

1 THESSALONIANS 5
1 AND 2 THESSALONIANS



T. M. Moore
A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Fellowship of Ailbe

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1 Thessalonians 5: Introduction

1 Thessalonians concludes with Paul pointing his readers to the return of Jesus and urging them to press on in their Kingdom-and-glory calling from the Lord.

We may face many difficulties and distractions in our walk with the Lord, but if we work together, encouraging one another and following God's appointed leaders, we can realize more of the Lord's blessings in the days before Jesus comes again.

1 Thessalonians ends where it began – in the grace and peace of the Lord.

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1 Not for You to Know

Pray Psalm 23.1-3.

The LORD *is* my shepherd;
I shall not want.
He makes me to lie down in green pastures;
He leads me beside the still waters.
He restores my soul;
He leads me in the paths of righteousness
For His name's sake.

Read 1 Thessalonians 5.1-6.

Reflect.

1. We can't know *when* Jesus is coming again, but we can know *that He is*. Why should that be enough for us?
2. What difference does it make that we are children of "the day" and not of "the darkness"?

Meditate.

Paul echoes Jesus here (Acts 1.7) in advising the Thessalonians against speculating on the specific time of Christ's return. The reason he had "no need to write" to them was undoubtedly because he had taught them what Jesus told His disciples just prior to His ascension. The return of the Lord will be unexpected. It comes like "a thief in the night" because when it occurs, everything that unbelieving men have been hoarding and indulging will be taken away from them, and they will discover that they are utterly and eternally without hope.

Already the "labor pains" of this fatal delivery are upon the unbelieving world. All the misery, destruction, waste, disappointment, disillusionment, and unsatisfying consumption which characterize this dark world are the pains indicating that something terrible is "slouching toward Bethlehem to be born" (Yeats). Believers know this, and we understand that the wrath of God, which is now being revealed against all manner of unbelief and unrighteousness (Rom. 1.18ff), is but a portent of a greater day of wrath to come.

When Christ comes again, believers will not be overtaken as by a thief. This is because they will not be clinging to anything that will be burned up in the judgment of the Lord. Their values, aspirations, hopes, desires, longings, joys, and delights will all be bound up in and focused on Jesus. He is coming to us, not like a thief, but as a Deliverer and Restorer and the eternal God and our Friend. At the judgment, when Jesus returns, unbelievers *lose* everything; Christians *gain* everything. We do not know when He is coming again, so we must work hard to make our lives such that, when He *does* return, we will be clinging to nothing which, to lose, would cause us any regret.

Therefore, let us not be lulled into thinking that the pleasures and treasures of this life hold any lasting thrall or hope for us as followers of Christ. We do not sleep in the darkness; we walk in the light, as He is in the light. And so, because we are not of the night but of the day, we are preparing toward that day by working out our salvation, increasing in holiness and Christlikeness, continuing to bear witness to the Lord and His coming, and encouraging one another in our walk with and work for the Kingdom and glory of God.

Prepare.

1. Material things are not inherently evil. Is there a difference between "worldly things" and "necessities"?

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How can we know which is which?

2. Is it part of the Good News of God's Kingdom to explain to unbelievers that a day of "bad news" is coming? How would you do that? What would you say? And what would you point to in our day as a portent or "labor pain" of that coming day?

3. We are "sons of light and sons of the day." How should the people in your Personal Mission Field be able to see that this is so?

...we must be desirous to learn so far as our heavenly Master doth teach us; but as for such things as he will have us ignorant of, let [none] be so bold as to inquire after them that we may be wise with sobriety. Therefore, so often as we are vexed with this foolish desire of knowing more than we ought, let us call to mind this saying of Christ, "It is not for you to know." For unless we will burst in against his will and commandment, this shall have force and strength enough to restrain the outrageousness of our wits. John Calvin (1509-1564), Commentary on Acts 1

Lord, I know I must daily prepare for Your coming, and for today, that means...

Pray Psalm 23.

Meditate on those green pastures and still waters, on that banquet table, and on what it means to dwell in the house of the Lord forever. Give thanks and praise to God for what awaits you when Jesus returns.

Sing to the Lord.

Psalm 23 (*The Gift of Love: Though I May Speak with Bravest Fire*)

Because the Lord my Shepherd is I shall not want, for I am His!

He makes me lie in pastures full; I rest in Him by waters still.

My soul He quickens and will bless; He leads in paths of righteousness.

Though I may walk in death's dark vale, I shall not fear – He will not fail!

The Lord is ever by my side; His rod and staff with me abide.

A table rich for me He spreads; with oil my Lord anoints my head.

Goodness and mercy, full and free, shall ever after follow me,
and in the house of God, my Lord, shall I abide forevermore!

2 Guarding Heart and Mind

Pray Psalm 45.6, 7.

Your throne, O God, *is* forever and ever;
A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom.
You love righteousness and hate wickedness;
Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You
With the oil of gladness more than Your companions.

Read 1 Thessalonians 5.7-11.

Reflect.

1. How is salvation like a helmet?
2. In what sense do we hope to “obtain” a salvation which we already possess?

Meditate.

Paul isn't saying we should never sleep. A good night's sleep is the Lord's gift (Ps, 127.2). He's calling us to live wide awake, so that, the Lord's return ever before our minds, our hearts won't veer from the path of sanctification.

To that end, Paul instructs the Thessalonians to guard their hearts with the breastplate of faith and love. When faith in Jesus and love for God and neighbor are our guiding affections, our hearts will not easily be distracted from the Lord's priorities or overcome by doubt. And when salvation protects our minds like a warrior's helmet protects his head, we won't be susceptible to every wind of doctrine that wafts by, enticing us to doubt the Gospel and believe the ways of the world.

God has appointed us for salvation. We *are* saved if we believe in Jesus; we *are being* saved as we press on in our sanctification; and we *will be* saved when the Lord returns and we are transformed and taken to be with Him forever. Keep this great hope in mind, and cherish it always in your heart, and the ways of the world will hold little allure, and its threats will not divert you from your course.

Again, here is another tool in our encouragement tool box. We are to encourage and build one another up by helping each other keep our breastplate and helmet on at all times. We should preach the Gospel to one another, urge one another on in our walk with and work for the Lord, and help one another keep focused on the glory that is yet to come. The Thessalonians were doing this, and Paul insisted they must continue.

He says the same to us.

Prepare.

1. Who encourages you in your walk with and work for the Lord? How do they encourage you?
2. Is it your regular practice to talk with other Christians about the Gospel? How might you do more of this?
3. How can you tell when you are being lulled to sleep and losing focus on the things of Christ? What should you do when you recognize this is happening to you?

Do you see how everywhere Paul puts the health of the community into the hands of each individual? “Exhorting one another

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daily,” he says, “while it is called today.” Do not then cast all of the burden on your teachers, and do not cast everything on those who have authority over you. You are able to edify one another. He says this in writing to the Thessalonians, “Edify one another, just as you are doing.” John Chrysostom (344-407 AD), Homilies on Hebrews 30.1

Give me grace, O Lord, so that today I might encourage...

Pray Psalm 45.1-12.

Today, Jesus rides forth conquering and to conquer (Rev. 6.2). He goes out *with* you (Matt. 28.20) and *for His glory* (1 Cor. 10.31). Meditate on the beauty and power of Christ as you pray, and let verses 10-12 renew you in your commitment to the Lord.

Sing to the Lord.

Psalm 45.1-12 (*Manoab: When All Your Mercies, O My God*)

O my heart, let now a pleasing theme overflow to praise the Lord;
My song I pledge to You, my King, and dedicate my words.

You of all men are the fairest, Lord, and Your lips are flush with grace;
Thus God has blessed You evermore before His holy face.

Your sword gird on Your thigh, O Lord, in splendid majesty;
Ride out, resplendent in Your Word, to glorious victory.

For meekness and for righteousness Your Right Hand shall prevail.
Your foes shall come to deep distress when You their souls assail.

Your throne, O God, is evermore, and upright is Your reign;
Though wicked men Your soul abhor, Your righteousness must gain.

Your God has thus anointed You with oil of gladness great.
Your robes are rich with rich perfume; sweet music gilds Your way.

In gold the queen at Your right hand, with princesses around,
Resplendent with You takes her stand while glories great abound.

Let none keep us from hearing You; desire our beauty, Lord!
We bow, submitting humbly to Your ever-faithful Word.

3 Among, Over, For

Pray Psalm 28.7.

The LORD *is* my strength and my shield;
My heart trusted in Him, and I am helped;
Therefore my heart greatly rejoices,
And with my song I will praise Him.

Read 1 Thessalonians 5.12, 13.

Reflect.

1. Why was Paul so *urgent* about the Thessalonians recognizing and esteeming their shepherds?
2. What is the “work” of shepherds?

Meditate.

Paul believed that a church was only in order when leaders – elders – were in place and functioning as shepherds over the Lord’s flock (cf. Titus 1.5; Eph. 4.11, 12; Acts 20.25-31). The Lord Jesus established the pattern of shepherding by His life and by His teaching, especially in John 10. He has determined that His churches should have shepherds who care for His people and work to help them grow as disciples (1 Pet. 5.1-3).

As he had done elsewhere, Paul did not leave Thessalonica until elders were in place to shepherd the Lord’s people (cf. Acts 14.23). Elders were appointed from *among* the community of believers. Their ministry was to watch *over* the souls of God’s people, *for* the purpose of helping them grow in the Lord and serve Him in their daily lives.

God’s people are charged with *submitting* to their shepherds, *esteeming* them highly because of their work, and *obeying* them as they work to help us grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord (cf. Heb. 13.17). Paul *urged* the Thessalonians to live within the Lord’s appointed order for His churches, so this must have been a very important idea.

We no longer have shepherds in our churches. We prefer to have preachers, team leaders, directors, committee heads, board members, and assorted leader-types.

As eager as such folks may be to serve their church well, they do not practice the work of shepherding – watching over the souls of every member of the Lord’s flock – which Jesus, Paul, and the other apostles taught. The result is that we are currently experiencing a shortage of the kind of disciples like those in Thessalonica who persevered in the face of persecution, increased more and more in love, excelled in caring for one another, and grew in holiness and as witnesses for Christ. In the absence of true shepherds, we have only lean and listless sheep, lolling about in the meadows, licking their wounds and producing no wool or other evidence of vital spiritual life.

The work of shepherds is to equip the Lord’s people to grow in Him and serve Him in their own callings. Paul *urged* the Thessalonians to follow this pattern; he *urges* us to do the same.

Prepare.

1. If there is a Biblical pattern and teaching for the work of shepherding, should churches today be following

that? Is yours?

2. Why is it important that the Lord's sheep should have someone watching over their souls?

3. We do not organize our churches today as Paul did in his day. Why not? Would Paul urge us to redouble our efforts doing what we're doing, or take up the practice of shepherding as he taught it?

He commands first obedience and then honor to be rendered to them. These two things are necessarily required, so that the people might have confidence in their pastors [shepherds], and also reverence for them. But it ought at the same time to be noticed that the Apostle speaks only of those who faithfully performed their office; for they who have nothing but the title, nay, who use the title of [shepherds] for the purpose of destroying the Church, deserve but little reverence and still less confidence. And this also is what the Apostle plainly sets forth when he says, that they watched for their souls, — a duty which is not performed but by those who are faithful rulers, and are really what they are called. John Calvin (1509-1564), Commentary on Hebrews 13.17

Lord, use me as a faithful shepherd of my fellow believers today, to encourage and edify them so that...

Pray Psalm 28.

One of the ways God shepherds us is through those we choose as leaders. We need to pray faithfully for them, that they might have the strength and protection of the Lord and might trust in Him to help them fulfill their calling to watch over our souls (Heb. 13.17). Let this psalm guide you in praying for the shepherds of your church.

Sing to the Lord.

Psalm 28 (*Angel's Story: O Jesus, I Have Promised*)

I cry to You, our Savior, O, be not deaf to me!
Lord, speak to me with favor, lest I should dying be.
Hear now my supplications when for Your help I cry;
Receive these, my oblations, before Your throne on high.

Lord, count me not among those who walk in sinful ways;
With words of peace their tongue glows while evil fills their days.
Your works they disregard, Lord, while evil fills their hands;
Destroy them by Your Word, Lord, and let them no more stand.

Blessed be the Name of Jesus, for He will hear our prayer.
His strength protects and shields us with mercy and with care.
In You our heart rejoices; You help us by Your Word.
To You we raise our voices to praise and thank You, Lord.

Our strength are You, O Savior, our strong defense and sure;
Anointed with Your favor, we rest in You secure.
Save us, and bless us, Jesus, upon us turn Your face;
With shepherd's care, Lord, keep us forever in Your grace.

4 Everyday Good Works

Pray Psalm 146.1, 2.

Praise the LORD!

Praise the LORD, O my soul!

While I live I will praise the LORD;

I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.

Read 1 Thessalonians 5.14, 15.

Reflect.

1. Warn, comfort, uphold, be patient, pursue: Do you see these verbs in place in your life?

2. How does Paul understand love for ourselves?

Meditate.

Paul piles on the imperatives. We do not live the Christian life alone nor merely for ourselves. We are members of the Body of Christ, connected to one another and therefore needing one another for the health and growth of individuals and the Body alike.

We must be sure about the meaning of these verbs. What is it to *exhort* someone? To *warn*? What are the important skills that go into being able to *comfort* a person in need? How do we *uphold* the weak? And are we always as *patient* as we need to be, or as disciplined in the *pursuit* of good works?

These are daily, continuous, “small stuff” acts of obedience; but they are precisely the place where the Kingdom of God comes to expression in the world. As we continue growing in our sanctification, we will be more alert to the opportunities all around us for nudging others along in the life of faith. And the combined efforts of innumerable nudges by millions of faithful believers can cause the earth to move under the feet of the world.

Prepare.

1. Define each of the six verbs in italics in the second paragraph above.

2. Now, on a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 = “Very present”, evaluate the state of those verbs in your life. How can you improve in each of these?

3. Self-love is valid to the extent that it encourages growth and goodness for those around us. Explain.

It is a common doctrine—that the welfare of our brethren should be the object of our concern. This is done by teaching, admonishing, correcting, and arousing; but, as the dispositions of men are various, it is not without good reason that the Apostle commands that believers accommodate themselves to this variety. John Calvin (1509-1564), *Commentary on 1 Thessalonians*

Today, Lord, use me to encourage my fellow believers, and to show Jesus to all the people I meet. Help me especially to...

Pray Psalm 146.

Call upon the Lord to help those you know who are suffering, in need of direction, in danger of persecution, or are faltering in their walk with the Lord.

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Sing to the Lord.

Psalm 146 (*Hallelujah! What a Savior! Man of Sorrows*)

Praise the Lord, my soul, give praise! While I live, His Name I'll raise!
And exalt Him all my days – God forever reigns in Zion!

Trust we not in prince or man – no salvation's in their hand;
death shall take them, breath and plans – God forever reigns in Zion!

Blessed are they whose hope resides in the Lord, Christ at His side.
By Him heav'n and earth abide – God forever reigns in Zion!

He is faithful evermore; He gives justice to the poor,
feeds the hungry from His store – God forever reigns in Zion!

Jesus sets the pris'ner free, heals blind eyes that they may see,
Lifts those burdened painfully – God forever reigns in Zion!

He the righteous loves the best; wand'ers in His grace are blessed;
Needy ones in Him find rest – God forever reigns in Zion!

But the wicked who defame His eternal blessed Name,
Them He brings to ruin and shame – God forever reigns in Zion!

5 Absolutes of Sanctification

Pray Psalm 24.3-5.

Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD?
Or who may stand in His holy place?
He who has clean hands and a pure heart,
Who has not lifted up his soul to an idol,
Nor sworn deceitfully.
He shall receive blessing from the LORD,
And righteousness from the God of his salvation.

Read 1 Thessalonians 5.16-22.

Reflect.

1. Paul piles on more imperatives. How many can you identify? How do these relate to the will of God for us, which is our sanctification (1 Thess. 4.3)?
2. How present is each of these imperatives in your walk with and work for the Lord?

Meditate.

The Christian faith is nothing if not *absolute*: always, everything, do not, test, hold fast, abstain. Not much wiggle room there.

Sanctification is a process of becoming more like Jesus. Whatever distracts, diverts, or hinders us in this process is to be avoided as not the will of God. The pathway of sanctification is clearly marked by such imperatives as we see in these verses. The more we fill our lives with prayer and thanksgiving; the more we yield to the Spirit's leading and draw on His power; the more consistently we test all things and hold fast only to what is good, abstaining from every form of evil; the more we do such things as these, the greater will be the pace of our growing into Jesus.

And growing us into Jesus is what God is all about (2 Cor. 3.12-18). If we're not all about this, then we are not in the will of God, and we cannot expect to know the full and abundant life He has for us, except in fits and starts.

Paul begins his string of imperatives with "Rejoice always." Rejoicing always – so that we pray always and give thanks always and all the rest – depends on keeping our focus on Jesus, Who is coming again for us soon and very soon. He is all our joy, and being with Him forever will find us enveloped in joy without end. So by looking to Him here and now we can have joy in praying, in abstaining from evil, in testing everything and holding fast only to what is good. These are the absolutes of our sanctification, which are clearly set forth for us in the Word of God in such passages as this.

Let us not be confused, and let us not make excuses. Instead, let us lay hold on the absolutes of our faith, so that we may absolutely know the joy of our Lord Jesus Christ at all times.

Prepare.

1. In which of these imperatives would you most like to make some progress? How will you do that?
2. If we're not making progress in the things Paul commands here, are we merely standing still? Explain.

3. The choices before us are “good” and “evil,” as Paul suggests here. How would you define these two terms?

As fire requires fuel, so grace requires our prompt response, that it may be ever fervent. “I put you in remembrance that you stir up the gift of God that is in you by the putting on of my hands,” that is, the grace of the Spirit, which you have received, for presiding over the church, for the working of miracles and for every service. For this grace it is in our power to kindle or extinguish. For this reason Paul elsewhere says, “Do not quench the Spirit.” John Chrysostom (344-407 AD), Homilies on Second Timothy 1

Help me to respond promptly to Your grace always, O Lord, so that I may continue to...

Pray Psalm 24.

Commit your life to the Lord. Thank Him for His sustaining grace. Draw near to Him in His holy place. Yield your entire life to Him, all the “gates” of your soul

Sing to the Lord.

Psalm 24 (*Foundation: How Firm a Foundation*)

The earth is the Lord's, as is all it contains;
the world and its peoples He daily sustains.
He founded it fast on the seas long ago,
and bid gentle rivers throughout it to flow.

Oh, who may ascend to the Lord's holy place?
And who may appear to His glorious face?
All they who are clean in their hearts and their hands
and true in their souls with the Savior shall stand.

A blessing all they from the Lord shall receive
who seek Him and on His salvation believe.
For these are His people, the children of grace,
who earnestly, eagerly seek for His face.

O lift up your heads, all you gates of the soul,
for the Savior would enter and render you whole!
The Lord strong and mighty in battle draws nigh;
He rules in His glory above us on high.

O Who is this King, Who approaches our gate?
His might is before us, His glory is great!
This King is the Lord of all glory above,
Who comes to indwell us in mercy and love!

6 Grace to the End

Pray Psalm 17.6-9.

I have called upon You, for You will hear me, O God;
Incline Your ear to me, *and* hear my speech.
Show Your marvelous lovingkindness by Your right hand,
O You who save those who trust *in You*
From those who rise up *against them*.
Keep me as the apple of Your eye;
Hide me under the shadow of Your wings,
From the wicked who oppress me,
From my deadly enemies who surround me.

Read 1 Thessalonians 5.23-28.

Reflect.

1. What does it mean to be sanctified “completely” so that we are “preserved blameless” to the coming of the Lord?
2. How does grace work in us unto these ends?

Meditate.

We recall that this epistle began with Paul wishing the grace of God for his readers (1 Thess. 1.1). From there, he proceeded to show how that grace had been in evidence in the way they received the Gospel in the face of trials, and in their taking up works of faith, love, and witness, so that they became an example to all the churches.

Then Paul launched into a series of exhortations and instructions designed to encourage them to persevere in the faith and in their sanctification. It is not enough to begin well; we must be diligent at all times to grow in Christlikeness. Now, as he closes his first epistle, Paul commends the Thessalonians to the grace of God and Jesus Christ, which alone can enable them to fulfill their calling to the Kingdom and glory of God (1 Thess. 2.12).

He calls upon God to do the work of sanctification in them (v. 23), in all aspects of their lives. The mention of *spirit* and *soul* here should not be taken to mean that two spiritual natures exist within us. Calvin points out: “The word soul means often the same with spirit; but when they occur together, the first includes all the affections, and the second means what they call the intellectual faculty. So Paul, writing to the Thessalonians, uses the words, when he prays God to keep their spirit, and soul, and body blameless until the coming of Christ, (1 Thessalonians 5:23,) he meant no other thing, but that they might continue pure and chaste in mind, and will, and outward actions.”

There is a lovely tenderness in Paul’s request for prayer and for the brethren to show love to one another. This is followed by a strict charge to make sure this letter is read to all “the holy brethren.” Then, finally, the benediction, commending the Thessalonians to the “grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,” for unless His grace attends, moves, transforms, and works through us, we have no hope of salvation or sanctification. Grace brought the Thessalonian church into being. Grace sustained them through trials. And grace would be the means of their being sanctified “completely” (v 23). God is faithful; He will do what He has promised (v. 24). Thanks be to God!

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Prepare.

1. Grace is both a disposition of God toward us and a power that works within us. Explain.
2. How does God *sanctify* us? What means does He employ? What is our responsibility in this great work of sanctification?
3. Paul says God is “the God of peace.” How would you describe the connection between grace, sanctification, and peace?

This, therefore, is perfection in the Christian life in my judgment, namely, the participation of one’s soul and speech and activities in all of the names by which Christ is signified, so that the perfect holiness, according to the eulogy of Paul, is taken upon oneself in “the whole body and soul and spirit,” continuously safeguarded against being mixed with evil. Gregory of Nyssa (335-394 AD), On Perfection

Lord, let Your grace attend to me, fill me, move me, strengthen and transform me, so that I...

Pray Psalm 17.

Let the Lord test your soul as you pray; and call on Him for the grace you will need to serve Him today, even in the midst of enemies and obstacles of various kinds.

Sing to the Lord.

Psalm 17 (*Park Street: All You that Fear Jehovah’s Name*)

Hear a just cause, O God the Lord! Gladly receive my plaintive word.

I cry with lips of purity: Look on my case with equity!

Look on my case with equity!

Let judgment from Your throne proceed; You have discerned my every need.

Let naught of sin in me be found, and from my tongue let truth resound!

And from my tongue let truth resound!

As for the deeds of sinful men, I will not walk those paths again.

My feet hold firm from first to last: Help me pursue Your righteous path;

Help me pursue Your righteous path!

When I have called, You answered me, Lord; hear now my fervent, seeking word!

Let kindness flow by Your command. Keep and preserve me by Your right hand,

keep and preserve me by Your right hand.

Treasure me in Your holy eye; shelter me from a troubling sky.

Around me all my enemies eagerly would despoil me,

eagerly would despoil me.

They their unfeeling hearts have closed, while with their mouths they loudly boast.

They set their eyes to cast us down, roaring and lurking all around,

roaring and lurking all around.

Rise up, O Lord, and bring them low! Brandish Your sword, and save my soul!

With children they are satisfied; treasures fulfill their hope and pride,

treasures fulfill their hope and pride.

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But as for me, Lord, save and bless! Let me behold Your righteousness.
Your face in glory I would see, and thus forever blessed be,
and thus forever blessed be.

7 Until He Comes

Pray Psalm 121.1, 2.

I will lift up my eyes to the hills—
From whence comes my help?
My help *comes* from the LORD,
Who made heaven and earth.

Read 1 Thessalonians 5.1-23.

Reflect.

1. How should knowing that Jesus is coming again affect our daily life as His followers?
2. God's grace works in and through us as we work at our sanctification. How does this chapter help us to see that?

Meditate.

Jesus had come to the Thessalonians in power, and He had launched them into a new life with a good beginning. They were people of true faith, mutual love and devotion, fearless witness, and bold perseverance. If the first coming of Jesus had done so much for them, His second coming would do even more.

Against the backdrop of that second coming, Paul outlines the believer's calling to the Kingdom and glory of God (1 Thess. 2.12). It is one of mutual encouragement and support, growing together as a body of believers, caring for and nurturing one another, maintaining continuous contact with the Lord, living by the Spirit and Word of God, and growing in the grace and peace of the Lord.

1 Thessalonians thus offers solid counsel for us as believers and for our churches. We who have been saved must not be content merely to be forgiven and assured of eternal life with the Lord. We must press on in the faith, excelling still more in grace and love, standing firm in the truth as witnesses for Christ, and working together to build strong communities where the Kingdom and glory of God are increasing day by day.

In his second epistle to the Thessalonians, Paul will review and enlarge on these themes, offering further instruction and clarification concerning the day of the Lord and the duties of our calling as followers of Christ.

Prepare.

1. In which areas of your sanctification would you most like to see improvement? What steps are you taking to achieve that?
2. What is your responsibility in contributing to the wellbeing of your fellow believers and the growth of your church?
3. Why should we make a point of meditating often on the second coming of our Lord Jesus? How can doing so benefit us in the here and now?

"Edify one another," and "With fear and trembling work out your own salvation." In this way we will have the satisfaction of seeing the church grow in strength, and you will enjoy more abundant favor from above through the great care you show for your members. God, you know, does not wish Christians to be concerned only for themselves but also to edify others, not simply through

1 Thessalonians 5
1 and 2 Thessalonians

their teaching but also through their behavior and the way they live. John Chrysostom (344-407 AD) *Homilies on Genesis* 8.4-5

Lord Jesus, lead me further into Your Kingdom and glory today as I...

Pray Psalm 121.

Claim the promises of this psalm for your walk with and work for the Lord today.

Sing to the Lord.

Psalm 121 (*Duke Street: Jesus Shall Reign*)

I lift up my eyes up to the heights:
Whence comes my help by day, by night?
My help comes from the Lord above!
He made creation by His love!

God will not let our footsteps fall;
He will preserve us all in all.
He does not slumber, does not sleep;
God will His chosen people keep.

You are our Keeper and our Shade;
You have our debt of sin repaid!
You will preserve us by Your might;
Naught shall afflict us day or night.

Lord, You will guard our lives from ill;
You will our trembling souls keep still.
All our endeavors You will guard;
Eternal praise be Yours, O Lord!

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1 and 2 Thessalonians*

Questions for reflection or discussion

1. Why is it important to meditate on the second coming of our Lord Jesus?
2. What is our responsibility toward our fellow believers in helping to build them up in the Lord?
3. Why do churches have shepherds? What is our responsibility toward those who watch over our souls?
4. Sanctification is a work of God's grace, in which He transforms us and our churches increasingly into the image of Jesus Christ. But though sanctification is all of grace, we have a role in the process. What are some of the important aspects of that role?
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from this chapter? How are you working to implement that lesson in your walk with and work for the Lord?

For prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

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Thank you.