

THE
PULPIT COMMENTARY

EDITED BY THE

VERY REV. H. D. M. SPENCE, D.D.

DEAN OF GLOUCESTER

AND BY THE

REV. JOSEPH S. EXELL, M.A.

WITH

INTRODUCTIONS

BY THE

VERY REV. F. W. FARRAR, D.D., F.R.S., DEAN OF CANTERBURY

RIGHT REV. H. COTTERILL, D.D., F.R.S.E.

VERY REV. PRINCIPAL J. TULLOCH, D.D.

REV. CANON G. RAWLINSON, M.A.

REV. A. PLUMMER, M.A., D.D.

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I. THESSALONIANS

Exposition and Homiletics
By REV. P. J. GLOAG, D.D.

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REV. PROF. T. CROSKERY, D.D.
REV. B. C. CAFFIN, M.A.

REV. W. F. ADENEY, M.A.
REV. R. FINLAYSON, B.A.

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THE FIRST EPISTLE OF PAUL TO THE THESSALONIANS.

INTRODUCTION.

§ 1. THE AUTHORSHIP OF THE EPISTLE.

THERE is no doubt that the author of this First Epistle to the **Thessalonians** is the Apostle Paul. This is one of those scriptural writings the genuineness of which has been almost universally acknowledged. It has been called in question only by theologians of the most extreme school of criticism,¹ and has even been admitted by some belonging to that school.² The external evidence in its favour is strong. It is indirectly alluded to by the apostolic Fathers; it is directly referred to by such early Fathers as Irenæus, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian; it is contained in the Muratorian Canon, and in the early Syriac and Latin versions belonging to the second century; and its genuineness has never been challenged until recent times. To quote only one of these Fathers; Irenæus (A.D. 179) thus writes: "And on account of this the apostle, explaining himself, has set forth the perfect man of salvation, saying thus in the First Epistle to the Thessalonians: 'And may the God of peace sanctify you wholly, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved without complaint until the advent of the Lord Jesus Christ'" ('Adv. Hæres.,' v. 6, 1). Nor is the internal evidence less strong than the external. The character of Paul is distinctly impressed upon this Epistle; his intense love for his converts, his anxiety about their spiritual welfare, his joy when he receives a favourable account of their faith and charity, his zeal for the cause of the Lord for which he is ready to sacrifice everything, his noble independence of spirit,—all these characteristics of the apostle are seen in this Epistle. So also the style and mode of expression are Paul's. We have the same employment of emphatic terms, the same rich use of synonyms, the same

¹ See author's 'Pauline Epistles,' pp. 79—106.

² Baur and the Tübingen school; Hilgenfeld, however, asserts its genuineness.

accumulation of ideas, the same digressions suggested by a word, the same preference for participial constructions as are elsewhere found in Paul's other Epistles. In short, as Professor Jowett observes, "It has been objected against the genuineness of this Epistle that it contains only a single statement of doctrine. But liveliness, personality, similar traits of disposition, are more difficult to invent than statements of doctrine. A later age might have supplied these, but it could hardly have caught the very likeness and portrait of the apostle. . . . Such intricate similarities of language, such lively traits of character, it is not within the power of any forger to invent, and, least of all, a forger of the second century."¹ Nor is there anything in the contents of the Epistle at variance with the opinion that it was written by Paul. It has, indeed, been asserted that it is devoid of individuality and doctrinal statements. Its perusal will show that it is at once lively and specially adapted to the wants of the Thessalonians. And that it is devoid of doctrinal statements is an assertion which may also well be disputed; but even admitting that there is a partial truth in the remark, yet this is easily accounted for by the circumstances under which the Epistle was written.

The coincidences between the Epistle and the incidents in the life of Paul, as recorded in the Acts, is another striking proof of its authenticity.² In the Acts we read of the persecution to which Paul and Silas were subjected at Philippi, when, in violation of their rights as Roman citizens, they were publicly scourged and cast into prison. In the Epistle, written in the name of Paul and Silas, there is reference to this shameful treatment: "Even after we had suffered before and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention" (ch. ii. 2). In the Acts we are informed that Paul and Silas encountered a similar persecution at Thessalonica. "The Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people" (Acts xvii. 5). In the Epistle Paul appeals to the knowledge of the Thessalonians concerning this treatment: "For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know" (ch. iii. 4). In the Acts we are informed that Paul parted from his companions, Silas and Timothy, at Berea, and was rejoined by them at Corinth: "And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia (to Corinth), Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ" (Acts xviii. 5). And the Epistle, written, as we shall afterwards see, from Corinth, is in the joint names of Paul and Silvanus and Timotheus. Not only are there these coincidences, but also additional statements in the Epistle supplementing the history, thus proving that the one record could

¹ Jowett's 'St. Paul's Epistles,' vol. i. pp. 24—26 1st edit., pp. 28, 29 2nd edit.

² Paley's 'Hæc Paulinus:' on 1 Thessalonians.

not have been copied from the other. Thus in the Acts we are informed that Silas and Timothy did not join Paul until after his arrival at Corinth (Acts xviii. 5); whereas in the Epistle there is a statement which has led many¹ to affirm that Timothy joined Paul at Athens, and was sent by him from that city to Thessalonica: "Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone; and sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellow-labourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith" (ch. iii. 1, 2). In the Acts we are informed that Paul preached in the synagogue for three sabbaths, reasoning with the Jews (Acts xvii. 2); whereas there are references in the Epistle which have induced some to think that his residence in Thessalonica was more protracted. In the Acts we are only informed that Paul preached in the synagogue to the Jews and devout Greeks, that is, the religious proselytes; whereas it is evident from the whole character of the Epistle that the Church was composed of Gentile converts. These differences are not contradictions, and may easily be adjusted; but they are apparent enough to demonstrate the independence both of the history and the Epistle.

§ 2. THE CHURCH OF THESSALONICA.

Thessalonica was a large seaport of Macedonia, situated in the form of an amphitheatre on the slope of a hill at the north-east end of the Thermaic Gulf, now called the Gulf of Salonica. It had in antiquity various names. Thus it was called Emathia and Halia. In ancient history it appears under the name Therma, so called from the hot springs in the neighbourhood. Under this name it is mentioned in the account of the invasion of Xerxes, and in the history of the Peloponnesian War. We are informed that Cassander, the son of Antipater, King of Macedonia, rebuilt Therma, and called it Thessalonica, after the name of his wife, the half-sister of Alexander the Great (Strabo, vii. Frag. 24). According to another account, less trustworthy, it was so called by Philip, the father of Alexander, to commemorate his victory over the Thessalonians. In the Middle Ages it appears under the contracted form Salneck; and is now known under the name Salonica. Under the Romans Thessalonica became a city of great importance. During the temporary division of Macedonia into four districts, it was the capital of the second district; and afterwards, when the Roman province of Macedonia was formed, it became the metropolis of the country, and the residence of the Roman governor. In the civil wars it sided with Augustus and Antony, and was rewarded by receiving the privileges of a free city. Strabo, who lived shortly before the Christian era, observes that "it has at present the largest population of any town in the district" (Strabo vii. 7, 4). In the time of Paul, then, Thessalonica was a populous and flourishing town; it was chiefly inhabited by Greeks, with

¹ So Paley, Bleek, Neander, Jowett, and Ellicott.

a mixture of Romans. The Jews also were attracted to it in great numbers for the sake of commerce, and here was the synagogue of the district (Acts xvii. 1). It has always been a city of great importance. It long continued to be a bulwark against the assaults of the northern barbarians, and afterwards of the Saracens. When the Greek empire became enfeebled, Thessalonica was attached to the Venetian Republic, and remained so until the year 1430, when it was captured by the Turks, in whose possession it continues to this day. It is considered as the second city of European Turkey, having a population of about seventy thousand, of whom at least thirty thousand are Jews. Thessalonica has many remains of antiquity, one of which deserves special mention, a triumphal arch, erected to commemorate the victory of Philippi, and which must have been standing when Paul visited that city.

We have an account of the origin of the Church of Thessalonica in the Acts of the Apostles. In his second great missionary journey, Paul and his fellow-labourers, Silas and Timothy, had arrived at Alexandria Troas, when he was directed by a vision to cross over the *Ægean* Sea and repair to Europe. In obedience to this Divine direction, we are informed that loosing from Troas, they came with a straight course to the island of Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis, and from that they journeyed inland to Philippi (Acts xvi. 11, 12). Here they remained for some time, preaching the gospel with great success, until they were driven from it by a severe persecution. From Philippi Paul and his companions proceeded, by way of Amphipolis and Apollonia, to Thessalonica. Here was the chief synagogue of the district, and into it Paul, according to his custom, entered and preached the gospel. He proved to the Jews from their Scriptures that the Messiah was to suffer and rise from the dead; and he showed them that Jesus did thus suffer and rise again, and was consequently the Messiah (Acts xvii. 3). It would also appear that at Thessalonica he dwelt much on the kingdom and second advent of the Lord Jesus Christ; he laid great stress on the resurrection of Christ, and on his exaltation to the throne of eternal majesty. Hence the accusation brought against him that he proclaimed another King, one Jesus (Acts xvii. 7); and, in his Epistle, he observes, "Ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children, that you would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory" (ch. ii. 11, 12). For three sabbaths Paul continued his efforts in the Jewish synagogue with considerable success; some of the Jews believed, but his converts were especially numerous among the devout Greeks (Acts xvii. 1—4). At length the unbelieving Jews, moved with envy, raised a tumult against Paul and his companions; they stirred up the rabble, and assaulted the house of Jason, with whom the Christian preachers lodged; and when they failed to capture them, they dragged Jason and certain of the converts before the magistrates of the city, accusing them of disturbing the public peace and of harbouring traitors to the emperor. In consequence

of this, to avoid further disturbance, Paul and Silas left the city by night, and repaired to the neighbouring town of Berea (Acts xvii. 10).

In the Acts of the Apostles a residence in Thessalonica of only three weeks is mentioned (Acts xvii. 2). There are, however, statements in the Epistle which would lead us to infer that his residence was for a somewhat longer period. A flourishing Church was formed in Thessalonica; the gospel spread from it as a centre throughout Macedonia; its fame was everywhere diffused; and for this success a longer space of time than three weeks would appear requisite. Besides, at Thessalonica Paul supported himself by manual labour. "Ye remember," he writes, "our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God" (ch. ii. 9). And it was his custom to do so only when his residence in any city was prolonged. And we are informed in the Epistle to the Philippians that his converts in Philippi "sent to Thessalonica once and again to his necessities;" and that this was on the occasion of this visit to Thessalonica is evident, for the apostle tells us that it was "in the beginning of the gospel" (Phil. iv. 15, 16). Now, the distance between these two cities was a hundred miles; and therefore more than three weeks appear to be necessary for the transmission of this twofold supply for his wants. Still, however, his residence could not have been long, and his departure from the city was compulsory. Probably Paul preached for three successive sabbaths in the synagogue, but, finding the Jews obstinate and the synagogue closed against him, he turned, as his manner was, to the Gentiles; and it was his success among the Gentiles that stirred up the wrath of the Jews, and excited that disturbance which was the occasion of his leaving Thessalonica.

The result of Paul's ministry during the three sabbaths he preached in the synagogue is thus given by the author of the Acts: "And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few" (Acts xvii. 4). From this it appears that his success was small among the Jews, but great among the devout Greeks, that is, those Greeks who had previously detached themselves from idolatry and were seeking after God, and were thus in a manner prepared for the reception of Christianity. Afterwards it is probable that Paul preached to the Gentiles, and made numerous converts among them. Although the Jews were numerous in Thessalonica, yet it is evident from the two Epistles that the Church there was chiefly composed of Gentile converts. They are described as those who turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God (ch. i. 9)—a description applicable to converted Gentiles, but not to converted Jews and Jewish proselytes; and in neither Epistle is there a direct quotation from the Old Testament, the only probable allusion being to the prophecies of Daniel in the description of the man of sin contained in the Second Epistle (2 Thess. ii. 4).

§ 3. THE OCCASION OF THE EPISTLE.

Paul, driven from Thessalonica, had repaired to Berea, but from this also he had been compelled to depart by the machinations of the Jews of Thessalonica (Acts xvii. 13, 14). He had learned that the persecution which had arisen during his presence was continued in his absence (ch. ii. 14). And hence he was filled with anxiety about his Thessalonian converts. He knew that by reason of the shortness of his residence they were only partially instructed in Christianity, and he naturally feared that they might fall from the faith. Twice he had planned to visit them; but circumstances had prevented him (ch. ii. 18). Accordingly, no longer able to master his anxiety, he sent his fellow-labourer Timothy, either from Berea or Athens, to ascertain their state (ch. iii. 1, 2). Paul, meanwhile, had repaired from Berea to Athens, and thence to Corinth; and there Timothy joined him, and the information which he brought was the occasion of this Epistle. That information was upon the whole consolatory and satisfactory. Timothy brought good tidings of the faith and charity of the Thessalonians, of their affectionate regard for the apostle, and of their earnest desire to see him. The Thessalonians, in spite of the persecution which they endured, continued steadfast to the faith; they were examples to all that believed in Thessalonica and Achaia (ch. i. 7; iii. 6, 7). But, however favourable this report of Timothy, there were still many defects to supply, many errors to correct, and many evil practices to reform. The religious knowledge of the Thessalonians was defective; their religion had partially degenerated into fanaticism; and especially they were filled with excitement under the persuasion of the immediate coming of Christ. Some of them had neglected their worldly duties and had sunk into an indolent inactivity (ch. iv. 11, 12). It would appear that some of the converts had died, and their friends were distressed on their account, lest they should forfeit the blessings to be bestowed at the advent of Christ (ch. iv. 13). Nor had the Thessalonians entirely detached themselves from the vices of their former heathen state. The apostle had to warn them against sensuality, that vice so prevalent among the Gentiles; and he had to rebuke the covetousness of some as well as the indolence of others (ch. iv. 1—7).

With regard to its contents, the Epistle is divided into two parts: the first, comprehending the first three chapters, may be termed historical; the second, including the two last chapters, is practical. The apostle, after saluting the Thessalonians, renders thanks to God for the entrance of the gospel among them, for the mighty efficacy with which it was accompanied, and for the steadfastness of their faith (ch. i.). He alludes to his demeanour when in Thessalonica; how, notwithstanding his shameful treatment at Philippi, he had preached the gospel among them amid much contention; how he had sought neither their money nor their applause, but

actuated by the purest motives, had laboured incessantly for their spiritual welfare, and was ready to sacrifice himself for them (ch. ii.). He mentions the extreme anxiety he had on their account, the mission of Timothy to them, and the great satisfaction he experienced at the information which Timothy brought of the steadfastness of their faith and the abundance of their charity (ch. iii.). He then exhorts them to continue in holiness, carefully to avoid the lusts of the Gentiles who knew not God, and, instead of being led away by excitement as if the advent of Christ was at hand, to be diligent in the performance of their earthly duties. He comforts them concerning the fate of their departed friends, and exhorts them to be watchful and prepared for the coming of the Lord (ch. iv.). Then follow a series of detached exhortations to cultivate the virtues of Christianity, and the Epistle concludes with the apostolic benediction (ch. v.).

§ 4. THE DATE OF THE EPISTLE.

When Paul and Silas left Thessalonica, they came to Berea; Timothy probably remained behind, but he also soon joined them. Paul left them both at Berea, and proceeded alone to Athens. Timothy was probably sent from Berea back to Thessalonica to confirm the Church there, though some suppose that this mission took place from Athens. At Athens Paul intended to remain until his companions joined him; he sent a message to Silas and Timothy to come to him with all speed (Acts xvii. 14, 15). It would, however, appear that he left Athens without them; unforeseen circumstances had prevented them complying with his request, and they did not rejoin him until his arrival at Corinth. Now, as the Epistle is written in the joint names of Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus, it is evident that it was not composed until all three met together at Corinth. Some time also must have elapsed between the planting of Christianity in Thessalonica and the writing of this Epistle. Paul had twice attempted to visit them; Timothy had been sent by the apostle and had returned from his mission; and the faith of the Thessalonians had been spread abroad throughout Macedonia and Achaia (ch. i. 7, 8). The interval, however, could not have been long. Timothy returned at the commencement of Paul's residence at Corinth; and the apostle's anxiety for the Thessalonians would induce him to write the Epistle immediately on his receiving the information. He speaks of his absence from them as having as yet lasted only a short time. "We, brethren, being taken from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavoured the more abundantly to see your face with great desire" (ch. ii. 17). We may, therefore, safely fix the time of the composition of the Epistle toward the close of the year 52 or the beginning of the year 53, and during the early part of Paul's residence at Corinth, about six months after the planting of Christianity in Thessalonica.

Accordingly the place of writing was Corinth. In our New Testament,

at the end of the Epistle, there is appended the note: "The First Epistle to the Thessalonians was written from Athens." Though such a note is found in the most ancient manuscripts, it is evidently a mistake. The Epistle could not have been written from Athens, for Silas and Timothy were not both there with the apostle; and it was not written until the return of Timothy from Thessalonica, which occurred at Corinth; nor is there any ground for the supposition that Paul and his companions, during his residence at Corinth, made a short excursion to Athens. The mistake appears to have arisen from a careless inference drawn from the words, "We thought it good to be left at Athens alone" (ch. iii. 1); whereas the reference there is evidently to a past event, and indirectly implies that the apostle was not at Athens when he wrote these words. These subscriptions at the end of the Epistles have no authority; and although in general correct, yet occasionally, as in the present instance, they are erroneous.

§ 5. THE PECULIARITIES OF THE EPISTLE.

The special peculiarity of this Epistle is that it is undoubtedly the first of Paul's extant Epistles. Whether it is the first Epistle that Paul ever wrote is an entirely different question; but it is the first that has come down to us. This is a point on which almost all commentators are agreed. In all probability it is the earliest of the books of the New Testament, with the possible exception of the Epistle of James.

It is erroneous to affirm that this First Epistle to the Thessalonians is devoid of doctrinal statements. The supreme dignity of the Lord Jesus Christ, the spiritual kingdom which he has established in this world, the deliverance from the wrath to come effected by him, the necessity of holiness for salvation, the reign of Christ in heaven, the resurrection of the just, the second advent of Christ, the blessedness of a future state to the righteous and the wrath which awaits the wicked, are all clearly deduced from this Epistle. The great plan of redemption through the sufferings of Christ was clear to the apostle from the beginning. We can hardly even affirm that there was a development in the views of the apostle—a progress made in spiritual knowledge and insight into the ways of God. No doubt different doctrines are insisted on in the different Epistles; but this arose from the circumstances of the Churches to whom the apostle wrote. Thus in this Epistle to the Thessalonians there is no mention of the great Pauline doctrine of justification, because in that Church there was no controversy with the Judaistic Christians, and therefore no necessity of defending the doctrine of justification against erroneous notions; whereas the errors of the Galatian Church caused the apostle to dwell specially on that doctrine. So also at a still later period the incipient Gnostic errors were the occasion which induced the apostle to insist more fully on the nature of Christ's Person in the Epistles to the Colossians and Ephesians.

than in his earlier Epistles. Bishop Lightfoot, in his able article on the "Epistles to the Thessalonians," in Smith's 'Biblical Dictionary,' notices three points of difference between these and Paul's later Epistles. First, in the general style of these earlier letters there is greater simplicity and less exuberance of language. Secondly, the antagonism is different. Here the opposition comes from the unconverted Jews; afterwards Paul's opponents are Judaizing Christians. Thirdly, the doctrinal teaching of the apostle does not bear quite the same aspect as in the later Epistles. Many of the distinctive doctrines of Christianity which are inseparably connected with Paul's name were not evolved and distinctly enunciated until the needs of the Church drew them out into prominence at a later date. So far, then, it may be true that this First Epistle to the Thessalonians is not so doctrinal as the Epistles to the Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians. The circumstances of the Church determined the contents of the Epistle. The doctrine most insisted on and explained is the second advent, because erroneous views prevailed concerning it among the Thessalonians, giving rise to many disorders.

Paul, in writing to the Thessalonians, lays bare his heart; he speaks of his gentleness among them, even as a nursing mother cherisheth her children, and of his readiness to impart unto them, not the gospel of God only, but his own soul by reason of the affection which he bore to them. The Epistle which it most closely resembles is that to the Philippians. The Macedonian Churches were peculiarly attached to the apostle, and he to them; he writes to them in the fulness of his affection; and exhorts them, not so much with the authority of a spiritual teacher, as with the love and tenderness of parental affection, even as a father doth his children.

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THE FIRST EPISTLE OF PAUL TO THE THESSALONIANS.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER I.

CONTENTS.—Paul, after the address and salutation, testifies that he renders constant thanks to God for the Thessalonians, calling to remembrance their faith, love, and hope, being assured of their election. He expresses his joy in their cordial reception of the gospel and the Christian character which they exhibited, being examples to all believers in Macedonia and Achaia. He mentions the favourable report which he had of their conversion to God from idols, and of their waiting for the advent of Christ.

Ver. 1.—Paul. He does not call himself “an apostle,” not because the Thessalonians were newly converted (Chrysostom), or from tenderness to Silvanus who was not an apostle (Estius), or because his apostolic authority was not yet recognized (Jowett), or because he had merely commenced his apostolic labours (Wordsworth); but because his apostleship had never been called in question by the Thessalonians. For the same reason he omits this title in the Epistle to the Philippians; whereas he strongly insists upon it in his Epistles to the Corinthians and Galatians, because among them there were many opposed to his authority. **And Silvanus.** The same as the Silas of the Acts. He is mentioned as a chief man among the brethren, and a prophet or inspired teacher (Acts xv. 22, 32). His Latin name renders it probable that he was a Hellenistic Jew, and, like Paul, he was a Roman citizen (Acts xvi. 37). He was sent with Judas Barsabas from Jerusalem, to convey the apostolic decrees to Antioch; and he accompanied Paul instead of Barsabas on his second missionary journey

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(Acts xv. 40). He suffered imprisonment with Paul at Philippi; and was engaged with him in preaching the gospel in Thessalonica, Berea, and Corinth. His ministry at Corinth is honourably mentioned by Paul in his Second Epistle to the Corinthians (2 Cor. i. 9). After this there is no more mention of Silvanus in the Acts, and it is doubtful whether he was the Silvanus by whom the First Epistle of Peter was conveyed to the Churches of Asia (1 Pet. v. 12).¹ Ancient tradition, erroneously supposing that Silas and Silvanus were different persons, makes Silas the Bishop of Corinth, and Silvanus the Bishop of Thessalonica. **And Timotheus.** The well-known disciple of Paul. He was a native of Lystra, having a Greek father and a Jewish mother (Acts xvi. 1). He joined Paul and Silas on their second missionary journey at Lystra, and was with them in Philippi, Thessalonica, and Corinth. He was with Paul on his third missionary journey, and was sent by him on a mission to Macedonia and Corinth (Acts xix. 22; 1 Cor. xvi. 10), and accompanied him into Asia on his last journey to Jerusalem (Acts xx. 4). He was also with Paul during his first Roman imprisonment, when he wrote the Epistles to the Philippians and Colossians (Phil. i. 1; Col. i. 1). Afterwards he resided at Ephesus (1 Tim. i. 3); from which he was recalled to Rome by Paul shortly before his martyrdom (2 Tim. iv. 21). The last mention of Timothy is in the Epistle to the Hebrews: “Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty; with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you” (Heb. xiii. 23). According to ecclesiastical tradition, he became Bishop of Ephesus, and there suffered martyrdom.

¹ Some, on insufficient reasons, identify Silas with Tertius (Rom. xvi. 22), and others with Luke.

Silvanus and Timotheus are associated with Paul in his address to the Thessalonians, not to give weight and authority to his Epistle, but because they assisted him in the planting of the Church at Thessalonica, and were now with him at Corinth, when he was writing this Epistle. Silvanus is placed first, because he was the older and had been longer with the apostle, and, as is evident from the Acts, was at this time the more important of the two (Acts xvi. 19; xvii. 4). By being included in the address, they are represented as joint authors of the Epistle with Paul, although they were only so in name. It is possible that Paul employed one of them as his amanuensis in writing the Epistle. **Unto the Church.** The word "Church" denotes a select assembly; here, Christians selected from the world. It does not denote in the New Testament, as with us, a building, but the congregation. In Paul's later Epistles, those addressed are called, not the Church, but saints. **Of the Thessalonians.** In other Epistles the address is to the city, as Rome, Philippi, Colosse; here it is to the inhabitants. The Church of the Thessalonians was chiefly composed of converted Gentiles, with a small number of converted Jews (see Introduction). *Which is*; to be omitted, as not being in the original. **In God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ.** The characteristic peculiarity of the Church: they are in God and Christ, that is, in fellowship with them, united to them. **"In God the Father"** characterizes them as not being heathens; **"in the Lord Jesus Christ"** characterizes them as not being Jews. **Grace be unto you, and peace.** The usual apostolic benediction. **"Grace"** is the Greek and **"peace"** is the Jewish form of salutation. The Greeks commenced their epistles with wishing grace for those to whom they wrote; and the usual form of salutation among the Jews was *Shalom* or **"peace"**; the apostle combines them, thus intimating that both Greeks and Jews are one in Christ Jesus. In the Pastoral Epistles and in the Second Epistle of John the form is **"Grace, mercy, and peace"** (2 John 3), and in the Epistle of Jude it is **"Mercy, peace, and love"** (Jude 2). **From God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.** These words are wanting in some important manuscripts, and are omitted in the R.V. The preponderance, however, of external authority is in their favour.

Ver. 2.—We. Many expositors (Conybeare, Koch, Jowett) suppose that the plural is here used for the singular; as Paul elsewhere does in other parts of this Epistle. Thus: **"Wherefore we would come unto you, even I Paul, once and again"** (ch. ii. 18); **"Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left**

at Athens alone" (ch. iii. 1). In these verses the pronoun **"we"** is evidently restricted to Paul. Still, however, Silvanus and Timotheus being mentioned directly before, it is most natural to include them here. **Give thanks to God always for you all.** All Paul's Epistles, with the solitary exception of the Epistle to the Galatians, commence with an expression of thanksgiving. **Making mention of you in our prayers;** whilst we are engaged in prayer for you. Paul's prayer for the Thessalonians took the form of thanksgiving.

Ver. 3.—Remembering without ceasing. Some attach the words, **"without ceasing,"** or **"unceasingly,"** to the previous clause; **"making mention of you unceasingly in our prayers"** (so Alford). **Your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope.** These expressions are not to be weakened, as if they were a mere Hebraism for active faith, laborious love, and patient hope. We have here the three cardinal virtues—faith, love, and hope (1 Cor. xiii. 13). Elsewhere these graces are combined. Thus again in this Epistle: **"Putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation"** (ch. v. 8); and in the Epistle to the Colossians: **"Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all saints, for the hope which is laid up for you in heaven"** (Col. i. 4, 5). By the **"work of faith"** is not meant faith itself as the work of God (John vi. 29), but that faith which is energetic, which is active and living, productive of good works. By the **"labour, or toil, of love"** is not meant that love which is devoted to God, but that love which manifests itself in acts of kindness toward our fellow-Christians and toward the human race. And by the **"patience of hope"** is meant that constancy which remains unconquered by trials and persecutions. There is a climax here; faith manifests itself by its works—its active exertion; love by its toils—its works of self-denial; and hope by its patience—its endurance amid trials and discouragements. **Remembering, the apostle would say, your faith, hope, and love: a faith that had its outward effect on your lives; a love that spent itself in the service of others; and a hope that was no mere transient feeling, but was content to wait for the things unseen, when Christ should be revealed"** (Jowett). In our Lord Jesus Christ. These words do not refer to all three virtues (Hofmann), but only to the last, specifying its object, namely, that it is hope in the advent of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is hope's highest expectation, because at the advent the kingdom of Christ will come in its glory. In the sight of (or rather, before) God and

our Father. These words are to be conjoined with "remembering:" "remembering unceasingly before God and our Father your work of faith," etc. According to the English idiom, the conjunction "and" is dropped—"God our Father."

Ver. 4.—Knowing; that is, not the Thessalonians themselves, but we, Paul and Silvanus and Timotheus; knowing, being well assured of. Brethren beloved, your election of God; or rather, as it is in the margin and in the R.V., *Knowing brethren, beloved of God, your election*. By election is meant that act of free grace by which God destines individuals to become believers in Christ. Thus the Thessalonian converts were chosen or elected by God from among their heathen countrymen to become Christians. The ultimate reason of their Christianity was their election of God.

Ver. 5.—For; or rather, *how that* (R.V.); or, *because*; assigning the reasons for Paul's confidence in their election; and these reasons were two: first, the powerful entrance which the gospel had among them; and secondly, the joyful reception which was given to it by the Thessalonians. Our gospel; that is, the gospel which was preached by us. Came not unto you in word only. The gospel came in word, for this was a necessary pre-requisite, but "not in word only," that is, it was not a bare publication or communication in human words. But in power. Some restrict the epithets which here follow to the teachers, as denoting the mode in which they preached the gospel; but it is better to refer them both to the teachers and the taught. By "power" is not meant miracles, but, in contrast to "word," the power with which Paul and his companions preached, and the impression which the gospel made on the hearers. And in the Holy Ghost. Here also the reference is, not to miraculous gifts, but to the influences of the Spirit accompanying the preaching of the gospel; such was the efficacy of Paul's preaching that it proved itself to be accompanied by the operation of the Holy Ghost in the conversion of his hearers. There is here an ascent: the gospel came in power, and, what is more, it came in the Holy Ghost. And in much assurance. By "assurance" here is meant the confidence with which Paul and his fellow-workers preached the gospel to the Thessalonians, and the fulness of conviction with which the Thessalonians received it. As ye know. An appeal to their knowledge that what he now states is true. What manner of men we were among you. Alluding to the blamelessness of their behaviour when in Thessalonica. For your sake; namely, that we sought not our own profit or advantage, but your spiritual good.

Ver. 6.—Now follows the second reason assigned by Paul for his confidence in their election. And ye became followers (or, *imitators*) of us, and of the Lord; of Christ. By becoming imitators of the apostle, they became imitators of Christ. "Be ye followers of me," writes St. Paul to the Corinthians, "even as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. xi. 1). The point of imitation did not consist in their cordial reception of the gospel, for that could not apply to Christ; but in their joyful endurance of suffering. Having received the word in much affliction. We learn from the Acts that the unbelieving Jews stirred up the heathen rabble, and raised a persecution against Paul and his associates, in consequence of which they had to depart from Thessalonica (Acts xvii. 4—10). It would appear that, after the apostle had left the city, the persecution, far from abating, rather increased, and the Gentile inhabitants united with the unbelieving Jews against the Christians; the Thessalonian converts suffered from their own countrymen as well as from the Jews (ch. ii. 14). With joy of the Holy Ghost; that is, not merely spiritual joy, or joy in the Holy Ghost, but joy which proceeds from the Holy Ghost—joy which is produced by him, of which he is the Author.

Ver. 7.—So that ye were ensamples. The word here rendered "ensamples" literally signifies "types." It is used to denote a form or figure (Acts vii. 43), a model or likeness (Acts vii. 44), a mark or impression (John xx. 25). Hence, in a metaphorical sense, it came to signify an example, a pattern for imitation. "Now these things are our examples" (1 Cor. x. 6). To all that believe—to all believers—in Macedonia and Achaia. These are the two provinces into which ancient Greece was divided by the Romans, each of which was governed by a consul. Macedonia was the northern portion, including Macedonia proper, Epirus and Illyricum; at first it was divided into four districts, but afterwards united into one province, of which Thessalonica was constituted the capital. Achaia was the southern portion of ancient Greece, including the Peloponnesus, Attica, Boeotia, etc., and, until recently, was nearly of the same dimensions with the modern kingdom of Greece; its capital was Corinth.

Ver. 8.—For; or, *because* the proof of this praise conferred on the Thessalonians. From you sounded out. Resounded like the sound of a trumpet. Comp. Rom. x. 18, "Their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the end of the world." The word of the Lord. This does not intimate that the Thessalonians by their missionary activity disseminated the gospel, but that from them locally the gospel had spread.

Not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad. There is a slight difficulty in the construction. The sentence is complete without the addition, "your faith to God-ward is spread abroad," and, therefore, we must consider these words as equivalent to "from you sounded out the word of the Lord." When the apostle says that "the faith of the Thessalonians is spread abroad in every place," the meaning is that the report of their joyful reception of the gospel had excited universal attention. There is here a certain use of the figure hyperbole. The words, "in every place," are not to be taken in their full literal sense, but are merely a strong expression for the wide diffusion of the faith of the Thessalonians. Paul uses similar hyperboles in other places, as when he speaks of the faith of the Romans being spoken of throughout the whole world (Rom. i. 8), and of the gospel having come into all the world (Col. i. 6). This wide diffusion of the faith of the Thessalonians, notwithstanding the recent date of their conversion, may be accounted for when we consider that Thessalonica and Corinth were two great commercial cities, from and to which there was a constant coming and going, so that reports might easily be transmitted by merchants and strangers. It has also been suggested that Aquila and Priscilla who had lately come from Rome (Acts xviii. 2), must in their journey have passed through Thessalonica, and would bring with them to Corinth such a report of the faith of the Thessalonians (Wieseler). So that we need not to speak anything; that is, of your faith, as this is already so well known and applauded.

Ver 9.—*For they themselves; that is, the reporters, those in Macedonia, Achaia, and every other place. Show of us; or, report concerning us* (R.V.) in regard to our preaching or entrance among you. Instead of questions being asked of us by them, as would naturally be expected, they of their own accord give information. What manner of entering in we had among you. "Entering" here evidently refers, not merely to the outward entrance, the mere preaching of the gospel among the Thessalonians; but to the access, the internal entrance, which the gospel found into their hearts; that is, with

what power and fulness of the Holy Ghost we preached the gospel unto you, and with what joy and confidence and contempt of danger ye received it. And how ye turned to God from idols. This, as already remarked, is one of the proofs that the Church of Thessalonica was chiefly composed of Gentile converts, though, of course, not to the exclusion of the Jewish element (Acts xvii. 4). To serve the living and true God. Two epithets employed in contrast to the idols of the heathen: "living," in opposition to dead idols, which were nothing in the world; "true," not in the sense of veracious, but of real in opposition to the imaginary gods of the heathen.

Ver. 10.—*And to wait.* The faith of the Thessalonians took the form of hope or expectation for the coming of the Lord; an element of Christian feeling, perhaps, not so prominent in the present day. For his Son from heaven; referring to the second advent. Christ on his departure from this world went to heaven, where he resides, making intercession for us, but from thence he will come to judge the quick and the dead. In the primitive Church the advent of Christ was not regarded as at a distance, but as an event which might at any moment occur. Whom he raised from the dead; with emphasis placed before "Jesus," because his resurrection from the dead was the open declaration, the public inauguration, of his Divine sonship (Rom. i. 4). Even Jesus which delivered us. The participle is present; not past, "who delivered us," namely, by his death; nor future, "who shall deliver us," at the judgment; but present, "who delivers us;" the deliverance is going on—it commenced with his death, but will not be completed until his advent. Or the word may be used as a substantive, "Jesus, our Deliverer." From the wrath; or righteous indignation of God; here punishment as the effect of wrath. "The wrath of God is, in its deepest ground, love; love itself becomes a consuming fire to whatever is opposed to the nature of goodness" (Koch). To come; literally, *which is coming, the coming wrath*, denoting its absolute certainty. This coming wrath will take place at the advent of Christ, when he appears, not only for the salvation of his people, but for the destruction of his enemies.

HOMILETICS.

VERS. 1, 2.—*The character of Christians.* 1. *They are converted;* they turn to God from idols. As the heathen turned from material idols, so do believers from spiritual idols. A change is effected in their disposition; their chief affection is now fixed on God and Christ; they serve the living and true God. 2. *They wait for the Lord Jesus Christ;* they expect salvation from him, and look forward to his second coming. 3. *They live a holy life;* they possess the three cardinal virtues, and prove that they do so by their outward manifestations.

Ver. 3.—The three cardinal virtues : faith, love, and hope. 1. *Their order.* Faith is the commencement of the spiritual life, love its progress and continuance, and hope its completion; faith is the foundation, love the structure, and hope the top-stone of God's spiritual temple in the soul. 2. *Their manifestations.* Faith is seen by its works; love, by its self-denying exertions; and hope, by its patience and endurance. 3. *Their reference to time.* Faith refers to the past, love to the present, and hope to the future.

Ver. 5.—The entrance of the gospel. 1. *Negatively.* "Not in word only." The preaching of the gospel will only add to our condemnation if we do not by faith accept it; not nominal, but real Christianity is the chief matter; the entrance must not be external, but internal. 2. *Positively.* "In power," arresting us in our worldly career; "in the Holy Ghost," being the Agent of our conversion; "in much assurance," so that we know from experience its truth and efficacy.

Ver. 6.—The imitation of Christ. Christ not only died as a Sacrifice, but lived as an Example. He is the great Example whom we must imitate, the Pattern of the new creation, the Original of which all believers are copies. Especially we must imitate him in his patient endurance of suffering. The cross is ever the Christian's motto; and we can only enter into heaven through tribulation.

Ver. 6.—The union of affliction with joy. The Thessalonians "received the word with much affliction and joy of the Holy Ghost." Christianity makes no stoical demands. Spiritual joy does not exclude, but even includes, sorrow. "Sorrowing, yet always rejoicing," is the Christian's condition. To glory in tribulation is the Christian's experience. "In the spiritual world joy and sorrow are not two, but one."

Ver. 7.—The example of Christians. It was greatly to the praise of the Thessalonians that they were examples to all believers in Macedonia and Achaia. 1. *Consistent believers are living evidences of the truth of Christianity.* By the purity of their conduct, by their unselfishness, by their patience in suffering, they prove that there is something real and living in Christianity. 2. *Inconsistent believers are obstacles in the way of the gospel.* They confirm the worldly in their worldliness, as if Christianity were a mere pretence, and thus give occasion to the enemies of God to blaspheme.

Ver. 10.—The expectation of the advent. Believers are here described as waiting for the Son of God from heaven. Certainty of the fact of the advent; Christ shall come from heaven. Uncertainty of the time of the advent; "Of that day knoweth no man, not even the angels who are in heaven." It would appear that the early Christians believed that Christ might come at any time, even in their days; the first advent, being so recent, excited within them the expectation of the immediateness of the second. Hence the doctrine of the second advent occupied a much more prominent place in the thoughts of the primitive Christians than it does in ours. It was to them a living power; believers then lived in constant expectation of the coming of the Lord; whereas the teaching of the present day has in a measure passed from it; its uncertainty, instead of exciting us to holiness and watchfulness, is too often abused as an encouragement to sloth and security.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 1.—Address and salutation. At a point almost midway between the apostle's call and his martyrdom he penned this first of his thirteen Epistles, which was, perhaps, the earliest book of New Testament Scripture, and addressed to one of the primary centres of European Christianity.

I. THE AUTHORS OF THE SALUTATION. "Paul, and Silvanus, and Timothy." Simply Paul, without official adjunct of any sort, for there was no one in the Thessalonian Church to challenge his apostleship or his relationship to Christ. He associates Silvanus and Timothy with himself in the salutation as they were associated with him in the original foundation of the Church; Silvanus being placed next to himself, because

he was of older standing and greater weight in the Church than Timothy, a comparatively young evangelist.

II. **THE CHURCH TO WHICH THE SALUTATION WAS ADDRESSED.** "To the Church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." 1. *Its situation.* Thessalonica was the capital of all Macedonia, and is still the second city of European Turkey. Important then as now by its commerce; important by its place on the great road which connected Rome with its Asiatic dependencies; but more important in the eye of the apostle as a grand centre of missionary operations both by land and sea, and with a mingled population of Jews and Gentiles. 2. *Its true character as a Church.* It was "the Church of the Thessalonians"—a regularly organized community of Christians, mostly Gentiles, having the root and ground of its spiritual existence in union with the Father and the Son. They were "in the fellowship of the Father and the Son," because they were "dwelling in God, and God in them," and "they were in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ." The one fellowship implies the other; for Jesus said, "No man cometh unto the Father but by me;" yet it is also true that it is "God who calls us into the fellowship of the Son" (1 Cor. i. 9). This double fellowship is secured by the bond of the Holy Spirit. As enjoyed by the Thessalonians it implied: (1) Their devotion to the truth; for only "as abiding in the doctrine of Christ" they would have "both the Father and the Son" (2 John 9; 1 John ii. 24). There is no fellowship but in the truth. To be in darkness is to be out of fellowship (1 John i. 6). (2) Their unity. "Even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us" (John xvii. 21). (3) Their love to one another. "If we love one another God abideth in us" (1 John iv. 12). (4) Their boldness in the day of judgment (1 John ii. 28). (5) Their ultimate perfection. "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one" (John xvii. 21-23). Behold thus the high dignity and blessed privilege of the Church at Thessalonica.

III. **THE SALUTATION.** "Grace and peace be unto you." (See homiletical hints on Gal. i. 5; Col. i. 2).—T. C.

VERB. 2, 3.—Heartfelt thanksgiving for spiritual prosperity. The apostle begins by a full and earnest expression of thanksgiving such as is characteristic of all his Epistles except that to the Galatians.

I. **THE GROUND OF THANKSGIVING.** "Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ." We consider here: 1. *The graces of the Christian life.* We have here, in the first Epistle ever written by the apostle, his favourite trilogy of Christian principles. (1) *The three graces are fundamental.* As the three principal colours of the rainbow—red, yellow, and blue, representing respectively heat, light, and purifying power—supply in their combination all the other colours, so, by a sort of moral analysis, it can be shown that faith, hope, and love lie at the foundation, or enter into the composition, of all other Christian graces whatever. (2) *They are three inseparable graces.* Faith always works by love, and love is inseparable from hope, for "hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost" (Rom. v. 5). Faith is the necessary root, as hope and love are its unailing fruits. As faith works by love, it is also the substance of things hoped for. (3) *They are at once the defence and the adornment of Christian life.* "Let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for a helmet, the hope of salvation" (ch. v. 8). (4) *They are the abiding principles of Christian life:* "Now abideth faith, hope, love, these three" (1 Cor. xiii. 13). They do not die with death; for in eternity the Church will be made perfect in love, as it will ever continue to trust in the Lord, and hope for new developments of truth and new disclosures of blessedness. 2. *The practical aspect of these graces as forces in the life of the Church.* There is a climax in the exhibition of the three graces. The apostle does not say, "the work of faith, the work of love, the work of hope," but ascends from work to labour, and from labour to endurance. There is a work that is a refreshing exercise of our energies, but it involves no exhaustion or fatigue; but when work has deepened into labour we become conscious of the limitation of our strength, and then we have to call in the new principle of endurance, or "patience," if we are to carry it to a triumphant result. (1) *The work of faith points to a work springing out of faith;* for faith is the most active of all the principles which

influence human conduct. Their faith was, therefore, a fruitful faith. (2) The labour of love suggests the sacrifices which we are ready to make for the objects of our love. It was not "love in word or in tongue," but "in deed and in truth" (1 John iii. 18). (3) The patience of hope suggests the severity of present afflictions, which are borne with constancy and perseverance because the sufferers are cheered by hope. But it is "hope in our Lord Jesus Christ;" that is, hope of his second advent; for the Thessalonians had a constant and overwhelming sense of the nearness of his coming, which in some cases broke in upon the continuity of their daily duties.

II. THE OCCASION, CIRCUMSTANCES, AND FREQUENCY OF THE APOSTLE'S THANKSGIVING. "We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers." 1. *It was in his prayers for them that he expressed his thanksgiving.* "Even in the sight of God and our Father." The care of all the Churches was upon him daily (2 Cor. xi. 28), and under such a burden he "bowed his knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." It is happy for Christians to be remembered in the prayers of saints, to be borne upon their hearts, to be borne up before God in intercessory prayer (Rom. i. 9; Eph. i. 16). His thanksgivings were as constant as his prayers. 2. *The thanksgivings were addressed to God* because the spiritual prosperity at Thessalonica was due neither to the converts themselves nor to the preachers of the gospel. We must ever speak of the grace of God, and exalt it in our praises. 3. *The thanksgiving was all the more hearty and full because it had regard to the prosperity of the entire community.* "All of you," because they were an eminent seal of his apostleship, a blessed effect of his ministry among them.—T. O.

Vers. 4—6.—*Their election and its fruits another ground of thanksgiving.* The apostle, Jew as he was, addresses these Gentiles as his brethren, and represents them as the objects of Divine love. "Knowing, brethren beloved of God, your election."

I. THERE IS AN ELECTION ACCORDING TO GRACE. 1. *The election referred to here was not an election to external privilege or ecclesiastical relationship;* for that might have had a very uncertain issue, and would not have been the subject of such abounding thankfulness as he expresses in this passage. 2. *It was not even the call to obtain glory, which they had received through his gospel* (2 Thess. ii. 13, 14); for the election only realized itself in that call, Scripture always distinguishing the order of election and calling. "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called" (Rom. viii. 30). 3. *Much less is the election to be identified with regeneration, conversion, or faith.* These were its effects. 4. *It was an election to eternal life, involving all the various processes of his grace.* (Rom. xi. 5.) (1) It is an election in Christ (Eph. i. 4). (2) It is irrespective of merit (Rom. ix. 11). (3) It is through faith and the sanctification of the Spirit (2 Thess. ii. 13). (4) It is to eternal glory (Rom. ix. 23).

II. THE KNOWLEDGE OF THIS ELECTION IS A POSSIBLE AND AN ACTUAL EXPERIENCE. The apostle's knowledge was not derived from special revelation, neither was it the mere credulity of a kindly charity, "hoping all things" in the absence of evidence. It had a double ground—one subjective and the other objective; one based upon the apostle's conscious experience in preaching the gospel, the other upon their practical and hearty reception of the truth. 1. *The subjective evidence.* "For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." (1) It did come in word, for it was conveyed to the Thessalonians in human speech, albeit not "in the enticing words of man's wisdom," but it passed beyond the word. It did not merely sound in the ear nor touch the understanding. (2) But it came in power—on the part of the preachers with an overwhelming force and persuasiveness, so that "the faith of the people should not stand in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God" (1 Cor. ii. 5). There was a conscious abounding energy which carried them beyond themselves, with an overmastering conviction that they would prevail. (3) It came also "in the Holy Ghost," or, as the apostle elsewhere phrases it, "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1 Cor. ii. 4). The Word would otherwise have been a dead letter and a killing letter, but the Spirit gave it life. The power of the gospel, therefore, was due to the efficient operation of the Spirit. (4) It came also "in much assurance," not on the part of the Thessalonians, but on the part of the preachers of the gospel, who were fully convinced of its truth, and had thorough confidence in its power. (5) This subjective evidence was confirmed by their own

recollection of the three preachers of the gospel—"As ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake." The Thessalonians would have a very vivid recollection both of the preaching and the preachers. The three brethren were conspicuous by their holiness, their zeal, and their interest in the welfare of the Thessalonians. This was no self-flattery, for it was confirmed by the knowledge of their converts. 2. *The objective evidence of their election.* "And ye became imitators of us, and of the Lord, having received the Word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost." Their ready imitation of the apostle and his colleagues—which was, in truth, an imitation of Christ, so far as they were connected with him in his life and truth—was a practical proof of the sincerity of their conversion. The imitation was manifest in the spirit and circumstances of their reception of the truth. (1) The truth was received "in much affliction." The history of their conversion confirms this statement (Acts xvii. 5, 9). But the persecution continued after the departure of the apostle. The gospel had its drawbacks, but the Thessalonians were steadfast in their allegiance to the truth. (2) Yet it was received "with joy of the Holy Ghost;" that is, the joy that springs from his presence in the soul. They were thus imitating that apostle who "took pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake" (2 Cor. xii. 9, 10). The joy in question is (a) a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. v. 22); (b) it is essentially connected with the kingdom of God as part of its blessedness (Rom. xiv. 17); (c) it is capable of increase through the very presence of affliction (Acts v. 41); (d) it is the strength of the believer—"The joy of the Lord shall be your strength" (Neh. viii. 10); (e) its advent marks a distinct change in the world's history; (f) it ought to be constant (Phil. iv. 4); (g) it is maintained through abiding in Christ (John xv. 10, 11).—T. C.

Vers. 7, 8.—*The profound impression made by the conversion of the Thessalonians.* Having become imitators of the apostles and of our Lord, they soon became examples for the imitation of other Churches. Their conversion lifted them up into a sudden and distinct visibility in two directions.

I. THE GOSPEL WAS THUS CARRIED THROUGH NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN GREECE LIKE THE RINGING SOUND OF A TRUMPET. "For from you hath sounded out the Word of the Lord in Macedonia and Achaia." These two divisions of Greece, included in the Roman empire, received the report of the gospel, which went forth like a joyful sound, proclaiming with no uncertainty liberty to the captives. 1. *A work of grace in one place quickly leads to a work of grace in other places.* The tale of wonder is repeated with solemn surprise, gratitude, and expectation. 2. *Churches already in existence were stirred and stimulated by the visible work of grace at Thessalonica.*

II. THE REPORT OF THEIR FAITH RECEIVED A WIDE PUBLICITY EVERYWHERE, EVEN OUTSIDE THE LIMITS OF GREECE. This was not wonderful, for the city was, as Cicero says, in the very bosom of the Roman empire, a centre of business and influence which touched its furthest limits. Their faith must have had the solid stamp of reality to produce such a widespread sensation. It must have been practical and self-manifestative, for they did not hide it in their own breasts, but declared it by words and deeds. There was, therefore, no necessity for the apostle speaking about it—"so that we need not to speak anything."—T. C.

Vers. 9, 10.—*The nature of the impression made upon the world by the spectacle of Thessalonian piety.* It was a truly providential foresight that led the apostles at the beginning of the gospel to plant it first in the great cities of the world. Thus it first appeared at Jerusalem, Antioch, Ephesus, Thessalonica, Rome, and Corinth.

I. THE WORLD WAS FIRST IMPRESSED BY THE RAPID AND IMMEDIATE SUCCESS OF THE APOSTLES. "For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you" The world seemed to appreciate the boldness, the sincerity, the uprightness of the preachers, as elements of their success; for there was no dexterous flattery, there was no spirit of self-seeking, there was no guileful strategy, in the proclamation of the gospel.

II. THE WORLD WAS STILL MORE DEEPLY IMPRESSED BY THE BLESSED EFFECTS OF THE APOSTLES' PREACHING. "And how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God." 1. *It was a conversion from idolatry.* Immediately and at once they

received converting grace, under the influence of which they turned to the Lord from their dead and fictitious deities. (1) Idolatry is apostasy from God. These Thessalonians "had changed the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man, and of birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things" (Rom. i. 23). They had been "joined to their idols" for ages (Hos. iv. 17). They had been hitherto walking just like other Gentiles, in all moral blindness and carnality of heart (Eph. iv. 17, 18). (2) Their conversion was a repudiation of idolatry. It was not mere proselytism. It was the bursting asunder of ties which had an immense social as well as religious weight in pagan life. (3) It was a thorough consecration to the service of the living and true God. As their God was true God and living God, having life in himself and a true and faithful relation to his worshippers, they could give him the living service of faith, obedience, and dependence. 2. *Another effect of the apostles' preaching was their expectation of our Lord's coming.* The doctrine of the advent occupies the foreground in the thoughts of the Thessalonians, as in the two Epistles addressed to them. As faith underlies the service of the true God, so hope underlies the expectation of the Lord's coming. "And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, who delivereth us from the wrath to come." (1) This implies the belief that Jesus is in heaven, to reign, to plead, to prepare a place for us. (2) It implies the belief that he will return from heaven. The Thessalonians may have believed that he would return in that age, but all Christians live in the "blessed hope" of his second coming. (3) This waiting attitude implied the recognition of a certain connection between Christ's resurrection and our deliverance from the wrath to come. They were not waiting for a dead man lying in a Jewish grave, but for One raised from the dead, and living in the power of an endless life. His resurrection implied the completion of his atoning work, as the work of atonement supplies the ground for our continuous deliverance from the wrath that is coming. There is a wrath coming upon disobedient sinners, but there is a way of deliverance provided in the Word of Jesus Christ ratified by his resurrection from the dead.—T. C.

Ver. 1.—The address. I. THE WRITER. 1. *He uses no title.* He does not style himself apostle. He asserted his apostolic authority when it was necessary to do so; for the sake of others, as in his Epistles to the Corinthians and Galatians. Now it was not necessary; the Macedonian Churches regarded him with affection and reverence. He simply gives his name, his new name—Paul. He had laid aside his old name with all its associations. It recalled the memory of the famous king, Saul the son of Kish, of the tribe of Benjamin. It recalled to the apostle the memories of his own old unconverted life, his self-satisfied Pharisaism, his persecution of the Church, especially that one saddest day of his life, when he consented to the death of the first martyr of the Lord, the holy Stephen. He had laid aside his old name, and with it his old modes of thought, his old life. Paul was, we may say, his Christian name; we do not read of it before the beginning of his first missionary journey; it was consecrated now by constant, untiring, self-sacrificing labour. It was known wherever Christ was preached as the name of the great missionary, the apostle of the Gentiles, the first of the noble band of Christian missionaries, who had left his home and all that once he loved to devote himself, heart and soul, to the mission work with all its hardships, all its dangers. Many holy men have trodden in his steps; but it was Paul who first set the high example, who kindled the sacred enthusiasm which has led so many saints in every age to fulfil the Lord's command, to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. *Paul* is a Latin name; it means "little." St. Augustine in one place suggests that St. Paul may have chosen it to mark himself as "the least of the apostles." There are other possible reasons for the change, and it may be thought that St. Paul would have shrunk from what might seem almost like a parade of humility. But at least we may find a lesson here. God exalteth the humble. *Paul* is a famous name. Others have borne it—some distinguished Romans; but it was reserved for the apostle to make the name honoured and beloved throughout the civilized world. The Paulus who conquered Macedonia for Rome is far less famous now than the Paul who won the Macedonian Churches for Christ. 2. *He associates others with himself.* Paul is the spiritual father of the Thessalonian Christians; he is the writer of the Epistle, not Silvanus or Timotheus (see 2 Thess. iii. 17). But they had laboured with him in

Thessalonica; Silvanus certainly, Timotheus in all probability; they had shared his dangers there; they were well known to the Thessalonians. So he joins their names with his own, recognizing their brotherly fellowship, their faithful co-operation, and shrinking, it may be, from putting himself into unnecessary prominence. He seeks not honour for himself; he has no literary ambition; his one aim is the salvation of his converts, the glory of God. (1) Silvanus, or, in the shortened form of the name, Silas. He, like St. Paul, was a Roman citizen, and bore a Latin name. It was, in the Latin mythology, the name of the sylvan god, who was supposed to protect the sheep, and save them from wolves. When he became a Christian, that name might perhaps serve to remind him of the great duty of tending the flock for which the good Shepherd died. He had been a leader in the Church at Jerusalem; he was a prophet (Acts xv. 32), that is, he had the gift of spiritual, inspired eloquence; he used it to exhort and confirm the brethren. He accompanied St. Paul in his first missionary journey; he worked with him, he suffered with him. In the dungeon at Philippi, his feet made fast in the stocks, he prayed and sang praises unto God. His presence and sympathy had cheered St. Paul in his dangers. Companionship in affliction had bound them very close to one another. When working together at Thessalonica they must have still felt the effects of the many stripes which they had received at Philippi. It was natural that St. Paul should mention Silas in writing to the Thessalonians. We may notice here that he furnishes one of the links which couple together the two apostles whose differences (Gal. ii. 11—21) have been so much magnified by heretics of old, by unbelievers now. St. Paul loved Silvanus; St. Peter counted him a faithful brother (1 Pet. v. 12). (2) Timotheus, St. Paul's dearest companion, his own son in the faith, bound to him with the closest ties of tender, personal affection. He stands first among the noble company of holy, loving fellow-workers whom St. Paul had drawn around himself. He was known to the Thessalonians; his name, indeed, does not appear in the record of St. Paul's visit to Thessalonica in the Acts of the Apostles. But we know that he was sent there afterwards to establish and to comfort the Thessalonian Christians concerning their faith (ch. iii. 2). Doubtless he was chosen for that work because of the Christian zeal, the loving, gentle sympathy which marked his beautiful character. He fulfilled his mission, and brought back to the apostle good tidings of the faith and charity of the Thessalonians. He greets them now.

II. THE CHURCH. 1. *The foundation of the Thessalonian Church.* St. Paul had been shamefully treated at Philippi; he had not lost courage. He came to Thessalonica; he went, as he was wont, to the synagogue. There he preached for three sabbath days; he "reasoned with them out of the Scriptures." He showed (as our Lord himself had shown to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus) that it was necessary that the Messiah should suffer, and should rise again from the dead; he showed that Jesus was the Messiah, the Christ. All true preaching must be full of Scripture; all true preaching must be full of Christ. St. Paul's words were greatly blessed. Some Jews believed, a great multitude of Greek proselytes, many ladies of rank. Those three sabbaths had been wonderfully fruitful; a Church was formed at Thessalonica. 2. *The word "Church."* This is the earliest of St. Paul's extant Epistles; it may be (possibly the Epistle of St. James was written earlier) the earliest of all the writings of the New Testament. Then, if we were to read the New Testament in chronological order, we should meet here with the word "Church" for the first time. St. James (ii. 2) uses the word "synagogue," not "Church." Our Lord, of course, used it earlier. He founded the Church. He had said, "On this rock will I build my Church;" and again, "Tell it to the Church." But the date of St. Matthew's Gospel is probably later than that of this Epistle. The Greek word means simply an assembly, a congregation, as the word "synagogue" means a meeting. It is derived from a verb which means to call out or summon, and is regularly used in classical Greek of the assemblies of citizens summoned by the magistrate in the Greek commonwealths for legislative or other political purposes (comp. Acts xix. 39); sometimes of other assemblies, as of the crowd of artisans collected by Demetrius (Acts xix. 32, 41). It is used of the congregation of Israel in Acts vii. 38; Heb. ii. 12; and sometimes in the Septuagint. The New Testament has taken the word and filled it with a new and holy meaning. It is the assembly which Christ hath chosen to himself out of the world—the flock of Christ. The visible Church of Christ is "a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure Word of God is

preached, and the sacraments be duly ministered according to Christ's ordinance in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same." The great day of Pentecost was the true birthday of the Church; the gift of the Holy Ghost then sent down from heaven knit together the disciples into one body, the mystical body of Christ. St. Luke gives us, in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, a description of the Church at that time. "Then they that gladly received the Word were baptized: . . . and they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." Thus the notes of the Church, according to Holy Scripture, are baptism, fellowship with the apostles, the doctrine of the apostles, the holy communion, public worship. The Church is also one, for it is one body in Christ, united into one fellowship by the indwelling of the one Spirit. It is holy, because it is being sanctified by the Holy Ghost; all its members are dedicated to God in holy baptism; they are all pledged by that dedication to follow after holiness of heart and life. It is catholic, because it is not confined to one nation, like the synagogue, but universal, world-wide, open to all who receive the Word of God. It is apostolic, because it is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief Corner-stone; and because it continues in the doctrine and fellowship of the apostles. It is the bride of Christ. "Christ loved the Church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, that he might present it unto himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but what it should be holy and without blemish." 3. *The Church of the Thessalonians.* Now there was a branch of the one Church at Thessalonica. (1) It was the second Church founded in Europe. The first was at Philippi, a small place, though a Roman colony. Thessalonica was a populous city, the metropolis of Macedonia. God plants his Church everywhere. It embraces all who will accept the gospel—poor and rich, ignorant and learned; it meets the deepest needs of all places alike—the quiet country and the stirring city. (2) It was already organized. It had its ministers (ch. v. 12, 13), and its assemblies for public worship (ch. v. 27). Short as St. Paul's visit was, he had, it seems, ordained elders there, as he was wont to do in every Church (Acts xiv. 23), and had provided for the regular meetings of the brethren. (3) It was in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ. This was its essential characteristic. As Chrysostom says, "There were many *ἐκκλησίαι*, many assemblies both Jewish and Greek. St. Paul writes to that assembly, that congregation, which was in God. It is a high exaltation, above all other possible dignities, to be in God." Thessalonica formerly lay in wickedness, in the evil one (1 John v. 19), in the sphere of his activity. Now, the Church there was in God. The presence of God was the very atmosphere in which the Church lived and moved. It lay in the everlasting arms, encircled with his embrace, guarded by his love. The words imply a close intimate union, an exceeding great depth of love and tenderness, a very great and profound truth, which does not admit of formal definition, and cannot be adequately expressed in language; but it is realized, in a greater or less degree, in the inner life of those true members of the Church who abide in that invisible, but most holy and most blessed, union with the Lord. God had breathed into the Church of the Thessalonians the breath of life—that new life, that eternal life, which consists in the personal knowledge of God. That life is in his Son. Christ is the Life. "He that hath the Son hath life." The Thessalonian Church was in the Lord Jesus Christ, as it was in God. "We are in him that is true," says St. John, "even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." The Church is in Christ, then surely Christ is God. The Church cannot be said to be in any creature; in St. Paul, for instance, or in any other of the holiest saints of God. Such an assertion would be unmeaning, blasphemous. Then in the first verse of the first of St. Paul's Epistles (the least dogmatic, some say, of all his Epistles, possibly the earliest of the New Testament writings), he distinctly teaches the great doctrine of the divinity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. "In Christ," "in the Lord," is a constant formula of St. Paul's; he is never weary of repeating it, never weary of enforcing the great truth that the Christian lives in Christ. Here he asserts the same thing of the Church as a whole. It is in Christ, living in his life, holy in his holiness, strong in his strength, glorious (John xvii. 22) in his glory; the glory of his presence now, the glory of eternal life with him henceforth in heaven. The Church is "in Christ;" its members must strive to realize the blessedness of that holy fellowship in their own individual souls.

Outward membership will not avail for our salvation, unless we abide in living spiritual communion with the Lord.

III. THE SALUTATION. 1. *Grace.* It is one of those words which the Holy Spirit has taken from common use and filled with a sweet and sacred meaning. (1) It is the gracious favour of God which rests upon all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. That favour is essentially free, spontaneous, flowing out of that eternal love which is intimately one with the very being of God. "God is love." It is given in and through the Lord Jesus; it is "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2) It is the gratitude, the spirit of joyful thankfulness, which should be the happy temper of those who believe in the grace of God. (3) It sometimes (as in Col. iv. 6) expresses the sweetness, the winning beauty, the dignified gracefulness of the true Christian character. The grace of God produces thankfulness, and gives grace and beauty to the life. 2. *Peace.* It was the first greeting of the risen Lord to his apostles, "Peace be unto you." It became the apostolic greeting. The Macedonian Churches had little outward peace; they were early called to suffer. They needed that blessed peace which God alone can give. (See homiletics on Phil. i. 2 and iv. 7.)

LESSONS. 1. Imitate St. Paul in his humility. Notice every feature, every manifestation of that great grace; it is hard to learn. 2. The Church, as a whole, is in God; in his guardianship, in his encircling love. We must strive and pray to realize that loving presence individually, to be in God ourselves. 3. Pray that grace and peace may rest on all who bear the Name of Christ.—B. C. O.

Vers. 2—6.—*The apostle's thanksgiving.* I. ITS CHARACTER. 1. *It is shared with his companions.* "We give thanks." The three friends prayed and gave thanks together. It is true that the plural number is characteristic of these Epistles to the Thessalonians; the singular is avoided, it seems, from motives of modesty. But here, immediately after the mention of the three names, it is natural to regard the thanksgiving as proceeding from all. It is a true Christian feeling that draws friends together for religious exercises. The faith, the love, of the one kindles, strengthens, the like graces in the other. The tide of prayer and praise from many hearts flows in deeper, fuller volume towards the throne. And we know that where two or three are gathered together in his Name, there is he in the midst of them. 2. *It is constant.* "We give thanks to God *always*." Thanksgiving is the joy of the redeemed in heaven; it is the outpouring of the Christian heart upon earth. The nearer we can approach to perpetual thanksgiving, the nearer we draw to heaven. "Sursum corda!"—"Lift up your hearts!" is an exhortation which we daily need. May God give us grace to answer daily, hourly, "We lift them up unto the Lord." 3. *It is for all.* The true shepherd knows his sheep; he loves them all, he prays for all. He does not divide them into parties. The closer his own walk with God, the more he is enabled to keep himself apart from and above party divisions. But the infant Thessalonian Church seems to have enjoyed the blessing of unity. It was not, like Corinth, distracted by strife and party feeling. 4. *It accompanied prayer.* Thanksgiving and prayer ever go together. The man who prays earnestly must give thanks, for prayer brings him into the sense of God's most gracious presence; and with that presence cometh joy—joy in the Lord. True prayer must involve intercession, for in answer to prayer the Holy Spirit is given; and the first, the chief of the fruits of the Spirit is love. St. Paul is a remarkable example of perseverance in intercessory prayer.

II. ITS GROUNDS. 1. *His remembrance of their spiritual state.* He was working hard at Corinth; in the midst of his labour, with all its new interests, he remembered without ceasing the Christians of Thessalonica. The care of all the Churches was already beginning to press upon him. He was unwearied in his labours, in his supplications, in his constant thoughtfulness for all the Churches which he had founded, for all the converts whom he had brought to Christ. Mark the extent, the comprehensiveness of his love for souls. 2. *His description of that state.* The Thessalonian Christians already exhibited the three chief Christian graces. (1) Faith, and that not a dead faith, but a faith that was ever working through love. St. Paul remembered their work of faith. Faith is itself a work, the work of God. "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." It is itself a work, and it must work in the soul, for it is an active principle. It cannot exist with-

out working. Its working may not always express itself in outward action; it will do so when possible; but it will be always working in the inner sphere of the heart, producing self-purification, self-consecration, spiritual self-sacrifice. Each step towards holiness is a work of faith, hidden, it may be, from the eyes of men, but seen by him who searcheth the heart. The Thessalonians had shown their faith by their works. (2) Love, the greatest of the three, manifests itself in labour. The word is a strong one; "toil," perhaps, is a better rendering. Toil is not painful when it is prompted by love. True Christian love must lead the believer to toil for the gospel's sake, for the souls and bodies of those whom Jesus loved. The abundance of the Christian's labours is the measure of his love. "I laboured more abundantly than they all" (says St. Paul, 1 Cor. xv. 10): "yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." (3) Hope. The object of the Christian's hope is the Saviour—our "Lord Jesus Christ, which is our Hope." We hope for him—for his gracious presence revealed in fuller measure now, for the blissful vision of his glorious beauty hereafter. That hope is patient. The husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth; the Christian waits patiently for Christ. It works patience in the soul. He can endure the troubles of life who is blessed with the lively hope of the inheritance reserved in heaven. The Thessalonians showed in their lives the presence of this lively hope. All this the apostle remembered without ceasing before God in his prayers and meditations. 3. *His confidence in God's election.* Himself "a vessel of election" (Acts ix. 15), he felt sure that the same gracious choice had rested on the Thessalonian Christians. God had "chosen them to salvation," he tells them in the Second Epistle. St. Paul loves to dwell on the great truth of God's election. 4. *The evidence of that election.* St. Paul finds it: (1) *In the lives of the Thessalonians.* Archbishop Leighton beautifully says, "If men can read the characters of God's image in their own souls, these are the counterpart of the golden characters of his love in which their names are written in the book of life. He that loves God may be sure that he was first loved of God; and he that chooses God for his delight and portion may conclude confidently that God hath chosen him to be one of those that shall enjoy him and be happy in him for ever; for that our love of him is but the return and repercussion of the beams of his love shining upon us." The Thessalonians received the Word; they showed the martyr spirit; they were content to suffer as Christians for the gospel's sake. They had joy amid tears—that holy joy which the presence of the blessed Spirit can give even in the midst of afflictions. They were learning in their own experience the meaning of that seeming contradiction, "Sorrowful, yet always rejoicing." They imitated the holy life of St. Paul, the holiest life of the Lord Jesus Christ. By this patient continuance in well-doing they were making their calling and election sure. (2) *In the energy and success of his own preaching among them.* He had brought them the gospel, the glad tidings of great joy. He had delivered his message with power, with the strength of deep conviction. The Holy Ghost was with him, teaching him what to speak, filling him with a Divine fervour and enthusiasm. His words were more than mere sounds; they were a message full of intense meaning—a message from God. The Thessalonians had felt the power of his preaching; they were his witnesses. This energy was not his own; it came from God; it proved that God was with him; it was a sure evidence that God was blessing the apostle's work; it was given for the sake of the Thessalonians; it surely meant that God had chosen them to be his own.

Learn: 1. To take delight in the spiritual progress, in the faith, hope, love of our fellow-Christians. 2. To thank God for it. 3. To refer all that seems good in us to God's electing grace. 4. To look for the evidence of that election in holiness of life.—B. O. C.

Vers. 7—10.—*The happy results of the conversion of the Thessalonians.* I. THEY BECAME AN EXAMPLE TO OTHERS. 1. *True piety tends to propagate itself.* The Thessalonians had not long embraced Christianity. But they had learned much; they had given their hearts to God. The Macedonian Churches gave St. Paul, from the first, deep and unmingled satisfaction. Thessalonica was the metropolis of Macedonia, the seat of government, a centre of trade. It became a centre of spiritual life. All believers throughout Macedonia and Achaia looked to the Thessalonians. St. Paul was now at Corinth, the chief city of Achaia. The Lord had much people in that city; but there were grave evils at Corinth, many causes for anxiety and distress. St. Paul must

have told the Corinthians often of the simple faith and obedience of the Macedonians. So the Thessalonians became an example to the converts whose lot was cast among the sensual temptations and the intellectual restlessness of the famous Peloponnesian town. The lives of good men are very precious; they are a living proof of the power of God's grace; they are facts which can be seen and tested; facts from which the reality of the forces which are working in the unseen sphere of God's spiritual agency can be inferred with as much certainty as the laws of nature from the facts of observation and experiment. 2. *The Word of God is living and powerful.* The Thessalonians had received it; it was in their hearts and on their lips. As the starry heavens with their silent witness declare the glory of God, so it is with the stars that are in the right hand of the Son of God (Rev. i. 20); their sound goeth forth into all the earth. That heavenly melody was issuing now from Thessalonica. "It hath sounded forth," St. Paul says, like a clear, thrilling trumpet-strain. It hath sounded, and still it sounds, reaching far and wide with its penetrating tones. The conversion of the Thessalonians was known not only in the neighbouring regions of Greece. The glad news had brought joy wherever the gospel had reached. It was not necessary for the apostle to praise the faith of the Thessalonians; men knew it, talked of it among themselves, reported it to the great missionary himself.

II. THE TESTIMONY THAT WAS BORNE TO THE FAITH OF THE THESSALONIANS. Christians talked: 1. *Of the wonderful success of St. Paul's preaching.* Those three weeks (he may have remained there somewhat longer) had been a time of marvellous fruitfulness. It was but an entrance, the time was so short; but what an entrance!—so full of power, so manifestly under the Divine guidance. The three men—Silas, of whom we know so little; Timotheus, shy and timid; Paul, of whom it was said in Corinth that his bodily presence was weak, and his speech contemptible,—they had done wonders in Thessalonica. God was with them plainly; there could be no other explanation of such strange unexampled energy. 2. *Of the change wrought in the Thessalonians.* They turned from idol-worship. The Thessalonian Church was mainly Gentile; there were a few Jews among them, but the Jews as a body bitterly persecuted the infant Church. The gospel was glad tidings indeed to thoughtful Gentiles. The Jews had great and precious truths, though their teachers had well-nigh hidden them under a mass of traditions and idle forms. But what was there in the heathenism of the day on which a thinking man could rest his soul? There were temples everywhere, but what man who felt the yearnings of the human soul for righteousness and God could in his heart reverence the deities who were worshipped there? So the Thessalonians turned from their idols: (1) To serve the living and true God. The Gentiles did not *serve* their gods. It could not be. They admired the temples and the statues as works of art; they regarded their religion as of some political importance, a part of statecraft. But now the converts were ready to *serve* God, for they began to know him. Their idols were dead things; the God whom Paul preached was living, loving, and powerful; they felt his power in their hearts, nay, he was the Life; all life (they knew now) came from him, and was his gift. Their idols were false gods, there was no truth in them; they were images of that which was not; for an idol, as St. Paul taught them, was "nothing in the world." The Thessalonians could see the snowy top of Olympus; the stories of the gods who dwelt there were but idle tales. St. Paul had taught them of the great Creator who is very God, living and true; nay, the one only Source of real life and being. He is the very God, the self-existing One, I AM THAT I AM. There is none other. (2) To wait for his Son from heaven. Hope is the key-note of this Epistle, as joy and faith are of the Epistles to the Philippians and the Romans. St. Paul had taught his converts not only to believe in God the Father who made us, but also in God the Son who redeemed us. He taught them the great truths of the Resurrection and Ascension, the blessed doctrine of the atonement. Some of the Thessalonians, perhaps, had tried to grapple with the dark mysteries of life, sin and misery. St. Paul pointed them to Jesus. "Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world." There is wrath coming in its awfulness; but there is a Deliverer—One who is delivering us now, who is daily delivering us from the power of sin, as we draw nearer and nearer to him; who will deliver us from the punishment of sin, if by the gracious help of the blessed Spirit we abide in him. And this Deliverer is Jesus.

LESSONS. 1. The holy lives of Christian people help the blessed work of saving souls; holy lives are more persuasive than holy words. Let each Christian strive to do his part. 2. We are not in heathen darkness; God has given us the light of his gospel. Let us be thankful, and show our thankfulness in our lives. 3. Wait for the coming of the Lord Jesus; all our hopes are in him.—B. C. C.

Ver. 1.—Introduction. This Epistle has the distinction of being the first in time of all Paul's Epistles. The leading thought, to which there is reference toward the close of each of the five chapters into which the Epistle has been divided, is the *second coming of our Lord*. The first three chapters are personal, setting forth the apostle's connection with the Thessalonians, and interest in them as a Church. In the remaining two chapters he addresses them in view of their condition as a Church, and especially in view of anxiety connected with the second coming. Pleased with the progress they were making, he writes to them in a quiet, practical, prevailingly consolatory strain.

I. THE WRITERS. "Paul, and Silvanus, and Timothy." Paul comes first, as pre-eminently the writer. It can be made out that the matter and style are characteristically Pauline. It speaks to his humility that he does not claim it as his own, that he does not put forward his official position, but associates two brethren with him as joint-writers. These, Silvanus (to be identified with Silas) and Timothy (less prominent at the time), assisted at the founding of the Thessalonian Church. Timothy had just returned from a visit of inquiry to Thessalonica. He therefore claims them as adding the weight of their influence with the Thessalonians to his own. And their place as joint-writers is accorded to them throughout. Only in three places, for a special reason in each case, does he make use of the singular number.

II. COMMUNITY ADDRESSED. "Unto the Church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Thessalonica—so named by Cassander in honour of his wife, who was a sister of Alexander the Great—was well situated for commerce "on the inner bend of the Thermaic gulf—half-way between the Adriatic and the Hellespont—on the sea-margin of a vast plain watered by several rivers," the chief of these being the *Axius* and *Haliacmon*. Under the Romans it became a large, wealthy, and populous city; and was chosen as the Macedonian capital. Its importance has been well kept, up to the present day. Saloniki (slightly altered from Thessalonica) ranks next to Constantinople in European Turkey, with a population of seventy thousand. Paul visited Thessalonica in his second missionary tour, after the rough handling he had received in the other Macedonian city of Philippi. The Jews, being more numerous here than at Philippi, had a synagogue; and in this, Paul, for three sabbath days, reasoned with them from the Scriptures, opening and alleging that it behoved the Christ to suffer and to rise again from the dead, and that this Jesus is the Christ. The result was so far favourable. Some Jews were persuaded, and consorted with Paul and Silas; of the Gentile proselytes attached to the Jewish synagogue, a great multitude, and, among these, not a few chief women. But there was also what was unfavourable. The Jews as a body, being moved with jealousy, took unto them certain vile fellows of the rabble, and raised a tumult against the Christian preachers, which ended in their departing by night for Berea. Paul and his assistants had a *very short time* in which to found a Church in Thessalonica. For three sabbath days Paul reasoned in the Jewish synagogue. We may allow a little longer time for the ripening of Jewish opposition. Short as the time was, they had settled down to supporting themselves by labouring with their own hands. Short as the time was, the Philippian Christians, in their eagerness, had managed once and again to send unto Paul's necessity. What would render the formation of a Christian Church at Thessalonica easier was the number of Gentile proselytes who embraced Christianity. These had received training in monotheistic ideas, and had already the elements of a godly character. But, beyond this, many Gentile idolaters must have been brought in; for the entering in of Paul and his companions was signalized as a turning of the majority of them from idols unto the living and the true God. Under the conditions of time and manual labour and Jewish fanaticism, the founding of the Thessalonian Church was a most marvellous work. So short time with them, Paul wrote to them when he got to Corinth, after visiting Berea and Athens, about the close of the year 52. The Thessalonians are

addressed as a Church, i.e. in their corporate capacity, with corporate responsibilities and privileges, not as saints, i.e. in respect of the consecration of the members individually. They are addressed as a Church in God the Father, i.e. as having all the position of sons. They are also addressed as a Church in the Lord Jesus Christ, i.e. as a Christian family where the sons are all saved men placed under the superintendence of him who has the position of Lord, and distributes to their need.

III. GREETING. "Grace to you and peace." This did not necessarily exclude favour and peace from men, from these persecuting Jews. But whether it had that sweep or not, it certainly meant the Divine treatment of them, not according to merit, but according to infinite mercifulness, and the consequent freeing of them from all disturbing influences. It is what we should invoke for all our friends.—R. F.

Vers. 2—10.—*Manifestation of interest.* I. HOW THEY THANKED GOD FOR THE THESSALONIANS. "We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers." The three Christian preachers away at Corinth, and in the midst of their engagements there, were interested in their Thessalonian converts. They were so interested as to act as *priests* for them. This they did at the throne of grace, praying for them by name, in view of their special needs as a Church. This they would also do unitedly, praying to all the more purpose that they united their prayers; for a threefold cord is not easily broken. Noah, Daniel, and Job in a land may not counteract all wickedness; but Paul, Silas, and Timothy, agreeing as touching what they asked for a progressing Church like Thessalonica, would certainly mean valuable help to them from heaven. Praying, they gave thanks *always*. This designation of time is not to be understood with the utmost strictness. It is prescribed in Exodus that Aaron should bear the judgment of the children of Israel (the Urim and Thummim) upon his heart before the Lord continually, i.e. whenever he went into the holy place to discharge the pontifical functions. So the meaning here is that, whenever these men of God went into the presence of God to discharge the priestly function of prayer for the Thessalonians, their hearts were filled with gratitude for them, which they poured forth in thanksgiving. They gave thanks to God, who had made the Thessalonians a Church, who had blessed them hitherto, and upon whom they depended for future blessing. They gave thanks to God for them *all*. They did not know of any (and their information was recent) who were bringing dishonour on the Thessalonian society. They were all with one heart helping forward the common Christian good.

II. UPON WHAT THEY PROCEEDED IN THANKING GOD FOR THE THESSALONIANS. "Remembering without ceasing." They proceeded in their thanksgivings upon what they remembered of the Thessalonians. The impression produced at the time had not been effaced by fresh scenes, new engagements, the lapse of time. By thinking of them and hearing from them their impression of them had not ceased to be lively. This impression concerned the three Christian graces—*faith, love, hope*. In 1 Cor. xiii. love is placed last, the object being to exalt it, in its permanent value, over the other two. Here, as also in the fifth chapter and in Col. i., and virtually in Titus ii., the natural order is followed, faith manifesting itself in love (Gal. v. 6), and hope rising out of love (Rom. v. 5). Hope is also properly held to come last, as the link between the present and the future. What the Christian pioneers remembered was the practical outcome of each grace. 1. "*Your work of faith.*" In the eleventh of the Hebrews we read of special works which were produced by faith. But the work, in its *totality*, which each man produces, is the life which he lives before the world. And he who believes that there is the eye of the holy, heart-searching God upon him; that he is here to carry out the Divine behests; that according as he does or does not carry out these behests does he lie under the Divine approval or disapproval; that there is a judgment coming which shall prove each man's work of what sort it is;—such a man will surely produce a work very different from him who habitually looks only to the seen and the temporal. The adoption of faith as the principle of their lives meant to the Thessalonians the abandonment of many vices, and the cultivation of sincerity, humility, purity, temperance, and other Christian excellences. 2. "*And labour of love.*" The word translated "labour" approaches the meaning of painful effort. We are not merely to wish well to others and to rejoice in their good;—that implies no *laboriousness* of love. But we are to burden ourselves with the wants of others, and to undertake labours on behalf

of the sick, on behalf of the poor, on behalf of the oppressed, on behalf of the ignorant, on behalf of the erring. The Thessalonian Christians were full of these labours; their Church life had become *one labour of love*, a putting forth of painful effort for each other, without thought of reward, with only the desire to please the Master. It was a labour of purest, freest love, that the Master himself undertook on behalf of those whom he was not ashamed to call his brethren. 3. "*And patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.*" Hope was the characteristic grace of the Thessalonians. It was hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, which is more exactly defined in the Epistle as hope with regard to his coming. It was a hope which burned in them with extraordinary intensity. So eager were they as to the time of its realization that there was a likelihood of impatience being engendered by delay. When the Thessalonians are remembered here for the patience of their hope, we are to understand the brave way in which they maintained the conflict with sin within, and especially with persecution without. It is the hope of victory that sustains the soldier under all the hardships of the march and the dangers of the battle-field. So it was the hope of the infinite compensation that there would be at the coming of Christ that sustained them under the disadvantages of their position. What to them were all that their enemies might inflict on them, when any day Christ might come among them for their deliverance? They could say with their teacher, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed to us-ward." *Additional circumstance.* "Before our God and Father." This points to the solemnity and also the joy of the remembrance. It was in prayer that it took place. It was there before the God of Paul and Silas and Timothy, the Heart-searching One, who could testify that it was no formal remembrance, but was marked by sincerity. It was also before their Father, who, as Infinite Benevolence, regarded it with pleasure.

III. THERE IS NOTED THE FACT OF THE ELECTION OF THE THESSALONIANS. "Knowing, brethren beloved of God, your election." Paul, for himself and his helpers, addresses them as brethren. What they had in common was that they were beloved of God. What marked them as objects of Divine love was their election. This is a word of deep and gracious import, which is more opened up in other places in Scripture. What marked ancient Israel was that they were the election. In succession to ancient Israel, Christians were the election. Among others these Thessalonian Christians had most of them been elected out of heathenism, elected to all the privileges of the new covenant. They owed this their position not to their own merits. It was no doings of their own that brought Christ into the world. It was by circumstances over which they had no control that the gospel was preached to them in Thessalonica. It was not in their own strength that they believed. It was Divine love, then, that gave them their position among the election, and to Divine love was to be all the praise.

IV. PAUL AND HIS HELPERS CAME TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF THEIR ELECTION BY CONSIDERATION OF DIVINE ASSISTANCE VOUCHSAFED IN PREACHING TO THEM. "How that our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; even as ye know what manner of men we showed ourselves toward you for your sake." The gospel is the glad tidings of salvation to all men. It could only be called *their* gospel inasmuch as they used it instrumentally in the conversion of souls. It was Christ who was the great Subject of it. "Neither is there salvation in any other." These three agreed as to the purport of the gospel. It was not different from the gospel as preached by Peter or any other Christian teacher. In dealing with the Jews in Thessalonica, as we learn from the Acts of the Apostles, the gospel proper was accompanied with the producing of proof from the Old Testament Scriptures that the Messiah was to suffer and to rise from the dead; and the fitting into it of other proof that the historical Jesus, who had lately been on the earth, met all the requirements of their Scriptures. But to Jews and Gentiles alike it was the free offer of salvation, based on the great facts of the death and resurrection of God's Son in our nature. This gospel had come to them in Thessalonica; it had providentially been directed their way. It had come to them in word, in the Word preached, and that was a great point gained. "For how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?" But it had not come in word only, but also in power. They felt power descending on them in the delivery of their message. This was nothing else than the assistance of the Holy Ghost. And it was accompanied with the deep assurance that

their message was taking effect. The Thessalonians themselves had the proof of their being men who were divinely assisted toward them. And, as this Divine assistance was granted in their interest, it pointed to their being in the number of the elect.

V. PAUL AND HIS HELPERS CAME TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE ELECTION OF THE THESSALONIANS BY CONSIDERATION OF THEIR POWER OF IMITATION. "And ye became imitators of us, and of the Lord, having received the Word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost." There is a point of *difference*. They *preached* the Word, or rather—for a new aspect is brought up—the Lord in them. It was the Lord's message they delivered; they were the instruments of the Lord in its delivery. It was, therefore, the Lord as well as they, and more than they, in the preaching. On the other hand, the Thessalonians *received* the Word. This is not inconsistent with what is said in the Acts of the Apostles in connection with Berea: "Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the Word with all readiness of mind, examining the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so." For the meaning there is that the Berean Jews were a nobler class than the Thessalonian Jews, which is no reflection on the Thessalonian Christians, who, with few exceptions, were Gentiles. The testimony of this Epistle is that they were a Church peculiarly receptive of the Word. Allowing for this difference which the sense requires, the imitation is to be restricted to the associated circumstances and spirit. "In much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost." It was the Word that gave rise to much affliction. And it is not to be wondered at that, when the light comes into conflict with darkness, this should be the result to those who are associated with the light. In much affliction the three subordinates and the great Superintendent in them drew joy from the Word preached. "Sorrowful, yet always rejoicing," said the greatest of the three. In the same affliction the Thessalonians were imitators, in drawing joy from the Word received. They were not crushed under the affliction, but, imbibing the comfort of the Word, they rose triumphant over it. In both cases the joy, which was not to be thought of as earthly, proceeded from the Holy Ghost dwelling within. This was the second thing that pointed to their election.

VI. THE THESSALONIANS WERE SO GOOD IMITATORS AS TO BECOME AN ENSAMPLE TO OTHERS. "So that ye became an ensample to all that believe in Macedonia and in Achaia." These were the two Roman divisions of Greece. It is implied that the circumstances of the Grecian Churches were similar. To believe was, more or less, to be opposed, to be afflicted. The Thessalonians were an encouragement to the other Churches. Philippians, Bereans, Athenians, Corinthians, might all take heart from the manner in which the Thessalonians triumphed over their affliction.

VII. THERE WAS A WIDESPREAD REPORT REGARDING THESSALONICA WHICH WAS VERY SERVICEABLE. "For from you hath sounded forth the Word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place your faith to God-ward is gone forth; so that we need not to speak anything." This shows how the Thessalonians could be an ensample to so many. There was the condition of *publicity*. In the language which is used, prominence is given to the Word, and it is characterized, not now as "our gospel," but as "the Word of the Lord." From them at Thessalonica the Word of the Lord had sounded forth. The Word of the Lord sounds forth, not merely when we preach it, but also when, as these Thessalonians did, we receive it and allow it to have influence upon our lives. From them at Thessalonica there had been a notable sounding forth. The image employed is that of a trumpet, filling with its clear sound all the surrounding places. Hill and valley, hamlet and homestead, are waked with it. So the gospel-trumpet had been sounded at Thessalonica, and the result is represented as the filling of all Greece with the clear sound of the gospel. Its wakeful sound had reached the important places, not only in Macedonia, but in Achaia. There is suggested by this what the Church has to do for the world; it has to sound the gospel-trumpet, so that, without any hyperbole, the whole world shall be filled with the clear sound of the gospel. The sounding forth from Thessalonica had reached even to places beyond Greece. And, in giving expression to this, Paul, as he sometimes does, gives a different turn to the sentence. We should have expected it to run so as to be complete: "Not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in places beyond." He, however, lays hold on what the Word had notably done for the Thessalonians, viz. made them monotheists, given them faith to God-ward,

and the sentence is made to run: "But in every place your faith to God-ward is gone forth." "The currency of the reports was probably much promoted by the commercial intercourse between Thessalonica and other cities, both in Greece and elsewhere. Wieseler suggests that Aquila and Priscilla, who had lately come from Rome to Corinth (Acts xviii. 2), might have mentioned to the apostle the prevalence of the report even in that more distant city. If this be so, the justice and truth of the apostle's hyperbole is still more apparent; to be known in Rome was to be known everywhere." This may be true, but still it is to be borne in mind that the sounding forth to distant places is rather ascribed to the vigour with which the gospel-trumpet had been sounded at Thessalonica. By the going forth of their faith there was great service done. In preaching the gospel in new places, it was Paul's custom to hold up what it had done for other places. With regard to Thessalonica, he was placed in an exceptional position. In Berea, in Athens, in Corinth, wherever he went, he needed not to labour in language to create an impression of what the gospel had done for Thessalonica. He needed not to say anything, the work being already done for him.

VIII. THE TWO POINTS TO WHICH THE REPORT REFERRED. 1. *The entering in of Paul and his helpers.* "For they themselves report concerning us what manner of entering in we had unto you." This has already been particularized. It was their gospel coming unto the Thessalonians, not in word only, but also in power, and the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance. It was that attested by the Thessalonians. It was the Lord in them preaching the Word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost. Now it is generalized—"what manner of entering in we had unto you." They did not need to enter upon that; the people themselves in the various places came forward with their acknowledgments. This was important to the three ministers; it was a seal to their ministry, it was added influence in the proclamation of the gospel. A minister may well aspire to have such a record. 2. *The response of the Thessalonians.* "And how ye turned unto God from idols, to serve a living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead." This is an expansion of the previous words, "your faith to God-ward." They had been idolaters. This is to be understood of the Thessalonian Church as a whole, which points to its composition. They turned unto God from idols. There is marked their *conversion to monotheism*. They turned from idols "to serve a living and true God." The old translation is better here: "to serve the living and true God." Idols are dead; their living touch upon the soul can never be felt. They turned from dead idols to the living God, the God in whom we live and move and have our being, who giveth to all life and breath and all things. Idols are false and vain, they can do no good to their votaries. They turned from false and vain idols to the true God, who cannot deceive his worshippers, who comforts and cheers them, who is the Rewarder of them that diligently seek him. Turning from idols, they made their life a service of this living and true God—not a dead, make-believe service, but characterized, from its object, by life and truth, a waiting on him to carry out his behests. There is marked their *conversion to Christianity*. They turned from idols to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead. They laid hold on the great Christian fact, that God gave up his Son to die for man. They also laid hold on the other great Christian fact, that God raised him from the dead and raised him to heaven. They further believed, on Divine authority, that God's Son was to come from heaven. Round this their life as a Church very much revolved; they were fascinated by its influence. They waited for his Son from heaven; they lived in daily expectation of his coming. While we are not curious about the time of Christ's coming, let us not lose the influence of the fact of Christ's coming. Let us consider whether we are prepared for his coming. Let us be dead to the charms of the world, dead also to its opposition. Let us take comfort, under present troubles, from this coming (John xiv. 1—3). Let us joyfully anticipate the coming (1 Pet. i. 8). We may well learn from the Thessalonians to give this subject greater prevalence in our thoughts. Let us, like them, be found in the attitude of expectancy. Christ's last message to man is this: "Yes, I come quickly." And the reply which we are expected to make is this: "Amen: come, Lord Jesus." "Even Jesus, which delivereth us from the wrath to come." This is the first of the three references to the wrath of God in this First Epistle to the Thessalonians. It is an element that is more largely prevalent in the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians. It was natural that,

writing so much to the Thessalonians about the second coming, he should introduce the future wrath. The full expression in this place, "the wrath to come," had already been used by one who could preach the terrors of the Law. When the Baptist saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said unto them, "Ye offspring of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" Paul, standing after the great Messianic manifestation, could say more definitely and mildly, "Even Jesus, which delivereth us from the wrath to come." (1) *The reality of the wrath.* By the wrath of God we are to understand the disposition which leads him to inflict punishment for sin. It cannot be said of God that he is wrathful, or that wrath is the predominant feature in his character. For "he delighteth in mercy;" but "judgment is his strange work." When men put themselves in opposition to God, while he is displeased, he is also grieved. We read of the grieving of the Spirit; of Christ, while looking round on his audience with anger, being grieved at the hardening of their hearts. Even when God, from necessities of government, may have to remove the reprobate from his presence, there is not wanting the tone of indignant rebuke, "Cast ye out the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness: there shall be the weeping and gnashing of teeth." But with this righteous indignation there is no mingling of malice, but only a feeling of infinite reluctance to resort to such a measure with any of his creatures. It is supposed to be derogatory to the Divine character that there should be wrath in the heart of God at all. But how is he to regard sin? Is sin to be committed under his government, and no notice to be taken of it, especially when it is of the very nature of sin to strike at the Divine government? Such an idea would certainly be repudiated in connection with human government. Or are we to suppose that he can become accustomed to the sight of sin, so as not to heed this sin or that sin in the great multitude that are committed every day upon this earth? But God can never see sin to be other than it really is. It stands out before him in all its details and in all its vileness, as that which interferes with his government, thwarts his holy ends among men. And as he has taught us to flash out in anger against wrong-doing, so we must believe that his own soul flashes out in anger against wrong done to his government. But we must exclude from the Divine out-flashing such inequality as attaches to human outflashing. The Thrice-holy One never knows the perturbing influence of passion; sin is not felt more keenly at the first, and less keenly when time has exerted its away—it is ever unchanged before his mind. He continues unsatisfied, and the fire burns within him against it, until it is removed out of his sight. So far from wrath being derogatory to God, it must enter into a right conception of the Divine character. It is necessary to the consistency of the Divine character. To favour the following of a certain course, and yet to view with indifference the following of an opposite course, is simply characterlessness. According to the ardour with which we regard one course must we burn against its opposite. We must think of God as infinitely favouring righteousness; and he would not be true to himself if his feelings did not infinitely burn against iniquity. According as he is attracted to the pole of holiness, so powerfully must he be repelled from the opposite pole of sin. Even under the New Testament economy it is said that "our God is a consuming fire." More prominence is given to this in the Old Testament, but it is a necessary conception of God, that, as he is consumed with zeal for the cause of truth and love, so he is a consuming fire to all that is opposed to it. There is a certain course which he favours—which he puts forward as obligatory. He gives us every encouragement to follow this course; it is the consuming desire of his heart to see it followed by us. This may be said to be the course of humble dependence upon him. If we follow this course, he is pleased, and he marks his pleasure, by making our humility return in liberty and happiness upon ourselves. But if we wilfully assert our independence and follow our own course, then God will make our wilfulness recoil in bondage and misery upon our own souls. Wrath is even necessary to our rising to a proper conception of the *Divine compassion*. We miss what the Divine compassion is, unless we first apprehend ourselves as objects of the Divine wrath. "That heathen antiquity had no idea of God's love is attributable to the fact that it had no living conviction of the world being under God's wrath. Plato and Aristotle rise only to the bare representation of God as being a jealous God; and men who in our day speak of dispassionate love rise no higher than they." (2) *The time to which the wrath is referred.* The wrath to come is the disposition of wrath in its future manifestation.

It is in the next world that it is to come to its full manifestation. Even now God manifests his displeasure against sin. The Flood was an early and signal instance of God's wrath burning against a wicked world. And the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah was another signal instance of God's wrath burning against wicked communities. But under the present order of things God does not ordinarily deal with man in unmixed wrath. He has ends of redemption in view. And, though he does give experience of judgment that men may not be forgetful of him, still he mingles mercy with judgment. And usually he gives us to experience far more mercy than judgment, that thereby he may commend redemption to us. He exercises wonderful forbearance toward us, that thereby he may win us over to himself. Thus it is that meantime there is no adequate impression given of the punitive justice of God. We do not see punishment following always upon sin. We do not see punishment proportioned to sin. The more hardened in sin men are, the more may they escape present punishment. It does not yet appear what God's displeasure against sinners is, any more than it yet appears what his love to his people is. There are hindrances which prevent a full manifestation in both cases. In the next world these hindrances will be removed, and then it will be seen clearly how God views every one who through a period of grace continues to oppose himself to Divine love. The sins of this life, unforgiven, will cry unto God; and his wrath, no longer restrained, will go forth. There are things for which, it is said in the Epistle to the Ephesians, the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience. There is a certain open defiance and forgetfulness of God (encouraging to ungodliness) which in a special manner attracts the Divine judgment. But it is true of a sinful life as a whole, that what there is in it of resistance to God draws down on it, when the time comes, the Divine wrath. This is to be at the day of judgment, which is called "the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God." Then there will be a righteous summing-up of the life lived on earth as a whole; and the wrath that descends will exactly indicate what God's estimate of the life is. That there will be retribution, and retribution exactly proportioned to each life, some being punished with few stripes and others with many stripes, is most certain. We cannot define with exactness the manner and contents of the retribution. The language employed in Scripture is sufficiently fitted to create alarm: "But unto them that are factions and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, shall be wrath and indignation, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that worketh evil." What is at first the assertion of independence toward God, will become, retributively, hindrance and bondage in complete subjugation and environment by God. What is, in its working, excitement and self-gratification, will become, retributively, in the distraction of the mind, in the upbraidings of conscience, a feeling of anguish. There is thus before the life of sin a dark future. "There remaineth a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries." And the life of sin is not to be judged by what it is at present in its licence and excitements and restraint of judgment, but is to be judged by what it is to come to. It is in the next world that the nothingness and wretchedness of a life of sin will be fully evidenced. And what a powerful deterrent is this to continuing our resistance to Divine grace! (3) *The Deliverer from the wrath to come.* This is the gracious side which is now presented in the gospel. We must think of the wrath to come, in order that we may properly conceive of the Deliverer. He is appropriately called Jesus. "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for it is he that shall save his people from their sins." Here it is saving from the wrath of God on account of their sins. We read of heroes of antiquity who were renowned for delivering countries from the monsters with which they were infested. The New Testament tells of One who delivers from the evil most to be feared of man—the wrath to come. It is not to be understood that Jesus *did* deliver (on the cross) or *will* deliver (at the last day), but rather that it is his *office* to deliver. This is the great part which he performs for men; it belongs to Jesus to deliver from the wrath to come. This office entailed on the Holder of it infinite self-abnegation. "The Son of God, . . . even Jesus." And, as the Son of God, he had to begin by laying aside his Divine glory, not counting it a prize to be clutched at by him. And he came down into our nature, that he might receive into himself the wrath due to our sin. He became the great vessel of wrath. What should have been poured into us

was poured into him. Thus the Deliverer is the greatest of all sufferers. He is one who has marks of mysterious sorrow and anguish upon his nature. And that shows how far it is from being according to the heart of God to make men miserable, to send wrath upon them. He interposes between the sinner and the results of his sin in this great Deliverer sent forth from his own bosom. He says, "Save from going down to the pit, for I have found a ransom." Rather does he inflict wrath upon his Son than inflict it on us. So far as his doing is concerned, he has removed the wrath to come—he has made it non-existent. Is that not proof, the most conclusive, that wrath is most abhorrent to him, that in his heart of hearts he wishes us to escape from wrath, wishes to make us all happy? (4) *Our relation to the Deliverer.* It is said here, "which delivereth us from the wrath to come." And the context shows that the reference is to *believers*. All are welcome to come into a saving relation to Christ; but, as a matter of fact, all do not come. In Thessalonica there were many to whom the gospel of deliverance came, who, in their idolatrous life, thought it an idle tale. There were some who, tired of their idolatrous life, welcomed the thought of deliverance, and gave a ready ear to the apostle when he told them of Jesus "which delivereth from the wrath to come." And there are many still in our more enlightened times who treat wrath and deliverance from it as an intrusion. The great work which Jesus accomplished has no interest to them. They like to go on in their own self-pleasing way, heedless of the issues. There are others, and these are the believers, who are unsatisfied in a life merely in the present. They are anxious to know how they are to meet the eternal issues. And feeling unable to do this themselves, as guilty before God, they shelter themselves in Jesus, "which delivereth from the wrath to come." Taking him as their Representative, entering into the full benefit of his deliverance, the future is relieved to them, and, for the first time, they breathe freely as in the atmosphere of heaven. Out of Christ the wrath to come is still a reality, and a reality which has been made more dreadful to those who refuse to escape from it. In Christ let us take the comfort of our position, let us dismiss our fear of future wrath; and let us remember him to whom we owe our escape, and let us prove our gratitude by a life of loyalty to our Deliverer.—R. F.

Ver. 8.—Works of grace. In writing to the Corinthians St. Paul singles out three Christian graces for supreme honour—faith, hope, and love. Here he selects the same three graces, but not simply to praise them for their own inherent merits. They are now regarded in their energetic operation, as powers and influences; and the fruits of their activity are the subjects of the apostle's thankful recognition. He makes mention in prayer of the *work of faith and labour of love and patience of hope*.

I. CHRISTIAN GRACES ARE ACTIVE POWERS. They are beautiful in themselves, but they are not to exist solely for their own beauty. Flowers are lovely, but the object of the existence of flowers is not that they may dream through the summer hours in their loveliness, and then fade and wither and die. They serve an important end in the economy of plants by preparing fruit and seeds. 1. The active operation of Christian grace *glorifies God*. While dwelling only in the depths of the soul, quiescent and secret, they do not show forth the glory of God. "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit" (John xv. 8). 2. The active operation of the Christian graces is a *means of benefiting our fellow-men*. Faith, love, and hope are not given to us for our own enjoyment only. They are aids for our mission in life—the mission of serving God by serving mankind. We must let them have their perfect work, that this mission may be fulfilled. 3. The active operation of the Christian graces is a *proof of their vital health*. "Faith apart from works is barren" (Jas. ii. 20). By the fruits they bear we know how far we have the graces within us.

II. CHRISTIAN GRACES HAVE THEIR SEPARATE SPHERES OF ENERGY. 1. *Faith has its work.* When we both believe and actively trust in the helps of the Unseen, we are encouraged to use them, and when we yield ourselves in faith to the will and law of the Unseen, we learn to obey the authority above us. Hence the work of faith. This is characterized by decision—it is no wavering, hesitating, intermittent activity—by calmness and by energy. 2. *Love has its labour.* Labour is harder than work. It implies great effort, toil, and trouble. Love goes beyond faith and undertakes greater tasks. But with love "all toil is sweet." An enthusiasm amounting to passion characterizes

this activity and distinguishes it from the sober work of faith. Love to God and love to man are necessary for the hardest work. It was not mere faith, it was love, that inspired the awful toils and sacrifices of Christ. 3. *Hope has its patience.* This is the passive fruit of Divine grace. It is not therefore the less important, nor does it therefore show the less energy. We need strength for endurance as much as strength for action. Christian hope manifests its energy by unflinching perseverance in spite of present crosses and distresses.

III. CHRISTIAN GRACES MUST CO-OPERATE FOR THE RIPENING OF THE FULL CHRISTIAN LIFE. St. Paul rejoices that all three of the primary graces were in active operation in the Thessalonian Church. Characters are too often one-sided. Faith is hard if love is wanting. Love is weak and wild if it is not supported and guided by faith. Hope is an idle dream without these two graces, and they are sad and gloomy if they are not cheered by hope. As the cord is far stronger than the separate strands, faith, hope, and love united produce energies many times greater than the results of their individual efficacy. The perfect Christian character is the character that is developed into rich fruitfulness on all sides. All the colours in the bow must blend to produce the pure white of saintliness.—W. F. A.

Ver. 5.—*The dynamic gospel.* If we may illustrate spiritual truths by describing them in the terminology of physical science, we may say that the great mistake which the Church, as well as the world, has been making over and over again is that of treating the gospel statically instead of dynamically—as a settled creed to be embraced in its rigid form rather than as a power to be submitted to in its progressive influence. But it is evident that the apostles cared not one straw for their preaching except in so far as it was the vehicle of Divine energy. They taught the truth, not as professors of metaphysics in a college, but as workmen who were bringing a new force to bear on the reconstruction of society.

I. IT IS VAIN TO RECEIVE THE GOSPEL IN WORD ONLY. 1. It may be *published*. A heathen country may open its ports to missionaries. Bible societies may circulate the Scriptures through every country and hamlet. Preachers may never cease to expound it. And all this will be as nothing for the spiritual welfare of people who will not hear, understand, believe, and submit to the truth. 2. It may be *heard*. Crowds may flock to the churches. Attentive congregations may hang upon the lips of popular preachers. And still no good may be done while the truth is not understood, believed, and obeyed. 3. It may be *understood*. The meaning of the language used may be intelligible enough. People may give themselves the trouble of thinking out the subjects presented to them by the preachers. Still all is vain if the gospel is not believed and submitted to. 4. It may be *believed*. The truth may not be doubted. We may have a certain conviction of it, and yet even this may count for nothing without the faith that accepts the influences and follows the directions of the gospel. There is a world of difference between believing the gospel and believing in Christ; at least, in the only way in which this is of practical importance, viz. as a trustful acceptance of his grace and a loyal devotion to his will. So long as we come short of this we may have the gospel, but it will be “words, words, words”—the letter that killeth, not the spirit that quickeneth.

II. THE GOSPEL MAY BE RECEIVED IN POWER. This very statement seems to strike some people who have long been familiar with the words of the gospel as a new revelation, as itself a fresh gospel. But we have to learn the power as well as the truth of the gospel if it is to be of any real good to us. 1. The operation of the power of the gospel consists in *changing the hearts and lives of men*. The gospel does not simply promise future salvation. It effects present regeneration. The new birth is the essential beginning of redemption. Nothing but a power, vast, overwhelming, penetrating, and omnipotent, can make new creatures of old, stubborn profligates and hypocrites, men of the world, and self-righteous Pharisees. 2. The secret of the power of the gospel is in the *baptism of the Holy Spirit*. The new man is “born of the Spirit” (John iii. 5). Christ is “the Power of God,” because he baptizes with the Holy Spirit (Matt. iii. 11). Christ expressly connected the power of apostolic preaching with the gift of the Holy Spirit: “Ye shall receive power, when the Holy Ghost is come upon you” (Acts i. 8). Preachers need this to give force to their words, and hearers to receive the truth effectually. 3. The sign of the power of the gospel will be *much assurance*. The

faith which grows out of experiencing this power will be much stronger, more vivid, and more joyous than that of first believing the truth of the gospel.—W. F. A.

Ver. 6.—Affliction with joy. The Christians of Thessalonica had no sooner accepted the gospel than they were attacked with swift, sharp persecution; and it is to be remarked that, while in other places the apostles were often assailed and the converts spared, here the full force of the assault fell on the infant Church (Acts xvii. 5—10). St. Paul frequently refers to the sufferings that so quickly tested the faith of this brave Christian community at the very commencement of its new life (ch. ii. 14; iii. 2—5). But in spite of persecution a peculiar joy seems to have possessed the Church at Thessalonica. The Epistles to the Thessalonians are to be distinguished for hearty congratulations and a spirit of gladness. Here is an apparent paradox, which, however, when regarded from a higher standpoint, resolves itself into a spiritual harmony.

I AN EARTHLY PARADOX. St. Paul was much inclined to the use of startling paradoxes. His vigorous mind seemed to delight in facing them. Thus his style is rugged with great contrasting ideas. 1. *The gospel does not prevent affliction.* To the Thessalonians it was the means of bringing suffering. Christians often suffer more of earthly trouble, rather than less, than others (Heb. xii. 8). Though the gospel is good news, and though it brings gladness to the soul, it may be ushered in with storms and sufferings in the outer life. This might be expected, seeing that it is in conflict with the prince of this world. 2. *Affliction does not prevent the experience of the joy of the gospel.* In spite of much affliction, the Thessalonians had joy. The world sees only the outside. Hence its common verdict that religion must be melancholy. It can see the flaming fagots; it cannot see the exultant heart of the martyr. It is a great truth to know that, when God does not remove trouble, he may give us such gladness of heart as shall entirely counteract it. Surely it is better to rejoice in tribulation than to be sad in prosperity.

II THE SPIRITUAL HARMONY 1. *The affliction is external, while the joy is internal.* The two belong to different spheres. It would be impossible for one and the same person to be in temporal prosperity and adversity at the same moment, or to be at once in spiritual sunshine and under spiritual clouds. But it may well be that, while the earthly sun is shrouded in gloom, the heavenly sun is shining in full splendour. 2. *The affliction comes from earthly causes, the joy from heavenly.* Men persecute, the Holy Spirit inspires joy. Here are different sources of experience, and accordingly the experiences differ. 3. *The affliction rather helps the spiritual joy than otherwise.* It prevents men from looking to external things for comfort. It enables them to see that true joy must be inward and spiritual.

In conclusion, observe that affliction is no reason for the rejection of the gospel, since this is not therefore the less true, and it claims to be received on its truth, not on our pleasure, and also because the joy it brings will not be lessened by any external trouble.—W. F. A.

Ver. 8—How the Word is sounded forth. **I. THE NEED OF SOUNDING FORTH THE GOSPEL.** This is a fine expression, "sounded forth;" not merely whispered in the ear, but proclaimed far and wide, with a fulness, a richness, and a power that command attention. Such is the proclamation that the royal message of the gospel deserves. 1. *The gospel comes from God.* It is not like the composition of an obscure man. If God opens his mouth, surely his words must be worthy of publishing in trumpet-notes. 2. *The gospel is for all men.* It is not a secret doctrine for the cultured few. All the world needs it, all the world has a right to have it. Therefore it should spread over wide territories and penetrate to remote districts. The alarm-bell must be resonant, the bugle-call must be clear and piercing, the shepherd's voice must be high and full that the wandering sheep may hear it and return to the fold. 3. *The gospel is conflicted by other voices.* Men are preoccupied. The din of the world renders them deaf to the message from heaven. The world will not lie in solemn stillness to hear the angels sing. The sound of the gospel must go forth so that deaf ears shall be unstopped, and walls of prejudice fall flat like those of old Jericho at the trumpet-notes of Israel's priests.

II. THE METHOD OF SOUNDING FORTH THE GOSPEL. 1. *It must be sounded by living men.* A written gospel is not enough. Soul must stir soul. 2. *It must be sounded*

in the conduct of Christians. It would seem that St. Paul was thinking rather of the influence of the heroic endurance of the Thessalonians and of their spiritual prosperity than of the missionary labours of evangelists sent out by them, for he writes of how they became an ensample to all that believe in Macedonia and in Achaia, and how in every place their faith to God-ward was gone forth. The loudest, clearest, most eloquent, most unanswerable proclamation of the gospel is the unconscious testimony of Christian living. 3. It may be sounded forth with redoubled energy from the midst of affliction. The troubles endured by the Thessalonians tested and revealed their faith, and so led to the fuller proclamation of the gospel. "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church." Men never preach Christ so perfectly as when they die for him. The torch that kindled Latimer's sagots at Oxford kindled a glorious fire of reformation throughout England. 4. It can be sounded forth with greatest effect from central positions. Thessalonica was the capital of Macedonia. What happened there was not done in a corner. Christian testimony witnessed at this great centre would spread far and wide. It is our duty to establish Christian influences in prominent places. While not boasting of our own doings, and not letting our left hand know what our right hand doeth, we should still not hide our candle under a bushel, but so let our light shine before men that we may glorify our Father which is in heaven, and remember that, if a city which is set on a hill cannot be hid, it is most important that the light of the gospel should shine from such a place.—W. F. A.

Vers. 9, 10.—The great change. The Thessalonians were converted heathens. To them the blessedness of the gospel would be largely measured by its contrast with the darkness of paganism. In Christendom the language descriptive of the acceptance of the spiritual blessings of the gospel would, of course, be different. But little else than the language; and with the essential, spiritual signification of it, even this would scarcely need altering. St. Paul regards the great change in two aspects, present and future.

I. THE PRESENT ASPECT OF THE GREAT CHANGE. "Ye turned unto God from idols, to serve a living and true God." 1. *It is emancipation from an evil service and enlistment in a good service.* In the old condition a man is a servant, of idols, of sin, of passion, of the world, of Satan. He thinks himself free, but he is really a miserable slave. In the changed condition the Christian is freed from this thralldom. But he is not the less a servant. He no longer serves in hard bondage. Love is his chain, and free devotion his service. Still he serves. 2. *It is the giving up of death and falsehood and the acceptance of truth and life.* (1) The idol is lifeless. All worldly, sinful living is a devotion to lifeless gods, to mere material things that perish in the using. The Christian serves a living God, who can give vital grace, accept loving devotion, and commune with his people. (2) The idol is false. Idolatry is a lie. All earthly things when exalted into gods become unreal and only mock their devotees. God is real, and he only can be rightly served in spirit and in truth. We come to reality, to fact, to truth, when we come to God.

II. THE FUTURE ASPECT OF THE GREAT CHANGE. 1. It consists in a *turning from wrath*. Whether we anticipate it with fear, or delude ourselves in the dream of evading it, or simply ignore it with stolid indifference, the fact remains that for all of us, while in our sins, there is a certain looking for of judgment. It we are children of sin we must be children of wrath. It is no small blessing to be able to face the future and to see that reasonably and righteously all the horror of Divine wrath is gone in the free pardon of sin. It is like turning one's face from the lowering thunder-cloud to the silver light of sunrise. 2. *It leads on to an anticipation of the coming glory of Christ.* All the early Christians were much occupied with this anticipation, but none more so than the Thessalonians. The hope of the Parousia is an ever-recurrent theme in the two Epistles of St. Paul to this Church. His own mind must also have been very full of it when he wrote these letters. In their immediate expectation—at least, as far as a visible appearance and triumph of Christ was concerned—the first Christians were disappointed. But the great promises still cheer us as we wait for the glory that is reserved in the future. The Christian conversion thus not merely results in a deliverance from wrath; it inspires a grand hope and promises a rich glory in the days to come.—W. F. A.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER II.

CONTENTS.—Paul turns from the reports of others to the experience of the readers. They themselves knew that his entrance was not powerless; although maltreated in Philippi, he was emboldened to preach the gospel at Thessalonica. His preaching did not proceed either from delusion on his part or from a desire to delude others. He felt approved by God, and was actuated by no improper motives: he sought neither their praise nor their money; so far from insisting on his apostolic rights, he was gentle among them, and conducted himself with the tenderness of a nursing mother toward her children; and so far from his ministry being a pretext for covetousness, he had laboured for his own support; and thus he could confidently appeal to the Thessalonians as witnesses of the blamelessness of his conduct. And as his entrance among them was not powerless, so he thanked God that it resulted in their reception of the gospel; they had embraced it as the word of God, and had not shunned persecution for its sake; they had in this become the imitators of the Churches in Judæa. The apostle then alludes to his earnest desires to see them; twice he had attempted to come to Thessalonica, and twice he had been prevented by the machinations of Satan. They were very dear to him—the objects of his tender affections, and the source of his rejoicing before the Lord Jesus Christ at his coming.

Ver. 1.—For yourselves, brethren; in contrast to other persons. Not only do strangers report the power and efficacy of our preaching among you, but you yourselves are experientially acquainted with it. Know our entrance in unto you; referring, not merely to the mere preaching of the gospel to the Thessalonians, but to the entrance which the gospel found into their hearts—to its coming, not in word only, but also in power (ch. i. 5). That it was not in vain; not empty, useless, to no purpose,—descriptive of the character of the apostolic entrance among them. Our entrance among you was not powerless, unreal; on the contrary, it was mighty, energetic, powerful. The reference is chiefly to the manner or mode in which Paul and his companions preached

the gospel, though not entirely excluding the success of the gospel among the Thessalonians (comp. 1 Cor. xv. 14, "And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain").

Ver. 2.—But even after we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated. As the word here rendered "suffered before" does not in itself imply that the sufferings were unjust, the apostle adds, "and were shamefully entreated." As ye know, at Philippi. We are informed, in the Acts of the Apostles, that Paul and Silas were publicly scourged and cast into prison; and scourging with rods was regarded as an ignominious punishment, and therefore was forbidden to be inflicted on Roman citizens, such as Paul and Silas were. "They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison" (Acts xvi. 37). We were bold in our God to speak unto you. The word here rendered "bold" denotes boldness or freedom of speech; and hence some render the clause, "We were bold of speech in our God, so as to speak unto you" (Ellicott). Perhaps, however, as the verb "to speak" follows, it is better to render the clause, "We were confident in our God to speak;" or "emboldened to speak" (R.V., "we waxed bold"). This boldness or confidence was in our God, that is, on account of our fellowship or union with him. The gospel of God. The genitive of origin, denoting, not merely that God was the Object, but that he was the Author of the gospel. With much contention; or, in much conflict (R.V.), alluding to the peril and danger with which Paul preached the gospel in Thessalonica.

Ver. 3.—For our exhortation. This word has a twofold signification, denoting both "exhortation" and "consolation;" when it refers to the moral conduct it denotes exhortation, but when it is an address to a sufferer it denotes consolation. In the gospel these two meanings are blended together. Was not of deceit. Not in the sense of guile, which would be tautological, but simply "error," without any direct evil intent; our gospel was not a delusion—we were not ourselves deceived. Nor of uncleanness; a word usually employed to denote sensuality, and in this sense the meaning is—We did not, like the heathen in their worship, give occasion to unclean practices: "We have corrupted no man" (2 Cor. vii. 2). The word, however, may be taken in a more general sense, as denoting impurity of disposition, impure motives: such as the impure desire of applause or of gain, to

which the apostle afterwards alludes. Or of guile. As we were not ourselves deceived, so neither did we attempt to deceive others. The apostle did not adapt his religion as Mahomet, to suit the prejudices or passions of men; he did not employ any seductive or temporizing arts; but he boldly went in the face of the prevailing religions of the age, both of the Jews and of the Gentiles.

Ver. 4.—But; in contrast. As; according as. We were allowed. The old English for “approved.” Of God. The word rendered “allowed” signifies tried, tested as gold is tested in the fire, and hence also the result of that trial, “approved.” As we were esteemed worthy to be put in trust with the gospel; entrusted with its publication. Even so; in this condition of approval and trust. We speak, not as pleasing men, but God, that trieth. The same verb that is rendered “allowed” in the first part of the verse; hence “proveth,” or “approveth.” Our hearts. Not a general statement, “God who is the Discerner of the heart;” but “our hearts,” namely, of us, the publishers of the gospel—Paul and Silas and Timothy; thus appealing to God, as the infallible Judge of their sincerity.

Ver. 5.—For; confirming the statement that the preachers of the gospel did not seek to please men, but God. Neither at any time used we flattering words; endeavouring to gain you by flattery and praise; we did not pander to your feelings; we did not soften the demands of the gospel. As ye know, nor a cloak—or pretext—of covetousness. We did not use the gospel as a pretext to mask our real motive, which was covetousness, pretending to seek your spiritual good, whereas in reality we sought our own advantage. Paul could with perfect confidence appeal to his converts, and say, “I have coveted no man’s silver, or gold, or apparel” (Acts xx. 33). He was free from all sinister motives. “He did not use words such as flattery uses, or pretexts such as covetousness” (Jowett). God is witness. Paul appeals to the Thessalonians themselves that he had not used flattering words; so now he appeals to God that the motive of his conduct was not covetousness. Men can judge the external conduct, they can hear the flattering words; but God only can know the motive of action—he only can discern the covetousness.

Ver. 6.—Nor of (or, from) men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome. These words admit of two meanings. The apostle may refer to his refusal to seek maintenance from the Thessalonians, and in this sense become a burden to them. But such a meaning does not suit the context; and besides, this refusal of maintenance is after-

wards alluded to by the apostle. The reference here is not to maintenance, but to glory: we did not seek glory from you, when we might have been burdensome, when we might have done so. Hence the word is to be taken in the sense of honour, importance; when we might have claimed honour. As—in virtue of our character as—the apostles of Christ. Paul does not speak of himself alone, but he includes Silas and Timothy, and therefore the word “apostles” is to be taken, not in its restricted, but in its wider meaning.

Ver. 7.—But. The apostle now describes his conduct positively. We were gentle; a word used of the amiable conduct of a superior toward an inferior, as of a master toward a servant, a prince toward his subjects, or a father toward his children. “The servant of God must not strive, but be gentle toward all men” (2 Tim. ii. 24). Some manuscripts read, “We were babes among you”—the difference being only the addition of another letter. Among you; in our intercourse with you. Even as a nurse; or rather, a nursing mother, for the children are her own. Cherisheth; the word employed for birds warming and cherishing their young. Her children. A stronger expression of tenderness and love could hardly be made. Even as a nursing mother dedicates her life for her infant; so, says Paul, we are willing to dedicate ourselves for you. Some important manuscripts read the verse thus: “But we were babes among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children;” but this arises from an obvious error of the transcriber.

Ver. 8.—So being affectionately desirous of you; a strong expression in the original: “being filled with earnest love for you.” We were willing. The word denotes a pre-determination of the will: “we esteemed it good.” To have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls. An evident climax: not only were we willing to preach the gospel of God to you, but more than this, to sacrifice our own lives for your advantage. The word here rendered “souls” denotes lives; and the meaning is that the apostle was willing to submit to death for the sake of the Thessalonians. The plural “we” still implies Paul and Silas and Timothy. The thought is—As a nursing mother not only nourishes her children, but is also ready to sacrifice her life for them; so the apostle not only nourished his spiritual children with the pure milk of the gospel, but was ready to sacrifice his own life for their spiritual maintenance; thus expressing in the strongest manner the womanly tenderness of the apostle toward his converts. Because ye were dear unto us.

Ver. 9.—For; a proof or confirmation of this deariness of the Thessalonians to the apostle. Ye remember, brethren; recalling to their recollection his conduct when he was with them. Our labour and travail. These two terms frequently occur together (2 Cor. xi. 27; 2 Thess. iii. 8), and can hardly be distinguished; "labour," or "toil," is active, denoting exertion; "travail" is passive, denoting weariness or fatigue, the effect of the exertion. For labouring; in its strict meaning chiefly used of manual labour. Paul here refers to his working for his own support as a tent-maker. Night and day. Night precedes according to the Jewish mode of reckoning. It does not denote that the apostle made up by labour at night the loss of time during the day which his higher duties as a preacher of the gospel, occasioned that he wrought at his trade at night, and preached during the day; but the phrase, "night and day," denotes incessantly, continually. Because we would not be chargeable to any of you. Not a proof of the poverty of the Church of Thessalonica; but the reason of this unselfish conduct of the apostle was that no hindrance should arise on his part to the spread of the gospel; that no imputation of selfishness or covetousness should be laid to his charge. As he had done at Thessalonica so the apostle acted in other places. Thus at the time he was writing this Epistle he was working for his support at Corinth (1 Cor. iv. 12; 2 Cor. xi. 9). And such was also his practice at Ephesus: for in his farewell address to the Ephesian elders he could appeal to them. "Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me" (Acts xx. 34). We preached unto you the gospel of God. Thus freely, without charge.

Ver. 10.—Ye are witnesses, and God also; ye of the outward conduct, and God of the motives which actuated us. How holily and justly and unblamably; "holily" denoting the apostle's conduct to God, "justly" his conduct to man, and "unblamably" the negative side of both particulars. We behaved ourselves among you that believe. The apostle here refers to his own personal demeanour and to that of Silas and Timothy among them, in order that the Thessalonians might realize the purity of their conduct, and so might continue steadfast in their attachment to the gospel which they taught. He mentions specially "them that believe," not that he acted otherwise among those that did not believe, but because believers were cognizant of his conduct.

Ver. 11.—As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children. The translation of this verse is somewhat faulty; it

ought to be, as in the R.V., *as ye know how we dealt with each one of you, as a father with his own children, exhorting you, and encouraging you, and testifying*. Paul here changes the image from that of a nursing mother to that of a father; because then he was speaking of his tender care for his converts, whereas here he speaks of the instructions and admonitions which he gave them; as a mother he nourished their spiritual life, and as a father he superintended their spiritual education. "Exhorting and comforting and charging;" representing three modes of the apostle's instructions: "exhorting" denotes also encouraging and consoling; "comforting" denotes supporting and sustaining ("Comfort the feeble-minded," ch. v. 14); and "charging" denotes testifying or protesting—a solemn pressing home of the exhortation to the hearers.

Ver. 12.—That (or, to the end that) ye would walk worthy of God; so as to adorn the gospel of God. So in the Epistle to the Colossians: "That ye would walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing" (Col. i. 10). Who hath called you; or, as the best attested manuscripts read, *who calleth you*. To his kingdom and glory. Not to be weakened as if it were a Hebraism for "his glorious kingdom," or "the kingdom of his glory;" but the kingdom and glory are to be viewed as two different objects. "God called you to his kingdom," namely, the Messianic kingdom which he has established on earth; and which will be completely realized at the advent. And "God called you to his glory," namely, the glory which is in reserve for all the members of his kingdom.

Ver. 13.—For this cause. Not because God has called you to his kingdom and glory, but, referring to what follows, because of your reception of the gospel. We thank God. Although the reception of the gospel was in one sense the free and voluntary act on the part of the Thessalonians; yet in another sense it was the act of God who ordained them to accept the gospel; their belief was an operation of God in them. Without ceasing, because, when ye received the Word of God which ye heard of us; literally, *because when ye received from us the Word of hearing, which is of God*. The gospel is called "the Word of hearing," because it came by hearing; hence "the Word heard," or "the Word of the message" (R.V.). It is further designated "of God"—the Word whose Author is God. Ye received it not as the word of men—as if it were of human origin—but as it is in truth, the Word of God—of Divine origin—which effectually worketh. The pronoun may refer to God, "who effectually worketh," or better to the Word of God, as the principal subject of the sentence. Also in you that believe. The gospel

was powerful as respects the preachers, and effectual as respects the hearers.

Ver. 14.—For ye, brethren, became followers; or rather, *imitators*, namely, in the endurance of suffering for the sake of the gospel, not in intention only, but in reality. Of the Churches of God which in Judæa are in Christ Jesus. These Churches are mentioned as being at this early period the most prominent. The special mention of persecution by the Jews has its origin in the fact that it was by the unbelieving Jews that Paul was persecuted at Thessalonica. For ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen. One of the proofs that the Church of Thessalonica was Gentile in its origin; as these countrymen were evidently Gentiles, being here distinguished from the Jews. From this it would seem that, after Paul and his companions had left Thessalonica, the persecution which arose against the Christians continued, and the Gentiles combined with the Jews in opposing the gospel. Even as they—the Churches of God in Judæa—have of the Jews. We learn from the Acts of the Apostles that the Jewish Christians in Judæa were exposed to severe persecution from their unbelieving countrymen: Stephen was put to death, and Paul himself, in his unconverted state, was a chief among the persecutors.

Ver. 15.—Who both killed the Lord Jesus; emphatic, to point out the greatness of their wickedness. And their own prophets; or, as some manuscripts read, *and the prophets*. This crime was often laid to the charge of the Jews: thus, by our Lord, "Ye are witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets" (Matt. xxiii. 31); and by the protomartyr Stephen, "Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted?" (Acts vii. 25.) And have persecuted us; literally, *driven us out*, as Paul and Silas were expelled from Thessalonica. And they please not God, but are contrary to all men. The hatred and contempt which the Jews bore to other nations is noticed by Tacitus, Juvenal, and other heathen writers. Thus Tacitus writes of them: "They are faithful to obstinacy, and merciful toward themselves, but toward all others are actuated by the most irreconcilable hatred (*odium humani generis*)."

And Juvenal says, "They will not show the road to one who was not of their religion, nor lead the thirsty person if uncircumcised to the common spring." Perhaps, however, the apostle refers here, not to the enmity of the Jews to the human race in general, though perfectly cognizant of their bigotry and intolerance; as this enmity was a perversion of their peculiar distinction as the people of God; but rather to their opposition to his preaching the gospel to

the Gentiles—to their extreme reluctance that the Gentiles along with themselves should be admitted into the kingdom of God.

Ver. 16.—Forbidding us—by contradicting, blaspheming, slandering, laying snares—to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved. Not that the Jews were averse to the proselytism of the Gentiles, provided they were circumcised and kept the Law of Moses; on the contrary, Judaism at this period was a proselytizing religion; but their great objection to the preaching of the gospel was that the preachers did not insist on the Gentiles becoming Jews before they became Christians. And, accordingly, we learn from the Acts of the Apostles that the unbelieving Jews were the most violent and implacable enemies of the gospel. Of the numerous persecutions mentioned in the Acts, there were only two, namely, those at Philippi and Ephesus, which were not occasioned by the Jews. To fill up their sins *always*; so that the measure of their iniquity became full to overflowing. Their forbidding the apostles to preach to the Gentiles was the last drop which caused the cup of their iniquity to overflow (comp. Gen. xv. 16, "The iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full"). The remark of Professor Jowett is well worthy of notice: "In the beginning of sin and evil it seems as if men were free agents, and had the power of going on or of retreating. But as the crisis of their *few* approaches, they are bound under a curse and the form in which their destiny presents itself to our minds is as though it were certain, and only a question of time how soon it is to be fulfilled." For the wrath; that wrath which was predicted and merited by them. "Wrath" is here used for punishment, which is the effect of wrath. Is come upon them to the uttermost; literally, *to the end*. The apostle here refers to the judgments of God, which were impending on Jerusalem and the Jewish people; judgments which were fearfully executed in the awful sufferings they endured in the Jewish war, and in the destruction of their city by the Romans.

Ver. 17.—Here a new chapter ought to have commenced, passing on to another subject, the apostle's desire to visit the Thessalonians. But we, brethren, being taken from you; literally, *being bereaved of you* (R.V.). For a short time; literally, *for the space of an hour*. And yet it was several years before the apostle revisited Thessalonica; but he here speaks of the short period—a space of six months—which had already separated them; not, as some suppose, that his mind was so full of the ideas of eternity that he overlooked all

divisions of time. In presence, not in heart. Similar expressions are common in Paul's Epistles, denoting his love for his converts; thus: "Though I be absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in the spirit" (Col. ii. 5). Endeavoured the more abundantly to see your face with great desire; because our separation has been so short. As has been well observed, "Universal experience testifies that the pain of separation from friends and the desire to return to them are more vivid, the more freshly the remembrance of the departure is on the mind" (Lünemann).

Ver. 18.—Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul. Paul distinguishes himself, because in all probability his companions, Silas and Timothy, had been at Thessalonica after he had left it. Once and again. Not used indefinitely, but referring to two separate attempts which Paul made to revisit the Thessalonians. But Satan hindered us; denoting, not the enemies of Christianity, but the devil, the author of all the hindrances in the kingdom of God. Paul here recognizes the personality of Satan, as the author of all evil, the great opponent of God and Christ. We are not informed by what instrumentality this hindrance of Satan took place. It may refer to the various persecutions against Paul, which prevented him returning to Thessalonica, and especially to that persecution raised against him in Berea by the Jews of Thessalonica (Acts xvii. 13). In one

sense, indeed, the hindrances arose in the way of God's providence, for under its direction all the journeys of Paul were placed, and Satan could not have hindered him from preaching the gospel in any quarter, unless by the Divine permission (comp. Acts xvi. 7; Rom. i. 13).

Ver. 19.—For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? or, *glorifying*. The apostle calls the Thessalonians his "hope," not because he anticipates any reward from their conversion, or because their conversion would counterbalance his former persecution of the Christians, but because he hoped to meet them in glory; he calls them his "joy," because he would rejoice with them in their final salvation; and he calls them his "crown of rejoicing," because he regards them as trophies of the victory of the gospel which he preached. Similarly he calls the Philippians "his joy and crown" (Phil. iv. 1). Are not even ye; or rather, are not ye also?—ye as well as other Christians? In the presence of—before—our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming; at the restoration of his Messianic kingdom.

Ver. 20.—For ye are our glory and joy. Some refer this verse to the present, and the former verse to the future; not merely at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but even now ye are our glory and joy. But there is no reason for this distinction; the words are merely confirmatory, and added from the fulness of the apostle's emotions.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 5, 6.—*Motives of action*. Man judges us by our outward conduct; God by our internal disposition. The apostle appeals to God as a witness of the purity of his motives. He asserts that he was free from all desire of personal fame or interest. Can we make the same appeal and the same assertion? 1. Are we influenced by unworthy motives? Is covetousness, the desire of fame, or the love of power, the mainspring of our life? 2. Or are we influenced by worthy motives? Do we seek to please, not man, but God? Is the glory of God in Christ Jesus the chief end of our life and actions?

Vers. 7, 11, 19.—*The true pastorate*. 1. *Its qualities*. Paul compares himself to a nursing mother and a father. A minister should resemble the one in his tenderness and loving sympathy, and the other in his wisdom and firmness. 2. *Its mode*: exhorting, comforting, and charging. 3. *Its reward*: (1) conversion of the hearers; (2) a joyful meeting with them at the coming of the Lord.

Ver. 12.—*Our high and holy calling*. We ought to walk worthy of God, so as: 1. To obey God's laws. 2. To imitate God's moral perfections. 3. To enjoy God's fellowship. 4. To adorn God's gospel. 5. To promote God's cause. 6. To live to God's glory.

Ver. 13.—*The gospel a Divine revelation*. 1. *Negatively*. The gospel is not the word of man; not the result of man's wisdom; does not spring from a development of human thought; its doctrines are not within the sphere of the human intellect. 2.

Positively. The gospel is the Word of God. This seen from its origin, its contents, and its efficacy.

Ver. 16.—*Beware of opposing the gospel.* The Jews did so. They endeavoured to prevent the apostle preaching to the Gentiles, and wrath came upon them to the uttermost; and so will all opposition made to the gospel terminate (Ps. ii. 6, 9). If we ourselves will not embrace the gospel, let us beware of throwing obstacles in the way of those who would. Especially let parents beware how they act toward their children when under religious impressions.

Ver. 18.—*The opposition of Satan to the gospel.* "Satan hindered us."

I. THE PERSONALITY OF SATAN. Christ and Satan, the heads of two opposite empires—the one the kingdom of light, and the other the kingdom of darkness; the one the source of all that is good, and the other the source of all that is evil.

II. THE AGENCY OF SATAN. He hindereth the spread of the gospel. He worketh in the children of disobedience. Mode of his operation; the instruments which he employs.

III. THE FINAL VICTORY OF CHRIST OVER SATAN. Though Satan hindereth the gospel, yet it is only for a season. "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under our feet shortly" (Rom. xvi. 20).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—4.—*Effectiveness of the gospel. Entrance into Thessalonica.* It was not necessary, however, to depend upon foreign testimony for the facts of the case, for the Thessalonians themselves were the best witnesses. "For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain," but an effective living reality, a great and gracious success. The proof of the fact is contained in two circumstances.

I. THE BOLDNESS OF THE THREE PREACHERS. "But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much conflict." The insulting treatment the apostle had received at Philippi had not the effect of scaring him away, or of leading him to withdraw into Asia, leaving Europe to its fate. Such treatment would have deterred men of a different stamp. His boldness was not mere stoical courage, but based on faith, for he was "bold in our God," and was equal to present perils as well as to past persecutions; for he spoke the gospel of God "in much conflict," caused, as we know, by the league of violence which the Jews of Thessalonica formed with "lewd fellows of the baser sort" against the gospel.

II. THE SPIRIT AND METHOD OF THEIR MINISTRY. "For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile." The matter is exhibited first negatively, and then positively. 1. *Negatively.* His persuasive exhibition of the truth was not (1) "of deceit." He was not deceived himself—he had not "followed cunningly devised fables"—neither did he design to deceive others, for he preached the truth as it is in Jesus. Therefore there was all the greater force and fervour and directness in his teaching. (2) "Nor of uncleanness." There were no impure or sinister ends in his teaching, implying love of gain; nor any disposition to tolerate those subtle forms of temptation which sometimes manifest themselves even under the guise of piety. (3) "Nor in guile," for he was straightforward and sincere in his methods, with "no cunning craftiness," no manoeuvres, no strategy; for they had "renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the Word of God deceitfully" (2 Cor. iv. 2). 2. *Positively.* The method of his preaching met with the Divine approval. "But as we were approved of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, who trieth our hearts." (1) The gospel is a solemn trust, a rich treasure. There are many human trusts which men would rather shrink, but the apostle is not unwilling to accept this trust for the good of the world. (2) He claims no independent worthiness for so sacred a trust. God gave him any worthiness or sufficiency he possessed. "Our sufficiency is of God, who also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament" (2 Cor. iii. 5, 6). (3) He discharged his trust (a) with a perfect disregard for men's opinions about him (1 Cor. iv. 3); (b) and with no desire to catch the favour of men. "Not as pleasing men;" for "as of sincerity,

as of God, in the sight of God, speak we in Christ" (2 Cor. ii. 17). Not sacrificing truth to the fancies or prejudices of men in order to secure their favour. If "he pleased men, he should not be the servant of God" (Gal. i. 10). (4) He had supreme and final regard to the all-seeing God, "who trieth the hearts," who knows the springs of all actions, discovers all artifices, and brings all hidden things to light. Men look on the outward appearance. God "spares all beings but himself that awful sight—a naked human heart." He "seeth not as man seeth." It is vain, therefore, to appear other than we are.—T. C.

Vers. 5-8.—*The spirit and method of apostolic labour.* The apostle sets it forth under two aspects

I. **NEGATIVELY.** "For neither at any time were we found using words of flattery, as ye know; nor a cloak of covetousness, God is witness; nor seeking glory of men." 1. *The apostle and his colleagues did not attempt to win their way by flattery*, either by setting forth high views of human nature, or by holding men's persons in admiration for the sake of advantage. for their gospel tended rather to humble man and subdue his pride. Flattery is a gross dishonour both to God and man, for it implies untruthfulness and may become fatal in its results to easily deluded sinners. The apostle appealed to the Thessalonians in confirmation of his statement. 2. *They did not use their position as a cloak of covetousness*, as God could testify, who knows the heart. The apostle might say now as he afterwards said to the elders of Ephesus, "I coveted neither silver, nor gold, nor apparel." The false teachers were chargeable with covetousness, for "through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you" (2 Pet. ii. 1, 3). How emphatically the apostle insists upon ministers of the gospel being free from this vice! "Not greedy of filthy lucre." 3. *They were not fond of vain-glory.* "Nor seeking glory of men, neither from you, nor from others, when we might have been burdensome as apostles of Christ," or might have stood on their dignity as apostles of Christ. There is no allusion here to his claim to ministerial support, but rather to the position of magisterial dignity he might have assumed, with all its pomp and peremptoriness and sternness. His spirit at Thessalonica was not that of lordship over God's heritage.

II. **POSITIVELY.** "But we were gentle in the midst of you, as when a nurse cherisheth her own children." 1. *They were gentle in their intercourse with their converts*; unassuming and mild, with no haughty or imperious airs, challenging honour and homage. They acted in the very spirit of the good Shepherd. Long afterwards the apostle could remind one of his present colleagues that "the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle to all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves" (2 Tim. ii. 24-26). This gentleness, which is at once a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. v. 22) and a characteristic of the "wisdom from above" (Jas. iii. 17), becomes all the more impressive when it is linked with the highest strength of character. 2. *They were most affectionate in their intercourse with their converts.* "Even so, being affectionately desirous of you, we were well pleased to impart to you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were become very dear to us." (1) Their yearning love was manifest: (a) In their imparting the gospel to them. As their spiritual parents they travailed in birth till Christ was formed in them, and then they fed them thereafter with the sincere milk of the Word. (b) In their readiness to risk their lives for the sake of their children in the faith. They verily carried their lives in their hands. (2) This apostolic solicitude on their behalf sprang out of their deep love for the Thessalonians, as being at once the trophies of their ministry, and as being pre-eminently docile in their attitude toward the gospel and its preachers. There is hardly any stronger tie in this world than that which links together a spiritual father and his converts.—T. C.

Ver. 9.—*A retrospect of his disinterested and self-sacrificing labours.* He next recalls the circumstances of his ardent and laborious ministry amongst them. "For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: working night and day, that we might not burden any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God."

1. **THE MINISTRY OF THE APOSTLE WAS ALWAYS LABORIOUS.** He could say to the Corinthians that "he had approved himself as the minister of God in labours;" that "in

labours he was more abundant" (2 Cor. vi. 4, 5; xi. 23); exhausting his strength daily in his eager anxiety to reach the people with the gospel of God. If ever man went to the edge of his possibility, it was the Apostle Paul. The labour might be exhausting in itself, or on account of the obstacles thrown in his way, but it became the habit of his daily life.

II. IT WAS DOUBLY LABORIOUS AT THESSALONICA ON ACCOUNT OF THE NECESSITY HE IMPOSED UPON HIMSELF OF WORKING FOR HIS LIVING. Occupied in preaching or teaching through the day, he devoted his nights to his craft as a tent-maker. 1. *The necessity in question was not imposed by either the Mosaic or the Christian Law.* He showed to the Corinthians that alike natural justice, the Mosaic ordinance, and positive law, as announced by our Lord himself, required them to support the ministers of the gospel (1 Cor. ix.). "They who preach the gospel shall also live of the gospel." 2. *It was a necessity based upon a high Christian expediency.* At Corinth he thought good "not to use his power in the gospel," and therefore preached the gospel there "without charge." The malignity of Jewish enemies led him to avoid even the appearance of covetousness, or of attempting to "make a gain" of the Corinthians. We do not know under what circumstances he was led to pursue a similar course at Thessalonica. It may have been from similar accusations, or from a tendency he had observed among certain saints in the city to forswear work and go about as "busybodies." But his policy was exceptional, and affords no rule in modern times unless the circumstances should again become exceptional. 3. *It was a necessity cheerfully accepted for the good of the Thessalonians.* He had but two means of support in the city. (1) He was not supported by supernatural means, like Elijah in the desert. (2) He was occasionally helped by the thoughtful kindness of the Philippians. "I robbed other Churches," he tells the Corinthians, "taking wages of them to do you service." He tells the Philippians, "For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again to my necessities" (Phil. iv. 15—17). (3) He had to supplement these occasional gifts by "working with his own hands." Every Jew had to learn a trade. The apostle thus dignifies common industry.—T. C.

Vers. 10—12.—*Appeal alike to man and to God respecting his personal and his official work at Thessalonica.* This double appeal attests his profound sincerity.

I. CONSIDER HIS PERSONAL DEPORTMENT. "Ye are witnesses, and God, how holily, and justly, and unblamably we behaved ourselves among you that believe." He touches on the twofold relationship of the Christian life toward God and toward man, for he had always exercised himself "to have a conscience void of offence toward man and God," and strove "to give no offence in anything, that the ministry be not blamed" (Acts xxvi. 16; 2 Cor. vi. 3). He had striven to walk circumspectly in a world prone to suspect sinister ends even in the best of men. The apostle's walk was on high, even as his calling was high.

II. CONSIDER HIS OFFICIAL DEPORTMENT. It was manifest in his method of dealing with his converts, and in the end which he kept steadily in view in all his ministry. 1. *His method of dealing with his converts.* "As ye know how we exhorted and comforted, and testified to each one of you as a father doth his children." (1) Mark the varieties in his mode of dealing with his converts. (a) He exhorted them, for their position of persecution and temptation demanded that he "should give them much exhortation" (Acts xx. 2). (b) He comforted them, in the presence of many disquieting circumstances in their condition. (c) He testified to them, exhibiting gospel truth with all urgency. (2) Mark the affectionate spirit of his dealing with them: "As a father doth his children;" for he combined a father's unwearied love with his power of direction and authority. (3) Mark the individualizing interest in their welfare: "Each one of you." Whether they were rich or poor, few or many, he passed by none of them. They all had a place in his heart. 2. *The aim of all his affectionate and individualizing interest in their welfare.* "That you would walk worthy of God, who calleth you into his kingdom and glory." The duty here enjoined, "Walk worthy of God." This implies (1) conformity to his revealed will; (2) adornment of the gospel by a holy walk; (3) supreme regard to the obligations involved in the high calling of God—these being necessitated by (a) the nature of the call, which is not external, but spiritual; (b) by the consideration of him who calls us; (c) by the holy ends of the call; (d) by the consideration of their high destiny: for they are called to "his own

kingdom and glory." This kingdom is that which is established in the mediation of Christ, into which we enter by the gate of regeneration, and which reaches its full and final development in the second coming of Christ. The glory is that which he impresses upon his people here, and which receives its full manifestation hereafter.—T. C.

Ver. 13.—*The Thessalonian reception of the truth.* The apostle had spoken of his own part in the work of grace; he now speaks of the manner in which his converts accepted the truth. "Ye are my witnesses; now I am yours." His immediate ground of thankfulness was that they had received, not man's word, but God's, and that the Word was so thoroughly efficacious. "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because when ye received the Word of God which ye heard of us, ye received not the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God."

I. THEY APPRECIATED THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE WORD OF MEN AND THE WORD OF GOD. 1. *They first heard it no doubt with interest and docility of spirit.* "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." The Word was not read but heard in the preaching of the apostles; it was no discovery of their own mind. 2. *They received it as an external fact made known to them by man.* 3. *They welcomed it with the inner acceptance of faith.* It was "mixed with faith in them that heard it" (Heb. iv. 2). It was "the joy and the rejoicing of their heart" (Jer. xv. 16). 4. *Their glad acceptance of it was conditioned upon its Divine origin.* It was not man's word, representing a new speculation in philosophy or ethics; it was "the Word of God" (Rom. x. 14). It was therefore (1) an infallible Word; (2) bearing the impress of Divine authority; (3) and therefore to be received with reverence and love.

II. THEY MANIFESTED THE POWER OF THE TRUTH IN THEIR LIVES. "Which effectually worketh also in you that believe." 1. *This effectual operation is conditioned upon their faith.* "The Word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it" (Heb. iv. 2). The gospel is only to the believer "the power of God to salvation" (Rom. i. 16). 2. *Its power was manifest in quickening, enlightening, sanctifying, and comforting* under all afflictions and persecutions.—T. C.

Ver. 14—16.—*The evidence of the effectual working of the Divine Word.* They were able to imitate the patience and constancy of the Judæan Churches under great persecutions. These Churches were referred to probably because they were the oldest Churches, and the most severely persecuted.

I. IT IS A HIGH HONOUR AS WELL AS PRIVILEGE FOR CHURCHES TO BE SELECTED AS PATTERNS OF PATIENCE TO OTHER CHURCHES. "For ye, brethren, became followers of the Churches of God which in Judæa are in Christ Jesus." We are first to be imitators of Christ, then of all who follow in his steps, who keep on "looking to Jesus" (Heb. xii. 2). There were many Churches in Judæa, for Christianity was founded by Jews; its first converts were Jews; its first martyrs were Jews; and the Churches among them rejoiced in the fellowship of Christ, as the Source of their life and comfort.

II. THE PATH OF THE THESSALONIANS WAS ONE OF SEVERE TRIAL AND CONTINUOUS PERSECUTION. "For ye also have suffered like things from your own countrymen, even as they from the Jews." 1. *They had received the Word "in much affliction."* (Ch. i. 6.) The first outbreak of violence against them occurred after their conversion (Acts xvii. 5). They belonged to one of those Churches of Macedonia of which the apostle long afterwards wrote to the Corinthians as "enduring a great trial of affliction." It came from their heathen countrymen. 2. *Their trials attested the genuineness of their conversion.* The heathen would have had no quarrel with a dead faith. The Thessalonians did not "sleep as did others." They discovered by sharp experience that "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. iii. 12). 3. *Their trials involved the precious experience of a "fellowship in Christ's sufferings."* (Phil. iii. 10.) 4. *Their trials manifested at once the strength of their faith and their Christian constancy.*

III. IT WAS SOME COMFORT TO THE THESSALONIANS TO KNOW THAT THEY WERE NOT THE ONLY SUFFERERS FROM THE FURY OF PERSECUTORS. "Even as they have of the Jews: who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and drave us out." This terrible invective against the Jews illustrates the saying that the apostle often "goes off at a word." It recalls the language of Stephen before his murderers (Acts vii. 52). The malignity of the Jews against their believing countrymen was

extreme. 1. *The Jews were murderers of Jesus and the prophets.* Though the Saviour was executed by the Romans, the responsibility of the terrible deed rests on the Jews, who "for envy" delivered him up, and "killed the Prince of life." They likewise killed their own prophets, whose very sepulchres they afterwards built and garnished. What wonder, then, that the Thessalonian converts should escape! 2. *The Jews, though zealous for God, did not please him.* "They pleased not God," but rather provoked him to anger by their unbelief and their wickedness. 3. *They were at cross-purposes with all mankind.* They were "contrary to all men." They were anti-social, exclusive, and bitter, so that the heathen Tacitus could describe them as "holding an attitude of hostility and hatred to the human race." But it was specially manifest in their resistance to the calling of the Gentiles—"forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved." The Acts of the Apostles supply abundant evidence of this fact. 4. *The end to which all this wickedness toward God and man was tending.* "To fill up their sins at all times." (1) God often allows nations to complete the sum of their wickedness before bringing upon them final retribution. "The iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full" (Gen. xv. 16). (2) The judgment upon the Jews was at hand—"but the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost." "There is now nothing between it and them." The destruction of Jerusalem was still future, but "the days of vengeance were already come." The fire was already burning, which would never be quenched till the vengeance was complete. The apostle seems to regard the moment of the rejection of the Messiah as marking the outpouring of the Divine wrath. The history of the Jews from that moment is a significant commentary on the passage.—T. O.

Vers. 17, 18.—*The apostle's anxiety to visit the Thessalonians.* His departure had been very sudden, but he had never ceased to regret his separation from them.

I. HIS GRIEF AT THE SEVERANCE OF PERSONAL INTERCOURSE WITH THEM. "But we, brethren, being bereaved of you for a short season in presence, not in heart." The term is expressive of the orphan-feeling felt by children deprived of their parents, or of parents bereaved of their children. He seems to say like Jacob, "If I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved." 1. *His grief was a proof of his deep affection for them.* Grace intensifies all right human affections. 2. *Absence, instead of weakening, rather strengthened his desire to see them again face to face.* Neither time nor distance could diminish his interest in them.

II. THE SEPARATION WAS IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWED BY SEVERAL ATTEMPTS TO REVISIT THEM. "We endeavoured the more exceedingly to see your face with great desire." The difficulties were great, but he tried once and again to get back to Thessalonica, probably in the period when Silas and Timothy were temporarily gone from him.

III. THE OBSTACLES TO HIS RETURN. "But Satan hindered us." 1. *The apostle believed in the existence of a personal evil spirit* as well as in his steadfast resistance to the kingdom of God in all its interests. He was "not ignorant of Satan's devices." 2. *The obstacles may have arisen through Satan inciting evil men to raise conflicts and tribulations round the apostle,* so as to allow of no leisure for the projected visit.

IV. THE GROUND OF HIS ANXIETY TO REVISIT THEM. "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye before our Lord Jesus at his coming?" He did not desire to have his labour in vain. 1. *They were closely identified with his own future honour and happiness,* by the hope that they would not be "ashamed at Christ's coming," but would be "his joy and crown of rejoicing." He would then "rejoice in the day of Christ that he had not run in vain, neither laboured in vain" (Phil. ii. 15, 16). Therefore he longed to be near to them that "he might impart to them some spiritual gift," and watch over the walk of his spiritual children. 2. *His wish implies* (1) that there will be degrees of glory in heaven according to the measures of a minister's usefulness; (2) that he will be able to identify his converts in heaven.—T. O.

Vers. 1—12.—*The characteristics of St. Paul's preaching at Thessalonica.* I. APPEAL TO THE RECOLLECTION OF THE THESSALONIANS. 1. *His first appearance among them had not been in vain.* Others had borne witness to its results. That testimony was true;

the Thessalonians knew it themselves. The apostle appeals to them in all the confidence of Christian simplicity. Perfectly sincere and single-hearted himself, he knew that as a body they had appreciated the purity of his motives. They could bear testimony (he knew that they would gladly do so) that his preaching from the beginning had not been empty talk, but full of energy and life and fire. It is a blessed thing, this mutual confidence between a pastor and his flock. 2. *His previous sufferings had not abated his zeal.* He had been cruelly treated at Philippi; he bore the marks of the lictors' rods when he entered Thessalonica. It did not damp his ardour. His Lord had endured the cross, despising the shame, for the joy that was set before him. For the same joy, the great joy of saving souls, St. Paul was content to suffer, and, if need be, to die. Troubles soon came upon him in Thessalonica. He preached amid much conflict, but he was full of courage. 3. *His courage was of God.* We were bold in our God. It was he who gave them boldness, he who taught them what to speak; they felt that it was not they, but the Spirit of God who spoke in them. They abode in him, in his encompassing, irradiating presence, within the sphere of his gracious influence; hence came their utterance, their boldness of speech. 4. *For their gospel (our gospel, he calls it in ch. i. 5) was the gospel of God.* They were the messengers, but he had given the message. It was his glad tidings; it came from him, and it brought tidings of him, of his will, of his justice, of his love; it told men of a Creator, a Saviour, a Sanctifier. It was a high mission to preach that blessed gospel; the sense of its unspeakable preciousness inspired their burning words.

II. WHAT THEIR PREACHING WAS NOT. The Jews had tried to poison the minds of the Thessalonians against the apostle; they imputed low, earthly motives to him. St. Paul repudiates their insinuations. 1. *There was no mixture of selfish motive.* Their preaching was not of error or of deceit. They were not deceived themselves, they did not deceive others. They did not belong to the crowd of wandering impostors like Simon Magus, or Elymas the sorcerer. They knew certainly the truth of their mission. St. Paul had seen the Lord; what he delivered to the Thessalonians he had first received of the Lord. He knew this from the sure evidence of experience. His own truthfulness was manifest; the mighty change that had come over his life, the greatness of his sacrifices proved it. There was no uncleanness (as, perhaps, some of his enemies maliciously suggested), no impurity of any kind, attaching to his exhortation or his conduct. None who knew him could charge him with such things. But a life of self-sacrifice for the sake of souls was unexampled. He was the first missionary who had traversed Asia Minor, and now came to Europe for that lofty purpose. The mass of men, whether Jews or heathens, could not understand his noble character; it was high above them. They judged him by themselves. They were incapable of such self-denial for the sake of others; they could not believe in it; they had no faith in love, in purity, in high religious motive. Such a life, too, if real, if genuine, was a rebuke to them. It angered them. They could not bear to think of its contrast with their own life; it was like light and darkness. And so they believed, or forced themselves to believe, that it was not genuine. A true life like St. Paul's seemed to them above human nature—impossible, inexplicable. And they said that it was not true; they attributed his actions to vulgar motives, to low selfish designs. 2. *There was no covetousness.* His life was not one of pretences, fair words serving to conceal the covetousness which (so said his enemies) was his real motive. But his treasure was in heaven. He had suffered the loss of all things for Christ. He had in him a hidden treasure, a pearl of great price, for which he was content to count all else as loss. He could not covet earthly gold who had the true riches. But he had to endure this among other slanders. It was said of him at Corinth (2 Cor. xii. 17; vii. 2). He was obliged to take with him delegates of the Churches to assist him in the administration of alms, that he might avoid blame (2 Cor. viii. 20, 21). What a sad proof of the meanness of human nature that such a motive should be attributed to such a man! 3. *There was no desire of glory.* They did not seek to please men, but God. They knew that God tried the hearts, and, knowing that, they sought only to approve their inner and outer life to him. We labour, said St. Paul (2 Cor. v. 9), it is our ambition to be well pleasing unto him. God had proved them; he had entrusted them with the gospel. It was a high privilege. St. Paul counted it so; he magnified his office. He sought for nothing else. The great work of winning souls was, he well knew, of all works the

highest and the noblest. God was proving their hearts now. He, the Searcher of hearts, knew their work through and through. He knew the inner life of thought and motive, as well as the outer life of word and action. They fully recognized this great truth. They knew that their motives were pure and unselfish. God knew it too. It was all they wanted. They sought not praise of men. They had no pleasure in flattery; they did not flatter others. That the Thessalonians knew. God knew the purity of their motives. "God is witness," they could say. How blessed that life must be which could thus appeal to his all-seeing eye! They were apostles of Christ; St. Paul in the highest sense, Silvanus and Timotheus in the more extended meaning of the word. St. Paul may, indeed, be using the plural number of himself only; more probably in this place he includes his companions. They might have claimed honour for themselves; they might have made men feel the weight of their apostolic dignity. But they sought not glory from men. They had overcome that temptation which is so strong in most men, the "last infirmity of noble minds," the desire of earthly glory.

III. WHAT THEIR PREACHING WAS. 1. *They were gentle.* There is very strong manuscript evidence for *ἡμῶν*, babes. If that is the true reading, St. Paul means that their character was one of childlike simplicity, free from selfish motives; they were babes in malice, but men in understanding (1 Cor. xiv. 20). But "gentle" suits the context better. "The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men." St. Paul adduces the most touching type of human tenderness—the nursing mother cherishing her own children, warming them in her bosom. Such had been his gentleness among his children after the faith. He had sought to win them by gentle words. He had told them of the gentleness of Christ. He had set before them the attractive picture of the Saviour's tender love. Gentleness wins more hearts than sternness. The apostle knew the terrors of the Lord. He could remind his converts of the awful things beyond the grave. "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ." But he knew that love is a more powerful motive than fear. "Perfect love casteth out fear." The cross of Jesus Christ draweth all men to the Saviour, because it is the manifestation of that love that passeth knowledge—the love of Jesus Christ. 2. *They were actuated by the strong love of souls.* The Thessalonians had become very dear to them. They had not known them long, but they recognized them as sheep of that little flock which the Lord Jesus bids those who love him to feed for his love's sake. Thus loving them, they were affectionately desirous of their salvation. They were ready to give them not only the blessed gospel, but their own selves, their own lives, in humble imitation of the good Shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep. They had exposed themselves to the greatest dangers for the work's sake; for that work they were ready, if need be, to die. The love of souls is the essential requisite for real success in the sacred work of the ministry. Other qualifications may win the praise of men; but the true work of winning souls can be wrought only by those who have learned from the blessed Saviour something of that holy love which burned in the sacred heart of Jesus. 3. *They were absolutely disinterested.* They would not be burdensome to their new converts. The Philippian Church had twice sent help to the apostle during his residence at Thessalonica (Phil. iv. 16). That help he had accepted; it was unasked, freely given. He welcomed it for the sake of the givers, as an evidence of their love. But the gifts, though very precious as a proof of Christian charity, were probably small in themselves; the Philippian Church was very poor. It seems also to have been a season of scarcity; times were bad. The missionaries had to labour for their livelihood. St. Paul's craft, weaving tent-cloth of goats' hair, was hard, wearisome, ill-paid work. He had to labour night and day. Yet he achieved those great results. He had but the sabbath to himself. Three sabbath days he spent in reasoning with the Jews, and preaching Jesus in the synagogue at Thessalonica; other days he had to work, to work hard and long, for his daily bread. The Greeks despised manual labour; they called it vulgar; they left such work to slaves. The apostle teaches by his own example the dignity of honest labour, the dignity of true Christian independence. Probably the Thessalonians could have helped him. "Not a few of the chief women" had become Christians. They must, one thinks, have been willing. St. Paul must have had reasons for declining their aid, as he afterwards declined the aid of the Corinthians (2 Cor. xi. 9, 10). How these thoughts increase our admiration of the great apostle! Amid all these difficulties, all these cares, all this engrossing labour, he preached with power, with perseverance,

with success such as only an ardent love of souls, only the presence of God the Holy Ghost, could give. 4. *They set a high example.* The Thessalonians saw their outward life; God could read the secrets of their hearts. That life was pure and holy towards God, just and righteous in its relations to men. The Christians of Thessalonica knew that they were blameless. Others might, perhaps, be busy with their insinuations; unbelievers might suggest this or that unworthy motive. The Christians had learned to know St. Paul and his companions. They knew the sincerity, the purity of their lives. Nay, St. Paul could fearlessly appeal to a higher Witness—to the all-seeing God. Example is a mighty aid in preaching the gospel. Deeds are more persuasive than words. A holy life is an evidence of the reality of those spiritual facts which the preacher describes in words. 5. *They taught their converts individually.* They were not contented with preaching in the synagogues every sabbath day; they taught from house to house. The converts were many, we read in the Acts of the Apostles. Chrysostom wonders at their zeal in omitting no one in so great a multitude. They sought out each, caring for each separate soul, sharing the angels' joy over one sinner that repenteth. They tried all means of winning souls. They exhorted, stirring the souls of men with burning words, suggesting nobler views of human life and destiny; they comforted, encouraging the afflicted, the despondent, the penitent, by the glad tidings of pardon, peace, and hope; they testified, urging their converts by every constraining motive to persevere in the Christian life. And all this they did with such earnestness, with such affectionate interest, with such love as a father shows towards his own children. A bright example of the pastor's work. 6. *The purport of their exhortation.* God was calling them; they must walk worthily of that high calling. He was calling them into his kingdom now, into the kingdom which Christ had come to found—his Church. They had become children of the kingdom. He was calling them higher yet, to his glory, to the beatific vision, that the Saviour's prayer might be fulfilled, "I will that they whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me." Their walk in life must show the reality of their hope. Walk implies movement, change of place and scene. As they move hither and thither in the course of their daily lives, in their business, in their amusements, they must ever think of that high calling, and live according to their hopes. Their religion was not to be confined to the sabbath, to the synagogue, to the hours spent on their knees in private prayer; they must carry it everywhere with them; it must guide, stimulate, comfort, encourage in all the varying circumstances of daily life. Their life must be worthy of their calling. They must show its influence; they must adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things.

LESSONS. 1. Study the lives of St. Paul and other holy men. 2. Let not that study end in admiration; act upon it. 3. In such lives is seen the manifest workings of the grace of God. 4. The sight of such lives confirms the faith of the wavering, kindles the desire of the lukewarm. 5. True Christians are the light of the world; they must let their light shine before men. 6. But not for their own glory; they must seek only the glory of God.—B. C. C.

Vers. 13—16.—*The effects of the gospel.* I. ITS RECEPTION BY THE THESSALONIANS. 1. *They believed that it came from God.* Paul and Silas and Timotheus brought the message; the Thessalonians recognized it as the message of God. They felt that it came from him. (1) Their words were such as never man untaught of God could speak. The gospel was utterly unlike anything that had been heard or read before. It stood alone, unique, separate from all other histories. No human imagination could have pictured it; no human genius could have thought it out. It must be of God; it could have no other source. It bore within itself the evidence of its inspiration, of its Divine origin. And (2) they felt its energy within their hearts. It did not lie dormant there; it was living and powerful. It wrought within them with a mighty working, drawing them by a strange constraining power away from their old self-pleasing lives into the new life of faith and love and self-denial. That living force showed that it was the Word of God. No mere human words could so stir the heart. The preaching of the cross might be a stumbling-block to the Jews, it might seem foolishness to the Greeks; but to those who had the precious gift of faith, it was "the power of God and the wisdom of God." 2. *They showed their faith by their works.* The infant European

Churches imitated the oldest Churches, those of Judæa. All alike belonged to God; all were in Christ Jesus, living branches in the true Vine. The new converts sought to live like the first Christians. "Then had the Churches rest throughout all Judæa and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of God, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied." They imitated them in active holiness, and they imitated them in patient endurance.

II. THE OPPOSITION OF THE WORLD. 1. *The Gentile opposition.* It first appeared in Macedonia. In Philippi the evangelists were for the first time brought before Gentile magistrates. The politarchs of Thessalonica had more sense of justice than the so-called prætors of Philippi. They contented themselves with taking security from the Christians who were brought before them. But the converts were exposed to great persecution in both places from the first. In his letters to both Churches, St. Paul again and again mentions their sufferings. In writing to the Corinthians he speaks of the "great trial of affliction" which beset the Macedonian Christians. The Thessalonians had to suffer much at the hands of their own countrymen. But they had been taught that those who would live a godly life must suffer persecution, and so they thought it not strange. It had been so from the beginning of Christianity. They looked to the example of the earliest Churches. 2. *The Jewish opposition.* The Jews had slain the prophets; they had slain the Lord Jesus; they had chased the apostle from city to city. They were St. Paul's own countrymen. He loved them dearly. He could find no words strong enough to express his intense longing for their salvation (see Rom. ix. 1—3). But they were constantly thwarting his work—that work of saving souls on which his whole heart was set. They were doing so now at Corinth, opposing themselves and blaspheming (Acts xviii. 6). St. Paul could not restrain his feelings of holy indignation. They call themselves (he says) the peculiar people of God; but they please him not. He willeth that all men should be saved, and they are contrary to all men. In that hatred of the human race which heathen writers attribute to them, they tried to hinder the apostle from preaching to the Gentiles. Nothing angered them more than the proclamation of a free salvation offered to Jew and Gentile alike (see Acts xxii. 21, 22). This wicked jealousy filled up the measure of their sins. Their sin was its own punishment. That hardened heart was the beginning of the judgment that was coming.

Learn: 1. To reverence the Gospel as the Word of God. 2. To look for its inner working in the heart. 3. To imitate the saints of God in patient endurance.—B. C. C.

Vers. 17—20.—*St. Paul's love for his converts.* I. HIS LONGING DESIRE TO SEE THEM. 1. *His efforts to return to Thessalonica.* He had not been long away. He was at Corinth now. Perhaps the jealousies, the dissensions, the sin which encompassed him there made him long all the more for the simple faith and love of his Macedonian friends. He was with them even now in heart, thinking of them in the hour of prayer, remembering them in his thankgivings. But there was a feeling of bereavement, almost of desolation, when he thought of their absence. So very dear they had become to him during the short time which he spent at Thessalonica. We feel, as we read these words, the depth of St. Paul's affection; we feel the power of Christian love. 2. *What hindered him from coming.* It was Satan, Satan the adversary—that awful being whose presence in God's world is so great a mystery, but whose personality is so clearly taught in Holy Scripture, whose power and malice we have all so often felt. Twice the apostle purposed to revisit Thessalonica; twice the hindrance came. The visit would have given him great comfort. Satan envied him that comfort, that sweet communion with his Christian friends. Satan hinders us, we may be sure. He tries to rob us of the consolations of religion, of the sweetness of Christian sympathy. His agency is more widespread than we think. He is the accuser of the brethren, their adversary in the religious life. But God sitteth on high. He will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able. He will make all things, even the temptations of the evil one, work together for our good if we abide in his love.

II. HIS EXPRESSIONS OF AFFECTION. 1. *They are his glory and his joy.* They are so now. He had few joys in this world, few earthly comforts. His life was spent in hard labour amid dangers and privations. It was relieved by very few pleasures. The natural beauty, the historical associations of the places which he visited in his travels,

seem to have given him no enjoyment. His one joy was to save souls; his one pleasure was the loving sympathy of his converts. He sought no earthly glory; fame was nothing to him. The souls won to Christ by his preaching were his glory. 2. *They would be his crown at the last.* Not they only, others saved by his preaching at Damascus, at Antioch, in Cyprus, in Asia Minor, were his hope and joy; but none were more tenderly loved than the Christians of Macedonia, none are addressed with more endearing words. He ever looked forward to the coming of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; the great day was always in his thoughts. What joy would it be to present these happy souls to Christ, as a chaste virgin to the heavenly bridegroom! This was his hope; this would be his crown—the crown of glory that fadeth not away, which the chief Shepherd shall give in that day to those faithful presbyters who have fed the flock of God willingly and of a ready mind, being themselves examples to the flock.

LESSONS. 1. True Christians will delight in the society of those like-minded with themselves. 2. We must remember the restless energy of Satan. We must trust in God. He is stronger than the strong man armed. 3. We must pray for grace to love the saints of God as St. Paul loved them.—B. C. C.

Vers. 1—12.—*The manner of the preachers; or, self-portraiture.* I. WHAT THE THESSALONIANS HAD FOUND THEIR PREACHING TO BE. 1. *Not void of power.* "For yourselves, brethren, know our entering in unto you, that it hath not been found vain." "For" goes back to the first of the two divisions given at the close of the previous chapter. This is indicated by the recurrence of the leading Greek word translated "entering in." It was said, "For they themselves report concerning us what manner of entering in we had unto you." There is an advance to a further point. Not only did the people in the various places report, but they *themselves* had the evidences in their possession. The evidences are regarded as extending down to the time of the Thessalonian letter being received. Taken hold of at that moment, and addressed as brethren, they are asked this question, "What has the entering in of us preachers been found to be?" And, having had ample time to estimate the entering in, they are confidently expected to give this testimony, "It hath not been found vain." The epithet "vain" might mean empty of result; but that thought falls under the second division, which is taken up at ver. 13. It must, therefore, mean empty of all that it ought causally to contain—empty of purpose, and earnestness, in a word, of evangelical power. 2. *Characterized by fortitude.* "But having suffered before, and been shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we waxed bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God in much conflict." This is so far confirmed by the Acts of the Apostles, where the narrative of the entering in to Thessalonica is immediately preceded by the narrative of the rough treatment received at Philippi. The feature of the suffering before referred to here is there presented as imprisonment. It was imprisonment with aggravated circumstances. Paul and Silas were *dragged* into the market-place before the magistrates, by whose orders they were beaten with rods. After many stripes had been laid on them they were cast into the inner prison, and their feet made fast in the stocks. This was *shameful treatment*, not because they were there in Philippi on an errand of mercy, which heathen magistrates could not appreciate, but because their rights were not respected. It was an irregularity to lay stripes on them at all as Roman citizens. It was a further irregularity to punish so hastily in obedience to clamour, and without an opportunity of defence being granted. All this was known to the Thessalonians. So far the statement here supplements the narrative in the Acts of the Apostles. We read, further, that Timothy accompanied Paul from Lystra, and again that he was left behind at Berea, but there is nothing said of him in the interval. We learn from this notice that he was co-operating with Paul and Silas both in Philippi and in Thessalonica, although, we may understand, not so prominent an object of attack as the others, who were his seniors both in age and in service. The three were not intimidated by this treatment in Philippi. On the contrary, proceeding to Thessalonica, they waxed bold in their God to speak unto the Thessalonians the gospel of God. It was the gospel of God, inasmuch as it came as a glad message from God. They looked to God as their God, who had commissioned them to deliver his message. As commissioned by God to deliver his message, they did not flee, like Jonah, through fear, but they emboldened themselves in their God, that he would give them his protection and support. It did

not fare with them in Thessalonica differently from what it did in Philippi. Their message brought them into conflict with the powers of unbelief. It was a conflict of a formidable nature. But the fact that they were able to stand forth and speak the gospel of God in the face of strong opposition was evidence of the very highest value that their entering in to Thessalonica was not vain.

II. THEIR GENERAL HABIT AS PREACHERS. 1. *They were not like the idolatrous priests.* (1) *They did not preach out of error.* "For our exhortation is not of error." There was not much of what is here called exhortation in the ministrations of the idolatrous priests. They did not lay themselves out to influence men by suasion to what was considered to be the right belief and the right life. The old translation in this place, "deceit," was objectionable. Such men were not impostors to begin with. They believed in their system. It was what they had received by tradition from their fathers. Nevertheless it was a system of error, literally, "wandering." Heathenism was a wandering from God, whether objects of worship were sought in the stony world, in the silence of vegetable life, behind the hieroglyphics of the brute creation, or behind the human form. Out of such error they ministered to man. Paul and his companions, on the other hand, ministered out of truth. They had the true conception of God and of human life. Their exhortation had its *inspiring cause* in Christianity. As moved themselves by its soul-cheering truth, they sought to move others. (2) *They did not preach out of uncleanness.* "Nor of uncleanness." This was the general character of heathen ministrations, but, as denied here, it would seem, from the context, to refer more particularly to the impure love of gain. Those who ministered in heathen temples were in the habit of receiving gifts from the worshippers. And there was the danger, and, in the absence of better influences, the likelihood of gain becoming the end, in which their ministrations had motive power. This was not the end in which the apostle and his companions found motive for their way of exhortation. (3) *They did not resort to unworthy methods in preaching.* "Nor in guile." Heathen priests could not but be conscious of much imposture. Conscious of no inflatus, of no extraordinary knowledge possessed by them, they yet professed to tell the future from the position of the stars, from the flight of birds, from the entrails of animals. They had to do with unrealities in many forms, in order to keep up their influence with the worshippers. The apostle and his companions, as their end was the salvation of souls, so they only sought it by the use of means which their conscience could approve. 2. *They realized their responsibility.* "But even as we have been approved of God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God which proveth our hearts." There are *two ideas* in a trust. The first is *acting for another*. He who makes over the trust does not act himself by reason of *death*, or by reason of *infirmity*, or by reason of *absence* (as in the analogy that is made use of in Luke xix. 12). The trustee—he to whom the trust is made over—acts in his name and for his interest. The second idea is *acting apart by one's self*. The trustee may have directions to guide him, and ample resources to draw upon in the management of the trust. But otherwise he acts independently. He is left there alone with the trust; in responsibility it is his and not another's if it is managed well; it is his and not another's if it is mismanaged. (1) *What their trust was.* "*So we speak.*" A minister must not be devoid of thoughts, and must also be able to give clear expression to them. He has also to stand up before his fellow-men, and to *speak* to them face to face with a practical aim. That, with the speaking of which he is intrusted, is the gospel. "The gospel of the glory of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust." The gospel is properly the glad tidings of salvation to all people. It begins with the message of pardon to the guilty, of adoption into the family of God of the disowned and disinherited. It is, in its gladsome breadth, the promise of the communication of the Divine life and happiness to our being. It is this which the minister has to speak with a view to its acceptance. It is not meant that he is only to speak this. For he has the whole Bible to open up as he can. He has other important truth to present, even the terrors of the Law in its bearing on the gospel. Neither is he to confine himself in his illustrations to the Bible. For as all roads led to Rome, so all things can legitimately and usefully be made to lead to the gospel. Only nothing is to be dilated upon or brought in which has not the effect of making prominent the gospel proper, or the glad message from God to man. (2) *Their being chosen for the trust.* "*As we have been approved*

of God." "It was requisite," it has been said of the Athenian priesthoods, "that all priests should be of legitimate birth, without bodily defect, and of unblamable life and conversation. These particulars were ascertained by a dokimasia." It cannot be said of all who are in the office of the ministry that they have received the Divine approval. There must be a certain aptitude in natural gifts for preaching the gospel. There must especially be aptitude in the moral state of the preacher. God has seen fit, by saving men, to save men. He employs, in the preaching of the gospel, those who have sympathy with the gospel. In this light Paul and Silas and Timothy were no pretenders, but had received the Divine stamp—had been pronounced fit, from their gifts and experiences, to be employed in the saving of souls. (3) *The spirit in which they fulfilled their trust. Danger they avoided.* This was *man-pleasing*. There is a certain pleasing of men which is not to be avoided by the preacher of the gospel. He is to seek to interest men by all legitimate methods. But this pleasing cannot be exalted into a *law universal*. We are not to please men as though we were responsible to them. We are not to please men as though we had to consult their false tastes, their natural dislike to the gospel. On the contrary, all man-pleasing is to be repudiated where it interferes with the main design of the gospel, which is to effect a change upon the heart. *Excellence they cultivated.* This was *God-pleasing*. This is a safe rule to follow in every case. For he is infinite excellence, and he who seeks to please him follows no low or variable standard. It is the fit thing to do in the position in which we are placed. He has entrusted us preachers with the gospel; it is therefore simply our duty to please him who has given us so solemn a trust. If we have been approved of God to be entrusted with the gospel, that is so far well. But there is an approval that we have to look forward to at the end of our labours. And shall it then be seen that we have stood the test? Shall we then receive the word of approval, "Well done, good and faithful servant"? Paul and Silas and Timothy claimed that, in accordance with the fact of their having been approved, they spake pleasing God. And this is heightened by the consideration that God is regarded as proving their hearts. They preached as under the eye of the heart-trying God. They preached as if asking God to remove from their hearts all that unfitted them for dealing with the gospel. They preached with some consciousness in the depth of their being that their single aim was to find acceptance for the good message.

III. THEIR HABIT TOWARD THE THESSALONIANS. 1. *Denial of selfishness.* (1) *In the form of flattery.* "For neither at any time were we found using words of flattery, as ye know." In proof of what was their general habit, an appeal is made to what their habit was particularly toward the Thessalonians. At no time were they found using speech whose contents were flattery. Having denied generally the method of deceit, they now deny, toward the Thessalonians, the method of flattery. It is a method commonly resorted to by deceivers. It may seem removed from selfishness, inasmuch as it is a way of pleasing men. In that respect it is not so odious as a habit of detraction. But the flatterer is essentially selfish. He professes affection he does not feel; he bestows praises beyond what he considers to be deserved. He thus goes against the person he seeks to flatter, who has a *right* to have presented to him what a man really is, and not what he assumes to be—a true face, and not a mask. And he further goes against him, inasmuch as he would have him think of himself as different from what he really is. Paul and his companions were not slow to let the real affection of their heart be known, and to bestow praises where they were deserved. But they disclaimed flattery, appealing, in support of their truthfulness in doing so, to the experience of the Thessalonians. (2) *In the form of covetousness.* "Nor a cloak of covetousness, God is witness." The idea of deceit is carried forward in the word "cloak." It is something worn under which, or, to keep nearer to the Greek word, "woven before" ("pretext"), behind which the real design is concealed. Covetousness is doubly degrading in connection with sacred service. It is laid down as one of the qualifications of a minister that he is not to be greedy of filthy lucre. Paul and his companions did not use great profession of godliness, or of affection and esteem for the Thessalonians, as a pretext for getting their money. They were conscious to their own minds of purity in this matter, and, feeling the vast importance of being thoroughly cleared from such an imputation, they solemnly call God to witness that they were stating the truth. This form of confirmation—"God is witness"—approaching to the oath, is only to be used in a matter

of great moment, and especially where hidden motive is concerned. (3) *In the form of a desire for honour.* "Nor seeking glory of men, neither from you, nor from others, when we might have been burdensome, as apostles of Christ." This is an alternative to covetousness. Following the method of deceit, they might have been seeking, not money, but glory. Christ says, "I receive not glory from men." And he declares this to be an obstacle to believing. "How can ye believe, which receive glory one of another, and the glory that cometh from the only God ye seek not?" Paul and his companions had not sought glory which had its origin in men, neither more immediately from them nor from others. They had not done this when, as the meaning would seem to be, they might have claimed honour as the apostles of Christ. The idea of "burdensomeness" seems out of keeping with the immediate context, the preceding thought being "glory," and the succeeding thought being "gentleness." It seems better, then, to adopt the other meaning which the words equally well bear: "When we might have claimed dignity, assumed consequence." They had an honourable status as apostles of Christ, that designation being taken widely. The honour connected with it came, not from men, but from Christ. It was a great honour to hold a commission from Christ. But they did not put forward their official position; they did not exact a recognition of it from men. 2. *On the positive side their motherly unselfishness.* "But we were gentle in the midst of you, as when a nurse cherisheth her own children: even so, being affectionately desirous of you, we were well pleased to impart unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were become very dear to us." So far from being mere officials taken up with their dignity, they were gentle in the midst of them. Their whole bearing in the midst of the Thessalonians was like that of a parent in the midst of his children. Nay, that does not suffice to bring out the nature of the gentleness. It is not the father who is taken; but, as expressing greater tenderness, the mother. In another place (Gal. iv. 19) Paul also makes use of the motherly: "My little children, of whom I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you." Here he not only takes the mother, but the mother at the time when she is nursing. As when a nurse cherisheth her own children. It is then that the motherly feeling is most active in her. It is then that she uses the sweetest expressions, holds her child with the greatest fondness and solicitude. But the nursing mother is not only the picture of gentleness; she is also the picture of *unselfishness*. She does not think of receiving from her child; she thinks only of giving. She gives from herself, and, if that child's life were in danger, she would not hesitate to give her own life. So the motherly was very active in them at Thessalonica. They were *affectionately desirous* of the Thessalonians. Desire has a certain contrary nature to affection. Desire draws in; affection gives out. It is giving out that is referred to here. It would seem, therefore, better to translate, "Having a fond affection for you." In the working of this affection they gave to the Thessalonians the milk of the Word—here called the gospel of God—what was given them by the great and tender Giver to give to the new-born. And such was the unselfishness of their affection that they had the willingness, if it had been necessary, to give their very lives for the Thessalonians, because, in their craving for the Word, they were felt to be very dear. 3. *Striking exemplification of unselfishness.* "For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: working night and day, that we might not burden any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God." The apostle and his companions "practically gave up their existence" to the Thessalonians. Those addressed as brethren are called upon to call to mind the *labour and travail* undergone for them. The second word serves the purpose of intensification. There was giving out of strength in "heralding" the gospel of God. A herald does not spare himself; as gospel heralds they did not spare themselves in soul or body. This work of heralding was by itself labour and travail; but it was added to by the circumstances under which they heralded. They felt themselves under the necessity of working—Paul, no doubt, at the work of tent-making. That also was labour and travail; for it was night and day—as we would say, day and night; not completed with daylight, but extending into the night. There was *no* reason for his not receiving from the Philippians as he did at Thessalonica. There was reason for his not receiving from the Thessalonians. The reason given is, the desire not to burden any of them. His not feeling free to burden any of them, whatever determined it, raised him now above the suspicion of being covetous among them. He had only been a giver, like a nursing

mother. 4. *What their behaviour generally was toward the Thessalonians.* "Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and righteously and unblamably we behaved ourselves toward you that believe." Their behaviour is defined as being toward the Thessalonians as believers. We may think of Paul as speaking for himself and his companions. How did he bear himself toward these believers? (1) *Holily*, i.e. with love and reverence toward God in them. (2) *Righteously*, i.e. with due consideration for their position. This must be taken to include their position as believers. There was what was suitable for them, as adopted into the family of God through faith. (3) *Unblamably*, a strong word which is used not infrequently by the apostle. It is the negative side of the two positions that have been given. Here there is a concentration of the self-praise, as it may seem, that pervades the paragraph. How could he act so holily and righteously toward the Thessalonians as to incur no blame from them or from God? But that is not all: he makes an appeal to them as witnesses, and, the second time in the paragraph, he makes a solemn appeal to God as Witness even of his inward disposition. It cannot be understood that he lays claim to perfection; for it is he who says in another place, "Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect." But it must be understood that he claimed to be sincere, and sincere in no ordinary degree, in seeking the good of the Thessalonians. In claiming this he was not really praising himself; but he was making clear what was fitted to influence powerfully the Thessalonians in their fidelity to the gospel. He points to them as believers, because, it may be, they were fitted to appreciate the spirituality of his bearing. He points to them as believers, chiefly as showing that they worthily responded to what his bearing was. 5. *Their fatherly dealing.* There are frequent allusions to fatherhood in God in Scripture. One of the allusions to motherhood in God is in Isa. lxvi. 13, "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." Both meet in God, forming a complete conception.

"No earthly father loves like thee,
No mother e'er so mild."

So they must meet in the servant of God. Paul has already in this paragraph referred to himself as acting the motherly part; he now supplements it by referring to himself as acting the fatherly part. (1) *Individual dealing.* "As ye know how we dealt with each one of you, as a father dealeth with his own children." It is the part of a father to have his children under his eye. He is acquainted with their little histories and peculiar dispositions. And he does not deal with all alike, but studies their various ways, and deals with them accordingly. So it is the part of a minister not only to make a general declaration of the gospel, but also, father-like, to deal with his people individually, according to what he knows of their circumstances and needs. (2) *Three words descriptive of the nature of fatherly dealing.* "Exhorting you." It is the part of a father not merely to tell his children their duty, but also to exhort them, to urge them warmly to duty, especially from his own experiences of life. So it is the part of a minister not only to hold up Scripture precept for instruction, but also, father-like, warmly to recommend its observance, especially from his own spiritual experiences. "And encouraging you." It is the part of a father to hold out encouragement to the performance of duty. Nothing can be more fatal to the young than a discouraging tone. So it is the part of a minister not to be harsh, censorious, despondent, but, father-like, to catch a geniality and hopefulness from his message which may be said to have come from the fatherhood of God. "And testifying." The word can bear a stronger meaning—charging, conjuring. There are times when a father addresses his children as with his dying breath, conjures them by all that he counts dear and sacred, by a consideration of their best interests, not to give way to temptation, but to follow in the path of duty. So there are times when it is becoming for a minister to concentrate his earnestness and to address his people as with his dying breath, conjuring them by the authority of God, by the love of the Spirit, by the blood of Christ, by the dreadful issues at stake, by the solemnity of judgment, not to allow themselves to be cheated out of happiness, but to make sure of Christ as their everlasting portion. (3) *To what the fatherly dealing is to be directed.* "To the end that ye should walk worthily of God, who calleth you into his own kingdom and glory." It is the part of a father to endeavour to hold the children to what is noble. For this purpose he loves to tell them

of the good name their family has borne, of the call which that addresses to them to follow out a good career. And so he exhorts, encourages, conjures them. Let them not stain that noble name, let them not stop short of that noble career. So it is the part of a minister, father-like, to tell his people of their high dignity and destiny, of their being called by God into his own kingdom, of their being called in that kingdom to share with God in his glory. And so he exhorts, encourages, conjures them. Let them prove worthy of having place and honour in God's kingdom. Let the *royal stamp* be on all their conduct.—R. F.

Vers. 13—16.—*Response of the Thessalonians to the proclamation of the gospel by Paul and his companions.* I. *THEIR ACCEPTANCE OF THE WORD.* "And for this cause we also thank God without ceasing, that when ye received from us the word of the message, even the Word of God, ye accepted it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the Word of God, which also worketh in you that believe." With this commences the second of the divisions indicated at the close of the first chapter. Our attention is turned away from the preachers to the hearers. It is confusing to join "also" to "we," and to suppose the meaning to be, with Lünemann, "We as well as every true Christian who hears of your conduct," or, with Ellicott, "We as well as you who have so much to be thankful for." It makes an easier transition to join "also" to "thank," making the subject of thanksgiving something additional to the earnestness of the preachers. We may translate freely, "Having this as an antecedent, we have this in addition as a consequent for which to thank God." Here, then, is a falling back into the thankful strain with which the Epistle commenced. The very word translated "without ceasing" is caught up. Having given out their strength in preaching, they had unceasing cause of thanksgiving to God in the result. In setting forth the result, the word is described from the point of view of the Thessalonians in relation to the preachers. The nearest translation is "the from-us-heard-word." This they received in the outward ordinance of preaching. Having thus received it, they next accepted it or received it into their inmost being. They gave this inner reception to it, as being, in their estimation, not the word of man. It was indeed delivered by men. It was a word of human salvation. In its very humanness it was fitted to reach men. But their estimation of the word rose above it as a mere human word to what it really was (as attested here), the Word of God. It was a Word given under Divine direction. It was a Word that came from the heart of God. It was a Word of the overflowing of Divine love. It was a Word, moreover, that was accompanied with the Divine efficacy. In harmony with its being the Divine Word, it is described as working in them that believe. Faith is the organ for our reception of the Word. We may receive the Divine Word in the outward ordinance of preaching, but if there is not this organ of inner reception it must remain inoperative. On the other hand, if there is faith, and in proportion as there is faith, does the mighty power of the word pass into us, even up to the full extent of our capacity and need. It is, therefore, our duty to see that we present no obstacle of unbelief to the efficacy of the Word in us. "That the Word may become effectual to salvation we must attend thereunto with diligence, preparation, and prayer; receive it with faith and love, lay it up in our hearts, and practise it in our lives."

II. *THE ACCEPTED WORD WROUGHT IN THEM TO GIVE THEM CHRISTIAN HEROISM.* "For ye, brethren, became imitators of the Churches of God which are in Judæa in Christ Jesus: for ye also suffered the same things of your own countrymen, even as they did of the Jews." There were, to appearance, other Churches of God in Judæa. It was, therefore, necessary to distinguish Christian Churches in Judæa. It is not to be understood that the Thessalonian Christians were designedly imitators of the Judæan Churches. In result they were imitators. In similar circumstances they exhibited a similar spirit. Judæa was notably the quarter where Christian heroism was most required. The Jews there were filled with deepest rancour against Christ. By their numbers they were more to be considered by the Roman power, and were able to go to greater lengths against the Christians. It could be said of the Thessalonian Christians that they were not behind the Judæan Churches in Christian heroism. They suffered the same things of their own countrymen. We are, therefore, to understand that they were subjected to severe persecution in Thessalonica. We know that the Jews had to do with the persecution as instigators, but, as they had little in their

power without the action of the Gentile authorities, their own countrymen are referred to as those at whose hands the Thessalonians suffered. A position was held for Christ at Thessalonica as in Judæa. And, in recording this to the praise of the Thessalonians, they warn toward them and address them as brethren.

III. FOR THEIR ENCOURAGEMENT IN HEROISM THE JEWS ARE PRESENTED IN THEIR TRUE CHARACTER. 1. *Their past conduct.* (1) *Worst manifestation.* "Who both killed the Lord Jesus." In the Greek the mind is first made to rest on the word "Lord." Then there is brought into neighbourhood and sharp contrast with it the word "killed." The "Lord" of the Old Testament Scriptures to whom Divine attributes are ascribed—whom David owned as his Lord—they did not own or submit to; but, going in the opposite direction as far as they could go, him they murdered. They did this not only to him who was the Impersonation of authority, but was also the Accomplisher of the loving, saving purpose of God. For "Jesus" is added as a third word. This the Jews did as a nation. They said in effect, through their constituted authorities, "This is the heir; come, let us kill him." In thus charging guilt home upon the Jews, Paul was charging it home upon himself. For wherever he was at the time of the crucifixion, in his then state of mind he was in full sympathy with the action of the rulers. And it is right that we should see here not only the blackness of the Jewish heart, but the blackness of the human heart. This was what we did to our Lord when he came on an errand of mercy to our earth. We laid hands on him and put him to death. For this let us be deeply humbled before God. Let us say with Job, in nearer contact with God, "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." (2) *Manifestations leading up to the worst.* "And the prophets." What the Jews did to their Messiah was not an isolated act. It was only of a piece with what their previous conduct had been. "Which of the prophets," said Stephen, "did not your fathers persecute? and they killed them which showed before of the coming of the Righteous One; of whom ye have now become betrayers and murderers." The treatment they gave to God's messengers, whose work it was to prepare the way for the Messiah by rebuke and prediction, led up to the treatment they gave their Messiah. In his pre-Christian state Paul was well entitled to be called "son of them that slew the prophets;" and so are all who abuse and thwart, or stand aloof from, those who are seeking to advance the cause of God in the world. (3) *Manifestation subsequent to the worst.* "And drove out us." The reference seems to be to the driving of the apostles out of Judæa. This was overruled by God for the proclamation of the gospel beyond Judæa; but none the less was it culpable. It showed that the spirit of penitence had not passed over them for the heinous crime of which they had been guilty. They were still holding to the words, "His blood be upon us, and upon our children." 2. *Condemnation of their conduct.* (1) *It was against God.* "And please not God." The Jews thought they were pleasing God in what they did to Christ and also to the prophets and apostles. This is denied of them. They were really, in their anti-Christian position, setting themselves against the Divine ends. They were setting themselves against the whole meaning of their existence as a nation, against the teaching of their oracles, against the design of their rites. They were setting themselves against the evidence of miracles, and against the stronger evidence of a goodness which should have carried conviction to every honest heart. If they could be so far mistaken, have not we reason to be on our guard? We may think that we are pleasing God when we have never learned the alphabet of the Divine teaching, have never subjected ourselves to the Divine control. (2) *It was against man.* "And are contrary to all men; forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved." Their condemnation manifold is as strong as their condemnation Godward. *They were contrary to all men,* is the language used; and the proof which is given is conclusive. The gospel is the offer of salvation to all men. But the universality, which is its glory, was to them its defect. They had the idea of keeping salvation to themselves. They had the idea that they were blessed the more, the fewer they were that were blessed. And when the apostles spoke to the Gentiles, and thus preached the larger salvation, as if the blessing were being taken away from them, they forbade them in such manner as they could, by contradiction, calumnies, laying snares for their life. If this was their fall, let us beware lest it should be ours. The first saved (for as Christians we stand where the Jews stood) must understand it to be their duty, not to draw the line at themselves,

but to reach forth in blessing to all the unsaved. 3. *Final result of their conduct.* (1) *In guilt.* "To fill up their sins *always*." There is here a reflection of our Lord's words, "Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers." The Jews were on their trial as a nation. In this trial they should have filled up the measure of their good actions, of service to the world. That would have been their vindication before God. Instead of that, they filled up the measure of their sins. There is significant language used in Gen. xv. 16, "But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again; for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full." It is a sad thing that it could be said of the Jews with Divine helps, as of the Amorites without Divine helps, that they were filling up their sins. They were filling up their sins *always*. It was a course which they did not alter by a genuine deep conformed repentance as a nation. The general tendency of their conduct, both before Christ, at the time of Christ, and after Christ, was to fill up their sins. They obstinately put away God from them, disregarded the Divine calls and warnings. And the ultimate result of such conduct, in the working out of the eternal purpose, could only be as here set down, the bringing of the measure of their sins up to the full. (2) *In punishment.* "But the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost." This is in contrast with the filling up of their sins, in their opposition to God and man. The wrath of God, which is here mentioned for the second time in the Epistle, is to be thought of as the predestined or the merited wrath. It is a wrath which descends upon nations as well as upon individuals. As the measure of their sins is thought of as being brought up to the full, so the wrath is thought of as reaching its utmost limit, when it must discharge itself—when, instead of probationary dealing, there must be infictive judgment. The inspired writers here had words of our Lord on which to proceed. "That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of Abel the righteous unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachiah, whom ye slew between the sanctuary and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation." The apostolic words were written within fifteen years of the destruction of Jerusalem, when the Jews were finally rejected as a nation. There is hope of their conversion at some future period; but it cannot be said that to this day the wrath of God, for their long course of disobedience, has been removed.—R. F.

Vers. 17—20.—*Great desire to see the Thessalonians.* With this another chapter might fitly have commenced.

I. THEIR DESIRE WAS ALL THE GREATER THAT THEY WERE ORPHANED OF THE THESSALONIANS. "But we, brethren, being bereaved of you for a short season, in presence, not in heart, endeavoured the more exceedingly to see your face with great desire." Very different were Paul and his associates from the Jewish persecutors. They had the most tender feelings toward the Thessalonians, whom they acknowledge as brethren. The principal statement is that they were *orphaned*. It is a word which is usually applied to children who are bereaved of their parents. It is here adopted as a strong word to express the great pain which those apostolic men felt in being separated from their loved converts. They have already called themselves father and mother to the Thessalonians. Now it is rather the Thessalonians who are father and mother to them, of whom they have been bereaved, by whom they have been left desolate. Two mitigating circumstances are added. It was separation for a short season, literally, "the season of an hour." It is the language of *emotion*. It was but the season of an hour, compared with the time they would be together in the better world. Then it was separation in presence, not in heart. Still, with these mitigating circumstances, they were in an orphaned state. All the more exceedingly, then, were they zealous to see their face with great desire. This reference to the effect of absence is a touch of nature which the Thessalonians could well appreciate.

II. PAUL WAS HINDERED IN HAVING HIS DESIRE TO SEE THEM GRATIFIED. "Because we would fain have come unto you, I Paul once and again; and Satan hindered us." They would fain have come unto them. Having said this, Paul (correctively so far) refers to two definite occasions on which his plans were to proceed to Thessalonica. The statement did not pertain to Silas and Timothy, as they were probably not with him. By necessity of fact he therefore detaches himself from the others: "I Paul once and again." And once and twice Satan hindered him. There is distinct testi-

many here to Paul's belief in a personal tempter. Satan appears here in his real character as adversary of God's people. Repeatedly he actually succeeded in hindering Paul in his good intentions. Though only a secondary agent, he has a wide range in the use of means. We are to think of the means here not as sickness (which was allowed in the case of Job), nor as other work needing to be done elsewhere, but as difficulties caused by the working of evil in the minds of persecuting enemies or unfaithful friends. The language is, "Satan hindered us;" for there was not only a hindering of Paul, but of Silas and Timothy as well, who were interested in the advancement of the cause in Thessalonica.

III. ESTEEM WAS THE REASON FOR DESIRING TO SEE THE THESSALONIANS. "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of glorying? Are not even ye, before our Lord Jesus at his coming? For ye are our glory and our joy." The use of the plural, which begins with the preceding word, illustrates the humility and generosity of the apostle. As in the next statement of fact he has to slide again into the singular, he might naturally have preserved the singular in this intermediate burst of feeling. But he will not exclude Silas and Timothy when it is possible to include them. These apostolic men had their hope. Without hope it is not possible to endure existence. And if the future is not really bright, it is made to appear bright with false colours. They had not only their hope, but their joy; i.e. they were joyful in view of what they hoped for, which again was a crown of glorying. As Christian athletes they looked forward to their wreath of victory. This is thought of as the Thessalonian converts, they among others. These conquerors were not to appear alone before our Lord Jesus at his coming. But their converts in the various places were to be as a wreath of victory around their heads. It is faith that brings us into a fundamentally right relation to Christ; but within that relation there is room for greater or less activity. The teaching here is that we are to aim at not appearing before Christ alone at his coming. Christian parents and Christian ministers ought to be in a position to say then, "Behold I, and the children whom the Lord hath given me." There is incidentally a comforting thought in the language used. It is implied that Paul would know his converts at Christ's coming. We may, therefore, feel certain that Christian friends will know each other in the future state. And what a stimulus is this to be unremitting in our prayers and labours, so that all who are dear to us shall appear in that happy company at last, not one wanting! It is added, "For ye are our glory and our joy." As woman is said to be the glory of the man, so converts are here said to be the glory of ministers. The Thessalonian converts were a halo around the heads of their teachers. They were also their joy, a source of deep satisfaction, as their wreath of victory at the looked-for coming.—R. P.

Ver. 2.—*Boldness in declaring the gospel.* I. THERE ARE CIRCUMSTANCES THAT MAKE THE DECLARATION OF THE GOSPEL AN ACT OF BOLDNESS. St. Paul had been "shamefully entreated" at Philippi. Danger threatened also at Thessalonica. But the apostle was nothing daunted, not even holding his life dear in the prosecution of his great mission. Similar dangers beset the missionary now, and no one has a right to undertake mission work who is not prepared to endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. Moral courage is not less requisite in outwardly peaceful circumstances. The discouragement of indifference, the chilling influence of ridicule, and even the hindrance of direct opposition, will meet us if we are faithful to our duty of declaring the gospel where it is most needed.

II. IT IS THE DUTY OF THOSE WHO ARE ENTRUSTED WITH THE GOSPEL NOT TO SHRINK FROM DECLARING IT IN SPITE OF ADVERSE CIRCUMSTANCES. It is a trust, and the trust must be discharged even if the steward die at his post. The world needs the gospel most when it is most opposed to it. For the sake of the very men who mock or resist us we must faithfully discharge our message. Others also need it who must not be kept out of their lawful privileges by our weak fears. Moreover, the glory of God must be sought above all considerations of personal safety. How strangely that passion of devotion to Christ which inspired the apostles to preach him at the peril of their lives contrasts with the selfish, comfort-loving habits of many who have undertaken to discharge the duties of the same stewardship in our own day!

III. A BOLD, DECIDED DECLARATION OF THE GOSPEL IS ALWAYS NECESSARY. Chris-

tianity is no religion for cowards. It is a gross error to suppose that it unmans its followers. The greatest heroes of the first century were the Christians. A manly courage is much needed in the present day. The gospel should always be declared clearly, positively, and confidently by those who have a sure faith in it themselves. It is a great mistake to think that a timid, apologetic tone will be more conciliatory. We have no need to be thus timidly apologetic for the gospel, if it is true; but if it is not true, we have no right to defend it at all. In either case a weak, half-hearted advocacy is culpable. Enmity is best overcome and ridicule shamed by courage. It is most foolish for the Christian advocate to be afraid of boldly stating his beliefs before his sceptical opponent. Let us, however, distinguish true boldness from heedless provocation on the one hand, and from mere insolence on the other. Christians are to be wise as serpents, to be courteous, and as far as in them lies to live peaceably with all men.

IV. THE SOURCE OF CHRISTIAN BOLDNESS IS IN GOD. This boldness is a very different thing from mere brute daring. It is spiritual, sober, thoughtful. It has to face spiritual as well as carnal foes. It comes, like other Christian graces, as an inspiration from the Spirit of God. They who are most deeply in communion with God when by themselves will be most thoroughly brave when in the world. Thus Joshua was made courageous by his vision of the "captain of the host of the Lord" (Josh. v. 14). —W. F. A.

Ver. 4.—*Entrusted with the gospel.* I. THE GOSPEL IS A TRUST. 1. The gospel is of great value. If property is put in trust it is presumably valuable. We carefully guard what we prize highly. God's message of reconciliation is a charter of liberty, a covenant of grace, a promissory note of future blessings. 2. The gospel needs to be guarded and administered. It is in danger of being lost, forgotten, perverted, and corrupted. Trustees are required in order to preserve it in its integrity and to give it forth to those who need it. 3. The gospel is entrusted to men. There are those who are put in trust with the gospel. Men are to trust God; God also trusts men. He confides in the honour and devotion of his people. As the steward is entrusted with his master's estate, the servant of God receives a trust of the rich treasures of the gospel. The treasure is committed to earthen vessels. Thus does God honour his children and use them for his good purposes.

II. THE TRUSTEES OF THE GOSPEL ARE CHOSEN AND APPROVED OF GOD. God called the prophets, and Christ called the apostles. Every true Christian minister is called of God. The Church is God's chosen company of trustees of the gospel. Christian nations are providentially appointed for its custodianship. Certain qualifications are required in the trustees, in order that they may be approved of God. 1. They must hold the truth themselves. "Not of error" (ver. 3). The first requisites are an understanding of and a belief in the gospel. 2. They must live in accordance with the truth. "Nor of uncleanness." The trustee of the holy gospel must be a regenerate man. Otherwise his conduct will damage the gospel which he holds. 3. They must be honest in the discharge of the trust. "Nor in guile." No self-seeking, double-dealing, or men-pleasing can be permitted in the trustees of the gospel. They must be sincerely devoted to the truth that is entrusted to them.

III. THE TRUSTEESHIP OF THE GOSPEL IMPOSES IMPORTANT DUTIES. 1. The gospel must be preserved in its integrity. The trustees are not permitted to tamper with the trust. We have no right to add to or to detract from the gospel as it is given to us in the New Testament. It is a matter of honour that one who holds office in a Christian Church should not avail himself of the advantages of his position to advance private views which in any way militate against what is contained in the gospel charter on which the Church is founded. The New Testament is a trust-deed, and its provisions must be studiously observed, or the trusteeship implied by any active work in the Church must be resigned. Any other course is dishonest. 2. The trust of the gospel must be discharged for the benefit of those for whom it is designed. The trustees must study the interests of the beneficiaries. Trustees of the gospel are teachers of the gospel. This truth of God is not to be wrapped up in a napkin, but made use of for the good of mankind. The Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God that ultimately the Gentiles might receive those oracles from their hands. The Church is intrusted with the gospel that she may convey it to the world. The trust of the gospel carries

with it the obligation of undertaking missionary enterprises. 3. The trust of the gospel must be *discharged to the approval of God*. It is his trust. He will call the stewards to account. Their aim, therefore, must be, not to please men, but "God which proveth our hearts."—W. F. A.

VERS. 7, 8.—*The use of affectionateness in commending the gospel.* It is very interesting to observe what a wealth of affection St. Paul poured out upon the Churches which came under his care. He was not satisfied with declaring the facts of the gospel and demonstrating the truth of them to the conviction of his hearers. He was very different from a cold philosopher who simply aims at establishing a certain thesis. Deep feeling entered into his work. A touching gentleness and affectionateness may be felt as the pervading tone of his treatment of his converts. He does not behave as a master who is ambitious to lord it over the heritage of Christ. He is like a nurse with her children. The example of the great apostle is worthy of the study of all Christian teachers.

I. THE GOSPEL IS BEST COMMENDED BY AFFECTIONATENESS IN THE CHRISTIAN PREACHER. The gospel bases its first claims on its own truth and reasonableness, and it is necessary that men should be convinced on these points if due respect for the rights of the human intellect is to be observed. Nevertheless the most persuasive power is not to be found in hard reason; nor does it reside in the splendours of eloquence. It is much more effective when it comes from simple, natural affectionateness. Men are more vulnerable in the heart than in the head. The Christian teacher must attack both strongholds; he will be foolish indeed if he neglect the more accessible one. It is often seen in experience that affectionateness conquers where convincing logic falls dead, and where glowing rhetoric only dazzles the hearers. 1. *The influence of the preacher depends chiefly on his affectionateness.* His relations with his hearers are personal. He is more than the herald. He is the shepherd of the flock, the father or brother of the family, the nurse of the babes in Christ. Thus ties of love between pastor and people not only make the association in Church life happy; they also afford the greatest aids to the work of the ministry. 2. *The truth of the gospel is best revealed through affectionateness.* The gospel is no dreamy dogma, no hard law, no pompous manifesto. It is a message from a father to his children, and a story of love in death. The Bible is a most human book, homely, brotherly, pathetic in its affectionate character. But this character of the Bible and of the gospel is marred and almost lost to view when harsh language and cold feelings accompany the preaching of it. The gospel of love should be offered in a kindred spirit of love.

II. A RIGHT FEELING OF THE SPIRIT OF THE GOSPEL WILL LEAD TO AFFECTIONATENESS IN THE CHRISTIAN PREACHER. It is most important that the desired affectionateness should be genuine. The pretence of it is mere hypocrisy. Affectionate language which does not spring from a heart of love is a mockery. It is better to have an honest hardness than this assumed unctuousness. It is important, also, that the affectionateness should be healthy and manly, and should not degenerate into effeminate sentimentality. The gospel itself should inspire the right affectionateness. 1. *The spirit of the gospel being love, if we truly receive the gospel it will inspire love.* The greatest change which it produces in men is to cast out selfishness, and to give a heart of love to God and man. 2. *We best show our love to Christ by loving our brethren.* We love Christ in them. He who loves Christ warmly will have the spirit which St. Paul manifested to the Churches under his care.—W. F. A.

VER. 12.—*Worthy of God.* I. TO BE WORTHY OF GOD IS THE HIGHEST AIM OF SPIRITUAL ASPIRATION. It is so high an aim that it seems to be hopelessly out of our reach. Are we not in everything unworthy of God? Our sinfulness is direct ill-desert, our unbelief, weakness, and imperfection dishonouring to Divine grace, our very virtues and good deeds of no absolute worth, because at best we are unprofitable servants, who have but done that which it was our duty to do. Nevertheless: 1. We should *aim* at the highest attainment, though as yet we may be far from reaching it. 2. We may become *increasingly less unworthy* of God. 3. We may *truly honour God* by our character and deeds. 4. We may hope *at last* to be worthy of God in the sense that we *shall* be fit to dwell with him; no disgrace to his Name when we bear it, and able to take our position as members of his family.

II. **TO BE WORTHY OF GOD IS TO BE LIVING IN A RIGHT COURSE OF DAILY LIFE.** This is expressed by the word "walk." 1. *It must be a continuous course.* To have passing phases of very pure spiritual thought is not to be so worthy of God as to walk continuously in obedience to his will though on a much lower plain. 2. *It is to be striven after in daily life.* We do not want angels' wings wherewith to soar into unearthly altitudes. We can walk on the lowly earth and yet be worthy of God. The worthiness depends on the spirit of our conduct, not on the sphere in which we live. With coarse surroundings, in toilsome drudgery, by humble tasks, the soul can so live as to be worthy of God.

III. **IT IS THE DUTY OF ALL CHRISTIANS TO BE WORTHY OF GOD.** The requirement does not belong to a counsel of perfection which a few rare souls may adopt at their will. It is laid upon all Christians as a duty. The special ground of the obligation is in what God has done for his people. He has called them "into his own kingdom and glory." 1. *Gratitude* requires us to walk worthy of God. His gifts and his promises reveal love and sacrifice on his part which naturally call for love and devotion on ours. 2. *The future destiny of Christians* also demands this conduct. The heir should behave as befits his future position. "Prince Hal" was an unworthy prince in his youth, especially because he disgraced himself in view of an exalted future. Christians are heirs of God's kingdom. Therefore they should walk worthily of him who has called them into it.

IV. **IT IS THE OBJECT OF CHRISTIAN PREACHING TO LEAD MEN TO BE THUS WORTHY OF GOD.** If the aim of the spiritual life must be high, so also must be that of its guide and teacher. The preacher's work is not done when a soul is first turned from the slavery of sin to the service of Christ. Then follows all the education and training of the new life up to the perfect worthiness. Hence the need of affectionate influence and all graces of persuasion.—W. F. A.

Ver. 13.—*The Word of God.* I. **ST. PAUL CLAIMED TO BE A TEACHER OF THE WORD OF GOD.** 1. *He did not admit that his teachings were merely human speculations on religious subjects.* His position was entirely different from that of the most gifted philosopher, more exalted since he stood forth as the apostle of superhuman truth, and also more humble since he subordinated his own private ideas to the message of which he was but the bearer. 2. *St. Paul did not profess to be simply a witness of the facts of the gospel.* That was the position of the first Christian teachers. St. Peter and his companions of the day of Pentecost presented themselves as witnesses of the great transactions of the life of Christ, and chiefly of his resurrection. They narrated what they had seen and heard (Acts ii. 32; 1 John i. 1). St. Paul had not been a companion of our Lord. But he had something higher than the knowledge of experience and observation. He did not learn his gospel of men; it was revealed to him in the solitudes of Arabia. 3. *St. Paul claimed to be inspired with a Divine revelation.* It was not his thought, nor even his testimony of Divine facts, but the Word of God that he proclaimed. It is plain that the apostle used his own language, and spoke in a characteristic and individual style. He also reasoned with his own intellect; for inspiration does not simply breathe through a man as through a mechanical instrument. But his language and thought and whole being were illumined and elevated by the Spirit of God, so that he saw the truth of God and was able to speak the Word of God.

II. **THE THESSALONIANS ACCEPTED ST. PAUL'S MESSAGE AS THE WORD OF GOD.** 1. *They admitted the fact.* They did so, no doubt, first because the power and personal influence of the apostle impressed them; then because they were convinced by his arguments; then because they must have felt the inherent beauty and greatness of what he taught; and lastly because they saw the good effects of his gospel. By these four gradations we are led on to a more and more consistent belief in the Divine authority of the gospel; viz. by authority, by argument, by the excellency of the gospel itself, and by its fruits. 2. *The Thessalonians received the message as befitted its Divine origin.* (1) They believed in its truth. God only speaks what is true. To establish a message as the Word of God is to prove its truth. (2) They submitted to its authority. There may be many things in the gospel which we cannot account for. Our faith in God should be implicit. (3) They yielded to its influence. Thus they let it work in them. The Word of God is a word of grace and a word of command. To accept it aright we must avail ourselves of the grace and obey the command. To

receive a word of pardon as from a king is to leave the prison when the door is open. To receive a message as from a master is to carry out the order.

III. **ST. PAUL'S TEACHING PROVED ITSELF TO BE THE WORD OF GOD BY ITS EFFECTS.** It was found to be working in the Church at Thessalonica. The Word of God is powerful (Heb. iv. 12). Christ's words were spirit and life (John vi. 63). This Divine Word is no barren revelation of far-off celestial curiosities. It is a message concerning human and earthly as well as heavenly affairs. Like the first creative word, when God spake and it was done, the message of the new creation is a word that effects. God's words are deeds. But that they may be deeds in us it is necessary for us to receive them in faith. And in proportion to our faith will the energy of God's Word work in us.—W. F. A.

Ver. 16.—*Fulness of sins.* "To fill up their sins alway." This is a terrible and mysterious expression. Some light may be gained by considering it in relation to the history of the Jews, as it is of these people that it is here written. They had accumulated sin upon sin in slaying Christ and the prophets, in expelling the apostles from their communion, and finally in hindering the Gentiles from receiving that gospel which they had rejected for themselves. But there was to come an end to this tale of wickedness. The time was drawing near when the Jews would no longer have power to hurt the cause of Christianity, and when swift punishment for their accumulated iniquities would descend in the destruction of their city and nation. They were hastening to fill up the sins which must issue in this fearful doom.

I. **THE GREATEST SIN IS THAT OF SINNING WITHOUT RESTRAINT.** It is a mistake to speak of every sin as of infinite guilt, or of all sins as equally guilty. Such an assertion is not only false, it tends either to despair or to reckless excess in sinning. However far one has gone in sin, it is better to stop than to go on to greater enormities. To be adding sin to sin, and to be sinning "alway," are signs of reckless, abandoned depravity.

II. **THERE IS A FULNESS OF SINS WHICH BRINGS ITS OWN PENALTY.** When sin reaches this point the penalty can no longer be stayed. The cup once full flows over in wrath and ruin. It is as though forbearance and guilt were in the scales. When guilt is full the balance dips. There is an end to all possible long-suffering. The more men go on in excesses of sin, the faster do they approach the inevitable day of reckoning. The sooner the sin is filled up to the measure which passes endurance, the sooner must the stroke of doom fall.

III. **FULNESS OF SINS MUST LEAD TO FULNESS OF PUNISHMENT.** They who fill up their sins always will have the wrath "come upon them to the uttermost." The worst debtor must be made to pay the last farthing. The swifter the rush downhill, the greater the crash at the bottom. The more tares that are sown in spring, the more bundles to burn in harvest. He who fills the present life with sins will have the next life filled with wrath.

IV. **THERE SEEMS TO BE A LIMIT TO SINS.** There is a fulness of sins. There is no fulness of virtues; these can be developed indefinitely. The good man is growing up to a perfection. The bad man is being corrupted, not to a perfection, but to a fulness. Evil has limits; goodness has none. Satan is let loose for a time. God restrains the wrath of the wicked. Sin, through rebellion against God, cannot break away from all Divine control. Sins are limited by several means: 1. *Capacity.* We have a limited power of sinning. 2. *Time.* God sometimes cuts the sinner off in the midst of his days, and brings the guilty nation to destruction. 3. *Providential control.* The fulness of sins is not the amount which God predestines to be committed, for God is not the author of sin, nor does he will or permit it. This fulness is the measure beyond which God stays the evil from proceeding. When the tide of iniquity, driven onwards by rebellious powers, reaches this fulness, God says, "Here shall thy proud waves be stayed," and the storm beats itself out in impotent fury.—W. F. A.

Ver. 18.—*Hindered by Satan.* St. Paul tells his friends at Thessalonica that he was anxious to revisit them, and that he made the attempt to do so more than once, but that he was hindered by Satan. The direct impediment may have been the opposition of his enemies (Acts xvii. 13, 14); or it may have been bodily sickness—"a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan." Whatever this immediate and visible hin-

drance was, the point of interest to us is that St. Paul attributed it to Satan. Let us consider the hindrance thrown in the way of good work by Satan.

I. SATAN HINDERS THE WORK OF THE GOSPEL. 1. *The hindrance is to be seen in all times.* Doors are shut; enemies are raised up; misunderstandings throw mission work into confusion. 2. *The source of the hindrance may be discovered by its character.* "By their fruits they shall know them." The excuse may be the preservation of order, the restraint of excesses, or conservative respect for old ways. That the real source of opposition is Satanic may be known when (1) bad men are the agents, (2) a good moral reformation is frustrated. 3. *This hindrance converts mission work into a warfare.* The Church becomes an army. The forces of light and darkness are drawn up in battle array. New territory cannot simply be claimed by planting the standard of the cross upon it. It must be fought for and won in conquest.

II. SATAN'S HINDRANCE IS INDEPENDENT OF THE CHARACTER OF THE CHRISTIAN LABOURERS. Of course, if these men receive Satan into their hearts, so much the more effectually will their mission be frustrated. They become traitors who destroy their own cause by opening the gates of the citadel to the foe. Sin indulged by the servant of Christ is treason. This is a certain and fearful hindrance to success. But the Christian labourer may be faithful and may still be hindered by Satan. In the old tradition Satan dared to oppose the archangel Michael. Shall we be surprised that he opposes a man? Satan resisted and tempted Christ. He hindered St. Paul. Therefore do not let us think that all difficulties will vanish if only we are true and faithful. Satan may hinder us, though we are innocent, through the wickedness of other men.

III. SATAN'S HINDRANCE IS OVERRULED BY GOD'S PROVIDENCE. Here St. Paul writes of Satan hindering him. In the Acts St. Luke tells us how, when the apostle and his friends "assayed to go into Bithynia, . . . the Spirit of Jesus suffered them not" (Acts xvi. 7). Is it not possible that sometimes the two influences may have concurred in effecting the same results though originating in the very opposite sources and prompted by contradictory motives? Thus the messenger of Satan that was sent to buffet St. Paul was the means of applying a wholesome discipline and of saving him from undue self-exaltation. Thus, too, though Satan troubled Job, with the object of showing him to be a hypocrite; the great trial proved to be for the glory of God as well as for the honour of his servant. Satan tempted Christ, and so made him the better High Priest for us. Satan compassed the death of Christ, and thereby led to the redemption of the world. Satan's hindrance to our work may be overruled for its more full accomplishment in the end, just as the east winds of early spring help to secure a good fruit harvest by checking the too-early development of bud and blossom. Moreover, all this hindrance is but temporary. Satan's reign is for a season only. And when the hindrance is removed the final result will not have suffered for the delay. Perhaps it will even come the quicker for the temporary hindrance, as, when once it bursts its bounds, the stream rushes out with the more vehemence for having been dammed up. Let us not be impatient. Remember that God has all eternity to work with.—W. F. A.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER III.

CONTENTS.—The apostle, no longer able to repress his longing and anxiety for the Thessalonians, resolved to be left alone at Athens, and sent Timothy for the purpose of exhorting them to endurance amid their persecutions, and to bring him information concerning their condition. Timothy had just rejoined him at Corinth, and the apostle expresses the extreme satisfaction which he felt at the welcome tidings which his messenger had brought of their faith

and love; it put new life into him, and comforted him in all his affliction and distress. He prays God that he may be permitted to revisit the Thessalonians, and to supply what was still defective in their faith; and he makes it the object of his earnest supplication that the Lord Jesus would make them so to increase in love and establish them in holiness that they may be blameless at his appearance with all his holy ones.

Ver. 1.—This verse is closely connected with the concluding verses of the last

chapter, from which it should not be separated. Wherefore; on account of my affection toward you and my repeated vain attempts to see you. When we. Some refer the plural to Paul, Silas, and Timothy (ch. i. 1); others to Paul and Silas, as Timothy had been sent to Thessalonica; but it is to be restricted to Paul, as is evident from ch. ii. 38 and iii. 5, and inasmuch as Paul was left alone at Athens; the plural being here used for the singular. Could no longer forbear; could no longer restrain our longing and anxiety to know your condition. We thought it good; a happy translation of the original, expressing both "we were pleased and resolved." To be left at Athens alone; an expression of solitude. Alone in Athens, in the very metropolis of idolatry. Compare with this the common saying, "Alone in London." In the Acts of the Apostles we are informed that Paul came to Athens alone, and that there he waited for Silas and Timothy (Acts xvii. 14, 15), and that these fellow-workers rejoined him at Corinth (Acts xviii. 5). Many expositors, however, from this and the next verse, infer that Timothy at least joined Paul at Athens, but was sent back by him to Thessalonica, to inquire into the condition of his converts in that city. Such is the opinion of Olshausen, Neander, De Wette, Lünemann, Hofmann, Koch, and Schott; and, among English expositors, of Macknight, Paley, Eadie, Jowett, Ellicott, and Wordsworth. There is no contradiction between this view and the narrative of the Acts. Luke merely omits to mention Timothy's short visit to Athens and departure from it, and relates only the final reunion of these three fellow-workers at Corinth. Indeed, Paley gives this coming of Timothy to Athens as one of the undesigned coincidences between this Epistle and the Acts of the Apostles.¹ Still, however, we are not necessitated to suppose that Timothy joined the apostle at Athens. The words admit of the opinion that he was sent by Paul direct from Berea, and not from Athens; and that he and Silas did not join Paul until they came from Macedonia to Corinth. Such is the opinion of Hug, Wieseler, Koppe, Alford, and Vaughan.

Ver. 2.—And sent Timotheus. This was a great act of self-sacrifice on the part of Paul; because to be without an assistant and fellow-labourer in the gospel in such a city as Athens, the very centre and strong hold of heathenism, full of temples and idols, must necessarily have brought upon him many discomforts; and yet his anxiety for the Thessalonians overcame all motives

of personal convenience. Our brother, and minister of God, and our fellow-labourer. The reading of manuscripts here varies. Some important manuscripts read, "our brother and fellow-worker with God"—a phrase which is elsewhere employed by the apostle: "for we are labourers together with God" (1 Cor. iii. 9). Retaining, however, the reading of the text, Paul here calls Timothy his brother, expressing his esteem and fraternal affection for him; "a minister of God," expressing Timothy's official position and the honour conferred on him by Christ; and his "fellow-labourer," expressing his laborious work in preaching the gospel, and reminding the Thessalonians of his labours among them. Different reasons have been assigned for this eulogy pronounced by Paul on Timothy. Some suppose that it was to show how eagerly he consulted the welfare of the Thessalonians, by sending to them a person of such importance and of such use to himself as Timothy (Calvin); others think that it was to recommend Timothy to the favourable regard of the Thessalonians in the absence of himself (Chrysostom); but it appears to be the natural outburst of affection for his favourite disciple. In the gospel of Christ. Timothy had laboured with Paul and Silas in the publication of the gospel at Thessalonica, and was consequently well known to the Thessalonians, and favourably regarded by them. To establish you, and to comfort you; or rather, *to exhort you*, as the matter of exhortation follows. Concerning your faith; in order to the continuance and furtherance of your faith. The purpose of the mission of Timothy; namely, to confirm the Thessalonians in the faith, to exhort them to perseverance in Christianity, notwithstanding the persecutions to which they were exposed.

Ver. 3.—This verse contains the object of the exhortation; the clause is an accusative to the verb. That no man should be moved (or, *shaken*) by; or rather, *in*; expressing the position in which they were placed. These afflictions. The same word as "tribulation" in the next verse. For yourselves know. How they knew is explained, partly from the forewarnings of the apostle, and partly from their own experience. That we; not to be referred to Paul only, nor to Paul and his companions, Silas and Timothy, nor to Paul and the Thessalonians, but to all Christians in general; that we Christians. Are appointed thereunto; namely, by God. Our afflictions do not result from chance, but are the necessary consequence of our Christianity; they arise from the appointment and ordinance of God. Tribulation is the Christian's portion. Whatever truth there may be in the saying that prosperity

¹ Paley's 'Hæc Paulina,' 1 Thessalonians, No. iil.

is the promise of the Old Testament, affliction is certainly the promise of the New. We must be conformed to Christ in his sufferings. "In the world," says our Lord, "ye shall have tribulation" (John xvi. 33). When our Lord called Paul to his apostleship, he showed him how great things he must suffer for his Name's sake (Acts ix. 16). All the apostles suffered from persecution, and concerning Christians in general Paul asserts that it is only through tribulation that they can enter into the kingdom of God (Acts xiv. 22; see Rev. vii. 14).

Ver. 4.—For; assigning the reason why they should not be moved by these afflictions. Verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we; here also Christians in general. Should suffer. Not a simple future, but denoting that it was thus appointed in the counsels of God—that their tribulation was the result of the Divine purpose. Tribulation (*affliction*); even as it came to pass, and ye know; that is, from your own experience. The affliction, then, was not some strange thing which had befallen them.

Ver. 5.—For this cause, when I could no longer forbear; no longer repress my anxiety, and endure my want of information concerning you. I sent to know your faith; to receive information concerning your spiritual condition. Lest by some means the tempter; a designation of Satan, used also by Matthew (iv. 3). Have tempted you, and our labour be in vain; that is, useless, without result (see on ch. ii. 1; comp. also Gal. iv. 11, "I am afraid, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain"). The temptation to which the Thessalonians were exposed was that of apostasy from Christianity, through the fear or endurance of persecution. That the tempter had tempted them is probable—it was almost unavoidable; that he had succeeded in his temptation, and had thus rendered the apostle's labours among them useless, was uncertain—a contingency which might possibly have taken place.

Ver. 6.—But now when Timotheus came from you unto us. Timothy, as we learn from the Acts, in company with Silas, joined Paul at Corinth (Acts xviii. 15), and brought him information concerning the state of the Thessalonian Church. And brought us good tidings; the same word which is elsewhere employed for preaching the gospel. The information which Timothy brought to the apostle was as it were a gospel to him (comp. Luke ii. 10, "Behold I bring you good tidings"). Of your faith and charity. The good tidings which Timothy brought referred to the spiritual condition of the Thessalonians—their faith had not been shaken and their love had not

waxed cold under the persecutions to which they were exposed; and along with their faith and love was the affection which they bore to the apostle, and their earnest desire to see him. And that ye have constant remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us, as we also to see you. The affection between the Thessalonians and the apostle was mutual.

Ver. 7.—Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you—with reference to you—in all our affliction and distress. Some refer "affliction" to outward troubles, and "distress" to internal evils—referring the one to the persecutions arising from his Corinthian opponents, and the other to his bodily infirmity (Koch). Such a distinction is, however, precarious. The words do not refer to the apostle's anxiety on account of the Thessalonians, for that was removed by the coming of Timothy. Clearly some external trouble is denoted. Paul, when he preached the gospel at Corinth, and before he obtained the protection of Gallio, was exposed to much persecution and danger. The Jews had expelled him from their synagogue (Acts xviii. 6), and attempts had been made against him which at length broke out into an insurrection against him, when he was dragged before the Roman tribunal (Acts xviii. 12). His condition at Corinth when he wrote this Epistle was dark and gloomy. By your faith; by the steadfastness of your faith. The good news which Timothy brought of the faith and love of the Thessalonians comforted the apostle amid all the trials and difficulties and disappointments of his ministry (comp. with this passage 2 Cor. vii. 4-7).

Ver. 8.—For now we live. Not to be referred to the eternal and future life (Chrysostom); or to be weakened as if it merely signified, "We relish and enjoy life notwithstanding our affliction and distress" (Pelt); but the meaning is the good tidings which Timothy has brought have imparted new life unto us; "we are in the full strength and freshness of life, we do not feel the sorrows and tribulations which the outer world prepares for us" (Lünemann). The apostle considers his condition of affliction and distress as a kind of death; so, elsewhere he says, "I die daily" (1 Cor. xv. 31); and from which death he was now again raised to life. If; provided—a hypothetical assumption. Ye stand fast; continue firm in the faith of the gospel. In the Lord; the element of true life.

Ver. 9.—For; assigning the reason of the declaration, "now we live." What thanks can we render to God again for you. As their steadfastness in the faith was owing to God's grace, thanks was to be rendered to God on their behalf. For all the joy; joy

in all its fulness (comp. Jas. i. 2, "Count it all joy"). Wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God. Giving prominence to the purity of their joy.

Ver. 10.—Night and day (comp. ch. ii. 9) praying exceedingly. Denoting the intense earnestness and anxiety of the apostle for the spiritual welfare of the Thessalonians, that found vent to itself in incessant prayer for them. Now follows the subject-matter of his prayer: That we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith. The faith of the Thessalonians was not perfect; it was "lacking" in several respects. It was defective in extent; they were ignorant of many of the doctrines of the gospel, and had formed erroneous views of other doctrines, such as the second advent. It was defective in application; they had not yet renounced all the corrupt practices of their former heathen life, nor had they embodied all the precepts of the gospel into their actual life. The Thessalonians were as yet but novices. So also the reason which impelled Paul to wish to come to Rome was to supply that which was lacking in the faith of the Roman converts (Rom. i. 11). Confirmation was a work in which the apostle delighted, being both important and desirable. In general, faith at first is weak and defective; it is only developed by degrees. Especially is it increased by every increase of spiritual knowledge. "Add to your faith knowledge" (2 Pet. i. 5, 6). The remark of Calvin is worthy of attention: "Paul is desirous of having the opportunity given him of supplying what is wanting in the faith of the Thessalonians, or, which is the same thing, completing in all its parts their faith which was as yet imperfect. Yet this is the faith which he had previously extolled marvellously. From this we infer that those who far surpass others are still far distant from the goal. Hence, whatever progress we may have made, let us keep in view our deficiencies, that we may not be reluctant to aim at something further."

Ver. 11.—Now God himself and our Father; or, as we would express it according to the English idiom, *God himself, our Father*, omitting the conjunction. And our Lord Jesus

Christ. Some suppose that the three Divine Persons of the sacred Trinity are here expressly named: God the Holy Ghost, and the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ; but the words in the original will not bear this sense: "God himself and our Father" is the same Divine Person. Direct. It is to be observed that the verb "direct" is in the Greek in the singular, thus denoting a unity between God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. At all events, we have an express prayer directed to Christ, thus necessarily implying his Divine nature. Our way unto you.

Ver. 12.—And the Lord. By some referred to the First Person of the blessed Trinity, God our Father (Alford); by others to the Holy Ghost, as the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ are afterwards both mentioned in the prayer; but it is to be referred, according to the prevailing usage in Paul's Epistle, to the Lord Jesus Christ. Make you; literally, *you may the Lord make*, putting the emphasis on "you." To increase and abound in love one toward another; toward your fellow-Christians. And toward all men; toward the human race in general. "This is the character of Divine love to comprehend all; whereas human love hath respect to one man and not to another" (Theophylact). Even as we do toward you; that is, as we abound in love toward you.

Ver. 13.—To the end (*in order that*) he may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness before God. In the sight of God, in his judgment who searcheth the hearts. The words, "before God," are to be conjoined neither with "holiness" nor with "unblamable," but with the whole phrase, "unblamable in holiness." Even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; at the second advent. With all his saints. By "saints" or "holy ones" are by some understood the angels who shall accompany Christ to judgment; but although the term "saints" is used of the angels in the Old Testament, it is never so employed in the New. The word seems to denote those holy men who have died in the Lord and who shall be raised at the advent, and accompany Christ to the judgment.

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 3, 4.—*Connection between affliction and religion.* True religion, instead of delivering those who possess it from suffering, rather entails suffering upon them. Believers are appointed by God to suffer tribulation. This was peculiarly true of the early Christians, but it is true generally. We are appointed to afflictions (1) in order that by them our fitness for heaven and our relish for our everlasting rest may be increased; (2) in order that we may thus learn the blessed graces of patience and resignation—graces which we could not learn in health and prosperity, and which will be useful to us in a world of glory (1 Cor. iv. 17, 18).

Vers. 8, 8.—Steadfastness in faith and affliction. "That no man should be moved by these afflictions." We are certainly not now exposed to persecutions, but still there are afflictions peculiar to the Christian life. We are forewarned of them, and therefore are not to regard them as strange or unexpected calamities. 1. *This steadfastness is the work of God.* God is able to make us stand, and will cause us to be more than conquerors. He can even, while we continue in this state of warfare, establish our hearts unblamable in holiness. 2. *This steadfastness is the work of man.* We must co-operate with God. We must beware of being either terrified by threats or allured by blandishments. We must exercise prayer, watchfulness, and the active performance of Christian duties.

Vers. 6-8.—The duties of minister and people. In the reciprocal feelings of the apostle and his Thessalonian converts, we gain instruction regarding the mutual conduct of minister and people. 1. *Duties of the minister.* The affection and anxiety which he should have for his people; the earnestness with which he should pray for them; the gratitude with which he should thank God for their spiritual welfare; the joy which he experiences in the steadfastness of their faith and the warmth of their charity; the care and diligence with which he should supply what is lacking in their faith. 2. *Duties of the people.* The reciprocal affection which they should have for their minister; the good remembrance which they should entertain of him; the obedience which they should render unto him in spiritual matters; the constant prayers which they should offer up for him.

Ver. 9.—Joy in the spiritual welfare of others. We rejoice in the temporal prosperity of our friends; much more ought we to rejoice in their spiritual prosperity. "Now we live," says the apostle, "if ye stand fast in the Lord." And similarly the Apostle John says, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the truth." We must imitate the angels in heaven, who rejoice at the repentance of a sinner. We must imbibe the spirit of the Lord Jesus himself, who is represented as rejoicing when he had found the sheep that was lost. We should rejoice (1) because souls are rescued from hell and Satan; (2) because Christ is glorified in the salvation of men; (3) because new members are born into the family of God; (4) because boundless happiness is secured.

Ver. 10.—Defective faith. Our faith may be defective in various ways. 1. *In its quality.* It may be mingled with unbelief or with doubts; we may only partially believe. If so, let our prayer be, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." 2. *In its objects.* It may not embrace all the revealed truths of religion; we may be ignorant of some of them, or have adopted erroneous notions concerning others. If so, we must "add to our faith knowledge." 3. *In its efficacy.* It may be too much of a dead faith; it may not exercise itself outwardly; it may not sufficiently influence our practice. If so, we must remember that "faith, if it hath not works, is dead." 4. *In its steadfastness.* Our faith may be wavering, unstable, liable to fail; it may be variable; sometimes we may be strong in the faith, and at other times weak. If so, let our prayer be, "Lord, increase our faith."

Ver. 12.—Prayer addressed to Christ. We have here an instance of prayer addressed to Christ. The apostle prays that Christ may direct his way to the Thessalonians, and make them abound in love. The martyr Stephen breathed out his spirit in a prayer to Christ. And Christians in general are represented as those who in every place call on the Lord Jesus. "There is no foundation," as Bishop Alexander remarks, "for any such statement as that 'truly primitive and apostolic prayer is invariably to God through Christ.'" Christ himself is often in Scripture the direct Object of worship. Now, if Christ be not God, the apostle and early Christians were idolaters. The divinity of Christ is the only ground on which the worship of Christ can be defended.

Vers. 12, 13.—Religious progress. 1. *The nature of religious progress.* It is an increase in love to our fellow-Christians and to all men. 2. *The ultimate end of*

religious progress. The establishment of our hearts in holiness, and our being presented blameless before the Lord Jesus Christ at his coming.

Ver. 13.—*The ultimate end of the Christian dispensation.* The establishment of believers in holiness before God at the advent of Christ is the ultimate design of Christianity. Or, as Paul elsewhere expresses the same truth, "Christ loved the Church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. v. 26, 27). And again, "That ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. i. 8). What a glorious consummation! What a perfection of holiness! When faith and love will both be perfect; when all that is lacking in our faith will be supplied; and all that is defective in our love will be remedied; and when the whole Church will be presented faultless and blameless before God; when sin and moral imperfection will be for ever excluded!

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—5.—*The design of Timothy's mission to Thessalonica.* When the apostle could no longer control his longing to see his converts, he sent them Timothy by way of relieving his solicitude in their behalf. His love for them was manifest in all the circumstances of this mission.

I. HE SACRIFICES HIS OWN IMMEDIATE COMFORT TO THEIR BENEFIT. "We thought it good to be left at Athens alone." 1. *Though Timothy was most necessary to him in the ministry, he parted with him for their good.* 2. *Athens, as a seat of boundless idolatry, exercised such a depressing influence upon him that he needed the stimulus of Timothy's society.* Yet he denied himself this comfort that he might serve them.

II. HE DESPATCHES TO THEM THE MOST HIGHLY ESTEEMED OF HIS FELLOW-LABOURERS. "Our brother, and minister of God, and fellow-labourer in the gospel of Christ." He selects one best fitted to serve them by his gifts, his experience, and his knowledge of the apostle's views and wishes. The various titles here given to Timothy help to honour him before the Churches, and to challenge the abiding confidence of the Thessalonians.

III. THE DESIGN OF TIMOTHY'S MISSION. It was twofold: "To establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith," and "to know your faith." 1. *The necessity for his mission.* The afflictions which they were enduring for the gospel. (1) These afflictions had a most disturbing tendency. "That no one be disquieted by these afflictions." The converts had newly emerged from heathenism, and therefore the apostle was more concerned on their behalf. Yet, as we know from the Second Epistle, they remained firm. "We ourselves glory in you in the Churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure" (2 Thess. i. 4). (2) These afflictions were of Divine appointment. "For yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto." They were, therefore, "no strange thing." They come by the will of God, who has determined their nature, severity, and duration. "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves." The afflictions were not accidental. (3) They were clearly foreseen by the apostle. "When we were with you we told you beforehand that we are to suffer affliction." (a) It is the duty of ministers to forewarn their converts of coming affliction, lest they should be offended thereby. (b) Converts, when forewarned, ought to be forearmed, so that they may not sink under them, much less forsake the gospel on account of them. "For the light afflictions are but for a moment, and work out an exceeding weight of glory." (4) Satan is the main source of danger in these afflictions. "Lest by any means the tempter had tempted you." The apostle was "not ignorant of his devices," and was apprehensive lest Satan should get an advantage of his converts by moving them from the hope of the gospel, and causing them to relinquish their profession of it. (5) The only security against Satan's temptations—faith; for this "is the victory that overcometh the world"—this is the shield "wherewith they could quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." 2. *The manner in which Timothy's mission was to be discharged.* "To establish you and to comfort

you concerning your faith." (1) In relation to the Thessalonians. Timothy would (a) establish them by giving them a fresh exhibition of the truth with its manifold evidences. The strongest faith needs confirmation. The apostles were in the habit of confirming the souls of the disciples (Acts xiv. 22). (b) He would comfort them concerning their faith by exhibiting the example of Christ, the glory that must accrue to God from their steadfastness, and the hope of the coming kingdom. (2) In relation to the apostle himself. "To know your faith." One object of his sending Timothy was to put an end to his own anxieties and doubts on their behalf, for he might fear that "his labour would be in vain." He might hope the best but fear the worst, for he was most deeply concerned in their welfare.—T. C.

Vers. 6-8.—*The happy issue of Timothy's visit to Thessalonica.* This Epistle was written immediately after Timothy's return as expressive of the apostle's hearty relief at his tidings.

I. THE GOOD TIDINGS. "Your faith and charity, and that ye have remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us, as we also to see you." 1. *Their faith.* He was gratified to hear of the steadfastness and soundness of their faith. They abounded in the (1) grace of faith, which was unfeigned, growing, and lively; (2) in the doctrine of faith, which had much light in it; (3) in the profession of faith, which they held fast without wavering, out of a pure conscience. 2. *Their love.* This, which was the fruit of their faith, had not waxed cold on account of abounding iniquity. Their faith worked by love. The two graces are always found together. Christian love must be without dissimulation, in deed and in truth, fervent and constant. 3. *Their constant and kindly remembrance of the apostle.* "Ye have a good remembrance of us always." They thought much of their spiritual teachers, bore their persons in memory, thought of them with gratitude and respect, and, no doubt, remembered them in their prayers. 4. *Their desire to see the apostle.* They desired to have their memories refreshed by a personal visit from him. If they had begun to fall away, they would not have been so anxious to see him. There was a tender attachment on both sides, for there was a longing on both sides for further fellowship.

II. THE EFFECTS OF THESE GOOD TIDINGS ON THE APOSTLE. "Therefore we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith." 1. *They enabled him, if not to forget, at least to bear up, under a weighty burden of trial.* He was now at Corinth, in peril and persecution from the Jews, who "opposed themselves and blasphemed" (Acts xviii. 5-17; 1 Cor. ii. 3). He was disconsolate and dispirited, almost like a dead man, carrying about with him the dying of the Lord Jesus; but now the news of Timothy revived him, like life from the dead, infusing into him new life and vigour. It was their faith especially which comforted him. There is no comfort to a minister comparable to that which springs from the stability and perseverance of his people. 2. *The very continuance of his life seemed to be dependent upon their steadfastness.* "For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord." The language is almost painfully strong. It suggested to them: (1) The necessity of continued watchfulness and faith. (2) The true secret of steadfastness—being "in the Lord." Thus only would "they build themselves up in their most holy faith," "continuing steadfastly in the Church's prayers and instructions." (3) How much they could affect, not the comfort only, but the life of their teachers, by their vigilance and perseverance!—T. C.

Vers. 9, 10.—*The apostle's gratitude to God and his further solicitude for his converts.*

I. HIS GRATITUDE FOR THE JOY IMPARTED BY TIMOTHY'S TIDINGS. "For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God?" 1. *He has no words to express his gratitude to God for their constancy.* 2. *The joy he experienced was not in the greed of any worldly advantage he had gained,* but was the hearty and sincere joy of one profoundly interested in their spiritual welfare. 3. *It was joy "before God," who sees and knows all inward thoughts and feelings,* and therefore knows its reality and power.

II. HIS PRAYERFUL ANXIETY TO SEE THE THESSALONIANS FOR THEIR FURTHER BENEFIT. "Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith." His prayers had an extraordinary fervency. Ministers ought to be much in prayer for their flocks. 1. *The deficiencies*

in their faith. They had already received the grace of faith and the doctrine of faith, and exhibited in its fulness the "work of faith." But there were deficiencies still to be supplied. (1) Their faith wanted still greater power, for they had hardly yet escaped all danger of relapse into heathen impurities. (2) It wanted to be more widely diffused through all the duties of life, for they needed to mind honest industry and forswear idleness. (3) They needed fuller light upon the second advent. 2. *The design of the ministry is to supply these deficiencies of faith.* The apostle longed to be at Thessalonica once more, not only to impart to them "some spiritual gift, to the end they might be established" (Rom. i. 10, 11), but to give them fuller teaching upon the various points where their faith needed enlargement. It is God's work to increase faith, but ministers can promote it as instruments, for they are "for the perfecting of the saints in the knowledge of the Son of God."—T. C.

Ver. 11.—*Further prayer for his personal return to Thessalonica.* The apostle had hitherto been hindered by Satan from carrying out his intention. "But may God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you."

I. THE APOSTLE RECOGNIZED A DIVINE HAND IN ALL THAT CONCERNED HIS PERSONAL LIFE. His way to Thessalonica seemed hitherto blocked up, but he felt that it depended, not upon Satan, nor upon his wicked instruments, but upon the will of God himself, whether he should ever take that way. This implies: 1. *Our journeys are not in our own power.* Man may plan his own ways, but God directs his goings; for "a good man's steps are ordered by the Lord." 2. *Our journeys are not to be undertaken without God's will.* (Jas. iv. 13, 14; Rom. i. 10.) It is for him to order us where and when to go. 3. *It is in his power only to remove the obstacles to our journeys.*

II. THE APOSTLE RECOGNIZED THIS PROVIDENTIAL GUIDANCE AS EQUALLY EXERCISED BY THE FATHER AND THE SON. 1. *He prays here to both Father and Son.* The same prayer is addressed to both without distinction, for the verb is in the singular number. Must not Jesus, therefore, be a Divine Person? 2. *Father and Son are here regarded as possessing one indivisible will,* as exercising a joint agency in the guidance of men, and as possessing an equality of power to this end. Athanasius saw this fact clearly in the grammatical peculiarity of the passage. 3. *The apostle exercises an appropriating faith in both Father and Son,* for he speaks of "our God and Father," and our Lord Jesus Christ. He was, therefore, all the more disposed to trust submissively to the directing hand of God.—T. C.

Vers. 12, 13.—*The apostle's prayer for the progressive sanctification of the Thessalonians and their final perfection at the coming of Christ.* He has just prayed for himself, but whether he is to come to them or not, he has a prayer for their spiritual benefit.

I. CONSIDER THE PERSON TO WHOM THE PRAYER IS ADDRESSED. "But you may the Lord enlarge." It is the Lord Jesus, who, "as the Purchaser of the Church with his own blood," has received the fulness of the Spirit for the benefit of his people. It was to the Lord the apostles addressed the unanimous prayer, "Increase our faith."

II. THE BLESSING PRAYED FOR. "But you may the Lord enlarge and make to abound in love toward one another, and toward all." 1. *The existence of their love is frankly admitted.* He had spoken of "their labour of love." He prays now for its increase. 2. *Their love was to be an abounding love.* (1) There were defects in their love, as there were defects in their faith, to be supplied from the inexhaustible Source of all love. (2) The objects of their love were (a) "one another," those of the household of faith, who were to have the first place in their affections; (b) but "all men" likewise, as children of a common Father, for as we have opportunity we must do good unto all men (Gal. vi. 10), the world itself being the field of our missionary labours. The Apostle Peter adds "love" to "brotherly kindness" in the chain of Christian graces, as if to imply that brotherly kindness might become a narrow, sectarian thing, and therefore the love of man as man is enjoined.

III. THE DESIGN AND TENDENCY OF THIS PROGRESSIVE INCREASE. "To the end that he may stablish your hearts unblamable in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints." 1. *This implies that establishment in holiness is necessarily involved in the enlargement of both faith and love.* 2. *It implies that stability in holiness is the great end of Christian life in a world which*

shakes believers by fears and temptations and delusions. 3. *It implies that without perfect holiness we cannot appear without blame before God.* 4. *It implies that perfect holiness is reserved for the second coming.* (1) It is not attainable in this life. We are not here "without spot or wrinkle." (2) It is connected with the redemption of the body. (3) It is connected with the final glorification of the redeemed; for all the saints are to be associated with the Judge as assessors in the final judgment (Luke xii. 30; John v. 28; 1 Cor. vi. 3). Therefore let us pray for the increase of faith and love, and live in the blessed hope of the "day of Christ."—T. C.

Vers. 1—5.—Proof of the apostle's love for the Thessalonians. I. THE MISSION OF TIMOTHY. 1. *He could no longer forbear.* Mark the intensity of his affection. He repeats the words twice, ver. 1 and ver. 5, first in the plural, then in the singular number, implying, perhaps, that while all the missionaries longed to know how it fared with the Thessalonians, his longing was the most overmastering. He must hear of his converts, cost him what it might. The suspense was agonizing; he could endure it no longer; so deep, so burning, was his interest in their spiritual state. What an example to Christian pastors now! 2. *He would submit to any sacrifice; he would be left alone at Athens.* "Alone in London" has almost passed into a proverb. Loneliness is nowhere felt so much as in a great city—a

"Crowded wilderness,

Where ever-moving myriads seem to say,

'Go! thou art nought to us, nor we to thee—away!'"

St. Paul felt like this at Athens. To the student of history, to the lover of classical antiquities, Athens is one of the most attractive of cities. To St. Paul it was almost a desert. He does not seem to have found delight in natural beauty or in historic associations; the one object of his life was to extend the Redeemer's kingdom, to win souls to Christ. The Athenians of his day had much curiosity, much versatility, but no depth of character, no real longing after truth. They did not persecute; they had not earnestness enough for that. But mockery and indifference were more painful to St. Paul than danger and suffering. He could not feel at home in Athens. And he was one of those men to whom sympathy is almost a necessity; his one earthly comfort was the society of Christian friends. This Epistle shows the intensity of his affections; he can scarcely find words strong enough to express his love for the Thessalonians, his yearning desire to see them again. Yet he had spent only three weeks, or perhaps a short time longer, at Thessalonica. How, then, must he have prized the society of Timotheus, the dearest of all his friends! He was his brother, his fellow-labourer; he could ill spare him, especially while labouring in vain, as it seemed, in that most uncongenial place. But he would send him; he would endure that isolation which was so oppressive to him. Even for himself it was better than the cruel uncertainty which he could bear no longer; and the visit of Timotheus would be very useful to the infant Church at Thessalonica. So he thought it good; it pleased him, there was a pleasure mingled with the pain, to be left at Athens alone. There is a pleasure in self-sacrifice, severe but real; there is a peace in the conscious submission of the human will to the blessed will of God—a peace not granted to all, for not all take up the cross, but very precious, very high and holy. 3. *So he sent his closest friend and companion.* His words show how he felt the separation. He describes him as his brother; elsewhere he calls him his son in the faith, his dearly beloved son. His presence, his loving care, his affectionate sympathy, were very dear to St. Paul. His help, too, was very needful; he was the minister of God, St. Paul's fellow-labourer in the gospel (the readings are somewhat confused, but the meaning is plain); he could assist him in his difficult and almost heartless labour at Athens. Like St. Paul, he delighted to serve God, to do God's work, to preach the glad tidings of the atonement, the resurrection of Christ, the life and immortality brought to light by the Lord Jesus. There was work, hard work, enough and more than enough, for both of them at Athens; but St. Paul, in his intense anxiety for the Thessalonians, sent to them his dearest companion and his best helper. Old work must not be neglected for new; it is a common temptation. The care of all the Churches pressed upon St. Paul. The minister of God must care for all the souls entrusted to his charge.

II. THE PURPOSE OF TIMOTHY'S MISSION. 1. *To stablish them.* They were but neophytes—Christians of a few months. The first work of drawing men to take an interest in religion is often easier than the work which follows of establishing and building them up in the faith. It is hard to persevere; we know it from our own experience. It may be that by God's grace we have drawn nigh to the crucified One; we have felt something of the sweetness of his precious love; our hearts have burned within us as we listened to his voice, "Come unto me." In such moments we have felt, perhaps, that our work was well-nigh done, and our souls saved for ever; we thought that we could never fall from him whom we had learned to love so dearly. But a little while, and we found ourselves miserably disappointed. The time of temptation came; or perhaps, without any definite temptation, the freshness of those glowing feelings passed away; we lost our first love, and sunk back into that cold indifference which we hoped we had shaken off for ever. We lost all that we seemed to have gained; we had to begin our work again. Alas! many are thus always beginning; their spiritual history is a series of oscillations between permitted carelessness and feeble repentance. They make no real progress towards that holiness without which we cannot see God. They need a Timotheus to stablish them. It is one of the most important, one of the most difficult, duties of the ministers of God to persevere themselves, to lead others to persevere. 2. *To comfort them,* or rather, perhaps, to exhort them. They needed both, comfort and exhortation. The cross was coming. They were but babes in Christ; they shrunk from its sharpness. But "we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." The grace of perseverance is best acquired in the bracing air of affliction. "The trying of our faith worketh patience." Self-denial, the mortification of the flesh, are, alas! to many of us but empty sounds. They must become realities in our daily lives if we are to be Christians indeed. The sentimental religion of mere poetry and feeling is a weak and sickly exotic; it will never bear the cold blasts of temptation, it will not stand in the evil day. Timotheus was to comfort the Thessalonians in their troubles, to exhort them to patient endurance, that their faith might not fail them, that it might rather grow and increase. 3. *To prepare them for tribulation.* (1) *Afflictions must come.* It is a law of Christ's kingdom. "Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth." The Saviour endured the cross, despising the shame; the Christian must consider him, always "looking unto Jesus." "We are appointed thereunto," St. Paul says; not himself only, but all Christians. It is God's ordinance; it is "the trial of faith, much more precious than of gold." The gold perisheth, the faith abideth; it will issue in praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. But "we are appointed thereunto." We must recognize this, and accept it cheerfully as the law of our Christian race. The cross is the very badge and emblem of our religion; the cross is a sacred object in the Christian's eyes; but it will not profit us unless we bear the inner cross, the spiritual cross of self-sacrifice wrought into our souls by the power of God the Holy Ghost. The Lord Jesus bore the cross first; his death upon the cross gave a deep and awful and blessed meaning to the word; it invested the cross with glory and solemn beauty and attractive sweetness. His saints have followed him. One after another they have taken up the cross; they came out of great tribulation. From the quiet rest of paradise their voices seem to float around us yet, telling us of the power of the Saviour's cross and the high rewards of suffering for his sake. "We are appointed thereunto," St. Paul said to the Thessalonians; he does not attempt to hide it from them. They were very young Christians, but, young as they were, they must experience the law of suffering. "Ye knew it," St. Paul says; for they knew the blessed story of the cross, and they knew the meaning of the cross. The Churches of Macedonia had a great trial of affliction. We are not called to suffer in the same way, but the cross has the same meaning still. "In the world ye shall have tribulation." "We are appointed thereunto." We are not in danger of the martyr's death, but the martyr's spirit is as necessary as ever it was; its essence lies in the prayer which we daily use, "Thy will be done." We must not be moved by these afflictions; they must not be allowed to disquiet us, to disturb the steadfastness of our faith. Affliction is the ordinary atmosphere of the Christian life. (2) *St. Paul had told them this.* When he was with them, short as the time was—three weeks or a little more—he warned them of the coming trials. It was a great help when the time came. As Chrysostom says, if the physician warns his patient of the probable symp-

toms of his disease, he is not so terrified when they come. Thus the Thessalonians were prepared to see the sufferings of St. Paul and his companions—prepared themselves to follow them as they followed Christ. The preacher must not dwell exclusively on the bright side of religion, its beauty and its joys; he must point to the cross; he must prepare himself and his people to endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. (3) *But though he had warned them, he was still anxious.* The affliction had come, as he had said. He knew that they were suffering; he felt for them in their trials. Especially he was anxious to know how that newly formed faith of theirs would endure the first shock of persecution. The tempter had tempted them—that was certain. These trials were his work. It was permitted; it was overruled for good, as the event showed. But it came from the same evil one who had tempted Job to curse God, and was foiled then by the patience of that holy man, and now, by the grace of God, vouchsafed to the Thessalonians. But St. Paul did not know the issue. He had heard of the temptation, and with the tender, trembling solicitude of a loving parent he feared—he could not help fearing—lest his labour should prove in vain. Mark, again, his firm belief in the personality of Satan. He knew his malice; he was not ignorant of his devices, and he feared for his children in the faith.

LESSONS. 1. Pray for the love of souls; seek to love souls with a great love, as St. Paul yearned for the salvation of his converts. 2. Be content, like him, to suffer privations for the souls of others. 3. Pray for the grace of perseverance; be distrustful of self; trust only Christ; watch always. 4. Expect afflictions, chastisements; they must come; they form a necessary part of Christian experience; be prepared for them.—B. C. O.

Vers. 6-10.—The return of Timothy. I. **THE GOOD NEWS.** 1. *The faith and charity of the Thessalonians.* This was good tidings to St. Paul. The gospel was good tidings to all who felt the misery of sin, to all who had been distressed by the strange, perplexing mysteries of life. Tidings of a Deliverer, of an atonement, of the gracious help of God's Holy Spirit, of eternal life to come, were full of joy and gladness to the Thessalonians. Out of that first great joy sprang other gifts of joy. The apostles had no greater joy than to hear that their children were walking in the truth. They had so entered into the full meaning of that short prayer, "Thy will be done, in earth as it is in heaven," that they had learned to share the holy joy wherewith the blessed inhabitants of heaven rejoice over one sinner that repenteth. Good news to them did not mean this or that earthly success, but the growth in grace of Christian souls. Are we thus affected when we hear of the victories of the gospel, of missionary triumphs abroad, of converted sinners, of holy deaths at home? It is a sure index of our spiritual state. If we know ourselves the deep blessedness of communion with God, we shall count it good news indeed when we hear of other souls being drawn into that holy fellowship. The glory of God is the one highest object to which all true Christians look, and each redeemed soul brings new glory and honour to the great Redeemer. The deeper, the purer our joy in the growth of holiness around us, the nearer our approach, while we are yet on earth, to the holy joy of heaven. Timothy brought news that the faith of the Thessalonians had not wavered in the fiery trial, that their charity was living and fervent. It was glad news indeed to St. Paul. 2. *Their remembrance of the apostle.* St. Paul had a tender human heart; he writes these words, as Bengel says, with a fresh joy, with the tenderest love. The steadfastness of their faith was the chief part of the good news; but also their personal love for the apostle was very precious to him. To hear that they loved him still, that they desired greatly to see him, that they remembered his presence, his words, his affection, was very sweet to him.

II. **ST. PAUL'S DELIGHT.** 1. *He was comforted.* He had need of comfort and encouragement. Since he left Thessalonica he had met with great perplexities and disappointments at Athens; and now at Corinth he was working amid many difficulties, much harassed by the persecutions of the Jews, toiling hard for his daily bread. He tells them of his necessities, of his affliction. But now he was comforted; and it was their faith that brought him comfort, that encouraged him in his work. How these words must have pleased the Thessalonians, who so loved the apostle! To hear of their faith was good tidings to him; to be told that that faith had given him such deep comfort in his troubles must have been good news to them. 2. *Their perseverance*

gave him new life. He knew what it was to die daily, to bear about always in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus. But if death, as he says, was working in him, there was a new life that more than balanced it; a new life, full of warm, glowing feelings, full of high hopes and eager aspirations. And that life was nourished and sustained by the continued progress of the gospel. The tidings of their faith gave him a sense of life, a spiritual energy, a joy analogous to that joy in the mere sense of living which we experience sometimes in the bloom of youth and health. But his joy was wholly spiritual; the life of Christ in other souls seemed to stimulate the energies of the same Divine life in himself; he felt the water of life within him springing up with renewed freshness, as he listened to the glad words of Timotheus telling him how the Thessalonians were standing fast in the Lord. They were *in* the Lord, as he was—in the sphere of his gracious presence, of his Divine working; and to be in the Lord is life, for he is the Life. Spiritual life consists in union with him, without whom we can do nothing. The Thessalonian Christians were in him; so was St. Paul. Their life and his life came from the same Source. The knowledge of their faith and love, their spiritual life, quickened the Divine life that lived in him.

III. HIS THANKSGIVING. 1. *He thanks God for them.* He regards thanksgiving as a return due to Almighty God for his mercies. So the psalmist, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me?" He fulfils his own precept, "In everything give thanks." Thanksgiving is the outflow of a loving heart. The love of God is the very essence of religion; and the more we love him, the more fervent will be our thanksgivings. St. Paul thanks God for the Thessalonians, for their faith and love: for faith and love come from God, who is the Object of faith, who alone can increase our faith; who is Love, from whom, the highest Love, cometh all pure and holy love. 2. *He thanks God for his own joy.* Holy joy is the fruit of the Spirit, the gift of the Spirit, the foretaste of the joy of heaven; it must issue in thanksgiving. St. Paul's joy was full and complete. He thanks God for *all* the joy wherewith he was joying. There were no shadows to darken its brightness; he had heard of no backslidings among the Thessalonians. And it was pure; it could bear the all-seeing eye of God. "We joy before our God," he says. There was no element of selfishness, no earthly pride, no lower motive, to defile it. Such joy in the salvation of souls is indeed heavenly; it is like the ineffable joy wherewith the blessed rejoice before the throne. 3. *He adds prayer to his thanksgiving.* Prayer and thanksgiving ever go together; they act and react upon one another. Prayer leads to thanksgiving; thanksgiving lends increasing energy to prayer. (1) He prayed night and day. The quiet of the night is a time for holy thoughts. The psalmist thought of the Name of God in the night season, and received comfort. The Christian prays; he watches with Christ as he lies yet awake on his bed. He prayed night and day. While working at his daily labour, the hard work of weaving the goats' hair, he ever prayed. So it is with Christians now. They

"Ply their daily task with busier feet,
Because their secret souls some holy strain repeat."

(2) He prayed exceedingly. "Above measure," the words mean literally. The more we pray, the more we love prayer. The prayers of the Christian increase in fervour, in earnestness, and in delight, the nearer he draws to God. Prayer occupies more and more of his time; it tends to assume more and more its proper place as the great work of life, the most important part of each day's business. St. Paul's love for the Thessalonians deepened the importunity of his intercession. (3) He prayed that he might see their face. To see a good man's face, to hear his voice, to touch his hand, is a source of true pleasure. St. John trusted to speak face to face with his Christian friends, "that our joy," he says, "may be full." So was it with St. Paul. (4) That he might be enabled to do them good. He had been but a very short time with them. He wished to give them further instruction, to fill up what was lacking in their knowledge. Christians may be living near to God, but there is always room for further advance in knowledge and in holiness. A saint of God like St. Paul can always do us good.

Learn: 1. To rejoice in the spiritual progress of others. 2. To thank God for it. 3. To take delight in intercourse with holy men.—B. C. C.

Vers. 11—13.—St. Paul's prayer for his converts. I. **GOD HIMSELF IS THE ONLY GIVER OF ALL GOOD THINGS.** 1. *He can give the apostle and his converts the great joy of another meeting.* The Thessalonians might be zealous in their religious duties; St. Paul might pray exceedingly, above measure; but it is God himself, not any creature, from whom all goodness flows. The word *αὐτός* ("himself") is emphatic. He only can save; he only is the Giver of joy. He is our God, therefore he is able; he is our Father, therefore he is willing to help us. His is the kingdom and the power and the glory, and he loves us with a Father's love. The apostle adds the Saviour's Name: "God our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ." He addresses Christ in the language of direct prayer. He uses, too, a verb in the singular number. There can be no satisfactory explanation of this, save that furnished by our Lord's own words, "I and my Father are one." From him only, the Triune God, cometh every blessing. He can bring St. Paul again to the Thessalonians. He will, if it is good for him and for them. 2. *He can increase in them the great grace of charity.* Love is the chiefest of all graces; it expels all manner of sin little by little from the heart which it fills; it consumes selfishness little by little with its heavenly fire. It must abound in the Christian's heart, for it is the best of all treasures; it must be fervent, intense, for lukewarmness is hateful to the Lord. It must be wide in its range; for that love which rests on some men because they are agreeable, and excludes others because they do not please, is merely human; not of God—mere natural affection; not the precious grace of holy love. God loved the world; the measure of his love is the gift of his Son. His saints in their poor way must imitate him. He only can make them abound in love; for love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God. Love is the best gift of the good Spirit of God. We must covet earnestly that great grace, and seek it from him of whose only gift it cometh.

II. **GOD CAN FULFIL THE GOOD WORK WHICH HE BEGAN.** 1. *Holiness comes from him.* Without holiness no man shall see the Lord; and it is God the Holy Ghost who sanctifieth the elect people of God. He can cleanse the thoughts of the heart by his Divine inspiration. He can make the soul that was unclean pure and blameless. We must listen to his voice speaking in our hearts. He checks us when we are tempted to sin; he calls us ever onwards to holiness, to self-consecration, to closer union with Christ. It is our part to recognize his awful presence, to shrink with godly fear from grieving the indwelling Spirit, to make silence in our hearts to listen to his voice, to pray with ever-deepening earnestness, "Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth." 2. *He can enable us to persevere.* The psalmist says, "O God, my heart is fixed, my heart is fixed." That fixedness, that establishment of the heart in holiness, cometh from God; it is his gift. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee." We need to be rooted and grounded in love, to be strengthened with all might by his Spirit in the inner man. Then we shall persevere unto the end; then we shall be found unblamable in holiness at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints. St. Paul ever looked forward to that second coming: it filled the whole range of his hopes. So ought Christians now to live, "looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God."

LESSONS. 1. St. Paul prays that God would direct his way to Thessalonica. We may pray for the great blessing of intercourse with those whom we love; but it must be "in the Lord," in humble submission to his will. 2. But above all things we should pray for their continued growth in grace and holiness, in preparation for the coming of the Lord.—B. C. C.

Vers. 1—13.—The subject is still great desire to see the Thessalonians. I. **PAUL ALONE AT ATHENS.** "Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left behind at Athens alone." There is continued the use of the plural; but it is to be regarded as corrected by the use of the singular in the fifth verse. The correction relates to the mission of Timothy, which is to be understood as covering Paul's being left behind at Athens. For want of full materials it is difficult to understand the bearing of what is said in the Acts of the Apostles on what is said here. But the most probable account of matters seems to be the following. Silas and Timothy were left behind at Berea. They that conducted Paul from Berea brought him as far as Athens; and immediately returned with a commandment unto Silas and Timothy

that they should come to him with all speed. Here comes in the link which is given here: Wherefore (i.e. on account of his endeavour to see the Thessalonians having twice proved abortive) when he could no longer forbear (i.e. when he was necessitated to give some relief to his feeling of being orphaned), he thought it good to be left behind at Athens alone. This was a change of plan, but arising out of the very best feeling. He sent on to Berea a second commandment, that Timothy should proceed to Thessalonica before joining him, Silas meantime remaining at Berea. In that case Paul was *really* left behind at Athens, though not with the greatest literalism. He was left behind from the point of view of Timothy going on to Thessalonica, and also of his intention to have had Silas and Timothy with him at Athens. It was the being *alone* at Athens that made him think of sending for Silas and Timothy, while his conductors from Berea had not yet left. He felt the atmosphere to be so oppressive beyond his expectations that he longed for their fellowship. And while he was waiting for them, as we learn from the Acts of the Apostles, the feeling did not abate. He went forth into this beautiful city which was associated with the greatest intellectual refinement. And, though a man of gigantic intellect, he was not attracted to the study of its works of art or philosophies. No, it was the gospel sandals with which his feet were shod. It was in the light of Christ that he contemplated the city. Its principal works of art were temples. There on the Areopagus was a temple of Mars, with the subterranean sanctuary of the Furies. On the prominent Acropolis was the Parthenon, or temple of Athene, the protectress of the city, and, next to it in magnificence, the Erechtheum with its presiding deities. A third rock was associated with Jove. There was an altar of Prometheus within the groves of the Academy; the Lyceum was dedicated to Apollo. At every turn were structures connected with idolatrous worship, and, among the many, the eye of the apostle detected an altar with this inscription, "To the Unknown God," from which he afterwards took occasion to preach to the Athenians some of the elementary truths of religion. It was while alone in this city *full of idols*, oppressed by its false forms of religion, that he longed for Silas and Timothy to come on to him. But, strong as his desire for their fellowship was, it was soon overmastered by another, viz. desire toward the Thessalonians, for the gratification of which he was willing to make sacrifice by remaining alone at Athens.

II. MISSION OF TIMOTHY WITH REFERENCE TO THE THESSALONIANS. "And sent Timothy, our brother and God's minister in the gospel of Christ." Timothy is sometimes called Paul's son; he is here called his brother. He was a son who had already grown up to be a companion and associate in work. He was one to whom Paul gave commandment, yet it was properly to God that he stood or fell. The sphere in which he ministered to God was the gospel of Christ. It was his duty generally to bring the gospel of Christ to the wants of men. But let us think of it as his duty specially to bring the gospel of Christ to the wants of the Thessalonians. 1. *Timothy was to seek to influence them against their being moved by the pressing afflictions.* "To establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith; that no man be moved by these afflictions." The afflictions, not confined to the Thessalonians, but having the first reference to them, are regarded as present. It was Thessalonian afflictions that forced Paul to leave Thessalonica much sooner than he had intended. It was in a manner Thessalonian afflictions that followed him to Berea. At the time of sending Timothy he may have had late information of the things suffered by the Thessalonians of their own countrymen. By *indications*, then, he could only think of the afflictions as what might any moment be experienced by them. In consequence of these afflictions Timothy was sent to *establish* them. It was work which might expose him to the attacks of the virulent Jews of Thessalonica; and this establishing work is usually committed to older men. But that by which he was himself established was his message. And it was to this that he was to look for establishing the Thessalonians. He was to exhort them (not comfort them) concerning their faith, that no man should be moved by these afflictions. He was to hold up persuasively before them the gospel of Christ, that their faith thereby being strengthened, they might be kept from apostatizing. 2. *There was reason for their not being moved by the afflictions.* "For yourselves know that hereunto we are appointed. For verily, when we were with you, we told you beforehand that we are to suffer affliction; even as it come to pass, and ye know." The Thessalonians, and Paul as well, and not they alone, were appointed to suffer affliction.

It was the sovereign, all-wise decree of God that, through the affliction of his people, the gospel was to be spread abroad, and transmitted to future generations. And that was a reason why they were not to be moved in affliction. They were not being made the sport of chance, or simply left to the will of their enemies; but they were submitting to the reasonable necessary appointment of their heavenly Father, and that along with others. The Thessalonians were well acquainted with this doctrine. It had been taught them by Paul, when he was with them. And in this he was simply following the great Teacher. It was impossible for him to hold out false expectations. He told them whom he asked to enter into his service that they were to count the cost; they might be called even to lay down their lives for his sake. And at the last he recurs to this in speaking to his disciples. "If the world hateth you, ye know that it hath hated me before it hated you. . . . Remember the word that I said unto you, A servant is not greater than his lord. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they kept my word, they will keep yours also. . . . These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be made to stumble. They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the hour cometh, that whosoever killeth you shall think that he offereth service unto God. And these things will they do, because they have not known the Father, nor me. But these things have I spoken unto you, that when their hour is come, ye may remember them, how that I told you." As Paul, after the Master, taught, so it came to pass, and so they had experience. Being thus prepared beforehand, their affliction, instead of shaking them, was fitted to have a confirming effect upon them.

III. MISSION OF TIMOTHY WITH REFERENCE TO PAUL. "For this cause I also, when I could no longer forbear, sent that I might know your faith, lest by any means the tempter had tempted you, and our labour should be in vain." It seems best to connect "also" with "sent," as is grammatically allowable. He sent not merely for the sake of the Thessalonians, but also for his own sake. The affliction was a special reason why he, Paul (the singular being introduced), could no longer forbear. He wanted information regarding their faith. Connected with this was anxiety. As a fact, the tempter had tempted them. God tempteth no man; he seeks only through affliction to make his people conquerors. Through affliction Satan, according to his nature, had sought to seduce the Thessalonians to apostasy. And it might be that by some means (for he is fertile in means) he had succeeded in his nefarious object. In that case his labour among the Thessalonians, and laborious praying for them, in all of which he had a natural interest before God, would be vain. It would be as if his lot had never been cast among them. Wishing, then, to have his mind relieved from this state of anxiety, he had sent on Timothy.

IV. GOOD NEWS FROM THESSALONICA. "But when Timothy came even now unto us from you, and brought us glad tidings." Paul had meantime gone on from Athens to Corinth, where, according to Acts xviii. 5, he was joined by Silas and Timothy. He lost no time in writing to Thessalonica after their arrival. Timothy, who seems not to have delayed by the way, was the bringer of good news, of a kind of gospel—being indeed, tidings of the fruit of the gospel. He announced what the gospel had wrought for the Thessalonians in three particulars. 1. "Of your faith." Timothy was able to tell his master, by whom he had been sent, that they had such a hold upon the Divine help, that they were able to stand against the assaults of their enemies. 2. "And love." He had also this good news to tell Paul, that, in the face of opposition, they were not weakened by division, but were only drawn the closer together in the bonds of Christian love. 3. "And that ye have good remembrance of us always, longing to see us, even as we also to see you." He had the further tidings to convey, that they had a lively impression of all he had been to them—to whom, under God, more than to any other, they owed their existence as a Church. His name was a savour of a sweet smell among them. At all times they thought of him with pleasure. And as it had been told them that he had a longing to see them, so they wished it to be told him that they had a longing to see again the face, and not less to hear again the voice, of their teacher.

V. COMFORT IMPARTED BY THE GOOD NEWS. "For this cause, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our distress and affliction through your faith: for now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord." "As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news

from a far country." When Jacob knew that Joseph was alive, his spirit revived. Paul had not a little of distress and affliction, of trouble from without, that was straitening and oppressive, at Corinth as elsewhere; but, when the good news came regarding his Thessalonian converts, he forgot his distress and affliction. He was comforted over them, in his brooding love. What in them specially communicated comfort to him was their faith, i.e. the faith which enabled them to stand fast in the Lord. So dependent was he on them for happiness, that he only truly lived, had life in its vigour and elasticity, if he could think of them as standing fast in the Lord. While he thus acknowledges their steadfastness in the past, he gently appeals to them to remain steadfast in the future. Let them not take away the condition of his happiness. A Christian parent is dependent for his happiness on the conduct of his children. If he hears of them, when on going out into the world they come to their trial, as departing from the Lord, then his spirit is crushed. But if he hears a good report of them as standing fast in the Lord (in his strength and purpose), then his bones are made fat. And so is it with a Christian minister and his people.

VI. THANKSGIVING ON ACCOUNT OF THE GOOD NEWS. "For what thanksgiving can we render again unto God for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God?" The good news, the glad tidings, filled the apostle's heart with joy. There is an unhallowed joy which is not worthy of the name of joy. Not connected with a recognition of God, not in accordance with God's laws, it cannot bear the Divine inspection. The joy of the apostle for his Thessalonian converts was not of this nature. It extended over a wide range, but over all the range he joyed for them before God. It was not joy away from God, but joy to which he could ask God to be privy, as being joy in their Christian state, especially in their Christian steadfastness. This pure joy, which was his life, the apostle poured forth in thanksgiving. It was God alone who had made their mountain to stand strong; to him, therefore, was due all the praise. Thanksgiving is a *return* which God desires from us for his mercies. And we must often feel, with the apostle, that we cannot make a sufficient return in this form for mercies bestowed upon ourselves and upon others.

"Through all eternity to thee
A joyful song I'll raise;
For, oh! eternity's too short
To utter all thy praise."

VII. PRAYER WITH WHICH THE THANKSGIVING IS BLENDED. "Night and day praying exceedingly." He gave thanks when he prayed, and that was night and day. He borrowed from both, which is suggestive of morning and evening as fitting seasons for the duty of prayer. How fitting that in the morning we should turn to God and consecrate to him the powers he has renewed! How fitting that before returning to the world, to meet its temptations, to be entrusted with opportunities of usefulness, to meet what Providence has awaiting us,—how fitting that before we take the first step we should implore the favour of him on whom the lot of every day depends! How fitting, too, that in the evening we should thank God for the benefits of the day, that we should seek to be relieved of the burden of its transgressions, and that we should commit ourselves through the night to the keeping of him who neither slumbers nor sleeps! We can understand that the apostle would borrow largely from the night; for, apart from his labours night and day, his prayers here are described as beyond measure. What a rebuke to those who, instead of breaking beyond bounds in the impetuosity of devotion, narrow their prayers within small compass, or omit them altogether! Here we discover the secret of his power; and let us, in this undevout age, go back to his style of praying, without any loss of intensity, beyond bounds. *Two subjects of prayer.* 1. "That we may see your face." It has been said of Paul by James Martineau, that "his ardent and generous soul had fastened itself on no one living object, but on an abstraction, a thing of his own mind, *the truth*;" "that he rested nowhere long enough to feel his nature silently yet irrevocably depositing itself there, but was at all times ready to gather up his feelings and pass on;" that he loved his disciples less in their individual persons and for their own sakes than as depositaries of the truth—as links of a living chain of minds by which that truth would complete its circuit, and find a passage for its renovating power. But it is difficult to know what

personal attachment is, if there are not the marks of it in Paul. Did he merely gather up his feelings and pass on, when he was driven by persecution from Thessalonica? No; the Thessalonians, in the short time, had obtained a place in his heart, which was not transient, which they have to this day in heaven. And night and day, when he was away, they came up before him in his audience with God; and what, going beyond bounds, he asked was partly this—that he might see their face. He wished to have fellowship with them, soul with soul, such as is best promoted by direct personal intercourse. That he embraced so many in his affection, that he could not give them more time individually, did not make his attachment less truly personal. 2. “And may perfect that which is lacking in your faith.” It is true that Paul had an object beyond seeing their face, and that was that he might the better impart to them spiritual benefit. But is that attaching importance to the person only as a home for the truth? If so, then it is what should be true of all affection. The more ardently we love persons, the more should we love them not as mere earthly beings, but rather as having a heavenly constitution, as those in whom it is fitting that the truth should have a resting-place and home. The more we love to see their face, the more we should seek to perfect that which is lacking in their faith. Paul meant no reflection on the Thessalonians, who were little more than beginners as believers. It was not to be expected that they had come up to the full measure of faith. They had stood the tests to which they had been put, but there might be stronger tests coming. Neither they nor he had come up to the full-measured faith of the Master, who had stood even the forsaking of the Father. Privileged to come among them, he could only hope to be helpful in making up the deficiencies of their faith by a fuller and more earnest exhibition of gospel truth.

VIII. PRAYER THROWN INTO FORM TO BE OVERHEARD BY GOD. *Two petitions corresponding to the two subjects of prayer.* 1. “Now may our God and Father himself, and the Lord Jesus, direct our way unto you.” Paul prayed to have his way directed unto the Thessalonians. In the same way the servant of Abraham prayed to have his way prospered in the obtaining of a wife for Isaac. We may learn that we are to make even external arrangements subjects of prayer. “Our God and Father himself . . . direct our way unto you.” Satan, with his misanthropic qualities, twice succeeded in hindering him in his endeavours to proceed to Thessalonica. He looks above his own feeble endeavours and the hinderings of Satan, to God, in his almightiness and fatherliness, himself to direct his way unto the Thessalonians. “The Lord Jesus direct our way unto you.” We may learn that it is right to pray to Christ, though it is more usual to pray to the Father through Christ. The way of his servants, even the external way, is in his sovereign hands. We must not forget that he controls all things in heaven and in earth. In this verse there is a most remarkable enallage of number—two nominatives followed, not by a plural, but by a singular verb. It is one of the most striking proofs in Scripture, all the more that it comes in incidentally, of the absolute unity of the Father and the Son. It was made effective use of by Athanasius, in his case against Arius. 2. (1) *More immediately.* “And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and to all men, even as we also do toward you.” If there is any distinction between the two main verbs here, it is that the first refers more to range, the second to degree. It is implied that the Thessalonians already increased and abounded in love; still there was room for higher things. “Whether I come or no, the Lord make you to increase and abound in love.” They were to increase and abound in love one toward another (within the Christian circle at Thessalonica), and toward all men (the wider Christian circle, and, beyond it, the world lying in wickedness). This is in conformity with what Peter says, that to brotherly kindness we are to add charity. There is a concentration of our affections in our home. But we are not selfishly to confine them there; rather are we to get there refreshment for a wider circle. So there is a concentration of our affections in the Church or enlarged home. But we are not to make it a close guild; rather, in its refreshing fellowship, are we to be fitted for embracing in our affection the whole world. The apostle supports his petition by his own example. It is literally, “even as we also toward you.” And it is better to leave it thus indefinite, that Paul’s example may extend over past and present. He was not one who had confined his affections to any narrow circle; but they had gone out toward them in Thessalonica, and were still going out. It is true that, when the truth finds a home in a person, there is a look beyond him to its

finding a home by him in others. And the more truly and deeply we are attached to men as persons, the more shall we with Paul feel prompted to view them as appointed for the transmission of the truth. (2) *Ultimately*. "To the end he may stablish your hearts unblamable in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints." By the stablishing of our hearts we are to understand our being made proof in our inmost being against temptation, our being placed above the reach of a fall. This is to be brought about by love proceeding from faith. As love is said to be the fulfilling of the Law, and the bond of perfection, so it is here viewed as consummating our establishment. We are to be established, so as to be in the sphere of holiness, sanctity without blame, and that under the searching yet loving eye of God. Such a consummation seems far beyond us at present; but it will be realized for us at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints. His power over the evil of our hearts, through His blood and Spirit, will then be fully manifested. With imperfect holiness now, then we shall be saints indeed. And as Christ's saints, the trophies of his power, we shall attend on him at his coming, and swell the majesty of his train. Let us, then, give love the sweep of our being, to the dislodging of sin, to the incoming of saintliness, that in Christ's day of triumph we may be, with the saints, in his train.—R. F.

Ver. 5.—*How the work of the gospel may be frustrated by temptation*. St. Paul has just referred to the external hindrance to his journeying that Satan was able to throw across his path (ch. ii. 18). He now writes of a much more serious Satanic opposition in the temptation of his converts to unfaithfulness. He is anxious lest during his absence the fierce enmity of the Jews, either by some more violent attack on the Church or by the harassing of incessant petty persecution, may at length have broken down the fidelity of the Christians at Thessalonica. And he shows his anxiety by sending to inquire of the state of the Thessalonian Church. The danger in which these Greek Christians lay besets the people of God in all ages, though the form in which it presents itself varies considerably.

I. THE TEMPTER RAISES UP TEMPTATIONS IN ORDER TO FRUSTRATE THE WORK OF THE GOSPEL. 1. *The tempter furnishes temptations*. A temptation implies two things: (1) a latent appetite or desire in the mind of the tempted, which appetite or desire may be natural or acquired, innocent or corrupt, such as the innate instinct of self-preservation or the artificial craving for strong drink; and (2) external circumstances that tend to rouse the internal longing. Now, the tempter may work through either of these two elements of temptation. He may sway the mind towards certain thoughts and impulses, or he may present to the mind occasions of sin by bringing about an arrangement of circumstances which shall appeal to the internal desire in such a way that indulgence would be unlawful. Thus dangers appeal to the instinct of self-preservation and forbidden delights to the love of pleasure. 2. *These temptations tend to frustrate the work of the gospel*. All is undone if the Church proves unfaithful. High knowledge may be acquired, elaborate organization may be perfected, busy work may be accomplished, and yet, if the purity of the spiritual life is invaded, or the faithfulness that should mark the soldier of Christ corrupted, the labour that led to the happiest results is all in vain.

II. THE TEMPTER CAN ONLY FRUSTRATE THE WORK OF THE GOSPEL WHEN THE TEMPTED YIELD TO TEMPTATION. 1. *The power of the tempter is limited to temptation*. He can persuade; he cannot compel. He may use threats, or he may use cajolery. But he cannot use force. For the violence that is done to the body of the martyr is no violence to his soul, but only a powerful persuasive influence. Satan goes about like a roaring lion. He has a deep throat, but blunt fangs. 2. *We are free to resist temptation*. Temptation cannot destroy free-will. The tempter simply tries to induce us to choose the evil. If we do not choose it, he is powerless. And the decision lies entirely with ourselves. 3. *The grace of God will help us to resist temptation effectually*. We are not left alone to battle with the tempter. If Satan is against us, God is for us. Stronger and greater influences for good are provided for counteracting the evil influences. But these are equally outside our liberty of choice—good persuasion as against bad persuasion. It is for us to lend ourselves to the helpful grace of God in Christ if we are to be strong to resist temptation and to prevent the work of the gospel from being frustrated in us.—W. F. A.

Ver. 8.—*St. Paul's devotion to his converts.* I. A PICTURE OF CHRISTIAN LOVE. St. Paul is intensely devoted to his converts. Their prosperity is his life, their unfaithfulness his death. Love of the brethren is a conspicuous feature in the early Christian character—more conspicuous than, alas! it is in the modern Church. An apostle felt more than a brotherly love for the Churches he had planted. His affection was that of a father for his children. 1. *Christianity promotes care for others.* It is directly opposed to a self-seeking exclusiveness as much in spiritual as in worldly affairs. As it bids a man not simply care for the enriching of himself with material wealth, so it equally forbids him to seek only for the saving of his own soul. The Church of Christ is always required to have in view the object which Ignatius Loyola propounded as the great end of the society of the Jesuits when he wrote, "The end of this society is not only, with the grace of God, to devote ourselves to the salvation and perfection of our own souls, but also, with the same Divine grace, to labour most earnestly for the salvation and perfection of our neighbour." 2. *Christianity binds Christians together in close bonds of affection.* This is its aim, and this is what it does when unhindered by culpable selfishness and coldness. The gospel introduces a new experience into the world. Christian love is quite unlike pagan friendship, being (1) broader; (2) deeper, founded on spiritual union; and (3) warmer.

II. AN INDUCEMENT TO CHRISTIAN FIDELITY. 1. *The inducement is first direct and personal.* St. Paul urges the Thessalonians to be steadfast because he feels his own life to be wrapped up in their fidelity. For his sake, if not for their own, he desires them to resist the temptations that are trying them. No doubt so devoted and affectionate a man as St. Paul would be able to bring great weight of persuasion to bear on his converts by this appeal to their consideration for their spiritual father. A similar influence may be helpful now. If we know one who has laboured, prayed, and watched for our soul, surely the desire not to grieve him at the last by proving all his toil to have been in vain should be a motive for profiting by it. The scholar should feel thus towards his teacher, the child towards his Christian mother; above all, every one of us towards Christ, that his work may not be in vain—that, after all he has suffered for us, he should not be made to suffer by us. 2. *Further, the inducement is general and inferential.* If the steadfastness of the Thessalonians was a matter of such profound concern to St. Paul, it must have been of great importance in itself. Here is a strong reason for not thinking lightly of Christian fidelity. An apostle feels that he lives in the faithfulness of his converts. How supremely necessary must that faithfulness be for them! how supremely necessary must it ever be for the Church!

III. AN EXAMPLE FOR CHRISTIAN WORK. The Church at Thessalonica was faithful. St. Paul was not disappointed in his friends. The secret of this steadfastness may be seen in the spirit of the apostle. He was no perfunctory preacher. Not only was his heart in his work; his heart was with the people to whom he ministered. Their faithfulness and failure were questions of life and death to him. The servant of Christ has here an example of supreme interest. Learning, eloquence, holiness, zeal, all fail without love. The preacher who identifies himself with his people is the most successful in winning them for Christ.—W. F. A.

Ver. 12.—*The increase of love.* I. THE INCREASE OF LOVE IS THE FIRST ESSENTIAL OF CHRISTIAN PROGRESS. St. Paul sets it first and by itself as the root and secret of the blameless holiness before God which he regards as the great consummation of perfection. The Church has too often disregarded this primary note of progress, preferring growth in knowledge, enlarged activity, and more extended influence in the world. But it needs to be seen that the one measure of spiritual prosperity is the degree in which love abounds. The reasons for this honouring of Christian love are apparent. 1. *Love is the most like God of all human experiences.* We are nearest to God when we love one another most. 2. *Love is the most fruitful grace.* It does most good to the world and inspires the best service of God. 3. *Love is the foundation of all other graces.* It opens the eyes of knowledge, and kindles the ardour of zeal, and inspires the life of faith, and breathes holiness into the soul.

II. THIS INCREASE OF LOVE MUST BE IN EXTENT AS WELL AS IN INTENSITY. It is not enough that we have a very warm, passionate devotion if this is confined to a narrow circle. One of the most important features of Christian love, in contradistinction to the

natural kindness of persons of an affectionate disposition, is its breadth. It is not led by fancy and confined to the arbitrary selection of a merely human love. 1. *It begins with Christ.* Though St. Paul does not here express this truth, he implies it. For he is writing to a Christian Church, not to a mixed crowd of men of the world. He assumes devotion to Christ, and seeks for the fruits of it. Now, it is part of the glory of Christianity that it reveals man in his most attractive character when it shows Christ to us. Thus the enthusiasm of humanity is possible, because, first seeing man in Christ, we afterwards learn to see Christ in every man. 2. *It expands into love for all Christians.* The special characteristic of the brotherly love, so much enforced in the New Testament, is that it flows out to Christians as such, irrespective of personal attractiveness or the reverse. Of course we must have our natural affinities and special friendships. Christ had as much. But we must not confine Christian love to such cases. Indeed, the specially Christian character of love is not seen until this love is bestowed upon those who would not have received it had they not been united to us through Christ. 3. *It must extend to all men.* Christian love is not confined to the Christian community. The disciple of Christ is the true philanthropist. It is not simply that in the spirit of Christian universalism we are to endeavour to draw all men within the fold of Christ; we are also to love them while they remain outside it. We are to love them as men. From this we may infer that religious exclusiveness is a sin, that Christian people should take interest in all things human—in the science, art, business, politics, and social and domestic affairs of the world. The progress of our Christian life may be measured by the cheerful sympathy, breadth, and generosity of our humanity.

III. THE INCREASE OF LOVE IS A FRUIT OF DIVINE GRACE. St. Paul prays that the Lord may make the Thessalonians increase and abound in love. 1. *Love is only possible where the hard heart of selfishness has been softened.* It is the work of God's Spirit within us to make this change. God also casts out the impurities which deaden genuine love and the aversions which limit it. 2. *Love springs up in us by contact with the Divine love.* That love must be revealed and "shed abroad in our hearts" in order that our love may be stimulated. 3. *Nevertheless human influences help the development of Christian love.* The apostle referred to his own example: "Even as we do towards you." Christian love is contagious. The study of the lives of men of large-hearted charity is helpful in the overthrowing of our narrow prejudices and the arousing of a broad, strong spirit of loving-kindness.—W. F. A.

Ver. 13.—*Divine culture.* God is carrying on a process of culture with his people, training, educating, and forming them according to his own ideal of humanity. To ignore this process while admitting the merciful kindness of God in other respects is to take a low view both of providence and of Christianity. To recognize it is to do much towards lightening the burdens and the mystery of all this unintelligible life. For pain, temptation, and disappointment can be better borne when we know that the end of God's dealings with us is not our enjoyment of present ease, but our education in character.

I. THE SUBJECT OF DIVINE CULTURE. "Your hearts." The education that secures good habits is a shallow training if it leaves the source and spring of conduct untouched. It may drill; it cannot discipline. Neither is the mere infusion of knowledge, nor even this with the addition of the cultivation of taste and the development of mental energy, the great requisite in God's culture. He aims at renewing and purifying the heart. He is not satisfied with decorous conduct as a mask for a corrupt heart. But, having secured purity of heart, he knows that right conduct will follow. Moreover, if the external act may appear to men questionable, God, reading the heart, accounts his people blameless when the motive is good.

II. THE CHARACTER MOULDED UNDER DIVINE CULTURE. "Unblamable in holiness." 1. *It is holiness.* God does not satisfy himself with the forgiveness of the past; we should not be satisfied with that. He aims at the real and positive holiness of his people. Holiness is more than dutifulness, more than virtue. It includes these human types of goodness, but it goes beyond them. It goes down to thought, affection, and conduct, seeking clean hands and a pure heart. It rises to the character of God himself. Holiness is godlike goodness, as virtue is human goodness. 2. This holiness is

to be *unblamable*. It is to be perfect. It is to stand the test of a searching scrutiny. Yet it is not a barren negative purity. For we may be blamed for sins of omission as much as for sins of transgression. It is the unprofitable servant who is cast into the outer darkness. To be unblamable we must faithfully discharge our trust.

III. THE STANDARD AIMED AT IN DIVINE CULTURE. The holiness is to be unblamable before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints. 1. God is satisfied with no less holiness than such as is *pure in his own sight*. Our standard is low because our conscience is corrupt. The height of God's aim is only to be measured by the loftiness of his own character. Nevertheless, be it remembered, God will expect no more of us than is humanly possible. The gardener aims at producing a perfect flower up to his own ideal, but still only up to his own ideal of what a flower should be; he does not seek in it the properties of animal or man. 2. The test is to be applied at the *coming of Christ with his saints*. They come to judge the world.

IV. THE STABILITY SECURED BY DIVINE CULTURE. "*Stablish your hearts.*" High culture often produces a result which is brief in proportion to its excellence. The forced hot-house flower soon fades. Knowledge acquired simply to meet an examination is quickly forgotten. This is not education. God aims at more than the momentary elevation of rare seasons of grace. He will have a firm and lasting character—a spiritual life which is also an eternal life.

V. THE MEANS EMPLOYED FOR DIVINE CULTURE. Ver. 12 describes this. It is an increasing and abounding love. Holiness springs from love. They greatly err who seek it in the lonely and chill altitudes of an inhuman saintliness. By mutual Christian love, and by a broad, practical love of mankind, we are trained in the purity which may be at last quite blameless, even in the sight of God.—W. F. A.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER IV.

CONTENTS.—With this chapter the second portion of the Epistle—its practical application—commences. The apostle exhorts and entreats the Thessalonians to make progress in the Christian life, and to practise those commandments which, when he was with them, he gave them by the authority of Jesus Christ. God had called them to holiness and to the renunciation of their heathen practices. They must especially be on their guard against impurity, to which as Gentiles they were formerly so prone. He who rejected his injunctions rejected, not man, but God, whose commands they were. As they were already taught of God in the active practice of Christian love, so they must abound therein. They must not allow themselves to be led away by excitement, as if the day of Christ were at hand, but with quietness and honesty perform the duties of their earthly calling, and so commend the gospel to unbelievers. And with regard to their anxiety concerning the fate of their deceased friends, they were to be comforted by the thought that the dead in Christ would be no losers at the advent, but would

rise first, and, along with the living, would be caught up to meet the Lord at his coming, and so they shall all be united in one holy fellowship with him.

Ver. 1.—Furthermore; literally, *finally*; *for the rest*—introducing the closing or practical part of the Epistle. The apostle uses the same word elsewhere at the close of his Epistles (comp. 2 Cor. xiii. 1; Eph. vi. 10; Phil. iv. 8; 2 Thess. iii. 1). Then; or rather, *therefore*; connecting this exhortation with the closing verses of the last chapter: In order that you may be established unblamably in holiness at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, you must do your part, you must earnestly strive after holiness. We; to be restricted to Paul. Beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus; or rather, *in the Lord Jesus*; that is, in fellowship with him—the sphere or element within which the apostle besought and exhorted the Thessalonians. He wrote as the organ or instrument of the Lord Jesus. That as ye have received of us. Paul here appeals to the exhortations which he gave them during his residence among them at Thessalonica. How ye ought to walk and to please God; how you ought to conduct yourselves so as to please God. The walking was the means of pleasing. The R.V., after these words, on the authority of manuscripts, adds, "even as ye do walk." So ye

would abound more and more. The apostle acknowledges their Christian walking; they had already entered upon the road; their conduct was sanctified; but he exhorts them to abound therein with still greater care and fidelity.

Ver. 2.—For ye know; appealing to their memory in confirmation of what he had said. What commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus; or, *through the Lord Jesus*; that is, not merely by his authority, but by means of him, so that these commandments did not proceed from Paul, but from the Lord Jesus himself. We have here, and indeed in this chapter throughout, an assertion of the inspiration of the apostle: the commandments which he gave to the Thessalonians were the commandments of the Lord Jesus.

Ver. 3.—For this is the will of God. The phrase, "the will of God," has two significations in Scripture: the one is the determination of God—his decree; the other is his desire, that in which he delights—a will, however, which may be frustrated by the perversity of his creatures. It is in this latter sense that the word is here employed. Even your sanctification; complete consecration; holiness taken in its most general sense. Our holiness is the great design of Christ's death, and is the revealed will of God. Some (Olshausen, Lünemann) restrict the term to moral purity, and consider the next clause as its explanation (comp. Rom. xii. 1). That ye should abstain from fornication; a vice fearfully prevalent among the heathen, and which, indeed, they hardly regarded as wrong. Especially it was the great sin of Corinth, from which the apostle wrote, the patron goddess of which city was Venus.

Ver. 4.—That every one of you should know how to possess. The word here rendered "possess" rather signifies "acquire." The R.V. renders the clause, "that each one of you know how to possess himself of;" hence it admits of the translation, "to obtain the mastery over." His vessel. This word has given rise to a diversity of interpretation. Especially two meanings have been given to it. By some it is supposed to be a figurative expression for "wife," in which sense the word is used, though rarely, by Hebrew writers. Peter speaks of the wife "as the weaker vessel" (1 Pet. iii. 7). This is the meaning adopted by Augustine, Schott, De Wette, Koch, Hofmann, Lünemann, Riggenbach; and, among English expositors, by Alford, Jowett, Ellicott, and Eadie. This meaning is, however, to be rejected as unusual and strange, and unsuitable to what follows in the next verse. The other meaning—"one's own body"—is more appropriate. Thus Paul says, "We have

this treasure," namely, the gospel, "in earthen vessels" (2 Cor. iv. 7; comp. also 1 Sam. xxi. 5). The body may well be compared to a vessel, as it contains the soul. This meaning is adopted by Chrysostom, Calvin, Grotius, Bengel, Olshausen, Meyer; and, among English expositors, by Macknight, Conybeare, Bishop Alexander, Wordsworth, and Vaughan. In sanctification and honour. What the apostle here requires is that every one should obtain the mastery over his own body, and that whereas, as Gentiles, they had yielded their members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity, they should now, as Christians, yield their members servants to righteousness unto holiness (Rom. vi. 19).

Ver. 5.—Not in the lust of concupiscence—not in the passion of lust (R.V.)—even as the Gentiles which know not God; and therefore from whom nothing better was to be expected. The moral sense of the heathen was so perverted, and their natures so corrupt, that they looked upon fornication as a thing indifferent.

Ver. 6.—That no man go beyond; or, *transgress*. And fraud; or, as it is in the margin of our Bibles, *oppress*, or, *overreach*; *wrong* (R.V.). His brother. Not an exhortation against dishonesty, or prohibition against all attempts to overreach in usual mutual intercourse, as the words would at first sight seem to imply, and as some consider it (Hofmann, Lünemann, Riggenbach); but, as is evident from the context, a continuation of the former exhortation, a prohibition against impurity. In any matter; or, more properly, *in the matter*, namely, that about which I have been discoursing. "An example of the modest reserve and refined delicacy which characterize the holy apostle's language in speaking of things which the Gentiles did without shame, and thus, by a chaste bashfulness of words, commending the duty of unblemished purity in deeds" (Wordsworth).¹ Because the Lord is the Avenger of all such; either of all such as are thus defrauded or of all such sinful practices. As we also have forewarned you and testified.

Ver. 7.—For God hath not called us unto; or, *for the purpose of*. Uncleanness; moral uncleanness in general (comp. 1 Cor. vi. 15). But unto; or, *in*; *in a state of*. Holiness; or *sanctification*; the same word as in the third verse; so that holiness is the whole sphere of our Christian life.

Ver. 8.—He therefore that despiseth; or, as it is in the margin, *rejecteth* (R.V.). What is rejected is either the above commands to moral purity, or the Christian calling to holiness, or, better still, Paul himself, as the

¹ See also Jowett, *in loco*.

organ of God. *Despiset; or, rejecteth.* Not man; that is, not me, as if the commands were given from myself—were of mere human origin. But God; the Giver of these commands. So also Peter said unto Ananias, "Thou hast not lied unto man, but unto God" (Acts v. 4); and our Lord says, "He that rejecteth you rejecteth me" (Luke x. 16). Who hath also given unto us his Holy Spirit. If this is the correct reading, then the apostle here again asserts his own inspiration, and that in the strongest and plainest terms. The best manuscripts, however, read, "who giveth his Holy Spirit unto you" (R.V.)—a strong enforcement of holiness, inasmuch as the Holy Spirit was given them for the express purpose of producing holiness within them.

Ver. 9.—The apostle now proceeds to a new exhortation. But as touching brotherly love. Brotherly love is the love of Christians to Christians, that special affection which believers bear to each other; a virtue which was carried to such perfection in the primitive Church as to call forth the admiration of their heathen adversaries. This virtue is often inculcated in Scripture (Heb. xiii. 1; 1 John iii. 14), and is distinguished from love in general (2 Pet. i. 7). Ye need not that I write unto you; a delicate and gentle reproof. For ye yourselves are taught of God. We are not here to think of the new commandment of brotherly love given by the Saviour, nor on the Divine compassion exciting us to love; but "taught of God" by the influences of the Spirit on their hearts and consciences to love one another.

Ver. 10.—And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia. Not only to those in Thessalonica, but to all believers in your country and neighbourhood. But we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more; that ye make progress in brotherly love—that it increase in purity, in warmth, and in extent.

Ver. 11.—And that ye study; literally, *that ye be ambitious.* To be quiet; to avoid unrest, to live in peace. Worldly ambition excludes quietness and prompts to restlessness; so that the apostle's admonition really is, "that ye be ambitious not to be ambitious." The unrest which disturbed the peace of the Thessalonian Church was not political, but religious; it arose from the excitement naturally occasioned by the entrance of the new feeling of Christianity among them. It would also appear that they were excited by the idea of Christ's immediate advent. This had occasioned disorders, and had caused several to neglect their ordinary business and to give themselves over to an indolent inactivity, so that Christian prudence was overborne (comp. 2 Thess. iii. 6—12). Perhaps, also, the libe-

rality of the richer members of the Church was abused and perverted, so as to promote indolence. And to do your own business; to attend to the duties of your worldly calling, to avoid idleness. And to work with your own hands. From this it would appear that the members of the Thessalonian Church were chiefly composed of the labouring classes. As we commanded you. A precisely similar exhortation is given in the Epistle to the Ephesians: "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good" (Eph. iv. 28).

Ver. 12.—That ye walk honestly; that is, *honourably; seemly.* Toward them that are without; without the pale of the Christian Church, toward those who are not Christians, whether Jews or Gentiles, the unbelieving world. So also, in another Epistle, the apostle says, "Walk in wisdom toward them that are without" (Col. iv. 5). That ye may have lack of nothing; either neuter, *of no thing*; or perhaps rather masculine, *of no man*; that ye be under no necessity of asking assistance either from heathens or from fellow-Christians; inasmuch as working with your hands will put you in possession of what is necessary for life; whereas idleness necessarily involves poverty and dependence on others.

Ver. 13.—With this verse the apostle proceeds to another subject, namely, to comfort those who were mourning the death of their friends. It would appear that the Thessalonians were in perplexity and distress concerning the fate of their deceased friends, fearing that these would miss those blessings which they expected Christ to confer at his advent. Their views of the time and nature of the advent and of the future state in general were confused. They expected that Christ would come immediately and establish his kingdom on earth; and consequently they feared that those who had died would be excluded from it. But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren; a phrase often used by the apostle, when he makes a transition to new and important matters (comp. Rom. i. 13; xi. 25; 1 Cor. x. 1; xii. 1; 2 Cor. i. 8). Concerning them which are asleep; or, *are fallen asleep.* The death of believers in the New Testament is frequently called "sleep." "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth" (John xi. 11). Of Stephen it is said that "he fell asleep" (Acts vii. 60). "Many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep" (1 Cor. xi. 30). "Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished" (1 Cor. xv. 18). "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed" (1 Cor. xv. 51). "He fell asleep" is a common epitaph on early Christian tombstones. It is to be observed that it is

not of the dead generally that the apostle speaks, but of the dead in Christ, and especially of those members of the Thessalonian Church who had died. *That ye sorrow not.* Some suppose that sorrow for our deceased friends is here utterly prohibited; inasmuch as if we had a firm belief in their blessedness we would rejoice and not mourn. But the sorrow here prohibited is a despairing and an unbelieving sorrow; we are forbidden to sorrow as those who have no hope, no belief in a blessed resurrection. The tears of Jesus at the tomb of Lazarus have authorized and sanctified Christian sorrow. "Paul," observes Calvin, "lifts up the minds of believers to a consideration of the resurrection, lest they should indulge excessive grief on occasion of the death of their relatives, for it were unseemly that there should be no difference between them and unbelievers, who put no end or measure to their grief, for this reason, that in death they recognize nothing but destruction. Those that abuse this testimony so as to establish among Christians stoical indifference, that is, an iron hardness, will find nothing of this nature in Paul's words." Even as others; literally, *as the rest*; namely, the heathen. Which have no hope; no hope of immortality beyond death, or no hope of the resurrection. The heathen, with very few exceptions, had no hope of a future life, and hence they mourned over the death of their friends as an irreparable loss. This disconsolate feeling is apparent in their writings (for examples, see Lünemann, Alford, and Jowett, *in loco*).

Ver. 14.—*For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again.* The apostle's argument proceeds on the supposition that Christ and believers are one body, of which Christ is the Head and believers are the members; and that consequently what happens to the Head must happen to the members. Our knowledge and belief of a future state, and especially of the resurrection, is founded on the resurrection of Christ (comp. 1 Cor. xv. 12—20). *Even so them also which sleep in Jesus;* or more literally, *through Jesus.* Will God bring with him; namely, with Jesus. These words are differently construed. Some read them thus: "Even so them also which sleep will God through Jesus bring with him" (De Wette, Lünemann); but this appears to be an awkward construction; as we must then render the clause, "will God through Jesus bring with Jesus." It is, therefore, better to refer the words, "through Jesus," to the first clause. It is through Jesus that believers fall asleep; it is he who changes the nature of death, for all his people, from being the king of terrors into a quiet and gentle sleep, from which they will be wakened to eternal life.

Ver. 15.—*For this we say unto you by the*

word of the Lord; or rather, *by a word of the Lord.* The apostle does not refer to those portions of the gospel which record our Lord's discourses concerning the last things; nor to some sayings of Christ preserved by tradition; but to a direct revelation made unto himself by the Lord. We know from Scripture that Paul had many such revelations imparted to him (comp. 1 Cor. xi. 23; Gal. i. 11, 12). *That we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord.* These words are the occasion of an important discussion. It has been affirmed that the apostle here asserts that he himself expected to be alive, with the majority of those to whom he was writing, at the Lord's advent; that, according to his expectation, Christ's second coming was close at hand. "Those who are alive and remain" are distinguished from "those who are asleep," and in the former class the apostle includes himself and his readers. And a similar declaration is contained in the First Epistle to the Corinthians: "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed" (1 Cor. xv. 51). Such is the view adopted by Grotius, Olshausen, Koch, Neander, Lechler, Baur, Winer, Reuss, Lünemann, Riggenbach; and, among English divines, by Alford, Jowett, Stanley, and Conybeare. Some of them suppose that Paul changed his opinion on this point—that whilst in his earlier Epistles he taught the immediateness of the advent, in his later Epistles he renounced this hope and looked forward to his own departure. There does not seem to be any ground for this opinion. On the contrary, it would appear from the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, written only a few weeks after this Epistle, that Paul did not expect the advent immediately, but mentions a series of events which would intervene before its occurrence (2 Thess. ii. 1—3). And in this Epistle he represses the curiosity of the Thessalonians about the precise time of the advent by telling them that it was beyond the sphere of his teaching (oh. v. 1, 2). We consider, then, that the apostle speaks here as a member of the Christian body, and uses a very common form of expression—that we Christians which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord; but not at all intending to express his confidence that he himself and his converts would be actually alive at the advent. "He spake," says St Chrysostom, "not of himself, but of Christians who would be alive at the day of judgment." Such is the view adopted by Chrysostom, Calvin, Bengel, Hofmann, Lange, Macknight, Ellicott, Bishop Alexander, Wordsworth, and Vaughan. At the same time, it must be remembered that the time of the advent was expressly concealed (Matt. xxiv. 36; Acts i. 7), and that

it might occur at any period; and, by reason of their proximity to the first advent, the primitive Christians would be deeply impressed with the possibility or even probability of its occurrence in their days. Christians were to be living always in readiness for this great event, and thus it became a matter of expectation. "Strictly speaking, the expectation of the day of the Lord was not a belief, but a necessity in the early Church; clinging as it did to the thought of Christ, it could not bear to be separated from him; it was his absence, not his presence, that the first believers found it hard to realize" (Jowett). Hence Paul might not regard the advent as far removed into the distant future, as wholly impossible to happen in his days, but as an occurrence which might at any time take place; but he did not teach anything definite or certain on the subject.¹ Shall not prevent; go before or anticipate, obtain the preference over, get before, so that those that are asleep might be left behind and fail of the prize. Them that are asleep; those who are dead, so that they, the living, should be glorified before them, or perhaps hinder their glorification.

Ver. 16.—For; assigning a reason for the above assertion, "because." The Lord himself; not merely the Lord as the chief Person and Actor on that day, in contrast to his saints, but emphatic, "the Lord himself," the Lord in his own proper Person. Shall descend from heaven; where the crucified and risen Jesus is now enthroned, seated at the right hand of God. With a shout; a word denoting a commanding shout as that of a leader to his host when he leads them into the battle, or of the army when it rushes to the fight. Some refer this shout to what follows—the voice of the archangel and the trump of God; but there are three particulars here mentioned. Others attribute it to Christ himself. With the voice of the archangel; or rather, of an archangel. There is only one archangel mentioned in Scripture (Jude 9); the word denotes, not "chief angel," but "chief or ruler of the angels." Accordingly, some suppose that Christ himself is here meant, as to him alone, it is asserted, does this title belong; but the Lord and the archangel are here evidently distinguished. Others strangely imagine that the Holy Ghost is here meant. Others fix on the archangel Michael (Jude 9). Christ is represented as accompanied by angels to

the judgment; and it is futile to inquire who this leader of the angels is. And the trump of God; even as the trumpet sounded at the giving of the Law from Sinai. Also the advent of Christ to judgment is represented as heralded by the sound of a trumpet (Matt. xxiv. 31; 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52). "We are to recognize three particulars, following each other in rapid succession—the commanding shout of the King himself, the voice of the archangel summoning the other angels, and the trump of God which awakens the dead and collects believers" (Riggenbach). And the dead in Christ shall rise first. Some suppose that the reference here is to the first resurrection; that the righteous, "the dead in Christ," shall rise before the wicked, "the dead not in Christ;" and that a thousand years, or the millennium, will intervene between the first and second resurrections (Rev. xx. 4, 5). But this is an entirely erroneous supposition. All that is here asserted is that the dead in Christ shall rise before the living in Christ shall be changed; there is no contrast between the dead in Christ and the dead not in Christ, nor any allusion to the resurrection of the wicked.

Ver. 17.—Then we which are alive and remain; or, *are left*; that is, the saints who shall then be found alive on the earth. The apostle classes himself among the living, because he was then alive. Shall be caught up. The expression describes the irresistible power with which the saints shall be caught up, perhaps by the ministry of angels. Together with them; with the dead in Christ who are raised. In the clouds. Our Lord is described as coming to judgment in the clouds of heaven (Matt. xxiv. 30; Rev. i. 7). According to the Old Testament representation, God is described as making the clouds his chariot (Ps. civ. 3). To meet the Lord; in his descent from heaven to earth. In the air. Not that he shall fix his throne in the air, but that he passes through the air in his descent to the earth. And so shall we ever be with the Lord; shall share a blessed eternity in the vision and participation of his glory. The apostle does not here describe the solemnities of the judgment; but stops at the meeting of Christ and his risen saints, because his object was to comfort the Thessalonians under bereavement.

Ver. 18.—Wherefore comfort one another with these words; on the ground of that Divine revelation which I have made unto you.

¹ See dissertation on "Paul's Views of the Advent" in the author's 'Introduction to the Pauline Epistles,' pp. 94—106.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 3, 7.—Holiness the design of revelation. Holiness is the end aimed at in all the dispensations of God. (1) God has chosen us before the foundation of the world that we should be holy (Eph. i. 4); (2) Christ gave himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity (Titus ii. 14); (3) the Holy Spirit is conferred to sanctify us (Titus iii. 5; 2 Thess. ii. 13); (4) the Word is the instrument of sanctification (John xvii. 17); and (5) God chastens us in order that we might be made partakers of his holiness (Heb. xii. 10). In short, holiness is salvation—our restoration to the moral image of God.

Ver. 9.—Brotherly love. 1. *Its nature.* It is a love to all believers as believers, as being the children of the same Father, the brethren of the same Saviour, the members of the same family, the sharers of the same grace, and the expectants of the same glorious immortality. To all men we are related by a common humanity, but to Christians we are still more closely related by a common Christianity. 2. *Its manifestations.* It will show itself in acts of kindness done to believers, in preferring their company to that of worldly men, and in conversing with them on religious subjects. 3. *The evidence arising from brotherly love.* It is a proof that we are not of the world, that we love God and that we are Christ's friends and disciples.

Ver. 11.—Quietness and faithfulness in worldly duties. 1. *Quietness.* A true Christian is of a quiet and retiring disposition; he shrinks from worldly bustle; he is free from worldly ambition; like the lily of the valley, he loves the shade; he knows that this is not his home, and he looks for a better country, even a heavenly. 2. *Faithfulness.* A true Christian faithfully performs his worldly duties, because he believes them to be assigned him by the Lord; and he labours assiduously at his calling, because he recognizes it as the law of Providence that if any man do not work neither shall he eat.

Ver. 12.—Honesty. 1. *Its nature.* We must guard against commercial dishonesty; all attempts to go beyond and defraud our brother; all overestimating what we sell, and underestimating what we buy; all shrinking from the payment of debts; all mean practices to gain customers. 2. *Its importance.* Temptations to dishonesty in this commercial age. Dishonesty combined with religious profession gives occasion to the enemies of God to blaspheme. We must walk honestly toward them that are without. The independence and loftiness of character which honesty imparts.

Ver. 13.—The death of friends. 1. *The Christian's sorrow for the death of friends.* All sorrow not here forbidden; only commanded not to sorrow as those who have no hope. The Christian sorrow is a submissive sorrow, which discerns the hand of God; a holy sorrow, which improves the affliction; a disinterested sorrow, which, whilst it mourns over the loss, is comforted at the thoughts of the happiness of the departed; an enlightened sorrow, which looks forward to the future, and regards our separation from our departed friends as being neither final nor complete. 2. *The Christian's improvement of the death of friends.* It teaches us the vanity of the world, the power of religion, and the necessity of preparation for our own death.

Ver. 14.—Resurrection of believers. The ground of their resurrection rests on their union to Christ and on his resurrection. Not only are their souls immortal, but their bodies shall be redeemed from the grave. The voice of the archangel and the trump of God will call them from their graves, and, endowed with spiritual bodies, they shall be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. The resurrection is purely a doctrine of revelation; it formed no part of the religion of nature; the natural analogies which are adduced are defective in essential points.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1, 2.—*The importance of living in harmony with the Divine will.* The practical part of the Epistle begins at this point.

I. MARK THE AFFECTIONATE MANNER OF THE APOSTLE'S ADDRESS. "We beseech you and exhort by the Lord Jesus." He does not speak in the language of command, much less assume the air of a lord over God's heritage, but meekly and affectionately in the way of entreaty. But there was all the force of authority in the very entreaty because it was grounded in the Lord Jesus as its source and element.

II. THE IMPORTANT NATURE OF HIS REQUEST. "That according as ye received from us how ye ought to walk and please God, ye would abound yet more." 1. *It is the duty of a minister to enforce moral duties as well as gospel doctrines.* Scripture knows nothing of antinomianism except to condemn it. It is necessary for ministers to expound duty as well as doctrine. 2. *It is possible to please God in holy walking.* This does not imply that the saints' acceptance depends upon themselves, but that God is pleased with what a believer does in faith from a principle of love, in the grace of Christ, for the Divine glory. "The Lord taketh pleasure in his people." Even when our hearts condemn us, "he upbraideth not" (Jas. i. 5). 3. *It is necessary to increase in godliness.* "So ye would abound yet more." (1) The apostle recognizes their begun sanctification. The best texts add the words, "even as also ye walk." (2) He enforces the necessity of making further increase in holy walking. There must be an "exercising of themselves unto godliness," a resolute "going on unto perfection" in the exercise of every grace, in the discharge of every duty, "perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. vii. 1).

III. ENFORCEMENT OF THE EXHORTATION. "For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus." 1. *The apostle's position was purely ministerial*, for he merely delivered what he had received from the Lord. 2. *The moral duties he enjoins are based in the gospel of Christ*, which supplies the motives to a full-hearted obedience.—T. C.

Ver. 3.—*Sanctification a Divine arrangement.* "For this is God's will, your sanctification." The first duty expressed is personal holiness.

I. THE NATURE OF SANCTIFICATION. 1. *It implies the consecration of all our faculties and powers, both of body and mind, to God's service.* 2. *It implies personal purity in heart and life.* We are to "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. vii. 1).

II. THE GROUND OF THE EXHORTATION. 1. *It is God's will.* That ought to stimulate to exertion and encourage to prayer. "Teach me to do thy will, for thou art my God." 2. *It was the design of Christ's death*; for he "gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus ii. 14).

III. THE MEANS OF SANCTIFICATION. 1. *It is by the truth.* "Sanctify them by thy truth: thy Word is truth." 2. *It is by his ordinances.* 3. *It is by his providences.* (Ps. cxix. 71; Heb. xii. 10; Rom. ii. 4.) 4. *It is, above all, by the Spirit of holiness, as its sole Author.*—T. C.

Ver. 3.—*Warning against sins of impurity.* The apostle comes at once to particulars. "That ye should abstain from fornication." Though adultery and incest were crimes among the heathen, fornication was not accounted a sin at all. Therefore we can understand the emphatic place which is assigned to this sin in the synodal letters to the Gentile Churches (Acts xv. 20—29). The Gentiles "walked after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness."

I. CONSIDER THE HEINOUSNESS OF THIS SIN. 1. *It is a sin against God.* So Joseph regarded it (Gen. xxxix. 9). The law to restrain from this sin is grounded in the reason, "For I the Lord am holy" (Lev. xix. 2). The Divine nature which believers share through grace is quite inconsistent with "the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Pet. i. 4). This sin is likewise inconsistent with the design of the gospel of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. vii. 1; Eph. iv. 29, 30). 2. *It*

is a sin against our neighbour. This is implied in the seventh commandment. 3. It is a sin against our own bodies. (1 Cor. vi. 18.) Sinners dishonour their own bodies (Rom. i. 24). 4. It is a sin against the soul. "Whoredom takes away the heart" (Hos. iv. 11).

II. CONSIDER THE FATAL CONSEQUENCES OF THIS SIN. 1. *It wastes the body.* (Job xx. 11.) 2. *It wars against the soul.* (1 Pet. ii. 11.) 3. *It causes shame.* (Prov. vi. 33; Eph. v. 12.) 4. *It entails poverty.* (Prov. vi. 26.) 5. *It excludes from the kingdom of God.* (1 Cor. vi. 9, 10.)—T. C.

Vers. 4—8.—*How personal purity is to be maintained.* The sanctification which is God's will requires that "every one of you know how to possess himself of his own vessel in sanctification and honour, not in passion of lust." The vessel is not a wife, but a man's own body. If it meant a wife, it might be said that every man would be bound to marry. The wife is no doubt called the "weaker vessel," the evident meaning of the term of comparison being that the husband is also "a vessel."

I. HOW THE BODY IS TO BE USED. 1. *Negatively.* (1) It is not to be regarded as outside the pale of moral obligation, as antinomian perverters say, basing their error on the words of the apostle, "It is not I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me;" "In me, that is, in my flesh, there dwelleth no good thing." (2) It is not to be injured or mutilated by asceticism, after Romish example. The apostle condemns "the neglecting of the body" and "the not sparing of the body" (Col. ii. 23). (3) It is not to be made "an instrument of unrighteousness" through sensuality—"not in passion of lust." Sensuality is quite inconsistent with the very idea of sanctification. 2. *Positively.* (1) The body is to be kept under control; the Christian "must know how to possess himself of his own vessel." He "must keep under the body;" he must make it servant and not master, and not allow its natural liberty to run into licentiousness. (2) He must treat it with all due honour—"in sanctification and honour;" (a) because it is God's workmanship, for "we are fearfully and wonderfully made;" (b) because it is "the temple of the Holy Ghost" (1 Cor. vi. 19); (c) because it is an heir of the resurrection; (d) because it is, and ought to be, like the believer himself, "a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the Master's use," for the body has much to do in the economy of grace.

II. DISSUASIVES AGAINST PERSONAL IMPURITY. 1. *The knowledge of God received by the Christian ought to guard us against it.* The apostle here attributes Gentile impurity to ignorance of God. "Even as the Gentiles who know not God." The world by wisdom knew not God, was alienated from the life of God, and thus sunk into moral disorder. The apostle shows in the first chapter of Romans how God, as a righteous retribution, gave over the idolatrous Gentiles to all sorts of moral dishonour. 2. *Another dissuasive is the regard we ought to have for a brother's family honour.* "That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in this matter." A breach upon family honour is a far worse offence than any breach upon property. The stain is indelibly deeper. 3. *Another dissuasive is the Divine vengeance.* For "the Lord is the Avenger concerning all these things." If the vengeance does not reach men in this world, it will in the next, where they will have their portion in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone. They shall "not inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. vi. 9). 4. *The nature of the Divine call is another dissuasive.* For "God did not call you for uncleanness, but in sanctification." They had received "a holy calling," a "high calling;" and though "called unto liberty," they were "created unto good works." They were "called to be saints;" for God says, "Be ye holy, for I am holy." 5. *Another dissuasive is that the sin involves a despisal of God, who has given us his Holy Spirit that we may attain to sanctification.* "He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man but God, who hath also given unto us his Holy Spirit." God has ordered all our family relations, and any dishonour done to them involves a contempt of his authority. We have in this passage God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—interested in man's salvation and holiness.—T. C.

Vers. 9, 10.—*Inculcation of brotherly love.* The apostle next reminds the Thessalonians of the duty of abounding in brotherly love.

I. THE NATURE OF THIS LOVE. 1. *It is the affection of those who are children of the*

same Father. (Gal. iv. 26.) Members of the same "household of faith" (Gal. vi. 10). "Every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him" (1 John v. 1). 2. *It is a practical love.* "Not in word only, but in deed and in truth" (1 John iii. 18). It showed itself in "labours of love," and especially through the whole of Macedonia. 3. *It was a duty thoroughly understood by believers,* because they were "taught of God to love one another" in both Testaments. 4. *It was the test of regeneration.* (1 John iii. 14.) 5. *It was a token of discipleship.* (John xiii. 35.) 6. *It was essential to the growth of the Church.* (Eph. iv. 16.)

II. THE MOTIVES TO THIS LOVE. 1. *The command of Christ.* (John xiii. 34.) 2. *The example of Christ.* (Eph. v. 2.) 3. *The glory of Christ in the world is promoted by it.* (John xiii. 35.) 4. *It will be a powerful means towards the world's conversion* (John vii. 21.)

III. THE MANIFESTATION OF THIS LOVE. 1. In bearing one another's burdens (Gal. vi. 2). The Thessalonians several years afterwards showed this spirit, as we see by 2 Cor. viii. 1, 2, toward the Churches of Macedonia. 2. "In honour preferring one another" (Rom. xii. 10). 3. "Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another" (Col. iii. 13). 4. "Not suffering sin upon a brother" (Lev. xix. 17).—T. C.

Vers. 11, 12.—*Inculcation of the duty of quiet and honest industry.* "And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you."

I. A WARNING AGAINST THREE INCONSISTENT AND UNPROFITABLE MODES OF LIFE. 1. *They were to guard against a spirit of restlessness.* "That ye study to be quiet." There had, perhaps, arisen an unsettlement of mind on account of their belief in the nearness of Christ's advent, as well as some uneasiness on account of the fate of their deceased brethren. It led to a desultoriness of life little effective for any good end. The apostle, therefore, counsels sedateness and calmness. We ought to live "a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty" (1 Tim. ii. 2). 2. *They were to guard against a meddling and pragmatical spirit.* "Do your own business." Love naturally inclines us to "look not on our own things, but also on the things of others" (Phil. ii. 4), but it must not prompt either to the neglect of our own business or to undue interference with that of others. We must not be "busybodies in other men's matters." 3. *They were to guard against idleness.* "Work with your own hands." The converts probably belonged mostly to the artisan class. The belief in the nearness of the advent had unhinged their minds, and led them to neglect the duties of their secular calling. Industry is a commanded duty. "Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called" (1 Cor. vii. 20). The Thessalonians needed to be reminded of it, for he had occasion to speak of it in his first visit. Idleness has peculiar temptations.

II. MOTIVES TO THE DISCHARGE OF THESE DUTIES. "That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have need of nothing." 1. *We are to have consideration to the opinion of those without.* They may misjudge us, yet their judgments may be often true. We must not repel them by our inconsistencies of conduct. We must give "none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully" (1 Tim. v. 14). 2. *We are to provide a supply for our own wants,* (1) so as to support ourselves respectably, (2) and to enable us to supply the need of others. Christianity is above all things a self-respecting religion, and has the promise even "of the life that now is." Mendicancy is essentially degrading.—T. C.

Ver. 13.—*Sorrow for the dead.* The apostle next refers to the share of the Christian dead in the coming of Christ, respecting which some misapprehensions seem to have existed at Thessalonica.

I. THE DEATH OF FRIENDS IS A CAUSE OF DEEP SORROW TO SURVIVORS. Such sorrow is instinctive, and is not forbidden by the gospel: for "Jesus wept" at the grave of Lazarus, and the friends of Stephen "made great lamentation over him." True religion does not destroy, but restrains, natural affections.

II. THERE IS A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CHRISTIAN AND HEATHEN SORROW. That of the heathen is extravagant, because there is "no hope" in the death of their relatives. It is "the sorrow of the world," which is utterly uncheered by hope. The sorrow of the Christian is sober, and chastened by the hope of the gospel.

III. THE CAUSE OF THESSALONIAN SORROW. 1. *It was not that there was a denial or doubt of the resurrection from the dead, such as existed at Corinth.* 2. *Nor was it that the resurrection was regarded as past already,* according to the heresy of Hymenæus and Philetus. 3. *But it was that it was feared the Christian dead would not be raised to share with the living in the coming glories of the advent.*

IV. THE RESURRECTION HAS CHANGED DEATH INTO A SLEEP. "Those that are asleep." 1. *There is nothing in the word to justify the idea of the soul's unconsciousness in the period between death and resurrection.* 2. *Sleep implies an awaking.* This will occur at the resurrection. Thus the hope of the Church is the hope of the resurrection.

V. THE IMPORTANCE OF EXACT KNOWLEDGE RESPECTING THE FUTURE DESTINY OF THE SAINTS. "I would not have you ignorant." Ignorance of the truth mars our spiritual comfort.—T. C.

Vers. 14, 15.—*Reasons against sorrow for the dead.* The apostle gives several reasons why the Thessalonians ought not to sorrow for their dead.

I. THE FUNDAMENTAL REASON IS THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF CHRIST. "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again." These are the primary facts of Christianity. They are inseparably linked together, for the resurrection was the crown of the redeeming sacrifice; for if he was delivered for our offences, he was raised again for our justification. Deny either or both, we "are yet in our sins."

II. THE SECOND REASON IS, WHEN CHRIST COMES AGAIN FROM THE FATHER'S RIGHT HAND, HE WILL BRING WITH HIM THE SLEEPING SAINTS. "Even so them also who sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." 1. *The dead saints sleep in Jesus.* They are associated with him both in life and in death. They "die in the Lord;" "they are present with the Lord." 2. *They will accompany Jesus at his second coming.* This includes (1) their resurrection from the dead,—for "he who raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus" (2 Cor. iv. 14); (2) their joining the retinue of Jesus to share his triumph. As risen from the dead, he becomes "the Firstfruits of them that sleep."

III. THE THIRD REASON IS THAT THE LIVING SAINTS WILL NOT PRECEDE THE DEAD SAINTS AT THE COMING OF CHRIST. "For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not precede them which are asleep." This fact would effectively dissipate their sorrow for their departed friends. 1. *It is a fact made known by special revelation.* Such revelations were frequently made to the apostle, as in the case of his special mission field (Acts xxii. 18—21), the position of Gentile saints (Eph. iii. 3), the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. xi. 23), and the reality and proofs of Christ's resurrection (1 Cor. xv. 3). 2. *It is a fact that does not imply either the nearness of the second advent, or the apostle's own share as a living man in its glories.* He says, "We which are alive and remain to the coming of Christ;" he merely identifies the living believers of the last age with himself, as if he said, "Those of us Christians who may be alive at the advent." He could not have believed that he would not die before the advent, for (1) that would imply that "the word of the Lord" had misled him; (2) he actually preferred to be absent from the body, and toward the end of his life spoke of death as "gain," and of his desiring "to depart and be with Christ," words quite inconsistent with this theory; (3) he virtually declares in the Second Epistle that the advent could not happen in his lifetime (2 Thess. ii.); (4) he knew that no man, not even the Son of man, knew the time of the advent (Mark xiii. 42). 3. *It is a fact that the living saints will not get the start of the dead saints in the coming of the Lord.* This is his express revelation from the Lord. "The dead in Christ shall rise first," or before the living are changed (1 Cor. xv.). The Thessalonians need not, therefore, sorrow for their departed friends, neither be afraid themselves to die.—T. C.

Vers. 16—18.—*The order of events at the second advent.* The apostle justifies his statement by a fuller revelation of the truth. He sets forth the order of events.

I. THE DESCENT OF THE LORD FROM HEAVEN. "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God." 1. *It will be a descent of our personal Lord.* "No phantom, no providential substitute, no vicarious spirit;" the same Person that ascended is he that will descend

2. *It will be a descent with awe-inspiring accompaniments.* (1) "With a signal shout" by the Lord himself, which will be taken up and prolonged by (2) "the voice of the archangel;" for he is to come, "bringing with him all the holy angels" (Matt. xxv. 31); and (3) "the trump of God," for "the trumpet shall sound" (1 Cor. xv. 52), and "he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet" (Matt. xxiv. 31). It is God's trumpet because employed in his heavenly service. It will be the sound of a literal trumpet, like that which was heard upon Sinai (Exod. xix. 16, 19). These various sounds are to herald the descent of the Lord, and to gather the elect together from the four winds of heaven.

II. THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD SAINTS. "And the dead in Christ shall rise first." There is no allusion to the resurrection of the wicked. The apostle is concerned at present with the destinies and glories of a single class. So far from the sainted dead being overlooked, the priority of resurrection is to belong to them.

III. THE CHANGE OF THE LIVING SAINTS. This wonderful transformation is here rather implied than asserted. "For we shall not all die, but we shall be changed" (1 Cor. xv. 51).

IV. THE SIMULTANEOUS ASSUMPTION OF BOTH CLASSES OF SAINTS. "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air." 1. *As one united band, the saints, in spiritualized bodies, will be caught up in clouds*—those "clouds which are his chariot"—just as he himself ascended "in a cloud," and "a cloud received him out of their sight" (Acts i. 9). The new bodies of believers will be able to pass with ease through the air. 2. *The saints will then "meet the Lord in the air"*—not in heaven as he leaves it, nor in earth as he approaches it, but between heaven and earth. The apostle does not say whether they will at once descend to earth and return with him to heaven. He is silent upon the question of the judgment or the entry into final glory.

V. THE PERPETUAL RESIDENCE OF THE SAINTS WITH THE LORD. "And so shall we ever be with the Lord." 1. *It will be a meeting without a parting.* The intercourse begun will have an endless duration. Believers shall "go no more out." 2. *It implies an intimate fellowship with the Lord.* 3. *It will be the fulfilment of our Lord's prayer:* "That they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory" (John xvii. 24).

VI. THE CONSOLATORY INFLUENCE OF ALL THESE TRUTHS. "Wherefore comfort one another with these words." Chase away your sorrow; the dead are not lost or forgotten; they shall share in the glories of the advent. There was surely deep and lasting consolation in such truths.—T. C.

Vers. 1, 2.—*Exhortation.* ST. PAUL'S AFFECTIONATE IMPORTUNITY. 1. *He beseeches.* He has finished the personal part of his letter; he has told them of his love, his constant remembrance of them, his prayers for them, his thanksgiving; he has reminded them of the close spiritual ties which bound them to him. Now he beseeches them to persevere. He knows the exceeding difficulty of maintaining a Christian life in this sinful world; he knows the momentous issues that depend on perseverance; he loves his converts with an intense love; therefore he beseeches (comp. 2 Cor. v. 20). He uses all means of persuasion in turns. Now he commands, now he beseeches. Sometimes entreaty is more prevailing than commandment, gentleness than authority. No qualities are more important in the work of the ministry than a genuine love for souls, a real and evident anxiety for the spiritual welfare of our people. St. Paul beseeches; it is an example to all Christian ministers. 2. *He exhorts them in the Lord Jesus.* Christian people need all manner of encouragement, comfort, exhortation. That exhortation prevails which is in the Lord Jesus. His presence, his grace, himself, is the sphere of the Christian's spiritual activity. He who lives habitually in "that fellowship which is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ," is best able to lead others to God and heaven. For he who hath the Son hath life. The Lord Jesus is the Life; and he who hath that life himself, hath from the life that abideth in him the warmth, the fervour, the holy enthusiasm, without which religious exhortation has no power, no reality. "In the Lord Jesus." Mark how frequently those words, "in Christ," "in the Lord," are on the lips of St. Paul. It is a constant formula with him. But it is a formula full of life, full of holy meaning. "Not I, Christ liveth in me."

3. *He reminds them of his former teaching.* He had given them a charge, and that through the Lord Jesus. He had received of the Lord that which he delivered unto them. The commandments were not his; they were the commandments of Christ. He had received them from Christ; and through Christ's appointment, guidance, presence, he delivered them to the Thessalonians. He appeals to their recollection. They knew them; they had the knowledge; that knowledge involves a deep and solemn responsibility. The Lord tells us in the Gospel of the condemnation that hangs over the careless servant who knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will. Hence the force of the apostle's words, "Ye know." Much had been given to them, much would be required. It is a warning to be always remembered, to be urged constantly upon ourselves, upon those who are brought in any way under our influence. "Ye know." Knowledge, if it issue in obedience, is exceeding precious; knowledge without obedience involves an awful danger. "Ye know;" therefore we must use that knowledge, that precious talent entrusted to our keeping. The tremendous alternatives before us—the blessed words, "Well done!" or the sentence that fills the heart with shuddering awe, "Thou wicked and slothful servant!" 4. *He urges them to continual progress.* He had taught them how to walk and to please God. The subject of his practical teaching was how to walk, not how to talk. They must walk in the Spirit, he had told them; their daily life in all its details and circumstances must be guided by the promptings of the Holy Spirit. "Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth," is the key-note of the true Christian life. Thus living they would please God. To please God is the highest Christian ambition; the consciousness of pleasing him is the highest Christian joy. But walking implies progress. Standing still is dangerous; it must issue in backsliding. They must go on from strength to strength; they must forget those things that are behind, and press on to those that are before. The grace of God abounds; it is without limit. He giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not. So must the Christian abound more and more in the exercise of the graces communicated to him by God; he must work the works of righteousness with ever-increasing energy, as the grace of God more and more fills his heart.

LESSONS. 1. Do all things in the Name of the Lord Jesus; learn by experience the meaning of those deep words, "in the Lord." 2. Remember that knowledge implies responsibility. 3. Strive to maintain continual progress in all Christian graces, in faith, hope, love, humility, patience.—B. C. C.

Vers. 3-8.—*The law of purity.* I. PURITY OF HEART. 1. *The will of God the rule of the Christian life.* To please God is the strongest desire of the true Christian; and we please him by obedience. The Lord delighteth not in outward observances as he doth in "obeying the voice of the Lord." The Christian's prayer is, "Thy will be done." The standard of that obedience is the obedience of the angels in heaven. It is above our reach; but it is what we are bidden to aim at, what we are told to pray for in our daily prayers. It should be the effort of our lives to lift ourselves up, by the grace of God assisting us, nearer and nearer to that heavenly rule. Without that grace we are helpless; but "I can do all things," says St. Paul, "through him that strengtheneth me." 2. *The will of God is our sanctification.* He willeth that all men should be saved; but salvation is possible only through sanctification; for without holiness no man shall see the Lord. Sanctification is the separation from all that is evil, the entire consecration of the whole man to the service of God, the gradual conforming of the human will to the blessed will of God. Christ is our Sanctification. "He of God is made unto us Wisdom, and Righteousness, and Sanctification." Faith brings us near to him, and he becomes our Righteousness; then the work of sanctification begins. It is a progressive work, slow and gradual. The more the believer grows in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, the more does that blessed knowledge exert its hallowing power. The beauty of holiness, the sweetness of fellowship with God, the glories of his coming kingdom, are more and more deeply felt. Then, when the affections are set upon things above, and the heart's love is centred upon God, the soul reacheth forth after Christ, longing above all things to be like him, yearning after holiness with a strong, intense desire, eagerly striving to purge itself from the defilement of sin, and to advance ever onwards in the work of sanctification; and that because the Lord Jesus Christ dwelleth there himself, and the pulses of his love beat in the converted heart. He is our Sanctification,

He abideth in his people's heart by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. All holy desires, all good counsels, all just works, come from him—from his inspiring, elevating presence. This is the will of God; this is what God would have us to be. It is a very high and heavenly state; yet in its various degrees it must be by the grace of God within our reach. For he is the God of truth; his promises are not deceitful; his commandments do not mock us with a standard impossible of attainment.

II. PURITY OF LIFE. 1. *Chastity*. The apostle is writing to converts who but a short time before had been heathens. It was necessary to speak very plainly and solemnly on this subject; for the heathen commonly regarded that impurity, which is so great a sin in the sight of God, almost as a thing indifferent. But the will of God is our sanctification, and sanctification involves purity. Without sanctification we cannot see the Lord; but the pure in heart shall see him. God is light; in him is no darkness at all. There is something awful in the stainless purity of the starry heavens. As we gaze into them, we feel ourselves oppressed with an overwhelming sense of our own uncleanness. It is a parable of the ineffable purity of God. In his sight the heavens are not clean. He is of purer eyes than to behold evil; therefore only the pure in heart can see his face. That inner purity covers the whole spiritual life. It implies freedom from all lower motives—all that is selfish, earthly, false, hypocritical; it is that transparency of character which flows from the consciousness of the perpetual presence of God. But that inner purity, which is so large an element in sanctification, involves the perfect purity of the outward life. Religion is not morality, but it cannot exist without morality. It transcends morality, but it implies it. This was not the teaching of the religion which the Thessalonians had abandoned. That admitted immorality. Their very gods were immoral. They were served, not by purity of life, but by sacrifices and outward rites often leading to impurity. Hence the urgency of the apostle's appeal. Amid the evil surroundings of a heathen town, living in an atmosphere of depraved public opinion, new converts were exposed to constant and great dangers. St. Paul reminds them that holiness, without which there is no salvation, is impossible without chastity. Fornication is not, what they once deemed it, a thing indifferent. It is an awful sin against God. Christianity has taught us this. We know it well. We wonder at the light way in which heathen writers speak of abominations which now we shrink from naming. But the sin exists still in terrible strength. It hides itself, indeed; it walketh in the darkness; Christianity has driven it there. But still, alas! it slays its thousands and its ten thousands. It cuts a soul away from God with a fearful rapidity. It fills the man with impure images, unholy desires. It drives out of the heart the thought of God. The soul that is tainted with this foul leprosy cannot pray. It cannot endure the thought of the presence of God in his heart-searching nearness, in his awful purity. Impurity destroys the possibility of the slightest approach to that sanctification without which we cannot see God. Hence the necessity of the apostle's earnest words, "The will of God is your sanctification; and there can be no sanctification if ye live in uncleanness." 2. *Honour*. The unclean life of the heathen cities was full of sin and shame. The Christian life is truly honourable. The Christian's body is a holy thing. It has been dedicated to God. It is "for the Lord" (1 Cor. vi. 13). The Christian must acquire a mastery over it in honour. He must yield his "members as instruments of righteousness unto God." The Christian husband must give honour to his wife. Christian marriage must be honourable, for it is a parable of the mystical union that is betwixt Christ and his Church. The life of holiness and purity is a thing to be honoured. Those who honour holiness honour God, who is the most holy One, the one Fountain of holiness. 3. *The knowledge of God*. The heathens knew not God. They might have known him. He had manifested in the works of creation his eternal power and Godhead. But they did not like to retain God in their knowledge. They changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man. Their false gods resembled men, not only in their form, but also in their sins and uncleanness. Men had framed a conception of Deity from their own corrupt nature, and that conception reacted powerfully upon their character. Their gods were like them, and they were like their gods. The Thessalonian Christians had learned a holier knowledge. They must not live like the heathen, who knew not the true and living God. Their knowledge must act upon their life. They must be pure. 4. *Impurity is a sin against man*. "Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light." Impure desires assume

the form of love; uncleanness usurps and degrades the sacred name of love. The sensual man ruins in body and in soul those whom he professes to love. He uses words of tenderness. He is the most cruel, the deadliest enemy in his wicked selfishness. He cares not for the nearest and holiest ties. He sins against the sanctity of matrimony. He brings misery upon families. Seeking only the gratification of his own wicked lust, he transgresses and wrongs his brethren. But his sin will bring swift punishment upon him. The Lord is the Avenger in all such things. He called us not for uncleanness, but in sanctification. Sanctification is the very sphere in which the new life moves and energizes. Uncleanness is utterly alien to it. The Lord who called us in sanctification will punish with that awful vengeance which belongeth to him all who for their wicked pleasure sin against their brethren. 5. *It is a sin against God.* God hath given us his Holy Spirit. He hath given that great gift "unto you," the apostle says—to you Thessalonians. He gave it once, he is giving it still. It is this great fact which makes uncleanness in Christians a sin of such exceeding awfulness. Their bodies are the temples of God the Holy Ghost. To bring impure thought into that most sacred presence, to defile that body which he has taken to be his Church and shrine, is an outrage, an insult to that Divine Majesty. Such a man hath done despite to the Spirit of grace. Of what punishment shall he be thought worthy? The Spirit of purity cannot abide in an impure heart. He will depart, as he once departed from Saul. There are awful things in Holy Scripture said of those who resist the Holy Ghost, who will not listen to his still small voice speaking in the heart, but continue to vex him by wilful and persistent disobedience, till at last his voice is heard no more, and his gracious influences are quenched. It is enough to fill the thoughtful Christian with shuddering awe when he reflects on that sanctification which the Word of God requires, and contrasts it with the fearful prevalence of sins of impurity.

LESSONS. 1. Long after holiness, pray for it, struggle for it with the deepest yearnings of the heart, the most earnest efforts of the life. 2. Flee from the slightest touch of impurity—the thought, the look, the word. It is a deadly poison, a loathsome serpent; it stingeth unto death. 3. Remember God the Holy Ghost dwells in the Christian's heart. Keep thyself pure.—B. C. C.

Vers. 9-12.—The law of love. I. **ON ITS POSITIVE SIDE.** 1. *It is taught by God.* God is love, and love is of God. The Church of God is the school of love. God himself is the great Teacher. He teaches us by his own example. "So God loved the world, he gave his only Son;" "The Son of God loved me, and gave himself for me." The cross of the Lord Jesus Christ reveals to us the blessed love of God. God the Holy Ghost teaches his people to comprehend with all saints what is the length, and breadth, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge. He shows us something of his own blessed love, and bids us learn of him. "This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you." We are his disciples, his pupils; we learn of him. What should we learn, if we learn not to love? It is the great task of life. Our lives are wasted if we have not learned that holiest lesson before we die; for heaven is the home of love. There is no place there for the soul that hath not learned to love. God is the Teacher. He had taught the Thessalonians. They did love the brethren. They needed not, the apostle says in his tenderness, a human teacher. 2. *Yet St. Paul exhorts them.* For love is a debt which is never fully paid. The great lesson of love is never fully learned. We are dull scholars. Our natural selfishness keeps us back. We need every incentive, every help. There must be a continual growth. To stand still is to lose ground. We must urge ourselves, we must urge others, to abound more and more. The Lord Jesus is our Example. "As I have loved you," he says. The depth, the purity of that holiest love is altogether above us, out of our reach; we cannot attain unto it. We see its effects in the lives of his saints. We know how the love of Christ constrained the holy apostle St. Paul to live no longer to himself, but to him who died for him and rose again. We despair of ever reaching that high degree of holy love; but it must be the strongest yearning of our hearts to advance continually, to abound more and more.

II. **ON ITS NEGATIVE SIDE.** 1. *Christian ambition.* Ambition (*φιλοτιμία*) is a common word in Greek ethics and history, a prominent characteristic of Greek political life.

There is a Christian ambition; its object is not to be first in the arena of political strife, but to preach the gospel, to please God, to live a quiet, holy life (compare in the Greek, Rom. xv. 20; 2 Cor. v. 9). Political φιλοτιμία, Bengel says, blushes to be quiet. The Greeks were eager, bustling, restless, each longing to be first. The apostle seeks to turn the ambition of the Thessalonians into another channel. Their ambition should be to be quiet—to keep themselves free, as far as might be, from political excitement and social rivalry, that they might cultivate the inner life of love and peace and communion with God. Love would lead them to abstain from meddling with other men's matters—to do their own duty in the station where God had called them. Love would keep them free from envy and party spirit, and help them to maintain a current of quiet, peaceful thought within their souls. 2. *Christian dignity.* Love would keep them from everything that might bring the gospel into discredit. The Christian has duties towards those who are without. His light must shine before men, that they may be led to glorify him from whom the light cometh. The life of the Thessalonian Christians must be honest, becoming. The apostle insists on the dignity of honest labour. It was little regarded. Educated Greeks and Romans spoke of it as coarse and vulgar. The Lord Jesus worked with his hands, so did St. Paul. Christianity has invested the life of industry with a grace of its own. St. Paul here uses the same word in connection with honest labour which in the Acts of the Apostles is employed to designate the ladies of rank at Berea, the "honourable women" who believed. The Christian must be careful to use words in their true sense. It is not wealth or rank that is truly respectable, but virtue and holiness. Thus living, thus labouring, they would have need of nothing; rather, perhaps, of no man. They would attain that honourable independence which enables one to "look the whole world in the face, for he owes not any man."

LESSONS. 1. Covet earnestly the best gifts; pray for growth in charity. 2. Let your ambition be a Christian ambition; try to be first in humility, first in self-sacrifice, first in the quiet discharge of daily duties. 3. Never despise labour; it was the lot of the Lord Jesus; it has its own moral beauty and dignity.—B. C. C.

VERS. 13—18.—*The resurrection.* I. COMFORT FOR THE SORROWING. 1. *The dead in Christ sleep.* The Lord Jesus Christ hath abolished death; he has changed it into sleep. "She is not dead, but sleepeth," he said of the little daughter of Jairus. The sting of death is sin, but the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin. The Lord died and rose again. He died; he encountered the king of terrors in all his awful power; but by his death he hath abolished death to his saints. Stephen fell asleep under the crushing shower of stones. So is it with believers now; they are laid to sleep through Jesus. Through his atonement, through his loving care, through his gracious presence, death is but sleep to them. They die in the Lord; they rest from their labours. They are not unconscious; they do not "sleep idly," for they are blessed; they are "with the Lord, which is far better." Yet that quiet rest of the holy dead in Paradise is as a peaceful slumber compared with the entrancing joy of the glorious resurrection. Yes, they sleep; they have not yet attained unto that perfect consummation and bliss both in body and soul which shall be theirs in God's everlasting glory. There the redeemed of the Lord, perfected in strength and gladness, entranced in the contemplation of the beauty of the Lord, the beatific vision, need rest no longer. "They rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." But now they rest. They are in peace; they are happy, for they are with Christ. 2. *Therefore the Christian's sorrow is full of hope.* We must sorrow when our loved ones fall from our side. The Lord wept over the grave of Lazarus. Not to sorrow would be the hard stern temper of stoicism. The Christian sorrows over the grave, but it is a sorrow chastened by faith, cheered by hope. The heathen might envy the very flowers of the field. "They die, indeed, but it is to spring up again with renewed life and beauty; while man, when he dieth, sleepeth on for ever—a still, silent sleep; he waketh nevermore." Such was the wailing of the heathen poet. It is not so with the Christian. He finds comfort himself, he comforts others, with the blessed words of Holy Scripture. His sorrow is not hopeless, like that of the heathen; he looks for a happy meeting in that blessed place where there is "no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying." 3. *That hope springs out of faith.* We believe that Jesus died and rose

again. The resurrection of Christ is the earnest of our resurrection. He is the First-fruits, the First-begotten from the dead; they that are his shall follow him. The resurrection of Christ was one principal topic of the apostolic preaching; it is now one of the most precious articles of the Christian faith, the very centre of our most cherished hopes. He was seen by many, by Mary Magdalene, by the other holy women, by the apostles, by more than five hundred brethren at once. "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

II. THE COMING OF THE LORD. 1. *Its solemn accompaniments.* He shall come, the Lord Jesus himself, with his holy angels. He shall descend from heaven with a shout. His voice will pierce through the universe; all they that are in the graves shall hear it. The trumpet shall sound. The voice of the trumpet, exceeding loud, filled the people of Israel with trembling at Mount Sinai. More awful by far will be the voice of the archangel and the trump of God that wakes the dead. What that trumpet may be we cannot tell; but sound it will, "for this we say unto you by the word of the Lord." 2. *Its end and purpose.* The dead in Christ shall rise first. They shall hear his voice, though they have lain in their graves, some of them, almost from the beginning. They shall come forth, and that first. Then follows the assumption of the living. Those who are found alive, who have not entered into the deep, quiet rest of Paradise, shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. We shall meet one another; we shall meet him; we shall be for ever with him. "Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

LESSONS. 1. Let sorrow in bereavement be Christian sorrow, softened by faith and hope. 2. The holy dead are at rest. Do not call them "poor;" they are blessed. 3. Let us strive to walk with God now, that we may be ever with the Lord.—B. C. C.

Vers. 1—8.—*Sanctification.* With this chapter commences the hortatory part of the Epistle.

I. EXHORTATION TO ADVANCE IN ACCORDANCE WITH WHAT HAD BEEN DELIVERED TO THEM OF THE DIVINE WILL. "Finally then, brethren, we beseech and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that, as ye received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, even as ye do walk,—that ye abound more and more." The announcement which is made by "finally" of the close of the Epistle is to be taken as meaning that the remaining part is to be taken up with that which is now introduced. There is a natural transition from the prospect of being unblamable in holiness, with which the *personal* part of the Epistle ends, to this *hortatory* part. The exhortation is very affectionate in tone. The Thessalonians are addressed as brethren. And there is not the simple form, "We exhort you," but it is preceded by a less frequent form (only once used by Paul beyond these Epistles to the Thessalonians), "We beseech you," which is the language in which friend earnestly presses home a request on friend. "We exhort you" is more the language in which a teacher earnestly presses home duty on his hearers. "We exhort you" is, moreover, defined and heightened by the addition of the words "in the Lord Jesus." The three Christian teachers found the element of their exhortation, not in themselves, but in him who, as Saviour, has a right to rule all lives. It is implied that the tone of Christ toward us is that of earnest exhortation, in which he perfectly reflects God; for it is said, in 2 Cor. v. 20, that God exhorts, which should have been the translation there. There had been delivered by the teachers to the Thessalonians the knowledge of the true God, and, as they had formerly sought to please their false deities, so, when they came to the knowledge of the true God, it became their duty to please him. There had also been delivered to them how they ought to walk and to please God, i.e. to say, this had been presented to them in considerable detail, so that they could readily follow the course of life that was pleasing to God. To their credit it could be said that they were following in their God-pleasing course, and what is pressed home on them is, that they should abound more and more in it. "The Lord make you to abound," is language which has already been used; and this exhortation to abound more and more, which recurs in the tenth verse, may be said to be the watchword given to the Thessalonians. However much we have walked and pleased God, we have not done it enough. Let us abound more and more in the course that is pointed out to us in the Bible as pleasing to God.

II. APPEAL TO THEIR MEMORY IN CONNECTION WITH WHAT HAD BEEN DELIVERED

TO THEM OF THE DIVINE WILL. "For ye know what charge we gave you through the Lord Jesus." There is not a happy change made from "commandments" in the old translation to "charge" in the revised translation here. There is an obscuring of the idea, which is that the Divine will has been delivered in the form of commandments. There were the ten commandments of the moral Law. These, possessed by the Israelites, placed them far in advance of the heathen around them. Coming out of heathenism, it would be a great boon to the Thessalonians to have these fixed in their memory. Presented along with Christian considerations, they would become Christian commandments. There were other Christian commandments, of which we have examples toward the close of the Epistle, which would be reiterated and reinforced until they also were fixed in the memory. In these commandments Paul and Silas and Timothy were only the medium of delivery. Given by the authority of the Lord Jesus, they were to be regarded as his commandments. These being now to be referred to, they are indirectly asked to call them to mind.

III. PURPOSE OF THE DIVINE WILL. 1. *Generally*. "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification." It was affirmed by William of Ockham that "if God had commanded his creatures to hate himself, the hatred of God would ever be the duty of man." It was a violent supposition to make of him, whose will is absolutely wedded to holiness, and who can only command his creatures to be holy. The will of God is here said to be our sanctification. This is a word which is very often used in a passive sense. "Sanctification is the work of God's free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin and live unto righteousness." The Greek word here has, however, the *active* sense. The way in which we are actively to advance the work of our sanctification, is by yielding up our will to the will of God in all that he requires of us from moment to moment. By abounding more and more in the course that is pleasing to God, we shall more and more die unto sin and live unto righteousness, more and more be made according to the Divine idea, from our inmost life to its most outward manifestation. 2. *Particularly* (1) *Fornication*. "That ye abstain from fornication; that each one of you know how to possess himself of his own vessel in sanctification and honour, not in the passion of lust, even as the Gentiles which know not God." This is one of the commandments in which the Divine will finds expression. In 1 Cor. vii. 2 marriage is put forward as the remedial course against fornication. The form here is, that there can be the possession of a wife in consistency with sanctification and honour. This is put in favourable contrast with another possession belonging to Gentilism, possession in the passion of lust, i.e. in which the morbid sensual desire acquires the force of a passion. The fact of fornication being so rife in the Gentilism with which they were surrounded, and out of which they had lately come, is the reason why the Thessalonians are specially guarded against it. What was to be accounted for in the Gentiles by their ignorance of God, was not to be excused in them who had been blessed with the knowledge of God. (2) *Adultery*. "That no man transgress, and wrong his brother in the matter." This sin is not named, but only that mentioned in which it differs from the preceding. Being an overreaching and wronging, not a neighbour, but a Christian brother, in the matter involved, it is "doubly flagitious."

IV. WARNING. "Because the Lord is an Avenger in all these things, as also we forewarned you and testified." In Ephesians the warning is, "Let no man deceive you with empty words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience." In Colossians it is similar: "For which things' sake cometh the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience." The idea here is that the Lord is Avenger in all the things that have been referred to. "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." As Judge, he is to be thought of as Righter between man and God. When men give themselves up to sensuality, God has a controversy with them. And, by appeal from God against men, Christ comes in as Righter in the controversy, to vindicate the holy character of his Father's laws, to punish for the unholy use of his Father's gifts. From the immediate context we are also led to think of Christ as Righter between man and man. He is the Righter of the slave who is trampled upon without pity by his unlawful owner. He is the Righter of the man who has the purity and peace of his house invaded by the adulterer. When with the Thessalonians, the teachers had made this their teaching clear. In view of

judgment they had warned them, and solemnly testified to them, that these things would not go unpunished.

V. THE HOLY OBJECT OF THEIR CALLING. "For God called us not for uncleanness, but in sanctification." The thought is similar to what is expressed in the third verse. There is this difference, that the will of God there is here connected with a historical point. Let them remember the great turning-point from heathenism to Christianity. Then God graciously called them in the gospel of his Son. And to what did he call them? It was not to a life of uncleanness, but, in keeping with the holy life of Christ, in keeping with the holiness of God vindicated on the cross, it was to find the sphere of their calling in the pursuit of holiness.

VI. THE REJECTER. "Therefore he that rejecteth, rejecteth not man, but God, who giveth his Holy Spirit unto you." This is drawn as a conclusion from the object of their Christian calling. There is not singled out an actual rejecter among the Thessalonians. But, should such a rejecter arise among them, let it be known that he is not a rejecter of man in his interests and rights, but a rejecter of God, who has laid down laws and limits for his creatures. He is especially a rejecter of God, who gives, to those whom he has called in Christ, his Holy Spirit. Sanctification is pre-eminently the Holy Spirit's work. And for any of them to indulge in the sins referred to, would have this as its gravest condemnation, that it was a thwarting and grieving of the Spirit in his holy strivings.—R. F.

Vers. 9—12.—*The Christian circle and accounting by them that are without.* I. BROTHERLY LOVE. 1. *The disposition.* "But concerning love of the brethren ye have no need that one write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another." There is a rhetorical touch here which is called "passing over"—not saying what might be said with a view to gaining over. For while it is said, "Ye have no need," the design is more effectually to impress on the Thessalonians the necessity of brotherly love. While they are graciously commended, they are at the same time shown how proper it is for them to love the brethren as being taught of God. Their education in this important department was a reality. To be taught of God does not exclude human help, the help of others, or, as contrasted with that, self-help. Only human help does not avail, unless it is taken up and made effectual by the Holy Spirit. Teachings and experiences must be inwardly interpreted, and made luminous to us. We must therefore stand in an immediate relation to God as his disciples who are taught of him; who, according to another representation, have an anointing from the Holy One to know all things. It is fitting that he who has made our minds, and retains sovereign power over them, should teach us. It is also fitting that he should teach according to his own nature. As Love, he has created us, sustains us in being, earnestly desires our well-being, places us under numberless obligations to him. Shall he not then school us to love? As under the Divine teaching we form a brotherhood of Christian disciples. And this is the only fellowship of minds that is right to the core, that will stand all the tests, that will stand out in eternal permanence. In the brethren there is something of Christian excellence on which to rest our love, and we are to recognize and value and delight in that, even under an uninviting exterior, and, in the name of Christ, to desire its increase and perfectness. 2. *Its manifestation.* "For indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia." An argument has been founded on this statement against the early date of the Epistle; but it tells the other way. For the love is not said to be manifested toward all the brethren, but "toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia;" i.e. to say, its manifestation was yet limited to the Christian circle nearest to the Thessalonians. We are to think of Philippi, a hundred miles distant on the one side, and Berea, twenty miles on the other. To the Christians in these places they had found opportunities of showing their Christian love. It was just such an outgoing as might commendably be connected with the short period of a few months. The word "do" is emphatic after "taught." The lesson is that Divine teaching is to be followed by suitable practice. Love must be allowed free outlet. "Love," says Barrow, "is a busy and active, a vigorous and sprightly, a courageous and industrious disposition of soul which will prompt a man, and push him forward to undertake or undergo anything—to endure pains, to encounter dangers, to surmount difficulties for the good of its object. Such is true charity; it will dispose us to love, as St. John

prescribeth, in work and in truth; not only in mental desire, but in effectual performance; not only in verbal pretence, but in real effect." 3. *Its increase.* "But we exhort you, brethren, that ye abound more and more." What Paul had prayed for (ch. iii. 12) is now made subject of affectionate exhortation. The watchword formerly applied to the whole of a God-pleasing course is now specially applied to brotherly love. Let them abound more and more. Let them seek opportunities of manifesting their interest in Christ's people beyond Macedonia. And let them look to the purifying and intensifying of their love to the brethren. And, with a longer Christian history than they had, have we not need of the same watchword? If we have abounded, let us abound more and more. Let us embrace, in intelligent practical interest, a wider and wider extent of the Christian world. The great obstacle to love is selfishness, or exorbitant fondness for our own interests, for which we have all reason to humble ourselves before God. When shall we be taught to abandon this? When shall we be taught as in the great school of Christ, by the great lesson of the cross, to give love the unlimited sway of our being, so that we shall ungrudgingly delight in our Christian brethren, seek their advancement in Christian excellence, and help them in all ways that we can?

II. ACCOUNTING BY THEM THAT ARE WITHOUT THE CHRISTIAN CIRCLE. 1. *Quietness and doing our own business.* "And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business." "Be ambitious" is the marginal reading for "study," and the idea of *honour* which is in the Greek word is to be regarded as thrown into prominence by the association. "Be ambitious to be quiet." This is a paradox; for whereas restlessness belongs to ambition, we are to make it the object of our ambition to be quiet. "Political ambition," says Bengel, "blushes to be quiet;" and, it may be added, Christian ambition rejoices to be quiet. What is it that is here commanded to us? It is not a mere negation. To be quiet is not necessarily to be without strong force in our nature; but it is to have those forces so placed under Divine restraints, so moderated by reason, justice and charity, modesty and sobriety, as that we can do our own business, can confine ourselves to the sphere of our own proper duties. We may indeed interpose, when the honour and interest of God is much concerned, when the public weal and safety are much endangered. We may interpose for the succour of right against palpable wrong, for our own just and necessary defence. We may interpose when our neighbour is plainly going to ruin, "snatching him," as Jude says, "out of the fire." We may also interpose when we can do our neighbour considerable good. For all that is really doing our own business. But we are not to be impelled by ambition, or covetous desire, or self-conceit, or any other disturbing influence, beyond our own proper bounds. We are not to attempt, unasked, to manage for another, to overbear his will, to impose on him our opinions, to make free in conversation with his character, to pry into his affairs. We are not to thrust upon him our advice, to reprove him unbecomingly, or rashly, or unreasonably, or harshly. We are not to interpose in the contentions of others so as to make ourselves parties, or so as to raise or foment dissensions. For all that, against what is here commended, is turbulent meddling with what God has not made our business. "We may consider," says Barrow, "that every man hath business of his own sufficient to employ him; to exercise his mind, to exhaust his care and pains, to take up all his time and leisure. To study his own near concerns, to provide for the necessities and conveniences of his life, to look to the interests of his soul, to be diligent in his calling, to discharge carefully and faithfully all his duties relating to God and man, will abundantly employ a man; well it is if some of them do not encumber and distract him. Seeing, then, every man hath burden enough on his shoulders, imposed by God and nature, it is vain to take on him more load, by engaging himself in the affairs of others; he will thence be forced, either to shake off his own business, or to become overburdened and oppressed with more than he can bear. It is indeed hence observable, and it needs must happen, that those who meddle with the business of others are wont to neglect their own; they that are much abroad can seldom be at home; they that know others most are least acquainted with themselves. Philosophers therefore generally have advised men to shun needless occupations as the certain impediments of a good and happy life; they bid us endeavour to simplify ourselves, or to get into a condition requiring of us the least that can be to do." 2. *Working with our own hands.* "And to work with your hands, even as we charged you." This is to be regarded as a particular injunction under the foregoing. In the Second Epistle the language is, "that they

quietly work." The language here seems to point to this, that many of the members of the Thessalonian Church were handicraftsmen. From this injunction, and the way in which the second coming is introduced in the next paragraph, it would seem that the disturbing influence in the Church of Thessalonica was religious excitement, called forth by the new world of thought into which Christianity had brought them. They were especially excited by the prospects connected with the second coming. Paul, for one, saw the danger of their being carried away by the excitement—not so as to be meddlesome, but so as to be negligent of their earthly calling. Therefore he charged them well to work with their own hands, which also he enforced by his example. In this he showed his sense of the importance of quiet industry. However much we may be under the influence of the great truths and prospects of our religion, let us not be without the steady condition of our earthly calling. 3. *We are to be quietly industrious so as not to produce a bad impression on them that are without.* "That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and may have need of nothing." What there is of connection between the two parts of the paragraph seems to be this. We are to exhibit love within the Christian circle; we are also, within the Christian circle, to be quietly industrious, so as not to give occasion of offence to them that are without. We are to remember that the eye of the world is upon us, and that we are subjected to its judgment. And there are certain external features of the Christian circle upon which the world is quite fitted to pronounce judgment. Upon none is it more ready to fix than upon anything like the neglect of the ordinary duties of life. Therefore it is recommended that we quietly work with our own hands, with this specially in view, that we may walk becomingly (i.e. honestly) toward them that are without, and have all that is necessary for our wants. By industry and honesty we shall commend our religion to them that are without; for these are things which they can appreciate and by which they are likely to be attracted. Whereas, by idleness and indisposition to pay our debts, we shall bring a reproach upon our religion which does not belong to it, and reproach from us them that are without. In early times the heathen called healthy beggars traders on Christ, in allusion to what is here guarded against. Let us not by meddlesomeness, or by any want of industry, or honesty, or prudence, or straightforwardness, present Christ in an unlovely aspect to them that are without.—R. F.

Vers. 13—18.—*Anxiety about the state of the Christian dead.* I. STATE OF THE CHRISTIAN DEAD NO CAUSE FOR SORROW. "But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them that fall asleep; that ye sorrow not, even as the rest, which have no hope." Paul (the principal writer) sets himself here to administer consolation to the Thessalonians. In doing so he practises the duty he lays down in the concluding words of the paragraph. Himself in possession of comfort about the state of the Christian dead, he could not leave them in ignorance of it. As his Christian brethren, they must be sharers with him. Timothy had probably communicated to him the occasion of their anxiety. It was in the Thessalonian Church as in other Churches—there were those who, from time to time, were falling asleep. The change in the translation extends the scope of the language beyond the actually dead. How did it fare with their dead, and how also would it fare with those whom death would yet overtake? Christians are distinguished from the rest of mankind. It is said of the latter as a class, that they sorrow having no hope. What did the men of the old heathen world think with regard to their dead? Theocritus says, "The living have hopes, but the dead are without hope." Æschylus says, "Of the once dead there is no resurrection." Lucretius says, "Nor does any one stand forth awaked, whom once the cold pause of life has found." Catullus says, "Suns may set and return; when once our brief day has set we must sleep one everlasting night." It is a sad thought that some modern thinkers have given expression to the same blank hopelessness. Strauss has said, "A life beyond the grave is the last enemy which speculative criticism has to oppose and, if possible, to conquer." The whole hope of John Stuart Mill was an earthly future, not for the individual, but for the race, created by science "when all the greater evils of life shall have been removed." If such were our creed, or want of creed, we might well sorrow when our friends have been taken away. Our only feeling could be that we had seen the last of them. Their memory might remain (John Stuart Mill, writing after the death of his wife, said, "Her memory is to me a religion"); but that cannot

lift the gloom from the extinction of personal existence. Let no rude hand rob us of the comfort which our Christianity brings. It tells us here that we are not to sorrow for the state of our Christian dead. We may indeed sorrow for our being deprived of their earthly society. The Master himself gave relief to his nature in weeping, even in view of a speedy resurrection. Paul tells us that the removal of his friend Epaphroditus would have been to him sorrow upon sorrow. But, as for the state of our Christian dead, we are here told that they are *fallen asleep*. The description is in respect of the body, and contains three ideas. 1. *Continued existence*. A man continues to exist, though he is in a state of sleep. The body is still, but the mind may be active in dreams. And so, when the bodies of our Christian dead are in the stillness of the grave, there is no cessation of their existence. All doubt on this subject must be put to rest by the words of our Saviour on the cross to the dying penitent at his side, "To-day thou shalt be with me in Paradise." The souls of the departed are not in a state of sleep; but they are wakened up to a higher life. 2. *Repose*. In sleep we lose our hold upon the world; we forget its cares and pleasures; we are being calmed and soothed in our feelings. And so we are to think of our Christian dead as for ever released from the work and toil, the pain and sorrow, of this life, and as now calmed and soothed in the presence of God. "And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, for their works follow with them." 3. *Wakening*. We think of sleep as followed by a waking. And so we are to think of a wakening for our Christian dead, though it may be after long years. They are awake now in respect of their souls; our fuller comfort is that they shall yet be awake in respect of those bodies which we have sorrowfully laid in the grave. "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction."

II. REASON FOR THE CHRISTIAN DEAD BEING ASSOCIATED WITH THEIR LORD AT HIS COMING. "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with him." The apostle goes back to the cardinal facts of Christ's death and resurrection. These are facts for which those who reject our continued existence after death have little respect; but they are dear to the Christian heart, and the more firmly our faith lays hold upon them, the more animated is our hope for our Christian dead. *We believe that Jesus died*; thus briefly does the apostle state the fundamental article of our Christian faith. "Such is the historical and supernatural basis of Christianity—its very definition, its breath of life, the source from whence springs all its greatness, strength, and uniqueness." The apostle states the fact plainly, "*Jesus died*," which is all the more observable that it is followed by a statement not plain but consolatory—our Christian dead are *fallen asleep*. We believe in a God who, in infinite love, became man, that he might verily (not in semblance) die, and who was not less truly God than man when he was nailed to the cross. We believe in a God-Man who came under the broken Law, and endured death as the curse due for sin. And our faith follows him beyond his death. *We believe that Jesus rose again*. That is the second great article of our Christian faith. Having in his death made full atonement for sin, he could not be holden of death. He rose victoriously out of the state of insensibility and lifelessness in which his body lay in the tomb. He rose with the same body, but changed to a nobler quality. We further believe that he died and rose again, not for himself, but for those whom he represented. He experienced death and conquest as Jesus—Saviour, Leader of his people. United to him, his people are not to be separated from him in destiny. He is here associated with their death. They are laid to sleep by Jesus, as the preposition should be. There is called up the image of Jesus himself caring for his own when the life departs—laying them to rest in the grave, and watching over them there with his omnipotent love. And, as he is associated with their death, so they are to be associated with his coming. Them that are laid to sleep by Jesus will God bring with Jesus. We are brought in view here of what distressed the Thessalonians. It was not a question *simply* of the resurrection; in that case the language would have been, "they will God *raise up*." But we are carried a point beyond that, to their being *brought as raised with Jesus*. We may, therefore, understand that what distressed the Thessalonians was the bearing of the coming of Christ on them who did not live to see that event. Would they not stand

at a great disadvantage? Would they have any share at all in his coming? Were they not to be sorrowed over as those who had missed the great object of their hope? For the relief of the Thessalonians Paul tells them this, to begin with, that the Christian dead are to be brought with Jesus. We are not to think of them as brought from heaven, for they are viewed in respect of their being in their graves. But we may think of them as joining their descending Lord, and brought with him to earth.

III. REVELATION MADE TO PAUL THAT THE CHRISTIAN LIVING ARE NOT TO HAVE THE PRECEDENCE OF THE CHRISTIAN DEAD AT CHRIST'S COMING. "For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord, shall in no wise precede them that are fallen asleep." It is true that in all he says in this Epistle he is under the direction of the Spirit of the Lord. In what he is now to say he proceeds on a word of the Lord such as there is in the Epistles to the seven Churches. He was privileged to announce directly from the heavenly Christ what had hitherto been concealed. The heavenly Christ was so interested in the Thessalonians that he had given his servant this revelation for them. The apostle divides Christians into two classes—"we that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord," and "they that are fallen asleep." He includes himself in the former class, and from this it has been very confidently inferred that he had a *definite expectation* of living unto the coming of Christ. But he includes, not only himself and Silas and Timothy, but also the Thessalonians, about whom he has said that there were those among them who from time to time were falling asleep. Did he, then, having a definite expectation for *all*, believe in all being saved from death by an *immediate* coming of Christ? Is it not more reasonable to suppose that he thought of the living and left as in a continual flux? This is borne out by the use of the present instead of the future—"we who are for the present the living and left, who have no certainty that we will not remain unto the coming of Christ, but have also no certainty that another moment will not transfer us to the class of them that are fallen asleep." The revelation made to Paul related to a question of *priority of time*. It is strongly denied of the Christian living that they will come into the presence of the Lord at his coming before the Christian dead. This was further relief to the distressed Thessalonians. Their departed Christian friends would not only be brought with Jesus; it was also true that this bringing would not be deferred until after the Christian living had taken their places in nearer relation to their Lord.

IV. GREAT DRAMA OF THE FUTURE. Here we are supplied more particularly with the contents of "the word of the Lord." 1. *Prelude: The Lord descending in majesty.* "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God." The central Figure is the *Lord himself*. He now sits enthroned in heaven, *Lord over all*. But he shall yet descend from heaven. There is thus confirmation of the announcement made by the heavenly visitants to the disciples gazing after their vanished Lord: "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." We are left to think of the majesty of our descending Lord chiefly from the accompaniments of the descent. He shall descend with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump. The shout is such a shout of command as is given by a leader to his host. There are some who think of the shout of command as given by Christ. This is the view which is adopted by Milton in his conception of another scene.

"The Son gave signal high
To the bright minister that watched: he blew
His trumpet, heard in Oreb since perhaps
When God descended; and perhaps once more
To sound at general doom."

There is this consideration which tells against that interpretation, that God has been introduced as bringing them that are asleep with Jesus. We are thus led to think of God as the Actor behind the scene, which is confirmed by the expression following—"the trump of God." This makes it more natural to think of the accompaniments of the scene as arranged by God. Are we, then, to think of God as giving the shout of command? The objection to that view is, that the shout is represented not as preceding (as befitting God) but as accompanying the descent. It seems better,

then, to think of the shout as given by the archangel in the Name of God, and as comprehending the two things which follow. First, the moment that the Lord descends from his heavenly throne, the archangel, apprised of what is to happen, marshals his innumerable host. The shout of command he gives in this case with the living voice—the voice of the archangel. The angels are an orderly multitude. “He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth” (with whom the idea of orderliness is not associated). We read of “twelve legions of angels.” The angels are led by an archangel. We read in Scripture of the angel Gabriel, and also of the seven angels that stand before God, but only in another place of an archangel who is there named Michael. Our Lord prepared us himself for this glorious accompaniment of his coming: “When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the angels with him;” “When he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels;” “When he cometh in his own glory, and the glory of the Father, and of the holy angels.” An army associated with royalty gives an impression of power and grandeur. So how mighty and glorious a Personage must he be, in whose honour all the legions of angels are marshalled! They are *mighty* angels, and *holy* angels, and especially are they in sympathy with the work of honouring Christ. As they sang over his birth on earth, so do they accompany him in his triumphal descent to earth, having this to rejoice their hearts, that they also are to share in the glorious consummation. The archangel, having marshalled his host to move in harmony with the descending Lord, at a subsequent stage is to give another shout of command, this time not with the living voice, but with the trumpet put into his hand by God. Milton thinks of the trumpet that was used “when God descended” in Horeb, calling the congregation of Israel, as being the same trump of God. Very vividly in 1 Cor. xv. is it associated with the resurrection: “At the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound.” 2. *First act: Resurrection of the Christian dead.* “And the dead in Christ shall rise first.” “The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible.” The trumpet is simply the instrument; it is the power of God, communicated through the trumpet, that raises the dead. A trumpet supposes a faculty of hearing; but this trump of God has miraculously to supply the faculty of hearing. The remains of our Christian friends which we lay in the grave soon mingle with the dust. They hear not any sound of earth that passes over them. But there is a trumpet-call, with Divine, all-penetrating power in it, that one day they shall hear in their graves, and hearing they shall start up as once they were, and yet how changed! It was beside the purpose of the revelation to bring into view the resurrection of others than Christians, or the nature of the resurrection-body. The Thessalonians were so taken up with the coming, that the resurrection was thrown out of view. It did not enter, or did but little enter, into their understanding of the last things. Therefore their attention is concentrated upon the simple fruitful fact of the resurrection. It meant the presence of their departed Christian friends in the body on the earth ready to meet Christ. And that all fear of their being anticipated might be removed, it is stated not only that the dead in Christ shall rise, but that they shall rise *first*, i.e. to say, they shall rise before the assumption of the Christian living. The Christian dead now in the resurrection-body, and the Christian living, will be on the earth at the same time, equally ready for the approach of Christ. 3. *Second act: Assumption of the Christian living.* “Then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air.” The Christian living are to be swiftly, irresistibly caught up. This implies their transformation in their bodies. They are to be caught up at the same time with the Christian dead who have been raised. The two classes will form one great blessed company, between whom what distinguished them has passed away. How they will be marshalled does not appear. We do read of leading places being assigned to the twelve apostles. That they will be as orderly in their multitudinousness as the innumerable company of the angels, we do not doubt. Caught up in the enveloping upbearing clouds in one body, they are to meet their descending Lord with the marshalled army of angels in the air. As persons of distinction go forth to meet their prince, so they now, all of them glorified persons, are caught up to meet their Lord in his triumphal descent. 4. *Finale: Perpetual enjoyment of the society of Christ.* “And so shall we ever be with the Lord.” There is a blank here, which it did not lie within the purpose of the revelation to have filled up. That the Lord actually descended to earth may be regarded as certain. The air was

his pathway to earth. When it is said that the fallen asleep God will bring with Jesus, the meaning plainly is (taken in connection with the language which has just been used) that, joining our Lord in the air, they will be brought with him to earth. We may think of the earth as transformed, in preparation for the Lord's coming. Some would interpose here a lengthened personal reign of Christ on earth with his saints. We are only on sure ground when we think of Christ as coming for judgment. "But when the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the angels with him, then shall he sit on the throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered all the nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats." All that is here passed over, and we are presented simply with the final state of the two classes that have been united. "And so shall we ever be with the Lord." The meeting referred to shall be followed by no parting. It is Christ's wish and promise that we should be with him. "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also." Christ has prayed to the Father that we should be with him. "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am." And when we have been brought into his presence, in spite of death and all opposing powers, separation will be impossible. As members, we must be with our Head; as loving, we must be with the great Object of our love. To be with the Lord is to be in the most favoured position for the enjoyment of his love, for the comprehension of his mind, for the reception of his Spirit, for the accomplishment of his plans. To be with the Lord is also to be with that great and blessed company who shall be gathered round him, comprehending the elder sons of creation, the great and good of all ages, and those Christian friends we have "loved ere since and lost awhile." What is the position we shall be carried forward to through the course of eternal ages is more than tongue can tell, more than heart can conceive.

V. MUTUAL COMFORTING. "Wherefore comfort one another with these words." We might read "exhort one another." But in view of the sorrow of the Thessalonians we rightly read "comfort one another." We might even read "cheer one another;" for the words are not only of a comforting, but of an inspiring nature. It is not Christian teachers, but Christians generally, who are addressed. Knowing what comfort is, let us not selfishly allow our Christian brethren to be ignorant of it. Even in our ordinary partings in the world there is an element of sadness that calls for comfort. As Shakespeare has it—

"So part we sadly in this troublous world
To meet with joy in sweet Jerusalem."

How thankful ought we to be that we are not in the position of those who have no hope; that we can tell those who have lost Christian friends of the sweet and cheering truth of Christ's coming! It is sad to think of them sleeping in the dust of the earth; but, laid to sleep by Christ, then they shall awake. They shall rest and stand in their lot at the end of the days. They shall hear the resurrection-call, and stand in the body as once they stood upon this earth. They shall be present as witnesses and actors at the most glorious event the universe shall ever have seen. They, and we too, shall be borne up in the clouds to meet and welcome our descending Lord. And from that first united meeting of him in our embodied, completed state, we shall be for ever with the Lord.—R. F.

Ver. 1.—*Christian progress.* This verse introduces a series of practical exhortations by an urgent entreaty to general Christian progress. The details of conduct must be considered. But the spirit and character of the whole life are of primary importance. First see to the health of the whole tree; then prune and train the several branches.

I. THE GREAT OBLIGATION OF CHRISTIAN PROGRESS. 1. *It requires a full, round development of spiritual graces.* It is not satisfied with a shrunken, shrivelled life of the soul. The meagre Christianity of those who are only concerned with the minimum requirements of religion is foreign to the very nature of a true spiritual life. This should abound; it should overflow; it should be developed in all directions. A one-sided life is maimed and marred, however advanced it may be in a particular direction. We should aim at completing the circle of graces. This is what is meant by being "perfect." 2. *It proceeds by gradual growth.* We are to abound "more and more." The attainment

which is respectable to-day will become despicable if it is not exceeded to-morrow. The growth is double—a greater achievement according to our present capacities and an enlargement of those capacities. The precious wine rises higher in the vessel; and the vessel itself expands.

II. THE DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF CHRISTIAN PROGRESS. 1. *It consists in conduct.* We are required to grow in knowledge. But this is not the most important form of spiritual progress. It has come about, unfortunately, that the phrase "advanced Christianity" stands for a certain doctrinal movement. It should be chiefly used for moral and spiritual progress. The great advance is to be in the walk and conversation of life—the daily, normal conduct. 2. *It is guided by knowledge.* St. Paul exhorts his readers to abound more and more in the conduct which follows his directions, "As ye have received of us." This progress is not to be according to our own fancied ideal of perfection. It is in pursuit of clear duty, and that duty is declared in Christian teaching. 3. *It is grounded on previous experience.* In the Revised Version we read the addition, "even as ye do walk." Future progress depends on our present position. We must not be always laying a new foundation. The Christian life is not a series of revolutions. Because more is required of the Christian, the good already attained is not ignored. 4. *It aims at pleasing God.* Thus it is characterized by a regard for the will of God. It is not satisfied with reaching any human standard. It is required to be pure, true, and spiritual.

III. THE STRONG INDUCEMENTS TOWARDS CHRISTIAN PROGRESS. 1. *They are urged with personal appeals.* St. Paul beseeches and exhorts. He appeals to the brotherhood of Christians and its tie of mutual affection between himself and his readers. 2. *They are centred in regard for Christ.* "By the Lord Jesus Christ." This is a sort of adjuration. The close relation of the Christian to Christ is his grand motive for striving after true progress. The grace of Christ supplies the power; the love of Christ brings the obligation. By all that he is to us we are urged to be worthy of him in an even richer and fuller Christian life.—W. F. A.

Ver. 9.—*Love of the brethren.* Christianity introduced a new word into the speech of mankind—"philadelphia," "love of the brethren." This word distinguishes a remarkable characteristic of the early Church. It describes how the first Christians regarded themselves as the members of one family. It was no visionary socialism, no communistic scheme, that led them to have all things common. They felt like the members of one household, like the nearest kindred in one home, and in the spirit of home life they shared their possessions. This was only possible so long as the family spirit pervaded the Church. Circumstances altered the habits of the Church as it grew in numbers and spread over a wider area. But all through the Epistles of St. Paul the same family affection of Christians is apparent. Love of the brethren is a leading feature of Christianity.

I. ITS SCOPE AND AREA. 1. *It is specially confined to fellow-Christians.* It is to be distinguished from philanthropy. We should love all men. Our neighbour, be he of the house of Israel, a Samaritan or a heathen, has claims upon us. But love of the brethren is to be distinguished from this general love of one's kind. It is the Christian's love of the Christian. 2. *It is due to all Christians.* It should not be given to a particular chosen circle of intimates only, nor simply to the members of one sect, nor to those only who excite our admiration. All Christians, of all ranks and orders, rich and poor, cultured and ignorant, saintly and imperfect, orthodox and heterodox, in every branch of the Catholic Church of Christ, have claims upon our love.

II. ITS ORIGIN. 1. *A common fatherhood.* We all have the same Father in heaven. In proportion as we realize the broad fatherhood of God shall we enter into the brotherly love of his family. He is the Father of whom "every family in earth and heaven is named." 2. *A common brotherly relation to Christ.* Every Christian can claim Christ as his Brother. The great elder Brother binds all the members of the family together by attracting them all to himself. We learn to love our fellow-Christian by seeing the Christ in him. 3. *Common interests.* We share the same blessings, enjoy the same redemption, walk in the same pilgrimage, and are travelling towards the same home.

III. ITS INFLUENCE. True love of the brethren cannot be without effect. Only the

lack of it could have permitted the fearful quarrels and enmities that have divided Christendom. Regard a man as your brother, and you will be loth to hound him to death. Were this love stronger many blessings would result. 1. *Mutual forbearance.* We permit our brother to hold his own opinion and follow his own conscience. 2. *Mutual helpfulness.* Selfish Christianity is a contradiction in terms. To bear one another's burdens is just to fulfil the law of Christ. 3. *Power to influence the world.* Civil war in the Church means paralysis of the army that should conquer the world for Christ. When Christians again learn the almost lost art of loving one another, they will attract converts from the world outside by better means than reasoning and preaching.—W. F. A.

Ver. 11.—*The industrial life.* Christianity has something to say on the industrial life. It has been charged with discrediting industry. No calumny could be more false. It certainly discourages engrossing worldly cares, and bids men remember their heavenly citizenship. But it only inculcates a more faithful discharge of earthly duty by insisting on lofty views of life and the pure principles which should inspire it. Three duties in regard to the industrial life are here urged by St. Paul.

I. *AN AMBITION TO BE QUIET.* The word "study" means literally, "be ambitious." This is a remarkable collocation of ideas—ambition and quiet. It is as though the apostle said, "You have been ambitious to make a noise in the world; reverse your aim: be ambitious of quiet." This striking piece of advice is urged in close connection with directions regarding the industrial life. Probably the Church at Thessalonica was largely composed of working-men. There was a danger lest the new privileges of Christianity should make some of these men foolishly anxious to make themselves conspicuous. 1. *We should aim at doing much good without attracting attention to ourselves.* The Christian should not clamour for recognition. He should be content that his work prospers, though he remains obscure. 2. *We should be too busy with work to have much time for talk.* Busybodies are generally drones. How silent is the work of God in nature! Silently the forest grows. So let our work be done. 3. *We should work peaceably.* The noisy man is too often the quarrelsome man. In the ambition to sound a name abroad, bitter envy and jealousy are excited. 4. *Ignorant people should not suppose that the privileges of Christian brotherhood qualify them to teach others.* "Be not many teachers" (Jas. iii. 1).

II. *A DOING ONE'S OWN BUSINESS.* 1. *The claims of the Church are no excuse for the neglect of a man's secular business.* It is wrong to become so much the slave of business as to have no time or energy for mission work, Sunday school teaching, etc. But it is also most certainly wrong to fail in our duty in the secular sphere. The Christian should be the most punctual, prompt, and energetic man of business. He should serve Christ in it. If he is responsible to others, his religion should strengthen his fidelity not to give eye-service as a man-pleaser. 2. *Religion does not remove a man from the station in which he is placed by Providence.* It may so improve his habits of work and may bring such blessings upon him as may enable him gradually to rise in the social scale. But it may permit no such external change; it should not be expected to do so in every case. And however that may be, religion can make no sudden change in a man's circumstances. The Christian slave was in outward circumstances a slave still. The artisan remained an artisan. 3. *Christianity forbids us to be envious of the more prosperous condition of other people.* It is not for us to snatch at their privileges to the neglect of our own duty. Every man has his Divine vocation. It is the Christian's duty to find his special vocation and to follow it, whether it lead him up the Beulah heights or down through the valley of humiliation. In the Church let each man find his own place and do his own work. There is a diversity of gifts. One has a gift of speech, another a gift of deft handiwork. Let neither be ambitious to usurp the place of the other. 4. *Christians should be too busy with their own work to have time to judge their neighbours.* We are workmen, not judges. To his own Master each man stands or falls.

III. *AN HONEST DILIGENCE IN MANUAL LABOUR.* This duty is clearly brought out in the Revised Version, which omits the word "own" before "hands," so that we read the clause, "Work with your hands." Thus we have a direct recommendation of manual labour. 1. *Manual labour is necessary.* There is hard, rough work of this

kind that must be done. It is cowardly to shirk it. Cultivated people do not object to hard work for amusement, *e.g.* rowing, Alpine climbing. Why should it be shunned when it is useful? 2. *Manual labour is honourable.* Any work done with a good purpose is honourable. The work of the carpenter is often more honourable than that of the financier. The dirtiest work is not always done by the roughest hands. The crowding of the sons of working men into the ranks of clerks is not a healthy sign if it betokens a shame of honest toil. 3. *Manual labour is wholesome.* The punishment of Adam is no curse. It is a blessing that man has to "eat his bread in the sweat of his face." While the early monks were busy, building, digging, weaving, monasticism presented a picture of pure Christian living. Riches brought superiority to physical industry, and corruption speedily followed. The best of Christ's apostles were working men.—W. F. A.

Ver. 12.—Christians before the world. In the previous verse St. Paul has been urging upon his readers the duty of quiet industry. He now gives two reasons for this advice—first, that they may walk honestly before the world; and secondly, that they may have need of nothing. The apostle turns to the same subject in his Second Epistle. "If any man will not work, neither let him eat," he says (2 Thess. iii. 10). God only provides for us when we cannot provide for ourselves; or, rather, he provides for us by helping us to provide for ourselves. He feeds the ravens by giving them strong wings and claws and beaks, and by providing them prey. But the birds must catch their quarry. We need not be anxious about the morrow if we are diligent in doing our own business. So much for the second reason for diligence. The first demands more extended inquiry, and may be taken by itself as a fertile subject for meditation. We are to be diligent in our secular business in order that we may "walk honestly towards them that are without."

I. CHRISTIANS OWE DUTIES TO THE WORLD. Christians have no right to treat "them that are without" as outlaws. If we should pray for those who spitefully use us, much more should we treat them honestly. And if we are to be kind to our enemies, certainly we are required to be just to those who are not inimical to us. The Christian must pay his debts to an infidel. The temperate man must fulfil his obligations to the drunkard. The spiritually minded man must be just to the worldly minded man. Christians should respect the rights of the heathen in foreign countries.

II. THE WORLD JUDGES CHRISTIANS ACCORDING TO THEIR DISCHARGE OF THESE DUTIES. These it can appreciate. It knows nothing of the behaviour of Christians in the Church. It cares nothing for orthodox creeds or devout psalm-singing. But it can estimate the value of a thorough piece of work, and it can see the merit of a prompt payment. If we are wanting in these things, the world will only regard us as hypocrites when we make much of our religion in spiritual matters—and rightly, for if we are not honest men we cannot be saints.

III. THE WORLD JUDGES OF CHRISTIANITY ACCORDING TO THE EXTERNAL CONDUCT OF CHRISTIANS IN THIS RESPECT. Here is a graver consideration. The honour of Christ is concerned. The defaulting Christian gives a shock to Christian evidences. One glaring instance of misconduct in secular affairs does more to hinder the progress of true religion than volumes of sermons can do to advance it. Even the negligent and idle Christian brings discredit on his Master. The Christian artisan should be known from the secularist by the greater diligence and thoroughness of his work.

IV. CHRISTIANS HAVE NO RIGHT TO EXPECT GOOD TREATMENT FROM THE WORLD UNLESS THEY BEHAVE HONESTLY TOWARDS IT. The Church at Thessalonica lived in constant danger of an assault from the hostile heathen population of the city. It was most desirable that no shadow of an excuse should be given for an attack. Idleness, noisy restlessness, interference with other people, would provoke opposition. Quiet industry was most safe. When a master found that the Christians were his best hands he would not be inclined to molest them. We shall best conciliate opponents and silence enmity and at last win respect by a quiet, unassuming, diligent discharge of our daily duty.—W. F. A.

Vers. 13, 14.—Sorrow for the dead transfigured by the resurrection of Christ. In the neighbourhood of Thessalonica—Salonica it is now called—there may be seen at the

present day ancient tombs on which are to be read inscriptions expressing hopeless regret for the dead. The Church addressed by St. Paul was a little community which had learnt to enjoy a strange, new view of the state and prospects of the departed, planted in the midst of a great pagan populace that held the melancholy sentiments of these epitaphs. Contrasting the Christians with "the rest" of the people, the apostle reminds them that they should not give way to the despairing sorrow that was natural to men who had no hope.

I. OUTSIDE CHRISTIANITY SORROW FOR THE DEAD IS HOPELESS. 1. *History and experience* establish this fact. Pagan tombs everywhere express themselves with various degrees of despair, but never with cheerful hope. Nations like the Egyptians that had a firm faith in a future life can scarcely be said to have enjoyed any hopes respecting that life. A general dream of immortality pervades our race; but it is everywhere dim and cheerless. Many men at all times have broken away from it altogether, and have said with Catullus, "When once our brief day has set we must sleep one everlasting night." 2. *Reasoning cannot conquer* the common hopelessness of sorrow for the dead. The arguments outside Christianity may be divided into two classes: (1) *Naturalistic*; e.g. from the nature of consciousness, from the indestructibility of all known existences, from the general instinct of immortality, from analogies of sleep, transformations of insects, succession of winter, spring, etc. Less and less weight is being ascribed to all such reasoning. It will not bear the strain of anxious doubt. The mourner turns his eyes in vain to nature for comfort. (2) *Theistic*. (a) In the *wisdom* of God. Man's life being but imperfectly developed here, the Divine idea of humanity would be vain and futile without a larger world for realizing it. (b) In the *justice* of God—the necessity of a future judgment. (c) In the *goodness* of God. A father would not mock his child by creating him so that he has a great hunger for a future which is unattainable. Nevertheless even these arguments do not satisfy, for who can venture to speak with assurance of the high counsels of the Almighty? and, moreover, they presuppose a knowledge of the character of God which only Christianity clearly furnishes.

II. CHRISTIANITY DRAWS THE STING OF HOPELESSNESS FROM SORROW FOR THE DEAD.

1. *It does not destroy that sorrow.* To do so would be impossible. We must grieve at parting from those who are dear to us. Indeed it would be unhealthy for us entirely to conquer natural sorrow. We should have to conquer natural love first. A softening, subduing, purifying mission comes with this grief, and is one of the best means of helping us to receive Christian truth. 2. *But Christianity removes the sting from this sorrow by depriving it of hopelessness.* The hope which St. Paul refers to is plainly the hope of receiving back those who have been taken from us by death. They are gone, but not gone for ever. Every weary year as it passes brings us nearer to the happy reunion. The words of St. Paul plainly show that he believed in the mutual recognition of friends in the future life.

III. THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF CHRIST ARE THE SECRET OF THIS CHRISTIAN TRANSFIGURATION OF SORROW FOR THE DEAD. 1. *The strongest argument to convince men generally* of a future life is to be found in the resurrection of Christ taken in connection with his life and teaching. He spoke of judgment and of eternal life. He confirmed his words by rising from the dead. The confirmation is twofold. (1) The resurrection is a Divine authentication of the claims and mission of Christ. (2) It is an instance, a crucial test, a proof that a future life is possible. 2. *For Christians the death and resurrection of Christ are grounds for enjoying the hope of a reunion of all the dead who die in the Lord.* (1) The triumph of Christ is here shown. Now, the object of his death and resurrection was to redeem the world. But this redemption would be vain if there were no resurrection. "If in this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most pitiable." The resurrection of Christ proves that the object of his death was obtained. It must therefore be followed by the resurrection of his people in order that the redemption thus accomplished may be fully realized in them. (2) The union of Christians with Christ secures their resurrection. His experience becomes the experience of his people, because he lives in them and they live in him (1 Cor. xv. 22).—W. F. A.

VERS. 15, 16.—*The order of the second advent.* The subjects here brought before us

are entirely beyond the reach of speculation. We have no data whatever to go upon, beyond the authoritative declarations of the Word of God. St. Paul himself was not prepared to reason about them. He could simply declare what was revealed to him. But this he did declare with marvellous, unhesitating positiveness. He prefaces his declaration by distinctly claiming the authority of inspiration for it. "For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord." So remarkable a revelation as that of the following verses needed some such assurance of its origin to commend it to us. We must take it in the spirit in which it is written, or we must leave it alone. It is useless to begin rationalizing with it. It is foolish to attempt to go one step beyond what is written. A sermon on such subjects must be as purely expository of the words of Scripture as possible. We note here three events in time, and their external consequence. The order of these three events is what St. Paul is most immediately concerned with. The occasion of his writing on them appears to have been the trouble felt by his readers as to the condition of those Christians who died before the second advent of Christ which they were expecting shortly to happen. Would these departed brethren miss the joy of welcoming their glorified Saviour? The order of events described by the apostle removes this difficulty.

I. THE FIRST EVENT IS THE ADVENT OF CHRIST. 1. *He is to come in Person.* He does not forget the world for which he died. He will return to his weary, waiting Church. 2. *He is to come in glory.* His first advent was humble and obscure. Few knew the Babe in the manger. Lowly and self-sacrificing was the whole life that followed. But every one that humbleth himself shall be exalted. The humble Jesus is to come again as the exalted Lord. 3. *He is to come conspicuously.* The shout, the full voice of an archangel, the blast of a trumpet—these awful sounds surely betoken no obscure mystical advent which can be questioned after it has occurred. When Christ comes a second time no one will say, "Is the Lord among us or no?" All will hear the great shout and the pealing angel-notes.

II. THE SECOND EVENT IS THE RETURN OF THE DEPARTED. Instead of missing the joy of that great advent, as their friends sadly feared, those Christians who had fallen asleep will be the first to share it. The trumpet will awake the dead before it arouses the living. There will be no advantage in being among the living at the time of the second coming of Christ. Some, even in our own day, have fondly hoped for some such privilege. But St. Paul distinctly tells us that the privilege is the other way. The departed will be the most privileged. This is fair; for if they have endured the pangs of death to reach Christ, it is right that they should see him first.

III. THE THIRD EVENT IS THE ASSOCIATION OF LIVING CHRISTIANS WITH THE SECOND ADVENT OF CHRIST. They take the second place in honour, not having wrestled with death and conquered the dread foe, as their departed brethren have done. But they also join in the glad triumph of their Lord. Of the physical process described as being "caught up into the clouds" we know nothing, and therefore cannot tell how it will be realized till it is accomplished. The attempt to explain it has only made the subject ridiculous. But the two spiritual facts accompanying it are clear. A joyous meeting with Christ and the departed, and a change of state and sphere; the earthly life and its limitations giving place to the heavenly life and its more exalted powers.

IV. THE ETERNAL CONSEQUENCE IS THE PERMANENT DWELLING OF CHRISTIANS WITH CHRIST. The second advent here described is not a passing event which ends. It is not a mere visit of Christ. It is not like the first advent, which, after a few years, was followed by the death and, after his resurrection, the ascension of Christ. Christ will never leave his people again. 1. *It secures joy.* The joy of love is to be with those we love. The highest Christian happiness is to be "for ever with the Lord." This is heaven. 2. *It protects from trouble.* God wipes away tears from all eyes. Associated with Christ for ever, his people can never weep again. 3. *It guards from sin.* Where the triumphant Christ always is, the defeated tempter can never come. 4. *It accomplishes the reunion of friends.* All being with Christ, all are also together. The home is perfected by the gathering of the blessed dead with the glorified living around the abiding Christ.—W. F. A.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER V.

Contents.—With regard to the time of that glorious advent when believers, whether dead or living, will be gathered together to Christ, the Thessalonians had already been fully instructed. They knew well that the day of the Lord would come suddenly and unexpectedly, and surprise an ungodly world. But they were not in darkness so as to be taken by surprise. Still, however, they must exercise constant watchfulness and sobriety, and be armed with the Christian graces of faith, love, and hope, being comforted with the assurance that God had not appointed them to wrath, but to the acquisition of salvation through Jesus Christ, who died for their benefit, in order that, whether living or dead, they might share in the blessings of his advent.

Now follows a series of short admonitions. The Thessalonians were to love and honour their ministers, to live in peace among themselves, to admonish the disorderly, to encourage the faint-hearted, to support the weak, and to exercise forbearance toward all men. They were to be on their guard against revenge, to preserve Christian joyfulness, to be constant in prayer, and to maintain a thankful disposition. They were not to quench the Spirit, nor despise prophesying, but were to test all things, retaining the good and rejecting the evil. And it was his earnest prayer for them that God would so completely sanctify them that they might be blameless at the advent of the Lord Jesus. After requesting an interest in their prayers, and solemnly charging them to read this Epistle to the assembled Church, the apostle concludes with his apostolic benediction.

Ver. 1.—This verse is connected with what precedes. The apostle was comforting the Thessalonians under the loss of their deceased friends by the assurance that both the living and the dead would be gathered together at the advent. The question would naturally arise, "When shall these things be?" (Luke xxi. 7); and it would appear that the Thessalonians expected an immediate advent. The apostle represses their curiosity on this point by reminding them of the uncertainty of the time of the

Lord's coming. But of the times and the seasons, brethren; that is, of the time and the precise period of the Lord's advent. "Times" and "seasons" are elsewhere united together (Eccles. iii.; Dan. ii. 21; Acts i. 7). The word translated "times" denotes time absolutely without regard to circumstances; and the word rendered "seasons" denotes a definite point of time; not merely the day, but the hour (Mark xiii. 32). *Ye have no need that I write unto you; literally, that ought be written unto you (R.V.); comp. ch. iv. 9.* The reason why it was not needful for the apostle to write unto them was, not because he regarded the information unprofitable or superfluous, or because he knew it to be impossible, but because he had already informed them when at Thessalonica that the time of the advent was beyond the sphere of his teaching. The apostle mentions this to repress that vain curiosity which is natural to man, and which was the occasion of so much disorder among the Thessalonians. Our duty is, not to pry into the times and seasons which the Father hath put in his own power (Acts i. 7), but to exercise constant watchfulness.

Ver. 2.—For yourselves know perfectly; namely, not from Scripture, nor from oral tradition, but from the teaching of the apostle when in Thessalonica. That the day of the Lord. "The day of the Lord" is a common Old Testament expression, denoting the coming of the Divine judgments (Joel i. 15; ii. 1); and by the phrase here is meant, not the destruction of Jerusalem, nor the day of one's death, but the day of the Lord's advent, when Christ shall descend from heaven in glory for the resurrection of the dead and the judgment of the world. The idea of judgment is contained in the term "day." So cometh as a thief in the night. The same comparison is used by our Lord himself (Matt. xxiv. 43; Luke xii. 39), and the very words are employed by Peter (2 Pet. iii. 10). The point of resemblance is evidently the unexpectedness and suddenness of the coming. The thief comes upon people in the night season, when they are asleep and unprepared; so, in a similar manner, when Christ comes, he will find the world unprepared and not expecting his advent. The ancient Fathers inferred from this passage that Christ would come to judgment in the night season, and hence they instituted vigils, or night watches. Some, still more precisely, fixed the coming on Easter night, from the analogy of the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt on the paschal evening.

Ver. 3.—For; the best manuscripts omit

this conjunction; the description is continuous. When they shall say; namely, the unbelieving world. Peace and safety; peace denoting internal rest, and safety external security. Sudden destruction cometh upon them. When they thought themselves most secure, they were then in the greatest danger; when they were most off their guard, then the crisis came. As travail upon a woman with child. The primary point of resemblance is certainly the suddenness and unexpectedness of the event; as labour comes upon a woman suddenly, so sudden destruction cometh upon the ungodly world. Still, however, the unavoidableness of the judgment may also be here intimated; there is no possibility of escape: this is implied in the last clause, and they shall not escape.

Ver. 4.—But ye, brethren; ye believers, in opposition to the unbelieving world. Are not in darkness; referring back to the night (ver. 2), when the thief comes. By darkness is here meant, not merely ignorance, but moral depravity—the darkness of sin. Ye are not in the ignorant and sinful condition of the unredeemed world, so as to be surprised by the day of the Lord. With you it is not night, but day; the light of the gospel is shining around you; and therefore the day of the Lord's coming will not surprise you in an unprepared state. That; a statement, not of result, but of purpose—"in order that." That day; *the day*; namely, the day of the Lord. Should overtake you—surprise you—as a thief.

Ver. 5.—Ye are all the children of the light, and the children of the day. Hebraistic expressions denoting, Ye all belong to the light and to the day. An affirmation, strengthening the previous declaration. The light and the day are synonymous expressions—the day being the period of light, as opposed to the night and darkness. We are not of the night, nor of darkness; rendering the positive assertion more emphatic.

Ver. 6.—Therefore; because we are the children of the light and of the day, because we have been enlightened and purified, we ought to be watchful and sober, so that we may not be unprepared for the day of the Lord. Privileges will avail us nothing, unless we use them and walk up to them. Let us not sleep. Sleep is here evidently used metaphorically to denote religious carelessness. As do others; the unbelieving and ungodly. But let us watch and be sober; evidently to be understood metaphorically of spiritual vigilance and sobriety: watchfulness denoting wakefulness from sleep, and sobriety freedom from intoxication. Both must be combined; we must be watchful, on our guard, and we must be sober, armed and prepared; "for

even by day," observes St. Chrysostom, "if one watches, but is not sober, he will fall into numberless dangers." The same exhortation is given by Peter, but in the reverse order: "Be sober, be vigilant" (1 Pet. v. 8).

Ver. 7.—For; the reason of this exhortation. They that sleep sleep in the night; and they that are drunken are drunken in the night. Here not to be taken in a metaphorical sense, but a simple statement of fact—what occurs in ordinary experience. The night is the season in which sleep and drunkenness usually occur; whereas the day is the season of watchfulness, sobriety, and work. Both heathen and Jews considered it as eminently disgraceful for a man to be seen drunken in the day-time. Hence, when the Jews accused the believers on the day of Pentecost with being filled with new wine, Peter answered, "We are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day" (Acts ii. 15).

Ver. 8.—But; contrast to the conduct of those who are of the night: let us not only be watchful, but armed. The apostle now adopts a favourite figure, that of spiritual armour. The arms which he here mentions are only two—the breastplate to protect the heart, and the helmet to guard the head; they are both defensive weapons, because the reference here is not so much to the believer's conflict with evil, as to his defence against surprise. And by these spiritual weapons are denoted the three cardinal graces—faith, love, and hope (ch. i. 3). Let us who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love. By "faith" is here meant faith in Christ; and by "love," not so much love to God as love to man. These preserve the heart of a Christian against the assaults and influences of evil, as the breastplate guards the heart of the earthly warrior. And for a helmet, the hope of salvation. Salvation in its most comprehensive sense. The hope of salvation sustains our courage amid all the trials of life by holding out to us the prospect of eternal blessedness. Vigilance is of no avail unless armed by faith, hope, and love. In the Epistle to the Ephesians there is a still fuller enumeration of the Christian armour (Eph. vi. 14—18); and there is a slight difference in the description of the weapons. Here the apostle speaks of the breastplate of faith and love; there of the breastplate of righteousness and of the shield of faith. Here the helmet is called the hope of salvation; there the apostle speaks of the helmet of salvation. And besides these defensive weapons, other weapons of defence and the sword, a weapon of offence, are mentioned.

Ver. 9.—For. Not a new reason for watchfulness and sobriety, but referring to "the

hope of salvation," why we may with confidence put on such a hope as a helmet. God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain—or, to the acquisition of—salvation by—or, through—our Lord Jesus Christ. Not through the doctrine of Christ, nor even through faith in Christ, but through the Lord Jesus Christ himself, through what he has done for us, and especially through his atoning death. The appointment of God's grace is here mentioned as the efficient cause of our salvation; and the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Mediator through whom salvation is bestowed.

Ver. 10.—Who died. His death being the meritorious cause of our salvation. For us; that is here, not "instead of us," but "for our benefit," or "on our account." That, whether we wake or sleep. Here not to be taken in an ethical sense—whether we are spiritually awake or asleep, for those who are spiritually asleep will be surprised by the coming of the Lord; nor in a natural sense—whether he come in the night and find us taking our natural sleep, or in the day, when we are awake—which would be a mere trifling observation; but in a metaphorical sense—whether we are alive or dead. The apostle has just been speaking of those who are dead under the designation of those "who are asleep" (ch. iv. 13), and therefore it is natural to interpret the clause, "whether we wake or sleep," of the condition of believers at the coming of the Lord. There is here certainly a change of metaphor: "sleep" in ver. 6 denotes religious carelessness; in ver. 7, natural sleep; and here, death. We shall live together—or, in one company—with him. The apostle is still continuing his consolatory address to those who were mourning over their deceased friends; and he tells them that at the advent there will be no difference between those who are then alive and those who sleep—both will live together with the Lord (comp. Rom. xiv. 8, 9).

Ver. 11.—Wherefore; because, whether alive or dead, you will equally share in the blessings of the advent. Comfort yourselves together. The words refer back to the last verse of the preceding chapter (ch. iv. 18), and with them the apostle concludes his consolatory address to those who were mourning over the loss of their friends. And edify one another; or, build up. It was a favourite figure of the apostle to compare the Christian Church and each individual believer to a building.

Ver. 12.—With this verse commences a new paragraph. The apostle adds in conclusion a few brief and somewhat miscellaneous exhortations. And we beseech you, brethren; an expression of earnestness and affection. To know; that is, to value, appre-

ciate, and esteem. Them which labour among you. It was Paul's custom to organize the Churches which he had founded, and to appoint presbyters among them. Although the Church of Thessalonica had been so recently founded, yet it had its presbyters. And are over you. The presbyters, in virtue of their office, presided over the Christian assemblies. In the Lord; the sphere in which they were set over the Church; they were ordained to minister in sacred things. And admonish you. There are not three classes or orders of office-bearers here mentioned—those who laboured among them, those who presided over them, and those who admonished them (Macon knight); but all these duties belonged to one class, namely, the presbyters.

Ver. 13.—And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake; that is, both on account of their labours, and especially on account of the dignity of their office, for their work is the work of the Lord. Both love for their persons and respect for their authority are here enjoined. And; to be omitted, as not in the original. Be at peace among yourselves. A new exhortation, entirely independent of the preceding; it is not addressed to the presbyters, but to the members of the Church in general.

Ver. 14.—Now we exhort you, brethren; an exhortation also addressed to all. Warn them that are unruly; or, as in the margin, disorderly (R.V.). Different modes of treatment have to be adapted to different classes; the unruly have to be warned. The word here rendered "unruly" or "disorderly" was originally a military term expressing the character of those soldiers who would not keep their ranks—out of the ranks. It would seem from this and other intimations that disorders existed among the Thessalonians; and that, especially being impressed by a belief in the near approach of the advent, several of them neglected the common duties of life, and abstained from working. Comfort the feeble-minded. By "the feeble-minded" are meant the desponding or faint-hearted; those who were agitated about the fate of their deceased friends, or those who despaired of the grace of God by reason of their sins. These were not to be reprimanded, but comforted and exhorted. Support the weak. By "the weak" are not meant those who are physically weak—the sick; but those who are spiritually weak, whose faith was feeble—those who were afraid of persecution, or were troubled with vain scruples. These were to be supported—confirmed in the faith. Be patient toward all men; all men in general, whether believers or unbelievers; toward them patience and forbearance were to be exercised.

Ver. 15.—See that none render evil for evil unto any. The prohibition of revenge is peculiarly Christian, neither corresponding to the spirit of heathenism, nor yet clearly revealed in Judaism. A precisely similar prohibition is given in Rom. xii. 17, "Recompense to no man evil for evil." But ever follow; pursue after. That which is good; the good, the beneficial. Both among yourselves; your fellow-Christians. And to all men. The human race in general; the one being brotherly kindness and the other charity (2 Pet. i. 7).

Ver. 16.—Rejoice evermore; or, rejoice always (R.V.). Joy is that feeling of delight which arises from the possession of present good, or from the anticipation of future happiness; and in both respects the believer has abundant reason for constant joy. He possesses the blessedness of forgiveness and the sure prospect of eternal life, and he has the consciousness that all things work together for good to them that love God (Rom. viii. 28). God wishes his people to be happy, and does not suffer them to be indifferent to their own peace. He commands them to rejoice, yea, to rejoice evermore. "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice" (Phil. iv. 4).

Ver. 17.—Pray without ceasing. The means of promoting religious joy is prayer. This prayer is to be "without ceasing," implying constancy (Col. iv. 2) and perseverance (Rom. xii. 12; Eph. vi. 18; Luke xviii. 1). This is not a mere precept "capable of fulfilment in idea, rather than in fact" (Jowett); but it is an exhortation to live in a devotional frame of mind. It is possible to be always on our bended knees, but we may be in the spirit of prayer when engaged in the duties of our earthly calling. Prayer may be without ceasing in the heart which is full of the presence of God, and evermore communing with him.

Ver. 18.—In everything give thanks. In every circumstance—in joy and in sorrow; for everything—for prosperity and for adversity; in every place—in the house of God and on the bed of sickness; Christians should not only be engaged in constant prayer, but in constant thanksgiving; indeed, their prayers should partake largely of the nature of thanksgiving. For this; this thankful spirit. Is the will of God; his desire. In Christ Jesus; the sphere in which this will of God is displayed. Concerning you. God by the gift of his Son has laid us under the obligation of perpetual thanksgiving. Our whole lives ought to be one continued thank-offering for all the blessings of redemption.

Ver. 19.—Quench not the Spirit. The Spirit is here considered as a flame which may be extinguished (Matt. iii. 11). The descent of the Spirit at Pentecost was in

the form of cloven tongues like as of fire (Acts ii. 3). By the Spirit here is usually understood the miraculous gifts of the Spirit—speaking with tongues or prophesyings; and it is supposed that the apostle here forbids the exercise of these gifts being hindered or checked. In the next verse the gift of prophesying is mentioned. But there is no reason to exclude the ordinary and still more valuable gifts of the Spirit, such as pure thoughts, holy actions, devout affections, which may be effectually quenched by a careless or immoral life. "Quench not the Spirit." Do not those things which are opposed to his influences. Be on your guard against sin, as opposed to the work of the Spirit in the soul. In this sense the admonition is similar to that given by Paul in his Epistle to the Ephesians: "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God" (Eph. iv. 30).

Ver. 20.—Despise not prophesyings. This refers to the miraculous gift of prophecy possessed by the primitive Church. And by prophesyings here we are to understand, not the prediction of the future, but inspired discourse, conducive to the instruction and edification of the Church. "By the term 'prophesying,'" observes Calvin, "I do not understand the gift of foretelling the future, but the science of interpreting Scripture, so that a prophet is an interpreter of the will of God." This useful gift, it would seem, was apt to be despised, and the inferior miraculous gift of tongues to be preferred before it (1 Cor. xiv. 1—3).

Ver. 21.—Prove all things. This exhortation is closely connected with the preceding. "Prove all things," namely, whatever was advanced by the prophets in their inspired discourses (comp. 1 John iv. 1, "Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God"). "Prove" here means to test, as metals are tested in the fire; and hence the word frequently denotes the favourable result of the testing, or approval. There was a special gift of discerning spirits in the primitive Church (1 Cor. xii. 10; xiv. 29). But although the words primarily refer to the testing of prophetic utterances, yet they have a general application. We should not rest our faith on the authority of others. The right of private judgment is the characteristic and privilege of Protestantism. We ought thoroughly to examine all doctrines by the test of Scripture, and then, discerning their reasons, we shall be able to take a firmer hold of them. At the same time, the fundamental principle of rationalism, that reason as such is the judge of the doctrines of revelation, is not contained in these words, and cannot be inferred from them. Hold fast; retain. That which is good; the good, the beautiful, the honour

able; a different word from that rendered "good" in ver. 15. We are to retain whatever is good in those "all things" which we are to prove or test, namely, in the prophesyings.

Ver. 22.—**Abstain from all appearance of evil.** This verse is connected with the last, and states negatively what is there stated positively. Test the declarations of the prophets; retain the good, and reject the evil. The word translated "appearance" has been differently rendered; it denotes form, figure, species, kind: so that the clause is to be rendered, "Abstain from all form of evil" (R.V.), or, "of the evil," the word being an abstract substantive. The whole exhortation is similar to that given in Rom. xii. 9, only there the negative statement is put first: "Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good." Some suppose that the metaphor employed is from the practice of money-changers who tested the money offered to them, rejecting what was base and retaining what was genuine. Among the Fathers we meet with the phrase, "Be ye experienced money-changers," as a traditional saying of our Lord; and some suppose that the apostle refers to this saying, and give the following paraphrase: "The good money keep; with every sort of bad money have nothing to do; act as experienced money-changers: all the money presented to you as good, test." Such a supposition is fanciful and far-fetched.

Ver. 23.—**And the very God of peace;** the God who communicates peace; an expression frequently employed by Paul at the close of his Epistles (Rom. xv. 33; xvi. 20; Phil. iv. 9; 2 Cor. xiii. 11; 2 Thess. iii. 16). **Sanctify you wholly;** that is, perfectly, without anything wanting, referring to the entireness of the sanctification, which is presently expressed in detail. **And I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body;** the adjective "whole" applies to all the three substantives. The apostle here divides human nature into three parts—spirit, soul, and body; and this threefold division is not a mere rhetorical statement: "The apostle pouring forth from the fulness of his heart a prayer for his converts" (Jowett); but a distinct statement of the three component parts of human nature. The "spirit" is the highest part of man, that which assimilates him to God; renders him capable of religion, and susceptible of being acted upon by the Spirit of God. The "soul" is the inferior part of his mental nature, the seat of the passions and desires, of the natural propensities. The "body" is the corporeal frame. Such a threefold distinction of human nature was not unknown among the Stoics and Platonists.

There are also traces of it in the Old Testament, the spirit, or breath of God, being distinguished from the soul. **Be preserved blameless.** "The spirit is preserved blameless at the advent when the voice of truth rules it, the soul when it strives against all the charms of the senses, and the body when it is not abused as the instrument of shameful actions" (Lünemann). **Unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

Ver. 24.—**Faithful is he that calleth you.** Paul knows that he does not beseech God in vain. He who calls you to the Christian faith is faithful to fulfil his promises. God's calling is the commencement of a series which terminates in glorification (Rom. viii. 30). A similar appeal to the faithfulness of God is elsewhere made by the apostle (1 Cor. i. 9; 2 Thess. iii. 3). **Who also will do it;** namely, will preserve you blameless unto the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Ver. 25.—**Brethren, pray for us;** namely, that our apostolic work may be successful; that "the Word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified" (2 Thess. iii. 1). The apostle, in almost all his Epistles, requests from his converts an interest in their prayers (Rom. xv. 30; 2 Cor. i. 11; Eph. vi. 19; Col. iv. 3; 2 Thess. iii. 1; comp. Heb. xiii. 18). Ministers and people need each other's prayers, and prayer is a duty which they owe to each other.

Ver. 26.—**Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss.** That certain persons were enjoined to salute the other members of the Church is a proof that the Epistle was given into the hands of the presbyters. The reference is to the mode of salutation in the East. The kiss is called "holy" because it was the symbol of Christian affection. The same exhortation is made in other Epistles (Rom. xvi. 16; 1 Cor. xvi. 20; 2 Cor. xiii. 12).

Ver. 27.—**I charge you;** namely, the presbyters. **By the Lord;** namely, Christ, an indirect proof of his Divinity, the adjuration being in his Name. The reason of this solemn charge was, not on account of any remissness on the part of the presbyters, but was occasioned by the earnestness of the apostle and by his consciousness that what he wrote was most important to the Thessalonians, and was the command of the Lord Jesus Christ. That this Epistle be read unto all the holy brethren; unto the Church of Thessalonians.

Ver. 28.—**The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.** A similar salutation is to be found at the close of all Paul's Epistles; indeed, in the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, he states that this salutation was the token which he affixed to his Epistles (2 Thess. iii. 17, 18). **Amen.** To be rejected, as not in the original.

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 6.—*Watchfulness and sobriety.* The day of the Lord is uncertain as regards its time. The early Christians were mistaken in regarding that time as at hand, and we perhaps may be equally mistaken in regarding it as distant. But there is an event which to each of us is, to all intents and purposes, the same as “the day of the Lord,” which is both near and uncertain—the day of our death. Let us be watchful, so that that day may not overtake us in an unprepared state; and let us be sober, never indulging ourselves in any course of action in which we would not wish death to surprise us.

Ver. 8.—*Spiritual armour.* We must not only be watchful, but be armed sentinels. To guard against surprise we must especially provide ourselves with two defensive weapons. 1. *The breastplate of faith and love.* By faith in Christ and love to man we shall effectually preserve our hearts against evil influences. Faith imparts courage, and love preserves us from selfishness, the great inlet to evil. The stronger and the more living our faith, and the purer and the more active our love, the more completely shall we be guarded against evil. 2. *The helmet of the hope of salvation.* By “the hope of salvation” we shall preserve our head from being filled with the idle dreams of worldly happiness, whether of power or fame. Hope will defend us from being seduced by the world’s pleasures or allured by the world’s honours.

Ver. 15.—*Christian forgiveness.* 1. *Its peculiarity.* Forgiveness of our enemies is pre-eminently a Christian virtue. It had no place in the morality of the heathen. The utmost they could attain to was, “Thou shalt love all men except those who have wronged thee.” It was very obscurely revealed in the Old Testament. The ancient saints did not distinguish between sinners and their sins; hence David’s bitter curses against his and the Lord’s enemies. Jesus Christ was the first to lay special stress on forgiveness. 2. *Its properties.* Forgiveness must be free, full, and universal; no feelings of enmity or ill will to any of our fellow-men ought to lodge in our hearts. We must imitate the example of our Saviour, who on the cross prayed for the forgiveness of his murderers.

Ver. 16.—*Religious joy.* 1. *Its sources.* Religious joy springs from four sources: from the relation in which believers stand to God, and then it is the joy of love; from the interest which they have in Christ, and then it is the joy of faith; from the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, and then it is the joy of holiness; and from the hopes which they have of heaven, and then it is the joy of hope. 2. *Its properties.* Religious joy is ordinarily calm; it is serious; it may be often interrupted; it is purifying; it is generally greater at peculiar seasons; and it is often sensibly felt at the hour of death. 3. *Means of obtaining it.* We must live by faith in Christ, guard against seeking our chief happiness in any creature-good, and be diligent in the performance of our religious duties.

Ver. 17.—*Unceasing prayer.* We ought not only to have stated hours of prayer, but to be continually raising up ejaculatory prayers, carrying on a constant intercourse between God and our souls; our prayers should be like the angels which Jacob saw continually ascending the mystic ladder to the throne of God. Unceasing prayer implies: 1. *A devotional spirit:* walking with God. 2. *Ejaculatory prayer:* our thoughts rising in prayer amid our daily occupations. 3. *Persistence in prayer:* not leaving off until our prayers are answered. 4. *Regularity in prayer:* carefully keeping the appointed seasons for prayer. 5. *Conjunction of thanksgiving with our prayers:* realizing God’s mercies and grace.

Ver. 19.—*Quenching the Spirit.* 1. *How we may quench the Spirit.* We quench the Spirit by the commission of grievous sins, by the indulgence of sensuality, covetousness, pride, and the irascible passions, and by formality and lukewarmness in our religion. 2. *How we may cherish the Spirit.* We cherish the Spirit by earnest desires

for his influences, by a diligent use of the means of grace, by a spirit of trust and dependence, and by compliance with his secret impressions.

Vers. 21, 22.—Use of reason in religion. 1. *The office of reason in religion.* Reason is of use to examine the evidences of revelation, to ascertain the contents of revelation, and to judge that there is no contradiction to reason and morality in those doctrines which we suppose are deducible from Scripture. 2. *The limitation of reason in religion.* Distinction between what is above reason and what is contrary to reason. When once we prove that Scripture is the Word of God, and that such and such doctrines are contained in it, then it is the province of reason to submit to faith, because the truth of these doctrines rests on their being part of a Divine revelation; the doctrines of revelation are above, but they can never be proved to be contrary to, reason.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—5.—Certainty of the time of the second advent. There is a natural curiosity to know “the times and the seasons” connected with an event so transcendently important to the human race. “But of the times and the seasons ye have no need that I write unto you.”

I. GOD HAS TIMES AND SEASONS IN HIS OWN POWER. It is solemnly true that “to everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the sun” (Eccles. iii. 1). God has “determined the times before appointed” (Acts xvii. 26). His Son came “in the fulness of time” (Gal. iv. 4). There is often a curious periodicity in the great time-intervals marked in sacred history.

II. GOD HAS HID FROM MAN THE PRECISE DATE OF THE SECOND COMING. “Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father” (Mark xiii. 32); “It is not for you to know the times and the seasons the Father hath put in his own power” (Acts i. 7).

III. THE DAY OF THE LORD WILL BE PERFECTLY UNEXPECTED. “The day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.” 1. *It is the day of the Lord, as it is “the day of the Son of man.”* “The day of God;” “the day of redemption,” involving that of the body as well as the soul; “the last day,” the day which winds up the destinies of the universe. 2. *It will be sudden and unexpected.* It will be “as a thief in the night,” who comes without previous warning at such an hour as we are not looking for him. This is true, even though there may be signs in the sun and moon and stars, and distress of nations, and men’s hearts failing them for fear (Luke xxi.). These will be the first signs to break up the calm, but the wicked will not see them in their true light. There is nothing in the simile of the thief to justify the opinion that Jesus will come in the night.

IV. THE SECURITY OF THE WICKED. “For when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.” 1. *Their condition is one of “peace,” inner quiet, and “safety,” external tranquillity.* 2. *Their fate.* “They shall not escape.” It will be with them as with the men in the days of Noah and Lot (Matt. xxiv. 36—39). The catastrophe will be as inevitable and as full of fear as in the case of a “woman in travail.”

V. THE PREPAREDNESS OF THE RIGHTEOUS. This lies in their character. “But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.” 1. *They were “not in darkness.”* They were “sons of light, sons of the day.” Darkness is the characteristic of the wicked. (1) There is darkness in their understanding. (2) There is darkness in their hearts. “Their foolish hearts are darkened.” (3) They walk in darkness, and therefore stumble and go astray. (4) They live in darkness (Pa. cvii. 10), they belong to “the kingdom of darkness” (Col. i. 13); they are under “the world-rulers of this darkness” (Eph. vi. 12). (5) But the darkness does not hide them from God’s vengeance. 2. *Believers are “sons of light.”* “Sons of the day.” (1) They walk in the light (1 John i. 7); for “he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John viii. 12). (2) They are in fellowship with God, for they cannot have it and walk in darkness (1 John i. 6, 7). (3) They “have cast off the works of darkness, and put on the

armour of light" (Rom. xiii. 12). (4) They are in fellowship with all believers; for "he that walketh in darkness hateth his brother" (1 John ii. 9).—T. C.

Vers. 5—8.—*A warning against watchlessness.* The apostle says that, as children of light and of the day, believers ought to exercise vigilance and sobriety in view of the solemn prospects before them.

I. THE SIN AND DANGER OF SPIRITUAL SLEEP. "Let us not sleep, as do others." There are three kinds of sleep spoken of in Scripture—the sleep of nature, which restores the wasted energies of the body; the sleep of death; and the sleep of the text, which is always fraught with peril, its prevailing idea being insensibility. The sleeper is: 1. *Not aware of his danger.* 2. *Forgetful of his duty.* 3. *Unconscious of the real world around him.* 4. *Immovable to all appeals.* 5. *May not even know that he is asleep.*

II. THE DUTY OF WATCHFULNESS AND SOBRIETY. "But let us watch and be sober," so as to be always prepared for the Lord's coming. We are not to be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, so that that day should overtake us unawares. Let us watch that we may be sober. 1. *The reason is that sleep and drunkenness are works of darkness done in the night.* "They that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night." Those spiritually asleep "sleep through all life's agitations, beneath the thunders of Sinai, and the pleadings of mercy from the cross." Like drunken men, they are intoxicated with life's delights, "minding earthly things," occupied supremely with "the unfruitful works of darkness." Believers are not so, into whose heart "God has commanded the light to shine out of darkness, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus" (2 Cor. iv. 6). 2. *Another reason for watchful sobriety is that our life is a spiritual warfare.* The believer is to be a sentinel always on guard, or a soldier on the battle-field—"having on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation." As a good soldier, bound to endure hardness, he goes forth into the conflict of life, equipped in Divine armour, not for aggression but for defence. The pieces of armour here enumerated are for the protection of vital parts, the heart and the head. (1) Faith is the principal part of this spiritual armour. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1 John v. 4, 5). It is by faith they resist the devil (1 Pet. v. 9). It is by it all difficulties are overcome (Matt. xvii. 20). If it is by the "sword of the Spirit, the Word of God," we are to conquer, faith is the arm that wields the sword. The eleventh chapter of Hebrews illustrates the power of faith as a principle of action and as a principle of endurance. (2) Love is joined with faith to form the breastplate, for "faith worketh by love" (Gal. v. 6). Love preserves from apostasy, and knits the saints together, because it is the bond of perfection, and thus enables us to bear all trial through love to the Redeemer. (3) The hope of salvation is the helmet. In the corresponding passage in Ephesians, the helmet is salvation itself; but the difference is not material, the salvation in the one case being partially enjoyed, in the other an object of future hope. Hope is a protection to the believer, as it nerves him to meet danger, and enables him to brave difficulties, by looking to the glorious objects in view. Therefore it is "the patience of hope." Thus the three Christian graces make the soul watchful and ready for the Lord's coming.—T. C.

Vers. 9—11.—*The source, channel, and end of the salvation hoped for.* The apostle is now led to illustrate the hope of salvation.

I. ITS SOURCE. "For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to the obtaining of salvation." 1. *The calling is according to the purpose.* "Whom he predestinates, them he also calls." The security of the believer depends, not upon himself, but upon God's unchangeable and loving purpose. 2. *The purpose is not to wrath, but to salvation.* Though believers were once "children of wrath," they are now reconciled to God, and saved from wrath to come. 3. *God's purpose of mercy toward us does not free us from the necessity of being watchful concerning the means of salvation.*

II. THE CHANNEL OF SALVATION. "By our Lord Jesus Christ." 1. *The covenant was "ordained in the hand of a mediator."* (Gal. iii. 19.) 2. *His death, not his doctrine or example merely, was necessary to our salvation.* "Who died for us." & *His death was substitutionary.* It was "for us."

III. THE END OF THIS SALVATION. "Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live with him together." This was "the joy set before him" for which "he endured the cross" (Heb. xii. 2) that we might live to him in order to our living with him. 1. *It is life with Christ.* Not merely life in him, but life with him in glory. "I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better" (Phil. i. 23). It is the greatest joy and glory of heaven (Rom. xiv. 8, 9; 1 Cor. v. 9). 2. *It is life with all believers.* They are to live with him, unsevered from one another; for whether they "are alive and remain," or whether they are of those who "have fallen asleep," they will be together, in Christ's society. Thus the great salvation is the "common salvation."

IV. THE CONSOLATORY ASPECT OF THESE TRUTHS. "Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do." These truths afforded a grand basis for mutual comfort and edification. The Thessalonians ought, therefore, to dismiss their despondency and alarm, and encourage each other with the blessed hopes of the gospel.—T. C.

Vers. 12, 13.—*The due recognition of Christian pastors.* The apostle next touches upon the relation of the Church to its teachers.

I. THE APPOINTMENT OF PASTORS IN THE CHURCH. 1. *This was by Divine appointment.* "He gave pastors and teachers" (Eph. iv. 11). There is no hint given in Scripture of a time when pastors would cease to be necessary, and when the Church would be served by an "any-man ministry." 2. *It was the custom of the apostles to "appoint elders in every city,"* for they understood the advantages of a full ecclesiastical organization.

II. THE OFFICIAL POSITION AND DUTIES OF PASTORS. 1. *They are labourers in the Church.* "We beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you." (1) This work is no sinecure, but a hard exhausting service, with heavy responsibilities and many cares. (a) It is labour in preaching. For they "labour in the Word and doctrine" (1 Tim. i. 5), "rightly dividing the Word of truth" (2 Tim. ii. 15), giving each of the household of faith "a portion of meat in due season" (Luke xii. 42). (b) It is labour in earnestly contending for the faith as well as in dispensing the ordinances of religion. (2) It is labour in a Divine partnership. For pastors are "labourers together with" God in the work of perfecting the Church (1 Cor. iii. 9). 2. *They are presidents in the Churches.* "Those which are over you in the Lord." This refers to the elders or presbyters, who are also called pastors, or shepherds, or bishops (Acts xx. 17, 28). (1) The appointment of rulers is essential to order and harmony in the Church. (2) Yet they are not a sacerdotal caste, nor "lords over God's heritage" (1 Pet. v. 3). (3) Their official superiority is "in the Lord," because from him deriving its warrant, motive, and blessing. 3. *They are spiritual guides.* "And admonish you." They have "to watch for your souls as they that must give account" (Heb. xiii. 17). Therefore they must "reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine" (2 Tim. iv. 2). They have to "warn every man, and teach every man in all wisdom, that they may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus" (Col. i. 28). They have to warn against sins committed, and urge to duties neglected.

III. THE OBLIGATIONS OF CHRISTIAN PEOPLE TO THEIR PASTORS. 1. *They must give them due recognition as pastors.* They must "know them." They must make themselves acquainted with them, that pastors may be the better able to know the state of their souls, and they must acknowledge their position as "stewards of the mysteries of God," and submit to their ministry. 2. *They must "esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake."* (1) The bond is not to be one of mere official relationship, but of affection. (2) A due respect for the ministry is an important element in its efficiency and success. Therefore we are to "hold such in reputation," and to count them "worthy of double honour." 3. *The ground of this claim is "for their work's sake."* Not for the mere office, which may be often filled unworthily, though it is still entitled to consideration, but for the sake of the "labours of love" involved in its faithful discharge. Ministers who "make full proof of their ministry" challenge the abiding respect of their flocks.—T. C.

Ver. 13.—*Inculcation of mutual peace.* "And be at peace among yourselves."

This is connected with the previous verse, for a faithful pastorate tends to unity and peace.

I. THIS PEACE DEPENDS UPON OUR DIVINE CALLING. For it is the "peace unto which we are called" (Col. iii. 15).

II. IT IS ESSENTIAL TO GROWTH AND BLESSING. (Eph. iv. 3; Ps. cxxxiii. 1; Jas. iii. 18.)

III. IT IS ONE OF THE BLESSINGS ALWAYS TO BE PRAYED FOR. (Ps. cxxii. 6—8.)

IV. IT IS ONE OF THE BEATITUDES WITH A PROMISE. (Matt. v. 9.)

V. IT IS ONE OF THE FAIREST GROWTHS OF THE SPIRIT. (Gal. v. 22.)—T. C.

Ver. 14.—*Mutual duties of Church members.* The Church must act as well as its pastors.

I. ADMONITION TO THE DISORDERLY. "Warn them that are unruly." 1. *The unruly are, literally, those who break rank, taking exceptional courses*, to the injury of the peace or unity of the Church. Probably the apostle refers to the unbending effect of the error concerning the near approach of the advent, leading individuals to abandon work and loiter about in a sort of meddlesome idleness. 2. *Such persons need to be warned, even with sharpness of reproof, yet in love*; for "God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, in all the Churches of the saints" (1 Cor. xiv. 33). Warn them to "do their own business, and work with their own hands."

II. COMFORT FOR THE FEEBLE-MINDED. "Comfort the feeble-minded." 1. *These persons were overburdened with sorrow on account of the dead, under the influence of error respecting their safety.* They were not intellectually feeble, but had become dispirited and desponding through their failure to realize the hope of the resurrection at the advent. 2. *They were to be comforted*; not rebuked or admonished for their sins, but exhorted lovingly in the truth. It is the Lord's way "to raise them that are bowed down," and "to comfort them which be in any trouble" (2 Cor. i. 4). There is "consolation in Christ."

III. SUPPORT FOR THE WEAK. "Support the weak." 1. *The weak in faith, or other Christian graces*, who may still feel the lingering influence of Jewish prejudice and pagan delusions. We are to "bear the infirmities of the weak." 2. *They must be sustained, not despised for their weakness.* "Be eyes to the blind; be feet to the lame." Thus "we fulfil the Law of Christ." We must "lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees" (Heb. xii. 12, 13).

IV. PATIENCE TOWARD ALL MEN. "Be patient toward all men." 1. *Patience or long-suffering, in view of the perverseness, or defects, or follies, or sins of men.* It points to a temper not easily moved or offended, to a disposition to bear and forbear after the example of that Father who "is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. iii. 9). This disposition greatly promotes the comfort and usefulness of life. 2. *It is to be exercised toward all men.* Even to those outside the household of faith who may gainsay or persecute the truth.—T. C.

Ver. 15.—*Abstinence from revenge, and the steadfast pursuit of good.* To a people freshly emerged out of paganism this counsel was still most appropriate, for the Greeks were remarkable for their undying feuds.

I. WARNING AGAINST RETALIATION. "See that none render evil for evil to any man." 1. *Retaliation is condemned both by the Old and the New Testaments.* (Lev. xix. 18; Rom. xii. 19.) 2. *It is condemned by Christ's beautiful example of forbearance.* (1 Pet. ii. 23.) "Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, threatened not." 3. *It is expressly rebuked by Christ in the case of the disciples James and John.* (Luke ix. 54, 55.) 4. *It springs from a spiteful heart.* (Ezek. xxv. 15.) 5. *It indicates a want of trust in God.* (Prov. xx. 22.)

II. INCULCATION OF THE PURSUIT OF GOOD. "But ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves and to all men." Believers are not to resist evil, but to return good for evil—to overcome evil with good. 1. *The good to be done is after the example of Christ*, who "went about every day doing good." 2. *It is done in virtue of union with Christ.* (John xv. 4, 5; Phil. i. 11.) 3. *It is the preordained pathway of God's children.* (Eph. ii. 10.) 4. *Christians ought to provoke each other to good.* (Heb. x. 24.)

5. *It is a grand argument for the gospel.* (Matt. v. 16.) 6. *It is to be catholic in its spirit*; for it is to be done, not to believers only, but "to all men." The believer is to have "brotherly kindness" as well as "love" (2 Pet. i. 7). 7. *It is to be earnestly pursued.* "Follow after that which is good." (1) Because it glorifies God (Matt. v. 16). (2) Because God remembers it (Heb. vi. 9, 10). (3) Because it is an evidence of faith (Jas. ii. 14—20). (4) Because it shall be brought into judgment (2 Cor. v. 10).—T. C.

Ver. 16.—*The duty and the privilege of constant joy.* "Rejoice evermore." (See homiletical hints on Phil. iii. 1; iv. 4).—T. C.

Ver. 17.—*The duty of constant prayer.* "Pray without ceasing." There is a mutual affinity between joy, prayer, and thanksgiving, as we see by other passages of Scripture (Phil. iii. 4—6; Col. iv. 2).

I. PRAYER THE DUTY, THE PRIVILEGE, THE INTEREST, OF ALL BELIEVERS. 1. *It is a commanded duty.* (Matt. vii. 7.) 2. *It is a sign of conversion.* (Acts ix. 11.) 3. *Saints delight in it.* (Ps. xlii. 4; cxxii. 1.) 4. *It is recommended:* (1) By the example of Christ (Luke xxii. 32). (2) By the experience of past mercies (Ps. iv. 1). (3) By the faithfulness of God (Ps. cxliii. 1). (4) By the fulness of the promises (Ps. cxix. 49; 1 John v. 15).

II. THE NECESSITY OF CONSTANT SUPPLICATION. "Pray without ceasing." 1. *There is nothing in the words to justify the neglect of other duties.* The apostle travelled and preached and laboured with his hands as well as prayed; but he cultivated a constant spirit of supplication. It is not true, therefore, that it can be fulfilled only in idea. 2. *It is a command not to be fulfilled by set hours of prayer, much less by adherence to a monastic rigour of devotion.* Yet it is not inconsistent with set hours. The psalmist prayed at evening, morning, and noon (Ps. lv. 17). Yea, "seven times a day do I praise thee" (Ps. cxix. 164). Daniel prayed three times a day (Dan. vi. 10). 3. *The apostle enjoins a constant spirit of prayer* in view of our constant dependence on the Lord. Prayer should interspace all our works. The heart may rise to a throne of grace in inward prayer when the hands are busy with the duties of life.—T. C.

Ver. 18.—*The duty of thanksgiving.* It is the natural fruit of joy as it is the natural accompaniment of prayer. "In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."

I. THANKSGIVING IS THE EXERCISE OF A JOYFUL AND PRAYING HEART. 1. *It is a mark of the wicked that they have no thankfulness.* They who glorified not God "neither were thankful" (Rom. i. 21). It is a sign of the antichristian apostasy that men "shall be unthankful" (2 Tim. iii. 2). Since "every good gift and every perfect gift" comes from the Father of Lights, the guilt of such ingratitude is great. 2. *It is the mark of the saints in heaven that they are full of thanksgivings.* (Rev. xix. 6, 7; vii. 12.) 3. *It is likewise a mark of the saints on earth.* "Blessed are they which dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee" (Ps. lxxxiv. 4). They abound in faith with thanksgiving (Col. ii. 7). They offer sacrifices of thanksgiving (Ps. cxvi. 17). They habitually offer thanksgiving (Dan. vi. 10).

II. THANKSGIVING MUST BE UNIVERSAL IN ITS SPHERE. "In everything give thanks." 1. *For the supply of our bodily wants.* (1 Tim. iv. 3, 4.) 2. *For the gift of Christ.* (2 Cor. ix. 15.) 3. *For the goodness and mercy of the Lord.* (Ps. cvi. 1.) 4. *In all circumstances of prosperity and adversity, joy and sorrow, health and sickness.* Job could say in the depth of his affliction, "Blessed be the Name of the Lord" (Job i. 8, 20, 21).

III. THE GROUND AND REASON OF THIS DUTY. "For this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." The Scripture as well as the light of nature directs to it, as it sets forth that "good and perfect and acceptable will of God," "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me." In Jesus Christ is this will revealed and made effectual: for all God's mercies reach us through the channel of his mediation. Therefore we "are to give thanks unto God and the Father by him" (Col. iii. 17); therefore "by him let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually" (Heb. xiii. 15).—T. C.

Ver. 19—21.—*Exhortations regarding spiritual gifts.* These three verses refer to

one subject, the extraordinary manifestations of the Spirit so frequent in the Church at this period, but apply likewise to his ordinary influence in believers.

I. THE SIN AND DANGER OF QUENCHING THE SPIRIT. "Quench not the Spirit." Perhaps there was a tendency to repress spiritual utterances, either because they had become fanatical, or from an undue love of order. It is possible to resist the Spirit. God strives with man, who may yet resist all his importunities (Acts vii. 51), "insulting the Spirit of grace" (Heb. x. 29). Even in the case of believers, "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh" (Gal. v. 17). It is both sinful and dangerous for believers to "grieve the Holy Spirit of God, whereby they are sealed to the day of redemption" (Eph. iv. 30). The text suggests the idea of quenching a fire. 1. *The Spirit acts upon the believer's nature* like a fire, warming, purifying, refining. 2. *The fire may be quenched by neglecting it* quite as much as by casting water upon it. This is the tendency of neglect. 3. *Sin has a tendency to quench the Spirit*, as water quenches fire. We ought to stir up our gifts and graces that they may shine the brighter, and give both light and heat around us. Yet provision is made in the covenant of grace that the fire once kindled will never be quenched.

II. THERE MUST BE NO UNDERVALUATION OF PROPHESYINGS. "Despise not prophesyings." 1. *These were spiritual utterances*, sometimes in psalms and hymns, "for the edification and exhortation and comfort" of believers, though they had the effect sometimes of laying bare the hearts of unbelievers (1 Cor. xiv. 25). They were more important than other gifts of the Spirit, and therefore more to be coveted (1 Cor. xii. 31). 2. *They were, therefore, not to be despised.* (1) Perhaps there had been "false prophets" at Thessalonica who had tried to pervert the truth, or weak members who had abused the gift of prophecy. The tendency, therefore, to underrate the gift was natural, but not proper. (2) Perhaps the exercise of this gift created less wonder or made less visible impression than other gifts, like those of tongues and healing. Therefore it came to be rather despised.

III. THE NECESSITY OF TESTING SPIRITUAL GIFTS. "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." Instead of rejecting prophesyings, they were to test them by a due spiritual discernment. 1. *They were to be tested:* (1) By a comparison with the original tradition given to them (2 Thess. ii. 2). (2) By a comparison with the prophesyings of others who sat as judges (1 Cor. xiv. 29). There was, besides, a supernatural gift of "discerning of spirits" (1 Cor. xii. 10, 14, 29). (3) By marking the practical fruits of these prophesyings. "Hold fast that which is good." Our Lord said, "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits" (Matt. v. 15, 16). True doctrine is "according to godliness" (1 Tim. vi. 3). Thus Christians are to examine the grounds of their faith, to hold fast nothing that has not first been tried, and to retain only "that which is good." 2. *Believers have the capacity as well as the right to test all things.* They are "to try the spirits whether they are of God" (1 John iv. 1). (1) They are the spiritual; "they judge all things, yet they themselves are judged of no man" (1 Cor. ii. 15). They have "an unction from the Holy One, and they know all things" (1 John ii. 20). (2) A right state of heart is necessary to this power of insight. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God" (John vii. 17). "Walk as children of light . . . proving what is acceptable unto God" (Eph. v. 8—10).—T. C.

Ver. 22.—*Warning against every form of evil.* "Abstain from every form of evil," whether practical or doctrinal.

I. WE NEED TO BE WARNED AGAINST EVIL. 1. *Because we naturally tend to do evil.* 2. *Because evil is so injurious to our spirits, in repressing joy, prayer, and thanksgiving.* 3. *Because it gives offence to others.* Therefore we ought to abhor that which is evil, to cleave to that which is good.

II. THE FORMS OF EVIL ARE VERY VARIOUS, AND THEREFORE NOT EASILY DETECTED. Truth is one; error is manifold. Satan can disguise error under forms difficult of detection. It is sometimes difficult to decide what is evil. But "a sound heart is the best casuist."—T. C.

Vers. 23, 24.—*Prayer for the sanctification and preservation of Thessalonian I. THESSALONIANS.*

believers. I. IT IS A PRAYER FOR PERFECT SANCTIFICATION. "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly." 1. *It is the design of the God of peace to do this.* Our Lord came to "save his people from their sins," to "redeem them from all iniquity." 2. *This sanctification is to extend to body, soul, and spirit.* (1) The body is to be sanctified, for it is to become an "instrument of righteousness," a "temple of the Holy Ghost," and eventually will receive its "redemption" in the resurrection (Rom. viii. 23). (2) The soul is to be sanctified. It is the principle of animal life. It is the self. The individual life of man is to be fully sanctified. (3) The spirit points to the inner life as coming from God, as the soul is life as constituted in man. The spirit is the higher aspect of self, the spiritual man being man as grace has reconstructed him. Yet the two words are parallel, though not equivalent; signifying not two separate natures in man, but two separate functions of the same nature. Provision is made for the sanctification of the whole man. 3. *It is not perfect in the present life.* The very prayer that God might sanctify them wholly implies that it was an attainment yet to be reached.

II. IT IS A PRAYER FOR THE PRESERVATION OF SAINTS TILL THE COMING OF CHRIST. "May your spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless." 1. *It is God only who can keep us.* He "keeps us from falling," that "he may present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy" (Jude 24). He "keeps us from evil" (John xvii. 15). Saints are "kept by his power" through faith unto salvation (1 Pet. i. 5). 2. *The preservation is to extend till the second advent.* Not till death, but till his coming, implying that body and soul are alike to share in the final redemption. "He that hath begun a good work in you will perform it till the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. i. 6).

III. THE GROUND OF HIS CONFIDENCE IN GOD'S PURPOSE OF SANCTIFICATION AND PRESERVATION. "Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it." 1. *God's faithfulness is the guarantee.* He "also will do it." He will be faithful to his oath, to his promises, to his covenant; for he has promised to cleanse his people from all their sins, and preserve them to his kingdom and glory. God is faithful "by whom ye were called into the fellowship of his Son" (2 Cor. i. 8, 9). 2. *Effectual calling is another guarantee.* For whom he calls he justifies and glorifies. If he gives grace, he gives glory. The calling implies perfection, as it is the first step to it.—T. C.

Vers. 25—27.—*Three closing injunctions.* I. THE APOSTLE ASKS AN INTEREST IN THE PRAYERS OF THE THESSALONIANS. "Brethren, pray for us." 1. *He did not feel himself independent, in spite of all his high graces and gifts, of the intercessions of the humblest disciples.* His request is a proof of his deep humility. 2. *His position, with the care of all the Churches upon his heart, entitled him to their prayers.* He said to the Roman Christians, "Strive together with me in your prayers to God for me." (1) He wanted a door of utterance as well as a door of entrance. (2) He wanted to be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men. (3) He wanted to see the gospel flourishing in all the Churches.

II. EXHORTATION FOR CHRISTIANS TO SALUTE EACH OTHER. "Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss." Eastern customs differ from Western; but the salutation ought still to prevail in all our Churches, not in the letter, but in the spirit. It ought to express the feeling of oneness, of affection, of equality among the disciples of the same Lord. Christianity purifies and elevates worldly courtesy.

III. SOLEMN ADJURATION TO HAVE THE EPISTLE READ TO ALL THE BRETHREN. "I charge you by the Lord that this Epistle be read unto all the holy brethren." Conjectures have been freely expressed that the elders at Thessalonica may have been disinclined to read the letter to the Church. There is not much ground for the opinion. 1. *This Epistle was the first ever written by the apostle to any Church;* and as the disciples may not have known how to use it, he gives specific directions on the subject. 2. *He recognizes the right of all the brethren to read it.* Rome denies to the laity this right.—T. C.

Vers. 1—11.—*"The day of the Lord."* I. THE TIME OF ITS COMING. 1. *There was no real need to write to them about this.* St. Paul had spoken of it; it had been a principal subject of his teaching. They knew all that could be known, all that they needed to know for their souls' health. But there was a restless curiosity, an eager

longing "to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power." Such knowledge was not for the apostles; it is not for the Church. "Of that day and that hour knoweth no man." But, in spite of these words of Christ, human thought has ever busied itself, it busies itself still, to pry into this awful secret. St. Paul had told the Thessalonians all he knew; there was no need to write it again. But he deals gently with them. He tries to quiet their restless anxiety. 2. *They knew that it could not be known.* It cometh suddenly, when men are least expecting it; when they say, "Peace and safety." It cometh as a thief in the night. They knew the Lord's illustration. St. Paul had told them. It was enough for them to know. Suddenly, as the lightning that cometh out of the east and shineth even to the west, the Son of man shall come. That we know; nothing more can be known. It is a thought full of awfulness, full of deep lessons and solemn warnings.

II. READINESS FOR ITS COMING. 1. *Christians are not in the darkness.* Darkness is the element, the sphere of the unconverted life. Darkness is ignorance of God, ignorance of the atoning work of Christ, ignorance of the blessed influences of God the Holy Ghost. Such darkness is either intellectual, darkness of the understanding; or spiritual, darkness of the heart and will. The two act and react upon one another. Darkness of the understanding produces in some cases and in some measure darkness of the heart. Darkness of the heart often results in darkness of the understanding. There are cases of darkness which seem to us the most perplexing of problems; men and women who have from the very beginning of life been enveloped in an atmosphere of ignorance, brutality, and sin, from which there seems to be no escape—who seem to us, as people say, to "have no chance," no possibility, humanly speaking, of attaining to enlightenment and the knowledge of God. What can be done in such cases? We must, each one of us, do all that lies in our power to help the helpless and to teach the ignorant; and then, when we have "done what we could," we can only leave them, in the trustfulness of faith, to his mercy who, we know, will require little of those to whom little has been given. But the darkness which we have to face in our daily walk is, more commonly, not like this, but wilful darkness. "He that hateth his brother" (St. John says) "is in darkness even until now." Any wilful sin deliberately indulged darkens the heart. "If thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness." The soul that cherishes a secret sin cannot believe, cannot see God, cannot be in readiness for the coming of the Lord. If such are not awakened to a sense of guilt and danger, the great day must overtake them as a thief, coming upon them in all its sudden awfulness. 2. *They are sons of light.* "God hath shined in their hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." The true light now shineth. We are in the light, the light of the knowledge of God, the light of the presence of God. We belong to the light; it is all around us; it is in us. Indeed, the true light "lighteth every man." The Lord is loving unto every man. "The Lamb of God taketh away [beareth] the sin of the world." We must believe, in spite of sad and dark appearances, that there is no child of man on whom the heavenly Father hath not shined; none who are left to perish without a hope of salvation. The light shineth upon all; but they are sons of light whose souls within are lighted with that heavenly glow, who come to the light and rejoice in the light, and in the brightness of that light see what others cannot see because their eyes are holden—the fair beauty of the Lord, the exceeding loveliness of the blessed Saviour's life, the aureole of golden light that bathes the cross of Christ in a glory of unearthly radiance. 3. *Therefore they must walk in the light.* They must live in the consciousness of that light, feeling its warmth and glory; as they move hither and thither in their daily life, they must walk in the sense of that light which is all around them. It shows things in their true colours. Sin is hateful, loathsome; you see its utter hideousness when the light shines upon it. Holiness is fair and bright; you see its attractive beauty when the heavenly light shines on it in its glory. The light shines into our hearts; it shows us our guilt, our misery, our danger. But, blessed be God, it does more than that. It hath a purifying power; it cleanses what was unclean; it brightens what was dark. "If we walk in the light . . . the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." 4. *They are sons of day, therefore they must watch.* The light shows the danger of sloth; it rests upon those awful words, "Thou wicked and slothful servant," and brings them out into full distinctness. They must not sleep, as do others. Indiffer-

ence and apathy are deadly enemies of the soul. The unbelieving multitude sleep; they are thoughtless about their souls, careless of the awful destinies which lie before us. The believer will watch; for he will remember the reiterated commandment of his Lord, "Watch, therefore. . . . What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch." Watchfulness is thoughtfulness; it is a vivid interest in everything that belongs to the spiritual life, an earnest desire to quicken it into ever new energies, a freshness of spirit, an active vigilance in guarding against all the dangers and temptations that surround us. "They that sleep, sleep in the night," but we are sons of day. We must watch as men that wait for their Lord. We know not when he cometh; we must be watchful always lest that day overtake us as a thief. It cometh as a thief. This warning of our Lord is not only recorded in the Gospels, but St. Paul, St. Peter, St. John, re-echo the solemn words. It made a deep impression on the minds of the early Christians; witness the name Gregory ("watchful") so common in the ancient Church. Would that that impression remained, that we too might be stirred to ever-deepening watchfulness. "The Lord is at hand." 5. *They must be sober.* "They that be drunken are drunken in the night." The Christian must be sober. Intoxication causes drowsiness; it is inconsistent with watchfulness. The intemperate cannot watch. The Christian must be temperate in all things; strictly temperate as regards food and drink, for temperance is the fruit of the Spirit, and drunkenness is one of those works of the flesh of which it is written that "they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." He must be temperate in all his enjoyments; for all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life,—all these things intoxicate their votaries, and make them slothful and drowsy in the concerns of the soul. But we must be sober, for we are of the day; we walk in the light of day and are looking for the coming of the day of the Lord. 6. *They must be prepared for the assaults of temptation.* They must be clothed with the armour of light. (1) The breastplate of faith and love. The hosts of darkness will gather round the Christian warrior as he stands watchful at his post. They cannot harm him if he continue faithful; the fiery darts of the wicked one cannot pierce the breastplate of faith and love. Faith is trustfulness. The soul that trusts in Christ is fixed and steadfast. Trust not in earthly things; they will fail you at the last. But trust in Christ; he abideth faithful; he is able to save even to the uttermost; his love is stronger than death. Faith protects the Christian's heart. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Faith overcomes the world. Love springs out of faith, and quickens faith. Believe in Christ, and love him you must, for faith realizes his presence in all his grace and tenderness. "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us;" "We love him, because he first loved us." Love reacts on faith; for God, who is Love, can be known only of those who have learned of him the great lesson of love. "Every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God." Like is known by like. He who knows not in his own heart what it is to love, cannot know God, who is the eternal Love. Love grows out of faith, and love fills faith with life and joy and holy enthusiasm. Love and faith protect the Christian as he watches; they sustain his energies. Faith preserves him from anxious doubts; the holy love of God keeps out all carnal loves. (2) The helmet of the Christian warrior. The hope of salvation guards his head. Other hopes may fall in shattered ruins on him; they will not crush him; they may vex and bruise, but they will not reach a mortal part; they may strike him as he stands erect and fearless; they will glance off from the polished surface of the helmet of salvation. The blessed hope of life eternal living in the heart supports the Christian in toil, in sorrow, in sickness, and in death. "Now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three." He will watch who hath these blessed graces; he will persevere, faithful unto death, looking always for the coming of the great and awful day. 7. *God is their Strength.* Without him they can do nothing. He did not appoint us to wrath. He is our Father; he is not willing that any should perish. He willeth that all men should be saved. Salvation, great and blessed word, is what God willeth for us all. 8. *The work of the Lord Jesus.* Our salvation is his work. He died for us, on our behalf and in our stead; his precious death is the high example of entire self-sacrifice for the sake of others; it is the atonement for our sins. "For us." Those great words stimulate us to love and serve him; they should be constantly in our thoughts; they should fill us with wonder, awe, and adoring love. "For us," though we were sinners; "for us," though he is God; "for us"—we

can never reach the depths of mysterious, blessed meaning which lie hid in those two simple words. He died that we, whether we watch or sleep, while we remain among the living, watching for his coming, and while we sleep with those who are laid to sleep through Jesus, should ever live together with him. His death is our life; by his death he took away the power of sin, which is the death of the soul. He died that we might live in that holy life which is in fellowship with him. That life begins now. "Ye have eternal life," St. John says. Christ's saints live with him and in him, for he is their Life. They live with him during their earthly pilgrimage; they live with him in Paradise, where the holy departed are with Christ; they shall live with him in that glory which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man. 9. *Practical conclusion.* (1) They must comfort one another. The word wavers in its meaning between comfort and exhortation. The two ideas, indeed, run very near together, as the etymology of the English word "comfort" suggests. To comfort, according to its derivation, is to strengthen. Comfort, consolation, is a source of strength. The despondent, those who brood over their sufferings and fret themselves in their troubles, are timid, devoid of energy and strength. Comfort helps them to "lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees," and stimulates them to look forward to the future with hope and courage. The Thessalonian Christians needed both comfort and exhortation. They had a great trial of affliction; they suffered much persecution from the beginning. No earthly comfort is so great as the sympathy of loving Christian friends. And those who sympathize with us stir us up by their example, by their loving words; their sympathy implies exhortation; it issues in exhortation, it makes exhortation real and effective. (2) They must edify one another. To edify is to build up. The wise builder builds his house on the rock, which is Christ. He is the Foundation; Christians are "built up in him." In the deepest sense he is the Builder. "On this rock I will build my Church." But, St. Paul says, "we are labourers together with God." Such grace he gives to his servants that they are privileged to help on the great work, to build upon the one Foundation. There is no higher, holier work than this, to prepare the living stones, to build them up into the one holy temple, the Church of the living God. The Thessalonians were doing it. St. Paul recognizes their loving labours, and urges them to persevere. Be it ours to follow them.

LESSONS. 1. It is not for us to know the times and seasons; be not too curious; but: 2. Prepare in quiet faith: "the Lord is at hand." 3. Live as sons of light; pray for grace to realize the presence of God, to see the cross by faith, to watch in hope and love. 4. Each Christian, however humble, has his place in building up the Church of Christ; let each do his part.—B. C. C.

Vers. 12—22.—*Closing exhortations.* I. THE MINISTERS OF THE CHURCH. 1. *Their duties.* (1) They labour. The work of the Christian ministry involves much labour—unseen labour in prayer and study, outward labour in preaching, in visiting the sick and aged, in feeding the Church of God which he purchased with his own blood. They are unworthy of their high calling who do not labour. (2) They preside over the flock, but it is "in the Lord;" by his appointment, in his strength, in accordance with his will, with a view to his glory, not their own. They must not seek to be "lords over God's heritage," but rather be ensamples to the flock, first in humility first in self-denial, first in Christian love. (3) They admonish—a difficult, a painful duty, but often the duty of a minister; not to be neglected by those who watch for souls as they that must give account, but to be performed in humility and gentleness, with many prayers for guidance and for wisdom. 2. *The respect due to their office.* St. Paul beseeches the Thessalonians (mark his earnestness) to recognize the labours of their presbyters; perhaps there had been some neglect of them. It is good for Christians themselves to know the ministers who work among them, to take a lively interest in their work, their difficulties, their necessities: so they may share in that holy work themselves. Such an interest will lead them to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake, for its dignity and importance, but also for the faithfulness with which it is performed. The indolent and careless will not win this esteem. Reverence towards those set over us and due subordination, tend to promote the peace of the Church. That peace is of the utmost moment. Our unhappy divisions give occasion to

the adversary to speak reproachfully, and draw Christians away from the quiet pursuit of holiness into the unhealthy atmosphere of controversy.

II. THE DUTIES OF THE BRETHREN GENERALLY. 1. *Admonition and encouragement.* All Christians must take their part in the great work of saving souls; all are responsible, in a greater or less degree, for the welfare of the souls that come within their influence. All true Christians must admonish when admonition is needed; all must comfort those who stand in need of comfort. All must support the weak, and all must practise patience towards all men, unbelievers as well as believers. For these duties are so many different phases of Christian love, and Christian love is the highest of all graces. The love of the brethren is the proof that we have passed from death unto life. Then the Christian who is living in that life which is hid with Christ in God must take a deep and holy interest in the souls around him. The nearer he lives to God the better he will be able to admonish, to comfort, to support; the more willing he will be to labour in the cause of Christ. 2. *They must teach the unlawfulness of revenge.* The heathen almost universally applauded it. To return evil for evil, they thought, was as commendable as to requite good with good. The Christian must learn of Christ, the blessed Master, to pray, "Father, forgive them." He must crush out of his heart all resentful feelings; he must learn to love his enemies, to pray for those who use him despitefully. It is a hard lesson sometimes. We shall learn it if we are living by faith in the presence of the cross. He died for the Thessalonians when they were enemies; they must learn of him to be kind to all men, even to the unthankful and to the evil. 3. *Christian joy.* It is a duty, not merely a privilege. A sullen, joyless temper implies a want of faith, the absence of hope and love. "The kingdom of God is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Joy is one of the fruits of the Spirit. He dwelleth in the Christian heart, and his presence bringeth joy. There must be joy where God is; the joy of heaven lieth in this, "He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them." And the joy of the faithful on earth is joy in the Lord, joy in his presence, in his love. Not to rejoice is want of trustfulness in him whose love should gladden the Christian heart. Barrow begins his great sermon on this text with the words, "O good apostle, how acceptable rules dost thou prescribe! O gracious God, how gracious laws dost thou inspire!" but "*res severa verum gaudium.*" Many rejoice at times, in seasons of excitement; but to rejoice evermore, in sickness, and pain, and disappointments, and bereavements—this is difficult indeed; this implies a high degree of self-mastery, a living faith in God. We must learn to regard joy as our bounden duty, a duty which flows out of the great debt of love which we owe to God. Joy is the expression of our gratitude; it ought to be the free-will offering of a thankful heart. "Rejoice evermore" is the commandment of the Lord. He who commands gives also power to obey. He giveth to all men largely. He gives his Holy Spirit to all who ask in faith, and with the Spirit comes the gift of joy. 4. *Perseverance in prayer.* The whole of the Christian life should be consecrated to God—every action, word, thought. This involves a constant reference of all the little details of our daily lives to the will of God. We should refer them all to him, as Hezekiah spread the letter of Sennacherib before the Lord. No emergency is so great as to keep the faithful Christian from his God, none of our little difficulties is so small as to make it needless or unseemly to consult the Lord in prayer. "Whosoever ye do in word or in deed, do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus." Thus the whole life must be sanctified by habitual communion with God, while in the stated hours of prayer the believer will constantly entreat the Giver of all good with unceasing and ever more urgent importunity for more abundant grace, for larger spiritual gifts, for strength from on high to offer daily a more acceptable service. Thus prayer will be without ceasing. The heart prays when the lips are silent. 5. *Thankfulness.* Thanksgiving must always accompany prayer. It springs out of faithful prayer; for faithful prayer brings us into the presence of God, and in that presence we must give thanks. Thanksgiving, like prayer, should be without ceasing, in everything. We thank God for his unspeakable gift, the gift of Christ; we thank him for our access to him in prayer and praise and holy sacrament; we thank him for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life. We must learn to thank him, not only in our joys, but in our sorrows too. We must thank him for his chastisements, for they are sent in love. "Hast thou suffered any evil," says Chrysostom; "if thou wilt, it is no evil; give thanks to God.

and the evil is turned to good." He practised what he taught; in the midst of cruel afflictions he died with the words, "Glory be to God for all things," on his lips. This is the will of God—God would have the Christian's life to be a life of joy, a life of unceasing prayer, of perpetual thanksgiving. This is his will in Christ Jesus, revealed in the words of Christ, exemplified in the life of Christ, rendered possible by the grace of Christ to those who abide in him. 6. *Spiritual gifts.* The Divine fire was kindled at the great day of Pentecost in the baptism of fire; the like holy flame burns in all true Christian hearts. It is of all gifts the most precious. It involves an awful responsibility. (1) It is our part to stir up the gift of God that is in us; to watch very carefully lest, through sin or carelessness or indifference, the holy fire lose its brightness and its power. The foolish virgins were suddenly aroused to the consciousness that their lamps were going out. The Lord was come; they had no oil, they were not ready. It was too late. Arise and trim your lamps; take warning in time; quench not the Spirit. An unclean life, says Chrysostom, quenches that holy fire; so does apathy, indifference in religion. Sin is like water poured upon the flame. There is no fellowship between light and darkness; the Holy Spirit dwelleth not in the impure heart. Indifference gradually quenches the fire. The lamp will not burn without the oil; the daily renewal of the Holy Ghost is necessary for the support of the spiritual life within us. The Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul; he may depart from us if we live, like Saul, in wilfulness and disobedience. It is a fearful thought that we have the awful power of quenching that Spirit which is the very life of our souls. It should stimulate us to constant, anxious watchfulness. (2) Quench not the Spirit in others; despise not prophesyings, but prove all things. There is a holy enthusiasm which comes from God; there is a fanaticism, a mere fervour of excitement, which is not of God. We must not believe every spirit, lest we be carried about with every blast of vain doctrine. We are bidden to "try the spirits whether they are of God." There were prophesyings in the apostolic times, flowing from the direct inspiration and impulse of the Holy Spirit; there are such utterances now. There were then, and there are now, counterfeit likenesses of these spiritual gifts. There is need of care. God giveth to his chosen a power of spiritual discernment. "He that is spiritual judgeth all things;" he will hold fast that which is good. 7. *All evil must be avoided.* Every form of evil; little sins, as they are called, as well as great sins. Little sins are the first symptoms of the deadly disease. It may be checked at its outbreak; if neglected, it may slay the soul. The danger is great; the enemy is awful in his power and malignity. Hate all that comes from him.—B. C. C.

Vers. 23, 24.—*The result of obedience to these commandments—sanctification.* I. It is THE GIFT OF GOD. 1. *Peace.* Peace is the blessed fruit of obedience. Be careful for nothing; live in prayer and thanksgiving, and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and thoughts. But it comes from God. He is the God of peace. It is his; "My peace," the Lord Jesus says. It is God who maketh peace, who reconciles the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. 2. *Holiness.* Holiness is the sum of all Christian graces. All the precepts contained in the previous verses are here taken together; they meet and are summed up in holiness. But no human effort can sanctify the heart without the grace of God. Therefore the apostle is not content with exhorting the Thessalonians; he prays that God may sanctify them. May he himself (he says emphatically), "the God of peace, sanctify you wholly." He goes on to expand the last word.

II. IT MUST PERVADE THE WHOLE BEING. 1. *The spirit.* This is the highest part of our immaterial nature, the breath of life, inbreathed by Almighty God. It is the part receptive of Divine communications, which, in the regenerate, holds converse with God; which is the sphere of the operations of God the Holy Ghost. That man is spiritual in whom the spirit rules; he is natural (*ψυχικός*) in whom the soul (*ψυχή*) has usurped the place of the spirit. The evil spirit seeks to enslave the spirit of man; he strives to enter in and dwell in the spirit which should be God's. The peace of God is the true garrison; it guards the heart and thoughts of the faithful, leaving no ingress for the wicked one. 2. *The soul.* Each of the two words is sometimes used for our whole invisible nature; but, when distinguished from the spirit, the soul is the lower part of our immaterial being, which belongs in common to the whole animal creation.

the seat of the appetites, desires, affections. Those men in whom the animal soul predominates are called by St. Jude "sensual, not having the spirit" (*ψυχικοί, πνεῦμα μὴ ἔχοντες*). The soul is sanctified when it submits itself to the divinely enlightened spirit, when all its appetites, feelings, longings, are controlled and regulated by the sanctified spirit. 3. *The body.* The Christian body is a holy thing. It should be the temple of the Holy Ghost; it should be presented unto God a living sacrifice. It is sanctified when it is ruled by the spirit, when it is kept pure from the defilements of sensual sin, when its members are made instruments of righteousness unto God. The apostle prays that the whole man, spirit, soul, and body, may be preserved in the whole sphere of its existence, so as to be without blame in the great day. 4. *How is this possible?* God is faithful; he will do it. He calleth us. His calling is not vain, his promises are not delusive; they are true, for he is the Truth. He will do it—all that he has promised, all that we pray for, more than we pray for, above all that we can ask or think; for his power worketh in us. He will do it. He will give us his Holy Spirit; he will sanctify us wholly if we yield ourselves to his purifying influences; he will preserve our entire being blameless at the coming of the Lord, if only we persevere—if we abide in him. This little verse has been well called "the sum of all consolation."

LESSONS. 1. Work, but pray. Be obedient, but always look to God, and trust only in his grace; it is he that giveth holiness. 2. Pray for entire sanctification. Body, soul, and spirit—all are God's; glorify him in all. 3. Obey his calling; he will fulfil his promises.—B. C. C.

Vers. 25—28.—*Conclusion.* 1. **HE ASKS FOR THEIR PRAYERS.** He, the great apostle, begs for the prayers of these neophytes, these babes in Christ. It shows: 1. *His humility.* 2. *The value of prayer.* A good man has said, "Prayer is possession. Faithful prayer is the sure possession of all that the redeemed will of man can desire. The man who is full of prayer is full of power. I would rather have the gift of a brother's faithful prayers than of his plentiful substance. And I feel that when I have given to a brother my faithful prayers I have given him my best and greatest gift." 3. *The duty of praying for the clergy.* They have a great charge, an awful responsibility. They might well shrink from the burden, conscious as they are of sin and weakness. But they work, if they are faithful, in the strength of God and in the strength of prayer—their own prayers and the prayers of the Church. The prayers of the Church are their due, for it is the commandment of the Lord. When they fail in energy, in self-denial, in holy example, it may be in part the fault of those who do not pray, as they are bidden, for the ministers of God.

II. **THE KISS OF PEACE.** St. Paul four times, St. Peter once, bid Christians to salute one another with a holy kiss. The practice was universal in ancient times; it was associated with the Holy Communion. Now it exists only in the Coptic Church of Egypt. The outward form has passed away; ancient customs may be disused when changes in habits and feeling render them no longer suitable. The sacred duty of brotherly love remains unchanged for ever. "By this shall men know that ye are my disciples, when ye have love one towards another."

III. **THE EPISTLE TO BE READ IN THE CHURCH.** Mark his earnestness: he adjures them by the Lord. It was his first Epistle. This solemn injunction was more needed now than afterwards. Then the Epistle was to stand on a level with the ancient Scriptures; it was to be read publicly, as Moses and the prophets were read in the synagogues. It was to be read to all. The open Bible must be given to all. All need its holy lessons; all have a right, by the gracious gift of God, to the blessings which it offers.

IV. **THE GRACE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.** He begins his Epistle with grace; he ends it with grace. The grace of God is the beginning and the end of our salvation. "By the grace of God I am what I am;" "By grace are ye saved." All our truest happiness here, all our hopes for blessedness hereafter, come from the grace of God.

LESSONS. 1. Try to realize the great value of prayer; desire the prayers of the saints. 2. Pray for the clergy; it is a sacred duty. 3. Love the brethren. 4. The Bible is a precious book; see that you prize it.—B. C. C.

Vers. 1—11.—*Exhortation in view of the Lord's coming.* I. **HOW THE DAY OF THE**

LORD IS SUDDEN AND UNEXPECTED IN ITS COMING. "But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that aught be written unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night." By the same method which is followed in ch. iv. 9, the apostle seeks to impress on the Thessalonians a certain point relating to the times and the seasons which make up the period of the Lord's dealing with men. This related more particularly to the day of the Lord, the day when the Lord is to descend to earth, which is to be thought of as the completing point of the times and the seasons. It is practically to each of us the day of our death. When with them he had taken care that they should accurately understand the sudden and unexpected nature of the advent. There were decisive words of the Lord on which to proceed. "But of that day and hour knoweth no one, not even the angels of heaven, neither the Son, but the Father only;" "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power." There was even the same image employed by our Lord which is employed here. "But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what hour the thief was coming, he would have watched, and not have left his house to be broken through." As a thief, without notice given and under cover of the night, approaches the dwelling which its occupant thinks secure, so stealthily approaches the day of the Lord. To all alike the uncertainty exists, and will exist. All fixings of the time, such as are sometimes attempted, are wholly unwarranted. God does not mean that either the Church or the world should know the time, any more than he means that any of us should know the time of our death.

II. HOW TO THE CARNALLY SECURE THE DAY OF THE LORD IS TO COME AS A TERRIBLE SURPRISE. "When they are saying, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall in no wise escape." The image is carried forward, and we are to think of those who confine their interest to the earthly sphere, and do not dream of their possession as ever to be disturbed. But, having sown carnal security, they are to reap *destruction*, and not only in their earthly but also in their higher interest. It is a strong word which is employed, and corresponds to "*wrath*," which is afterwards employed. This feeling of carnal security grows upon men. At first they chide themselves that they neglect Christ and their everlasting salvation. But, carried forward by the desire of earthly gratification and in confidence in their own strength, they find excuses for the course which they are following. A state of moral *darkness* is produced in them. They become blinded to the character of God, and the opposition which is ever widening between their life and the will of God. The result is, that qualms of conscience leave them, and they say, "I have a feeling of peace within, and there is no trouble from without." But just when they come to this height of carnal security, then sudden destruction comes upon them, from which there shall be no escape. Thus, it would seem, will it be at last. All men will not be ready for the descending Lord. "As were the days of Noah, so shall be the coming of the Son of man. For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and they knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall be the coming of the Son of man." So it would seem is it, anticipatively, now. Men go on in their sinful courses, until they are suddenly overtaken by death and destruction.

III. HOW TO SONS OF LIGHT AND SONS OF THE DAY THE DAY OF THE LORD SHOULD NOT BE A SURPRISE. "But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief: for ye are all sons of light, and sons of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness." The Thessalonian brethren are excluded from the darkness which is implied in the state of carnal security; it was not, therefore, designed that that day should overtake them as a thief. The *class* to which they, as Christians, properly belonged, was that of *sons of light and sons of the day*. They are those to whom the Lord has been revealed, especially to whom it has been revealed that he will come, and who thus have light in them. They are those upon whom the Sun of righteousness has risen, making day *around* them. Welcoming the light, even in its reproofing power, they come to be made of light and enveloped with light, so that they are sons of light (which is the Divine nature) and sons of the day (which is the Divine *incomprehensibility*). When it is always light, the thief has not opportunity of approach-

ing without being seen. So those who have abundance of light in them and around them should not be surprised by the day of the Lord. The class from which we as Christians are excluded is that of those who are *of the night and of darkness*. They are those who have moral night drawn around them. They are those into whose nature the light of God's mercy and truth has not penetrated. Loving the darkness rather than the light, because their deeds are evil, they come to have darkness as their surrounding and their nature, so that they are of the night and of darkness. It was open to the apostle, from the use of similar expressions by our Lord ("sons of this world," "sons of the devil"), to have said sons of the night and sons of darkness. He seems to have chosen his language purposely to avoid the idea of freedom, to bring out the idea of *servitude*. They are not like the free sons of light and free sons of the day. They are rather those who are hemmed in by the night, who are enslaved to darkness. When there is darkness in and around a dwelling there may be said to be an invitation to the thief to approach. So those who have darkness in and around their being may be said to invite a surprise from the day of the Lord.

IV. HOW WE ARE BOUND, AS ENLIGHTENED CHRISTIANS, TO WATCH AND BE SOBER. "So then let us not sleep, as do the rest, but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night." There is put forward what we are *not to do*. Let us not sleep, as do the rest of mankind. Sleeping implies obliviousness and inactivity. The rest of mankind are in an oblivious, inactive state, especially with regard to the solemn issues of life. Let us who have light not be like them. What we are to do is to *watch*. We are to have the wakeful activity of the sentinel at his post. He knows not from what side or what hour the enemy may approach, so he has altogether and always to be vigilant. In like manner, let us take full account of the fact that death is coming. And, seeing we know not how or what hour it may come, let our vigilance all round never sleep. What we are to do is also to be *sober*. A subject should be in a *fit* state when ushered into the presence of his sovereign. It will be a solemn thing for us to be ushered into the presence of the Lord at death; and we should be in a fit state for the occasion. We should especially have our appetites in proper restraint. We should have the full command of our powers. We should be so employed from moment to moment that, when the last moment comes, we can fitly leave our employments and pass into the presence of our Judge. Not to be doing *this*, is to be conforming to *unenlightened* practices. "They that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night." The literal fact is stated as the basis for thought. Night is the congenial time for *sleep*. So those who are in the night of sin are in a drowsy, unalarmed state with regard to their spiritual concerns. They do not take into account that they have to meet death, and yet, however deep their sleep, they have to meet it and the realities to which they will be wakened up after death. Night is also the congenial time for *drunkenness*. How much of the drinking that is to be deplored goes on after darkness has set in! So those who are in the night of sin are in a state of spiritual intoxication. And that is the worst thing that can be said of the literal drunkard. His spiritual nature is in a bad state. In not restraining his appetites he is rebelling against God. In continuing in sin he is hardening his heart. And he is not fit for passing into the presence of his Judge. And so is it, too, with those who are drunken with the world's engagements and cares. They become incapacitated for spiritual exercise, and for the enjoyment of the Lord's presence. "But take heed to yourselves, lest haply your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that day come on you suddenly as a snare."

V. HOW WE ARE TO GIVE PROOF THAT WE ARE SOBER BY BEING ARMED WITH FAITH, LOVE, AND HOPE. "But let us, since we are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for a helmet, the hope of salvation." Having the light of day, and knowing what is coming, let us, as sober men, take all due precautions. For us to be forewarned should be to be forearmed. It is only *defensive* armour that is thought of here as brought into requisition. The idea seems to be, that we are to be armed against all that would unfit us for our Lord's coming. 1. *The breastplate*. This is a double piece of armour. It is faith and love combined. Faith apprehends the Lord's coming, in opposition to blind unbelief which says, "Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were." Faith defends

by encircling us with the Divine strength, which is as though every part of our defenceless hearts were covered with armour. But faith only rightly defends when, at the same time, love gives Christ the possession of our hearts. It is the world that tempts us to forget the Lord's coming, to make no preparation for death. When our hearts are filled with love to the Saviour, we are enabled to keep out the world. The breastplate of our defence being completed by love, brings it into agreement with what, in Eph. vi. 14, and also in Isa. lix. 17, is called "the breastplate of righteousness." 2. *The helmet.* This is a single piece of armour. In Eph. vi. 17, and also in Isa. lix. 17, it is simply called "the helmet of salvation." But what is meant is what is here called "the hope of salvation." We have a certain experience of salvation already in the working of faith and love. Hope reaches beyond this experience forward to the salvation which is to be completed at the Lord's coming. This hope is a defence to us, as the helmet used to be to the warrior. Wearing this provided armour, we can hold our head high and scathless above present troubles. Let us, then, as sober men, not unclean our breastplate, not lay aside our helmet.

VI. HOW THE SALVATION HOPED FOR HAS BEEN MADE A DIVINE CERTAINTY TO US. "For God appointed us not unto wrath, but unto the obtaining of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ." For those who are sunk in spiritual slumber and intoxication there is an appointment unto *wrath*. The Divine displeasure must be manifested against the rebellious course which they have been following. But for us who are acting as sober men there is an appointment unto the *obtaining of salvation* through our Lord Jesus Christ, i.e. at his coming. And what God has appointed will be carried out. A soldier endures in the hope of victory. But the victory is to him an uncertainty; it may not be realized, or he may not live to share in it. But the Christian soldier has a Divine appointment on which to proceed. If even now we take Christ as our Saviour, and from this point wait for his coming, then God intends that we shall conquer. Let us seize the advantage of our position. While we have our faith and love in vigorous exercise, let us know also the sustaining power of a lively hope.

VII. HOW THE OBTAINING OF SALVATION HAS BECOME ASSURED TO US. "Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him." 1. *Our life has its source in Christ's death.* Christ died for our benefit, and, by implication, in our stead. He died in the way of making satisfaction for our sin. In him, as our Representative or Head, we obtain the benefits of his work. It is as though we had died, as though we had made satisfaction for sin. Thus in condescending love, in accordance with eternal principles, are we introduced into salvation. 2. *The final end of Christ's death is that we should live together with him.* Christ died with this view, that we should ultimately live along with him, and have fellowship with him; we entering into his thoughts and delighting in his love, while he enters into our thoughts and delights in our love. 3. *This end is independent of our waking or sleeping at Christ's coming.* Our waking or sleeping is *accidental*; the essential thing is that we shall have fellowship with Christ, and fellowship, as it then shall be, in the body. Both classes, those who wake and those who sleep, have the same reason for assuring themselves that they shall live together with him, viz. in the fact that he has died to merit it for them, as he lives to secure it for them. Those who wake shall be changed without the union between soul and body being broken; and, changed, *they shall live together with him.* Those who sleep have the union between the soul and body broken, without any break in the union between the soul and Christ and in fellowship with him; and, raised from their graves, *they shall live together with him.* Thus the ultimate state of both classes is to be the same, the apostle returning here to the conclusion reached in ch. iv. 17, where it is said of the same two classes united that they shall be for ever with the Lord.

VIII. HOW IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES THEY ARE TO ACT TOWARD EACH OTHER. "Wherefore exhort one another, and build each other up, even as also ye do." There is an unhappy change from "comfort" to "exhort" in the translation. It ought to be "comfort," as in the parallel verse at the close of the previous paragraph. They were to comfort one another with what was blessed in the Lord's coming. They were also to edify each other, in preparation for the Lord's coming—communicating knowledge to each other, praying for each other, pressing duty on each other, stimulating each other by example. This they were doing, and in that way were admirably

answering the ends of their being in a Christian society. But let them go on, and not, while only a little away from the starting-point, suppose that they have reached finality. Let us, too, make the end of our being in a Christian society comfort and, especially, edification to all the members.—R. F.

Vers. 12—22.—*Exhortations.* I. DUTY TOWARD THE PRESIDENTS. "But we beseech you, brethren, to know them that labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them exceeding highly in love for their work's sake." The Greek bears that those who labour, preside, and admonish are all one class. From other places in the New Testament we must understand that the reference is to the class of the elders. "And when they had appointed for them elders in every Church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they had believed." "For this cause," Paul says to Titus, "left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and appoint elders in every city, as I gave thee charge." From 1 Tim. v. 17 it appears that there were elders who simply ruled, and others who both ruled and taught. The language employed in the description of the elders here does not require a restriction in the application to teaching elders. It can only be said that the greater extent of their duties warrants a special application to them. There is put forward the idea of their being *workers*. In any office the first thing to be looked to is the amount of real honest work that is done in it. Certainly it is not meant that any ecclesiastical office should be a sinecure. There was spiritual work to be done among the Thessalonians, and there were those who were appointed for the doing of it. These did their work even to *weariness*. Next to their being workers, they were *presidents*. In 1 Tim. v. 17 the elders are described as thus ruling or presiding. In this presidency there is implied the possession of ecclesiastical power; but it is with limitations. Believers stand in an immediate *personal* relation to the Lord. But there is also the relation in which believers stand *collectively* to the Lord. In this relation Christ is not only President; but there are those who in each Christian society preside in the Lord, *i.e.* they preside in his Name, they represent his authority in the relation. To them belongs the power of the keys, or of admitting and excluding. To them it belongs to preside at the ordinance of the supper. To them it belongs to sit in judgment in matters connected with the efficient working of the society. As presidents, they are also *monitors*, not restrictively teachers. It belongs to them as characterized by piety and practical wisdom, and as foremost in every good work themselves, in a special manner, in virtue of their office, to press duty on those over whom they have been placed, to stir up the negligent, to administer rebuke to the erring. It is the duty of the members of a Christian society toward their laborious presidents and monitors to *know* them. It is usual to take this knowing as equivalent to *knowing with appreciation*, which is afterward defined as esteeming in love. It seems better not to bring forward the ideas of esteem and love, but to think only of that on which the esteem and love are founded, *viz.* such a *marking* of the presidents as leads to their being esteemed and loved. The esteem is to be founded on the work belonging to their office. They are engaged in the Lord's work, in seeking the spiritual good of those over whom they have been placed. And as that is the most important of all kinds of work, they are not only to be esteemed, but esteemed *exceeding highly* for their work's sake. While they are to be esteemed, they are also to be *loved*. Love is to be the element in which the esteem is to have its subsistence and nourishment. They are not to be judged harshly, but, in love, a kindly view is to be taken of them, and their defects overlooked.

II. DUTY OF REGARDING THE PEACE OF THE CHRISTIAN CIRCLE. "Be at peace among yourselves." Our Lord exhorts the twelve in almost the same terms: "Be at peace one with another." The exhortation means that we are to cultivate toward the members of the Christian circle such good feeling as will dispose us not only to refrain from *strife*, but also to be on good terms with them. And if we are to be peaceably disposed, as we are elsewhere exhorted, toward all men, much more are we to be peaceably disposed, as we are here exhorted, to those to whom we stand in nearer alliance and engagement, who are subjects with us of the same Prince of peace. The most fruitful cause of congregational or more widely ecclesiastical dispeace is *fondness for power or honour*. It was when the twelve had disputed one with another who was

the greatest (Mark ix. 34), and had turned against one who used Christ's Name yet followed not them (Mark ix. 38), that they were exhorted to be at peace one with another (Mark ix. 50). John refers to a certain Diotrophes, in a Church to which he wrote, who loved to have the pre-eminence among them. There are those who are more concerned to advance themselves, or their family connection, or their party, than the common ends for which the society exists. A co-operating cause is *prejudice*. There are those who are more attached to opinions hastily formed, or traditionally received, or to which they are constitutionally inclined as more liberal or more conservative, than to the truth honestly inquired into. When, with this, there conspires worldly motive, leading to worldly policy, the result, on occasion or, it may be, on little occasion, is dispeace. One cure for dispeace is respect for the properly constituted authorities, or *good feeling toward the presidents*. This will often carry a society through a difficult trial. A more effective cure is *abundance of Christian work*. It was when the twelve were in the way (unemployed so far) that they disputed who was the greatest. When afterward they were in the midst of their work, the question would not be who was the greatest, but who could do the most work for Christ. For a Church to be actively engaged in real work for the Master is to be in the best position for its own peace. Pray, then, for the peace of Jerusalem, and for its orderliness and holy activity, as conducive to peace.

III. DUTY TOWARD THREE CLASSES WITHIN THE CHRISTIAN CIRCLE. 1. *The disorderly*. "And we exhort you, brethren, admonish the disorderly." This class is described by a word which is used of soldiers who do not keep their rank. There were those in the Thessalouian Church who were out of rank, in the way of being negligent of their business, under the influence of the coming of Christ. In Christian Churches still there are those who are out of rank, in the way of being careless in attendance on ordinances, in the way of being dissipated, in the way of being chargeable with dishonourable actions. If it is a grave fault to be disorderly in a military sense, it is no less grave a fault to be disorderly in a Christian sense. Must it not be offensive to him who is pre-eminently charged with the order of the Church, the Captain of our salvation? And his command, laid not merely on the presidents but on all, is that such should be admonished. They all need to be admonished to the performance of the duty with regard to which they are at fault; and some of them need to be admonished to take the first step in the Christian life. 2. *The faint-hearted*. "Encourage the faint-hearted." In our Churches there are those who are faint-hearted on account of the loss of friends, as the Thessalonians were faint-hearted on account of the supposed fate of Christian friends taken away before the coming. There are those who are depressed by the state of their temporal affairs, as the Thessalonians would have a depressing influence in the way in which maintenance and home and even life were affected by persecution. There are always those who are apt to be faint-hearted on account of their spiritual state. Have they a real interest in Christ? Are they making progress in the Christian life? Are they doing any good? Are they having an influence for good upon those over whom they are immediately placed? The command of Christ, laid on all, is that such are to be encouraged. Let them be encouraged by the thought of the kind Providence that is exercised over them. Let them be encouraged to the exercise of faith. "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God." 3. *The weak*. "Support the weak." There would be those among the Thessalonians who felt the weakening influence of the heathenism out of which they had come. Heathen habits could not be laid aside in a day. So there are those in our Churches who are anxious to do well, but are apt to stumble from the strength of evil habit. The command of Christ, laid on all, is that such are not to be left to stand or fall by themselves; but they are to be supported by sympathy and counsel and example until they attain to greater moral strength—as infants, or those weakened by disease, need to be supported, until they can go about freely.

IV. THE ONE DUTY TOWARD ALL WITHIN THE CHRISTIAN CIRCLE. "Be long-suffering toward all." It seems better to confine the reference to the Christian circle, and to consider the reference as widened in the following verse. This is the condition of mind that will fit us for dealing with all. It was not unfitting that the duty should

be laid upon a young Church like that of Thessalonica. Young Christians are of a sanguine disposition. In their own enthusiasm they look for others being enthusiastic. They need, in their experience of the difficulty of evil being cast out of their own hearts, of keeping up their own enthusiasm, to be taught the lesson of patience. Let them not be less earnest, but let them bear long, in the hope of seeing those who are lukewarm and faulty brought into a better state.

V. DUTY ESPECIALLY TOWARD THOSE WHO INJURE US. "See that none render unto any one evil for evil; but always follow after that which is good, one toward another, and toward all." The heathenish idea is to return evil for evil. Even Aristotle regarded it not less reasonable to return evil for evil, than to return good for good; "for otherwise," he says, "if a man must not retaliate, his condition appears to be as bad as slavery" ('Ethics,' bk. v. ch. 5). This heathenish disposition to take revenge on those who injure us needs to be conquered by us. Hence there is enjoined on us care: "Take heed that none render unto any one evil for evil." There is danger, if we are not careful, of our giving way to revengeful feelings. The Christian idea is that we are to resist not evil: "Whosoever smiteth thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also." The meaning here is that, instead of returning evil for evil, we are to do kind offices to those who injure us. This is the best way of gaining our offending brethren. It is also the best way of gaining over them that are outside. There is no more powerful argument in favour of Christianity than its conquest of revengefulness, its disposing us to return good for evil.

VI. DUTY OF REJOICING. "Rejoice always." The happy God designs us to be happy like himself, and not merely in heaven. We cannot, indeed, have a light heart when we think of the evil in us and around us. But while sorrowful, we can always rejoice in the thought of our Christian advantages. "He that hath the inexhaustible Spring of good for his portion, that hath his welfare entrusted in God's most faithful hand, that hath the infinite Beauty and Excellency for the perpetual object of his contemplation, that enjoyeth the serenity of a sound mind, of a pure heart, of a quiet conscience, of a sure hope, what can he want to refresh or comfort him? If we scan all the doctrines, all the institutions, all the precepts, all the promises of Christianity, will not each appear pregnant with matter of joy, will not each yield great reason and strong obligation to this duty of rejoicing evermore?" (Barrow).

VII. DUTY OF PRAYER. "Pray without ceasing." This cannot mean that prayer is to occupy our whole time. For prayer is only one duty, and we have to proportion our time between our various duties. But it means that we are to make prayer part of the great business of our life, and not a by-business. It means that we are to connect prayer with the principal occasions of our life. It means that in particular matters we are to pray on, until we succeed in the object of our requests. It means that we are to have stated times for prayer, especially the natural seasons of morning and evening. It means that in the intensity of our earnestness we are to overleap these stated times. "Devotion is the best food of our souls, which preserveth their life and health, which repaireth their strength and vigour: if we, therefore, long abstain from it, we shall starve or pine away; we shall be faint and feeble in all religious performances; we shall have none at all, or a very languid and meagre piety" (Barrow).

VIII. DUTY OF THANKSGIVING. "In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus to you-ward." To give thanks means that, sincerely, duly sensible of our benefits, we are to make cheerful acknowledgment of them to God. To give thanks in everything means that we are to thank God, not only in great things, but also in small things; not only in rare things, but also in common things. It means that we are to thank God, not only in present things, but for past mercies as well, and even for what is laid up for future enjoyment. It means that we are to thank God, not merely in things affecting ourselves, but also in things affecting others. It means that we are to thank God, not merely in prosperous things, but also in adverse things, recognizing the merciful moderating of them, the merciful design in them, the supporting grace under them, and the benefit resulting from them. It means that we are to thank God, not merely in things affecting our bodies, but also in things affecting our souls. The duty of thanksgiving is here enforced by the consideration that this is the will of God in Christ Jesus to us-ward. In Christ Jesus he is infinite kindness, always overflowing in blessing on us. How fitting, then, that we should, through

Christ Jesus, "offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, the fruit of our lips"! This has the distinction of being the most delightful of all duties. "For praise and thanksgiving are the most delectable business of heaven; and God grant they may be our greatest delight, our frequent employment upon earth" (Barrow).

IX. DUTY TOWARD THE SPIRIT. "Quench not the Spirit." The Spirit is compared here, as in other places in Scripture, to fire. There is the beginning of spiritual life in every man. There is the depraved nature, but there is also the Spirit with his vital energy to be cherished or quenched. It is especially in connection with the gospel that the Spirit is given to men. In the gospel there is presented a Divine call to accept of Divine mercy, and there is, in connection with it, a Divine warning against refusing Divine mercy. "He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life; but he that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." The Spirit, in the Word read or preached, brings the gospel call to bear upon the conscience and heart. The feeling that we ought to accept of salvation and not throw away our existence, the desire to give Christ our confidence and not spurn his love, is the working of the Spirit. And, in providence after providence, does the Spirit more gently whisper to us, or more loudly rouse us up to the importance of the Divine call and warning. It is suggested by the context, that what those who have felt the power of the Spirit have to fear is the repression of enthusiasm. Let them give free outlet to the working of the Spirit, and not be deterred by the conventionalities even of religious society. If they feel prompted to pray, let them not restrain prayer. If they feel prompted to study God's Word, let them sit down and pore over it. If they feel prompted to throw themselves into Christian work, let them not hold back. It was by a strange perversity of will on the part of Saul that he was deserted by the Spirit. David feared that his outbreak of sin would drive away the Holy Spirit from him. What prevents men feeling the power of the Spirit is especially an irregular life. They turn away from good, and give the reins to their passions, and another spirit than God's takes possession of them. But there is not needed outward irregularity to quench the Spirit. The essential thing is the withdrawing of the mind from the range of the Divine revelation, the paying no heed to the Divine voice, the smothering good feeling even under the ordinary engagements of life, the neglecting to follow up good impressions by a decisive step for Christ. The result in the following out of trial is a state of mind in which there is an insensibility to the importance of the Divine call and warning. Conviction of sin or uneasiness about it ceases; interest in what is good dies out. The Spirit of God takes his departure, and an evil spirit takes full possession. There is this encouraging thought to those who have been resisting and grieving the Spirit, that while there is the slightest thought of good remaining in their hearts, it may be fanned into a flame. The Spirit, long slighted, at last cherished, will come, and with his vital energy fill their whole being.

X. DUTY WITH REGARD TO PROPHESYINGS. "Despise not prophesyings." These were special manifestations of the Spirit. As in the Corinthian Church, and also in the Galatian Churches, so in the Church of Thessalonica, there was the presence of miracles. There was the gift of healing; there was also the gift of tongues. As striking manifestations the use they served was especially in impressing and drawing the attention of them that were outside. Prophesyings were intelligent and, probably, impassioned utterances of Divine truth under the influx of the Spirit. As such the use they served was especially in promoting the edification of the Church. Let none, then, run the risk of quenching the Spirit by placing a low value on his less striking but far more important manifestations.

XI. DUTY OF PROVING ALL THINGS. "Prove all things." The language is taken from the art of the assayer. He has special skill in applying tests, with the view of discovering what is real and what is counterfeit in metals, what is good coin and what is bad coin. So the Christian assayer is to be specially skilled in testing the real nature of things. There is nothing in the language to restrict the reference to the prophesyings which have been mentioned. It is not said "all prophesyings," or "all these things." And if there is an antithesis, as some authorities have it, in the assertion of "but," yet is it preserved by regarding prophesyings as included among all things. The wideness of the reference is confirmed by the consideration that things as proved are divided into things to be chosen and things to be rejected. In prophesyings, as

inspired, there was no element to be rejected. Proving them could only mean learning to put due value upon them, partly in comparison with other Divine gifts. Ordinary teachings have not all the true ring or composition. "O holy simplicity!" exclaimed Huss, when he saw an aged devout woman throwing a fagot on to his burning pile. But our safeguard is not a holy simplicity, believing all that we have been told by good men; it is rather, in dependence on the direction of God, the exercise of an independent judgment. That is the sheet-anchor of our Protestantism. We reject the claim of the Roman Catholic that we are to accept of things because they are taught by the Church, because they have been ordained by councils, because they have even the support of the apostolic Fathers. The thing to be deplored is that much of our Protestantism is traditional, an unreasoning acceptance of belief. With regard to opinions which pass current in society, we are not to accept of them because they are popular, because they are well-sounding, because they are associated with particular names or parties; but we are to have a Divine insight into them as true or false. With regard to what is presented for the regulation of our conduct, there is evil as well as good presented for our acceptance. And evil is not presented to us as evil; it takes specious forms—even Satan puts on the garb of an angel of light. We have need, therefore, to be on our guard; we have need to have our senses exercised to discern good and evil. Let us inquire, regarding an action or course of action, whether it is fitted to yield not simply a present but a solid and lasting satisfaction, without regrets in the future; whether it is according to right principle and conducive to strength of character, and fitted also to be beneficial to others. "If we discerned ourselves," says the apostle, "we should not be judged." Let us be just with ourselves, that we may escape the consequences of a false judgment. Let us impartially apply the tests now, as those to whom they are to be impartially and convincingly applied at the day of judgment.

XII. DUTY IN VIEW OF THE RESULT OF PROVING ALL THINGS. 1. *On the one hand to hold fast the good.* "Hold fast that which is good." It is implied that we are not to be always proving. As a result of our proving, we find out that which is good. It is a duty we owe to that which is good to hold it fast, and not to let it go. If we have found the Bible to be the Word of God, let us hold it fast. Let us take it as nutriment to our souls. Let it be the test by which we try things. "To the Law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." If we have satisfied ourselves as to the claims of Christ as our Divine teacher, let us hold him fast; let us take his teachings into our being, and let the confessing of Christ be that by which we try the spirits, not persons, but rather the spirit by which individuals, communities, institutes, systems, are animated. If we have satisfied ourselves that Christ has made full atonement for our sin, let us hold that truth fast as central, let us take all the comfort there is in it, and let it be the test of loyalty to Christ. If we have found out what a good life is as commended and exemplified by Christ, and as put to the proof by ourselves, let us hold it fast as what has held us up in the past, as what has held up the good in all the generations, as what will hold us up until we obtain an immutable standing in heaven. And let us not, with a false toleration, think that any life can be good which wants the great theistic, and especially the great Christian, elements. 2. *On the other hand to abstain from evil.* "Abstain from every form of evil." The old translation is indefensible here. The words should not have formed a verse by themselves; they should have been added on to the former words. In view of the good and evil that are separated in the proving of things, we are on the one hand to hold fast that which is good, and on the other hand to abstain from every form of evil. If anything is yet undetermined to our mind, our duty as already laid down is to find out its true nature. If, after examination, it is of a doubtful nature, or seems to be bordering on evil, our duty certainly is to abstain from it. But the duty laid down here is different from that. It is our duty with regard to what we have found out to be one of the many forms of evil. Having found it out to be evil in reality, let us not hesitate about our course, let us abstain from it, let us refuse to taste it even as we would not take poison, let us turn away from it as from that which is alien from our being and fitted only to work our destruction.—R. F.

VERS. 23—28.—*Prayer.* I PRAYER FOR THE SANCTIFICATION OF THE THESSALONIANS. "And the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly; and may your

spirit and soul and body be preserved entire, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." From the object of the prayer God is here named the God of peace. The peace which takes away the discord of our nature and restores its harmony is his will and gift. But he is only the God of peace to us in our sanctification. The apostle had been exhorting to various forms of holiness. Feeling, however, how feeble his part was in their sanctification, he makes his appeal to the first Cause of Sanctification. "The God of peace himself sanctify you." In sanctification there is the idea of being set apart to the service of God. In the prayer the stress is laid on the *wholeness* of the sanctification. In the word translated "wholly" there is the idea of wholeness in the way of the end being reached. The materials of the temple-building and vessels were originally in a rough state. But, put into the hands of cunning workmen, they were brought up into apt and consistent and beautiful forms. And not without sprinkling of blood were they dedicated to God. So the stuff of which we are made is originally in an unpolished, defiled condition; but, in the hands of the great Artificer, through the efficacy of the blood of Christ, are we being brought up into a state in which, in our whole being, we shall be fit for being employed in the service of God. In the second part of the prayer there is brought in another aspect of the wholeness of sanctification. And the word which indicates it is brought forward in the original out of its natural position, so as to be separated from the similar word translated "wholly" only by "and." It conveys the idea of being whole in the way of being entire in its parts. "It means what represents the whole undivided possession, what is not weakened by division, and thus subsists in perfect integrity" (Delitzsch). The integrity refers to the three parts into which our nature is here regarded as divided—spirit and soul and body. In some places Scripture language turns upon the distinction between the material and immaterial nature of man. Here the immaterial nature is divided into spirit and soul. And this is in keeping with the dividing asunder of soul and spirit in Heb. iv. 12, and also with the contrast between the present psychical body and the future spiritual body in 1 Cor. xv. "Whilst the soul," says Olshausen, who has made a special study of this subject, "denotes the lower region of the inner man—comprises, therefore, the powers to which analogous ones are found in *animal* life also, as understanding, appetitive faculty, memory, fancy—the spirit includes those natural dispositions which constitute the true *human* life; viz. reason, as the faculty of perceiving the Divine; conscience, as the faculty of distinguishing moral good and evil; free-will, as the faculty of moral choice, by which the ability to form a history is purchased." The spirit, we may say, is that by which we have the power of knowing and serving God, and of making character, and in which, in its whole range, we are separated from the brutes. The soul is the lower part of the inner man, in which, in its judgments, and longings, and recollections, and imaginings, the spirit is designed to bear rule. The body, or outer man, which is quickened by the soul, and has the power of exciting the soul, is another sphere in which, in its appetites and powers, the spirit is designed to bear rule through the soul. The spirit is wholly sanctified in the sense intended when, through the possession of the Spirit of God, reason and conscience faithfully represent the Divine voice, and the will is faithfully responsive; when, as a whole, it is the ruling centre with reference to the rest of the nature. The soul is wholly sanctified when the understanding is used as a help to the keeping of Divine precepts; when the desires and affections are divinely regulated and purified and tempered; when there is a ready memory for the Word of God, and a readiness from past associations in calling up good thoughts; when the imagination is filled with Christ and the Christian ideal and the Christian prospect; when, as a whole, this part of our nature does not assert its independence of the spirit above, and can resist the charms of the senses below. The body is wholly sanctified when its various members are used as instruments of righteousness; when, as a whole, it does not aspire to rule in the soul; when it takes its law from pure judgments, and desires, and recollections, and imaginings. Such is the wholeness of sanctification in the integrity of the nature. And what, on the positive side, is represented as integrity of nature, on the negative side is represented as being without blame. Here there is a glance forward, as there frequently is in this Epistle, to the coming of Christ. It is then that the integrity of our nature is to be fully realized, and to be placed in inviolable keeping. Beyond that point, the integrity of our nature perfectly attained, no power in the universe can ever break.

II. THE PRAYER GROUNDED IN THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD. "Faithful is he that calleth you, who will also do it." There is a distinct covenanting on the part of God to bring about our sanctification. "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and on their heart also will I write them: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." God, in calling, actually begins the covenant work of our sanctification, and an appeal can be made to him as the faithful God, by ourselves or others, to carry out what he has begun. Let us not be backward to remind him of his promise, or to look for it being followed by performance.

CONCLUSION. 1. *Request for prayer.* "Brethren, pray for us." This request for prayer comes from the three Christian workers. They were thrown upon those for whom they laboured, in being themselves also compassed with infirmity. They felt that, if the Divine blessing was to rest upon their work in the highest measure, then the Thessalonian Church must join with the other Churches in giving them the assistance of their prayers. 2. *The holy kiss.* "Salute all the brethren with a holy kiss." This was the common Eastern form of salutation, associated with religion. Apparently the elders were thus to salute the members of the Thessalonian Church, one by one, in the name of Paul and Silas and Timothy. Propriety does not allow with us the use of this form of salutation between the various members of the Christian circle. But there is no reason why there should not be all the good feeling and fellowship with Christ of which the holy kiss is symbolic. At the same time, if love is to be sustained, it must be allowed all suitable forms of manifestation. 3. *Direction as to the public reading of the Epistle.* "I adjure you by the Lord that this Epistle be read unto all the brethren." The direction is given in the most solemn manner. Paul writes in his own name, and adjures by the Lord. The adjuration was apparently founded on the importance of the Epistle, not merely to the elders to whom it was handed, but to the whole community. Let it be brought *directly* to bear upon all, that they may each for themselves have their impression of its contents. Such an adjuration in the first of Paul's Epistles significantly points to the right of every Christian member to have direct access to the Word of God. "What Paul," says Bengel, "commands with an adjuration, Rome prohibits with an anathema." 4. *Benediction.* "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you." He ends his Epistle as he began, by imploring grace. It is to the ever-living Divine Head of the Church that we must look for the bestowal of the blessing, and not according to the merit of any for whom we implore it, but only according to the abundance of the merit that he has obtained for them.—R. F.

Vers. 2—4.—A thief in the night. The one idea to be impressed upon us by this striking image is that of unexpectedness. The thief succeeds in making his entrance when he is least expected. So will it be on "the day of the Lord." The idea is derived from the teaching of Christ, in which it is more fully expanded (see Matt. xxiv. 43, 44). The "day of the Lord" which is to come thus suddenly is often referred to in the Old Testament. There it is a dreadful occasion of Divine manifestation for judgment, to be hailed with gladness when the judgment falls on the enemies of Israel and brings the chosen people deliverance, but to be regarded with terror by sinful Israelites (Amos v. 18). St. Paul regards it as the day of Christ's second advent. But the general use of the expression in the Old Testament justifies us in applying the warning concerning it to various forms of the *parousia*.

I. THE DAY OF THE LORD WILL COME UPON THE BENIGHTED AS A THIEF. 1. *The day is unexpected.* What did the heathen fellow-citizens of the Thessalonians know, or think, or care about the glorious advent of Christ, with its angel-summons and its trumpet-blast for which the Christians were watching so eagerly? The Jews did not expect the coming of the Son of man in the destruction of Jerusalem. The world does not think of the great judgment-day. Worldly people do not contemplate death. 2. *No signs are given to the world of the dawning of this dread day.* No lurid twilight betokens the tempestuous morning. It bursts suddenly upon a world slumbering in darkness. Science, philosophy, ordinary signs of the times, give no hint of it to the unspiritual. The biblical arithmetic of our modern prophets is always proving itself at fault. No bare intellectual calculation will ever discover the "day of the Lord." 3. *It is best for the world that no natural signs should herald this day.* (1) Christian people are better

without the common signs which could be discerned by ordinary observation. To possess them would be to walk by sight. They are not given in order that faith may be exercised. (2) The world at large is better without these signs. They would disarrange all the necessary pursuits of life. Some would cry abjectly for mercy without really repenting at heart. Some, as when plagues raged in cities, would fling off all restraints and plunge into a reckless course of debauchery. Some would coldly calculate the time allowed for sinning before they would need to bethink them of preparing for the end.

II. THE DAY OF THE LORD WILL NOT COME UPON THE ENLIGHTENED AS A THIEF. St. Paul makes an important distinction here—one that is not always recognized: "But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief." 1. *No men are enlightened as to the date of the second advent.* Even Christ did not know it. This he distinctly says (Mark xiii. 32). 2. *Christians are enlightened as to the fact and the character of the second advent.* (1) They know that Christ will come again, which is more than the unbelieving world knows. They have Christ's own promise to rely upon (Matt. xxiv. 30). (2) They know that Christ will come unexpectedly. At least, they ought to know this if they read the teachings of Scripture on the subject. 3. *The enlightenment of Christians will prevent the second advent from coming upon them like a thief.* When we are prepared for a surprise, it is no longer a surprise. If we know a thing may happen at any time, its occurrence will not give us the shock of an unexpected event. Christ, longed for, eagerly desired, fondly expected, will come at an hour when his people know not, but not when his true disciples are unprepared to welcome him.—W. F. A.

Vers. 6—8.—*Night and day.* St. Paul writes of two classes of people whose conditions correspond respectively to night and day. Many associations of gloom and evil and ignorance gather round the image of night, while their opposites—brightness, goodness, knowledge, etc.—are suggested by the idea of day. One advantage of the metaphorical language of Scripture is that it gives to us richer and more suggestive ideas than could be conveyed by bare abstract phrases. Subsidiary notions, like chromatic chords in music, give tone and richness to the main idea impressed upon us by a manifold and significant image. This is apparent with the use of the images light and darkness by St. John. St. Paul would have us think that the unspiritual and godless world is in general like a people of the night, while the Church is like a city of light. But probably the enlightenment of revelation, the daylight of spiritual knowledge, is the prominent thought in the mind of the apostle. For we find that in previous verses he has been referring to the shock of surprise to the world which will not be shared by enlightened Christians. On the fact of their greater enlightenment he now founds an exhortation to conduct worthy of it. The fuller light demands the holier life. Sons of the day have not the excuses of children of night.

I. THE CHILDREN OF THE NIGHT. 1. These are *in darkness*. The darkness is not confined to the illiterate. Nor is it confined to the inhabitants of heathen lands. People in Christian countries, who are familiar with the language of the New Testament, may be totally ignorant of its spiritual thought. Such people, though they sit in university chairs as professors of divinity, are blinded with midnight blackness. Was not Faust in the night? 2. Some of the children of the night *sleep*. These are the thoughtless and careless. They may be awake to secular business. But they slumber over moral and spiritual subjects. If they think of them at all it is with dreamy unconcern. 3. Others of the children of the night are *awake only to evil*. They spend the night in drunkenness. They hide shameful practices under the cloak of darkness. 4. The guilt of the children of the night is mitigated just in proportion as their *benighting is not wilful*. If it arises from their unhappy circumstances, these unfortunate people cannot be condemned to the same doom as that of men who sin with their eyes open, or as that of those who wilfully put out their eyes because they love darkness.

II. THE SONS OF THE DAY. 1. These are *enlightened*. They may not be brilliantly intellectual nor highly educated. They may be illiterate in human lore. But the "eyes of their hearts" (Eph. i. 18) are opened. By faith and love and obedience they have come to know what God has revealed through his Spirit. 2. Sons of the day are expected to be *wakeful*. It is natural to sleep in the night. Sleep in the day betokens

sinful indolence. The indifference of spiritually ignorant people is natural. That of Christians on whom has risen "the Dayspring from on high" is monstrous. 3. Sons of the day are expected to be *sober*. It is bad enough to be drunken in the night, but a debauch which is not shamed by the light of day proves itself to be scandalously depraved. There are excesses of passion, of self-will, and of worldly excitement which Christian people who have escaped the coarser sins fall into. These are not excusable in the children of the night, but they are much less excusable in the sons of the day. Sobriety becomes the enlightened Christian. This sobriety need not consist in Puritan rigour; much less should it partake of sourness, gloom, or prim formality. The sober Christian should remember that the typical citizen of the kingdom of heaven is a little child. Sobriety is just the opposite to unrestrained passionateness of pleasure or anger. 4. Sons of the day are provided with *armour*. The three graces—faith, hope, and love—constitute the armour of the Christian. They protect the two most vital parts—breast and head. Faith and love come together, for they interact. Faith working by love protects the heart. Hope, the hope of final deliverance from trial and temptation, is the helmet, because it protects the head by keeping the thoughts clear and calm.

—W. F. A.

Vers. 9, 10.—*The Divine appointment of Christians.* To some it may seem superfluous that a Christian apostle, writing to the members of a Christian Church, should say, "God appointed us not unto wrath." But the import of this declaration is made apparent by what precedes. St. Paul has been contrasting the condition of the sons of light with that of the children of darkness. Among the latter are to be found all degrees of that conduct which hides under the cloak of night—from the carelessness that sleeps, down to the debauchery that is awake only to cause its own shame. Such things must bring wrath in "the day of the Lord" (ver. 2). But Christians are called to quite another life. They are not destined to wrath. Let them, therefore, not behave as the sons of the night, but in a way that is worthy of their call to salvation, with sobriety and confidence, strong in faith and love, and rejoicing in hope (ver. 8).

I. THE DIVINE APPOINTMENT TO SALVATION. 1. *It springs from an august Source.* God appoints to salvation. He has a hand in our destinies. We are not left to discover a way of escape from ruin for ourselves. God has interfered for our deliverance. 2. *It is determined by a firm ordinance.* God "appointed." This word signifies prevision, arrangement, definite order. Redemption is not an irregular makeshift brought about by a hasty after-thought. It enters into the calm, eternal thoughts of God, and takes its place in the orderly disposition of the Divine government. 3. *It aims at securing a large result.* When God makes bare his arm and settles a solemn appointment, this must be for some adequate result. The object must be large to justify so large an action. Here it is nothing less than perfect deliverance from the ruin of sin. Salvation is not a technical phrase. It is too big a word to be defined by a theological sentence. It is deliverance all round—from root and fruit of evil, from wrath of justice, from penalty of law, from tyranny of Satan, from vice of heart, from judgment without, from corruption within. 4. *It is to be personally accepted.* We are appointed to "the obtaining of salvation;" for (1) though ordained by God, it is not enjoyed by us until we have personal experience of it; (2) this personal acceptance depends on our own will and act; (3) the full consequences of the Divine ordinance of salvation are still future.

II. THE METHOD OF ACCOMPLISHING THIS DIVINE APPOINTMENT. 1. *It is secured by the mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ.* Thus it is to be obtained "through" him, which means (1) that the salvation itself is brought about by the action of Christ; and (2) that it becomes ours when we are united to Christ. Now each of these points has its own distinct position in the great work. Too often they are confused together. It is not necessary for us to comprehend all that Christ does. Our part is to see that we are united to him. He will do his part whether we understand it or not. 2. *It involved the death of Christ for us.* So much we know as a fact, whatever theory we may have as to the bearings of the crucifixion upon the process of redemption. And it is the great fact which is of supreme importance to us. It is unfortunate that abstract propositions concerning the theological aspects of it should confuse our vision of the simple, touching statement, "He died for us."

III. THE END FOR WHICH THIS DIVINE APPOINTMENT IS MADE. 1. *This is that we may live in fellowship with Christ.* Strictly speaking, the fellowship with Christ is given as the object of the suffering of death by Christ. But the earlier part of the passage shows us the Divine appointment of salvation as secured through Christ. Putting the two together, we see that salvation is worthless without the life in Christ, as well as that salvation is only possible to those who are in fellowship with Christ. Salvation is in itself a negative term. Bare deliverance is of little use unless some good is to be made of the liberty and immunity. While a fellow-creature is being saved from death by drowning we follow the process with intense interest; but after his deliverance we may not feel much concern with his future career. It may be that he will make but a poor use of his restored life. If we finished the story we might find the issue to be a pitiable anti-climax. God is guarding his great appointment from a similar catastrophe. They who are saved live in fellowship with Christ. Such a life is worth securing at the greatest cost. 2. *This fellowship with Christ is independent of the greatest outward changes.* It remains whether we wake or sleep, i.e. whether we live or die.—W. F. A.

Vers. 16—18.—*Three universal exhortations.* The striking feature of these three exhortations is their universality. It is natural that we should sometimes pray and rejoice and give thanks. But certainly it does not come naturally to us to be always doing these three things. Nearly all men experience them at some time in their lives. Universality and continuance are to be the distinguishing characteristics of Christians in regard to them. It is, says St. Paul, "the will of God in Christ Jesus to you-ward" that these remarkable signs of grace should be seen in Christian people.

I. PERPETUAL REJOICING. Christians are, of course, subject to natural fluctuations of mood and feeling. They are also liable to the changes of fortune; and they are not callous to the perception of them. None of us can escape sorrow. Some good people have the greatest troubles. The only perfect Man who ever lived was "a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." How, then, can we rejoice always? St. Paul was too real and too sympathetic to mock the sorrowing with the glib words of cheer that shallow comforters administer. If he exhorted, he knew that the exhortation was practicable. 1. *Christian rejoicing is a deep, calm joy.* The surface may be ruffled while the depths are still; cross-currents may vary while the undercurrent runs steadily on. Surface pain may conceal sacred joys which it cannot destroy. 2. *The secret of Christian joy is inwardness.* These Christians do not depend on external circumstances for their happiness. The spiritual sources of rejoicing in the love and presence of God are not disturbed by earthly calamities. Often they give forth sweetest blessedness under the blows of affliction, as the waters flowed out when Moses struck the rock. If we want to rejoice always we must live always near to God. The first exhortation is closely connected with the second. 3. *Christians are also helped to rejoice always by living in the future* (2 Cor. iv. 17, 18).

II. CEASELESS PRAYING. It is needless to say that this does not mean that we are to be always on our knees. That is not possible; nor would it be right, for the work of life must be done. We are not only worshippers; we are servants. 1. *Ceaseless praying is a continuous direction of the heart towards God.* The essence of prayer is not the uttering of devout phrases. God does not hear us for our much speaking. Christ condemned long prayers, not because we could pray too much, but because they became superstitious as though a worth lay in their length, and also because they became formal when the spirit flagged. Prayer is essentially spiritual communion with God. This must be supported, however, and inspired by definite seasons wholly given to devotion. People often abuse the motto, *Laborare est orare*. It is only true of the prayerful man. 2. *Ceaseless praying is attainable through the enjoyment of unbroken union with God.* Our thought may not be always occupied with God because the duties of life demand our attention, and its recreations are requisite for our health. But if we live near to God we shall have an abiding sense of God's nearness, a quick uplifting of the heart to him in quiet moments, and many a secret talk with him even in our busiest hours.

III. UNIVERSAL THANKSGIVING. The difficulty is to make this honest. For it is an insult to God to utter words of thanksgiving while the heart is ungrateful. How can we thank God for pain, for loss, for things the good of which we cannot discover? 1.

Universal thanksgiving is possible through the perception that under all circumstances blessings outnumber and outweigh troubles. We fix our thoughts on our trouble to the neglect of a thousand blessings. A fairer, wider consideration would call up more grateful thoughts. 2. *Universal thanksgiving is possible by means of faith that holds troubles sent by God to be blessings in disguise.* A mere consideration of the facts of life will not create it. But when we have come to believe that "the mercy of the Lord endureth for ever," we have learnt the secret of universal thankfulness.—W. F. A.

Ver. 19.—*Quenching the Spirit.* This verse is often misread. The context shows that it does not refer to the resistance of the sinner to the striving of the Holy Spirit in his heart. For the words immediately following, "despise not prophesyings," indicate its reference to the work of the Spirit in inspiring utterances in the Church. Some prosaic, cautious people were inclined to check these enthusiastic utterances. Perhaps there were foolish would-be prophets who were making themselves and the Church ridiculous by their predictions about the second coming of Christ, a subject in which the Church at Thessalonica was then deeply interested. St. Paul does not wish his readers to accept all that is offered to them, for he says, "Prove all things." But he fears lest, in the rejection of imposture, pretence, illusion, and misguided fanaticism, genuine teachings of the Divine Spirit should be discarded. Therefore he warns his readers against the danger of quenching the Spirit.

I. THERE IS A FIRE OF THE SPIRIT. It is fire that is not to be quenched. In Old Testament times a prophet was fitted for his mission by having a live coal from off the altar laid upon his lips (Isa. vi. 6). Christ, who came to baptize with the Holy Ghost, came also to baptize with fire. The Spirit descended on the day of Pentecost under the form of tongues of flame. God's Spirit deepens feeling, kindles enthusiasm, rouses sacred passion, sets the soul aflame with love. He who has not felt the fire knows not some of the strongest working of the Spirit, as the psalmist knew it when he said, "While I was musing the fire burned" (Ps. xxxix. 3).

II. THERE IS A DANGER LEST WE SHOULD QUENCH THE SPIRIT. 1. *In our own hearts.* If we check our more generous emotions, and harden ourselves with maxims of the world, and so immerse ourselves in grinding business cares that we have no thought or heart left for spiritual feelings, we shall quench the Spirit in ourselves. For us there will be no revelation. To us heaven will be black as midnight, silent as the grave. No warmth of devotion nor flash of spiritual perception will brighten up the dull and dreary chambers of our souls. 2. *In others.* Beware of checking young enthusiasm. It may err; but it had better err than die. Middle-aged common sense may not understand it. But this may not be the fault of young enthusiasm. It may result from the deadened perceptions of an unsympathizing mind. If we cannot follow, at least let us not check an inspiration which may be too high for our low sunken lives. 3. *In Scripture.* Absolutely, of course, we cannot quench the Spirit in Scripture. The Book remains, whatever we may think of it. But to ourselves we may quench the Spirit. A dry, hard critical examination of the Bible, ignoring all devotional, practical, and spiritual uses of it, will rob it of all inspiration for the reader. With some the fires are burnt out; they only grope among the ashes, and cannot find a lingering spark. To such people the Bible is the most dreary book in the world. In order that the fire of inspiration should touch us, the fire of love and faith must be kept alive on the altar of our hearts.—W. F. A.

Ver. 21.—*Private judgment.* This verse should be read in connection with the preceding passage. There we find a caution against quenching the Spirit and despising prophesyings by a narrow, cold, or prejudiced refusal to listen to the utterances of our fellow-Christians. Here we have a warning in the other direction, that we may guard against accepting every saying which professes to be the outcome of spiritual influences. We must try the spirits and accept each only as its claim is proven. But the universal character of the verse before us gives it a more general application to all teaching.

I. ST. PAUL RECOGNIZES THE RIGHT AND DUTY OF PRIVATE JUDGMENT. This fundamental principle of Protestantism is Pauline. The apostle is not writing to doctors of divinity or authorized teachers; he is addressing the whole Church (see ch. i. 1). To the general congregation of Christians he says, "Prove all things." The advice was in

accordance with his own practice. He speaks of himself and his colleagues—"by the manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God" (2 Cor. iv. 2). Contrast the Koran with the New Testament. Mohammed dogmatizes; St. Paul reasons. We cannot shelter ourselves in error under the *agis* of high authority. St. Paul abandoned with contempt the errors which he cultivated while he sat at the feet of Gamaliel. It is our duty as well as our right to have independent personal convictions.

II. THE REQUIREMENT OF INQUIRY IS UNIVERSAL. "All things." We must take nothing for granted. Some of the surest convictions of one age are absolutely repudiated by another age. This statement becomes softened in practice by the ease and unconsciousness with which many things may be proved to us. We have not to carry on elaborate, original inquiries to establish every point of our belief. There are beliefs which are best proved without any such inquiry. But all must be proved. The reason is twofold. 1. *Many specious delusions threaten to deceive us.* There have been false prophets flattering the people with smooth words since the days of Jeremiah's opponents. Truth and error are mixed. Forged coins closely resemble good sovereigns. Care must be taken to sift the chaff from the wheat. 2. *Truth is most valuable to us when we have tested and proved it for ourselves.* Then we understand it most clearly, believe it most heartily, and value it most highly. The few islands of truth for which a man has laboured and fought through seas of difficulty are more precious to him than vast continents of truth which he inherits at second hand.

III. THE METHOD OF INQUIRY MUST BE EXPERIMENTAL. This is implied by the word "prove," which means test, and is used of the assaying of precious metals. High *a priori* argument is a dangerous guide. The more tedious and less pretentious methods of observation and experiment are safer. To this method Christ referred when, speaking of the various teachers who should arise, he said, "By their fruits ye shall know them." This does not mean that we are to taste the fruits, *i.e.* to adopt every system in order to discover its merits. We can observe its working in others. Therefore the first requisite in regard to any new teaching is patience. Give it time to reveal itself by its fruits, and do not pass a hasty judgment upon it. If you do not wait for the harvest, you may cut wheat with tares. Next, careful inquiry is to be made; ideas and their fruits are to be tested. But two cautions should be borne in mind. 1. *The experience and testimony of other people is evidence.* We may not accept what any say simply on the authority of their official position. We who do not believe in the Pope of Rome would be very foolish if we adopted a little private pope of our own creation. But the authority of knowledge, experience, and ability is weight in evidence. 2. *We must not assume that nothing is true but what we can prove.* To do this is to dethrone the pope only to set up our own infallibility.

IV. THE END OF INQUIRY IS TO DISCOVER AND TO HOLD TO WHAT IS GOOD. It is not reasonable, nor happy, nor healthy to live in a permanent condition of unsettled conviction. It is useless to inquire at all if our inquiry is not to lead us to some decisive issue. When we have arrived at a truth, we need not repeat the process of seeking for it over and over again. Having proved certain things to be good, we may rest satisfied with the result—always preserving an open mind for new light, for it is a great mistake to confound an open mind with an empty mind. 1. The result of inquiry should be to *discover what is good.* The good is more important than the beautiful, the pleasant, the convenient, the striking, and the novel. 2. When the good is discovered it should be *held firmly.* Then the seeker after light is to become the guardian and champion of truth.—W. F. A.

Ver. 23.—*Complete sanctification.* In concluding his Epistle, and finishing his list of practical exhortations, St. Paul sums up his desires for the welfare of his readers by one comprehensive prayer for their complete sanctification.

I. CONSIDER THE NATURE OF SANCTIFICATION. The sanctification of a man makes a sanctuary of him. It consecrates him to the service and for the presence of God. It includes two things, the second of which is essential to the first. 1. *Dedication.* The sanctified man is dedicated to God. He yields himself up to the will of God. He is ready for any use to which God may put him. He lives to glorify God. 2. *Purification.* We have come to regard this as essentially the same as sanctification.

It is not so, for Christ was sanctified (John xvii. 19), and he never needed to be purified. But the great hindrance to our consecration of ourselves to God or to any special Divine purpose, is sin. Therefore for us the one great preliminary is purification.

II. OBSERVE THE SCOPE OF SANCTIFICATION. It is to be complete: 1. *In range*. It affects spirit, soul, and body—St. Paul's human trinity. (1) *Spirit*. Our highest thoughts, aspirations, and efforts are to be sound, pure, and devoted to God. (2) *Soul*. Our lower capacities of feeling and acting in our natural human life are to be equally sanctified. We cannot have a devout spirituality side by side with a carnal natural imagination. Moreover, our natural humanity, in its lower perceptions and energies, should be used for the service of God. (3) *Body*. This is not only not to be degraded by vicious appetite, but to be used as an instrument for God's service. It is unchristian to mutilate or weaken the body. This should be kept sound and healthy and vigorous for our Master's use. 2. *In intensity*. The sanctification is to be thorough. Each part of our nature is to be "wholly" sanctified. We must not dedicate ourselves to God half-heartedly. He requires the whole surrender of our whole nature.

III. NOTE THE SOURCE OF SANCTIFICATION. It is in God. St. Paul turns from exhortation to prayer. Here and there little duties are directed by our own will and energy. But the grand work of complete purification and consecration must be God's. 1. *By means of his spiritual influence*. He sanctifies by breathing into us his Holy Spirit. Contact with God burns out sin, and lifts the soul into an atmosphere of holiness. 2. *By means of his providential care*. St. Paul prays that God will keep his readers "entire"—as we read in the Revised Version. He guards from too great temptation.

IV. LOOK AT THE END OF SANCTIFICATION. This is to be "blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." 1. *Preparation for the second advent*. We are required to be ready to meet Christ. The glad expectation should encourage every effort to prepare, lest we should be like the foolish virgins. 2. *Blamelessness*. Christ comes as Judge. How sad, after longing to see him, to meet, instead of a welcome from our Lord, only stern words of rebuke!—W. F. A.

Ver. 24.—*God's faithfulness*. Between the Divine call to salvation and the full accomplishment of salvation, the Christian needs faith to watch and wait, to work and walk through the darkness. The rock on which he must build this faith is God's faithfulness.

I. CHARACTERISTICS OF GOD'S FAITHFULNESS. 1. *God performs what he promises*. God promises in his Word. He promises most solemnly, and as it were by oath, in his covenants, e.g. with Noah, with Abraham, with Moses and Israel, and the new covenant sealed by the blood of Christ. God also promises by his actions. Natural instincts, such as the innate thirst for light, the yearning for immortality, etc., are the Creator's promises written on the very being of his creatures. God's faithfulness means that he will not belie these promises. 2. *God is true to himself*. His consistency and immutability are the grounds of his faithfulness. Because he is true to himself he will be true to us: "The mercy of the Lord endureth for ever." If we are left to "the uncovenanted mercies" of God, these are large and sure enough to dispel all fear. 3. *God justifies the confidence of his children*. Faithfulness implies trustworthiness. If we commit our souls to God as to a faithful Creator, he accepts our trust, and thereby pledges his honour not to desert us.

II. GROUNDS FOR BELIEVING IN GOD'S FAITHFULNESS. 1. *Our knowledge of the nature of God*. If we believe in God at all, we must believe in him as moral, good, nay, perfect. A weak and limited being may change and fail. God is too great to be faithless. 2. *The testimony of those who can best speak for God*. We judge of a person's character largely on the evidence of those who have the most intimate acquaintance. Now we find prophets and saints who are nearest to God in thought and life most positive in asserting his faithfulness. Only they who dwell in the outer courts of his temple, or altogether away from his presence, venture to deny it. 3. *The evidence afforded by the life of Christ*. Christ was the great Revealer of the character of God; and Christ was faithful even to death. 4. *The witness of history to the past faithfulness of God*;

e.g. the deliverance from Egypt, the return from the captivity, the advent of Christ, the presence of Christ in his Church to guide and strengthen and bless. 5. *The confirmation of personal experience.* Many have proved God's faithfulness in their own lives. They can say, "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles."

III. TEMPTATIONS TO DOUBT GOD'S FAITHFULNESS. 1. *The weary time of waiting.* God does not fulfil his promises as soon as he makes them. Long intervals try our faith. So was it with the Jewish expectation of the Messiah; so is it with the Christian expectation of the second advent. The heart is sickened with hope deferred. But this doubt is as foolish as that of one who, seeing the morning to be long in coming, begins to distrust the promise of sunrise. 2. *Appearances of unfaithfulness.* Nothing tries love so painfully as the necessity of so acting as to provoke doubts of its own constancy. Yet the truest love will not shrink from this necessity when it arises. God seems to desert us, or he visits us in chastisement. It is his greater faithfulness that leads him so to act as to cloud our vision of his love. 3. *The unexpected fulfilment of Divine promises.* God does not always fulfil his promises in the way expected by us. Then we are disappointed. But the error was in our previous delusion, not in any change on God's part. Moreover, the true Divine fulfilment, though at first less pleasing to us than our expectation of it, always proves in the long run to be far better.

IV. THE RESPONSE WHICH GOD'S FAITHFULNESS SHOULD CALL FORTH FROM US. 1. *Adoration.* The faithfulness of God is one of the most worthy themes of worship. 2. *Trust.* Faithfulness merits confidence, and it encourages it. 3. *Fidelity.* If God is faithful to us, he has a right to bid us be faithful.—W. F. A.

HOMILETICAL INDEX

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