

Record of Sermons delivered during the month of
January 2021

(added progressively after each Sunday)

(see following pages)

1 Thessalonians 4:1-18

The Christian Life – Now and In the Future – Part 2

per S Olyott

1 Thessalonians 4:13

¹³ But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope.

What does the world think of a Christian who is always trying to draw attention to himself? What does the world think of ‘busy-bodies’? What does the world think of scroungers? Especially when they name the Name of Christ! Is that a good witness? ... ¹²so that you may walk properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one. What does the world think of Christians who depend on others, when they don’t really need to?

This relates to the Christian life now. Spirituality is not just a great emotional explosion. Being like Christ isn’t just having wonderful feelings. Some people think that you’re really godly if when they walk into the church, everybody gets a shiver down their back: just because you happen to be there. Being godly is keeping away from impurity, because you want to please God. And are living – living – for the welfare of fellow Christians.

That’s the Christian life now.

But the Christian life isn’t only for now. It’s also for the ‘future’. (verse 13 to the end of the Chapter.) Paul now continues in the same spirit. ¹³ *But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, ...* Thank God the Christian life isn’t just for now. But there is something wonderful waiting for us. “Brothers,” he says, “sisters, dear friends, I want to talk to you about it.” Because there was a problem at Thessalonica! Christians were dying and the world was watching. The world was watching these Christians who were sponging. Who were busy-bodies. And the ones who didn’t live as they should were being criticised by that watching world.

In addition the world was watching the Christians at Thessalonica and criticising for another reason: when a Christian died, many of the surviving Christians were as grieving, distraught and upset as the non-Christian’s were. The non-Christians were saying to themselves, “Well what’s the good of Christianity? They talk about a resurrection and all the rest, but it doesn’t seem to mean much to them. Doesn’t seem to make much difference!”

“It’s all about witness,” says Paul. “You shouldn’t be sorrowing like others who have no hope! We sorrow yes – our sorrow is deep, real and sometimes lasting – but we don’t sorrow like those that have no hope.”

Why were they like that? Look at verse 13: because of ignorance – being uninformed! If you have a problem in your Christian life this morning, the cause is almost certainly ignorance. Nearly every problem in the Christian life is caused by the Chris-

tian not knowing something. Or not doing what he knows to do. So very many problems are caused by ignorance.

They were grieving like the world was grieving, because as new Christians who had only been Converted a few months, they actually didn't know: what happens to Christian's when they die. Do you? Olyott reports that one of the biggest problems he faced in Switzerland was in this area. Seventh-day-ism is so strong in Switzerland that most evangelicals there actually don't believe what the Bible teaches, they have been influenced by Seventh Day Adventist teaching! So many Christians in Switzerland actually believe that when a Christian dies he goes unconscious. Amazing!

Word of God doesn't teach that at all. What does Paul teach us here? Well he teaches what happens to Christians when they die: verses 13 & 14. They sleep! Actually that does not mean that they stay unconscious. Paul explains that elsewhere in the New Testament. They sleep. Of course when you see a dead body it looks like they're asleep – at least for a little while. But that's not what Paul means either. When you went to bed last night you went with hope of getting up in the morning. Sleep is something temporary. Christians who die aren't going to remain dead. They appear to be asleep. We don't have any contact with them at the moment. They have none with us at the moment. But the whole thing is temporary.

“They sleep in Jesus,” Paul says in verse 14. The Lord Jesus Christ who redeemed them and saved them is still looking after them. Body and soul! They sleep. They will be awakened out of their sleep. Still verse 14 ¹⁴... *since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.* The ‘Second Coming’, will put an end to all that, as far as the body is concerned. But as we know, their souls will go immediately to heaven, which is far better. Their bodies will remain in the grave. But they will be awakened out of that sleep!

“Now I have something to tell you”, says Paul, verse 15, “What I have to tell you I know by divine inspiration. The Lord Himself has given me a ‘Word’. The Lord Himself has revealed it. Because the Lord Jesus Christ has revealed it to me, I’m telling it to you.”

He tells us 4 things about the last days:

- The Lord will come! Verse 15 ... *until the coming of the Lord, ...*

The Lord Himself will descend from heaven! Jesus Christ, whom the world despises, and who was seen ascending to heaven, will descend from heaven. It won't be a secret coming – He won't be hidden in a manger! ¹⁶ *For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, ... And if that is not enough ... with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God.*

(It really is silly to believe that Christ will come secretly and snatch Christians away and nobody will ever notice! You'd have to believe in a dumb Lord, a dumb archangel and a muted trumpet.)

There will be a great public coming of Christ! At the last day. The Lord will

come!

- Next he tells us that the dead will rise! ¹⁵ *For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.* ¹⁶ *For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.*

Now those Christians who have buried their believing loved ones. It's not for ever. Their souls are already with Christ. When Christ comes back they will come with Him and at that moment their bodies will leap out of the grave. When the Lord descends with a commanding cry; the archangel speaks; and the trumpet of God sounds, the dead will rise. The dead in Christ will rise first. That is, the first thing to happen will be that the graves will give up their Christians. That's what Paul means in 1 Corinthians when he says that the corruptible will put on incorruptibility. (1 Corinthians 15:53)

Some of their bodies in ashes. Some were burnt as Martyrs. Others have rotted in the ground. All very corruptible. But they will put on incorrigibility!

- The third thing that will happen is that living Christians will be changed. ¹⁵ *For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.* The fact is that if we are alive when the Lord comes, we won't have any advantage over those that have died. Their bodies will be raised first: (verse 17) ⁷ *Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air,...*

That's what Paul means in 1 Corinthians 15:54: when he says, ⁵⁴ *When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:*

"Death is swallowed up in victory."

Your body is dying. That is it's mortal. It will die. We all have mortal bodies, but if we are alive when the Lord comes back, this *mortal* will put on *immortality*. It won't die it will be wonderfully transformed. Paul says in 1 Corinthians, (15:52)¹ "in the twinkling of an eye", we shall be changed." In a moment. In a wink! We shall be changed from mortal to immortal, by the coming of Christ.

1 Mystery and Victory

⁵⁰ *I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.*

⁵¹ *Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, ⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. ⁵³ For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. ⁵⁴ When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:*

"Death is swallowed up in victory."

⁵⁵ *"O death, where is your victory?*

O death, where is your sting?"

⁵⁶ *The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

⁵⁸ *Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labour is not in vain.*

There it is, there are the dead being snatched from their graves, and there we are, if we are still alive at that time. We're being changed.

- And the fourth thing he tells us is that the whole family of Christ, will meet the Lord 'in the air' (which is a euphemism for 'Christ's heavenly home') so that we will always be with the Lord. What a reunion that's going to be! Isn't that wonderful! There's no pagan religion that has anything like it. Poor pagans they believe that we become disembodied spirits. ghouls.² Shapeless ghost, without personality, life or identity. That's the best they can hope for.

They never had the 'light' of the Gospel, you see, to enlighten their poor minds. Or the unbelievers all around us they have all these fancy ideas, most of which don't come from the Bible at all.

But God has spoken, in His Word and we know what happens to us. We don't have to live in any uncertainty. Soul and body: we shall be with Christ forever! And with every other Christian – all the loved ones that you've known, that have trusted Christ. They'll be there. All the Martyrs and the Apostles, they'll be there. Even the great patriarchs of the early part of the Old Testament, who have put their trust in the Christ to come, and the Prophets. Those that have put their trust in Christ, just as we've done.

There will be people from every nation and background. We'll all be caught up to be with the Lord, for ever.

"The effect this should have on you," says Paul, verse 18. "is that you should encourage and comfort one another with these words." Sometimes the battle with sexual immorality and temptation is very intense. Sometimes we don't love each other as we should. We're all very well aware that we are not growing in the now – the now, like we should. How long is this battle to go on? How long must we endure the difficulties? How long will the world laugh at us?

Not forever! At last we will be with Christ. There will be no sin; no sorrow; no tears. No disappointments, Nor any separations. We're to comfort one another with these words.

As we conclude this passage we need to say, to recognise, how glorious the Gospel is. There are things taught in the Bible that you could never, ever have guessed. They surpass all measurement when it comes to trying to put a value on them. They are priceless. They are wonderful. But that is the future that awaits the Christian!

Isn't it worth living for Christ now? In the time that remains. That we give all our energies to please Him. Isn't it worth doing battle with evil? Isn't it worth loving one another? Worth being conscientious in the Christian life – seeing what awaits us. Surely that's one of the reasons why Paul gave this teaching about the Christian life now and in the future.

2 Evil spirit or ghost.

[1917]

**Pray for God's grace, through the Spirit of Christ to live in us all, that we may live the new life made possible by the Spirit, for all the saints present today.
Amen**

John 11:30-44
Irresistible Grace

per S Olyott

Psalm 115:3

³ ***Our God is in the heavens; He does all that He pleases.***

A continuation of the occasional interlude: The Five Points of the Compass:

Have you heard that some people, 'lose their bearings'. This could be considered a strange expression. Until we pause to recognise that many of our commonly used expressions have their origins in past ages and countries.

In this case we consider an island nation which had a great sea-faring history.

Once out of the sight of land it was necessary to navigate by a compass or observation of the sun and stars especially when the time from a standard position was able to be known. Once having found their position and using a map they then needed to know the direction they needed to follow to reach their destination. This heading was called their bearing and was based on knowledge of the points of the compass. A bearing might be N 15° E, for example.

Now if they either had no knowledge of North, South, East or West and no means of determining them – their compass was faulty – then they had 'lost their bearings'.

These occasional interludes are called the Five Point of the Compass. Because if you're not to lose your way in the Bible you've got to know and understand the 5 points of the Biblical Compass. If you don't know them you'll 'lose your bearings'.

The whole purpose of these occasional messages is so that:

- those who don't have a clear understanding of the Gospel, will come to a clear understanding,
- those who are confused, will have your thinking clarified, and
- those who already have a clear view of the Gospel, will have your understanding strengthened.

The five Points of the compass are: T U L I P.

- T – stands for Total Depravity. We learned some weeks ago, (9th & 16th August 2020) that everything about you, as a boy or girl; man or woman, is polluted with sin: your feelings, your choosing, your thinking, your doing. It's all polluted with sin! Of course that means that no man or woman, boy or girl, left to themselves will ever chose God.
- U – stands for Unconditional Election. If anyone is to be saved God will have to save them. For God is God. And because God is God, He is free to save who He wills. And He does. The Bible tells us however, that before the world was made, and out of His mere 'good pleasure'. God, for His own glory, chose certain people to be saved. He chose that He would give them everlasting life. And He would bring them to everlasting life; He would bring them to salvation, by means of a Saviour. By means of a Redeemer. That is Unconditional Election

and we have seen, several weeks ago (5th July 2020) that this is taught in the Bible.

- L – stands for Limited Atonement. Because God has chosen certain people to be saved, Jesus Christ died for their sins. God has determined that they will have everlasting life. So Jesus died, not to make salvation possible, but actually to save them. He didn't just open the door to salvation at the cross. He actually took away their sins. He actually did something. He actually accomplished something, to the point where He said, "It is finished!" He actually did turn away the anger of God, which was going to fall on those men and women and took it to fall on Himself. The Cross: something happened there! It wasn't, just, that something was made possible. That was the third Point. (see 11th & 18th October 2020)

Now we recognise that God has chosen to save some men and women who can never save themselves; the Lord Jesus Christ has died to atone for their sins, but those men and women still haven't come into the enjoyment of what God has chosen for them. They still haven't come into the experience of what Christ died to procure for them. The Father chooses; the Son dies; now it's the work of the Holy Spirit that we need to consider.

What He does is this: He 'draws', attracts, brings, into the experience of salvation all the people, that the Father has chosen; all the people for whom the Son has died. He 'calls' them, through working through, the Scriptures. He brings them into the actual enjoyment of what God has chosen them to have; what the Lord Jesus Christ has procured for them. So now we come to the compass Point I.

- I – stands for Irresistible Grace. Sometimes called Effective Calling. God the Father determined to save them; the Lord Jesus Christ obtained their salvation; and so it follows logically that the Holy Spirit will bring them into the experience of salvation. But we don't just depend on logic. It's actually taught in the pages of the Word of God! This morning we should all be happy to be told that the Holy Spirit IS at work in the world. Of that we can be sure and confident!

Today all over the world the Holy Spirit is convincing men and women, young people, boys and girls of their sin. The world doesn't like that word, but the Holy Spirit doesn't depend on the world. He's convincing people of sin. So that they see themselves as sinners in God's sight.

All over the world today and tomorrow and every day until Christ comes back, the Holy Spirit is at work convincing people that because they are sinful, they are miserable. That they can't live another day without God and they dare not die, without God. The Holy Spirit is doing that. All over the world today and hopefully in Churches like ours, the Holy Spirit is working in the minds, the thinking, of people so that they are feeling their need of Christ. And they are being brought to know Him.

All over the world today the Holy Spirit is renewing the will of people. Because left to themselves they will never choose Christ. But people do choose Christ, because the Holy Spirit makes them willing in the day of His power (Psalm 110:3

KJV). All over the world today there are people who are being persuaded, that the Gospel is true. That Jesus Christ is their only hope. That He is the great God-man, who died for sinners and that they must 'come' to Him.

All over the world today, people are hearing Jesus Christ freely offered to them in the Gospel. They're persuaded to come to Him AND empowered to come to Him, by the power of the Holy Spirit! That is the truth that we call: Effective Calling, Irresistible Grace.

Now we should note the extract from the Westminster Confession of Faith: 10 – Effective Calling, points 1 and 2 (What is Effective Calling? and Wholly Gracious) that is reprinted on the back of today's Order of Service (and also the one for Sunday 22nd November 2020).

To which we might add the clause that was added in the London (Baptist) Confession of 1689, with the Biblical proof text of Ephesians 1:19-20: *and that by no less power than that which raised up Christ from the dead.*

Let's ponder that added clause: The very power that went into an 'Eastern' grave, 2000 years ago and resurrected the body of Jesus Christ, is the very same power which brought about your Conversion. At the resurrection Jesus Christ's body was given life by the Holy Spirit. You were dead, in trespasses and sin and the Holy Spirit gave you spiritual life.

With that as the introduction we continue with three points:

1. There is nothing surprising with this truth, Irresistible Grace, if we think it out. Young people, and those not so young, there are three great forces at work in the world. What are they? God, Satan and you. There is a conflict as to who is going to win. Whose will, will be done? Who will have his way? Who's going to prevail? God, Satan or men and women, you?

If Satan has his way nobody will be saved and nobody would ever have been saved. Satan wants to keep all men and women in bondage.

If you have your way – nobody will be saved, because not only do men and women resist the Gospel. They must resist the Gospel, because their nature resists the Gospel. Because God's Word says that: *The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.* (1 Corinthians 2:14)

So if Satan has his way: nobody will be saved! And if you have your way: nobody will be saved! Because left to yourself you will never come to God. So who will have His way? Will the human heart hold out like a strong fortress against God? Will Satan have His way? (If there is a tussle between Satan and us, he will always have his way because he is much stronger than we are.) The doctrine of Irresistible Grace means that God will have His way! That's the whole point of today's message. God is the conqueror!

A true Gospel preacher is delighted to say to all. Again and again: "God defeats

Satan! And God defeats you.”

He powerfully and certainly brings into the enjoyment of salvation, everybody He's chosen. Everybody for whom Christ died. The elect are brought into the experience and enjoyment of eternal life and all the privileges which God has prepared for them. By the work of the Holy Spirit.

Also let's consider this way of looking at it.

If God had chosen someone who is never brought to enjoy salvation. God wouldn't be God! Would He? If Christ had actually taken upon Himself the sins of somebody and then that person didn't come to Christ and had to bear his own sins and the consequences. God's will would have been frustrated. Defeated. His purpose would have been reversed:

Listen to these Bible verses:

*Whatever the LORD pleases, he does,
in heaven and on earth,
in the seas and all deeps.* (Psalm 135:6)

*Our God is in the heavens;
he does all that he pleases.* (Psalm 115:3)

declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose,' (Isaiah 46:10)

all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, "What have you done?" (Daniel 4:35)

Behold, he snatches away; who can turn him back? Who will say to him, 'What are you doing?' (Job 9:12)

In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, (Ephesians 1:11) Note: "according to the counsel of His own will".

Just think of this: The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, counselling together. That is what is meant by 'God's will'. All things are worked according to this 'Counsel of His own will'. It means therefore that everybody whom the Father has chosen. Everybody for whom the Son has died will be brought into the experience of salvation.

People say, "How can grace be grace? How can kindness be kindness, if it's irresistible?" Well they should reconsider. If God's grace was resistible, it wouldn't be grace. Why? Because all of us would choose the wide road which leads to destruction and nobody would be saved. It's precisely because God's grace is irresistible, that it is worthy of the name of 'grace' or 'kindness'. God saves the sinner! What is the sinner like? God saves the sinner, despite the fact that he is a hell-bent sinner, who is determined to go down that wide road.

God's grace intervenes and changes him and changes his understanding and his emotions, affections and his **will**. Then! Then he freely embraces the Jesus Christ that is offered to him in the Gospel. If God didn't conquer him like that

nobody would be saved. We could never talk of the grace of God.

So we have had the introduction of this topic and the first of three points. We will continue next week, starting with point 2: The Bible teaches this truth in the clearest possible way.

[2083]

**Pray for God's grace, through the Spirit of Christ to live in us all, that we may live the new life made possible by the Spirit, for all the saints present today.
Amen**

John 11:30-44

Irresistible Grace – Part 2

per S Olyott

Acts 19:10b

¹⁰ ... **for I have many in this city who are my people.**

A continuation of the occasional interlude: The Five Points of the Compass:

Irresistible Grace!

Now for some selected texts to support the description of what the Bible teaches us to believe, that we began last week.

As always this is only a small sample of the texts that teach that truth.

- John 6:37- 40: Hear the Lord Jesus Christ! "... ³⁷ *All that the Father gives me **will come to me**, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. ³⁸ For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. ³⁹ And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. ⁴⁰ For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."*

That passage teaches us this: Certain people have been given by the Father to the Son. Every one of those will come to the Son. Those are the people who will see the Son and believe in Him, and every one of them, without any exception, will be raised up, at the last day!

Jesus taught it!

- Stay in the same chapter verses 44 - 45: Can't anybody come to God without the 'effectual call'? Would anybody come to God without 'irresistible grace'? Can we come? Will we come, if left to ourselves, verse 44? ⁴⁴ *No one **can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. ⁴⁵ It is written in the Prophets, 'And they will all be **taught by God.**'*** Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me—
As the Gospel is explained and preached, some people hear the 'voice of God' and they learn from the Father. And they come to Him. But they couldn't come unless God Himself drew them. Jesus said so!

That's just a sample of the teaching of Jesus. In Chapter 10 (of John) He talks about His sheep. These are the sheep that were His even before they believed. And He goes on to say that everyone of His sheep will hear His voice.

A strange thing may happen here this morning and wherever the Gospel is preached. As the preacher, preaches, all may hear the words said. But as the preacher is preaching **some** are hearing Christ! That's effectual calling.

When you hear Christ for the first time that's when you become a Christian. Then you hear Him every day after that.

- Acts 16:14. We want to show you that the Bible comes at this truth in different ways. There Jesus does it by precept,³ here we have an actual example of effectual calling. Paul and Silas go to an apparent prayer meeting at a riverside in Philippi, they explain the Word of God: ¹⁴ *One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, (so there she was listening – she was hearing Paul, Silas and Luke) from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshipper of God. (She is already someone who has adopted the Jewish religion) The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul.* Who opened her heart? The Lord! She could never have opened it herself. Could she? Of course not. Being a sinner she sins. Sins which pollute the mind the affections and the will. We are thinking creatures, but we think sinfully – even our best thoughts have sin in them; we are feeling creatures, but we feel sinfully even our best feelings have sin in them; and we are deciding creatures, but we decide sinfully – even our best decisions have sin in them. But ‘the Lord opened her heart’.
- Romans 8:29-30. The classic passage which teaches this great truth! We’ve already seen many weeks ago that *foreknow* means: ‘to intimately love beforehand’. ²⁹ *For those whom he foreknew (intimately loved beforehand) he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.* ³⁰ *And those whom he predestined he also called,* (How many of the predestined are going to be called? All of them!) *and those whom he called he also justified,* (How many of the called are going to be put right with God? All of them! And if you’re put right with God, why is that? Because you’ve been called.) *and those whom he justified he also glorified.*

So God loves them; He calls them; He makes them right with Himself; and He takes them to heaven. Calling is a chief word in the New Testament.

- Galatians 1:15-16a. Let’s now listen to Paul as he explains his own experience of his calling: We continue to see how the Bible comes at this truth differently. Sometimes by precept, sometimes by example, sometimes by doctrine, this time by testimony. ¹⁵ *But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace,* ¹⁶ *was pleased to reveal his Son to⁴ me,...* That’s what

3 a general rule intended to regulate behaviour or thought.
eg. "the legal precept of being innocent until proven guilty"

4 As used in the KJV there is evidence that the ubiquitous Greek word *en* is best translated as “in”! This preposition can have the English equivalent of: in, on, at, with, by, among. Depending on its position in a sentence and the words before and after it. [Notably no direct mention of ‘to’, but the ESV ‘has the grace’ to acknowledge that the Greek is “in”!] There are many examples quoted, at <https://biblehub.com/greek/1722.htm> but the following directly relates to our present case.

2. with the dative of a person, in the person, nature, soul, thought of anyone: thus ἐν τῷ Θεῷ κέκρυπται ἡ ζωὴ ὑμῶν, it lies hidden as it were in the bosom of God until it shall come forth to view, [Colossians 3:3](#), cf. [Ephesians 3:9](#); ἐν αὐτῷ, i. e. in the person of Christ, κατοικεῖ πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα etc., [Colossians 1:19](#); [Colossians 2:3](#) ((?), 9). phrases in which ἡ ἀμαρτία is said to dwell in men, [Romans 7:17f](#); or ὁ Χριστός (the mind, power, life of Christ) εἶναι, ([John 17:26](#)); [Romans 8:10](#); [2 Corinthians 13:5](#); μένειν, [John 6:56](#); ([John 15:4, 5](#)); ζῆν, [Galatians 2:20](#); μορφουσθαι, [Galatians 4:19](#); λαλεῖν, [2 Corinthians 13:3](#); ὁ λόγος τοῦ Θεοῦ εἶναι, [1 John 1:10](#); μένειν, [John 5:38](#); ἐνοικεῖν or οἰκεῖν ὁ λόγος τοῦ Χριστοῦ, [Colossians 3:16](#); τὸ πνεῦμα (of God, of Christ), [Romans 8:9, 11](#); [1 Corinthians 3:16](#); [2 Timothy 1:14](#); τὸ ἐν τίνι χάρισμα, [1 Timothy 4:14](#); [2 Timothy 1:6](#); ἐνεργεῖν ἐν τίνι, [Matthew 14:2](#); [Ephesians 2:2](#); [1 Corinthians 12:6](#), etc.; ἐνεργεῖσθαι, [Colossians 1:29](#); κατεργάζεσθαι, [Romans 7:8](#). after verbs of revealing, manifesting: ἀποκαλύψαι ἐν ἐμοί, in my soul, [Galatians 1:16](#); φανερόν ἐστιν ἐν αὐτοῖς, [Romans 1:19](#). ἐν ἑαυτῷ, ἐν ἑαυτοῖς, within oneself, i. e. in the soul, spirit, heart: after the verbs εἰδένα, [John 6:61](#); εἶπεῖν, [Luke 7:39](#); [Luke 18:4](#); ἐμβρίμασθαι, [John 11:38](#); στενάζειν, [Romans 8:23](#); διαλογίζεσθαι, [Mark 2:8](#) (alternating there with ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις, cf. [Mark 2:6](#)); [Luke 12:17](#); διαπόρειν,

calling does. God chose me; I didn't know Him; God chose me, but I still didn't know Christ. I still hadn't seen Christ for myself. I didn't have anything in my heart for Christ. But I did – when God called me!

- 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14. Here Paul is describing the experience of a whole Church. The Church at Thessalonica. He talks several times in his two letters, about their Conversion. Here he does it again.

¹³ *But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, (so he doesn't say, "Congratulations on becoming a Christian." He says, "We thank God for you, because God loved you."*

*But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you from the beginning⁵ to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. ¹⁴ To this he **called** you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

The Spirit set you apart; you were brought to believe the truth; you were called!

- There are many more but we'll take just one. 2 Timothy 1:9 Here Paul talks about God and then he says this: ⁹ *who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began,* Marvellous! Paul's saying, "Why were we called. Were we better than the others? No. No. According to our works? Not that either, it was because of God's grace, His kindness. And when was it that God set His love on us. Just the day before? The minute before? No! In Christ Jesus, before time began.

There's just the smallest sample, of where we learn about calling in God's Holy Word. It's taught in many other different ways and one of these is the whole picture of resurrection.

Previously we have seen that we are dead in our sins. Let us go to Lazarus' tomb. How long has Lazarus been in his grave? How long has he been in his cave with the stone rolled against the opening? What state is he in?

He's been there 4 days. He's wrapped in linen strips and they put a cloth over his head, with his face still exposed. He's in there and he's already rotting because it's a hot, arid climate.

Jesus speaks! What is the point of speaking to the dead? The point is that Christ's Word is life giving. If you or I stood there and said, "Lazarus. Lazarus, it's not very wise to be dead, you know." We're not going to get much reply. "Lazarus, Lazarus, can't you see that what you're doing at the moment is wrecking the lives of your sisters? Can't you see what unhappiness you bring by dying?" We can use every argument that we can think of, but he won't budge.

But the Lord Jesus Christ comes. Speaks his name. Speaks to him personally. The word of Christ is life giving. We could be asked, "Are we Calvinist?" The answer is

[Acts 10:17](#); λέγειν, [Matthew 3:9](#); [Matthew 9:21](#); [Luke 7:49](#); also [2 Corinthians 1:9](#); for other examples of divers kinds, see εἰμί, V. 4 e.

5 Alternative footnote.

yes, if they know what the word means. And then, “What’s the point of our evangelising?”

The point of us evangelising is this: That we are to announce Christ’s Word. Only that Word is life giving! We announce the Word. Nothing we can do would raise Lazarus. What he needed was the life that only Christ’s Word can give. We are to announce Christ’s Word. And Christ Himself, by His Spirit, makes it personal in the life of this one, and that one, and another. That’s how they come to salvation by the effectual call.

Now we come to part three that we purposed last week. We have seen that this truth has been taught in ‘black and white’ and that it has the concrete effects on a believer’s life. Two effects on a believer’s life. If you believe in effectual calling, irresistible grace, two things will happen to you:

- You will become a worshipper. You ask, “Why did God chose me?” For reasons only known to Him. “How can I know that God chose me? I can’t read ‘God’s book of life’! Why did Christ die for me? Yes, because He loves me. But I can’t know that Christ died specifically for me. I can’t read God’s book. Not until. ... Until I’m called. Until I’m **called!** The only people who are called ARE the people for whom Christ died. The only people who are called are the people who were chosen in eternity. So if I am called, it’s because my name is written in the ‘Lamb’s Book of Life’ written before the world began. I am called because the Son of God loves me and gave Himself for me. I’ve been called! As long as God has been the unchanging, immutable, everlasting God, He has loved me like He loves Himself. He’s proved that in space and time, by the enormously-wonderful death of Christ. It was for me!”

“The proof is that I’ve been called! So I become a worshipper.

Why me! Why me? So nothing becomes more important in all life than the Worship of God. What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits toward me. I will take the cup of salvation and call on the Name of the Lord.” (Psalm 116:12-13)

You become a worshipper. ... Then Paul says, ¹... *walk in a manner **worthy** of the calling to which you have been called* ... Ephesians 4:1. He says it again at: Colossians 1:10. ¹⁰ *so as to walk in a manner **worthy** of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.* “So my expressing worship in praise as a response to God’s wonderfully, gracious calling of me, isn’t the only way I worship. My worship is also the life that I live. How can I live like others? I’m special! Christ died for me. If He died for me, I died with Him. I can’t live like the others. I’ve been redeemed. Bought with a price! I can’t live like other people. My life must be different. I must live like a Christian.”

- That’s the first effect. The second effect is this: having become a worshipper, you become an evangelist. You don’t have to walk into the world’s cemetery and try to think of ways to raise the dead. You know that Christ, by his Word alone, raises the dead. You don’t have to think of some new method. Is there some new method that will raise the dead quicker? Or raise them in larger numbers?

No! There's only one thing in the world – the universe – that will raise the dead.
The Word of Christ!

So whether I'm a personal soul winner. A Bible Class leader or Sunday School teacher or whatever – speaking. Or a preacher – speaking. All I have to speak is the Word of God. The Word of God will do the work.

There are Christ's sheep. As soon as they hear the Shepherd's voice: they'll follow Him.

Sound out that Shepherd's voice! Sound it out confidently. The great sin of the Church in this present age is that men and women are losing confidence in the Bible. They don't believe it does God's work. But it does! It does God's work. Remember: their salvation, in the final analysis, doesn't depend on me, or you, or them. It depends on God. That's why there's hope.

Finally to encourage and warm your hearts go to Acts 18, verses 9-11: Paul is in Corinth. It's really difficult there. Problems, opposition, discouragement. He's tired and weary. He's tempted to give up! He's seen some progress but not much. "Is it worth going on with Gospel work? Is it worth going on with the great work of evangelism? Is it worth going on proclaiming the Gospel? Can I go on?"

⁹ *And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, "Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, ¹⁰ for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people."* ¹¹ **And he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.**

So one final thought for you to go home with: God said: *I have many in this city who are my people.*

[2305]

**Pray for God's grace, through the Spirit of Christ to live in us all, that we may live the new life made possible by the Spirit, for all the saints present today.
Amen**

1 Thessalonians 5:1-28

Parting Words

per S Olyott

1 Thessalonians 5:11

11 Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.

Parting words are always significant. You may see someone for the last time. You take special note of what they may say to you. When people are facing death often they write down their last words. Here the first readers of this letter don't know what is to come. They don't know that there will be a second letter. Paul doesn't know yet that he will write one! Here are his parting words to this church.

So far in this letter we have discovered: It was the year 52; it's a very early document – perhaps the earliest that the Christian Church has. In Chapter one Paul talked about the Conversion of these people in a rather large Greek town. So we learnt a lot about conversion! What it is and how it happens. In Chapter 2: 1-16, Paul reminded them that Conversions took place when he and Silas and Timothy preached. In that way we learnt how to advance the work of Christ. A pure method, holy lives and frank, loving words. Then from Chapter 2:17 to the end of Chapter 3, Paul talks about the encouragement he has received and was giving to the Thessalonians. There we learnt how to encourage one another. The most encouraging thing we can do is to talk to one another about the things of God and live a holy life, so that people can see us 'going on' in the Christian life. In Chapter 4 he talked about the Christian life now and in the future: What does God want from me now? Purity and brotherly love - integrity in my own life and to be filled with affection for fellow Christians; in the future the coming of Christ and the resurrection, transformation and the meeting with the Lord, 'in the air' – so we shall be forever with the Lord.

Let us comfort each other with these words!

So we come to Chapter five: We will divide it into three:

- An illustration – with three examples, (verses 1-11).
- Then exhortations, verses 12-22.
- Finally a conclusion, verses 23-28.

We will begin with the illustration this week and conclude our examination of the passage next week.

An illustration, verses 1-11: It has a central theme but uses 3 examples. The first being in verse 2, where the example is of 'a thief in the night'. Perhaps we need to be reminded that in the early world, thieves only came at night. Unlike our modern examples which are more prevalent during the day, when houses are often empty.

Thieves used to come mainly at night when there were no street lights and they couldn't be seen.

The second example is of a pregnant woman in her labour pains at the birth of her child, verse 3. And a further example, in verse eight – someone dressing in military uniform.

The illustration goes this way: We're in South Bunbury at about 10:25 this Sunday morning, it's about the same local time as this (on a 12 Hour clock cycle) directly across the world from us, but in the night. (Our antipodal position would be: Saint George, Bermuda, some 20,000 surface km away.)

Here it is 'light', there it is 'dark'. Here it's late morning, there it's well into the night. But we and they are nevertheless human beings on the same planet: they in darkness and we in light. Because of our location on the globe of the earth. But the New Testament says, it's like that always. *you have no need to have anything written to you.* So, brothers and sisters, like the times and the seasons it is also quite clear that spiritually some people live in the 'dark' while we live in the 'light'. We are enlightened. But they are not on opposite sides of the globe. They can be in the same class-room; same bus; even the same church; and even in the same bed!

Some are in the dark and some are in the light.

There is a great event coming. The greatest event in the world is the coming of Christ. Some people are in the dark as far as the coming of Christ is concerned. Some, by God's grace, are in the light. They see clearly. So the Apostle Paul in verse 1 is saying, "You're not in the dark, you don't need me to write to you about the times and seasons. It's in God's plan. You don't need me to write to you about the 'day of the Lord'. This great day which is going to end all days. You yourselves know perfectly *that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.*

Of course that does not mean that the Lord is coming back secretly! He himself said that, ²⁵ ... *there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, ...* ²⁷ *And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.* Luke 21:25-28⁶. The Apostle John, also said, "⁷ ... *and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him.*" (Revelation 1:7) You don't need to believe what was taught by the dispensational churches of the nineteenth century! That the Lord comes back secretly and then He has an additional second coming. We should not believe that! It is not the teaching of the Scripture.

There is the 'great day of the Lord', but some people are in the 'dark' about that. To know when a thief is coming – exactly when? In Paul's time there were people going to bed as normal, not knowing that a thief was coming, so they lived as if the thief was never coming. There are people in the world all around us. They're asleep, spiritually.

6 **The Coming of the Son of Man** ²⁵ "*And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves,* ²⁶ *people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world. For the powers of the heavens will be shaken.* ²⁷ *And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.* ²⁸ *Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.*"

They are in the 'dark' and they are living their lives as if their present 'night' – because their world is 'night' – is going to go on for ever. As if the Lord will never come. The very idea of the Lord coming doesn't even enter their thinking. Tomorrow they will open their paper (or more likely turn on their TV or mobile phone), it will be January 25th and it will never occur to them that this might be their last paper! They may go to bed any night without considering that they might wake up in hell! Never think about the coming of Christ.

Therefore they are like the people of verse 3: Peace and safety! When they leave one another they say expectantly, "See you!" Because they are sure that they will see each other again. They say to a friend, "See you next Wednesday." Because they're convinced there will be a next Wednesday. They wouldn't even have the notion to say, "God willing." Not even, "If all Goes well."

In their thinking it's "peace and safety". The world is going on just as it always has, in their thinking. It will keep going on. They're not going to die anyway.

It never occurs to them that the world may end at any moment, by Jesus Christ's great coming.

"I don't need to tell you all that," says the Apostle Paul. When they say, "Peace and safety". But sudden destruction will to come upon them, like labour pains of a pregnant woman, they shall not escape. At least the pregnant woman knows that one day she will give birth. But nevertheless this event can happen when least expected. Certainly coming – but not when. Like the second coming of Christ. It is a certainty. He will come again. God has guaranteed it. He has prophesied it and pledged His word to it. But nobody knows exactly when. We don't know and 'the world' doesn't even think about it.

When that *great day of the Lord* does come they will not escape. Then it will be too late to repent! Too late to seek the face of God. No longer the days of grace and salvation, but the day of terror. When Jesus Christ will burst out of the blue to divide men and women: to put some into everlasting hell – because of their sin. They will not escape!

"But I don't have to tell you about that, brethren," says Paul, in verse 4, "You are not in darkness, so that day will not overtake you as by a thief. Because the 'day of the Lord', which is doom and judgement and damnation for the lost, is life and sunshine and joy for the Christian. In the dark you can't see the thief coming. In the light he doesn't come. The 'day of the Lord' is like a thief to them because it will rob them of everything that they hold precious. The 'day of the Lord' isn't like a thief to us it's like a glorious dawn. When the sun is shining in all its fullness. Early and bright and long. We're not in the dark, you see! We're not sons of darkness. We are sons of light – sons of the day. What they don't think about we look forward to. What isn't in their programme, is to us *the* event on the programme!"

We are not of the dark night, nor of darkness. So Paul takes us in verse 6 to a house: In this house are two sorts of people.

Here are some people sleeping. Why are they sleeping? Because it's nighttime. It's nighttime to them. But here are others. It's not night to them – it's day! And on this day the King is going to come. So while others sleep they are awake. They're alert. Watchful and expectant. They are preparing.

Some sleep because it's nighttime for them and their habit is to get drunk at night. They live like this in their foolishness, as if tomorrow is never going to come – as if the Lord is never going to come – because they are in the dark.

Today the King is coming, so we cannot sleep or live a disorderly life in drunkenness. We get up, get dressed and are ready!

The clothes to be put on are in verse 8: ⁸ *But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation.* All you need, as a Christian, is there. The way to get ready for the 'Lord's coming' is not to guess when He is coming – you'll never get that right! The way to be ready for the Lord's coming is **faith**: knowing, believing and essentially putting all you trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. Then there is **love**: wouldn't it be dreadful when the Lord bursts from the blue for you to be found 'out of sorts' with a fellow Christian whom Christ loves, just as He loves you. Having shed His blood for that person just as He has for you?

Faith and Love and the **hope** of salvation! Not more of riches or ease, but the real ambition of the Christian is the great hope of his salvation, promised at Conversion and accomplished in glory at the great 'day of the Lord'! The climax of God's salvation plan and purpose. "You see," says Paul, "God did not appoint us to wrath. When the last day comes these others will go away to the serious anger of God – His wrath. It's an everlasting anger because it's an everlasting God. It's an infinite punishment because their sin is against an infinite God. But God does not appoint us to that. God appointed us to attain salvation. (As you know salvation is in the past, present and future tense, in the New Testament. It's in the past tense because our sins have been forgiven; it's in the present tense because we have the righteousness of Christ on our account; and it's in the future tense because we will soon be where He is and like He is.) God appointed us to salvation. "Salvation comes", he says, verse 9, "*through our Lord Jesus Christ,*" He died for us. Whether we wake or sleep – that is whether we have to go through the grave or we are still alive when the Lord comes – the outcome will still be the same. We shall live together with Him.

The New Testament's definition of salvation in fact is this: that we will live together with Him! Me .. them .. Him = life!

¹¹ *Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.* It is the way to be ready. You cannot live like the others!

[2099]

**Pray for God's grace, through the Spirit of Christ to live in us all, that we may live the new life made possible by the Spirit, for all the saints present today.
Amen**

1 Thessalonians 5:1-28
Parting Words – Part 2

per S Olyott

1 Thessalonians 5:24

24 He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.

Last week we considered verses 1 to 11. Where Paul presents a powerful illustration. Next we consider verses 12 to 22. From illustration he moves to exhortation. The illustration was the painting of pictures so that we readily get the point he is making. Exhortation is a general standing in front of his troops, speaking in short clipped sentences. To give them instructions:

We're not in heaven physically yet, Christian friends! But we shall be. While not in heaven there are certain duties which are binding on us all as Christian men and women. Here are the ones that Paul recognises, that the Thessalonians sorely needed. And so do we.

First of all he's going to talk about their relationships. Verses 12-15. Then as individuals.

He speaks directly to them: Relationships with your office bearers. "Paul. Who is an office bearer?"

"Someone who labours among you." Here the Greek word⁷ used means, *to labour until weary*. "So, says Paul, "There are men among you who wear themselves out doing what they need to do, among you. They are 'over you', in the Lord ... [That's not popular teaching, but they are.] ... and their job is to speak clearly and honestly to you. Even admonish you. Recognise them. Christ put them in the Church. Give to them the value which Christ has put upon them. ¹³... *esteem them very highly in love because of their work*. You may not always appreciate every quirk of their character, gesture or grimace or everything about them. But remember the work that has been put into their hands! Esteem them highly and love them. Because Christ has put men in the Church to do this work.

Almost every professing Christian, who takes a wrong turn, begins through poor relationships in the local church. Some flit round from Church to Church and never become members. Church membership of course requires a certain deference towards Elders. It's a solemn covenant between other Christians to live in harmony, love and mutual edification with each other, but also to live under the authority of the Church's Elders. Exactly what Paul is saying here. You can't go it alone in the Christian life.

Then the 13th verse concludes with: *Be at peace among yourselves*. Because we all know from church history – maybe from our own experience – that when there is not proper deference given to office bearers, or there is not a proper authority structure in a local church, then there are all sorts of tensions, difficulties and misunderstandings.

⁷ The Greek word used is *kopiaō* (kop-ee-ah'-o). It is found only twice in the New Testament and is used to mean (a) I grow weary, (b) I toil, work with effort (of bodily and mental labour alike). In other words – to labour until worn-out, depleted (exhausted).

“We’re going to be ‘all together with Christ’.” Paul said in verse 10. We should, even now, live together, with Him! Very soon we all will be together with Him. It would be clear hypocrisy to believe that I am going to heaven, together with every blood-bought believer and not to actively cultivate, good relationships with every other believer – here and now! So we’ve got to be at peace amongst ourselves. In every way humanly possible. Avoiding tension, misunderstanding, difficulty or suspicion with our fellow brother or sister in Christ.

Because there should not be contradiction between the ‘great hope’ and the way we currently live.

Paul continues to talk about relationships: we’ve mentioned office bearers and each other and then at verse 14 he recognises that not everybody in the Church is the same. Some are disorderly, undisciplined or idle: that is they are deliberately and publicly, ‘nursing sin’. Warn them! Every Christian is to warn every Christian whose life, openly, doesn’t line up with the Gospel he professes.

Because the Bible teaches ‘the final perseverance of the saints’. This is not the eternal security of the believer. That is: Some people think that they have made a ‘profession of faith’ and can live like the world and still be saved. The Bible repeatedly shows that the proof that you have received a new nature, that God chose to give to you, is that you will follow the will of that new nature and live differently. If you don’t live differently – there is no longer any proof of a new nature. Therefore if you live in contradiction to the Gospel, I’ve got to warn you and tell you that if you live like that, you’ll be a lost man or woman. That’s what warning requires.

However, comfort and encourage, the faint-hearted. Some people do get discouraged easily. They find the Christian life to be hard; all sorts of doubts come into their minds. They are completely devastated when a Christian dies and they can’t see the reason it should happen. They become dis-spirited. But this is not a case were we get them by the shoulders and shake them! Comfort them. You can’t treat everyone alike. You need to be sensitive to what is going on in their hearts.

Help the weak! Don’t say, “There they are – backsliding again!” or “Not that same temptation again!” “Hasn’t he learned yet?” Some people are very weak. Remember we are all weak in certain areas, if we are honest! We fall into sin easily. If you know that your brother or sister falls easily into some particular sin. Give them a hand. Hold them up. Do what you can to help the temptation to be removed or resisted.

¹⁴ ... *be patient with them all*. Thank you, Paul we needed that! We are prone to lose patience with each other. But God doesn’t lose patience with us! Nobody’s fallen heart is more wicked than yours or mine. There’s nothing that others can do that you are not capable of doing. There, but for the grace of God, go you or I. Be patient: even with those that need to be warned.

“Then with the world”, he says, “See that nobody repays evil for evil ... to everyone. It couldn’t be any clearer than that! “Always seek to do good to one another (other Christians) and to everyone (the rest of the world).” When I speak I have to remember that my mouth, belongs to the person I’m speaking to. So it’s to be used to do him

good! Similarly when I act – seek the welfare of the receiver of the act. That’s what the ‘hope’ of the Second Coming means: that’s living the Christian life. It’s no good having that great glorious theological ‘hope’ and living as if it wasn’t true. You’ve got to live so that there is no inconsistency, between the ‘now’ and the ‘to be’. “Those are the matters concerning your relationships”, says, Paul.

But how about you? verse 16, (Some say that *Jesus wept* is the shortest verse in the new Testament – but in the Greek that *is 3 words: Jesus who wept*). ¹⁶*Rejoice always, ... Everyone in Bunbury!* Paul is teaching you that you are responsible for your emotional life. You are responsible for what you feel. Otherwise this command is nonsense. He’s telling you to have a certain form of emotion. So if you are not responsible for those emotions then the verse is nonsensical. Some people agree that they are responsible for their thoughts, words and actions, but they are not responsible for their feelings. Paul contradicts that!

You’re responsible for your feelings, because you are responsible for your thoughts: Jesus meets two fellows on the road to Emmaus with faces as long as a horse. He goes on to say, “What’s biting you?” And they say, “Are you the only fellow from around here that doesn’t know what’s going on?”

“Well tell me.”

“It’s Jesus: we thought He was a great Prophet and how, He would redeem Israel. And it hasn’t happened. It hasn’t come to pass. And then there is all this business about the grave being empty ... ”

Jesus says, “Aren’t you foolish. You’re like you are because you don’t see things as God sees them. Why are you down in the dumps? It’s because you’ve got failed aspirations. You’ve been hoping for something but it hasn’t come true. You’ve been hoping that this Jesus would be a great deliverer, who would throw out the Romans. This hasn’t come true so you’re down in the dumps. Your problem is not what you’re feeling it’s with your thoughts. You’re not thinking like God thinks.” So Jesus opens the Scriptures and explains that the Christ was never to come to throw out the Romans, but to redeem. He went through the Scriptures with them, to show the Christ had to come; to die in that way; had to be buried; and had to rise again. All as the Scriptures had said!

Thus He reforms their thinking and so now they are so overjoyed, they run to tell everybody else. Don’t fall for the modern psychological nonsense, that teaches that there is no connection between your thoughts and your feelings. Your feelings are the reflection of your thoughts. (Except for the rare case where you may have a chemical problem.)

If we were to see things as God sees them? We would obey verse 16!

Verse 17: ¹⁷ ... *pray without ceasing*, .. By that he doesn’t mean just pray most of the time: without ceasing! The commentaries say this is not possible. Why did Paul say it then? We can’t always be on our knees; in Church; or consciously talking to God.

But we can still pray, without ceasing. Because prayer is the lifting up of desires to God. Consider:

- A man comes home from work and is very, very tired. His wife also has had a bad day. They sit down together and they don't say a word. They both understand. There's a communication of spirit between them. A comfort which is given one to the other. No word has been said. ... There's a movement of spirit.
- A man works at a factory machine. He can't be praying out loud all day – nor should he! But he can do what he is doing – unto the Lord.
- The person reading a book for his studies. He can't be praying out loud and reading a book on the fusion of deuterium atoms at the same time – not even Einstein. But he can do it unto the Lord. (Colossians 3:23-24) A movement of spirit.

That's what Paul is asking. Of course this must be. The Lord is going to interrupt all life processes one day. Things are going to be going on fairly normally: *eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage* ... (Matthew 24:37-38)⁸ At that moment the Lord will come and stop it all. Wouldn't it be awful to be doing ordinary things, but to be found to be not doing them in Him.

¹⁶ *Rejoice always,* ¹⁷ *pray without ceasing,* ¹⁸ *give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.* “No moaning!” says Paul, “Whatever hits you.” Do what one Christian did when she put over her bed: Hallelujah! Anyway! In everything give thanks, because behind it all, there is the hand of God. (If you don't believe that, then you don't believe in God. Because you're accepting that there are some things that are outside His control. Or bigger than He is.)

In everything give thanks. No grumbling! No complaining! No bitterness! You're in Christ aren't you? Then whatever it is: this is God's will for you.

¹⁹ *Do not quench the Spirit.* “Is there anything in your life? Says Paul. “Stopping the free movement of the Spirit.” Blatant sin stopped blessing coming to Israel. Is there a Christian, nursing a sin. A bitterness. An element of un-forgiveness. Or a deliberate cultivation of something in secret, that you know, like Eve knew, that is contrary to the revealed will of God – but you're doing it anyway! There's dirt in the pipe and the Spirit isn't flowing. Because of you.

²⁰ *Do not despise prophecies,* Some have the gift to teach from God's Word. Don't despise them for this. As for the meaning in Paul's time, there were then those that had direct revelation from God, as Paul and the other Apostles had. This was foreshadowed by Christ (John 14:25-27).⁹ Once the totality of the Scriptures were committed to writing and the Apostles had completed their job. Such direct instruction was no

⁸ Matthew 24: ³⁷ *For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.* ³⁸ *For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark,*

⁹ John 14: ²⁵ *“These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you.* ²⁶ *But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.* ²⁷ *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.*

longer necessary. It ceased! There is now no more direct, infallible, heaven sent revelation to the Church, now that the Scripture is complete.

Yet the Holy Spirit is still at work in each individual Christian, principally helping us interpret the Word He has caused to be written (Old and New Testaments); teaching us what to Pray – the will of God; taking our barely thought-out words, refining and taking them to God; maintaining our ‘new heart’; and guiding our wills. And things will occur to us that might be specific directions from God, through His Spirit. ²¹ *but test everything; hold fast what is good.* ²² *Abstain from every form of evil.* Picture the man who is prospecting. Carefully examining his sample: which is gold and which is false? Keeping the gold and throwing out the dross. Do that with everything you hear; book you read; every sermon; every hymn you sing; every thought that comes into your head¹⁰; every dream and every prayer. Weigh it up and keep the gold. *hold fast what is good.*

Anything that looks, in any way, evil. Away with it!

That’s how you’ve got to live until the Lord comes.

Those were the exhortations from Paul to the Thessalonians and us.

Briefly now, the conclusion: verse 23-28: Our God is a God of peace. “Oh,” says Paul, “May God set you apart in all aspects of your life for Himself. When the Lord, Jesus Christ comes, let you be found as the people who have been preserved for Him. May there be nothing about you in any area which is grievous to Him or harmful to you. ²³ ... *may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.* ²⁴ *He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.*

“Despite all your imperfections and all the things, I’ve had to say to you,” says Paul, “God will continue His work and when Christ comes you will be seen to have been preserved in Him. He called you to be a Christian! I don’t believe He will let you go. He’s too faithful for that.”

“Pray for me. Pray for Silas. Pray for Timothy. And pray for each other. Every Christian should greet each Christian sincerely – as the custom of the times allows.” We are Christ’s body. Brothers and sisters – family.

Here is one command we have now obeyed: ²⁷ *I put you under oath before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers and sisters.*

But in our strength we can’t fulfil the commands from Paul for our Christian lives, so he concludes with a benediction that confirms the source of our strength: ²⁸ *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.*

[2505]

**Pray for God's grace, through the Spirit of Christ to live in us all, that we may live the new life made possible by the Spirit, for all the saints present today.
Amen**

¹⁰ 1 John 4:1 **Test the Spirits** ¹*Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.*

