

1. INTRODUCTION:

- a. **Author** – A number of factors all support Pauline authorship of the epistle to the Thessalonians including the following: 1) The historical evidence, 2) internal cohesion, 3) longtime church witness, and 4) theological content; all these factors reinforce Paul as the author. Although there have been some challenges made to suggest another author, there are no compelling arguments that have stood up under scholarly scrutiny. Unfortunately, many of these challenges have been thinly veiled attempts to circumvent Paul’s strong Biblically conservative witness with opponents attempting to advance liberal Christian objectives to advance socially progressive ideals more acceptable to the present culture. God’s Truth stated in Scripture at its core remains unchanging in keeping with God’s character. The Bible’s authority continues to stand the test of time because God revelation is timeless. As teachers and preachers, we need to make these truths relevant to each successive generation without changing their timeless character and nature. This is the true work of effective Biblical interpretation in the science and art of “Hermeneutics.” For more on this topic refer to the three articles on hermeneutics to be found on the AD website under the pathway Biblical Literacy/Hermeneutics.
- b. **Historical Background** – There are significant elements from the known archaeological and historical records that verify the Biblical accounts recorded in Acts and the Epistles. The following are some of these elements:
- i. **The City** – Thessalonica was a major military and commercial port located on the “Egnatian Way” – which was a major trade route connecting Asia Minor and the Adriatic Sea. Thessalonica was the largest city in Macedonia boasting a population of over 200,000. Paul began his ministry to the Jewish population of the area, and spent some three weeks preaching to them and to thoughtful Gentiles, until the Jews rejected Paul’s message. Paul then found the Gentile population to be a more open and receptive audience.
 - ii. **The Biblical and Historical Timeline** – from a combination of Roman and Jewish historical writers, the archaeological record, and numerous scientific discoveries:
 1. Jesus’ life – 6/5 BC to 30 AD.
 2. Paul’s conversion – 35 AD.
 3. Paul’s ministry journey’s – 46 to 67 AD.
 4. Apostolic Council at Jerusalem – 50/51 AD.
 5. Epistle of 1 Thessalonians written – 50/51 AD.
 6. Nero’s reign – 54 to 68 AD.
 7. Paul’s first imprisonment in Rome – 59 to 62 AD.
 8. Paul’s final imprisonment and death in Rome – 67/68 AD.
 9. Destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem – 70 AD.

Acts 15:40 to 18:22 chronicles Paul's second missionary journey. Zondervan's New International Version Bible Commentary contains the following background information by Robert Thomas that provides a great context for Paul's evangelical outreach in this area (edited for clarity and brevity):

1. First Thessalonians is most likely the earliest of Paul's letters. Appropriately, this epistle reveals so much of Paul's mind and heart and demonstrates a number of Paul's characteristic doctrinal emphases and shows the depth of his feeling for the Christians in Thessalonica.
2. Having been hindered by divine intervention from going into Asia and Bithynia, Paul arrived at Troas, probably in the spring of A.D. 49 (Acts 16:6-8). From there he was directed in a vision to cross the Aegean Sea into Macedonia and to take the Gospel there for the first time (Acts 16:9-11). This is one of the crucial events in Christian history because through it the Gospel first moved to the west, and the evangelization of Europe was begun.
3. The first stop of the missionary party of Paul, Silas, Luke, and Timothy was at Philippi. After a successful mission there (Acts 16:12-40) lasting about two months, Paul and Silas left under pressure from the city officials and went westward along the Egnatian Way toward Thessalonica, a major center about one hundred miles away. It must have been a painful journey because of what they had suffered while in prison at Philippi (Acts 16:22-24; 1Thessalonians 2:2).
4. At Thessalonica, they found circumstances suitable for settling down to preach for a time. The city was of good size, perhaps with a population of 200,000. Its location was conducive to commerce, having a good natural harbor. The city attracted sufficient Jewish merchants of the dispersion to account for the presence of a well-established synagogue (Acts 17:1). It was a free city ruled by its own council of citizens and administered by five or six senior leaders called "Politarchs" (Acts 17:6). Since 146 BC, it had been the seat of Roman government for all Macedonia.
5. The presence of a synagogue in Thessalonica offered Paul an obvious place to begin (Acts 17:1-4). He pursued his approach of proving from the Old Testament that the Jewish Messiah must suffer and be raised from the dead, and that Jesus is this Messiah. In the meantime, he followed his own trade of manufacturing the goat's-hair cloth that was a prominent part of the local economy (cf. Acts 18:3; 1Thessalonians 2:9; 2Thessalonians 3:8).
6. For three consecutive Sabbaths, Paul spoke in the synagogue but soon met with Jewish resistance. After those initial three weeks he was forced to leave the

synagogue, but he was still able to continue his ministry in the city focusing on the Gentile population for some time. Several factors point to this as the correct interpretation of Acts 17:1-4 noted as follows:

- a. Paul engaged in gainful employment at Thessalonica (1Thessalonians 2:9; 2Thessalonians 3:8). Furthermore, Paul used his working as proof of his self-sacrifice for them, something he could hardly have done during a limited stay. Paul's supporting his ministry through working supports his remaining in the community for a more extended time.
 - b. Upon his departure from Thessalonica, he left behind a thriving church. This church included many Gentiles fresh from heathen idolatry (1Thessalonians 1:9). These new believers could not have been won through a Jewish synagogue ministry.
 - c. Before leaving, Paul had received at least two special gifts from Philippi, a hundred miles away to further his ministry (Philippians 4:16).
7. A good number of Jews, God-fearing Gentiles, and prominent women responded to Paul's synagogue teaching phase, including Jason at whose home Paul stayed (Acts 17:4-9). Many Gentiles became Christians in the weeks following (1Thessalonians 1:9). After approximately three months, the Christian assembly was of considerable size, and the Jews became jealous. Jewish leaders instigated riots to force the Politarchs to rule against the Christians, whom they falsely accused of upsetting society and opposing Caesar's decrees (Acts 17:5-9). Jason and several other Christians were brought in for a hearing. The city officials, however, stood firm under pressure and eventually let Jason and the others go. Though not personally involved in this incident, Paul, Silas, and perhaps Timothy knew it was time to leave so as to avoid bringing additional hardship on their new brothers in Christ (Acts 17:10).
8. From Thessalonica they traveled west fifty miles to Berea. Here their synagogue ministry was favorably received for about seven weeks, and it might have continued even longer if adversaries from Thessalonica had not heard of their evangelical success and had come to disrupt their preaching. At this point Paul departed to Athens, but since Silas and Timothy had not been so conspicuous in the mission, they were able to remain at Berea (Acts 17:11-15). Paul sent instructions to Silas and Timothy to join him at Athens (Acts 17:15) which they did (1Thessalonians 3:1). The two were then sent back to Macedonia; Timothy's responsibility was to encourage the Thessalonian Christians and bring back a report about them. Paul had become concerned about the converts there because he knew they were suffering

persecution (1Thessalonians 3:1-5). Silas was probably sent on a similar mission to Philippi.

9. While the two men were away, Paul had a relatively fruitless ministry at Athens (Acts 17:16-34). Leaving there, he went to Corinth (about January, 50 AD) where he enjoyed a spiritually prosperous eighteen-to-twenty-month ministry. In the spring of 50 AD (Acts 18:5; 1Th 3:6-7), Timothy returned to Paul in Corinth and reported on Thessalonica; it was so encouraging that Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians shortly thereafter.

10. **Gallio was the Roman proconsul of the province of Achaia at the time Paul ministered there – Vs 1:12-17. This has been verified both by an inscription discovered in Delphi Greece of Gallio and a letter from Emperor Claudius referring to “Lucius Junius Gallio, my friend and proconsul of Achaia.” It is known that Paul left Thessalonica to minister in Corinth; these and other references allow for an accurate dating of Paul’s 18 month ministry in Corinth may be safely identified as occurring from the fall of 50 to the late spring of 52 AD.**

11. **Chronicled in Acts 17 – Thessalonica was the second stop on Paul’s second missionary journey accompanied by Silas, Timothy, and Luke. Altogether, they performed 600 miles of travel, mostly on foot. It was a primitive and grueling experience – and probably took a month or two to complete.**

c. **Purpose and Date of Writing: Paul had been forced out of Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-10), leaving behind a healthy and growing church. Paul later sent his trusted protégé Timothy back to check on the church while Paul remained in Athens (1 Thessalonians 3:1-2). Timothy met up with Paul in Corinth (Acts 18:1-5) and reported the Thessalonian church’s faith was strong, but they needed theological grounding. First Thessalonians was written to provide for this needed guidance. The date of composition is 50/51 AD probably a few months after Paul had left Thessalonica, making this the first of Paul’s epistles.**

d. **Themes:**

i. **Persecution – Paul experienced first-hand the persecution of leaders in Thessalonica, and he appreciated the local church for remaining steadfast in their faith and making progress in their growth. Paul urged them to persevere... to stay the course (4:1, 10; 5:11. He asserted that the trials they were experiencing were not chance encounters, and that suffering was not an uncommon means to perfect their faith (3:3).**

1. **After three sermons at the weekly synagogue gathering, Paul was driven out of the city (Acts 17:5).**

2. **Accusations against Paul were about false claims of political sedition relating to the worship of another king besides Caesar – not unlike Jesus.**

3. Jewish leaders chased Paul out of Thessalonica, and later out of Berea as well – he then moved on to Athens and Corinth.
 4. The ‘baby’ Christians of Thessalonica were being persecuted by their society within eight months of their conversions. This placed an undue strain on their faith and their commitment, a desperate situation Paul wanted addressed.
 5. Knowing he could not go to Thessalonica himself, Paul sent Timothy to check on them and to encourage them, and Timothy sent back favorable reports of the church’s growth (3:1-8). Ironically, Christians have always seemed to grow both numerically and in maturity when persecuted.
- ii. **Christ’s Second Coming** – the *Parousia* at the End of the Age is presented as certain and those who suffer and die will be the first to join Christ when He returns. As Christ suffered, and Paul suffered, so most believers would also suffer. Christ’s second coming is likened to a thief in the night (5:2) and also the sudden arrival of a baby (5:3). Each of the five chapters of 1st Thessalonians has a second coming statement at the end of each chapter.
1. The main message was that Messiah Jesus has come.
 2. And that He is coming again for His followers!
- iii. **Christian Living** – Paul provides practical advice on living the Christian life in the context of an immoral culture that is hostile to the Gospel and Christian values. While awaiting Jesus’ second coming believers should live out a quiet, respectful, holy [godly] and productive lives of purpose (4:1-12). Believers are encouraged to help each other being a counter-culture within the greater culture; and also to be patient and kind with all as a means of attracting sympathetic observers to the faith (5:14). Paul notes that while a moral life is not a precondition for acceptance by God, an immoral lifestyle is fundamentally incompatible and irreconcilable with the Christian faith.

2. **STRUCTURAL OUTLINE #1** – Dr Gary Tuck:

- a. 1:1 – Salutation
- b. 1:2-3:13 – Personal Relations
 - i. Gratitude for the Thessalonians demonstration of their faith – 1:2-10
 - ii. Recollections of past relations – 2:1-16
 1. Paul’s ministry of the Gospel – 2:1-12
 2. Thessalonians’ reception of the Gospel – 2:13-16
 - iii. Concern for continuing relations – 2:17-3:13
 1. Desire to see them – 2:17-20
 2. Timothy’s mission – 3:1-5

3. Paul's resultant joy – 3:6-10
 4. Paul's prayer – 3:11-13
 - c. 4:1-5:22 – Practical instructions
 - i. Christian living – 4:1-12
 1. General conduct – 4:1-2
 2. Sexual behavior – 4:3-8
 3. Brotherly love and responsibility – 4:9-12
 - ii. Christ's return – 4:13-5:11
 1. Rapture of the living and the deceased – 4:13-18
 2. Day of the Lord [End of Days] – 5:1-11
 - iii. Miscellaneous instructions – 5:12-22
 1. Relations within the assembly – 5:12-15
 2. Holiness and the individual – 5:16-22
 - d. 5:23-28 – Closing
 - i. Benediction – 5:23-24
 - ii. Greetings – 5:25-28
3. **STRUCTURAL OUTLINE #2** – Zondervan's New International Version Archaeological Study Bible:
- a. 1:1-10 – Greeting and thanksgiving
 - i. Thanksgiving for the faith of the Thessalonians – 1:1-4
 - ii. Thanksgiving for their witness – 1:5-10
 - b. 2:1-3:13 – Paul defends both his actions and his absence
 - i. The integrity of Paul's ministry – 2:1-16
 - ii. The reason for his absence – 2:17-3:10
 - iii. Paul's prayer – 3:11-13
 - c. 4:1-5:22 – Exhortations and instructions
 - i. Live to please God – 4:1-12
 - ii. Take hope in Christ's second coming – 4:13-5:11
 - iii. Final instructions – 5:12-22
 - d. 5:23-28 – Concluding prayer, greeting, and benediction
4. **THE MESSAGE OF 1ST THESSALONIANS – EXEGESIS**: Roughly following Dr. Tuck's outline:
- a. Chapters 1-3 are both personal and theological. Paul's intent seems to be similar to conducting a private teaching session where he's both encouraging and informing his students:

- i. **1:1-2 – The introduction [or salutation] is nearly identical to those of Paul’s other letters containing three elements: the writer, the recipient, and the formal greeting. The “We” pronoun of Vs two includes Silas and Timothy.**
- ii. **1:3-5 – This initial passage is intended to cultivate spiritual life and vitality in these believers. Paul’s gospel message when applied will result in behaviors and attitudes that make no sense to the unregenerate. The virtues of Faith, Love and Hope are first linked together here, and this letter predates 1 Corinthians 13 by some five years. In this passage, it is clear that there is a reflective development of the components “work, labor and endurance” which each precede “faith, love and hope.” Work, labor and endurance are therefore descriptive of every Christian’s worthy effort, just as faith, love and hope are the desired outcome in every Christian’s life. Zondervan’s New International Version Bible Commentary offers the following insights for this development:**

The substance of what Paul and his colleagues remember about the Thessalonians is summed up in three words which indicate a disciple’s worthy efforts of "work," "labor," and "endurance." In turn, these three words reflect the three qualities [fruits] of Christian character: "faith," "love," and "hope."

1. The exact nature of the "work produced by faith" is a combination of direct missionary work (cf. 1:8), acts of goodness toward others (cf. 4:9-10), and loyalty to Christ in the face of severe persecution (1:6; 3:3-4, 8). "Faith" indeed manifests itself on a broad front. For Paul to appreciate works is not surprising. Even in Romans, so notable for its repudiation of any system of justification by works (Romans 3:20-21, 28; 4:4-6), Paul finds occasion to speak of "work" as the essential fruit of the believing life (Romans 2:7; 13:3; 14:20; cf. 1Corinthians 3:14; Ephesians 2:10; Titus 3:1). This emphasis aligns him with James regarding Christian living and the absolute necessity of works accompanying faith to prove its vitality (James 2:14-26). Indeed, wherever genuine faith is present, it results in works (Galatians 5:6).
2. "Labor" that is "prompted by love" approximates the meaning of "work" but with a connotation of extraordinary effort expended. Love as it is meant here does not stop with [merely] ordinary effort, but goes the second mile and even beyond for the sake of another. "Labor" is more distinctly spiritual service [which means] beneficial efforts to help the sick and hungry and [displaying] intense devotion to spreading the Gospel despite persecution (cf. 1Corinthians 3:8; 15:10, 58; 2Corinthians 10:15; Galatians 4:11; Philippians 2:16). However it showed itself, one thing is certain: a great spirit of self-sacrifice was present because this is inseparable from Christian "love".

3. The supreme example of such loving self-sacrifice comes from no less than God the Father (John 3:16; 1John 4:10) and his Son Jesus (John 13:34; 15:12). This is no mere [feelings or an] emotional response prompted by the desirability of the person loved, though feeling certainly is not absent from it. It is ultimately traceable to the will of the one who loves, for he or she determines to love and does so regardless of the condition of the one loved. Such is God's love for us, and so must be the Christian's love for others, if "labor" is to result. Remembering this attainment of their readers, Paul and his helpers had additional cause for thanking God.
4. "Endurance" is the third visible fruit that evoked [Paul's] thanksgiving. This is an aggressive and courageous Christian quality, excluding self-pity even when one encounters severe trials in living for Jesus Christ. Endurance accepts the seemingly dreary "blind alleys" of Christian experience with a spirit of persistent zeal. It rules out discouragement and goes forward no matter how hopeless the situation. Such endurance is possible only when one is "inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ." "Hope", especially in the certainty of the return of Jesus Christ, is the only adequate incentive for this heroic conduct. Confidence about the future braces the child of God to face all opposition while persevering and continuing in the spread of the Gospel. Jesus' return and the encouragement it brings to believers are major themes in both 1 and 2 Thessalonians (1Thessalonians 1:10; 3:13; 4:13-5:11; 5:23; 2Thessalonians 1:4, 7, 10; 2:16).
5. These three Christian virtues of faith, love, and hope occupy a large place in early analyses of a Christian's responsibility (cf. 5:8; 1Corinthians 13:13; Galatians 5:5-6; Colossians 1:4-5; et al.). The expectation was that in every life faith would work (Galatians 5:6; James 2:18), love would labor (Revelation 2:2, 4), and hope would endure (Romans 5:2-4; 8:24-25).

Therefore... faith, love and hope essentially describes a Christian's character. Accordingly, we should read 1 Corinthians 13 with these elements describing love as being evidence of a Christian's character development.

1. **Faith, love and hope are the things that truly matter; these are the expressions of true Christian faith and belief.**
2. **The application of the evidence of faith, love and hope is useful in gauging the health in the church. In other words, the qualitative components of faith, hope, and love... are the definitive evidence of a transformed life. These qualitative components are far more valuable in determining church health and growth than the quantitative components of numerical growth, wealth, baptisms, decisions, or any other quantitative method of analysis.**

3. Paul is a Trinitarian who tends to focus alternatively on the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. However, he is adamant about holding a “High Christology” – meaning the prominent role of Messiah in securing our position in God enabling faith, favor, and eternity.
4. The basis of faith, love and hope – these should be evidenced in all brothers and sisters indwelt by the Spirit; these are those who are beloved by God.
 - a. This is blessed assurance! A transforming nature and character are evidence of the Spirit’s presence. Not that we are perfect, but we are moving toward Godly maturity in Christ-likeness.
 - b. Paul is providing them with pastoral reassurance of what God has already accomplished in them and is yet completing.
 - c. Men and women need security – we need to feel spiritually secure, and we are because God called us and we responded to His call.
 - d. Pastoral reassurance is critical for spiritual health – people need to be reminded that God is in the middle of this. It is not our battle to fight alone, we have a strong advocate.
 - e. The Epistle to the Thessalonians is all about making new believers understand they are being spiritually supported.
- iii. 1:6 – Is a key theme of this epistle – suffering will inevitably come, and it can be successfully endured because the Spirit has reaffirmed God’s love and presence. Zondervan’s New International Encyclopedia of Bible Words offers some insight into the concept of pain and suffering:
 1. Pain and suffering have been themes for many philosophers; but when we enter a time of suffering, all the wisest speculations of the philosophers seem empty and meaningless. We simply hurt. We struggle to cope with our pain. And sometimes when we look to Scripture to find a word on pain and suffering, hoping for a message that will heal, it may seem that we find little help.
 2. Unlike the ancient Greek Stoics, who viewed suffering as man's fate within the context of an impersonal universe, the Bible affirms a world ordered by a Personal and relational God. The Old Testament consistently sets pain and suffering in the context of morality and the divine purpose with endurance as the expectation. There is however, no hint here of chance or fate. The New Testament speaks more directly about human feelings of pain and suffering, and explores the stunning theme of the suffering of God. Scripture has no magic remedy to offer when suffering surprises and overwhelms us. There is no verse to read that will instantly

heal us or even dull our pain. However, there is a perspective on suffering that, if we adopt it by faith, will enable us to cope and even to overcome.

3. **James' Epistle in verses 1:2-4, captures the New Testament [New Covenant] view of trials, pain, and suffering... which are presented as a means God sometimes employs to perfect His children.** Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

Faith in a world without temptation, trials, and struggles can become tepid and flaccid. Spiritual struggles force us to press into God and depend upon Him. Experiencing God's consolation in these times, strengthens and sharpens faith. David's Psalms resonate with unwavering confidence in God in the midst of his trials. This is part of what made David, "A man after God's own heart." This doesn't mean we should look for trouble, but if or when God brings it into our lives, the prudent believer will lean on God and ask, "What do You want to teach me and develop within me through this struggle?" Faith always looks for a Spiritual implication and application.

4. **In the passage of John 15:18-16:11, Jesus is quoted explaining the inherent conflict between the people of the world, and the people of God. This is a certain Spiritual conflict that will affect God's people who stand in opposition to the worldly standard of living. Ultimately it is this that precipitates the Spiritual conflict between God's people and the anti-Christ in Revelation.**
5. **It is important to understand that God wastes nothing in our life experience, and uses everything to cultivate and develop our faith. It's not always easy and it certainly isn't always fun, but God brings meaning and purpose even into the most difficult circumstances with transformative power. A current example of this is the story of Lynn and David Wagner in their presentation of "Not Wasted." This is a stunning example of how God can transform even the most difficult of experiences into a redemptive moment. Please click on this link and hear their story - <https://vimeo.com/162325468> .**
6. **For much more on this topic see the Book of Job on the AD website – pathway Biblical Literacy/Bible Survey/Wisdom Literature/Job.**

- iv. **1:7-10 – The result of the Thessalonian's experience in persevering under spiritual oppression was that their endurance and their strength of faith produced a witness to the entire region.**

1. The distinction between the “Living and True God” and “dead idols” was being demonstrated in these Christian’s lives, and their counter-cultural theological witness to their community that was without eternal hope, demonstrated the transformational power of the Gospel. People in the community wanted the results of the faith these believers lived out.
 2. Most people in this region were terrified by death and the unknown that lay beyond the grave. The prevalent stoic mindset was to endure these difficulties even though they were without hope. The assurance of Christian “faith, love and hope” that Paul preached and the Thessalonians lived out were transformative components to this community. Those who lacked this assurance faced an unknown and foreboding future. The result was that people sought out the faith these believers lived out.
 3. Vs 1:10 – Paul’s warning of Jesus as the “Son from Heaven” who God “raised from the dead” who now “rescues the faithful from the coming wrath” provided added impetus for the Thessalonian church to stand firm, and provided additional encouragement for others to come and remain faithful.
- v. 2:1-12 – Paul preached boldly and fearlessly, because he feared God not men. This is the ultimate Model for Ministry! Vs 1-12 are a recap of Paul’s Gospel message:
1. 2:1-2 – Having suffered and prevailed despite opposition.
 2. 2:3 – Having no impurity (a clean heart is confessional, not sinless).
 3. 2:5 – Having no inherent deceit (loving truth with an aversion to flattery).
 4. 2:5 – Having no greed.
 5. 2:6 – Seeking no praise from men – godly men and women seek God’s approval.
 6. 2:7 – Being gentle and caring (as a nursing mother).
 7. 2:8 – Having fond affection for God’s people (genuine love).
 8. 2:8 – Investing in the lives of others.
 9. 2:9 – Demonstrating labor and effort to not be a burden to others.
 10. 2:9 – Endeavoring not as a job or occupation (as others) but as a calling from God.
 11. 2:10 – Being holy, righteous, and blameless.
 12. 2:10 – The true ministry of the preacher is the demonstration of being on fire.
 13. 2:11 – Caring for others as a father cares for his children.
 14. 2:12 – Providing an example of encouragement, comfort, and urging each toward lives worthy of the King and His Calling. Ephesians 2:6 – we have been raised with Him, we have been seated with Him – this is an acknowledgment that we ARE kings now and eternally will be with Jesus.

- vi. **2:13-16** – Paul reminds the church of their reception of the Gospel, and their willingness to stand the resultant persecution is evidence of their faith:
 - 1. **2:13** – Demonstrating that God’s Word (Gospel & Grace) is doing its work in those who believe.
 - 2. **2:14** – Becoming imitators of Jesus (churches in Judea following the Lord) who were persecuted for their faith.
 - 3. **2:15** – Just as the Jews persecuted and killed our Lord and the prophets who preceded Him, they were now enduring honorably through Jewish oppression.
 - 4. **2:16** – While the Thessalonians were escaping the wrath of God, their tormentors would pay dearly for their sins against the Christian community.
- vii. **2:17-3:13** – This is Paul’s strong testimony for his love and affection to this Christian community.
 - 1. **2:17-20** – “We were *torn away* from you” and “we wanted to come to you” helps express the depths of Paul’s love for these believers. He goes on to say they represent “*the hope, the joy, and the crown*” in which Paul will rejoice over in the presence of Jesus.
 - 2. **3:1-5** – When Paul could stand his separation from them no longer, and knowing he couldn’t come himself because of the Jews opposition, he sent his best man Timothy to encourage and strengthen their community and help prevent the community from subversion.
 - 3. **3:6-10** – Upon Timothy’s return Paul was comforted by the expressions of their faith and love. They are standing firm in their faith to Paul’s great joy and relief.
 - 4. **3:11-13** – Paul closes out this very personal section by expressing his desire to visit them again, and that they would continue to grow spiritually.
- b. Chapter 4 is about Paul’s pastoral instructions on developing and nurturing the Christian life:
 - i. **4:1-2** – Paul has already instructed them on living in a manner that is pleasing to God.
 - 1. To live a life pleasing to God is a common Pauline statement, but to do so “more and more” is more unique and is similar to Philippians 2:12-16.
 - 2. The exhortation is presented in a two-fold manner with “ask” followed by “urge.” “Ask” is more of a friendly reminder, seen as a polite request made by a friend. The term “urge” is a much stronger request but less than a command. The concept is to desire greater and greater devotion to God and as a result growing Christlikeness and service to Him. The Philippians passage is a clearer of the two, essentially reinforcing “if you know how much you are loved by God and how much He has done for you, you can’t help but strive to love more and the ultimate goal of desiring to please God is to be commended by Him.”

- ii. **4:3-8 – Sexual Purity – Sexual immorality from a Jewish/Christian perspective was rampant across the Greco-Roman Empire. Greek converts had a particularly difficult time in adjusting to God’s desired standard for humanity.**
 - 1. **Vs 3-5 – “To be Sanctified” is a particularly important goal for Christ followers. However, a basic distinction should be made between the Old Testament and the New Testament concepts of “holiness.” In the Old Testament that which is “holy” is set apart from that which is “common” – the former being fitting for God's service, while the latter is unacceptable to be presented to God. In the New Testament holiness is presented as a personal dynamic process of becoming “Christ-like.” Believers now infused by God's Spirit are being progressively transformed into Jesus’ likeness and set aside for his service. Thus, our sanctification has to do with God's transformation of us into persons whose actions in daily life are expressions of the Lord. Though sexual purity is the focus here likely because it has always been one of the hardest temptation, it also includes anything that prevents our dedication to serving and honoring God. Thus, it is not renouncing godly physical intimacy in marriage, but renouncing living wholly in physical passion outside of marriage.**
 - 2. **Vs 6 – The result of the rejection of a life dedicated to physical pleasure is to avoid transgressing against your brother or sister by falling into adultery.**
 - 3. **Vs 7-8 – Mature faith means being open to instruction and accepting the call to live in purity and sanctification.**
- iii. **4:9-12 – “Have been taught by God” refers to the aforementioned sanctification resulting in the duty to the faith community and social responsibility to neighbors. In accepting the call to love the brethren in a way they demonstrate respect for relational boundaries and promote fellowship that encourages observers to emulate them. The “we urge you brothers to do so more and more” is an inclusio with verse 4:1. The purpose of the inclusio is to call attention to the primacy of this entire passage.**
- c. **4:13-5:11 – Here Paul switches his focus to Eschatology – Christian eschatology is unique... not only do we have a Messiah-Savior who redeemed us, but also a Messiah-Lord who loves us and will return for us. Jesus promised that He is going ahead of us, and that where He is we will be also – John 12:26; 14:3. In this section, Paul teaches some of the known components of Christian Eschatology leading up to the Rapture, when Jesus returns for His Church and takes His followers to be with Him in eternity. In so knowing and living there are two orders of priorities... the Ultimate or first cause goal, and the Pen-ultimate or second cause goal:**
 - i. **“Ultimate Goal” [First cause] – When we are living as disciples in the HOPE of our resurrection in eternity, we are unshakable because we know that our future is in Him:**

1. **4:13-15** – Those who have “fallen asleep” are those Christ followers who die before our Lord’s return. The use of “asleep” bears testimony that their death is not eternal. Paul contrasts these against those who are unbelievers who have died without hope. Since we know Jesus died and rose again, and we know that those who have fallen asleep will arise as Jesus did. Thus, we should accept the privilege of having fallen asleep in Jesus.
 2. **4:16** – Wait for the Hope of the second coming – it will be spectacular! The first coming was quiet and subdued – celebrated only by the angels and a few observant shepherds. The second coming will be WAY different and wondrous, and everyone will see it though not everyone will rejoice in it.
 3. **4:17-18** – The dead in Christ Jesus WILL rise first! Then those who are alive will be caught up with Him in the clouds. This is what is called the RAPTURE. The reality is that no one gets off this planet alive, those who are in relational connection with Christ cannot die... they merely fall asleep and are awakened with Him in eternity. Those who are alive when Christ returns will fall asleep and be caught up with Him and the others who have fallen asleep through the ages. The old order... the Fallen world order must pass away. The old body must pass away for our new perfected bodies to be received. This is what the rapture is all about, and it is great news and we should be encouraged by this!
- ii. **“Pen-Ultimate Goal”** [second cause] – while we are living in this hope and surety, there are things we can recognize of what will happen leading up to the rapture:
1. **5:1-4** – Because the Rapture is great news, everyone wants to know when it will happen. Even Jesus’ disciples wanted to know the details – Luke 17:22-18:1. The Day of the Lord WILL COME as a thief in the night – Matthew 24:43; Luke 39. When the Rapture does come, it will be sudden and unexpected so be alert! There will be many who should have been prepared but will instead be unprepared – Matthew 24:42-51.
 2. **5:5-7** – We are called to be “sons of Light” and should live accordingly. Those who purposely sin try to conceal it by doing it under the cover of night, but those who live in the light will live lives accordingly.
 3. **5:8- 11** – “Breastplate of Faith, Hope, Love & the Helmet of Salvation” ... this was written nine years before the epistle to the Ephesians – see Ephesians 6:13-17 and the AD exegesis of these verses in the article on the Epistle to the Ephesians.
- d. **5:12-24** – Final instructions for a healthy inner-life which will promote a healthy inner-life for each believer and for the corporate faith community as well. In this final passage, Paul presents a rapid-fire volley of guidance of what this inner-life should entail:

- i. **5:12-15 – Involves the inner-life outcome in the corporate life:**
 - 1. Engage in respectful and responsive cooperation with the leaders of the faith community.
 - 2. Warn the idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, and be patient with everyone.
 - 3. Don't pay back wrong for wrong, instead always be kind.
- ii. **5:16-18 – Involves the three-fold inner-life outcome for each believer:**
 - 1. To become joyful people.
 - 2. To be praying continually.
 - 3. To always be thankful.
- iii. **5:19-22 – Involves choosing certain actions on a regular basis:**
 - 1. Not to quench the Spirit's fire – our actions will fan the flames of our spiritual fire, or quench them. Choose to keep the Spirit bright!
 - 2. Spiritual prophecies are a gift for our encouragement – be open to receive them.
 - 3. Testing everything pertains to exercising Spiritual discernment – don't believe everything without seeking the Spirit's confirmation.
 - 4. Hold onto the good, and reject evil.
- iv. **5:23-24 – Involves choosing to believe that God will continue His work in us and through us:**
 - 1. God brings us peace and sanctification.
 - 2. God keeps our spirit, soul and body blameless.
 - 3. God's faithfulness will keep us so we are ready when He comes for us.