

Abounding Grace Christian Church

The Second Coming Letters of Paul – Part 12

First Thessalonians

I. Exposition of Chapter Five (continued).

A. **Verses 9-11** – “For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.”

1. **Verse 9** - “...God did not appoint us to wrath...” – The reason we can have the “...hope of salvation...” (verse 8), is because we’ve not been appointed to God’s wrath. The word “wrath” is defined as: “**divine punishment based on God’s angry judgment against someone**”¹ God’s Wrath isn’t a fit of temper, but His unchanging attitude toward sin in any form. The unsaved already have the “**wrath of God**” abiding on them (John 3:36). God has delivered the Christian from this “wrath,” and desires that all men might be delivered from it. God’s wrath is described as “**vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ**” (II Thessalonians 1:7-9).

“The permanent attitude of the holy and just God when confronted by sin and evil is designated his ‘wrath’ ... It is rather a personal quality, without which God would cease to be fully righteous and his love would degenerate into sentimentality. His wrath, however, even though like his love it has to be described in human language, is not wayward, fitful or spasmodic, as human anger always is. It is as permanent and as consistent an element in his nature as is his love.”²

2. “...but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ...” – The word “salvation” means: “**deliverance, preservation, safety**”³ This is often referred to as an “**all-inclusive**” word pertaining to deliverance. Dr. Herbert Lockyer writes:

“Throughout the Bible the term is associated with a salvation or deliverance from physical diseases (Luke 7:50), as well as freedom from material wants. The ‘great salvation’ is the greatest manifestation of God’s power to deliver, namely the salvation from satanic bondage which Christ’s death and Resurrection made possible.”⁴

3. **Verse 10** - “...who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.” – The question arises here as to whether Paul is using “wake” and “sleep” in a literal sense or in a metaphorical sense. In other words, “**Did he mean ‘whether we are alive or dead,’ or ‘whether we are spiritually alert or lethargic?’**”⁵ Either way, both would be true. If we are alive on earth when Jesus comes (“wake”) or, if we have already died (“sleep”), we will “live together with Him.” And, if whether we’re “wake” (alert, watchful) when Jesus comes, or lethargic, (“sleep”) we will still be with Him. Remember, we’re still admonished to stay awake in verses 6-8 and other passages. Though our being spiritually awake isn’t going to affect whether we’re going to heaven or hell, it certainly will affect our life here on earth, our sensitivity to the Holy Spirit, our discerning of the times and knowing what we ought to do in times of tribulation. Of course, if we remain spiritually asleep long enough to no longer believe in Christ, it is possible to affect our spiritual destiny.

“He died for us so that whether we are alert or asleep we will come to life together with him.” – I Thessalonians 5:10 – NET

“Christ died for us so that, whether we are dead or alive when he returns, we can live with him forever.”

I Thessalonians 5:10 – NLT

4. **Verse 11** - “Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.” – This is similar to 4:18. Paul wanted to comfort and edify (build up and strengthen) these believers and wanted them to do the same to each other.

¹Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 489.

²R. V. G. Tasker, “Wrath,” ed. D. R. W. Wood et al., *New Bible Dictionary* (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 1250.

³Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Being Grimm’s Wilke’s Clavis Novi Testamenti* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House., 1977)

⁴Herbert Lockyer, *All the Doctrines of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1964), 159.

⁵Thomas L. Constable, “1 Thessalonians,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 707.

B. **Verses 12-13** – “**And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves.**”

1. **Verse 12** – “**...to recognize those...**” – The word “**recognize**” means: “**to acknowledge the high status of a person or event—to honor, to show honor to, to respect.**”⁶ Apparently there was a problem with a lack of respect for those who had been appointed leaders in the young Thessalonian church. Thomas Constable writes:

“The leaders in view were probably the elders in the Thessalonian church and possibly the deacons and others in positions of leadership (cf. Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 5:17). Clearly there were teachers in the Thessalonian church even though it was a new church. We may assume, therefore, that the apostles had appointed leaders in this church before they departed from Thessalonica, as they had done in the churches of Galatia (cf. Acts 14:23). These leaders were probably Jews who had a solid background in the Hebrew Bible and had come to faith in Christ.”⁷

2. “**...who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you...**” – Two things these leaders were said to be doing was to perform “**labor**” and to “**admonish.**” The word “**labor**” means: “**engage in hard work, implying difficulties and trouble**”⁸ The word “**admonish**” means: “**to provide instruction as to correct behavior and belief**”⁹ The Amplified Bible reads:

“Now also we beseech you, brethren, get to know those who labor among you [recognize them for what they are, acknowledge and appreciate and respect them all]—your leaders who are over you in the Lord and those who warn and kindly reprove and exhort you.” – I Thessalonians 5:12 – Amplified Bible

3. **Verse 13** - “**...esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake...**” – They were asked by Paul to esteem them very highly in love. The kind of love he’s speaking of here is the God-kind of love (agape). This implies that even though these leaders were not perfect and made mistakes, God’s love in them, empowered them to love them in spite of their flaws. Paul adds, “**...for their work's sake...**” which implies for the sake of the work of the Lord, it’s needful for them to highly regard their leaders and walk in love toward them.

4. “**Be at peace among yourselves.**” – This is in the form of a command. It’s an admonition to avoid strife and division at all costs. The word “**peace**” is defined as: “**to cultivate peace, concord, or harmony**”¹⁰ When we walk in the Spirit as opposed to the flesh, we are empowered to be at peace (**Galatians 5:22-23**). Dr. Bob Utley writes:

“...a continual command for believers and a common NT appeal (cf. Mark 9:50; Rom. 12:18; 2 Cor. 13:11). This reflects a common problem in the churches. Christianity embraced men and women from many differing backgrounds (cf. Rom. 14:1–15:13; 1 Cor. 8:1–13; 10:23–33).”¹¹

C. **Verse 14** – “**Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all.**” In this verse, Paul exhorts the believers in four things. The word “**exhort**” means: “**to cause someone to be encouraged or consoled**”¹² The four exhortations are:

1. “**...warn those who are unruly...**” – The “**unruly**” are those “**pertaining to refusing to work—‘idle, lazy, lazily.**”¹³ (cf. **Ephesians 4:28; I Timothy 5:8**).
2. “**...comfort the fainthearted...**” – This basically means encourage the discouraged! We all are called to be encouragers of one another.
3. “**...uphold the weak...**” – This means to assist those who are physically weak or infirmed.
4. “**...be patient with all...**” – This means: “**to continually be longsuffering, not short-tempered (cf. 1 Cor. 13:4).**”¹⁴

⁶Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 734.

⁷Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on 1 Thessalonians* (<http://www.soniclight.com>: Sonic Light Publication, 2022), 75.

⁸Louw and Nida, 514.

⁹*Ibid.*, 414.

¹⁰Mounce *Concise Greek-English Dictionary*, William D. Mounce and Rick D. Bennett, Jr. (e-sword version 1993).

¹¹Robert James Utley, *Paul's First Letters: Galatians and I & II Thessalonians*, vol. Volume 11, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International, 1997), 118.

¹²Louw and Nida, 305.

¹³*Ibid.*, 768.

¹⁴Utley, 118.