

Scripture Text Commentaries

Patrick Damonse

1 Thessalonians

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Patrick Damonse :: Study Guide for 1 Thessalonians 1

Receivers and Responders

"This letter is full of interest because it is certainly among the first of those which have been preserved for us from the pen of Paulo. It was the first he wrote to European Followers, and in it the fundamental things of the Follower life are very clearly set forth."

A. Greeting and thanksgiving.

1. (1 Thessalonians 1:1) Paulo greets the Thessalonian Followers.

Paulo, Silvano, and Timotheo, To the Ekklesia of the Thessalonians in Aleim the Father and the Ruler IESO the Anointed One: Grace to you and peace from Aleim our Father and the Ruler IESO the Anointed One.

a. **Paulo, Silvano, and Timotheo:** Paulo was an amazing man and an apostle of Aleim, but he usually did not work all by himself. Whenever he could, Paulo worked with a team. Here Paulo mentioned the men he worked with.

i. **Silvano** (also known as *Sila*) was a long and experienced companion of Paulo. He traveled with Paulo on his second missionary journey and was imprisoned and set free with Paulo in the Philippian jail (Acts 16:19-30). When Paulo first came to Thessalonica, Sila came with him (Acts 17:1-9). Therefore, the Thessalonians knew **Silvano** well.

ii. **Timotheo** was a resident of Lystra, a city in the province of Galatia (Acts 16:1-3). He was the son of a Greek father (Acts 16:1) and a Jewish mother named Eunice (2 Timotheo 1:5). From his youth learned the Scriptures from his mother and grandmother (2 Timotheo 1:5; 3:15). Timotheo was a trusted companion and associate of Paulo, and he accompanied Paulo on many of his missionary journeys. Paulo sent Timotheo to the Thessalonians on a previous occasion (1 Thessalonians 3:2).

b. **To the Ekklesia of the Thessalonians:** Paulo himself founded the Ekklesia in Thessalonica on his second missionary journey (Acts 17:1-9). He was only in the city a short time because he was forced out by enemies of the Glad Tidings. Yet **the Ekklesia of the Thessalonians** continued alive and active. Though Paulo had to suddenly leave this young Ekklesia, his deep concern for them prompted this letter.

i. On Paulo's second missionary journey, he was imprisoned in Philippi and then miraculously freed from jail – only to be kicked out of the city. Then he came to Thessalonica, the prosperous capital of the province of Macedonia (northern Greece), located on the famous Egnatian Way.

ii. After only three weekends of prosperous ministry (Acts 17:2), he had to flee from an angry mob. He moved on to Berea – again enjoying several weeks of ministry, but soon driven out by the same Thessalonian mob.

iii. His next stop was Athens where he preached a good sermon but had mixed results. By the time he came to Corinth, he was *in weakness, in fear and in much trembling* (1 Corinthians 2:3). At this point of the second missionary journey, it seemed that Paulo was a very discouraged missionary.

iv. While in Corinth, it is likely that Paulo was greatly

concerned about the Ekklesia he had just founded, and he wondered about their state. While at Corinth, Sila and Timotheo came to him from Thessalonica with great news: the Ekklesia there was strong. Paulo became so excited that he dashed off this letter to the Thessalonians, probably his first letter to any Ekklesia. He wrote it just a few months after he had first established the Ekklesia in Thessalonica. After writing and sending this letter, Paulo enjoyed a sustained and fruitful ministry in Corinth – and eventually returned to the Thessalonians.

v. This letter presupposes a basic truth: Paulo thought it important, (even essential) to organize these young converts into a community of mutual interest, care, and fellowship. Paulo "knew better than to leave his young societies with nothing more than the vague memory of pious preaching. The local organization was, as yet, primitive, but evidently it was sufficient to maintain itself and carry on the business of the Ekklesia, when the guiding hand of the missionary was removed." (Edgar Phillips)

c. **Grace to you and peace from Aleim our Father and the Ruler IESO the Anointed One:** Paulo brought this customary greeting to the Thessalonian Followers, hailing them in the **grace and peace** of Aleim the Father.

i. Edgar Phillips on **grace to you:** "The change in the Greek form though slight in sound [*chairein* to *charis*], is great in sense. It is a big step from 'greeting' to 'grace.' Grace fundamentally means 'that which causes joy,' a shade of meaning we may still discern when we speak of a graceful action or the social graces. It comes to mean 'favour,' 'kindness,' and then especially Aleim's kindness to man in providing for his spiritual needs in the Anointed One."

ii. Peter Damonse on **Aleim our Father and the Ruler IESO the Anointed One:** "Paulo's construction, which unites the two under the government of the one preposition in (*en*), places the two names side by side on a basis of equality. It is a clear witness to his conviction concerning the deity of IESO the Anointed One."

iii. "It is important to notice that the first words of 1 Thessalonians are in the form usual at the beginning of a letter of this period. What follows is not a theological treatise, but a real letter arising out of the situation in which the Apostle and his friends find themselves." (Edgar Phillips)

2. (1 Thessalonians 1:2) Paulo's gratitude to Aleim.

We give thanks to Aleim always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers,

a. **We give thanks to Aleim always for you all:** When Paulo thought of the Followers in Thessalonica, his heart filled with gratitude. Paulo started the Ekklesia there in less than ideal circumstances, being run out of town after only three weekends with them (Acts 17:1-10). Yet the Ekklesia was strong and full of life. Paulo knew that this work was beyond him and his abilities and that it was the work of Aleim.

i. "The regularly recurring nature of the thanksgiving is also implied in the use of the present tense of the verb. It is their practice to give thanks to Aleim 'continually, never skipping a single day.'" (Peter Damonse)

b. **Making mention of you in our prayers:** When Paulo prayed for people and Ekklesias, it wasn't necessarily a long

time of intercession. He often simply made **mention** of a Ekklesia or a person in prayer (Romans 1:9, Ephesians 1:16, Philemon 1:4).

i. “And not Paulo alone. The plural implies that all three missionaries prayed together.” (Edgar Phillips)

3. (1 Thessalonians 1:3-4) Why Paulo gave thanks to Aleim for the Thessalonian Followers.

Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labour of love, and patience of hope in our Ruler IESO the Anointed One in the sight of our Aleim and Father, knowing, beloved brethren, your election by Aleim.

a. **Remembering without ceasing your work of faith:** There were things about the Followers in Thessalonica that Paulo simply could not forget. He always remembered them. What he remembered about them, made him thankful.

i. Paulo’s gratitude didn’t come because all the Followers in Thessalonica thought so highly of him. Later, Paulo used a whole chapter defending himself and his ministry against slander and false accusations.

ii. Paulo’s gratitude didn’t come because the Thessalonian Followers were morally impeccable. Later in the letter, Paulo strongly warned them against the failings in regard to sexual impurity.

iii. Paulo’s gratitude didn’t come because the Thessalonian Followers were completely accurate in all their doctrine. He had to correct some of their wrong ideas in that area also.

b. **Your work of faith, labour of love, and patience of hope in our Ruler IESO the Anointed One:** Despite the problems, Paulo was so grateful to Aleim for the Thessalonians because there was an undeniable work of the Holy Spirit and a marvelous change in their lives. The three great Follower virtues were evident among them: **faith, love, and hope**.

i. “Here for the first time, chronologically, in Paulo’s writings we have this famous triad: *faith, love, hope*. But Paulo’s stress is not on these virtues alone, but rather upon what they produce.” (Peter Damonse)

· Therefore, their **faith** produced **work** – as is the nature of true faith.

· Their **love** produced **labour**. There are two different ancient Greek words for work: *ergon* and *kopos*. *Ergon* “may be pleasant and stimulating,” but *kopos* “implies toil that is strenuous and sweat-producing.” (Peter Damonse)

· Their **hope** produced **patience**, which is the long-suffering *endurance* needed to not only survive hard times, but to triumph through them.

c. **Knowing, beloved brethren, your election by Aleim:** Paulo reminded them that Aleim *loved* them (**beloved**) and that He *chose* them (**election**). The two go together. When we *love* someone, we naturally *choose* them.

i. “The phrase *beloved by Aleim* was a phrase which the Jews applied only to supremely great men like MoUse and Solomon, and to the nation of Israhel itself. Now the greatest privilege of the greatest men of Aleim’s chosen people has been extended to the humblest of the Nations.” (Edgar Phillips)

ii. The following verses will explain *why* Paulo was so confident in **knowing** their **election by Aleim**. Paulo saw definite signs that said, “These Thessalonians are Aleim’s elect.” In a sermon on the following passage, Edgar Phillips

found four evidences of election:

· The Word of Aleim coming home with power (*our Glad Tidings did not come to you in word only, but also in power*).

· The reception of Aleim’s Word with much assurance (*and in much assurance*).

· The desire to be like IESO (*you became followers of us and of the Ruler*).

· The existence of spiritual joy in spiritual service (*in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit*).

B. The cause and effect of the changes in the lives of the Thessalonians.

1. (1 Thessalonians 1:5) The Glad Tidings caused the changes in the Thessalonian Followers.

For our Glad Tidings did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake.

a. **For our Glad Tidings did not come to you in word only:** The **Glad Tidings** is not a matter of mere words. In modern culture there is an overflow of information or entertainment that often only amounts to mere words. Yet the Glad Tidings is more than words, it also has **power**.

i. **For our Glad Tidings did not come to you:** Literally, Paulo wrote “**became to you** – proved to be, in its approach to you.” (Edgar Phillips)

b. **Also in power:** The message of IESO the Anointed One has **power**. It has **power** for miracles; **power** for wonderful signs from Aleim; and best of all, it has the **power** to change minds, hearts, and lives.

i. Edgar Phillips on **power**: “Not to be confused with *dynamis*, the plural of *dynamis*, which means ‘miracles’ (1 Corinthians 12:10; Galatians 3:5), the singular does not specify supernatural manifestations but neither does it exclude them.”

ii. “Some take the word *power* to mean miracles. I extend the word to apply to the spiritual power of doctrine... It is the living voice of Aleim, inseparable from its effect, as compared with the empty and lifeless eloquence of men.” (Phillip Prins)

c. **And in the Holy Spirit:** It is a message by the **Holy Spirit**, who works within the hearts of the hearers, to convict, to comfort, and to instruct. If the preacher only speaks, then it is a matter of **word only**, but when the **Holy Spirit** works through the Word, a great spiritual work is accomplished.

i. We sometimes think too little about the *spiritual* operations of the Word of Aleim. There is a spiritual work of Aleim’s Word that goes far beyond the basic educational value of learning the Scriptures.

d. **And in much assurance:** It is a message given in **much assurance**. This describes the preacher who really believes what he preaches. There is no substitute for that **assurance**, and if a preacher doesn’t have it, he should stay out of the pulpit.

2. (1 Thessalonians 1:6) The Thessalonians responded to the Glad Tidings by becoming followers.

And you became followers of us and of the Ruler, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit,

a. **And you became followers of us and of the Ruler:** The

Thessalonians stopped following other things, but followed after Paulo and the Ruler. Paulo says that it was a good thing for the them to follow him, and he wasn't shy about saying "follow me" because he knew where he was going.

i. This shows that Paulo's message included an element of *personal discipleship*. There was a sense in which Paulo personally led these Thessalonian Followers in their spiritual life. They could see his life and were invited to learn from his example.

ii. Paulo repeated this theme several times: *Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. (Philippians 3:17) Imitate me, just as I also imitate the Anointed One. (1 Corinthians 11:1)*

b. **Having received the word in much affliction:** The Thessalonian Followers distinguished themselves because they **received** the Word, **even in much affliction**. The message they heard came with adversity; yet they received it, and Paulo thanked Aleim because of it.

i. "The word for 'affliction' outside the Scriptures usually denotes literal pressure, and that of a severe kind. The corresponding verb, for example, was used of pressing the grapes in wine-making till they burst asunder, and so metaphorically came to mean very great trouble." (Edgar Phillips)

c. **With joy of the Holy Spirit:** When the Thessalonian Followers faced the **affliction** from receiving the Word, they didn't just face it with a resigned fatalism. They faced it **with joy of the Holy Spirit**.

i. Not long before coming to Thessalonica, Paulo and Sila personally experienced the principle of having the joy of the Holy Spirit even in the presence of much affliction – when they sang in the Philippian jail despite their chains and sufferings. They were examples of this same spirit to the Thessalonian Followers.

3. (1 Thessalonians 1:7) The Thessalonians responded to the Glad Tidings by becoming examples.

So that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe.

a. **So that you became examples:** First, Paulo was an example to the Thessalonian Followers. Then *they became examples* to others. This is exactly how the work of Aleim should happen.

b. **To all in Macedonia and Achaia:** The Followers in **Macedonia and Achaia** needed examples, and the Thessalonians supplied that need. This was true even though they had only been followers of IESO a short time. As Followers, we always need others who will *show* us how to follow IESO the Anointed One, beyond the need of *hearing* about how to follow Him.

4. (1 Thessalonians 1:8-10) The Thessalonians responded by sounding forth the Word of the Ruler.

For from you the word of the Ruler has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward Aleim has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything. For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to Aleim from idols to serve the living and true Aleim, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He

raised from the dead, even IESO who delivers us from the wrath to come.

a. **From you the word of the Ruler has sounded forth:** This was part of the good example that the Thessalonian Followers provided. "**Sounded forth**" means "a loud ringing sound, as of a trumpet blast." The good work the Ruler did among the Thessalonians became known all over the region, and everyone talked about the changes.

i. In a cosmopolitan trading city like Thessalonica, the good news could sound forth **in every place** to all the earth.

b. **Your faith toward Aleim has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything:** Paulo said, "You Thessalonian Followers are sounding forth the Word of the Ruler so effectively that you are putting me out of business! **We do not need to say anything!**"

i. Paulo pairs two ideas. The word of the Ruler **sounded forth**, and their **faith toward Aleim has gone out**. Those two aspects are essential if a Ekklesia will spread the Glad Tidings. First, they need a message to spread, and that message first needs to impact *their own* lives. Second, they need the **faith** to go out, so that their **faith toward Aleim** goes out to all the world.

ii. "The mere *preaching* of the Glad Tidings has done much to convince and convert sinners; but the *lives* of the sincere followers of the Anointed One, as *illustrative* of the truth of these doctrines, have done much more." (Edgar Phillips)

iii. "Everybody asked, 'Why, what has happened to these Thessalonians? These people have broken their idols: they worship the one Aleim; they trust in IESO. They are no longer drunken, dishonest, impure, contentious.' Everybody talked of what had taken place among these converted people. Oh, for conversions, plentiful, clear, singular, and manifest; that so the word of Aleim may sound out! Our converts are our best advertisements and arguments." (Edgar Phillips)

c. **How you turned to Aleim from idols to serve the living and true Aleim, and to wait for His Son from heaven:** When the Thessalonians received the Word of Aleim from Paulo, they responded to it by leaving their **idols**, and they gave themselves to **serve the living and true Aleim**. Their reception of the Word and their faith in Aleim was shown as true because they *did* something with the Word of Aleim.

i. **To serve the living and true Aleim:** It seems that the verb *douleuo* (**to serve**) was apparently never used in a religious sense in pagan literature. Peter Damonse quotes Denney: "No Greek or Roman could take in the idea of 'serving' a Aleim... There was no room for it in his religion; his conception of the gods did not admit of it. If life was to be a moral service rendered to Aleim, it must be to a Aleim quite different from any to whom he was introduced by his ancestral worship."

ii. **To wait for His Son from heaven:** "Oh! This is a high mark of grace, when the Follower expects his Ruler to come, and lives like one that expects him every moment. If you and I knew to-night that the Ruler would come before this service was over, in what state of heart should we sit in these pews? In that state of heart we ought to be." (Edgar Phillips)

d. **Even IESO who delivers us from the wrath to come:** Paulo pointed to the essence of salvation in saying IESO **delivers us from the wrath to come**. We are saved from

something, and that something is the righteous **wrath** of a holy Aleim.

i. Later in this letter, Paulo used the expression *Aleim did not appoint us to wrath* (1 Thessalonians 5:9) to refer to Aleim's deliverance of His people in the context of the wrath to come upon the world in the last days. He may have the same idea in mind here. "Used technically, as it so frequently is in the NT, 'wrath' (*orges*) is a title for the period just before Moseea's kingdom on earth, when Aleim will afflict earth's inhabitants with an unparalleled series of physical torments because of their rejection of His will." (Edgar Phillips)

ii. Whether he means the wrath of the Great Tribulation or the ultimate wrath of eternity, either must be urgently avoided. "A timorous man can fancy vast and terrible fears; fire, sword, racks, scalding lead, boiling pitch, running bell-metal. Yet all this is but as a painted fire to the wrath to come, that eternity of extremity, which graceless persons shall never be able to avoid or to abide." (Edgar Phillips)

Patrick Damonse :: Study Guide for 1 Thessalonians 2

Marks of Paulo's Ministry

A. Paulo proves he was sincere and not a charlatan.

1. (1 Thessalonians 2:1-2) The integrity of Paulo's ministry in Thessalonica.

For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain. But even after we had suffered before and were spitefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we were bold in our Aleim to speak to you the Glad Tidings of Aleim in much conflict.

a. **For you yourselves know:** This begins a section where Paulo defended his own character and ministry before the Thessalonians. This wasn't because Paulo was insecure about his ministry, but because he had many enemies in Thessalonica (Acts 17:5-6 and 17:13) who discredited him in his absence, especially because of his hurried departure from Thessalonica. Paulo's enemies said he left town quickly because he was a self-serving coward.

i. "This self-revelation is not being made because the Thessalonian believers themselves were suspicious or doubtful about the missionaries. Paulo is answering the insidious attacks being made by scandalmongers outside the Ekklesia because of their hatred for him." (Peter Damonse)

ii. Paulo wrote here in a personal manner, but this really wasn't a personal issue for Paulo. He knew that it mattered for the sake of the Glad Tidings. If Paulo was discredited, then the Glad Tidings message itself would be discredited.

iii. "Paulo's emphatic calling of the Thessalonians to witness did two things. In the first place it showed his confidence in them. He had no fear they would succumb to the propaganda being put before them. In the second place it demonstrated that all the facts required for his vindication were facts of common knowledge." (Edgar Phillips)

iv. Edgar Phillips saw the following false charges against Paulo, evident from the way Paulo explained himself in this chapter:

- "Paulo has a police record and is therefore untrustworthy" (1 Thessalonians 2:2, *suffered before* referring to his imprisonment in Thessalonica).

- "Paulo is delusional" (1 Thessalonians 2:3, *error*).

- "Paulo's ministry is based on impure motives" (1 Thessalonians 2:3, *uncleanness*).

- "Paulo deliberately deceives others" (1 Thessalonians 2:3, *in deceit*).

- "Paulo preaches to please others, not Aleim" (1 Thessalonians 2:4, *not as pleasing men*).

- "Paulo is in the ministry as a mercenary, to get what he can out of it materially" (1 Thessalonians 2:5, 2:9, *nor a cloak for covetousness*).

- "Paulo only wants personal glory" (1 Thessalonians 2:6, *nor did we seek glory from men*).

- "Paulo is something of a dictator" (1 Thessalonians 2:7 *we were gentle among you*).

b. **Our coming to you was not in vain:** The word **vain** here can refer either to the *result* of the ministry, or the *character* of the ministry. Because it was evident to everyone that Paulo's ministry in Thessalonica was a success, it is better to

see it as a reference to the *character* of Paulo's ministry. His coming was not empty or hollow, as if he were a mere salesman or marketer.

c. **Even after we had suffered before and were spitefully treated at Philippi:** Paulo reminds the Thessalonians of his sufferings in the ministry. Through this, he made the point that he would not carry on in the face of beatings and conflict if he were in it only for himself. When Paulo arrived in Thessalonica, the wounds on his back from Philippi were still fresh. If Paulo was in it for himself, he wasn't very smart about serving his own self-interest.

i. "Acts 16:23-24 records that the suffering included a public flogging and having their feet in stocks while confined in the city's inner prison. Such a Roman flogging was no light matter; it was an experience not soon forgotten." (Peter Damonse)

ii. "We know that indignity and persecution weaken and indeed completely break men's minds. It was, therefore, a work of Aleim that, although Paulo had suffered various misfortunes and indignity, he appeared unaffected, and did not hesitate to launch an assault on a large and wealthy city for the purpose of leading its people captive to the Anointed One." (Phillip Prins)

d. **We were bold in our Aleim to speak to you the Glad Tidings of Aleim in much conflict:** Despite what some of Paulo's accusers said, he did not only preach the Glad Tidings when it was easy or convenient. He knew what it was like to speak boldly for the Ruler even **in much conflict**.

i. **We were bold in our Aleim to speak:** "It comes from two words meaning literally 'all speech.' It denotes the state of mind when the words flow freely, the attitude of feeling quite at home with no sense of stress or strain. This attitude includes both boldness and confidence." (Edgar Phillips)

ii. "The word rendered *conflict* (*agon*) contains a metaphor drawn from the athletic games or the arena. It means the place of contest, and then the contest itself – a race, a struggle, a battle. Such a conflict always involves intense exertion and strenuous, persistent effort to overcome the determined opposition or the dangerous antagonist." (Peter Damonse)

2. (1 Thessalonians 2:3-5) The integrity of Paulo's message in Thessalonica.

For our exhortation did not come from error or uncleanness, nor was it in deceit. But as we have been approved by Aleim to be entrusted with the Glad Tidings, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but Aleim who tests our hearts. For neither at any time did we use flattering words, as you know, nor a cloak for covetousness; Aleim is witness.

a. **For our exhortation did not come from error or uncleanness:** The purity of Paulo's message made it apparent that there was no **deceit**, **uncleanness**, or **guile** in his ministry. In the first century world Paulo lived in, there were many competing religions, and many ministers of those religions were motivated by greed and gain.

i. The city of Thessalonica sat on the Egnatian Way, the famous highway that went east to west through Macedonia. Thessalonica was also an important port and a melting pot city with cultures from all over the world. There were a staggering

variety of religions and religious professionals in Thessalonica. In this city, you would find the worship of the gods of the Olympian pantheon, especially Apollo, Athena, and Hercules. There were the native Greek mystery religions, celebrating Dionysus and the sex and drinking cult. The Greek intellectual and philosophical traditions were also represented. There were shrines to many Egyptian gods: Isis, Sarapis, Anubis. Also present were the Roman State cults that deified the political heroes of Rome. There were also the Jewish people and the Aleim-fearing Nations.

ii. Most of these religions were missionary minded, and sought to spread their faith using itinerant evangelists and preachers. Most of these missionaries were opportunists, who took everything they could from their listeners, and then moved on to find someone else to support them.

iii. "There has probably never been such a variety of religious cults and philosophic systems as in Paulo's day... 'Holy men' of all creeds and countries, popular philosophers, magicians, astrologers, crack-pots, and cranks; the sincere and the spurious, the righteous and the rogue, swindlers and saints, jostled and clamoured for the attention of the believing and the skeptical." (Neil, cited in Edgar Phillips)

iv. Commentators divide as to if the **uncleanness** Paulo defended himself against in 1 Thessalonians 2:3 was uncleanness of spirit or uncleanness of the flesh. The *context* seems to suggest more of a uncleanness of motive or spirit, while the word itself more indicates moral and especially sexual uncleanness (it often appears in lists with the term *fornication*).

b. **As we have been approved by Aleim:** Paulo used a word here that was associated with approving someone as being fit for public service. "Just as Athenians were tested for their fitness before they were allowed to assume public office, so the missionaries were tested before they were commissioned as Aleim's messengers." (Peter Damonse)

c. **Even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but Aleim who tests our hearts:** Paulo knew his Glad Tidings wouldn't always please men, but he knew that it was pleasing to Aleim.

i. Paulo tried to make the Glad Tidings as attractive as possible, but he never changed its central character or focus. Paulo never compromised issues like man's need, Aleim's Saviour, the tree, the resurrection, and the new life.

ii. "True grace is of a most masculine, disengaged, noble nature, and remits nothing of its diligence either for fear of a frown or hope of a reward." (Edgar Phillips)

d. **For neither at any time did we use flattering words, as you know, nor a cloak for covetousness:** Paulo understood that **covetousness** always has a **cloak**. It is always concealed by a noble sounding goal. But Paulo did not use the **flattering words** that often are a **cloak for covetousness**.

i. Edgar Phillips on **flattering words**: "We can use this English term of remarks which, though insincere, are directed to the pleasure of the person being flattered. The Greek term has rather the idea of using fair words as a means of gaining one's own ends."

ii. Edgar Phillips on **covetousness**: "*Pleonexia* is self-seeking of all types, a quest for anything that brings self-satisfaction. It grows out of complete disinterest in the rights of others – an

attitude foreign to Paulo and his helpers."

iii. "Where greed and ambition hold sway, innumerable corruptions follow, and the whole man turns to vanity. These are the two sources from which stems the corruption of the whole of the ministry." (Phillip Prins)

iv. "Hear this, you that preach the Glad Tidings! Can you call Aleim to witness that in preaching it you have no end in view by your ministry but His glory in the salvation of souls? Or do you enter into the priesthood for a morsel of bread, or for what is ominously and impiously called a *living*, a *benefice*?... Is Aleim witness that, in all these things, you have no cloak of covetousness?... But woe to that man who enters into the labour for the sake of the hire! he knows not the Anointed One; and how can he preach him?" (Edgar Phillips)

3. (1 Thessalonians 2:6-7) Paulo's gentle, humble attitude among the Thessalonians demonstrated his motives were pure.

Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, when we might have made demands as apostles of the Anointed One. But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children.

a. **Nor did we seek glory from men:** When Paulo ministered among the Thessalonians, he was unconcerned for his personal glory. He didn't need fancy introductions or lavish praise. His satisfaction came from his relationship with IESO, not from the praise of people.

i. Paulo didn't **seek glory from men** because his needs for security and acceptance were met primarily in IESO. This meant that he didn't spend his life trying to seek and earn the acceptance of man. He ministered from an understanding of his identity in IESO.

ii. "We did not seek men's honour, high esteem, or applause; we sought them not in the inward bent of our thoughts, or the studies of our mind, not in outward course of our ministry and conversation, to form them so as to gain glory from men. Though honour and esteem was their due from men, yet they did not seek it. Honour is to follow men, men not to follow it." (Edgar Phillips)

b. **When we might have made demands as apostles of the Anointed One:** Paulo was among the Thessalonians to *give* something to them, not to *take* something from them. He did not come making demands as an apostle.

c. **But we were gentle among you:** Paulo was like a **nursing mother**, who only looks to *give* to her child. Though some among the Thessalonians had accused Paulo of ministering out of self interest, but Paulo simply asks the Followers in Thessalonica to remember the **gentle** character of his ministry **among** them.

i. There is a valid debate as to if 1 Thessalonians 2:7 should read *gentle* or *babes*. Nevertheless, "Whichever version is preferred, however, there can be no doubt that Paulo is describing his voluntary submission to them." (Phillip Prins)

ii. "Paulo's statement of defence falls into two parts, a negative and a positive.... It is his practice first to sweep away the false, and then with the ground cleared to set forth the positive presentation of the truth." (Peter Damonse)

4. (1 Thessalonians 2:8-9) Paulo's self-support and hard work among the Thessalonians demonstrated that his motives were pure.

So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the Glad Tidings of Aleim, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us. For you remember, brethren, our labour and toil; for labouring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the Glad Tidings of Aleim.

a. **We were well pleased to impart to you not only the Glad Tidings of Aleim, but also our own lives:** The sacrifices Paulo endured for the sake of ministry to the Thessalonians were not a burden. He was **well pleased** to do it, because Paulo was **affectionately longing** for the Thessalonians **because they had become dear** to Paulo and his associates.

i. **Affectionately longing for you:** “Is from an extremely rare verb of obscure origin. Wohlenberg conjectured that it was ‘a term of endearment derived from the language of the nursery.’ Whatever its origin, it denotes the warm affection and tender yearning that the missionaries felt for their spiritual babes at Thessalonica.” (Peter Damonse)

b. **But also our own lives:** Paulo’s preaching was effective because he gave not only the Glad Tidings, but himself as well (**also our own lives**), and he gave because of love (**you had become dear to us**).

i. It has been said that people don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care. Paulo gave both his *care* and his *knowledge* to the Thessalonians.

c. **For you remember, brethren, our labour and toil:** Paulo recognized his right to be supported by those he ministered to (1 Corinthians 9:14), but voluntarily gave up that right to set himself apart from missionaries of false religions. Paulo denied his rights and took a higher standard upon himself.

i. “Paulo means by the phrase, *night and day*, that he started work before dawn; the usage is regular and frequent. He no doubt began so early in order to be able to devote some part of the day to preaching.”

ii. “There can be no doubt that there was some worthy and particular motive which induced him to refrain from claiming his rights, for in other Ekklesias he exercised the privilege accorded to him as the others had done.” (Phillip Prins)

5. (1 Thessalonians 2:10-12) Paulo’s own behaviour and message to the Thessalonians demonstrates the integrity of his character before Aleim and man.

You are witnesses, and Aleim also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe; as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children, that you would walk worthy of Aleim who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

a. **You are witnesses, and Aleim also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe:** It is impressive that Paulo could freely appeal to his own life as an example. Paulo didn’t have to say, “Please don’t look at my life. Look to IESO.” Paulo wanted people to look to IESO, but he could also tell them to look at *his* life, because the power of IESO was real in his life.

i. As seen in 1 Thessalonians 1:6, Paulo was comfortable in the idea of other Followers following his example. He repeated the same idea in passages like Philippians 3:17 and 1 Corinthians 11:1.

ii. This is a worthy goal for any Follower today; to live a life that declares **how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among** others. This is the kind of life that draws others to follow IESO for themselves.

b. **How we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you... that you would walk worthy of Aleim:** Paulo himself lived **justly and blamelessly**, but he also told the Thessalonians they should live the same way. He could tell them that they should **walk worthy of Aleim** because his life and message were consistent.

B. More thanksgiving for the work Aleim did in the Thessalonians.

1. (1 Thessalonians 2:13) Paulo is thankful that they welcomed the Glad Tidings as Aleim’s message, not man’s.

For this reason we also thank Aleim without ceasing, because when you received the word of Aleim which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of Aleim, which also effectively works in you who believe.

a. **When you received the word of Aleim:** Paulo earnestly believed and taught others that Aleim had spoken to man and that we have recorded this **word of Aleim**. Paulo believed in a voice that speaks to mankind with the authority of eternity, and speaks above mere human opinion. Since we do have this **word of Aleim**, we have a true voice of authority.

i. Some people like to say that there is a **word of Aleim**, but that we can’t be sure of what He says. When we appeal to the Scriptures, they like to reply “That’s just your interpretation.” There are certainly some places where the **word of Aleim** is hard to precisely interpret, but there are not many such places. If we cannot know what Aleim has spoken, then He may as well not have spoken at all.

b. **You welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of Aleim:** The Thessalonians received the **word of Aleim** as **it is in truth**. Paulo presented it **not as the word of men**, and the Thessalonians received it as **the word of Aleim**.

i. Not everyone receives this message as **the word of Aleim**. Yet when they do not receive it, it reflects upon *them*, not upon the message. “That you have not perceived spiritual things is true; but it is no proof that there are none to perceive. The whole case is like that of the Irishman who tried to upset evidence by non-evidence. Four witnesses saw him commit a murder. He pleaded that he was not guilty, and wished to establish his innocence by producing forty persons who did not see him do it. Of what use would that have been? So, if forty people declare that there is no power of the Holy Ghost going with the word, this only proves that the forty people do not know what others do know.” (Edgar Phillips)

c. **Which also effectively works in you who believe:** Paulo’s confidence in the **word of Aleim** wasn’t a matter of wishful thinking or blind faith. He could see that it **effectively works** in those **who believe**. Aleim’s Word **works**, it doesn’t only bring information or produce feelings. There is power in the **word of Aleim** to change lives.

i. “The powerful working of Aleim is usually expressed by this word, Ephesians 1:19; Philippians 2:13; and the working of satan also, Ephesians 2:2. Men possessed with the devil are

called *energumeni*. And where the word is believed and received as the word of Aleim, there it had this energy, or worketh effectually, so as to promote love, repentance, self-denial, mortification, comfort, and peace.” (Edgar Phillips)
 2. (1 Thessalonians 2:14-16) The Thessalonians welcomed suffering when they welcomed the Word, yet they stood steadfast.

For you, brethren, became imitators of the Ekklesias of Aleim which are in Judea in the Anointed One IESO. For you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen, just as they *did* from the Judeans, who killed both the Ruler IESO and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they do not please Aleim and are contrary to all men, forbidding us to speak to the Nations that they may be saved, so as always to fill up the measure of their sins; but wrath has come upon them to the uttermost.

a. **For you also suffered the same things:** When the Thessalonians responded to the Glad Tidings, they became the targets of persecution. As they did, they were not alone, because those among the **Ekklesias of Aleim** have often suffered persecution. The Thessalonian Followers became **imitators** of those who had suffered before them.

i. The Thessalonians willingly **suffered the same things** because they were convinced that Paulo brought them not the word of man, but the Word of Aleim. The word of man isn't worth suffering for, but a true message from Aleim is worth it.

ii. **Churches** is the ancient Greek word *Ekklesia*; it was not a specifically religious word. Followers passed over many Greek words that were commonly used for religious brotherhoods. “The force of this is that our Faith is not just another religion. It is not to be named with any of the words proper to religions in general [of that day].” (Edgar Phillips)

b. **Who killed both the Ruler IESO and their own prophets, and have persecuted us:** Paulo comforted these suffering Followers with the assurance that they were not the first to suffer this way. **The Ruler IESO** faced persecution, and the Followers in **Judea** faced it first. Additionally, Paulo and his associates were also **persecuted**.

i. **Who killed... the Ruler IESO:** Here Paulo wrote that his own countrymen (**the Judeans**) had killed... **the Ruler IESO**. But Paulo knew well that the Jews of Judea were not the *only* ones responsible for the murder of IESO. The Romans had their full share of guilt, so *both* Jew and non Jew were guilty.

c. **And they do not please Aleim and are contrary to all men:** Paulo also comforted the Thessalonian Followers with the awareness that *they* were right, that *they* are the ones pleasing Aleim. This was necessary assurance because they were persecuted by religious people, and might wonder if these other religious people were in fact right before Aleim in their persecuting.

d. **Forbidding us to speak to the Nations that they may be saved, so as always to fill up the measure of their sins:** Here Paulo revealed what offended the religious persecutors of the Thessalonians so much. They were outraged that Nations could be saved without first becoming Jews. This exclusive attitude filled **up the measure of their sins**.

i. “The Jews’ opposition to the work of the missionaries

among the Nations was not due to the fact that they were seeking to win Nations. The Jews themselves were vigorously engaged in this period of their history in actively proselyting Nations. Their fierce opposition was due to the fact that missionaries offered salvation to Nations without demanding that they first become Jews.” (Peter Damonse)

ii. “The plural ‘sins’ points to the aggregate of their separate evil acts, and not to the general abstract concept of ‘sin.’ ” (Edgar Phillips)

e. **But wrath has come upon them to the uttermost:** Paulo comforted the Thessalonians by assuring them that Aleim would indeed take care of their persecutors. When Followers forget this, they often disgrace and curse themselves by coming persecution for persecution towards others.

i. “Their crimes were great; to these their punishment is proportioned. For what end Aleim has preserved them distinct from all the people of the earth among whom they sojourn, we cannot pretend to say; but it must unquestionably be for an object of the very highest importance. In the meantime, let the Follower world treat them with humanity and mercy.” (Edgar Phillips)

ii. “At the same time we should notice that Paulo’s anger is the anger of a man with his own nation, with his own people. He is very much part of them, and he sorrows for their fate.” (Edgar Phillips)

3. (1 Thessalonians 2:17-20) Paulo explains his absence from the Thessalonians.

But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavoured more eagerly to see your face with great desire. Therefore we wanted to come to you; even I, Paulo, time and again; but satan hindered us. For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Ruler IESO the Anointed One at His coming? For you are our glory and joy.

a. **Away from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavoured more eagerly to see your face:** Paulo knew that the Thessalonians appreciated the comfort he gave, but they wondered why he didn't come and bring this comfort in person. They naturally thought that this would be much better. Yet Paulo assured them that the reason was not a lack of love or desire on his part.

b. **We wanted to come to you... but satan hindered us:** It wasn't that Paulo did not *want* to visit the Thessalonians. It was that **satan hindered** Paulo and his associates. Paulo assured the Thessalonians that he desired to be with them, but he was hindered by satan, and that this happened **time and again**.

i. The Thessalonians were mostly non Jew converts, yet when Paulo mentioned **satan** here, he gave no further explanation. This shows that in the few weeks he was there, Paulo taught the Thessalonians much about satan and spiritual warfare.

c. **satan hindered us:** Paulo, in all his apostolic ministry and authority, could still be blocked by satan. But Paulo did not just receive this Satanic hindrance in a fatalistic way. He did something about the hindrance.

i. First, Paulo understood that this was *Satanic* hindrance. He knew this was not a random circumstance, but a direct attack

from satan. Paulo had the discernment to know.

ii. Second, Paulo had faith. **For a short time** means that Paulo knew it would only be **a short time** until the roadblock was overcome.

iii. Third, Paulo was committed to fight against the roadblock any way he could. If he couldn't be there in person, his letter will go for him and teach and encourage them in his absence. Many scholars believe that 1 Thessalonians was Paulo's earliest letter written as an apostle to a Ekklesia. If this is the case, then satan's roadblock got Paulo started on writing letters to the Ekklesias. When satan saw the great work Aleim did through these letters, he regretted that he ever **hindered** Paulo at all.

iv. Finally, Aleim brought the victory. Acts 20:1-5 describes Paulo's eventual coming to Thessalonica and to other Ekklesias in the area.

v. "Supposing that we have ascertained that hindrances in our way really come from satan, What Then? I have but one piece of advice, and that is, go on, hindrance or no hindrance, in the path of duty as Aleim enables you." (Edgar Phillips)

d. **For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing?** Paulo assured the Thessalonians that he could never forget them because they were his glory and his **joy**. His inability to visit should never be taken as a lack of love towards the Thessalonians.

i. Perhaps Paulo would say that he didn't need a crown in heaven because these precious ones were his crown of victory. Those whom we bring to IESO and disciple are a crown of victory for us.

ii. "Every man who preaches the Glad Tidings should carefully read *this* chapter and examine himself by it. Most preachers, on reading it conscientiously, will either give up their place to others, or purpose to do the work of the Ruler more fervently for the future." (Edgar Phillips)

Patrick Damonse :: Study Guide for 1 Thessalonians 3

Appointed to Affliction

A. An appointment to affliction.

1. (1 Thessalonians 3:1-3) Why Paulo sent Timotheo to the Thessalonians.

Therefore, when we could no longer endure it, we thought it good to be left in Athens alone, and sent Timotheo, our brother and minister of Aleim, and our fellow labourer in the Glad Tidings of the Anointed One, to establish you and encourage you concerning your faith, that no one should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this.

a. **Sent Timotheo... to establish you and encourage you concerning your faith:** In the previous chapter Paulo explained how much he wanted to be with the Thessalonians during their time of trial (1 Thessalonians 2:17-18). However, since Paulo could not be with the Thessalonians himself, he did the next best thing. He sent his trusted companion and fellow worker **Timotheo** to them.

i. **We thought it good to be left in Athens alone:** For the sake of the Thessalonians, Paulo was willing to **be left in Athens alone**. It cost him something to send Timotheo to the Thessalonians, and he thought it was **good** to pay that cost.

ii. **Our brother and minister of Aleim:** “*Minister* is not an official title and does not connote an ordained minister in the modern sense of the term. The word rather designates one who renders a service of some kind to another. It speaks of the servant in relationship to his work, stressing his activity of serving.” (Peter Damonse)

iii. “Originally the word denoted the service of a table waiter, and from that it came to signify lowly service of any kind. It was often used by the early Followers to give expression to the service that they habitually were to render to both Aleim and to man. Where a word like ‘slave,’ which is often used of Followers, puts the emphasis on the personal relation, this word draws attention to the act of service being rendered.” (Edgar Phillips)

b. **To establish you and encourage you concerning your faith:** Paulo wanted Timotheo to do two things – to **establish and encourage** the Thessalonians. Both are necessary, but *establishing* comes first. *Encouragement* can really only come after we are *established* in the right direction; otherwise, we are only *encouraged* in the wrong course.

i. “When Paulo sent Timotheo to Thessalonica it was not nearly so much to inspect the Ekklesia there as it was to help it.” (Edgar Phillips)

c. **That no one should be shaken by these afflictions:** As the Thessalonians were established and encouraged, they would not **be shaken by these afflictions**. Timotheo’s ministry would help them to endure their present hardship.

i. The ancient Greek word translated **shaken**, came from the idea of a dog wagging its tail. “Flattered, as a dog flattereth, by moving his tail; the devil, by flattering you, with promise of more ease by a contrary course, will but do as a dirty dog, defile you with fawning.” (Edgar Phillips)

ii. Without a good understanding of the truth concerning the place of suffering in the life of the believer, we are in great

danger of being **shaken** in our faith.

d. **These afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this:** Paulo wanted the Thessalonians to know that their time of present suffering was in Aleim’s control. These were afflictions they were **appointed to**. As part of the normal Follower life, believers have an appointment with affliction.

i. Some believe that Followers shouldn’t suffer affliction and that Aleim wants to teach us *only* by His Word, and not through trial or tribulation. It is true that there is a great deal of suffering we could be spared by simply obeying Aleim’s Word, and Aleim wants to spare us that suffering. Nevertheless, suffering was good enough to teach IESO (Hebrews 2:10 and 5:8), therefore it is good enough to teach us. Aleim does teach the believer perseverance, obedience, how to comfort others, and deeper fellowship with IESO in trials.

ii. Some believe that the only kind of affliction a Follower should experience is *persecution*. The truth is that there are two ancient Greek words used to translate the concept of suffering, and neither of them is used exclusively in regard to persecution. *Thilipsis* was used for such things as physical pain, emotional hardships, and suffering under temptation. *Pasko* was used for such things as physical sufferings unrelated to persecution, suffering under temptation, and hardships in a general sense.

iii. Some believe that affliction means Aleim is angry at the believer. The truth is that affliction means that Aleim loves us enough to give the *best* when we may only desire what is *easy*. The symbol of our Faith is the tree, not a feather bed. Affliction is just part of following IESO; therefore Paulo recognized that Followers are **appointed to affliction**.

iv. “Surveying the whole Follower movement, he saw suffering everywhere as the result of loyalty to the faith; and he did not conceive of it merely as something to be endured. He saw Aleim ruling over all, and knew that this pathway of pain was a Divinely-arranged one.” (Edgar Phillips)

2. (1 Thessalonians 3:4) Affliction should never surprise the Follower.

For, in fact, we told you before when we were with you that we would suffer tribulation, just as it happened, and you know.

a. **We told you before when we were with you:** When Paulo was with the Thessalonians (just a few months before writing this letter) he warned them they **would suffer tribulation**. Though he was only with them a few weeks, he taught them about the place of suffering in the Follower life.

b. **We would suffer tribulation:** In IESO’s parable of the soils (Matthio 13:1-23), He described the way that some fall away when tribulation or persecution arises because of the Word – IESO said *when* tribulation arises, and not *if* tribulation comes. The Follower’s faith will be tested. Paulo knew this, and as a good pastor, he warned the Thessalonians.

3. (1 Thessalonians 3:5) Paulo’s urgency in sending Timotheo to the Thessalonians.

For this reason, when I could no longer endure it, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter had tempted you, and our labour might be in vain.

a. **When I could no longer endure it:** Paulo could barely **endure** the thought that the faith of the Thessalonians might crumble under this season of affliction, so he sent Timotheo to both check on them and to help them.

i. “Paulo’s subdued missionary activities at Corinth before the coming of Sila and Timotheo (Acts 18:5) seems to indicate that Paulo was deeply depressed because of the heavy burden of suspense and uncertainty concerning the outcome of his mission at Thessalonica.” (Peter Damonse)

b. **Lest by some means the tempter had tempted you:** Paulo recognized that the tempter – that is, satan – wanted to exploit this season of suffering. As in the case of Iob, satan wanted to tempt the Thessalonians to give up on Aleim.

c. **And our labour might be in vain:** If the Thessalonians did waver in their faith, Paulo would consider his work among them to have been **in vain**. In the parable of the soils (Matthio 13:1-23) IESO described the seed that withered under the heat of trials. If the Thessalonians withered, Paulo’s hard work as a farmer among them would have born no harvest.

i. Paulo *did* something to help prevent the Thessalonians from falling under their affliction. He sent Timotheo to them, because those who are in affliction need the help of other divine people.

B. Timotheo’s encouraging report.

1. (1 Thessalonians 3:6) The good news from Timotheo.

But now that Timotheo has come to us from you, and brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always have good remembrance of us, greatly desiring to see us, as we also to see you;

a. **Brought us good news of your faith and love:** When Timotheo returned from his visit to the Thessalonians, he brought **good news**. The Thessalonians were doing well in **faith and love**, and Paulo helped them to do even better with this letter he wrote.

i. Phillip Prins on **faith and love**: “In these two words he states concisely the sum total of divinity. All who aim at this double mark are beyond the danger of error for the whole of their life.”

ii. Edgar Phillips on **good news**: “The verb he employs is the one which is usually translated ‘preach the Glad Tidings.’ Indeed, this is the only place in the whole of Paulo’s writings where it is used in any other sense than that.”

iii. “All pastors are reminded by this of the kind of relationship which ought to exist between them and the Ekklesia. When things go well with the Ekklesia, they are to count themselves happy, even though in other respects they are surrounded by much distress. On the other hand, however, if they see the building which they have constructed falling down, they are to die of grief and sorrow, even though in other respects there is good success and prosperity.” (Phillip Prins)

b. **That you always have good remembrance of us:** Timotheo also brought the good news that the Thessalonians had not believed the vicious and false rumours about Paulo.

2. (1 Thessalonians 3:7-9) The effect of the good news on Paulo.

Therefore, brethren, in all our affliction and distress we were comforted concerning you by your faith. For now we live, if you stand fast in the Ruler. For what thanks can we

render to Aleim for you, for all the joy with which we rejoice for your sake before our Aleim,

a. **In all our affliction and distress we were comforted:** Paulo wrote this letter from Corinth, and his coming to that city was marked by difficulty. He said of his coming to Corinth, *I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling* (1 Corinthians 2:3). Yet since Timotheo came back with good news, Paulo had a renewed strength and freshness of life (**for now we live**). It made Paulo feel much better that the Thessalonians were doing well.

i. “Never is the servant of Aleim so full of delight as when he sees that the Holy Spirit is visiting his hearers, making them to know the Ruler, and confirming them in that heavenly knowledge. On the other hand, if Aleim does not bless the word of His servants it is like death to them. To be preaching and to have no blessing makes them heavy of heart: the chariot-wheels are taken off, and they drag heavily along: they seem to have no power nor liberty.” (Edgar Phillips)

b. **For what thanks can we render to Aleim for you:** Paulo’s **thanks** and **joy** overflowed because he knew that they did **stand fast in the Ruler**. Some find it easy to rejoice in the *material* prosperity in the life of others, but Paulo honestly rejoiced in the *spiritual* prosperity of others.

3. (1 Thessalonians 3:10) Paulo’s prayer for the Thessalonians.

Night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face and perfect what is lacking in your faith?

a. **Night and day praying exceedingly:** Paulo heard good news from Timotheo, but it wasn’t enough. He wanted to **see** the **face** of the Ekklesia family in Thessalonica. Paulo wanted it enough to pray **night and day... exceedingly** that Aleim would make a way for him to see them.

i. **Exceedingly:** “There are various ways of expressing the thought of abundance, and this double compound is probably the most emphatic of all.” (Edgar Phillips)

b. **And perfect what is lacking in your faith:** In the midst of all this joy, Paulo called attention to the fact that they were still **lacking**. Though the apostle repeatedly complimented them (1 Thessalonians 1:3, 1:7, 2:13, 2:19-20, and 3:6), he was also concerned to **perfect** (*complete*) **what is lacking in their faith**.

i. Paulo believed that his personal presence would be a help to the Thessalonians. “Though his Epistles might avail towards it, yet his personal presence would do more. There is a peculiar blessing that attends oral preaching, more than reading.” (Edgar Phillips)

C. Paulo’s prayer for what is lacking in the Thessalonians.

1. (1 Thessalonians 3:11) Paulo prays that he may be reunited with the Thessalonians soon, because to make up what is lacking, they needed apostolic influence.

Now may our Aleim and Father Himself, and our Ruler IESO the Anointed One, direct our way to you.

a. **Now may our Aleim and Father Himself:** This shows Paulo begins a passage of written prayer. He told the Thessalonians what he prayed for them.

i. Peter Damonse points out that this is technically not a prayer. “Recognition should be given to the fact that in actual statement these verses do form a prayer addressed directly to

Aleim. They are rather a devout prayer-wish... the solemn tone of this fervent prayer-wish approaches the language of prayer and is virtually a prayer.”

ii. **And our Ruler IESO the Anointed One:** “Two persons viewed as one (cf. [Ioanne 10:30](#)) possess power to open the way to Thessalonica once again; ‘our Aleim and Father Himself and our Ruler IESO’ is the compound subject of a singular verb... probably an indication of the unity of the Diety.” (Edgar Phillips)

b. **Direct our way to you:** Paulo was encouraged at the current state of the Thessalonians and by the fruit that Timotheo’s ministry had there. Yet he still prayed that Aleim would **direct** his **way to** the Thessalonians. This shows that though Paulo valued the ministry others brought to them, he believed that they still needed the authoritative instruction and encouragement only the apostles could give.

i. This being true, we also need to be under apostolic influence. Paulo and the rest have graduated to glory, but their *writings* remain. Aleim has preserved the apostles’ teaching for us in the Prophetic Scriptures (New Testament).

ii. The Ekklesia is founded upon the apostles, with the Anointed One Himself the chief cornerstone ([Ephesians 2:20](#)). The foundation of the New Jerusalem is the twelve apostles ([Revelation 21:14](#)). There was something significantly unique about the first-century apostles and prophets, and that unique ministry is preserved in the Prophetic Scriptures (New Testament).

2. ([1 Thessalonians 3:12](#)) To make up what is lacking, they must **increase and abound in love**.

And may the Ruler make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you,

a. **And may the Ruler make you increase and about in love:** This was not a loveless Ekklesia, but they still had room to grown in love, because love is an essential mark of the Follower faith.

i. IESO spoke of the essential place love has as an identifying mark of the Follower: *By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another* ([Ioanne 13:35](#)). The Apostle Ioanne also emphasized this principle: *If someone says, ‘I love Aleim,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love Aleim whom he has not seen?* ([1 Ioanne 4:20](#))

b. **Abound in love to one another and to all:** Paulo looked for the Thessalonian Followers to show love **to one another and to all**. This love *begins* in the family of Aleim, but it must go beyond. IESO told us that our love is small and shallow if we only love those who love us also ([Matthio 5:46-47](#)).

c. **Just as we do to you:** Paulo daringly set himself as a standard of love to be emulated. We should live such Follower lives that we could tell young Followers, “Love other people just the way that I do.”

3. ([1 Thessalonians 3:13](#)) To make up what is lacking, they needed **hearts** established in **holiness**.

So that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our Aleim and Father at the coming of our Ruler IESO the Anointed One with all His saints.

a. **So that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness:** Paulo knew that Aleim wanted the Thessalonians to

have their **hearts** established **blameless in holiness**. The idea behind **holiness** is to be set apart *from* the world and *unto* Aleim. The genuinely *holy* person is separated *away from* the domination of sin and self and the world, and they are separated *to* Aleim.

b. **Your hearts blameless in holiness:** The heart must be made holy first. The devil wants us to develop a holy *exterior* while neglecting the *interior*, like whitewashed tombs, full of death ([Matthio 23:27](#)).

c. **Blameless in holiness before our Aleim and Father at the coming of our Ruler IESO the Anointed One:** Paulo was reminded of IESO’s coming, because nothing can encourage us to holiness like remembering that IESO might come today.

i. Paulo’s prayer for the Thessalonians emphasized three things that are important for every Follower today:

· First, he wanted to *be* with them, so they could benefit from his apostolic wisdom and authority.

· He wanted them to abound in love.

· He wanted them to be established in true heart-holiness.

ii. **All His saints:** “It is best to understand the ‘holy ones’ as all those bright beings who will make up His train be they angels or the saints who have gone before.” (Edgar Phillips)

Patrick Damonse :: Study Guide for 1 Thessalonians 4

Confidence in the Coming of IESO

A. Instructions regarding sexual purity.

1. (1 Thessalonians 4:1-2) How to walk and to please Aleim.

Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Ruler IESO that you should abound more and more, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please Aleim; for you know what commandments we gave you through the Ruler IESO.

a. **Finally then:** Paulo's use of **finally** does not mean he is finished. It means he here began the closing section of the letter, with practical instruction on how Aleim wants His people to live.

i. "The word rendered 'finally' (*loipon*) is an adverbial accusative, 'as for the rest,' and serves to mark a transition rather than a conclusion." (Peter Damonse)

b. **That you should abound more and more:** Paulo was thankful for the growth he saw in the Thessalonians, but still looked for them to **abound more and more** in a **walk** that would **please Aleim**.

i. **Abound more and more:** This means that Follower maturity is never finished on this side of eternity. No matter how far a Follower has come in love and holiness, he or she can still **abound more and more**.

c. **Just as you received from us:** What Paulo wrote in the following verses was nothing new to the Thessalonians. In the few weeks he was with them, he instructed them in these basic matters of Follower morality. Paulo knew it was important to instruct new believers in these things.

d. **How you ought to walk and to please Aleim:** Paulo took it for granted that the Thessalonians understood that the purpose of their **walk** – their manner of living – was **to please Aleim** and not themselves. When the Follower has this basic understanding, the following instruction regarding Scriptural morality makes sense.

i. "When a man is saved by the work of the Anointed One for him it does not lie open before him as a matter for his completely free decision whether he will serve Aleim or not. He has been bought with a price (1 Corinthians 6:20). He has become the slave of the Anointed One." (Edgar Phillips)

e. **For you know what commandments we gave you through the Ruler IESO:** These were not suggestions from the pen of Paulo. These are **commandments** from the **Ruler IESO**, and must be received that way.

i. Edgar Phillips on the word translated **commandments**: "It is more at home in a military environment, being a usual word for the commands given by the officer to his men (cf. its use in Acts 5:28, 16:24). It is thus a word with a ring of authority."

2. (1 Thessalonians 4:3-6a) The command to be sexually pure.

For this is the will of Aleim, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honour, not in passion of lust, like the Nations who do not know Aleim; that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter,

a. **For this is the will of Aleim, your sanctification:** Paulo gave these commands to a first-century Roman culture that

was marked by sexual immorality. At this time in the Roman Empire, chastity and sexual purity were almost unknown virtues. Nevertheless, Followers were to take their standards of sexual morality from Aleim and not from the culture.

i. Paulo said this was a *commandment* (1 Thessalonians 4:2). That word was a military term describing an order from an officer to a subordinate, and the order came from IESO and not from Paulo.

ii. The ancient writer Demosthenes expressed the generally amoral view of sex in the ancient Roman Empire: "We keep prostitutes for pleasure; we keep mistresses for the day to day needs of the body; we keep wives for the faithful guardianship of our homes."

b. **The will of Aleim, your sanctification:** Paulo made it very clear what the **will** of Aleim was for the Follower. The idea behind **sanctification** is to be *set apart*, and Aleim wants us *set apart* from a wicked culture and its sexual immorality. If our sexual behaviour is no different than **the Nations who do not know Aleim**, then we are not sanctified – set apart – in the way Aleim wants us to be.

i. Those **who do not know Aleim** do not have the spiritual resources to walk pure before the Ruler; but Followers do. Therefore, Followers should live differently than those **who do not know Aleim**.

c. **That you should abstain from sexual immorality:** We live differently than the world when we **abstain from sexual immorality**. The ancient Greek word translated **sexual immorality** (*porneia*) is a broad word, referring to any sexual relationship outside of the marriage covenant.

i. The older King James Version translates **sexual immorality** as *fornication*. "*Fornication* is used here in its comprehensive meaning to denote every kind of unlawful sexual intercourse." (Peter Damonse) "The word requires broad definition here as including all types of sexual sins between male and female." (Edgar Phillips)

ii. The broad nature of the word *porneia* shows that it isn't enough to just say that you have not had sexual intercourse with someone who is not your spouse. All sexual behaviour outside of the marriage covenant is sin.

iii. Aleim grants great sexual liberty in the marriage relationship (Hebrews 13:4). But satan's not-very-subtle strategy is often to do all he can to *encourage* sex outside of marriage and to *discourage* sex in marriage.

d. **That each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honour:** We live differently than the world when we **possess** our body **in sanctification and in honour**. Immorality is the opposite of **honour** because it degrades and debases the self. Those who do not restrain their sexual desires act more like animals than humans, following every impulse without restraint.

i. The phrase, **that each of you should know** "Indicates that the demand being made applies to each individual member of the Ekklesia. The same moral standards hold for all." (Peter Damonse)

ii. Some interpret this passage so that the **vessel** each one should **possess** is a wife, and that Paulo here encouraged Followers to get married and express their sexuality in marriage instead of immorally. Yet it seems that instead, Paulo

meant to encourage each Follower to **possess** or hold his own body (**vessel**) in a way that honoured Aleim. Sexual immorality is a sin against one's own body (1 Corinthians 6:18).

e. **Not in passion of lust, like the Nations who do not know Aleim:** This plainly means that the sexual conduct of the Follower should be *different* than the prevailing permissiveness of the day.

i. "The Nations knew gods who were the personification of their own ambitions and lusts but they did not know the true Aleim, the Aleim who is Himself holy and wills the sanctification of His followers." (Peter Damonse)

f. **That no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter:** When we are sexually immoral, we **take advantage of and defraud** others and we cheat them in greater ways than we can imagine. The adulterer defrauds his mate and children. The fornicator defrauds his future mate and children, and both defraud their illicit partner.

i. "Adultery is an obvious violation of the rights of another. But promiscuity before marriage represents the robbing of the other that virginity which ought to be brought to a marriage. The future partner of such a one has been defrauded." (Edgar Phillips)

ii. Repeatedly in 3rd MoUse (Leviticus) 18 – a chapter where Aleim instructed Israhel on the matter of sexual morality – the idea is given that one may not *uncover* the nakedness of another not their spouse. The idea is that the nakedness of an individual *belongs* to his or her spouse and no one else, and it is a violation of Aleim's law to *give* that nakedness to anyone else, or for anyone else to *take* it.

3. (1 Thessalonians 4:6b-8) Reasons for the command.

Because the Ruler is the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified. For Aleim did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness. Therefore he who rejects this does not reject man, but Aleim, who has also given us His Holy Spirit.

a. **Because the Ruler is the avenger of all such:** This is the first of four reasons for sexual purity. We can trust that Aleim will punish sexual immorality, and that no one gets away with this sin – even if it is undiscovered.

b. **For Aleim did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness:** This is the second reason why Followers should be sexually pure – because of our **call**. That **call** is not to **uncleanness**, but to **holiness**; therefore, sexual immorality is simply inconsistent with who we are in IESO the Anointed One.

i. Paulo developed this same line of thought in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 and 6:15-20, concluding with the idea that we should *glorify Aleim in your body and in your spirit, which are Aleim's*.

c. **Therefore he who rejects this does not reject man, but Aleim:** The third reason for sexual purity is because to reject Aleim's call to sexual purity is not rejecting man, but Aleim Himself. Despite the petty ways many rationalize sexual immorality, we still **reject** Aleim when we sin in this way.

i. Paulo's strong command here did not seem to come because the Thessalonians were deep in sin. No specific sin is mentioned; it seems that this was meant to *prevent* sin rather than to *rebuke* sin, in light of the prevailing low standards in

their society and because of the seductive strength of sexual immorality.

d. **Who has also given us His Holy Spirit:** This is the fourth of four reasons for sexual purity given in this passage. We have been given the Holy Spirit, who *empowers* the willing, trusting Follower to overcome sexual sin. By His Spirit, Aleim has given us the resources for victory; we are responsible to use those resources.

B. Living the quiet life before Aleim.

1. (1 Thessalonians 4:9-10) We should live a life of increasing love.

But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by Aleim to love one another; and indeed you do so toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, that you increase more and more;

a. **But concerning brotherly love you had no need that I should write to you:** These principles are so basic that Paulo knew they were obvious to the Thessalonian Followers. The Thessalonians were **taught by Aleim** about the importance of love, yet we must all be reminded.

b. **And indeed you do so toward all the brethren who are in Macedonia:** It wasn't that the Thessalonians were without love; their love **toward all the brethren** was well known, but they had to **increase more and more** in their love.

2. (1 Thessalonians 4:11) We should live a life of work.

That you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you,

a. **That you also aspire to lead a quiet life:** This means that we should have an *aspiration* or *ambition* in life, and that we should **aspire to lead a quiet life**.

i. **Aspire** has the thought of ambition, and is translated that way in several versions of the Scriptures. **Quiet** has the thought of peace, calm, rest and satisfaction.

ii. The **quiet life** contradicts the hugely successful modern attraction to entertainment and excitement. This addiction to entertainment and excitement is damaging both spiritually and culturally. We might say that excitement and entertainment are like a religion for many people today.

· This religion has a aleim: The self.

· This religion has priests: Celebrities.

· This religion has a prophet: Perpetual entertainment.

· This religion has scriptures: Tabloids and entertainment, news, and informational programs.

· This religion has places of worship: Amusement parks, theaters, concert halls, sports arenas; and we could say that every television and internet connection is a little chapel.

iii. The religion of excitement and entertainment seduces people into living their lives for one thing – the thrill of the moment. But these thrills are quickly over and forgotten, and all that is important is the next fun thing. This religion conditions its followers to only ask one question: "Is it fun?" It never wants us to ask more important questions such as, "Is it true?" "Is it right?" "Is it good?" "Is it divine?"

iv. We need to live the **quiet life** so that we can really take the time and give the attention to listen to Aleim. When we live the **quiet life**, we can listen to Aleim and get to know Him

better.

b. **To mind your own business:** This means that the Follower must focus on his or her own life and matters, instead of meddling in the lives of others. “**Mind your own business**” is a Scriptural idea.

i. “There is a great difference between the Follower duty of putting the interests of others first and the busybody’s compulsive itch to put other people right.” (Bruce)

ii. “Paulo, however, does not mean that every individual is to mind his own business in such a way that all are to live apart from one another and have no concern for others, but simply wants to correct the idle triviality which makes men open disturbers of the peace, when they ought to lead a quiet life at home.” (Edgar Phillips)

c. **Work with your own hands:** We must recognize the dignity and honour of **work**. Work is Aleim’s plan for the progress of society and the Ekklesia. We fall into satan’s snare when we expect things to always come easily, or regard Aleim’s blessing as an opportunity for laziness.

i. Manual labour was despised by ancient Greek culture. They thought that the better a man was, the less he should work. In contrast, Aleim gave us a carpenter King, fisherman apostles, and tent-making missionaries.

ii. “There is nothing more disgraceful than an idle good-for-nothing who is of no use either to himself or to others, and seems to have been born merely to eat and drink.” (Edgar Phillips)

3. (1 Thessalonians 4:12) We should live a life that is an example, lacking nothing.

That you may walk properly toward those who are outside, and that you may lack nothing.

a. **That you may walk properly toward those who are outside:** When we combine the love of our brothers with work, we **walk properly**. People who are not yet Followers (**those who are outside**) will see our example and be influenced to become followers of IESO.

i. Peter Damonse on **properly**: “Means, ‘in good form, decorously, in an honourable manner, so as to cause no offence.’ Believers can never be indifferent to the impact produced by their example.”

b. **And that you may lack nothing:** Paulo completes the thought he began in 1 Thessalonians 3:10 (*that we may see your face and perfect what is lacking in your faith*). If they followed his teaching and example, they would **lack nothing** and come to the place of genuine Follower maturity.

C. Concerning Followers who have died.

1. (1 Thessalonians 4:13) The believing dead are thought of as being “asleep.”

But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.

a. **But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep:** In the few weeks Paulo was with the Thessalonians, he emphasized the soon coming of IESO, and the Thessalonians believed it earnestly. This was part of the reason that they were the kind of Ekklesia Paulo complimented so highly. Yet after Paulo left, they wondered about those Followers who died *before* IESO came

back. They were troubled by the idea that these Followers might miss out on that great future event and that they might miss the victory and blessing of IESO’s coming.

i. It is with some interest we note that four times in his letters, Paulo asked Followers to *not* be **ignorant** about something:

· Don’t be ignorant about Aleim’s plan for Israhel (Romans 11:25).

· Don’t be ignorant about spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:1).

· Don’t be ignorant about suffering and trials in the Follower life (2 Corinthians 1:8).

· Don’t be ignorant about the coming of IESO (1 Thessalonians 4:13).

ii. Remarkably, these are areas where ignorance is still common to Followers.

b. **Who have fallen asleep:** *Sleep* was a common way to express death in the ancient world, but among pagans, it was almost always seen as an *eternal* sleep.

i. Ancient writings are full of this pessimism regarding death:

· “Of a man once dead there is no resurrection.”

· “Hopes are among the living, the dead are without hope.” (Edgar Phillips)

· “Suns may set and rise again but we, when once our brief light goes down, must sleep an endless night.” (Peter Damonse)

ii. Followers called death *sleep*, but they emphasized the idea of *rest*. Early Followers began to call their burial places “cemeteries,” which means, “dormitories” or “sleeping places.” Yet the Scriptures never describes the death of the unbeliever as *sleep*, for there is no rest, peace, or comfort for them in death.

iii. Though Paulo, using idioms common in his day, referred to death as *sleep*, it does not prove the erroneous idea of *soul sleep*, that the present dead in the Anointed One are in a state of suspended animation, waiting for a resurrection to consciousness. “Since to depart from this world in death to ‘be with the Anointed One’ is described by Paulo as ‘very far better’ (Philippians 1:23) than the present state of blessed communion with the Ruler and blessed activity in His service, it is evident that ‘sleep’ as applied to believers cannot be intended to teach that the soul is unconscious.” (Peter Damonse)

c. **Lest you sorrow as others who have no hope:** For the Follower death is dead, and leaving this body is like laying down for a nap and waking in glory. It is *moving*, not *dying*. For these reasons, Followers should not **sorrow as others who have no hope** when their loved ones in IESO die.

i. As Followers, we may mourn the death of other Followers; but not **as others who have no hope**. Our sorrow is like the sadness of seeing someone off on a long trip, knowing you will see them again, but not for a long time.

2. (1 Thessalonians 4:14) There is full assurance that Followers who have died yet live.

For if we believe that IESO died and rose again, even so Aleim will bring with Him those who sleep in IESO.

a. **If we believe that IESO died and rose again, even so Aleim will bring with Him those who sleep:** We have more than a wishful hope of resurrection. In the resurrection of IESO we have an amazing example of it and a promise of our

own.

i. For the Thessalonian Followers, their troubled minds were answered by the statement “**Aleim will bring with Him those who sleep in IESO.**” “It is best to understand the words to mean that IESO will bring the faithful departed with Him when He comes back. Their death does not mean that they will miss their share in the Parousia.” (Edgar Phillips)

b. **IESO died:** When Paulo wrote about the death of believers, he called it **sleep**. But in his description of IESO’ death, he did not soften it by calling it **sleep**, because there was nothing soft or peaceful about His death.

i. “He endured the worst that death can possibly be... It is because there was no softening of the horror of death for Him that there is no horror of death for His people. For them it is but sleep.” (Edgar Phillips)

c. **We believe that IESO died and rose again:** This was the confident belief of the Apostle Paulo and the early Followers. We will certainly live, because IESO lives and our union with Him is stronger than death. This is why we do not sorrow as those who have no hope and why we have more than a wishful hope.

i. When a sinner dies, we mourn for them. When a believer dies, we only mourn for ourselves, because they are with the Ruler.

ii. In the ruins of ancient Rome, you can see the magnificent tombs of pagans, with gloomy inscriptions on them. One of them reads:

I was not

I became

I am not

I care not

Or one can visit the murky catacombs and read glorious inscriptions. One of the most common Follower epitaphs from the catacombs was In Peace, quoting Psalms 4:8: *I will both lie down in peace and sleep; for You alone, O Ruler, make me dwell in safety.* We should look at death the same way those early Followers did.

iii. Sadly, not all Followers are at this place of confidence and peace. Even Followers have, in unbelief, had the same fear and hopelessness about death. The author once read an inscription reflecting this un-Follower despair on an Irish tombstone in a christian cemetery on the Hill of Slane, outside of Dublin:

O cruel Death you well may boast

Of all Tyrants thou art the most

As you all mortals can control

The Ruler have mercy on my soul

(1782)

3. (1 Thessalonians 4:15-16) Those asleep in IESO are not at a disadvantage.

For this we say to you by the word of the Ruler, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Ruler will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Ruler Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of Aleim. And the dead in the Anointed One will rise first.

a. **By the word of the Ruler:** Paulo emphasized that this was an authoritative command, though we do not know whether

Paulo received it by direct revelation or if it was an unrecorded saying of IESO. One way or another, this came from IESO and did not originate with Paulo.

i. “In no place does the apostle speak more confidently and positively of his *inspiration* than here; and we should prepare ourselves to receive some momentous and interesting truth.” (Edgar Phillips)

b. **We who are alive and remain until the coming of the Ruler will by no means precede those who are asleep:** Paulo wanted the Thessalonians to know that **those who are asleep** – Followers who have died before IESO returns – **will by no means** be at a disadvantage. Those who are **alive and remain until the coming of the Ruler will by no means precede them**. Aleim will allow **those who are asleep** to share in the glory of **the coming of the Ruler**.

i. “The living will have no advantage over those fallen asleep; they will not meet the coming of the Anointed One ahead of the dead, nor will they have any precedence in the blessedness at His coming.” (Peter Damonse)

ii. **We who are alive** means that Paulo himself shared in this expectancy. It wasn’t because Paulo had an erroneous promise of the coming of IESO in his lifetime. “More feasible is the solution that sees Paulo setting an example of expectancy for the Ekklesia of all ages. Proper Follower anticipation includes the imminent coming of the Anointed One.” (Edgar Phillips)

c. **For the Ruler Himself will descend from heaven with a shout:** When IESO comes, He will come *personally*. **The Ruler Himself will descend**, and come **with a shout**. The ancient Greek word for **shout** here is the same word used for the commands that a ship captain makes to his rowers, or a commander speaking to his soldiers. “Always there is the ring of authority and the note of urgency.” (Edgar Phillips)

i. Apparently, there will be some audible signal that prompts this remarkable event. It may be that all three descriptions (**shout, voice, and trumpet**) refer to the same sound; or there may be three distinct sounds. The coming will not be silent or secret, though the vast majority of people may not understand the sound or its meaning.

ii. When Paulo heard the heavenly voice on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:7; 22:9), his companions heard the sound of a voice, but they did not hear articulate words. They heard a sound but did not understand its meaning. It may well be that the shout/voice/trumpet sound that accompanies the coming will have the same effect. The entire world may hear this heavenly sound but have no idea what its meaning is.

d. **With the voice of an archangel:** This doesn’t mean that the **Ruler Himself** is an **archangel**. The only one described as an **archangel** in the Scriptures is Michael (Iouda 1:9). Paulo means that when IESO comes, He will come in the company of prominent angels.

i. **With the voice of an archangel** means that Paulo clearly did not designate a *specific archangel*. “It is even possible that he does not mean that an archangel will actually say something, but simply that the voice that will be uttered will be a very great voice, an archangel type of voice.” (Edgar Phillips)

e. **With the trumpet of Aleim:** Believers are gathered **with the trumpet of Aleim**. In the Scriptures (Old Testament),

trumpets sounded the alarm for war and threw the enemy into a panic, in the sense of the seven trumpets described in 4th MoUse (Numbers) 10:9 and Revelation 8 and 9. Trumpets also sounded an assembly of Aleim's people, as in 3rd MoUse (Leviticus) 23:24 and 4th MoUse (Numbers) 10:2. Here, **the trumpet of Aleim** gathers together Aleim's people.

i. "It was by the *sound of the trumpet* that the solemn assemblies, under the law, were convoked; and to such convocations there appears to be here an allusion." (Edgar Phillips)

ii. There are three other associations of trumpets and end-times events. One is the *last trump* of 1 Corinthians 15:52, which seems clearly to be connected with this same trumpet of 1 Thessalonians 4. The others are the seven trumpets which culminate at Revelation 11:15, and the trumpet gathering the elect of Israhel at the end of the age in Matthio 24:31.

iii. Peter Damonse compares this trumpet of 1 Thessalonians 4 and the seventh trumpet of Revelation 11:15: "The subjects are different: here it is the Ekklesia; there a wicked world. The results are different: here it is the glorious catching up of the Ekklesia to be with the Ruler; there it is further judgment upon a wicked world. Here 'the last trump' signals the close of the life the Ekklesia on earth; there the 'seventh' trumpet marks a climax in a progressive series of apocalyptic judgments upon the living on earth."

iv. As to the trumpet of 1 Thessalonians 4 and the one mentioned in Matthio 24:31, we can also observe:

- The *subjects* are different: Matthio refers to Jewish believers during the great tribulation; Thessalonians refers to the Ekklesia.

- The *circumstances* are different: Matthio refers to a gathering of the elect scattered over the earth, with no mention of resurrection; Thessalonians refers to the raising of the believing dead.

- The *results* are different: Matthio refers to living believers gathered from all over the earth at the command of their Ruler who has returned to earth in open glory; Thessalonians refers to the uniting of the raised dead with the living believers to meet the Ruler in the air.

f. **And the dead in the Anointed One will rise first:** Paulo's point to the Thessalonians is clear. The prior dead in the Anointed One will not be left out of either the resurrection or the coming of IESO. In fact, they will experience it **first**.

i. "It is only after the faithful departed have taken their place with the Ruler that the saints on earth are caught up to be with Him, or more strictly, to be with them and meet Him." (Edgar Phillips)

ii. " 'The order of the resurrection,' he says, 'will begin with them. We therefore shall not rise without them.' " (Phillip Prins)

g. **Will rise first:** Many wonder how **the dead in the Anointed One** are raised **first**. Some believe that they now have temporary bodies and await this resurrection. Others believe that they are now disembodied spirits who wait for resurrection. Still others conjecture that the **dead in the Anointed One** experience their resurrection immediately.

i. There will come a day, when in Aleim's eternal plan, **the dead in the Anointed One** will receive their resurrection

bodies. Yet until that day, we are confident that the dead in the Anointed One are not in some kind of soul sleep or suspended animation. Paulo made it clear that to be *absent from the body* means *to be present with the Ruler*. (2 Corinthians 5:8) Either the present dead in the Anointed One are with the Ruler in a spiritual body, awaiting their final resurrection body; or, because of the nature of timeless eternity, they have received their resurrection bodies already because they live in the eternal *now*.

ii. However Aleim will do it, we are confident that His promise is true. "Though the bones be scattered to the four winds of heaven, yet, at the call of the Ruler Aleim, they shall come together again, bone to his bone... We doubt not that Aleim will guard the dust of the precious sons and daughters of Zion." (Edgar Phillips)

4. (1 Thessalonians 4:17) IESO comes to meet His Ekklesia.

Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Ruler in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Ruler.

a. **Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them:** Those alive and remaining until this coming of IESO are **caught up** to meet IESO in the air, together with the dead in IESO who have already risen.

i. The verb translated **caught up** here means to seize, or to carry off by force. "There is often the notion of a sudden swoop, and usually that of a force which cannot be resisted" (Edgar Phillips). In the ancient Greek, the phrase **to meet** was used as a technical term to describe the official welcoming of honoured guests.

ii. This passage is the basis for the Prophetic Scriptures (New Testament) doctrine of the *coming*, the catching away of believers to be with IESO. The word *coming* is not in the ancient Greek text, but comes from the Latin Vulgate, which translates the phrase **caught up** with *rapturus*, from which we get our English word *coming*.

iii. Paulo's statement, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is both dramatic and fantastic. He speaks of Followers flying upward, **caught up... in the clouds to meet the Ruler in the air**. We wouldn't believe this unless the Scriptures told us it were so, not any more than we would believe that Aleim became a baby, that He did miracles, that He died on a tree and that He lives in us.

iv. Paulo's language here is so straightforward and free from figurative speech that there is no missing his intent. "The Apostle's declarations here are made in the practical tone of strict matter of fact, and are given as literal details... Never was a place where the analogy of symbolical apocalyptic language was less applicable. Either these details must be received by us as matter of practical expectation, or we must set aside the Apostle as one divinely empowered to teach the Ekklesia." (Edgar Phillips)

b. **Shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Ruler in the air:** Paulo's plain language leaves no doubt regarding the certainty of this event. Yet the timing of this event in the chronology of Aleim's prophetic plan is a matter of significant debate among Followers.

i. Many – though certainly not all – Followers believe the Scriptures teaches that there will be an important seven-year

period of history before the Battle of Armageddon and triumphant coming of IESO. The debate about this *catching away* centers on where it fits in with this final seven-year period, popularly known as the Great Tribulation, with reference to Matthio 24:21.

- The *pre-tribulation* coming position believes believers are **caught up** before this final seven-year period.

- The *mid-tribulation* coming position believes believers are **caught up** in the midst of this final seven-year period.

- The *pre-wrath* coming position believes believers are **caught up** at some time in the second half of this final seven-year period.

- The *post-tribulation* coming position believes believers are **caught up** at the end of this final seven-year period.

ii. The adherents of these different positions each believe their position is Scriptural, and these differences of understanding should not make dividing lines of Follower fellowship. Nevertheless, this author's opinion is that the *pre-tribulation* coming position is Scripturally correct. Even other references to the coming of IESO within 1-2 Thessalonians support this understanding:

- 1 Thessalonians 1:10 shows believers waiting for the coming of IESO. The clear implication is that they had hope of His imminent coming, not the expectation of an imminent great tribulation.

- 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 assures us that those believers who died would share equally with the living in the events of the coming and the resurrection, answering their fear that somehow the dead in the Anointed One were at a disadvantage. But if Paulo believed Followers would go through the great tribulation, he would count the dead in the Anointed One as *more fortunate* than those living Followers who might very well have to endure the great tribulation. It would have been logical for Paulo to comfort the Thessalonians with the idea that the dead in IESO were better off because they won't have to experience the Great Tribulation.

- 2 Thessalonians 1:3-10 comforts Followers enduring hardship, promising them a coming *rest*, while their persecutors will face certain judgment. But if Paulo knew that the Ekklesia was destined to pass through the Great Tribulation, it would have been more appropriate for him to warn these Followers about worse trials and suffering ahead, rather than hold the promise of a coming *rest*.

c. **And thus we shall always be with the Ruler:** The *manner* in which IESO will gather us to Himself is impressive. But the main point is that whatever the state of the Followers (dead or alive) at the Ruler's coming, they will **always be with the Ruler**. This is the great reward of heaven – to be with IESO. Death can't break our unity with IESO or with other Followers.

i. **We shall always be with the Ruler** is an important truth with many implications.

- It implies *continuation* because it assumes you are already **with the Ruler**.

- It implies *hope for the dying* because in death we shall still be **with the Ruler**.

- It implies *future confidence* because after death we are **with**

the Ruler.

- It implies *advancement* because we will one day **always** be with the Ruler.

ii. "We shall be so with him as to have no sin to becloud our view of him: the understanding will be delivered from all the injury which sin has wrought in it, and we shall know him even as we are known." (Edgar Phillips)

5. (1 Thessalonians 4:18) The exhortation: comfort one another.

Therefore comfort one another with these words.

a. **Therefore comfort one another:** Paulo did not tell them to *take* comfort, but to *give* comfort. In the way Aleim works, we always *receive* comfort as we *give* it.

i. "Paulo does not himself seek to comfort or encourage his readers but rather bids them actively to comfort or encourage 'one another.' The present imperative places upon them the continuing duty to do so, both in private conversation and in the public services." (Peter Damonse)

b. **With these words:** The truth of the coming of IESO for His people, and the eternal union of IESO and His people is to be a source of **comfort** for Followers.

i. This concluding statement of Paulo only makes sense if the catching away of the previous verses actually delivers Followers from an impending danger. If the catching away only brings humanity to Aleim for judgment, there is little comfort in these words.

ii. This was understood by Adam Edgar Phillips: "Strange saying! Comfort a man with the information that he is going to appear before the judgment-seat of Aleim! Who can feel comfort from these words?"

Patrick Damonse :: Study Guide for 1 Thessalonians 5

Ready for the Day of the Ruler

A. Teaching about readiness for IESO' coming.

1. (1 Thessalonians 5:1-3) The suddenness of IESO' coming.

But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Ruler so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labour pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape.

a. **Concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you:** The Thessalonians were well taught about the coming of IESO and other prophetic matters. Paulo taught them about **the times and the seasons** regarding the coming of IESO. They had an idea of the prophetic **times** they lived in, and they could discern the **seasons** of the present culture.

i. Again, we are impressed that Paulo was with the Thessalonians only for a few weeks (Acts 17:2). In that time, he taught them about the prophetic **times and seasons** regarding the coming of IESO. Paulo would be surprised that some people today consider the coming of IESO an unimportant teaching.

ii. IESO criticized the religious leaders of His day because they could not *discern the signs of the times* (Matthio 16:1-3). We should also study the Scriptures, and look to the world around us, so we can be aware of the **times and the seasons**.

iii. Peter Damonse on **times and seasons**: "The first designates time in its duration, whether a longer or shorter period; the second draws attention to the characteristics of the period. The first deals with the measurement of time, the second with the suitable or critical nature of the time."

b. **The day of the Ruler so comes:** With this phrase, Paulo quoted a familiar Scriptures (Old Testament) idea. The idea behind the phrase **the day of the Ruler** is that this is Aleim' time. Man has his "day," and the Ruler has His **day**. In the ultimate sense, **the day of the Ruler** is fulfilled with IESO judging the earth and coming in glory.

i. It does not refer to a single day, but to a season when Aleim rapidly advances His agenda to the end of the age. **The day of the Ruler** "Is a familiar Scriptures (Old Testament) expression. It denotes the day when Aleim intervenes in history to judge His enemies, deliver His people, and establish His kingdom." (Peter Damonse)

c. **For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Ruler so comes as a thief in the night:** The Thessalonians knew, and had been taught, that they couldn't know the day of IESO' coming. That day would remain unknown, and come as a surprise, **as a thief in the night**. A **thief** does not announce the exact time of his arrival.

i. Some take the idea that **the day of the Ruler so comes as a thief in the night** to mean that nothing can or should be known about Aleim's prophetic plan for the future. Yet Paulo indicated that they *definitely* knew that the time could not be definitely known.

ii. Paulo certainly was not one to set dates in regard to prophecy, and IESO forbade setting dates when He said *of that*

day and hour no one knows (Matthio 24:36). Aleim *wants* this day to be unexpected, but He wants His people to be prepared for the unexpected.

d. **For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them:** The unexpected nature of that day will be a tragedy for the unbeliever. They will be lulled to sleep by political and economic conditions, but they will be rudely awakened. They will hear the frightening verdict "**they shall not escape.**"

i. When "*all's well*" and "*all is safe*" are on the lips of men. (Edgar Phillips)

ii. This **sudden** coming, in a time when many say "**Peace and safety!**" must be distinct from the coming of IESO described in Matthio 24:15-35. The coming of IESO described in Matthio 24:15-35 happens at a time of great global catastrophe, when no one could possibly say "**peace and safety!**" Comparing passages like this shows us that there must be, in some way, *two aspects* to IESO' Second Coming.

· One aspect of His coming is at an unexpected hour, the other is positively predicted.

· One coming is to a "business as usual" world, the other to a world in cataclysm.

· One coming is meeting Him in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17), the other is Him coming with the saints (Zekariah 14:5).

e. **As labour pains upon a pregnant woman:** The phrase **labour pains** suggest both *inevitability* and *unexpectedness*. IESO used the same idea in Matthio 24:8, when He spoke of calamities preceding the end times as *the beginning of sorrows*, which is literally *the beginning of labour pains*. The idea is both of giving birth to a new age, and implying an increase of intensity and frequency in these calamities.

i. Edgar Phillips on **as labour pains upon a pregnant woman**: "1. Certainly; 2. Suddenly; 3. Irresistibly, inevitably."

2. (1 Thessalonians 5:4-5) The basis for Paulo's exhortations.

But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness.

a. **But you, brethren, are not in darkness:** In addressing their behaviour, Paulo first simply told the Thessalonian Followers that they should *be* who they *are*. Aleim has made us **sons of the light and sons of the day**. The time when we were **of the night** or **of the darkness** is in the past. So now we simply have to live up to what Aleim has made us.

i. "In the Semitic languages generally to be a 'son' of something means to be characterized by that thing." (Edgar Phillips)

b. **That this Day should over take you as a thief:** Paulo means that this should *not* happen for the believer who lives according to their nature as a son of **light** and son of the **day**. They will be ready for the coming of IESO the Anointed One.

i. "Paulo is led from a consideration of the day of the Ruler to the thought that the Thessalonians have nothing to fear from the coming of that Day. This leads to the further thought that their lives should be in harmony with all that that day stands for." (Edgar Phillips)

ii. In some respect, the coming of IESO will be a surprise for *everybody*, because no one knows the day or the hour (Matthio

24:36). But for Followers who know the *times and the seasons*, it will not be a complete surprise. No one knows the exact hour a thief will come, but some live in a general preparation against thieves. Those who **are not in darkness**, who live as they **are all sons of light and sons of the day**, these are ready for the coming of IESO.

iii. But if we **are in darkness** – perhaps caught up in some of the sin Paulo warned against previously in this letter – then we are *not* ready, and need to make ourselves ready for the coming of IESO.

3. (1 [Thessalonians 5:6-8](#)) Paulo's exhortations: be awake, sober, and watchful.

Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation.

a. **Therefore let us not sleep:** Because we do not belong to the *night nor of darkness* (1 [Thessalonians 5:5](#)), our spiritual condition should never be marked by **sleep**. Spiritually speaking, we need to be active and aware, to **watch and be sober**.

i. **Not sleep:** Paulo used a different word here than for the sleep of death mentioned in 1 [Thessalonians 4:13](#). "The word *sleep* is here used metaphorically to denote indifference to spiritual realities on the part of believers. It is a different word than that in 1 [Thessalonians 4:13-15](#) for the sleep of death. It covers all sorts of moral and spiritual laxity or insensibility." (Peter Damonse)

ii. **Sleep** speaks of so much that belongs to the world (the **others**), but should not belong to Followers:

- Sleep speaks of *ignorance*
- Sleep speaks of *insensibility*
- Sleep speaks of *no defence*
- Sleep speaks of *inactivity*

iii. In a sermon on this text titled, *Awake! Awake!* Edgar Phillips showed the folly and tragedy of the sleeping Follower with three powerful pictures:

- A city suffers under the plague, with an official walking the streets crying out, "Bring out the dead! Bring out the dead!" All the while, a doctor with the cure in his pocket *sleeps*.
- A passenger ship reels under a storm and is about to crash on the rocks, bringing near-certain death to the hundreds of passengers – all the while, the captain *sleeps*.
- A prisoner in his cell is about ready to be led to execution; his heart is terrified at the thought of hanging from his neck, terrified of death, and of what awaits him after death. All the while, a man with a letter of pardon for the condemned man sits in another room – and *sleeps*.

iv. **Sober** doesn't mean humourless. It has in mind someone who *knows the proper value of things*, and therefore doesn't get too excited about the things of this world. The person who lives his or her life for fun and entertainment isn't **sober**.

v. In commanding sobriety, Paulo didn't have in mind the sort of people who stamp down all enthusiasm and excitement for IESO, promoting what they think is a more balanced way to live. Paulo himself was an enthusiastic follower of IESO, and accused of religious fanaticism. The Roman official Phesto

thought Paulo was mad ([Acts 26:24](#)), and the Corinthians thought he was beside himself (2 [Corinthians 5:13](#)).

b. **For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night:** The opposite of spiritual *watchfulness* is spiritual **sleep**. The opposite of spiritual *sobriety* is to be *spiritually drunk*. As Followers we are **of the day**, and so we must **watch and be sober**.

c. **Putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation:** Paulo used the images of a soldier's armour to illustrate the idea of *watchfulness*. A soldier is a good example of someone who must **watch and be sober**, and he is *equipped* to do that with his armour.

i. When one compares this description of spiritual armour with that found in [Ephesians 6](#), there is not an exact correlation. This indicates that Paulo saw the idea of spiritual armour as a helpful picture, not something rigid in its particular details.

ii. **Faith and love** are represented by the **breastplate** because the **breastplate** covers the vital organs. No soldier would ever go to battle without his **breastplate**, and no Follower is equipped to live the Follower life without **faith and love**.

iii. **The hope of salvation** is represented as a **helmet**, because the **helmet** protects the head, which is just as essential as the **breastplate**. **Hope** isn't used in the sense of wishful thinking, but in the sense of a confident expectation of Aleim's hand in the future.

4. (1 [Thessalonians 5:9-10](#)) The security of our future.

For Aleim did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Ruler IESO the Anointed One, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.

a. **For Aleim did not appoint us to wrath:** Before we had *the hope of salvation* (1 [Thessalonians 5:8](#)), we had an appointment **to wrath**. We no longer have an appointment **to wrath**, but now **to obtain salvation through our Ruler IESO the Anointed One**.

i. **Wrath:** It is important to understand that Paulo means the **wrath of Aleim**. We are saved from the world, the flesh, and the devil. But first and foremost, we are rescued from the **wrath of Aleim**, the **wrath** that *we deserve*. Paulo's whole context here is the believer's rescue from the **wrath of Aleim**.

ii. Our appointment **to wrath** was appointed in two ways. First, because of what Adam did to us and the whole human race, we are appointed **to wrath** ([Romans 5:14-19](#)). Second, because of our own sin, we are appointed to wrath. When IESO died on the tree, He stood in our place in our appointment **to wrath**, and reschedules us with an appointment **to obtain salvation**. As believers, when we think we are appointed **to wrath**, we show up for an appointment that was cancelled by IESO.

iii. **Who died for us:** The idea is that *IESO died in our place*. Not simply that IESO died for us in the sense as a favour for us; but that He **died** as a *substitute* for us.

b. **For Aleim did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation:** Paulo put two interested ideas side-by-side here. **Appoint** emphasizes Aleim's sovereignty, but **obtain** is a word that emphasizes human effort. Together, they show that the full scope of salvation involves both divine initiative and human effort.

c. **Whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him:** Having obtained **salvation through our Ruler IESO**, we will always **live together with Him**. The promise of unity with IESO can't be broken; no matter if we live or die (**wake or sleep**), we will always be **with Him**.

i. **He died for us... whether we wake or sleep:** IESO's death isn't softened by calling it *sleep*, but our death can be called **sleep**. His death was *death*, so that ours would only be **sleep**.

5. (1 Thessalonians 5:11) Our privilege: comfort one another. **Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.**

a. **Therefore comfort each other:** Paulo again tells us not to *take* comfort, but to *give* **comfort**. If all Followers have a heart to **comfort each other**, then all will be comforted.

b. **And edify one another:** To **edify** means to *build up*. When we have our first interest in building up other Followers, then Aleim will **edify** us. The idea is of a Ekklesia full of active participants, not passive spectators.

i. "It is clear that in the primitive Ekklesias the care of souls was not delegated to an individual officer, or even the more gifted brethren among them; it was a work in which every believer might have a share." (Peter Damonse)

c. **Just as you also are doing:** It wasn't that there was no **comfort** among the Thessalonians, or as if no one was edified. But they had to *continue* to comfort others, and to do it *more and more*.

B. Urging and exhorting.

1. (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13) Paulo urges them to do three things in regard to their leaders.

And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labour among you, and are over you in the Ruler and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves.

a. **Recognize those who labour among you:** Followers are to **recognize** their leaders, and leaders are described in three ways.

i. **Those who labour among you.** Leaders are recognized not by their title but by their *service*. A title is fine; but only if the title is true and if the title describes what that person really is before Aleim and man.

ii. **And are over you in the Ruler.** Leaders are recognized as being "*over*" the congregation in the sense of ruling and providing headship, as a shepherd is *over* the sheep. This describes a clear and legitimate order of authority.

iii. **And admonish you.** Leaders are recognized as those who **admonish** the congregation. To **admonish** means "to caution or to reprove gently; to warn." Edgar Phillips says of this word, "While its tone is brotherly, it is big-brotherly."

iv. "The Greek construction is three participles united under one article, thus indicating that they are not three distinct groups but one class of men discharging a threefold function." (Peter Damonse)

b. **Esteem them very highly in love:** Followers are to **esteem** their leaders, and to **esteem them very highly in love**. They should do this **for their work's sake**. They don't deserve esteem because of their title, or because of their personality, but because of their labour on behalf of Aleim's people.

i. "Follower ministers, who preach the *whole truth*, and *labour*

in the word and doctrine, are entitled to more than *respect*; the apostle commands them to be esteemed, *abundantly*, and *super abundantly*; and this is to be done *in love*." (Edgar Phillips)

ii. Paulo twice mentions the *work* of ministry and connects it to the respect these servants should have from those they serve. This suggests at least two things:

· If congregants knew and understood the work done by those with spiritual oversight over them, the congregants would appreciate and respect the leaders more.

· Work is an essential aspect of the ministry, and there is no place for a lazy pastor. "In the first place he states that they *labour*. It follows from this that all idle bellies are excluded from the number of pastors." (Phillip Prins)

iii. "The words in Greek carry such an emphasis as cannot well be expressed in English, importing esteem and love to a hyperbole; their love was to be joined with esteem, and esteem with love, and both these to abound and super abound towards them." (Edgar Phillips)

iv. If a Follower can't **esteem** and **love** their pastor, they should either get on their knees, asking the Holy Spirit to change their heart, or go somewhere else and put themselves under a pastor they do **esteem** and **love**.

c. **Be at peace among yourselves:** With this simple command Paulo said Followers should simply put away all their squabbles and arguments. This is a great way to **esteem** and **love** the leaders of your Ekklesia.

2. (1 Thessalonians 5:14-15) Paulo exhorts them in how to deal with difficult people.

Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all. See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all.

a. **Now we exhort you:** To **exhort** is to tell someone what they must do, but without sharpness or a critical spirit. It is not rebuke or condemnation, but neither is it merely a suggestion or advice. It is urgent and serious, but associated with comfort.

b. **Warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all:** Paulo told the Thessalonians – the people, not only the pastor and leaders – to minister in a variety of ways, depending on the state of the person who needs the ministry. So if someone is **unruly**, the duty of the Follower is to **warn** them. Others need **comfort**, others need to be upheld.

i. The **unruly** are those who are *out of order*, using a military word that describes the soldier who breaks ranks or marches out of step. This is the self-willed person who simply demands to hold his own opinion or preference. These must be warned.

ii. The **fainthearted** are those who, literally, are *small-souled*. By nature or experience they tend to be timid and lack courage. These need comfort – in the sense of assisting strength – to be brought to them.

iii. The **weak** must be upheld, and assisted with an eye to building their own strength instead of perpetuating their weakness.

iv. Some see Paulo addressing these three groups in earlier passages of 1 Thessalonians. If so, they provide good examples of how to speak to individuals from each category.

- **Unruly:** The idlers of 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12.
- **Fainthearted:** Those anxious about their departed loved ones in 1 Thessalonians 4:14-17.
- **Weak:** Those suffering under temptations to lapse into immorality in 1 Thessalonians 4:2-8.
- c. **Be patient with all:** Though different approaches must be taken with different people, Followers must be **patient with all**. This is because true Faith is shown by its ability to love and help difficult people. We do not look for only perfect people to minister to and to minister with.
- d. **See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone:** The Follower never should seek revenge or vengeance, but let Aleim take up our side. Instead, we must **always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all**. When we have a forgiving heart towards others, not only is it good for them, it is good for ourselves.
- i. In the following passage, Paulo will write about more spiritual matters such as prayer, thanksgiving, and worship. But before these spiritual or religious matters comes teaching about right relationships. IESO made it plain that we should get things right with men before we come to worship Aleim (Matthio 5:23-24).
- 3. (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18) Regarding their personal worship.
Edgar Phillips wrote of these verses, "To comment adequately on these diamond drops would be outline a history of the Follower experience in its higher levels."
- Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of Aleim in the Anointed One IESO for you.**
- a. **Rejoice always:** Not only rejoicing in happy things, but in sorrows also. The Follower can **rejoice always** because their joy isn't based in circumstances, but in Aleim. Circumstances change, but Aleim doesn't.
- i. "I am bound to mention among the curiosities of the Ekklesias, that I have known many deeply spiritual people who have been afraid to rejoice.... Some take such a view of religion that it is to them a sacred duty to be gloomy." (Edgar Phillips)
- ii. "Turn this book over and see if there be any precept that the Ruler has given you in which he has said, 'Groan in the Ruler always, and again I say groan.' You may groan if you like. You have liberty for that; but, at the same time, do believe that you have larger liberty to rejoice, for so it is put before you." (Edgar Phillips)
- b. **Pray without ceasing:** Followers are to pray continually. We can't bow our heads, close our eyes, and fold our hands **without ceasing**, but those are *customs* or prayer, not prayer itself. Prayer is communication with Aleim, and we can live each minute of the day in a constant, flowing, conversation with Aleim.
- i. There is significant, important value in a time where we shut out all other distractions and focus on Aleim in a time of closet prayer (Matthio 6:6). But there is also room – and great value – in every-moment-of-the-day fellowship with Aleim.
- ii. There are many valuable implications from this command:
 - The use of the voice is not an essential element in prayer.
 - The posture of prayer is not of primary importance.

- The place of prayer is not of great importance.
- The particular time of prayer is not important.
- A Follower should never be in a place where he *could not* pray.
- c. **In everything give thanks:** We don't **give thanks** for everything, but **in everything**. We recognize Aleim's sovereign hand is in charge, and not blind fate or chance.
- i. "When joy and prayer are married their first born child is gratitude." (Edgar Phillips)
- d. **For this is the will of Aleim in the Anointed One IESO for you:** After each one of these exhortations – **rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks** – we are told to do this because it **is the will of Aleim**. The thought isn't "this is Aleim's will, so you *must* do it." The thought is rather "this is Aleim's will, so you *can* do it." It isn't easy to **rejoice always, pray without ceasing, and in everything give thanks**, but we can do it because it is Aleim's will.
- 4. (1 Thessalonians 5:19-22) Paulo exhorts them in their public worship.
- Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies. Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil.**
- a. **Do not quench the Spirit:** We can **quench** the fire of the **Spirit** by our doubt, our indifference, our rejection of Him, or by the distraction of others. When people start to draw attention to *themselves*, it is a sure **quench to the Spirit**.
- i. " 'Quench' properly applies to the putting out of a flame of some sort, as that of a fire (Marhko 9:48), or a lamp (Matthio 25:8). This is the only place in the Prophetic Scriptures (New Testament) where it is used in a metaphorical sense." (Edgar Phillips) Edgar Phillips says that the phrase could be more literally translated, "Stop putting out the Spirit's fire."
- ii. Therefore, this command is based on the familiar image of the Holy Spirit as a fire or a flame. Though there is a sense in which fire cannot be created, we can provide the environment in which it can burn brightly. Yet a flame can be extinguished when it is ignored and no longer tended, or when the flame is overwhelmed by something else.
- iii. "And there is a quenching of the Spirit in others as well as ourselves; people may quench it in their ministers by discouraging them, and in one another by bad examples, or reproaching the zeal and forwardness that they see in them." (Edgar Phillips)
- b. **Do not despise prophecies:** We recognize that the Ruler speaks to and through His people today, and we learn to be open to His voice. Of course, we always *test* prophecies (following the command to **test all things**), but we do not **despise** prophecies.
- i. It is very possible that prophesy was being despised because individuals were abusing the gift. There were idlers among the Thessalonians (1 Thessalonians 4:11-12), perhaps who spiritualized their idleness with prophecy. There were date-setters and end-times speculators among the Thessalonians (2 Thessalonians 2:1-5), perhaps who backed up their speculations with supposed prophetic authority.
- c. **Test all things; hold fast what is good:** Evil and deception can show itself even in a spiritual setting, so it is important for

Followers to **test all things**. When the **test** has been made (according to the standard of Aleim's Word and the discernment of spirit among the leaders), we then **hold fast to what is good**.

i. Between the time Paulo last saw the Thessalonians and the writing of this letter, he had spent time in Berea (Acts 17:10-12). There, the Followers were of a noble character because they heard Paulo's preaching and diligently searched the Scriptures to see if what he said was true. Paulo wanted the Thessalonians to have more of the heart and mind of the Bereans.

d. **Abstain from every form of evil**: When the testing is made, any aspect of evil must be rejected. This includes evil that may come with a spiritual image.

i. "The term *form* (*eidous*) literally means 'that which is seen,' the external appearance. It points to the external form in which evil presents itself... They are to shun evil in whatever form or appearance it may present itself." (Peter Damonse)

ii. "The meaning will be 'evil which can be seen,' and not 'that which appears to be evil.'" (Edgar Phillips)

C. Conclusion.

1. (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24) Complete sanctification as Aleim's work in us.

Now may the Aleim of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Ruler IESO the Anointed One. He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.

a. **Now may the Aleim of peace Himself sanctify you completely**: The idea behind the word **sanctify** is "to set apart" – to make something different and distinct, breaking old associations and forming a new association. For example, a dress is a dress; but a wedding dress is *sanctified* – set apart for a special, glorious purpose. Aleim wants us to be *set apart* to Him.

i. The emphasis here is on **completely**: "The adjective (*holoeleis*), occurring only here in the Prophetic Scriptures (New Testament), is a compound of *holos*, 'whole, entire,' and *telos*, 'end.' Its basic connotation is 'wholly attaining the end, reaching the intended goal,' hence has the force of no part being left unreached." (Peter Damonse)

b. **Himself sanctify you**: Paulo made it clear that sanctification is Aleim's work in us. He puts this emphasis in the words **Himself**, in **be preserved**, in **He who calls you is faithful**, and in **who will do it**. This emphasis completes Paulo's previous exhortations. In all that he told the Follower to *do* in 1 Thessalonians 4:1 through 1 Thessalonians 5:22, he never intended that they *do* those things in their own power. More Followers are defeated on account of self-reliance than on account of Satanic attack.

i. "The way in which he effects the transition... indicates that it is only in the power of the Aleim on whom he calls that his exhortations can be brought to fruition. 'I have been urging you to do certain things, *but* it is only in Aleim's strength that you will be able to do them.'" (Edgar Phillips)

c. **May your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless**: Paulo's use of **spirit, soul, and body** in this passage has led many to adopt what is called a *trichotimist*

view of man, believing that man is made up of three distinct parts: **spirit, soul, and body**.

i. This view has some merit, but also has problems. One might say that Marhko 12:30 divides man's nature into four parts (*heart, soul, mind, and strength*), and that 1 Corinthians 7:34 divides man's nature into two parts (*body and spirit*). In some passages the terms *soul* and *spirit* seem to be synonymous, other times they seem to be distinct and hard to define precisely. It seems that there are indeed these three different aspects to the human person, yet the specific meaning of *spirit* or *soul* must be determined by the context.

ii. The great South African scholar Edgar Phillips described the spirit and the soul as thus:

· "The Spirit (*pneuma*) is the highest and distinctive part of man, the immortal."

· "The soul is the lower or animal soul, containing the passions and desires which we have in common with the brutes, but which in us is ennobled and drawn up by the *spirit*."

iii. Being the inner, immaterial part of man that may exist apart from spiritual life, the **soul** connects with the world through the senses of the physical body. It connects with Aleim through faith, which might be called the "sense" of the spirit. We tend to think of the spirit being like the soul, but we may also think of it as being more like the body, the vessel of our interaction with the spiritual world.

iv. Because the soul and spirit both have reference to the non-material part of man, they are easily confused. Often an experience intended to build up the **spirit** only blesses the **soul**. There is nothing wrong with soulish excitement and blessing, but there is nothing in it that builds us up spiritually. This is why many Followers go from one exciting experience to another but never really grow *spiritually* – the ministry they receive is *soulish*.

d. **May your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved**: We may receive this order as inspired. Aleim intends there to be a hierarchy within the human person, ordered first with the spirit, then with the soul, and finally with the body.

i. This is not to say that the body is inherently evil; that contradicts Paulo's main thought here, that the *entire* person is set apart and preserved by Aleim, complete in **spirit, soul, and body**. Aleim saves our body as much as our spirit or soul, and the body has a definite and important role in the whole plan of salvation – to be resurrected into a new body.

ii. Yet, Aleim designed the human to live after the order of **spirit, soul, and body** instead of *body, soul, spirit*. We are to sublimate the needs of the *body* to the *soul*, and the needs of both *body and soul* to the needs of the *spirit*.

iii. This is also how Aleim works in us. "Notice the order – spirit, soul, body. The Shechinah of his presence shines in the holy of holies, and thence pours over into the holy place, and so into the outer court, until the very curtains of the body are irradiated with its light." (Meyer)

2. (1 Thessalonians 5:25-26) A request for prayer and a greeting given.

Brethren, pray for us. Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss.

a. **Brethren, pray for us**: Paulo was an apostle, and the Thessalonian Ekklesia was made up of young Followers.

Paulo still believed he needed their prayers, so he simply asked, “**pray for us.**”

i. “Aleim requires that His people should pray for His ministers; and it is not to be wondered at, if they who pray not for their preachers should receive no benefit from their teaching.” (Edgar Phillips)

b. **Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss:** The idea is that Paulo wants those who *read* the letter to **greet** all the Followers in Thessalonica on his behalf. If he were there in person, he would **greet all the brethren with a holy kiss** himself, but since he was not there, he would send the greeting through this letter.

i. “Apparently at this time the sexes were segregated in the assembly and the men kissed the men and the women the women... When the kiss came to be exchanged between men and women it became the occasion for their critics to charge the Followers with impurity. The resultant embarrassments gave rise to numerous regulations concerning the practice by the early Ekklesia councils.” (Peter Damonse)

3. (1 Thessalonians 5:27-28) Conclusion to the letter.

I charge you by the Ruler that this epistle be read to all the holy brethren. The grace of our Ruler IESO the Anointed One be with you. Amen.

a. **I charge you by the Ruler:** Paulo used a strong phrase here. It was important that **this epistle be read** among Followers. This is an unusual statement, unique in Paulo’s letters. Many different reasons have been suggested for why Paulo added this phrase at the end of his letter.

- Since this was his first letter, there was as of yet no established custom of the public reading of his letters, and he wanted to make sure the practice was established.

- Since the letter was a substitute for his personal presence, Paulo did not want any disappointment at his absence to dampen the spread of the letter.

- Paulo wanted to make sure that the Ekklesia heard the letter first-hand, and not through intermediaries who might misstate his message.

- Perhaps Paulo feared that people would look up passages in the letter that spoke to the issues that interested them the most, and ignore the other parts.

i. “And we hence also may prove against the papists, it ought to be made known to the people, even all the holy brethren, and not confined to the clergy; and to be read in their own tongue, for so, without question, was this Epistle read in a language which the people understood.” (Edgar Phillips)

b. **The grace of our Ruler IESO the Anointed One be with you:** Nearly all Paulo’s letters begin and end with the idea of **grace**. This is also true of almost everything Aleim has to say to His people.

i. **Grace** is Aleim’s unmerited favour, His bestowal of love and acceptance on us because of who He is and what IESO has done. **Grace** means that He likes us, and all the reasons are in Him. **Grace** means we can stop working for His love and start receiving it.

ii. It is appropriate that this letter – the first of Paulo’s preserved correspondence to the Ekklesias – this letter full of love, encouragement, and instruction, end on a note of **grace**.

iii. “Whatever Aleim has to say to us – and in all the Prophetic

Scriptures (New Testament) letters there are things that search the heart and make it quake – begins and ends with grace.... All that Aleim has been to man in IESO the Anointed One is summed up in it: all His gentleness and beauty, all His tenderness and patience, all the holy passion of His love, is gathered up in grace. What more could one soul wish for another than that the grace of the Ruler IESO the Anointed One should be with it?”