

THE LORD'S RETURN AND BEHAVIOUR IN THE CHURCH

1 THESSALONIANS 05: 12–28

Introduction

The Behaviour of man needs to be changed. There is one thing that will change it as much as anything else: seeing and grasping the Lord's return to earth. If a person really believes that Jesus Christ is returning to earth, it will radically change his life.

- I. Behaviour toward the leaders of the church (vv. 12-13).
- II. Behaviour toward the church family (vv. 14-15).
- III. Behaviour toward God — personal Behaviour (vv. 15-22).
- IV. The results of proper Behaviour (vv. 23-24).
- V. The final exhortations for Behaviour (vv. 25-28).

I. 1 Thessalonians 05:12–13 Behaviour toward Church Leaders

First, the believers' behaviour toward church leaders. Note the word “work” (kopiontas). It means to labour to the point of exhaustion, then to keep on working; to continue working even if one has become weary; to arduously labour; to toil to the point of weariness; to work beyond what one is capable of doing. The point is forceful, and it should convict the heart of God's servant:

- => The minister of God is to arduously labour for his Lord.
- => The minister of God is to toil and toil for the church.
- => The minister is to labour to the point of exhaustion in ministering to people.

This is the work of the ministry; this is the demand made upon the minister's time and energy. His whole mind, body and soul belong to the Lord and are to be poured out into the lives of God's dear people, into both the believers and the unbelievers of the world.

Now, note the three exhortations of these two verses.

1. Believers are to respect the leaders of their church. The word “respect” (eidenai) means to acknowledge, appreciate and know the value of. Few people labour as much as a committed church leader.
 - a. Take, for example, the committed minister. Compare his work with any other professional. How much time would some other professional take away from his regular duties...
 - if he had to speak for thirty or more minutes at a church this week?
 - if he had to speak two or three times at the church *to the same people*?
 - if he had to speak every week — two or three times — *to the same people*; that is, he could never use the same speech?
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- if he had to attend several committee meetings at the church every week?
- if he had to visit everyone at the church when they went into the hospital?
- if he had to visit all the family members and the close relatives of the church members when they went into the hospital?
- if he had to counsel all the church members and their family members when they had a serious problem?
- if he had to conduct all the funerals of the church members and their families?
- if he had to conduct all the weddings of the daughters of the church members?
- if he was expected to visit the homes of most, if not all, of the church members?
- if he was expected to visit all the newcomers and prospective members within the community of the church?

The list could go on and on. But while the professional is doing all this, he still has to manage the administration of his business (the church it self).

- b. Take, for example, the committed teacher of the Lord. The committed teacher works all day at some job either in the home or out at some secular job. Then when he or she gets home, think of the time spent...
- in studying and preparing the lesson.
 - in praying.
 - in telephoning class members.
 - in visiting class members: at home and in the hospital.
 - in counselling and ministering to class members.
 - in fellowshiping and growing class members one on one and in groups (at meals, study groups and at social functions).

For the committed teacher, the hours are endless, and just think, the committed teacher does this every week.

The same could be said about any church leader who is genuinely committed to the Lord and takes his or her calling seriously. True, they live for Christ wherever they are — at work and at civic functions. But their commitment goes beyond that: the church leader has been called by God...

- to teach, edify and build up the church and its believers.
- to equip himself to be a dynamic witness for the Lord and to reach out to save the lost.
- to organize and minister to the desperate needs of the poor and hurting.

The point is this: believers are to respect their leaders — acknowledge, appreciate and honour them. They deserve it.

Rom 15:30 *I urge you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in my struggle by praying to God for me.*

1 Cor 16:16 *To submit to such as these and to everyone who joins in the work, and labours at it.*

Gal 4:14 *Even though my illness was a trial to you, you did not treat me with contempt or scorn. Instead, you welcomed me as if I were an angel of God, as if I were Christ Jesus himself.*

1 Th 5:12 *Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you.*

1 Tim 5:17 *The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honour, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.*

Heb 13:7 *Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.*

2. Believers are to highly esteem their leaders. Several significant things are said here.
 - a. Leaders are to be held in high regard.
 - b. Leaders are to be held in high regard *in love*: with affection, held ever so dear to a believer's heart.
 - c. Leaders are to be held in high regard because of their work, that is, because of the work they do. They are ministers of the Lord and they serve Christ and the church and its believers. Believers owe much to them because of their sacrificial service. Therefore, believers are to hold them in high regard.

Phil 2:29 *Welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honour men like him.*

1 Th 5:12-13 *Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other.*

Exo 33:8 *And whenever Moses went out to the tent, all the people rose and stood at the entrances to their tents, watching Moses until he entered the tent.*

3. Believers and leaders are to be at peace among themselves. Note: this exhortation is given to the leader as well as to the believer or follower. Believers are not to criticize, murmur, grumble, envy or oppose their leaders. Differ, yes, but not oppose — unless, of course, he is acting contrary to Scripture or to the love of God's Spirit.

Leaders are not to act as lords over God's people, nor are they to lead for the sake of seeking position, boosting ego, securing recognition, receiving honour or making a livelihood. A leader who leads for these reasons cannot feed the people of God. He does not have the presence and blessing of God which are necessary to feed the flock of God. Therefore, such leaders cause a restlessness and dissatisfaction among God's people.

The exhortation is for believers to be at peace among themselves. Both leader and people are to be totally committed to Christ, doing exactly what God has called them to do. When both are so serving, then they are at peace with each other.

1 Cor 14:33 *For God is not a God of disorder but of peace. As in all the congregations of the saints.*

2 Cor 13:11 *Finally, brothers, good-bye. Aim for perfection, listen to my appeal, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you.*

Eph 4:1-3 *As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.*

Phil 4:2 *I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord.*

1 Th 5:13 *Live in peace with each other.*

2 Tim 2:22 *Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.*

II. **1 Thessalonians 05:14–15** *Behaviour toward the Church Family*

Second, the believers' Behaviour toward the church family. A list of exhortations is given to all believers in these two verses — exhortations that tell us how to behave toward the whole church family.

1. Warn the “idle” (ataktous): “those who are out of line — the loafers, the disorderly and the unruly” (the Amplified New Testament). The word idle is a military term that referred to the soldier who broke rank and did not stand in his place. Too many believers are not where they belong. (They belong in the ranks of the Lord and of the church: fellowshiping with the Lord and fellow believers; serving the Lord and ministering to believers; helping to reach the lost and ministering to the poor and needy.) But they are out in the world doing their own thing, fulfilling their own desires and lusts.

The idle must be warned and admonished. They are treading on thin ice. They are damaging their own souls and hurting others through their idle testimony. The Lord will not tolerate such idle behaviour. The implication is that He will judge all idle behaviour.

Rom 15:14 *I myself am convinced, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, complete in knowledge and competent to instruct one another.*

1 Cor 4:14 *I am not writing this to shame you, but to warn you, as my dear children.*

Col 3:16 *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.*

1 Th 5:14 *And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone.*

2 Th 3:14-15 *If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of him. Do not associate with him, in order that he may feel ashamed. Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother.*

Titus 3:10 *Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him.*

2. Comfort the faint-hearted, the “timid” (oligopsuchous): the reserved, dispirited; those who lack courage and are cowardly; those who are easily discouraged and disappointed; those who fear difficult situations. The picture is that of a person who hesitates to serve or witness; a person who fails to live for Christ because of being faint-hearted. We must not rebuke or despise them, but instead comfort, encourage and assure them.

Mat 14:27 *But Jesus immediately said to them: “Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid.”*

Mat 17:7 *But Jesus came and touched them. “Get up,” he said. “Don't be afraid.”*

1 Cor 16:13 *Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong.*

2 Cor 2:7 *Now instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow.*

Eph 6:10 *Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.*

1 Th 4:18 *Therefore encourage each other with these words.*

1 Th 5:11 *Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.*

1 Th 5:14 *And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone.*

2 Tim 2:1 *You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.*

3. Support the weak: the spiritually weak; those who yield so easily to temptation; those who are so easily burdened, discouraged, defeated and led astray. These need to be helped (anthechesthe). The word means to cling and hold to. The weak need us clinging to them and holding them up. They need our help.

Acts 20:35 *“In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”*

Rom 14:1 *Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters.*

Rom 15:1 *We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves.*

1 Cor 9:22 *To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some.*

1 Th 5:14 *And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone.*

4. Be patient (makrothumeo) toward all persons. Leon Morris points out that being patient is the opposite of being short-tempered. It is being consistently patient, being very patient with people (*The Epistles of Paul to the Thessalonians*. "Tyndale New Testament Commentaries," p. 101). We must bear and forbear; we must suffer a long, long time with persons, no matter the situation.

Luke 21:19 *"By standing firm you will gain life."*

Rom 12:12 *Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.*

Heb 10:36 *You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised.*

James 1:4 *Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.*

James 5:7 *Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains.*

5. Look after every believer: see that no believer repays evil for evil, wrong for wrong to any person. Note: it is understood that throughout life some people will do evil against everyone of us. This verse clearly states that we are responsible for each other and responsible for how we respond to evil. We are to be looking after each other: see to it that none of us retaliates or mistreats those who mistreat us.

⇒ If we mistreat an unbeliever, we lose all chance of reaching him for Christ.

⇒ If we mistreat another believer, we lose all chance of reaching him and growing him in Christ.

When we mistreat a person, our testimony with that person is ruined. We lose our opportunity to minister to that person. Note the exhortation: "always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else." *Always trying to be kind* is the only way we can ever reach and grow others, believers and unbelievers.

Mat 5:39 *"But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also."*

Rom 12:17 *Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody.*

1 Pet 3:9 *Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.*

Lev 19:18 *"Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbour as yourself. I am the Lord."*

Prov 20:22 Do not say, "I'll pay you back for this wrong!" Wait for the Lord, and he will deliver you.

Prov 24:29 Do not say, "I'll do to him as he has done to me; I'll pay that man back for what he did."

III. 1 Thessalonians 05:15–22 Behaviour toward God

Third, the believers' behaviour toward God. Seven strong exhortations are to govern our behaviour toward God.

1. Rejoice always; Be joyful always: God has saved us, and He looks after and cares for us. If we love God, God promises that He will take all the circumstances that attack us and work them out for good (Rom. 8:28). And on top of this, He has given us eternal life, the glorious privilege of living face to face with Him and serving Him forever and ever. The believer who knows and keeps his mind upon these glorious facts can do nothing but rejoice.

Luke 10:20 "However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

Phil 4:4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

1 Th 5:16 Be joyful always.

Deu 12:7 There, in the presence of the Lord your God, you and your families shall eat and shall rejoice in everything you have put your hand to, because the Lord your God has blessed you.

Psa 5:11 But let all who take refuge in you be glad; let them ever sing for joy. Spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may rejoice in you.

Psa 32:11 Rejoice in the Lord and be glad, you righteous; sing, all you who are upright in heart!

Zee 9:9 Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

2. Pray always — continually, without ceasing. Prayer is God's ordained way for man to receive things from Him. God moves, acts and responds to prayer. Prayer is a law that He has established throughout the universe. Why? Because prayer stirs fellowship and communion with God and brings about a greater knowledge and understanding of God. It causes a person to learn more and more about God and stirs more and more trust as well as worship and praise of God. Prayer stirs and causes every good thing imaginable between God and man. This is the reason God destined prayer as the primary way man is to communicate with Him. This is the reason for this exhortation. Therefore, pray continually; continue and persevere in prayer: in your daily worship and quiet times and as you walk throughout the day.

Mat 7:7 “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.”

Mat 26:41 “Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak.”

Luke 18:1 Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.

John 16:24 “Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.”

1 Th 5:17 Pray continually.

Eph 6:18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

3. Give thanks in all things. How can we thank God for terrible trials such as accidents and death and sin? We don't; this is not what Scripture means. What God means is to thank Him for His presence and power as we walk through such trials. In Christ Jesus there is victory and triumph over all, no matter how terrible. Therefore, in everything (not for everything) — as we walk through all — thank God for the victory He has given us through Christ.

Note the statement, “this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus concerning you.” What is the will of God? All three exhortations that have just been given:

=> that we rejoice always.

=> that we pray continually.

=> that we give thanks in all circumstances.

Eph 5:20 Always giving thanks to God the Father for every thing, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Phil 4:6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

Col 3:17 And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

1 Th 5:18 Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

1 Tim 4:4 For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving.

Psa 50:14 Sacrifice thank offerings to God, fulfil your vows to the Most High.

Psa 92:1 A psalm. A song. For the Sabbath day. It is good to praise the Lord and make music to your name, O Most High.

1 Chr 16:8 Give thanks to the Lord, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done.

4. Do not suppress the Spirit — do not put out the Spirit's fire (see *Sin against the Holy Spirit*, 1 Th. 5:19).
5. Do not treat prophecies with contempt. Prophecy is the gift of proclaiming the gospel and of predicting the future under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Both proclamation and prediction are included in the gift. Note the exhortation: a person is not to minimize or to show contempt for the gift despite the abuse of the gift by some. (See notes, pt. 6, 1 Cor. 12:8-10, especially see *Prophecy*, 1 Cor. 14:3)

1 Cor 14:3 But everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort.

1 Th 5:20 Do not treat prophecies with contempt.

6. Test all things; hold on to what is good. The word “test” (*dokimazete*) means to test and to prove. Both the gifts and behaviour of believers are to be tested. If a person claims to prophesy — whether proclaiming the gospel or predicting some event to strengthen believers for some coming trial — all should be tested. We are not to blindly accept what people say, even if it is the preacher or servant of God. Neither are we to blindly accept people themselves. Every person — what he says and does — is to be tested and proven. How? By measuring what he says and does by the Scripture. But note: the Scriptures must be studied in order to measure what people say and do. The only way to know truth from error is to know the Scripture.

Eph 5:10 And find out what pleases the Lord.

1 Th 5:21 Test everything. Hold on to the good.

1 John 4:1 Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

Jer 6:27 “I have made you a tester of metals and my people the ore, that you may observe and test their ways.”

Now, note the exhortation: when a person or a truth is proven, hold on. Hold on to what is good. Do not let a good person go: learn from him. Do not let a good doctrine or exhortation go: hang on to it, live and practice it, and teach it to others.

1 Th 5:21 Test everything. Hold on to the good.

Heb 3:6 But Christ is faithful as a son over God's house. And we are his house, if we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast.

Heb 4:14 Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess.

Heb 10:23 Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.

Rev 3:3-4 *Remember; therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you. Yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes. They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy.*

7. Avoid every kind of evil: note closely what this exhortation says. It does not just say to avoid evil, but to avoid *every kind* of evil.

=> If something even appears or borders on evil, get away from it.

=> If there is any chance whatsoever that it could be wrong, leave it alone.

=> If there is even a suggestion that it could be wrong, flee it.

A believer must have nothing, absolutely nothing, to do with evil — not even the appearance of it.

Rom 12:9 *Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.*

1 Th 5:22 *Avoid every kind of evil.*

1 Pet 3:11 *He must turn from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it.*

Job 28:28 *And he said to man, 'The fear of the Lord — that is wisdom, and to shun evil is understanding.'*

Psa 34:14 *Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.*

Psa 97:10 *Let those who love the Lord hate evil, for he guards the lives of his faithful ones and delivers them from the hand of the wicked.*

Prov 4:27 *Do not swerve to the right or the left: keep your foot from evil.*

Prov 14:16 *A wise man fears the Lord and shuns evil, but a fool is hotheaded and reckless.*

1 THESSALONIANS 05: 19

SIN AGAINST THE HOLY SPIRIT

Do not put out the Spirit's fire. 1 Thessalonians 05:19

This is one of the four major sins against the Holy Spirit.

1. Quenching or putting out the Spirit's fire (1 Th. 5:19). To put out means to stifle, to snuff out, to stop. The Holy Spirit is always working in the life of the believer to lead him to do God's will. The believer *puts out* the Spirit's work by (a) ignoring Him, (b) neglecting Him, (c) disobeying Him, or by simply (d) procrastinating. Note the context above. The command "not put out the Spirit's fire" is surrounded by a series of positive commands.
2. Grieving the Spirit (Eph. 4:30). To grieve means to pain, to vex, to sadden. The Holy Spirit is pure, holy and righteous. The believer grieves the Spirit when he...

- allows impure things to penetrate his life.
- behaves immorally.
- acts unjustly.
- allows or participates in anything contrary to the nature of the Spirit.

Note the context. The command “Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God” is surrounded by a series of negative commands.

3. Blasphemy against the Spirit (see Mt. 12:31; 12:33).
4. Lying to the Holy Spirit (see Acts 5:3-4). □

IV. 1 Thessalonians 05:23–24 Results of Proper Behaviour

The results of proper behaviour. If a believer will behave properly — if a person will follow the exhortations given in this passage — he will experience four things.

1. The believer experiences the presence of the God of peace: peace means to be bound, joined and weaved together. Only God can bind, join and weave a person together. Only God can bring peace to a person's soul — the kind of peace that brings absolute assurance, confidence and security to a person's heart. And note: God possesses so much peace and is so ready to give peace that He is called the God of peace. (See *Peace*, 1 Thes 1:1.)

Rom 15:33 *The God of peace be with you all. Amen.*

Rom 16:20 *The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.*

2 Cor 13:11 *Finally, brothers, good-bye. Aim for perfection, listen to my appeal, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you.*

Phil 4:9 *Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me or seen in me — put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.*

1 Th 5:23 *May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Heb 13:20 *May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep.*

2. The believer experiences sanctification: the word sanctification means to be set apart and separated to God. The believer who follows the exhortations of this passage is greatly blessed by God: God takes the person and sets him apart unto Himself. The person is very special to God; therefore God gives him a special relationship with Himself. And note the words “through and through”: the believer is entirely set apart to God, under God's special care, protection and provision.

John 17:17 “Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.”

1 Cor 1:30 It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God — that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.

2 Tim 2:21 If a man cleanses himself from the latter, he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work.

Heb 13:12 And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood.

1 Pet 1:2 Who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance.

3. The believer has his spirit, soul and body preserved blameless in the day of judgment. This is the idea of the Greek text. The word “at” (en) is better translated *in*. That is, in that day when the Lord returns, the believer will be preserved blameless. He will be acceptable to God and receive a full reward. Note the three parts of man spelled out: spirit, soul and body. The idea is that the whole man will be preserved — his body and soul as well as his spirit. Believers are not to be some ghost-like figure or some formless spirit. They are to have their bodies and souls resurrected and preserved forever. The whole person — the whole spirit, soul and body — will live eternally with God. But note: only if the believer follows the exhortations of the Scripture.

Phil 2:15 So that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe.

Col 1:22 But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation.

1 Th 3:13 May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.

1 Th 5:23 May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Pet 3:14 So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.

4. The believer experiences the assurance of God, the very faithfulness of God. God called the believer; therefore, God completes His work in the believer. The work of salvation is God's work from beginning to end. If a person is not living for God, it is evidence that he is not really a true believer. But if a person is living for God by following the exhortation of Scripture, it is clear evidence that he is a true believer. He has truly been called of God. How do we know this? Because God is faithful. If God possesses a person, God continues to work in the person until the person is fully saved in the glorious day of redemption.

1 Th 5:24 The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.

2 Th 3:3 But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one.

2 Tim 2:13 If we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself.

Heb 2:17 For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.

Heb 10:23 Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.

Rev 1:5 And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the first-born from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood.

Rev 19:11 I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war.

V. *1 Thessalonians 05:25–28 The Final Exhortation*

The final exhortation for behaviour. This is the close of the *First Epistle to the Thessalonians*. The final words exhort us all when we apply them to ourselves.

1. Pray for ministers. Note that Paul does not say, “please” or “if you will.” He emphatically charges: “Brothers, pray for us.” All believers must pray for their ministers. And note: Paul says “us” not *me* — all of God’s chosen ministers are to be prayed for by believers. We must not omit a single minister; and the idea is that we must pray often, not just every day, but often every day. What an impact would be made upon the world if we obeyed this one charge.

Rom 15:30 I urge you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in my struggle by praying to God for me.

Eph 6:18-19 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel.

1 Th 5:25 Brothers, pray for us.

2 Th 3:1 Finally, brothers, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honoured, just as it was with you.

Heb 13:18 Pray for us. We are sure that we have a clear conscience and desire to live honourably in every way.

2. Greet all Christian brothers, and greet them intimately with care. Just how the holy kiss took place is not really known today. But it was a common practice in the early church. It is generally thought that only men kissed men and that they kissed on the

cheek, but again, the facts are not really known (Leon Morris. *The Epistles of Paul to the Thessalonians*. "Tyndale New Testament Commentaries," p. 109). The point is that affection and care are to be expressed between believers.

1 Pet 5:14 *Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in Christ.* (cp. Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12)

3. Read this epistle to all believers. Why was it necessary for Paul to give this exhortation? Would the epistle not be read to the whole church when it gathered on Sunday? Were some believers bed-ridden and home-bound? Was the church having to meet in several small groups in secret because of persecution? The answer is not known, but the lesson to us is clear. We must see to it that every believer studies this epistle as well as the rest of the Word of God. Every part of the Word is important and must be studied by all. No believer is to be left out whether bed-ridden or unable to attend services for any other reason.

Thought 1. What a challenge to churches! To provide ministries that will carry the Word of God out to those who are unable to worship and study at the regular service.

Acts 17:11 *Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.*

Acts 20:32 *"Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified."*

Col 3:16 *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.*

1 Tim 2:15 *But women will be saved through childbearing — if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety.*

1 Tim 3:16 *Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great: He appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory.*

1 Pet 2:2-3 *Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.*

4. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ rest upon you (see *Grace*, 1 Th. 1:1). ■