love..." (Eph. 3:17). "He who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him" (1 Jn. 4:16). Love gives life to faith. So we must have faith and love, and so Paul calls for *the breastplate of faith and love*, because it protects the vital parts of the body, *and for a helmet the hope of salvation*, for salvation is a spiritual motive force because it is the goal which we

hope to attain.

Then when he says, *for God has not destined us for wrath*, he shows the manner in which God works in us; this is first shown to be out of divine preordination and then as derived from the grace of Christ. Finally, Paul treats the manner in which salvation is to be achieved. He begins with the words, *God has not destined us*, that is, God has not appointed us: "(I) appointed you that you should go and bear fruit" (Jn. 15:16); *for wrath*, that is, that we should deserve His wrath: "God did not make death" (Wis. 1:13). "Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, says the Lord God, and not rather that he should turn from his way and live? (Ez. 18:23). *But to obtain salvation*, that is, that we might acquire salvation, "From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and men of violence take it by force" (Matt. 11: 12). "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people" (1 Pet. 2:9). And this is achieved through Christ's grace; hence he says, *through our Lord Jesus Christ*. "For there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Ac. 4:12).

Who died for us, that is, He redeemed us by dying for us. "The righteous (died) for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit" (1 Pet. 3:18). And the manner of attaining salvation is also through Him, for Christ taught us this while working for our salvation, which He achieved by dying and rising again. "Who was put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification" (Rom. 4:25). And so Paul says: *so that whether we wake or sleep, we might live with him*. "Whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's (Rom. 14: 8).

Then when he says, *therefore encourage one another*, he teaches us how we should behave toward special classes of people. And in this regard he makes three points; first, he shows how they should behave towards their equals; secondly, how they should be subject to their bishop (5:12). And finally, he shows how the bishops should behave toward their flock (5:14).

To our equals we owe consolation in times of difficulty, and so he says, *encourage one another*. In addition, they should inspire them through example, and so he says, *and build one another up*. "Let us then pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding" (Rom. 14:19).

Those who are subject to bishops owe them, first, the acknowledgement of blessings; secondly, charity; and thirdly, peace. *Respect those who labor among you*, that is, acknowledge their work: "Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God" (Heb. 13:7). And I say that you shall respect them first on their own behalf, because of the great labours they have borne for you. And so he makes mention of *those who labour among you* for your good. "Take your share of suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 2:3). Secondly, you

shall respect them on behalf of God, and because of this reverence is due to them as it is due to God. And so Paul remarks: *and are over you in the Lord*, that is, in the place of God. "If I have forgiven anything, it has been for your sake in the presence of Christ" (2 Cor. 2:10). Thirdly, you shall respect them on your own behalf, because they are useful to you; hence he says: *and they admonish you*. Furthermore, you owe them charity; hence, *esteem them very highly in love*, that is, before others.

Finally, *because of their work, be at peace* [with them]. Yet some act against this. "They hate him who reproves in the gate, and they abhor him who speaks the truth" (Am. 5: 10). "One who rejoices in wickedness will be condemned" (Sir. 19:5). Nevertheless, you should be at peace with them because of their work of correction, for this work properly belongs to their office. I am for peace; but when I speak, they are for war" (Ps. 120:7).

5-2

14 And we exhort you, brethren, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all. 15 See that none of you repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to all. 16 Rejoice always, 17 pray constantly, 18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. 19 Do not quench the Spirit, 20 do not despise prophesying, 21 but test everything; bold fast what is good, 22 abstain from every form of evil. 23 May the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24 He who calls you is faithful, and he will do it. 25 Brethren, pray for us. 26 Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss. 27 I adjure you by the Lord that this letter be read to all the brethren. 28 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

Earlier he showed them how they ought to remain subject to their bishops. Here he makes the same point from another point of view. And concerning this he does two things. He first teaches how bishops should act toward their priests, and secondly he teaches them in general how they ought to behave towards everyone (5:15). It should be understood that the concern of bishops should be directed toward two things, that is, to prevent others from sinning and to safeguard themselves in this respect.

In treating the first point, Paul does three things; because there are three ways in which persons subject to authority may fail: first, in action; secondly, in the will; thirdly, in virtue.

They fail in action when they give themselves over to the act of sinning; and then

they ought to be corrected. And, although they ought to be corrected concerning every sin, they should be corrected especially with respect to the sin of idleness, and so Paul remarks: *admonish the idle*. "We were not idle when we were with you" (2 Thess. 3:7). "Question your neighbor before you threaten him" (Sir. 19:17).

Their will may be at fault if no great tasks are undertaken because they are despondent as a result of their adversities and their earlier sins. Consequently Paul says, *encourage the fainthearted*. A person is considered fainthearted if he has no courage for great things because he is afraid of failing. "Say to those who are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not!" (Is. 35:4). "Your words have upheld him who was stumbling" (Job 4:4).

They fail in virtue, whenever they sin because of weakness or are halfhearted in a good act; and these people need to be encouraged. So Paul remarks, *help*, that is, befriend in all charity, *the weak*, for their power is weak for resisting evil or for doing charitable works. "We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak" (Rom. 15:1).

A bishop ought to guard himself against a fault of any kind, and mainly against impatience, for he is bearing the full burden of the group. "I am not able to carry all this people alone, the burden is too heavy for me" (Num. 11: 14). Hence he says, *be patient with them all*. "Good sense makes a man slow to anger" (Prov. 19:11).

Then, when Paul says: *see that none of you repays evil for evil*, he shows them in general how they ought to behave towards everyone. And concerning this, he does two things: first, he shows how everyone should behave in certain matters; secondly, he shows how they should behave in all things (5:21). In regards to the first, he makes three points: first, he shows how they ought to behave towards their fellow men; secondly, how to behave in matters that pertain to God (5:16); thirdly, how to conduct themselves with respect to His gifts (5:19).

They should not be mean to their fellow men but should try to be kind to them. Paul says that earlier I spoke in particular, but now I say this in general: *see that none of you repays evil for evil*. "If I have requited my friend with evil let the enemy pursue me..." (Ps. 7:4).

On the other hand, repayment is frequently sought before a judge. I wish to point out that the moral act is specified by the intended end. The intention, however, can be of two kinds, that is, either the mere misfortune of someone may be desired, and this is illicit because of the evil character of revenge: or the act may be aimed at the good of correction or of that of justice and the protection of the public interest. And, in this case, it does not render evil for evil but rather good, which is the corrective for evil.

Concerning the second point, Paul says, *always seek to do good*. And he says *seek* and not “do,” for it is you who must seek opportunity for doing good to your neighbor without waiting for him to supply you with an opportunity for doing good to him. “Seek peace, and pursue it” (Ps. 34:14). “Do not be overcome by evil” (that is, so that you be attracted by it for doing wrong) “but overcome evil with good” (Rom. 12:21). “As we have opportunity, let us do good to all men” (Gal. 6:10).

Then when Paul says: *rejoice always*, he shows how they ought to behave towards God; and he mentions three things. First, to rejoice in Him; and so Paul says, *rejoice always*, that is, in God; for whatever evil might occur, it is incomparable to the goodness which is God. Hence, no evil ought to interrupt it, and so Paul insists: *rejoice always*. Secondly, to pray for the blessings they want to receive. Paul urges, *pray constantly*. “They ought always to pray and not lose heart” (Lk. 18: 1).

How is this possible? It may happen in three ways. First, that person who does not neglect the appointed hours for prayer, prays always. “You shall eat at my table always” (2 Sam. 9:7). Secondly, “Pray constantly” means to pray continuously. But then prayer is considered under the aspect of the effect of the prayer. For prayer is the unfolding or expression of desire; for when I desire something, then I ask for it by praying. So prayer is the petition of suitable things from God; and so desire has the power of prayer. “O Lord, thou wilt hear the desire of the meek” (Ps. 10: 17). Therefore, whatever we do is the result of a desire; so prayer always remains in force in the good things we do; for the good things we do flow forth from the desire of the good. There is a commentary on this verse pointing out: “He does not cease praying, who does not cease doing good.” A third way by which it is possible to pray without ceasing is through the giving of alms which may be a sort of cause of continual prayer. In the lives of the Fathers we read: “He who gives alms is the one who always prays, for the person who receives alms prays for you even when you are asleep.”

The third thing he mentions is to offer thanks for those blessings already received, hence Paul says: in all *circumstances*, that is, in good times and in bad times, *give thanks*. “We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him” (Rom. 6:28). “Abounding in thanksgiving” (Col. 2:7). “With thanksgiving” (Phil. 4:6). *For this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you*. “Who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4).

Then when he says, *do not quench the Spirit*, he shows them how they are to regard the gifts of God. First, Paul shows that they must not curtail them; secondly, that they must not have a disdain for the gifts of God (5:20). The Holy Spirit is a divine, incorruptible and eternal person; and so He cannot be extinguished in His own substance. Nevertheless someone is said to quench the

Spirit, in one way, by extinguishing the ardor for the Spirit either in himself or in somebody else. "Be aglow with the Spirit" (Rom. 12:11). For when somebody wishes to do something generous as a result of the impulse of the Holy Spirit, or even when some generous inclination arises, and the person impedes it, he extinguishes the Holy Spirit. "You always resist the Holy Spirit" (Ac. 7:51).

In another way one may extinguish the Holy Spirit by mortal sin. For the Holy Spirit always abides in Himself; but He abides in us when He makes us abide in Him. But when somebody commits a mortal sin, the Holy Spirit does not abide in him. "For a holy and disciplined spirit will flee from deceit, and will rise and depart from foolish thoughts, and will be ashamed at the approach of unrighteousness" (Wis. 1:5).

A third way in which one may extinguish the Spirit is by concealing Him; this is meant to imply that if you have the gift of the Spirit, make use of it for the benefit of your neighbors. "Hidden wisdom and unseen treasure, what advantage is there in either of them? (Sir. 20:30). "Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house" (Matt. 5:15).

Do not despise prophesying. For some among these people were gifted with prophecies but were considered insane by them. "Earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy" (1 Cor. 14:1). Or else *prophesying* may be understood as divine doctrine; for those who explain divine doctrine are called prophets. In this case, do not despise the words of God and preachers. "For the word of the Lord has become for me a reproach and derision all day long" (Jer. 20:8).

'Men when he says, *but test everything*, he shows how they ought to behave towards everything; and one piece of advice is that they should make use of discretion in all matters. "Your spiritual worship" ["Your reasonable service"] (Rom. 12:1). In this matter there should be a careful examination the election of the good, and the rejection of the evil.

In treating the first point Paul says, *do not despise prophesying*, nevertheless, *test everything*, that is, those which are dubious; for matters that are evident do not require examination. "Do not believe every spirit" (1 Jn. 4: 1). "Does not the ear try words?" (Job 12:11). Concerning the second, he says, *hold fast what is good*. "For a good purpose it is always good to be made much of" (Gal. 4:18). In regard to the third point, Paul says of evil: *abstain from every form of evil*. "He knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good" (Is. 7:15). And he says, *every form* because we are obliged to avoid even those actions which only have the appearance of evil, that is, which we cannot perform in the sight of men without causing scandal.

Then, when Paul says: may *the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly*, he interjects a prayer; and he does three things. First, he prays on their behalf;

secondly, he indicates that his prayer will be heard; and finally he issues special admonitions. Paul says, I have given my advice; but remember that nothing will come of it unless God gives you grace. Therefore, *may the God of peace himself sanctify you*. "I am the Lord who sanctify you" (Lev. 22:32). *Wholly*, that you may be totally holy, and this in order that *your spirit and soul and body be kept sound*.

On account of these words, certain people maintained that the spirit in man is one element and the soul another, thus positing two souls in man, that is, one which animates the body and another which carries on the function of reasoning. These opinions are rejected in the Church's teaching. For it should be realized that these two elements [which are really one] do not differ essentially, but only by reason of the powers present in them. There are certain powers in our soul which are linked to bodily organs, such as the powers of the sensitive part of the soul. And there are other powers which are not linked to bodily organs, but function apart from the body, insofar as they are the powers of the intellectual part of the soul. The latter powers are regarded as spiritual powers in that they are immaterial and separated in some manner from the body in that they are not functions of the body but are referred to as the mind. "Be renewed in the spirit of your minds" (Eph. 4:23). Yet it is called the soul insofar as it animates the body, for this is proper to it. Paul speaks here in a specific sense.

Now there are three elements involved in sin: reason, the sensitive appetite, and the actual actions of the body. Paul is anxious that all three of these areas be free of sin. Since he wants reason to be free of sin, he says: *may your spirit*, that is, your mind, *be kept sound*. For in every sin, reason is corrupted in the sense that every bad person is in some way ignorant. There should be no sin in the sensitive appetite either, and Paul refers to this when he says: *and soul*. Nor should there be sin in the body, and so Paul adds: *and body*. This, however, is achieved when the body is preserved immune from sin.

Paul also says: *and blameless*, instead of "not without sin" which may be attributed only to Christ; but to be "blameless" may also be said of those who, although they may commit venial sins, nevertheless have not committed grave sins by which their fellow men may be scandalized. "Walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless" (Lk. 1:6). And Paul adds, *at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*, that is, persevering until the end of life. Or, perhaps the word *spirit* may refer to the gift of the Holy Spirit, as if implying: may the gift of the Holy Spirit which you have be unimpaired.

Then when Paul says: *He who calls you is faithful*, he expresses the hope that his prayer will be heard, as if saying: it will come about as I hope, for He who calls *you will do it*, that is, He will accomplish it. "The Lord is faithful in all his words" (Ps. 145:13). "And those whom he called he also justified" (Rom. 8:30).

Finally, Paul adds certain familiar admonitions as when he urges prayer: *pray*; and mutual peace: *greet all the brethren with a holy kiss*, not a treacherous kiss as that of Judas (Matt. 26), nor a passionate kiss like that of the lustful woman in Proverbs (7:13).

I adjure you by the Lord that this letter be read to all the brethren. Paul feared that those in charge of the assembly might suppress it because of some of the things contained in it. "The people curse him who holds back grain, but a blessing is on the head of him who sells it" (Prov. 11:26).

Finally, he concludes the letter with a salutation.