

CHAPTER FIVE – PART FOUR

SECTION 2 — Philippians to Timothy

The Epistle to the Philippians

Paul's Epistle to the Philippians centered on *suffering for Christ*. Paul had endured much persecution and was imprisoned when he wrote this Epistle, yet he was grateful for his trials because it produced more boldness to speak the Word. His testimony resulted in the spread of the Gospel and for that Paul was thankful. Paul used his imprisonment to express to the Philippians what it meant to suffer for Christ's sake, so that they too could be ready to endure affliction and to remain faithful in all circumstances. Paul prayed that their love and passion for knowledge would continue to grow, for he knew that this would be their strength during trials and suffering. When we possess "the hope," the confident expectation of a future with Christ, we are not ashamed of the gospel under persecution, but are bold and joyful. When we can rejoice in our sufferings, then we are perfect; we are mature.

"My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him." (James 1:2-5)

Paul tells them, "*For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain*" (Philippians 1:21). Paul expressed his faith to the Philippians, that whether he was alive or dead he belonged to Christ. If he lived, he lived for Christ and the Spirit of Christ was in him, and if he died, he would finally be with Christ.

For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. (Romans 14:8)

It is clear in all of Paul's epistles that we must suffer in this world. This world is presently ruled under Satan, and until Christ takes over, we will

suffer. This is not our world; this is not our time; this is not our home. *Suffering must precede glory.* And, as pilgrims on this earth, our battle does not lie with flesh and blood, but with Satan. He is the tempter who brings about tribulation; a deceiver and a liar who attacks believers.

One of Satan's biggest deceptions is challenging believers to presume that prosperity is connected to people's goodness and consequently that people's suffering is connected to their sin. Also, he adds the notion that if we are children of God, and He is good and true, we will always have joy, peace, good health and wealth in our life now. Satan puts this work of evil into the minds of men from the pulpit where the most harm can be done. Many "prosperity" Churches as well as "charismatic" Churches bring this false doctrine to those who have itching ears (those that only care to hear the fluffy, feel-good message). Beware of those who preach wealth, health and peace in this life, or that they can perform these miracles — it is a lie of the devil. This message will only bring a false sense of security and faith in God. The congregation who believes it will have all these expectations for their present life and when these things do not happen, they fall away from the Lord. Then, when trials and tribulations occur, they blame God. This is just another way for Satan to keep Christians from knowing the truth and overcoming.

For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear is in me. (Philippians 1:29)

'Suffering for Christ's sake' means enduring Satan's attacks because of the faith, growth, and ministry of the gospel of Christ. It means suffering for the Word of God. Because Satan seeks to destroy the Word of the kingdom, Christians may suffer persecution from others when attempting to spread this message. But with the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, we can overcome our sufferings. Suffering for Christ is a test of our faith; it strengthens us and prepares us for rulership.

Knowing what the future had in store for Him, Christ humbled Himself and was obedient to God's commands, even to the point of death. This was part of God's plan from the beginning, so that afterwards Christ would be rewarded and exalted above all. And Christ is our example, therefore we also are to suffer now and be exalted later. Suffering precedes glory!

For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps. (1 Peter 2:21)

We must be humble servants, faithfully obedient to God's commands. Since Christ died for us, we ought to give all to Christ. Paul was an excellent example, who counted all things rubbish, things that he had once deemed important, for the privilege of knowing Christ. Paul, an eyewitness, student and friend to the Messiah, lived to gain the knowledge of Him.

...that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. (Philippians 3:10, 11)

Paul realized the amazing treasure that was set before him made possible by Christ and he was determined to press toward the goal for that treasure. The treasure or prize is the future upward call of God in Christ Jesus. This is why Paul dedicated his life to knowing the power of His resurrection. Paul realized the significance of Christ's resurrection from the dead and that it pointed towards much more than being resurrected with all believers in that future Day. This was a special resurrection---an "out-resurrection" from among the resurrected, or a called-out from the called. It was a *special* upward calling; a reward for those who qualify. Normally throughout the New Testament, the word *resurrection* [Greek word anastasis; Strong's #G386] means "a standing up again, i.e. literally from death." However, in **Philippians 3:10**, the word "ex" meaning *out* is added to "anastasis" [Strong's #G1815] referring to an "out-resurrection" from among the dead.

And in order to achieve this, just as Christ did, Paul lived to know the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death. This was associated with his present sufferings and death (dying to self or denying his flesh, "the old man") in order to acquire future glory and life in Christ's kingdom. Jesus Himself during His ministry taught about this qualification or out-resurrection --- which points to the salvation of one's soul:

Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life [soul] will lose it, but whoever loses his life [soul] for My sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if

he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works.” (Matthew 16:24-27)

The goal of every Christian should be that he may receive the higher calling from God and the salvation of his soul in order to rule and reign with Christ. If we choose to put to death the deeds of the body by the Spirit then we must inevitably suffer because dying to our flesh never comes easy. But only then can we produce the fruit of the Spirit and good works for the building of the kingdom. If we are victorious in running this race to the end, we will rejoice in the Day of the Lord.

Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain. (Philippians 2:14-16)

When believers suffer and do not put their trust in the Lord, the suffering becomes unbearable. They seek confidence in the flesh and the world to provide aid. Suffering comes to all, believers and unbelievers alike, but those who know and trust in the Lord, He will provide a way of escape, that they may be able to bear it (**1 Corinthians 10:13a**). Whatever the outcome, even to the point of death, we should remain faithful because of His promise — the promise that those who choose to live for Him now will live with Him in the age to come. Therefore, seek aid through faith in Christ Jesus, that which leads to millennial life. And be glad if you are suffering for Christ’s sake or for righteousness sake, for this is commendable to God and He will faithfully reward you.

If we choose to abide in good works, it is God who ultimately works in us to accomplish His will. Under what condition does God permit this to happen? God knows everyone’s heart. If one chooses to seek Him diligently and asks in faith, God will reveal the deep things to him.

...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. (Philippians 2:12b, 13)

“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.” (James 1:5, 6)

As ambassadors for Christ, our business in this world is to beseech others to be reconciled to God. We are not *of* this world, although we are *in* this world. We are to consider ourselves as pilgrims passing through to do the will of God, *for our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.* (**Philippians 3:20**)

Through our sufferings, let us endure patiently in prayer, remaining steadfast in the faith, that we may have the peace of God through it all. Let us set our minds on things above, for the Lord is coming soon.

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. (**Philippians 4:6, 7**)

Meditate on this Scripture in **Philippians 4:6, 7**, for it is only the peace of God that can sustain us through our trials and sufferings. And on *that Day* when we have overcome, *“my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Now to our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.”* (**Philippians 4:19, 20**)

The Epistle to the Colossians

Like the Ephesians, Paul witnessed the Colossian’s growth in “the faith” and their love of the brethren because of the hope that was in them [**Colossians 1:3-5; Ephesians 1:15-18**]. This “hope” had to do with the coming glory of Christ and with an inheritance. Paul prayed for them to be strengthened in all knowledge and encouraged them to continue in the race of the faith. In this letter to the Colossians, he outlines the course needed to run the race, where this race leads them, and how to overcome the opposing forces that war against the Spirit for the sole purpose of stopping them from running the race of the faith.

For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;

that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy;

giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. (Colossians 1:9-14)

Wisdom and spiritual understanding

Christians are called upon to make the necessary preparations for the coming glory of Christ. But before this can be done, one must be “*filled with the knowledge of His will*” in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. Because of the tares that were placed in the Church, there is a present lack of knowledge concerning the gospel of the glories of Christ and therefore lack of understanding. Today, this has resulted in a complete eradication of teaching on the subject entirely. Without the knowledge and understanding of the gospel of glory, the purpose is omitted and there is no moving forward to any “hope” set before them. But once a Christian has attained the knowledge of His will, he then is able to go on to maturity and to fulfill his purpose in Christ. He must seek wisdom and spiritual understanding like treasure. He must search the Scriptures in order to unfold the mystery, beginning with the foundation, which is Christ, and build upon accordingly.

Walk worthy of the Lord

Spiritual wisdom and understanding provides us with the ability to walk worthy of the Lord, which is referenced in **Ephesians** chapter **five**: Walk in unity, Walk in Love, Walk in Light and Walk in Wisdom with the character of the “new man” in Christ [**Ephesians 4:17; Colossians 3:12**]. As representatives of Christ, therefore, we should strive to be like Him.

Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one. (Colossians 4:5)

Christ is our model and our greatest example. Walk like Him.

Fully pleasing Him

We were placed in this world “*to do business till He comes*” as servants of Christ, therefore we aim to please Him so that we can be found worthy on that Day of Judgment when He says to us, “*Well done, good and faithful servant.*” (Matthew 25:21)

And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ. But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality.” (Colossians 4:22-25)

The business that we are to do is “works of righteousness” that requires faithful obedience to the Word of God. *But without faith, it is impossible to please Him (Hebrews 11:6).*

Being fruitful in every good work

The “fruit” comes from the Holy Spirit and “works” are from our own efforts. In order for these “good works” to be “fruitful,” they must emanate from the Holy Spirit and not from the flesh. The “fruit” of the Spirit is revealed in **Galatians 5:22-25**:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

The character of the “new man” in **Colossians 3:12-14, 16**, also requires the application of the fruit of the Spirit in our ministry for Christ.

Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection...

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching, and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

Increasing in the knowledge of God

If we diligently study His Word, the Holy Spirit will reveal the deep things of God, which is able to strengthen us in the faith. The more we increase in the knowledge of God, the more our faith increases and so will our relationship with God.

“So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.”
(Romans 10:17)

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.” **(John 14:26)**

“However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth...and He will tell you things to come.”
(John 16:13)

Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power

The knowledge of God is our strength against the evil one, against false teachers, against the lusts of the flesh, the pride of life, the cares of this world and our own fleshly weaknesses. The Word of God is the only armor that can protect us from these evil forces. If we are weak, let us look to the Lord to provide us strength through the Word of God. Just as the Lord told Paul,

“My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness” **(2 Corinthians 12:9).**

If we put on the whole armor of God daily, we can be strengthened with His might, able to endure anything that comes our way. If we seek strength through the knowledge of God, He will freely give it to us and we give thanks to Him for it, because it is done only by His grace and glorious power.

For all patience and longsuffering with joy

The strength that we obtain through the Word of God is able to bring about patient endurance and longsuffering in any circumstance, trial, or tribulation we face. We are strengthened when our focus is on the commands of Scripture and our faithful obedience to those commands. It is then that we can overcome any trial because we trust God through it. When we realize that no event or no man in this world can harm us or take from us the life of our soul in the age to come, then we can be joyful through sufferings and overcome. *There is no harm that anyone can do to us with respect to our entrance into the Kingdom if we remain faithfully obedient to what God commands.* And we can be joyful in this, knowing that our trust and hope is in Him at all times.

My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. (James 1:2-4)

Blessed is the man who endures temptation, for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. (James 1:12)

This phrase “*for when he has been approved*” in **James 1:12** speaks of a future time when all believers will be judged according to their works. A believer who patiently endures temptation in this age will be blessed with the “the crown of life” in the age to come. This believer has shown that he loves the Lord, because he has abided in His commandments (**John 15:10; 1 John 5:3**).

Giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.

Before the foundation of the world, God the Father through His Son had finished all of His works, one of which was to qualify those who will be partakers with Christ in His kingdom on that future Day. For this, we give Him thanks daily and we earnestly hope that we may be found worthy to partake of this inheritance. This is our *daily* hope. Before the ages began, God delivered us from the power of darkness, who is Satan, and conveyed the faithful overcomers into the kingdom of Christ, which is to be manifested yet future. The “partakers” will be those who will be found qualified at the Judgment seat of Christ as “joint heirs” with Christ in His future Millennial kingdom.

All things were planned and created by Christ from the beginning — the heavens, the earth and everything in it to include Israel, the Gentiles, the Church, the Judgment seat of Christ, Christ’s bride, the Messianic Era and the Eternal Ages beyond. All events have already transpired and all of God’s works have been finished, from eternity past to eternity future!

It is incredible to think that we have already appeared at the Judgment seat of Christ and our works have already been judged. In the future, these events will be manifested and realized by us. God has already prepared a place for those who love Him --- *everything* has already been set in place. When John was transported by God to the Judgment seat of Christ recorded in the Book of **Revelation**, this was not a dream or a vision. This was a *live* event, a live transportation from one place to another, and all Christians were present!

The Word has many references on God’s omnipotent and manifold wisdom concerning the mystery of the bride. One reference can be seen in **1 Corinthians 2:7, 8**:

“But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age (Satan and his fallen angels) knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.”

The following is a companion Scripture to **1 Corinthians 2:7**:

...and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places (Satan and his fallen angels), according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord... (Ephesians 3:9-11)

Christ created *all* things from the beginning of time. He was there with God and through Him all things were created and finished. This is what **Colossians 1:15-18** reveals:

He (Jesus Christ) is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him (Jesus Christ) all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.

And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.

In the beginning, the heavens were created first and then the earth. However, at the end of the Millennium when all things will be reconciled by Christ the opposite will take effect — first on earth then in heaven. A major part of this reconciliation took place when He laid down His life on the Cross. The second part will be when He returns to gather His saints, and final reconciliation will take place when He has put all enemies under His feet and He delivers the kingdom to God the Father at the end of the Messianic Era.

Our hope in God's plan of reconciliation should be to take part as co-heirs with Him during the Millennium. This is the "mystery" that was hidden for generations until Christ came and revealed it to the Church.

...the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to his saints. To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the

Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. (Colossians 1:26, 27)

Though the Spirit of Christ is in every believer, not everyone allows the Spirit to lead their lives unto maturity. Paul gave warning of this when he said, *Him (Christ) we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. (Colossians 1:28)*

What if one does not mature in the gospel of Christ? Paul warns believers of two things that will occur. First, the believer will be tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine, and though the message may be persuasive and backed up by the traditions of men, it will have no root in the Word of God — he will be enticed to adhere to deceptive and false doctrine. Second, as a result of the first occurrence, he will not know his purpose in Christ, nor will he be able to run the race of the faith or produce any fruit.

Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. (Colossians 2:8, 9)

What are some of these **false messages**? The following lists a common few:

1. There is no literal kingdom to come. The kingdom is already here, in our hearts.
2. Man is not a three-part being like God, man is a two-part being made up of body and spirit/soul (spirit and soul are the same).
3. Your eternal salvation is a gift, but you must not sin and you must do good works or you will lose your eternal salvation.
4. There is no judgment for Christians, only for the unsaved. All Christians will receive rewards and all will be with Christ in His kingdom unto eternity.
5. One only needs to pray and God will provide riches and glory in this life.
6. Christians who do not sin and who serve the Lord will never have trials or tribulations.
7. Do not focus on the reward, but only in serving the Lord.
8. You must abide by the Law of Moses (through the flesh), the feasts and Jewish traditions or you will not possess salvation.

9. God is not a Triune God; there is no Trinity.

These are FALSE and confusing messages taught from the pulpit today. And these false messages began during the early Church period when Satan did his harmful work of placing tares in the Church to confuse and deceive believers into thinking, “*you will not surely die,*” as he did with Eve in the Garden of Eden.

And within these false messages, the works of legalism were enforced. Although Jesus Christ paid the price, wiped away sin once and for all, wiped out the handwriting of requirements so that the just will live by faith and faith alone in Him, false teachers continue to teach salvation by the law. Watch out for these pastor-teachers who seek to stray believers away from the Truth — they are full of pride, seeking to be exalted and glorified by men.

So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or Sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ. Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels,

intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up in his fleshly mind, and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God.

Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations---Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle, which all concern things which perish with the using—according to the commandments and doctrines of men? (Colossians 2:16-22)

The law was made to expose sin and was never a means to obtain righteousness or salvation. Christ’s death took away sin — faith alone in Christ alone is the only way to obtain righteousness and salvation. And if one remains faithful, he will be transformed and prepared for good works. This will lead to life in the age to come.

An immature Christian, who has no care or hope for the future kingdom, will set his mind on earthly things and not on things above. He is foolish in

being satisfied with knowing little to nothing about Christ. He is totally deceived, being blinded by the cares of this world and his fleshly desires, that which keeps him in bondage to sin and Satan. He is a carnal man, living a life that leads to destruction.

Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.
(Colossians 3:2-4)

Our baptism signified our death with Christ as we were emerged in the water. It acknowledged our commitment to put to death our fleshly desires and instead live for Christ. This requires setting our minds on Him and not on the things of this world. Upon doing this, we will be raised in glory when He returns. How do we live for Christ? We must put on the “new man in Christ” and put off the “old man.” **Colossians 3:12-17** gives us the character of the new man:

Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering, bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another;

even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

By allowing the indwelling Holy Spirit to teach us the Word, and then abiding in it accordingly, we will subsequently transform into the character of the “new man,” demonstrating that we are living for Christ.

Paul then reflects on being submissive to God’s commands. We are to be submissive to others of authority (according to the Scriptures), just as Christ

was submissive to His Father. It is a test of our faithful obedience to God's commands, knowing that we will give an account of our actions to Christ. This race of faith that we are in as individuals becomes a personal issue between us and the Lord. Our faithful obedience is not negotiable even though the circumstances we face may be difficult. Even if our relationship with another becomes extremely difficult, what does God say for us to do? We must obey and trust in God. In the end, what matters is how we treated others according to God's commands no matter how they treated us. Our words and deeds toward others reflect our relationship with Christ. Do it for the Lord and not for men, because your heavenly reward will come from Him and no one else. For, *the Lord redeems the soul of His servants, and none of those who trust in Him shall be condemned.* **(Psalms 34:22)**

If we love God, then we will trust Him and keep His commandments; and those who have faith in Him can overcome anything in this world.

For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome. For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. **(1 John 5:3, 4)**

The Epistle to the Thessalonians

Paul and Timothy traveled together on their second missionary journey. One of their successes during this journey was the conversion of the Church in Thessalonica. Though the Church experienced much opposition amongst other believers, they continued to follow Paul and Timothy's teachings regarding the gospel of the kingdom.

And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe. **(1 Thessalonians 1:6, 7)**

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

God, which also effectively works in you who believe.
(1 Thessalonians 2:13)

It is clear in these two Scriptures that the content of Paul's message to the Church is the gospel of glory and not the gospel of grace as they were already believers. The Church, in turn, ministered to others in the surrounding area, to those who "*already believed.*"

Paul exhorts the Thessalonians to stay strong in the faith, knowing that their sufferings will bring reward. Paul tells them not to be surprised at suffering for Christ's sake, for those who live godly lives should expect persecution. Paul experienced much opposition in Thessalonica, proving to be a hostile environment for the gospel of glory. Paul was forced to leave the city prematurely, and when he wanted to return, Satan hindered him. But in spite of persecution and satanic opposition, Paul looked beyond the present trials to the joy of being in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ.

For this is the will of God, your sanctification **(1 Thessalonians 4:3** [The word *sanctify* [Strong's #38] means to be "set apart"]). A major problem for the Church was maintaining sexual purity due to idol worship. Pagan religions often condoned sexual immorality as part of their rites. In contrast, Paul strongly urged the Thessalonians not to participate in any sexual activity outside of marriage. They would be going against God's commandments if they did this, thereby rejecting God.

Therefore he who rejects this does not reject man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit. **(1 Thessalonians 4:8)**

The Christian's body is God's temple and should be kept holy. Rejecting holiness is rejecting God and the ministry of the Holy Spirit within us.

As the faith of the Thessalonians grew, they anticipated the coming of the Lord and had questions on the subject. Evidently, they were concerned that believers who had already died would miss the resurrection of the Church. Paul, therefore, clarified the matter by affirming that believers who were dead would precede those believers still living.

For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep [dead].

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

*Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up [The Greek word “caught up” is *harpazo* (Strong’s G726) meaning “rapture”] together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17)*

With the trumpet of God and the voice of Christ, all living believers will be raptured to meet Christ. The dead [bodies] in Christ will be joined with their soul and spirit in order to rise first. Then those believers still alive, possessing the Holy Spirit in them, will be “caught up” (Greek: *harpazo*, meaning “rapture”) with the other believers in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air — all simultaneously *in the twinkling of an eye*. Therefore, all three parts of man: spirit, soul and body, will be raised to the Judgment seat of Christ. Paul reassured the Thessalonians that this is not a problem for a supernatural God who created the world. Clearly the resurrection will be a physical resurrection in which bodily existence will be restored, as confirmed in **1 Corinthians 15:51-53**. The raised bodies of Christians will be animated by the spirit, yet they will be bodies of flesh and bone (**Luke 24:39**). And they will all be recognizable, as was the resurrected body of Christ (**1 John 3:2**).

“Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live [believers]. For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man.

Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all [believers] who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth---those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.” (John 5:25-29)

The bride (overcoming Christians) will be granted glorified bodies; just as God is Spirit, the bride will also be spirits in the kingdom of heaven. No longer will their life be animated by the blood, but will be animated by the spirit, just like angels.

“For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven.” (Matthew 22:30)

Overcomers will worship God in spirit in the kingdom of heaven, not in the flesh. Therefore, we must practice putting to death our flesh and doing everything in the spirit, according to the Holy Spirit. False worshipers, those who worship in the flesh, will not be found qualified to possess life in the age to come. In the eyes of God, these Christians have done evil works according to the flesh and will not be granted glorified bodies, but will be condemned to outer darkness and blackness of darkness outside of the kingdom for one thousand years.

The rapture of the Church will mark the beginning of the Lord’s Day in the heavens and immediately following will be the final seven years of Man’s Day upon the earth. For carnal believers, this day will come as a thief in the night. For them, the appearance of Christ will be completely unexpected, as it is with a thief. Although these believers are transported to the heavens, they will have to stand before the Lord to be judged and through decisions and determinations at the Judgment seat of Christ, their works will be burned and they will find themselves cast out of the kingdom for one thousand years. But for faithful Christians who were preparing and looking for this Day, they will not be surprised. These Christians will be found worthy to rule and reign in the kingdom as king-priests, for their works will pass the test of fire at the Judgment seat of Christ. The Day of the Lord will be a time of judgment and cleansing executed by Christ and His co-heirs for a period of one thousand years.

The individuals left behind will be the remaining population on the earth--- Jews and Gentiles. It will be *a time of Jacob’s trouble, such as never before*. In the last half of the Tribulation, God will bring His people, Israel, to a place of repentance. God will allow the Gentile nations under Antichrist to annihilate many Jews.

For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, “Peace and safety!” then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman.

And they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. You are all son of light

and sons of the day. Therefore, let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. (1 Thessalonians 5:2-6)

1 Thessalonians chapter **five** speaks of the Day of the Lord. The Day of the Lord is characterized by two inseparable events over a period of one thousand years: 1) Christ's judgment over His people and 2) His reign over the earth. Paul exhorts the Thessalonians to be mindful of that Day and to live in light of what they already know. *For when they say, "Peace and safety"* refers to the man of sin, Antichrist, during the Tribulation. At the beginning of the Tribulation, Antichrist will promise "peace and safety" with regards to the Middle East problem, but will only bring chaos and destruction over Israel and all the earth.

"But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath.

For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, nor ever will be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened." (Matthew 24:19-22)

And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors have reached their fullness, a king (antichrist) shall arise, having fierce features, who understands sinister schemes.

His power shall be mighty, but not by his own power (but by the power of Satan); He shall destroy fearfully, and shall prosper and thrive; he shall destroy the mighty (Gentile leaders) and also the holy people (Jews). Through his cunning he shall cause deceit to prosper under his rule; and he shall exalt himself in his heart.

He shall destroy many in their prosperity (peace). He shall even rise against the Prince of princes (Christ Jesus); but he shall be broken without human means. (Daniel 8:23-25)

Following three and a half years of the Tribulation, known as the Great Tribulation, the Antichrist will be revealed. When the Holy Spirit and the Levitical sacrifices are taken away from the [newly-built] Jewish temple and

the image of the Antichrist is set up, Christ warns the remnant to run for their lives.

And from the time that the daily sacrifice [Levitical sacrifices and Holy Spirit] is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days. [three and a half years] (Daniel 12:11)

Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place” (whoever reads, let him understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. (Matthew 24:15, 16)

For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He [Holy Spirit] who now restrains will do so until He [Holy Spirit] is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. (2 Thessalonians 2:7, 8)

The Jews and Gentiles will experience unparalleled tribulation. And because they will continue to be disobedient to the Lord, God will keep them in a state of blindness that they should believe the lies of the Antichrist.

The coming of the lawless one (Antichrist) is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness. (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12)

All things have been revealed to us in the Word of God, for He wants “to show His servants---things which must shortly take place” (Revelation 1:1). Knowing this, we should be diligent to be the type of person that God wants us to be — holy, loving, faithful, set apart, and mature in Christ, so that our spirit, soul and body may be preserved blameless and we may be counted worthy when that Day comes.

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Thessalonians 5:23)

...because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other...for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure, which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer....(2 Thessalonians 1:3-5)

When we suffer persecution for righteousness' sake and endure, God will repay on that Day and give us rest. The non-overcomer's punishment will last one thousand years as they will be separated from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power. They will not receive glorified bodies or be with Christ, but will spend their time in darkness and torment outside of the kingdom of the heavens.

...since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels,

in flaming fire [judgment] taking vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. [immature, carnal Christians]. These shall be punished with everlasting [age-lasting; millennial] destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes, in that Day... (2 Thessalonians 1:6-10)

We must be faithful in repaying no one evil for evil. When we do good to evil-doers, the Lord is pleased. What does the Word say to do if your brother rejects the true message? The Word says to pray for them and continue to love them, not harboring any ill feelings or repaying back with evil. However, we also are not to keep company with them, lest we share in their evil deeds and without notice stray away from the faith.

Throughout the course of his ministry, Paul was committed to the Word that Christ had entrusted to him and he refused to be associated with someone who wouldn't remain with him in the ministry (**Acts 15:38-41**). He also

refused to let anything deter him from being able to complete his mission for which he had been called (**Acts 9:16; Philippians 1:27-29**).

But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary in going good. And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

(2 Thessalonians 3:13-15)

We are to stand fast and hold the Truth close to our hearts and minds, keeping on the straight and narrow path and not deviating from it. Paul and Timothy's prayer to the Thessalonian should be our prayer for our brethren:

Therefore we also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling [the higher calling of the kingdom], and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power,

that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Thessalonians 1:11, 12)

The Epistle to Timothy

While Timothy remained in Ephesus, Paul wrote to him, exhorting him to “*fight the good fight*” of the faith. Evidently, Timothy was experiencing rejection from certain individuals within the Church who were “*desiring to be teachers of the law*” and “*who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past.*” Paul told Timothy to instruct and correct them. These individuals did not understand the things they taught yet spoke evil of Timothy and the true message. Paul prayed to God to deliver these blasphemers over to Satan, not because they were unsaved, but because they were unfaithful believers whose flesh needed affliction and chastening. Because they had rejected the true message, Paul had excluded them from the Church. His purpose in doing so was to remove their evil deeds from the Church, and, in the hopes that they may abandon their evil ways.

Paul charged Timothy to “*wage the good warfare*” by keeping his faith and by building up the Church. Every Church will battle spiritual warfare.

Satan's seed is in a constant state of attack against the Church, and he does this through the flesh. The Spirit constantly makes war against the flesh and the flesh against the Spirit. When the flesh takes control, it gives access to Satan's evil spirits.

The unsaved knows only to live in the flesh, because they do not have the Spirit within them; their own spirits are dead. But believers can live according to the flesh or the Spirit, and they are always opposed forces. Paul encourages the believers to overcome the deeds of the flesh by choosing to live according to the Spirit. Believers who choose to live in the flesh will by no means inherit the kingdom of God. This was the reason Paul asked God to deliver the flesh of these men over to Satan, so that they may repent of their deeds, cleanse their hearts, and renew a right spirit in them.

A similar situation occurred in the Corinthian Church with a member practicing sexual immorality (**1 Corinthians 5:1-5**). Together with the members of the Church, Paul asked God in prayer to deliver the wicked believer to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the *Day of the Lord*. Clearly, this is not speaking of eternal verities, for all believers are saved for the Eternal Ages, the part of salvation that is irrevocable. This is speaking of millennial verities, in which the soul, spirit, and body must be saved in order to inherit, the part of salvation which is conditional and *is* revocable.

This Christian's evil deed of sexual immorality was contaminating the entire Church. This Christian could have caused others to fall, especially since the Church was allowing it, thereby endorsing it. The Church was not to ignore this man's disobedience, but hold him accountable.

Likewise, Paul exhorted Timothy to stand firm in the faith against those in the Church who were acting wickedly and rejecting his message.

You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier. And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. (2 Timothy 2:3-5)

The point here is to be set apart from Christians who are engaged in false messages and unrighteous living. False doctrine involves embracing the

values, perceptions and practices of the world. These false messages do not align with the Truth -- their purpose is to completely corrupt the Word of the kingdom. Jesus Christ warned about this very thing in **Matthew 13:33**:

Another parable He spoke to them: "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened."

The placing of the leaven through the tares was Satan's way of corrupting the Word of the Kingdom, a two thousand year corruption resulting in the complete elimination of this message. And for this reason, you will not hear the true message being taught in the Church today. There are only a few who are truly seeking to know the Lord through His Word, working out their own salvation with fear and trembling, and awaiting that future Day of the Lord.

Paul continually provided warnings concerning false doctrine in the Church, on falling away, and on those who speak against the Word of the kingdom.

Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons...but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. (1Timothy 4:1, 12)

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers;

and they will turn their ear away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. (2 Timothy 4:3-5)

At the near time of his death, Paul gave words of encouragement to Timothy. Paul had endured in the faith, even under much persecution and suffering. He knew that God would reward him with the crown of righteousness on that Day, and that he would live again to rule and reign with Christ. Though most of the Churches in Asia had forsaken him and fell away from the Truth, he asked God to forgive them. He knew he himself had "*fought the good fight*" and had "*finished the race of the faith.*" And he was assured of receiving the Lord's promise.

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

(2 Timothy 4:7, 8)

Paul also knew that on that Day when he faces His Judge at the Judgment seat of Christ, his good works of ministry to the Gentiles would wipe away every evil work he did in his past. His transformation and his service to God would qualify him to enter the future heavenly kingdom.

And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom. To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen!

(2 Timothy 4:18)

Paul had kept the faith, hope and love of Christ and the kingdom until the end.

This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, We shall also live with Him. If we endure, We shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us. If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself. (2 Timothy 2:11-13)

Too often these words are taken lightly and without much thought. Christians fail to realize the profound implications of this message. Those who have become complacent are not likely to receive this Word with benefit. Eternal salvation is not in view here. This has to do with the salvation of the soul — Millennial life.

"For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him" refers to believers who, in their lifetime, have put to death the flesh and lived according to the Spirit. These believers will live with Christ in the kingdom to come.

"If we endure, we shall also reign with Him" means if we finish the race of the faith, being faithfully obedient to His Word through sufferings — then we will reign with Him in the future Millennial kingdom.

"If we deny Him, He will deny us." means if believers deny Christ and His second coming, which includes His literal kingdom to come, then He will

deny *them* at the Judgment seat of Christ. He will deny them entrance into His kingdom for one thousand years.

"If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself." Christ is always faithful and just -- He is the same today, tomorrow and forever. He will stay true to His promises, judgments, commandments, His plans and purposes even if we are unfaithful to Him. He cannot lie and therefore cannot deny Himself. Everything has already been determined and all of His works have been finished since before the foundation of the world. If we are unfaithful believers, He will remain the righteous Judge and judge us according to our works. If we are faithless, our works will inevitably deny us entrance into Millennial life, but our eternal salvation remains secure.

Note that every sentence in **2 Timothy 2:11-13** begins with the word *if*, meaning there are conditions placed. Therefore, this has nothing to do with eternal life as there are no works required (Christ did the work, paid the price — it was His gift to us) but for Millennial life, works *are* required for entrance into the kingdom. It is conditioned upon good works emanating from the Spirit. This is why God "*begs*" us to be diligent to do good works:

Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation. (1 Peter 2:11, 12)