

## SPIRITUAL CHECKUP

Theme:

"To Complete What Is Lacking in Your Faith"

--1 Thessalonians 3:10b

### INTRODUCTORY AND BACKGROUND MATERIAL:

As you read this little book, I know you're going to be thrilled with the way Paul handles some very practical problems in Christian development.

It is our hope and prayer that as you study the book of 1 Thessalonians you will not just be studying verses but that you will make a personal SPIRITUAL CHECKUP; you will allow the word of God to probe beneath the surface and deal with the areas that the Spirit of God points out to you.

It is our hope and earnest desire that the attitude of the Apostle Paul might become our personal attitude as we present this series of studies to you.

Paul expresses it in:

#### 1 Thessalonians 2:8

So feeling kindly for you, we were delighting in imparting to you not only the gospel of God but also our own souls, because you became beloved ones to us.

Let us consider some background material before we dig into the text itself.

In Acts 16:9 we read:

And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. There was a man of Macedonia standing beseeching him and saying, "Come over into Macedonia and help us."

In answer to this vision, Paul and Silas set sail for Macedonia to preach the gospel and, thus, they came to Philippi which is a city of Macedonia.

It is here that they met Lydia, and she and her family came to know Christ as Savior.

During their stay in Philippi, the apostle cast an unclean spirit from a maiden and as a result they were brought before the magistrates. They commanded that the apostles be beaten with rods and then cast them into prison. About midnight Paul and Silas could be heard praying and singing hymns to God. We do not know what hymns they were singing, but certainly their sacred concert brought down the house for there was an earthquake, the jail doors were opened and all of the stocks were loosened so that the prisoners were freed.

The jailor was ready to take his life but Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, "Do yourself no harm for we are all here." And as a result of this encounter the jailor accepted Jesus Christ as his Savior, and also his entire household. The next day Paul and Silas were released. They came to the house of Lydia where they encouraged the brethren and then departed toward Thessalonica.

J. Vernon McGee says:

Thessalonica was located 50 miles west of Philippi and about 100 miles north of Athens. It was Cicero who said, "Thessalonica is in the bosom of the empire." It was right in the heart of the empire and was the chief city of Macedonia. The city was first named THERMA because of the hot springs in that area. In 316 B.C. Cassander, who was one of the 4 generals who divided up the empire of Alexander the Great, took Macedonia and made Thessalonica his home base. He renamed the city in memory of his wife, Thessalonika, who was a half-sister of Alexander. The city is still in existence and is now known as Salonika.

John Walvoord says:

Like Esther and Ruth in the Old Testament, the Thessalonian epistles trace their name to a famous woman.

When Paul and Silas came to Thessalonica they went to the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews from the Scripture with regard to Christ's suffering, His death and His resurrection. The Jewish leaders in the city, however, became jealous and incited some fellows from skid row to form a mob and start a riot. They went to the home of Jason in an effort to take Paul and Silas to the city council. This, however, did not work in that Paul and Silas were not at the home of Jason, so they took Jason and some of the other believers down before the council. That night a number of the Christians hurried Paul and Silas and Timothy and Luke, I assume, on down the road to Berea.

J. Vernon McGee says:

We are told in chapter 17 of Acts that Paul was in Thessalonica for 3 Sabbaths. So Paul was there a little less than a month, but in that period of time he did a herculean task of mission work. Paul was an effective missionary. He led multitudes to Christ there, and in that brief time he not only organized a local church, but he also taught the great doctrines of the Christian faith.

Ryrie says:

From Thessalonica the missionaries proceeded to Berea but soon were compelled to leave there because of opposition from the Thessalonian Jews who dogged their steps. Paul went on to Athens where Timothy joined him and from there he was dispatched back to Thessalonica in order to report on the condition of the young church. Both Timothy and Silas rejoined Paul at Corinth, from which city the 2 epistles to the Thessalonians were written.

It is from the city of Corinth, then, that the 2 epistles to the Thessalonians are written. The date is A.D. 51-52.

Ryrie says:

Paul had been a Christian for 17 or 18 years by the time he wrote 1 Thessalonians, and he had been a missionary for 7 or 8 years. His theology was fully developed in his mind and tested in his experience before he ever penned an epistle.

This is a letter from a pastor who was basically satisfied and even thrilled with the progress of his flock but who wanted to encourage them to go on in their faith. It is a heartwarming letter showing a side of Paul which we do not see in some of his other epistles.

Ryrie also says:

Therefore we conclude that there is no definite reason for extending Paul's stay in Thessalonica past the month indicated by the book of Acts.

Barnhouse says:

The first epistle to the Thessalonians, a letter to a missionary church only one year old was the first book of the New Testament to be written. All scholars agree that 1 Thessalonians is older than Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Romans, Corinthians, Galatians and all other parts of the New Testament.

Paul's PURPOSE IN WRITING is:

1. TO PRAISE THEM for progress to this point and to strengthen their faith and to establish them in the faith.
2. TO ASSURE THEM that he still loves them although he is not able to be with them.
3. TO TEACH THEM that suffering for God's Word and for Christ is a part of God's program for each of His children.
4. TO TESTIFY TO THEM of his joy because of their faithfulness and example.
5. TO INSTRUCT THEM with regard to the coming of the Lord and the day of the Lord.
6. TO EXHORT THEM to a holiness of life.
7. TO GIVE ANSWER to the Jewish opponents who were slandering the apostle and his ministry.

Leon Morris states:

Here we see Paul the missionary and Paul the pastor faithfully proclaiming the Gospel of God, concerned with the welfare of his converts, scolding them, praising them, guiding them, exhorting them, teaching them, thrilled with their progress, disappointed with their slowness.

Just as we often go to a doctor to get a physical checkup, so I feel that it is necessary for us to have a SPIRITUAL CHECKUP. When we go to the doctor he asks us quite a number of questions. This is so that he might make an effective diagnosis.

The KEY VERSE to the study is chapter 3:10b:

"To complete what is lacking in your faith."

In order to complete what is lacking in our faith, it will be necessary for us to make a proper evaluation and a study of our progress to this point.

OUTLINE for the studies:

### A SPIRITUAL CHECKUP

Key verse: 3:10b: "To complete what is lacking in your faith."

1. Did You Make the Right Start? - 1:1-10
2. Are You a Phony? - 2:1-12
3. Has Satan Hindered You? - 2:13-20
4. Are You Discouraged by the Problems? - 3:1-5
5. Are You an Encouragement to Others in Your Walk with the Lord? - 3:6-10
6. How is Your Prayer Life? - 3:11-13
7. Have You Gotten Dirty? 4:1-8
8. Is Your Life a Witness? - 4:9-12
9. Are You Afraid of Death? - 4:13-18
10. Is the Future Foggy? - 5:1-11
11. Have You Tried This? - 5:12-22
12. Are You Plugged In? - 5:23-28

There are 2 verses from the Psalms that it would be good for us to meditate upon as we prepare to study the epistle of 1 Thessalonians:

1. Psalm 26:2, 3:

Test me, O Lord, and try me, examine my heart and my mind; for your love is ever before me, and I walk continually in your truth.

2. Psalm 139:23, 24:

Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.  
See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

## STUDY NUMBER ONE - Did You Make the Right Start?

### 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

#### TEXT:

v. 1 Paul and Silvanus and Timothy to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace.

v. 2 We are always giving thanks to God for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers;

v. 3 constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and your labor of love and your perseverance of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the presence of our God and Father;

v. 4 knowing, brethren loved by God, His choice of you,

v. 5 because our gospel came to you not only in word but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; even as you are knowing what sort of men we showed ourselves to be among you for your sakes.

v. 6 And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word while in much affliction with joy of the Holy Spirit,

v. 7 so that you became an example to all those who are believing in Macedonia and in Achaia.

v. 8 For from you the word of the Lord has been sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we are not finding it necessary to be saying a thing.

v. 9 For they themselves are reporting about us what kind of an entrance we had to you, and how you turned to God from the idols to serving the living and true God,

v.10 and to be waiting for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, Jesus, the one who is rescuing us from the wrath which is coming.

## INTRODUCTION:

(Splashes of Joy in the Cesspools of Life by Barbara Johnson)

We've all seen typos in newspapers, but here is an example of how an error got into the classified section of a small-town daily, and the more they tried to correct it, the more disastrous it became:

(Monday) FOR SALE--R. D. Jones has one sewing machine for sale. Phone 555-0707 after 7 P.M. and ask for Mrs. Kelly who lives with him cheap.

(Tuesday) NOTICE--We regret having erred in R. D. Jones's ad yesterday. It should have read: One sewing machine for sale. Cheap: 555-0707 and ask for Mrs. Kelly who lives with him after 7 P.M.

(Wednesday) NOTICE--R. D. Jones has informed us that he has received several annoying telephone calls because of the error we made in his classified ad yesterday. His ad stands corrected as follows: FOR SALE--R. D. Jones has one sewing machine for sale. Cheap. Phone 555-0707 and ask for Mrs. Kelly who loves with him.

(Thursday) NOTICE--I, R. D. Jones, have NO sewing machine for sale. I SMASHED IT. Don't call 555-0707, as the telephone has been disconnected. I have NOT been carrying on with Mrs. Kelly. Until yesterday she was my housekeeper, but she quit.

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The KEY VERSE in this first study is:

verse 5:

because our gospel came to you not only in word but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; even as you are knowing what sort of men we showed ourselves to be among you for your sakes.

In making our SPIRITUAL CHECKUP we want to start right from the beginning:

Have you been born again?

Do you have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ?

This first question, "Did you make the right start?" is to help us see whether or not we have personally responded to God's love provided for us in Jesus Christ. The reason a lot of people do not know whether or not they are Christians centers right at this point. They have never really for themselves accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Savior.



In this first chapter we will note that there are a number of things which are described as being true of these Thessalonians when they came to know Christ as their Savior. It would be good for us to weigh our own experience against what we see described in these first 10 verses.

v. 1 Paul and Silvanus and Timothy to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace.

In this first verse we get:

- 1.the names of the three men who are involved in the ministry at Thessalonica,
- 2.plus the name of the church to whom the letter is addressed,
- 3.then a greeting.

Paul oftentimes refers to his title as "apostle." You will note that he leaves out this title in verse 1. This is because there is no false teaching to be corrected and his authority has not been called to question.

PAUL, SILAS, and TIMOTHY are 3 tremendous personalities that step before us in this first verse. They are certainly examples of men who made the right start:

- 1.PAUL, whose name was Saul before he became a Christian, was one of the chief persecutors of the Christian faith. On his way to Damascus to apprehend more Christians, a great light shone down from heaven and he heard a voice, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" The voice also said, "I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting." This was the turning point in Paul's experience. He wrote later to the Corinthian church in 2 Corinthians 5:17: When someone becomes a Christian, he becomes a brand-new person inside. He is not the same anymore. A new life has begun.

2. SILAS is the next man we meet. We do not know how he came to know Jesus Christ as his Savior. He and Judas are mentioned together as two men appointed to go and give the report of the Jerusalem Council to the church in Antioch. After a period of time, and a contention between Paul and Barnabas, Paul and Silas go together on a missionary journey and serve the Lord together in many difficult situations. Silas was with Paul when they came to Thessalonica.

3. The 3rd man in the trio is TIMOTHY. Timothy is a young man who probably would not be able to tell you when he came to know Jesus Christ as his Savior. His mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois both were Christians, and Paul tells us that he feels sure that Timothy is a Christian as well. Timothy proves to everyone's satisfaction the content of his character when he is seen in many situations serving the Lord faithfully. He is a young man who is willing to go anywhere at any cost to do anything as long as it was going to glorify his Savior, Jesus Christ.

This epistle is written to the CHURCH AT THESSALONICA. Paul was just in this city for a short time and yet long enough for a group of Christians to get together in a fellowship. Now Paul writes to them to encourage them in their faith. The big problem for the church at Thessalonica was the fact that they were suffering under tremendous persecution and so Paul writes encouraging them and strengthening them and wanting to be of help to them in any way that he possibly can.

Thessalonica comes from THERMAI which means "HOT SPRINGS." There were hot springs in the city.

J. I. Packer could well have written his book Hot Tub Religion from this location.

The next phrase in verse 1 is:

"IN GOD THE FATHER AND THE LORD JESUS CHRIST."

Hogg and Vine, in speaking on the little preposition "IN," say:

This preposition is frequently used by Paul to express intimacy of union and is not readily explained by any simpler term. Here it introduces the spiritual description and may be paraphrased thus: In relationship with God as Father and with Jesus Christ as Lord (cf. Col. 3:3). The first part makes the assembly in Thessalonica as non-heathen, the second as non-Jewish. The single preposition "in" governing both phrases suggests the unity of the Son with the Father.

#### John 17:11

And I am no more in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to Thee. Holy Father, keep them in Thy name, the name which Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, even as We are.

#### John 17:21

that they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me.

#### John 14:9, 10

Jesus said to him, "Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how do you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works.

#### John 15:5

I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing.

Out of this vital union there is a SECURITY IN THE STORM.

"IN GOD THE FATHER AND THE LORD JESUS CHRIST."

What a tremendous place to be when you are in the midst of persecution and difficulty.

John 10:28, 29

and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.

God was the very atmosphere in which this church lived and moved and had its being. We live in an atmosphere of air, and the air is in us, and we are in the air, and it is because of the air that we live. So the Thessalonian church, spiritually speaking, was in God the Father. Not only were they in God the Father, but God the Father was in them.

"God" speaks to us of the POWER to protect,

and "God the Father" speaks to us of the LOVE to protect.

This 1st verse ends with the GREETING:

"GRACE TO YOU AND PEACE."

This is a very familiar greeting that the apostle uses in most of his letters. He never reverses the two for man must first experience the grace of God before he can know anything of the peace of God.

Walvoord says:

Paul prays for them: "Grace be unto you, and peace." How rich are the simple words "grace" and "peace." Those without grace and peace are in utter poverty though they may possess all the riches of the world. Those with grace and peace are infinitely rich, though enduring persecution and sorrow, like the Thessalonians. Grace expressed the whole of God's love and favor in Christ. Peace with God and the peace of God is the priceless possession of the child of God. What richer jewels from God's treasures could be asked for anyone than "grace" and "peace"? While in a sense, they already had grace and peace, they needed its manifestation, its experience, its triumph.

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This first verse is the shortest of all of the greetings in Paul's letters.

Grace speaks to us of that which we do not deserve. In relationship to God because we are guilty of sin, we rightfully deserve death and judgement, but because of God's grace in our behalf we now have the privilege of becoming sons of God through faith in Jesus Christ.

Horne, in his book, points out:

The PEACE OF GOD is 3-FOLD:

1. First of all, Romans 5 tells us that we can have peace with God, and this comes through a relationship with Jesus Christ.

2. Secondly, we can have the peace of God which is an inward experience according to Philippians 4:7:

"If you do this, you will know God's peace, which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand. His peace will keep your thoughts and your hearts quiet and at rest as you trust in Christ Jesus."

3. The third is peace toward men according to Galatians 5:22:

"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace."

John 14:27

Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.

In this 1st verse we have noted 3 THINGS:

1. The PLACE of their residence was in Thessalonica.

2. The PLACE of their spiritual position was in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

3. Their PRACTICAL NEED is for "GRACE AND PEACE."

Barnhouse says:

Now if you put yourself in, you can take yourself out; but if you read your Bible correctly, you know that you didn't put yourself in Christ.

He saw me ruined in the fall,  
And loved me not withstanding all.  
He saved me from my lost estate,  
His loving kindness, O how great!

He took me out of a horrible pit, set me upon the Rock and established my going. And He put a new song in my mouth (Psalm 40:2, 3). He identified me with Jesus Christ, and I am in Christ. So are you if you have been born again. Grace be unto you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

v. 2 We are always giving thanks to God for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers;

In the 1st part of verse 2 we are talking about PRAISE and in the 2nd part we are talking about PETITION.

THE PRAISE:

"WE ARE ALWAYS GIVING THANKS TO GOD FOR ALL OF YOU."

THE PETITION:

"MAKING MENTION OF YOU IN OUR PRAYERS."

We see Paul the apostle at prayer on 3 different OCCASIONS in this letter:

1. Here at the beginning,
2. once in the middle,
3. and then once at the conclusion.

1. His 1ST PRAYER is contained in verses 2-4 of this chapter and has to do with a basic BACKWARD look.
2. The 2ND PRAYER is in chapter 3:9-13 and deals with progress, or the PRESENT look.
3. In chapter 5:23-24 we have preservation or the FORWARD look in view.

"WE ARE ALWAYS GIVING THANKS," speaks to us of the prayer ministry of the apostle Paul. He is positive in his prayers for them:

"GIVING THANKS TO GOD FOR ALL OF YOU."

Martha Snell Nicholson writes:

He who has charge of planets  
is mindful still of me;  
though I am weak and sinful,  
He heeds my faintest plea.  
From scenes of radiant splendor,  
He notes one crimson drop of my heart's lonely bleeding.  
The choiring angels stop  
and gaze all lost in wonder  
as He the undefiled  
stoops low in love to succor His sinful suffering child.

You will note that he is giving thanks to God concerning all of these Christians in Thessalonica. These young converts had been such a blessing and encouragement to the apostle that he lifts his voice in praise and thanksgiving to God for their progress to this point.

A. T. Robertson points out:

[The Apostle Paul is] in tune with the Infinite. Each time that they are engaged in prayers the writers mention the names of the converts.

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There are 2 THINGS which he is doing in this verse:

- 1.He is "GIVING THANKS TO GOD" for them.
- 2.He is "MAKING MENTION" of them in prayer.

Lenski observes:

"Whenever we pray we include you in our thanksgiving to God." There may be faults to be mended and further gifts to be asked of God, yet Paul and his helpers always keep in mind what God has already bestowed.

### THREE VALUABLE RULES

The War Cry related that when Billy Sunday was saved and joined the church, a fellow believer said to him, "William, there are three simple rules I wish you'd practice. If you do, no one will ever write 'backslide' after your name." The counselor then gave Mr. Sunday these worthwhile suggestions: "Take 15 minutes each day to let God talk to you; allow 15 minutes to talk to Him, and then spend 15 minutes telling others about the Savior." The young Christian was deeply impressed, and he determined to make these rules the pattern for his life. From that time forward he never failed to set aside the first part of the morning to be alone with God, studying and meditating upon His Word. After this he engaged in a session of fervent prayer. Then at each opportunity throughout the day he would witness to sinners and talk with saints about the Lord. Later when he became a nationally known evangelist, important letters and telegrams often flooded his home; but he wouldn't look at them until he had completed his devotions. He attributed much of the blessing of his ministry to the fact that his first impressions of the day came directly from Heaven itself.

(From InfoSearch 2.21)



v. 3 constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and your labor of love and your perseverance of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the presence of our God and Father;

Whereas in verse 2 he was "giving thanks" and "making mention,"  
now, in verse 3 he is "BEARING IN MIND."

He is "BEARING IN MIND" 3 THINGS:

1. "YOUR WORK OF FAITH,"
2. "YOUR LABOR OF LOVE,"
3. AND YOUR PERSEVERANCE OF HOPE."

These are ITEMS OF PRAISE:

1. their CONVERSION - the work done by their faith
2. the SERVICE that arose out of love - the cost that is involved
3. ENDURANCE which is inspired by hope

The "WORK OF FAITH" points to the PAST,  
the "LABOR OF LOVE" points to the PRESENT,  
and the "LABOR OF HOPE" points to the FUTURE.

The word "CONSTANTLY" is used in the papyri of "a man with a hacking cough," one which recurs at frequent intervals.

Paul's prayer life was one of continuous communion with the Father. He is certainly practicing what he is about to preach in chapter 5:17 when he admonishes the Thessalonians to unceasingly be praying.

Now let's consider these 3 THINGS which Paul is remembering in his prayers about the Thessalonians:

1. "YOUR WORK OF FAITH."



J. Vernon McGee says:

Now the "work of faith" is a strange expression because we are told that "by grace are ye saved through faith and that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God not of works lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8, 9). Yet here it is called the "work of faith." I think that Paul is making it very clear that he and James do not contradict each other. James writes: "Yea, a man may say thou hast faith and I have works. Show me thy faith with thy works and I will show thee my faith by my works" (James 2:18). That is the work of faith. It is the way faith is demonstrated to others. The writings of James and the writings of Paul certainly do not contradict each other as some have suggested because they are both writing about the same thing. Faith is the response of the soul of man to the word of God. When a man responds to the word of God, then he walks by faith. Paul says this in 2 Corinthians 5:7: "For we walk by faith, not by sight." The Lord Jesus said the same thing: "Then said they unto Him, 'What shall we do that we might work the works of God?' Jesus answered and said unto them, 'This is the work of God, that you believe on Him whom He hath sent'" (John 6:28, 29).

Walvoord sees this verse actually outlining the rest of the passage:

The remaining verses of chapter 1 constitute a simple outline:

1. In verse 3 Paul remembers what God has done through them and in them.
2. In verses 4-9 on the basis of what God has done, Paul knows certain things.
3. In verse 10 he expresses the hope of Christian salvation.

Ryrie points out:

The first of these three things for which Paul gives thanks is the work of faith. This could refer to the initial act of faith which brought salvation to the Thessalonians, or it may refer to the work which followed that act of saving faith. Probably the reference is to the latter and thus comprehends the whole Christian life work, but of course the initial act of faith from which all good works spring is in the background of this meaning.

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Evidently, Paul means by this that work or service which is performed after having come to know Jesus Christ by faith. Their faith has manifested itself in good works. Paul is confident that they were a part of the family of God because of the works which were being manifested in their lives.

### Ephesians 2:10

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

We come to know Jesus Christ on the basis of faith, but this faith manifests itself by works which it produces.

### James 2:17, 18

Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself. But someone may well say, "You have faith, and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works."

### Titus 3:8

This is a trustworthy statement; and concerning these things I want you to speak confidently, so that those who have believed God may be careful to engage in good deeds. These things are good and profitable for men.

The Thessalonians' "WORK OF FAITH" is seen in verse 9 as they "turned to the [unseen] God by faith from the idols [which are visible] to serve the living and true God."

John Calvin, in commenting on this phrase, says:

A rare energy of faith has shown itself powerfully in you.

The 2nd thing that Paul is "BEARING IN MIND" in this 3rd verse is:

2. "YOUR LABOR OF LOVE."

This could be better translated "the toil of love."

The meaning of this phrase is found in chapter 2:8, 9:

So feeling kindly for you, we were delighting in imparting to you not only the gospel of God but also our own souls, because you became beloved ones to us. For you are remembering, brethren, our toil and hardship, night and day laboring that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.

Philippians 2:17

But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with you all.

J. Vernon McGee says:

If working for the Lord is a great burden to you today, I believe the Lord Jesus would say to you, "Give it up, brother, don't bother with it." He doesn't want it to be like that. We are to love Him, then whatever we do for Him will be a labor of love that should characterize the life of the believer.

One time when Dwight L. Moody came home his family said to him, "Cancel your next meeting. You look so weary and we know you are tired." He gave this tremendous response: "I am weary in the work, but I am not weary of the work." I tell you it is wonderful to get weary in the work of God but not to get weary of the work of God.

(The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives by Dallas Willard)

Today, around every corner stands someone hawking wisdom and goodness on easy terms. But this is not what history and experience teach. Such instant wisdom is just another expression of our modern, hedonistic ideology fueled by our constitutional right to pursue happiness. Somehow, we think that virtue should come easily. Experience teaches, to the contrary, that almost everything worth doing in human life is very difficult in its early stages and the good we are aiming at is never available at first, to strengthen us when we seem to need it most.

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Acts 20:35

In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Romans 16:6, 12

Greet Mary, who has worked hard for you.

Greet Tryphaena and Tryphosa, workers in the Lord. Greet Persis the beloved, who has worked hard in the Lord.

Paul here is making reference to that labor which is ours as a result of desiring to serve the living and true God.

F. B. Meyer has a choice little statement on our "labor of love":

And how can we ever show our gratitude except by serving the living God? We are redeemed to serve, not to be owned absolutely. Who can refuse a service so reasonable, fraught with blessedness so transcendent.

Head! Think for Him whose brow was thorn-girt.

Hand! Toil for Him whose hands were nailed to the cross.

Feet! Speed to do His will whose feet were pierced. Body of mine! Be His temple whose body was wrung with pain unspeakable.

To serve Him, this is the only true attitude and behavior of those who are not their own but His.

Martha Snell Nicholson raises the question:

What are you doing for Jesus?  
 What are you doing for Jesus?  
 Think what He did for you.  
 Bearing your sins in His body,  
 bearing your punishment, too.  
 From God set apart,  
 breaking His heart.  
 What are you bearing for Jesus?  
 Think what He bore for you.

His measure of sorrow and anguish  
 only the Father knew.  
 We cannot know  
 the depths of His woe.  
 Think of the day you will meet Him.  
 No one so tender is he.  
 Think of His voice, as he asks you,  
 "What have you done for me?"  
 Think of that day.  
 What can you say?

Paul has spoken of:

1. their "work of faith,"
2. and "their labor of love."

Now, the 3rd phrase:

3. "YOUR PERSEVERANCE OF HOPE."

Ellicott explains this phrase as:

The brave patience with which the Christian contends against the various hindrances, persecutions and temptations that befall him in his conflict with the inward and outward world.

Ryrie says:

The word translated "patience" in verse 3 is hupomone. It does not denote a negative and

passive resignation to persecution or problems but rather a positive and optimistic fortitude in spite of indignities suffered.



Lenski says:

It is full of perseverance (hupomone), remaining under any load the Lord imposes, ever looking with brave endurance to the day of fulfillment promised by the Lord--always holding out as in the Father's presence.

Horne observes:

"Patience" (hupomone, etymologically 'to remain under') does not mean a mere passive resignation to grin and bear it when confronted with trying circumstances; it rather denotes an aggressive constancy, a dogged determination in the face of difficulties, a courageous facing of every pressing circumstance in the light of the blazing hope of Christ's return. The word "steadfastness" would perhaps convey the meaning a little more accurately.

#### Titus 2:12, 13

instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus;

#### 1 Corinthians 15:19

If we have only hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied.

#### John 14:1-3

Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.

This little epistle is filled with the promise of the second coming of Christ. We find that every chapter concludes with a reference to His coming.

Someone has said:

"Life with Christ is an endless hope.  
Without Him a hopeless end."

(Splashes of Joy in the Cesspools of Life by  
Barbara Johnson)

Don't lose your head in the battle . . . you won't have  
any place to put your helmet.

A recurring theme in many of the letters I receive is STRESS, the daily wear and tear that comes from just being alive. I love the quip about the lady who goes for a drive whenever things get too stressful--she is now twenty-six hundred miles from home.  
p. 89

Ben Carson, in his book Gifted Hands, tells many stories of dramatic and difficult brain surgeries, one of which was done upon a little girl named Beth:

After surgery, for quite a long time, Beth lay unconscious and there was no response.

One night her dad was lying on a cot in the room, unable to sleep. It was nearly 2:00 in the morning.

"Daddy, my nose itches."

"What?" he cried, jumping out of his cot.

"My nose itches."

"Beth talked! Beth talked!" Brian Usher ran into the hallway, so excited that he didn't realize he was wearing only underpants. I doubt that anyone cared anyway. "Her nose itches!" he yelled at the nurse.

The medical staff raced after him to the room. Beth lay quietly, a smile on her face. "It does itch. A lot."

Those words were the beginning of Beth's recovery. After that she started getting better every day.  
p. 172

(From Gifted Hands by Ben Carson, M.D. with Cecil Murphey)

(I Want to Grow Hair, I Want to Grow Up, I Want to Go to Boise by Erma Bombeck)

Several years ago there was a movie called Chariots of Fire. It was the story of a runner, Harold Abrahams, who was a member of the 1920 British Olympic team. After Harold lost a race to his arch-rival, he felt sorry for himself and said stubbornly to his girlfriend, "If I can't win, I won't run." She answered flatly, "If you don't run, you can't win."

"But," he whined, "I've worked so hard, what will I aim for?" She said quietly, "Beat him the next time."

p. 5

(The Upside of Down: Finding Hope When It Hurts  
by Joseph M. Stowell)

There were other reasons for Job's suffering. God knew that we needed a demonstration that true faith in God is more than a self-serving faith. Satan kicked the props out from under Job, and Job proved that his faith was anchored in that which is far greater--his God. Some religionists will tell you that if you have enough faith, you can be happy, healthy, and wealthy. Faith to them is a way to get good things from God. Job lost it all. Yet he remained a man of faith.

Faith is our unshakable belief in God, His Word, and His character. True faith stands above and beyond the trouble and triumphs of life. When life demolished Job, it did not demolish his faith. If trouble demolishes our faith, it is a reflection that our faith was only a faith for protection, peace, and pleasure. A shallow, selfish faith.

p. 177

Revelation 2:2, 3

I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot endure evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false; and you have perseverance and have endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary.

"CONSTANTLY BEARING IN MIND YOUR WORK OF FAITH AND YOUR LABOR OF LOVE AND YOUR PERSEVERANCE OF HOPE IN OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, IN THE PRESENCE OF OUR GOD AND FATHER."

What a wonderful place for our hope to be. We may rest assured in His word that He will come again even as He said. He will receive us unto Himself, that where He is we may be also, for He is in the presence of our God and Father.

Here in this verse then we have 3 THINGS which Paul is "BEARING IN MIND":

- 1.THEIR "WORK OF FAITH,"
- 2.THEIR "LABOR OF LOVE,"
- 3.THEIR "PERSEVERANCE OF HOPE."

We find this lovely trio in a number of places in Paul's writings:

1 Corinthians 13:13

But now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

Colossians 1:4,5

since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have for all the saints; because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of the truth, the Gospel.

Barclay points out:

These are the 3 great ingredients of the Christian life.

In these 3 we also see:

- 1.FAITH--which was operative in the PAST, when we accepted Christ as our Savior,
- 2.LOVE--which motivates us in our PRESENT service,
- 3.HOPE--which looks to the FUTURE with confidence that the Lord Jesus is going to return again.

Joseph Parker points out:

There is not a word about propositions, dogmas, tenets, creeds. It's all working, laboring, suffering, waiting. All believing, hoping, loving.

John Calvin says:

This is a brief description of true Christianity.

In this verse we see:

1. faith working,
2. love laboring,
3. and hope enduring.

This is the story of Christian experience. We would do well to raise the question:

What does God see in our hearts when He looks down upon us?

Does he see:

faith which is working?

love which is acting in faithful service?

the patient endurance of hope, seeing Him who is invisible?

and looking and hoping with real patience for His blessed return?

We will see this picture of the Thessalonians in verses 9 and 10:

For they themselves are reporting about us what kind of an entrance we had to you, and how you turned to God from the idols to serving the living and true God, and to be waiting for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, Jesus, the one who is rescuing us from the wrath which is coming.

Paul looks at the Christian life and Christian service as something that involves labor.

James Fergusson points out:

In this verse he shows that those graces which he with his associates saw appearing in them had left such an impression upon them that they could not but without ceasing, or whenever occasion offered, make mention both to God and men.

Jowett sums everything up by saying:

"Your faith, hope and love." A faith that has its outward effect on your lives; a love that spent itself in the service of others; a hope that was no mere transient feeling but was content to wait for the things unseen when Christ should be revealed.

J. Vernon McGee says:

So here Paul has brought together faith and love and hope, the three tenses of the Christian life. The work of faith which looks back to the cross and produces good works in the life. The labor of love which is the present basis and motivation on which a child of God is to serve Christ, and the patience of hope which looks into the future. What a wonderful trinity of Christian graces. It should be the biography of every believer.

v. 4 knowing, brethren loved by God, His choice of you,

Because of the evidence of a work of faith, a labor of love and a perseverance of hope, the apostle is saying he now knows with great confidence God's choice of them. In other words, because of their response to the gospel and these evidences that are seen, Paul has come to a settled persuasion about them.

"KNOWING, BRETHREN LOVED BY GOD."

1 John 3:1-3

See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

"KNOWING, BRETHREN LOVED BY GOD, HIS CHOICE OF YOU."

Their affirmative response to the gospel was evidence of ELECTION, or CHOICE.

"I know you are elect by the way the word worked in me and in you."

Paul addresses them as "BRETHREN." You will find this title a great number of times throughout the epistle. They are brethren in this sense that they are all members of the family of God, having experienced the new birth in Jesus Christ.

He also makes this statement that they are "LOVED BY GOD."

We come now to a consideration of Paul's statement here:

"BRETHREN LOVED BY GOD, HIS CHOICE OF YOU."

What does he mean by this?

The word of God is its own best commentary when it comes to explaining what is meant by God's choice or selection.

Ephesians 1:4, 5

just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,

John 15:16

You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask of the Father in My name, He may give to you.

Romans 8:29, 30

For whom He aforeknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren; and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

1 Corinthians 1:27, 28

but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised, God has chosen, the things that are not, that He might nullify the things that are,

2 Thessalonians 2:13

But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.

2 Peter 1:10

Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble;



J. Vernon McGee says:

Something else needs to be said. God is no tyrant. God is righteous. God is just. God is holy. Everything that God does is right. You may not always think so, but I have news for you. If you do not think God is right in what He is doing and if you think that God is not following the best plan, the news I have for you is that you are wrong. God is not wrong, you are wrong. You are the person who needs to get his thinking corrected. Because if you don't, you are out of step with the universe. This universe exists for God, for His glory and for His purpose. There is nothing going to happen that will not work out to His glory. He is in charge and He is running this universe today.

Stedman says:

It is also in the Scriptures that we learn He has chosen us (1 Thess. 1:4). How do you know that out of the millions that have lived on earth He chose you? The answer is you begin to be drawn toward God, to sense a desire for Him. The calling of God by means of the Spirit awakens a hunger within. If you are longing to be different, if you want to be more than you are now, if you have tried to change and cannot, but you want to change, if you find the words of the gospel, the songs and hymns of Christians attractive, you are being drawn by the Spirit. Jesus said, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent Me draws him" (John 6:44).

Ockenga says:

Paul spoke of their having evidence of their election by saying, "Knowing your election." His knowledge of their election came from what he had seen and heard among them. They had responded affirmatively to the word of God. They had brought forth fruit in faith, love and hope, and they had assurance in their hearts. Thus, they knew they were the elect of God. The clue God gives to the reason for such election is the love of God. Their being chosen did not originate with themselves but with God. God's grace, which is God's love in action, a love which gave Christ and spared Him not, is the love which chose us to be in Christ. Thus, the growth of the church rested in the unmerited love of divine grace which is extended to men in Christ. All is of grace.

John F. Walvoord points out:

Christians are the elect of God because God chose them before they chose Him.

A full description of God's elect is seen in:

Colossians 3:12-17

And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. And beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

The divine choice that is spoken of here was manifested to the apostles by the 3 QUALITIES which we have considered in verse 3:

- 1.the "work of faith,"
- 2.the "labor of love,"
- 3.the "perseverance of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ."

Where these things are found we know that we are in the presence of God's elect.

S. Lewis Johnson points out here:

In this verse we find Paul's ultimate ground for His thanksgiving. Why? Because of their election. God loved them, and it has issued in their election.

He and I in that bright glory  
one deep joy shall share,  
Mine to be forever with Him,  
His that I am there.

John 7:37

Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink.

v. 5 because our gospel came to you not only in word but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; even as you are knowing what sort of men we showed ourselves to be among you for your sakes.

Here we come to the KEY VERSE in our study.

"HAVE WE MADE THE RIGHT START?"

Is there a time in our lives when the gospel came to us in the power of the Spirit as the word was ministered to bring about a real conviction of sin? And then was there a response on our behalf in accepting Jesus Christ as God's provision for our sin?

I trust if you do not know Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and if you've never responded to His marvelous program for your life, that you will during this very first study in the book of 1 Thessalonians recognize that God does love you. He longs to manifest Himself to you in the person of His Son Jesus Christ.

What we are asking you to do is to compare your own experience with that of the Thessalonian Christians here in chapter 1.

and then answer honestly the question, "HAVE I MADE THE RIGHT START?"

In this verse and verse 6 we find 2 REASONS why the apostle knows that the Thessalonians are elect of God:

1. The FIRST REASON in this verse is that the apostle recognized the presence and power of the Holy Spirit doing His work among them as the word was being preached.

Hendricksen points out:

The meaning is that you were chosen, elected. We know from the fact that our gospel did not come to you in words only. As we see it, the sense of the entire passage (vv. 5-10) can be summarized as follows:

Do not be deceived by the enemies of the faith who are trying by means of an attack on our integrity to undermine your faith and your assurance of salvation. Our behavior among you was proof of our integrity and of the reliability of our message. Your own joyful acceptance of the gospel which we preached so that you began to spread the news everywhere, and turned away from those idols of yours to serve the living God, and to await His Son from heaven, clearly indicate that what happened, and is happening, in Thessalonica was and is wrought by the Holy Spirit and was, and is, the fruit of election.

Barns, in his commentary, says:

The way in which they knew it seems not to have been by direct revelation or by inspiration but by the evidence which they had furnished and which constituted such a proof of piety as to leave no doubt of the fact (Calvin).

Hogg and Vine point out:

The demonstration of the power of the Holy Spirit and the preaching was not given in the interest of the preachers but in the interest of the hearers for they were the elect of God whose time to call them had now come.

Ellicott points out:

The apostle argues they must be elect because his companions were enabled to preach the Gospel among them with such power, and secondly, they received it with joy.

Paul uses a NEGATIVE and a POSITIVE APPROACH to spell out his meaning here. He says:

"OUR GOSPEL CAME TO YOU [negatively] NOT ONLY IN WORD BUT [positively] ALSO IN POWER AND IN THE HOLY SPIRIT AND WITH FULL CONVICTION."

Someone has said:

Too much preaching is as clear as crystal and cold as ice.

This was not the experience of Paul with the Thessalonians.

From a NEGATIVE point of view:

It was "NOT ONLY IN WORD,"

but from a POSITIVE point of view there were 3 THINGS:

1. It was "IN POWER,"
2. It was "IN THE HOLY SPIRIT,"
3. "WITH FULL CONVICTION."

Paul sensed the power of God flowing through him as he preached the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ to these Thessalonians.

#### Zechariah 4:6

"Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit," says the Lord Almighty.

It is the Spirit of God who is the source of power for the believer.

#### Acts 1:8

but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.

(Transforming Grace by Jerry Bridges)

As John Calvin said, "For men have no taste for it [God's power] till they are convinced of their need of it and they immediately forget its value unless they are continually reminded by awareness of their own weakness."

p. 147

## GO IN HIS POWER

Preachers must always preach Christ and realize the built-in power of the message. "Paul knew that the cross and the resurrection have their own communicative power. Paul knew that the Holy Spirit takes the simple message of the cross . . . and infuses it with authority." There are several responsive chords the Holy Spirit will touch. 1) Life's needs are not being met by social programs or material affluence in this world. 2) There is an essential emptiness in the lives of those who live without Christ. 3) People are lonely because man is separated from the Creator. 4) There is much guilt among men, which only Christ can relieve with his forgiveness. 5) There is a universal fear of death. Preaching must also be simple and understandable and meaningful to the listeners. With the preaching of the gospel message must be a social involvement. Jesus taught simply and also by example.

"Go in His Power" by Billy Graham. Decision, Jan. 1988. Pages 1-3.

(From InfoSearch 2.21)

The "GOSPEL CAME":

1. "IN POWER,"
2. "IN THE HOLY SPIRIT,"
3. "WITH FULL CONVICTION."

John 16:8

And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment;

Acts 24:25

And as he was discussing righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix became frightened and said, "Go away for the present, and when I find time, I will summon you."

The verse ends by saying:

"EVEN AS YOU ARE KNOWING WHAT SORT OF MEN WE SHOWED OURSELVES TO BE AMONG YOU FOR YOUR SAKES."

1 Peter 3:15

but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;

Albert Barns points out:

The holy life of a preacher goes far to confirm the truth of the religion which he preaches and is among the most efficacious means of inducing them to embrace the gospel.

Someone has said:

What you do speaks so loudly that I cannot hear what you say.

How important it is that our lives reflect the gospel of Jesus Christ, and that in our daily conduct we manifest to others by our lives that we do know Jesus Christ as our personal Savior. Our lives must back up the truth which we claim is in our hearts.

"The eyes of the Lord are running to and fro throughout the whole earth" to find clear, clean channels through whom His word can be presented in power. The Holy Spirit can take this word and bring full conviction to the heart of sinful man, and this sinful man can see in the life of the one who is speaking that the gospel really works.

Paul and Silas and Timothy came to town as SENSITIVE, SELF-SACRIFICING SERVANTS, and God the Father used them to proclaim the wonderful message of salvation through Jesus Christ.

It behooves each of us as we consider what takes place in these verses whether or not we have really made the right start. Has this been our experience or is our experience better described by Peter in:

2 Peter 2:22

It has happened to them according to the true proverb, "A dog returns to its own vomit," and, "A sow, after washing, returns to wallowing in the mire."

If this should be the case, may God grant to us that right now we would make the right start by coming to know Jesus Christ as our personal Savior and enter into the joy of walking daily with the Lord.

Having conquered the rest of Europe, Napoleon invaded Russia. It turned out to be the worst winter Russia had known for 50 years and, to escape destruction, Napoleon had to give orders to retreat.

Chilled by blizzards and harassed by cossacks, his army came to a river and found the bridge had been destroyed. Napoleon ordered that at any cost a bridge of some sort had to be erected. Men plunged into the stream, seized boards and beams from the wreckage and began to build another bridge. Some men were swept away by the chilling current. Others took their places. The bridge had to be held together and partially supported by the men standing up to their necks in water but the army and its supplies eventually passed over in safety.

When the order was given for the men to leave the water, not one of them moved. There they stood clinging to the pillars frozen to death. Even the callous-hearted Napoleon wept as he realized the price these men had paid to build the bridge and to save his army.

How little is this price in comparison to the wonderful story of the gospel of Jesus Christ who willingly gave His life in our behalf that we might have life.

### 1 John 5:10-12

The one who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; the one who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the witness that God has borne concerning His Son. And the witness is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.

The question that comes before each of us this day is:

Do we have the Son, and do we have life?

The word of God tells us:

"behold now is the accepted time, behold, now is the day of salvation."



THREE FACTORS are involved in becoming a Christian, as in marriage:

- 1.the INTELLECT,
- 2.the EMOTIONS,
- 3.and the WILL.

- 1.INTELLECTUALLY, we must know the other person, what he looks like, how he acts, and so forth.
- 2.EMOTIONALLY, we must agree that he must be a good husband for us, that it would be best for us to marry. This still does not cause us to be married.
- 3.We must be WILLING to take a step of faith. We must have sufficient trust in the other person to commit ourselves, our wills, to him in a marriage ceremony.

Only after this 3rd step is taken are we married, and only after we commit ourselves to Christ in faith believing He will control our lives do we experience His control.

I believe the SKY DIVER provides a wonderful illustration of what it is to commit ourselves to Jesus Christ:

Soaring at a height of about 4,000 ft. the sky diver lets go of the plane and, in complete faith, trusts himself to the parachute. The parachute, however, does not do any good for him until he by an act of his will reaches across and takes hold of the ripcord and releases the activity of the chute so that his life might be saved.

So it is in our relationship to God through Jesus Christ. We must by faith allow Jesus Christ to come into our hearts and our lives, to be willing to recognize that we are sinful and that we need a Savior and that Jesus Christ is that Savior.

Leon Morris has aptly stated:

The Gospel is not the presentation of an idea but the operation of a power. When the gospel is preached, the power of God is at work for the salvation of men.

v. 6 And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word while in much affliction with joy of the Holy Spirit,

These Thessalonians "BECAME IMITATORS" of the MESSENGERS, and then of the MASTER, the Lord Jesus.

In this verse now we come to the 2ND REASON Paul recognizes the fact of their election by God:

2.It was because of their enthusiastic acceptance of the word of God.

You will note here that these new converts imitated the evangelists who came to minister the word in their way of life and also imitated the Lord. I believe here we find the reason that there is so much ineffective witnessing for Christ today. Our lives do not back up what we say and, as a result, people are not able to see in our lives that which they would desire to have for themselves.

Paul encourages this sort of thing in speaking to the Corinthian church in:

1 Corinthians 11:1

Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.

A. T. Robertson points out here, however:

The peril of it all is that people so easily and so readily imitate the preacher when he does not imitate the Lord.

So these Thessalonian converts became imitators first of their ministers, and then of the Master of their ministers.

Herodotus said:

I am satisfied that we are less convinced by what we hear than by what we see.

Will Rogers once spoke at a gathering of boys sponsored by a California service club. At the banquet club officials noted with horror the disappearance of the tableware as the kids began sneaking everything in sight for souvenirs. The harassed chairman begged, coaxed, cajoled the boys to return the loot. The youngsters returned narry a piece. Finally, it was Rogers turn to speak. With that inimitable grin he began to empty one after another of his pockets of knives, forks, spoons and salt shakers. To top it all, he removed a huge service plate from beneath his shirt. For a moment there was an amazed silence from the boys and they howled with delighted laughter and the clatter of silver echoed through the hall as the boys followed the leader and returned their loot.

You will note that they are characterized as:

"HAVING RECEIVED THE WORD WHILE IN MUCH AFFLICTION."

The little word "IN" describes their EXTERNAL CIRCUMSTANCES at the time they received the word of God.

(The Grass Is Always Greener Over the Septic Tank  
by Erma Bombeck)

It was either Thomas Jefferson--or maybe it was John Wayne--who once said, "Your foot will never get well as long as there is a horse standing on it."  
p. 19

(Fire in Your Heart by Sammy Tippit)

Nothing fans the flame of the heart like winds of adversity.  
p. x

It was in a time of suffering that the word was presented to them, and in this time of suffering they responded enthusiastically to the claims of God in Jesus Christ presented in the word.

Note also that it was received:

"WITH JOY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT."

The word "OF" is a genitive of "source." It was:

"OF THE HOLY SPIRIT."

The "joy of the Holy Spirit" is not affected by affliction.

Here we learn of the DIVINE PARADOX of Christian experience--that along the pathway of affliction and tribulation we experience the joy of Christ.

This certainly was the experience of the Lord Jesus on the night before His death when He said in:

John 15:11

These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.

The "joy of the Holy Spirit" certainly is not dependent upon our outward circumstances.

Paul bears witness to this fact in the 16th verse of chapter 5 when he says:

"Always be rejoicing."

He likewise is an example of this in the book of Philippians when he tells us in:

Philippians 2:17

And if my life-blood is, so to speak, to be poured out over your faith which I am offering up to God as a sacrifice, that is if I am to die for you, even then I will be glad and will share my joy with each of you.

He also states in the 4th chapter in the 4th verse as he is in prison:

"Rejoice in the Lord; and again I say, rejoice."

In Galatians 5 Paul makes it clear to us that the fruitage of the Spirit is joy. It is a joy that is not affected by present circumstances. It is our prayer that this joy will manifest itself in our lives daily.

Romans 5:3

And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance;

(Splashes of Joy in the Cesspools of Life  
by Barbara Johnson)

Listen, Pal . . . I work two jobs, I got the shaft in a divorce, my car is making a weird noise, my kid dyed his mohawk pink, and my dog had a litter in my living room! So don't tell me I have one item too many, unless you have a death wish!

p. 7

To be able to "smile at anything"--that's the key. Not only does smiling kill time between disasters, but it also helps your attitude, and we all have to work hard to avoid hardening of the attitudes!

Dr. Charles Swindoll, pastor of the Evangelical Free Church of Fullerton, California, is one of the most optimistic, "up" people I have ever met. He always has a smile and loves to laugh. He is a living, breathing example of the power of attitude. He writes:

The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on life. Attitude, to me, is more important than facts. It is more important than the past, than education, than money, than circumstances, than failures, than successes, than what other people think or say or do. It is more important than appearance, giftedness, or skill. It will make or break a company . . . a church . . . a home. The remarkable thing is we have a choice every day regarding the attitude we will embrace for that day. We cannot change our past . . . we cannot change the fact that people will act in a certain way. We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is play on the one string we have, and that is our attitude. . . .

p. 19

I call Philippians 4:8 my "rubbish removal service." It's the verse I use to dump the garbage from my mind and get rid of useless, rotting, noxious junk so I can replace it with things that are nourishing, fresh, and healthy. A lot has been written on "positive thinking," but Paul scooped everybody two thousand years ago with Philippians 4:8, which he wrote in prison, chained to a Roman guard, waiting to be executed.

In a JOY-LESS place, in JOY-LESS circumstances, Paul was JOY-FULL because he knew that the difference between splashes of joy and the cesspool often depends on how you want to look at what is happening to you and around you.  
pp. 10-11

When I said, "Whatever, Lord," it released a million little splashes of joy deep inside of me. My teeth stopped itching, the shag rug in my throat disappeared, the elephant that had been sitting on my chest for nearly a year was gone, and so was that knife twisting there close to my heart. I turned my car around and drove home to begin life again.  
p. 58

#### Acts 16:25

But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them;

The "JOY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT" is not affected by affliction.

EXTERNALLY:

they were "IN MUCH AFFLICTION,"

but INTERNALLY:

they were experiencing the "JOY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT."

v. 7 so that you became an example to all those who are believing in Macedonia and in Achaia.

Lenski says:

A joyfully suffering church in Thessalonica meant exceedingly much for believers elsewhere who in most cases had to face vicious opposition. We see the broadness of Paul's view, the steadfast joy of one church means so much for others. When we suffer, let us think not only of ourselves but also of all the others whom our joy and endurance may aid.

(On Asking God Why by Elisabeth Elliot)

"Wings are an illusive fallacy," she wrote. "Some may possess them, but they are not very visible, and as for me, there isn't the least sign of a feather. Don't imagine that by crossing the sea and landing on a foreign shore and learning a foreign lingo you 'burst the bonds of outer sin and hatch yourself a cherubim.'"  
p. 30

These Thessalonian converts had experienced such wonderful things in the word of God and the Holy Spirit convicting them of sin that they responded to the Word of God enthusiastically. In the midst of suffering they became imitators of Paul and of the Lord, so much so, that they became examples to all of those in the surrounding areas.

Following the example of their MINISTERS and their MASTER, the converts in Thessalonica became examples to other Christians in Macedonia and in Achaia.

The way they were examples is seen in verse 3 of this chapter:

"constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and your labor of love and your perseverance of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the presence of our God and Father."

They were good examples of what the grace of God can do in the human heart.

Once again we see the tremendous power of the right example. If people are going to be effectively won to Jesus Christ, it is going to be because they can see in our LIVES what we speak forth with our LIPS.

The Thessalonian Christians were effective in their community and became examples to all the other Christians.

The Lord Jesus, speaking to His disciples in the Upper Room, says in:

John 13:15

For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you.

1 Timothy 4:12

Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe.

1 Peter 2:21

For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps,

v. 8 For from you the word of the Lord has been sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we are not finding it necessary to be saying a thing.

The Thessalonian Christians were very much like a sounding board in this situation in that they received the word, reinforced it, and sent it on to others.

It is almost like an ECHO, or reverberations.

"FOR FROM YOU THE WORD OF THE LORD HAS BEEN SOUNDED FORTH."



This is in the PERFECT TENSE, something that happened in the past is continuing in the present.

We will note that in verse 5:

The word CAME to them.

In verse 6:

The word WAS RECEIVED by them.

Now in verse 8:

"THE WORD OF THE LORD HAS BEEN SOUNDED FORTH" from them.

The word for "SOUNDED FORTH" is not found elsewhere in the New Testament.

The word has the characteristic about it of "THUNDER." The main characteristic of thunder is its reverberations. It is like a radio wave, or an atomic explosion with a chain reaction.

"THE WORD OF THE LORD" began to be sounded and the results are still being heard today. There is no need to be talking about results because others are telling us.

Thessalonica was a great COMMERCIAL and POLITICAL CENTER, and the faith of these Christians in that city was sounding forth in every place.

Instead of our telling about what has happened in your city of Thessalonica, others are telling us what has happened in your lives.

### Acts 1:8

but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.

In John the 4th chapter the Lord Jesus confronts a pagan woman with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

At her response in verse 28 we read:

So the woman left her waterpot, and went into the city, and saith to the men, "Come, see a man who told me all the things that I have done; this is not the Christ is it?"

In verses 39-42 we read:

And from that city many of the Samaritans believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, "He told me all the things that I have done." So when the Samaritans came to Him, they were asking Him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. And many more believed because of His word; and they were saying to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this One is indeed the Savior of the world."

Paul S. Rees, in his book Christian, Commit Yourself, says:

As we look at the Christian world we see them divided into two classifications. They are illustrated by the train station. Some trains come in on tracks that end within the station. For them it is a full stop. Other trains come in on tracks that run through the station and on for many another mile. Trains that use these tracks arrive only to depart. Some of us say we have found the Savior of mankind, Jesus Christ, and having found Him, there we stand. But there are others who, having experienced Christ, have arrived only to depart. They become carriers to others of all that precious cargo that Christ produces in a life.

Christians were never meant to be terminals. They were meant to be junctions. God's new life within them looks not for a dead end but for "a clear track."

p. 134

Hogg and Vine say:

This word for "sounded forth" commonly refers to the sounding of a herald's trumpet. The Thessalonian converts had preached, their hearers had believed and, in turn, had carried the gospel whither they went.

## ON SOWING GOOD SEED

A Swiss professor has calculated that if nothing hindered or blighted a single grain of wheat, in only 8 years that lone kernel would multiply sufficiently to feed all the inhabitants of the earth for a whole year.

(From InfoSearch 2.21)

J. B. Phillips, in his introduction to the Young Churches in Action, says this:

In the pages of this unpretentious book written by the author of the third gospel the fresh air of heaven is plainly blowing. Many problems comparable to the modern complexities never arise here because the men and women concerned were of one heart and mind in the Spirit. Many another issue is never allowed to arise because these early Christians were led by the Spirit to the main task of bringing people to God through Christ and were not permitted to enjoy fascinating side-tracks.

Here is a problem for some of you mathematicians:

If 2 persons after hearing the gospel of Jesus Christ each told the good news of the gospel to 2 more people within 15 minutes and then those 4 people on hearing it would pass it on to each of 2 more within 15 minutes and this process kept going, soon the number would reach that of the population of the United States. How long do you think it would take theoretically for this to happen? We might try to guess. We won't keep you in suspense. The answer is that in less than 6 hours and 45 minutes the gospel of Jesus Christ would make the rounds of our entire country.

What thoughts of earth will I enjoy on heaven's shore?

A car I drove, the house I owned, the clothes I wore? The society clubs, and lodges I belonged to?

The education which I received?

All of these without salvation is damnation to a man's soul.

Not these but this:

I told the world that Christ died for all our sins, was buried and rose again.

This and this only will count for eternity.

(Fire in Your Heart by Sammy Tippit)

My desire is that this fire will spread throughout the Western world. We have sophisticated technology, but they have simple theology. We have learned Hollywood-style evangelism, but they have practiced Spirit-anointed evangelism. Our heroes are athletes. Theirs are martyrs. My prayer is that this fire from the East will become fire in your heart.

p. xii

My faith has been renewed, and I believe that God wants to send a great awakening in the midst of the darkness of the Western world. Spiritual awakening is simply a fresh view of Jesus. When we see Him, there is only one thing we can do. We fall at His feet in sweet surrender to love and worship Him. It is that love that spurs us to become the salt and light of the world.

p. 7

In America we have bowed to the god of entertainment. If we want a crowd, we bring in a professional entertainer. We now even have musicians and comedians who see themselves as "Christian entertainers." They may bless some Christians, but this will not produce an awakening that will shake the nation. A politician fiddled while Rome burned, and he blamed the Christians. Today Christians entertain while the world burns, and we blame the politicians.

p. 29

John 4:35-37

Do you not say, "There are yet four months, and then comes the harvest"? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest. Already he who reaps is receiving wages, and is gathering fruit for life eternal; that he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. For in this case the saying is true, "One sows, and another reaps."

Lead me to some soul today.

Oh, teach me, Lord, just what to say.

Friends of mine are lost in sin  
and cannot find their way.

Few there are who seem to care  
and few there are who pray.

Melt my heart and fill my life.

Give me one soul today.

(The Power of Optimism by Alan Loy McGinnis)

The term burnout had not yet acquired its present place in the language, but the phenomenon was of course prevalent. Such a state was caused, Cailliet told us, not by external pressure but by internal deterioration--what he called "a leakage of spiritual power." The phrase is apt. We all know people who started their careers with high ideals and zestful enthusiasm, but whose inner momentum gradually ran down--an entropic leakage of spiritual power.

Those who are able to stay energetic and enthusiastic over the long haul tend to have strong religious beliefs. Not all go to church, but I've noticed that there are few atheists among the go-getters, the crack salespeople, the hopeful people of this world. So if you find that your energy has evaporated and that you've lost some of your zest for the future, it may be that your spirituality needs a new commitment, that you must carve out time for reading and thinking about your faith, and above all, for prayer.

p. 48

v. 9 For they themselves are reporting about us what kind of an entrance we had to you, and how you turned to God from the idols to serving the living and true God,

Here Paul states the reason why he knows that their faith has gone forth and is making an impact in so many places.

The report that they are receiving is 3-fold and it is the same as the things which they are thanking the Lord for in verse 3 of this chapter.

It is here that we have the confirmation of:

the "work of faith,"

"labor of love,"

and "perseverance of hope."

In making a comment on "TURNING TO GOD FROM THE IDOLS," Hogg and Vine made the following statement:

The order is significant. The motive in this conversion was not that they were repelled by the grossness of their idols but that they were attracted by the character of God.

Walvoord says:

It does not say that they turned from idols to God, rather they turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God. It was not reformation first and faith in Christ second, but it was faith in Christ first with the result that idols were forsaken. The tense of the word "turned" as it is found in the Greek New Testament is in the aorist, which means that they turned once for all. It was a single definite act. In a single, deliberate choice they turned to God from idols. It was not simply that they were trusting God but the result of it was that they served the living and the true God.

Ockenga says:

Though an idol is nothing according to Paul, demonism is real. Both then and now demonism is able to exercise control over the thoughts and passions of men. These people had made a clean break from idolatry when they were converted. Immediately, they took upon them the service of the living God. They exchanged an old bondage for a new bondage, yet, paradoxically, this was perfect freedom, for freedom consists of deliverance from being torn between two forces. The Lord they now served was the living and true God, not dead idols, formed of inventions, vain imaginations, fantasies or projected passions. He is a God who speaks, delivers, sustains, and guides.

### 2 Peter 1:3

seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.

The idols were dead and false, whereas God is:

"LIVING AND TRUE."

### Jeremiah 10:10

But the Lord is the true God;  
he is the living God, the eternal King.  
when he is angry, the earth trembles;  
the nations cannot endure his wrath.

1 John 5:20

And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding, in order that we might know Him who is true, and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.

(Fire in Your Heart by Sammy Tippit)

Every man by his own natural will hates God. But when he is turned to the Lord by evangelical repentance, then his will is changed; then his conscience, now hardened and benumbed, shall be quickened and weakened; then his hard heart shall be melted, and his unruly affections shall be crucified. Thus, by that repentance, the whole soul will be changed, he will have new inclinations, new desires, and new habits.

--George Whitefield

p. 53

(Topical Memory System: Life Issues, The Navigators)

We found the following fable in Song Offerings by Rabindranath Tagore, an Indian educator and poet who believed in one God. Again and again, Tagore's simple, vivid story motivates us to give ourselves wholly to our true and living God.

I had gone a-begging from door to door in the village path, when thy golden chariot appeared in the distance like a gorgeous dream, and I wondered who was this King of all kings!

My hopes rose high and I thought my evil days were at an end, and I stood waiting for alms to be given unasked and for wealth scattered on all sides in the dust.

The chariot stopped where I stood. Thy glance fell on me and thou camest down with a smile. I felt that the luck of my life had come at last. Then of a sudden thou didst hold out thy right hand and say, "What hast thou to give to me?"

Ah, what a kingly jest was it to open thy palm to a beggar to beg! I was confused and stood undecided, and then from my wallet I slowly took out the least little grain of corn and gave it to thee.

But how great my surprise when at the day's end I emptied my bag on the floor to find a least little gram of gold among the poor heap. I bitterly wept, and wished that I had had the heart to give thee my all!

pp. 14-15

They have turned to the living and true God from their idols;

and now they are (in the present) serving Him, even as a slave would offer service to his master.

The 2 KEY WORDS here in verse 9 are the words:

1. "TURNED"
2. "SERVING"

"TURNED" points us back to:

"your work of faith" in verse 3,

and "SERVING" points us back to:

"your labor of love," in verse 3.

v.10 and to be waiting for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, Jesus, the one who is rescuing us from the wrath which is coming.

The word "WAITING" points us back to:

"your perseverance of hope" in verse 3.

"TURNED" points us to the PAST,

"SERVING" to the PRESENT,

and "WAITING" to the FUTURE.



TURNED to faith,  
 SERVING to love,  
 and WAITING to hope.

We noticed in verse 9:

in the PAST:

they "turned to God from the idols,"

and in the PRESENT:

they are "serving the living and true God,"

and here in this 10th verse:

they are looking to the FUTURE:

they are "WAITING FOR HIS SON FROM HEAVEN."

We have encompassed the entire responsibility of the man of God in these 3 WORDS:

turning,

serving,

and waiting.

When you are awaiting a visitor, you have prepared everything for his coming and now you are waiting expectantly for his footfall at the door.

Horne says:

"To wait," which is a present infinitive, found only here in the New Testament, implies "sustained expectation" with the added notions of "patience," "trust" and "readiness."

Harold J. Ockenga says:

They turned. They served. They waited. They were examples, they sounded forth the word of the Lord. The church should be the means of God's voice being heard throughout the world's confusion.

A good illustration of what it means to "WAIT" can be seen in the father in the PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON in Luke 15. He is still waiting and watching even at the very moment that the son comes into view coming home from the far country.

A. T. Robertson points out:

The hope of Christ's coming was real and powerful with Paul, as it should be with us. Paul likewise gloried in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead--of which fact he was himself a personal witness.

Joseph Parker points out:

Thus we are to live serving, waiting, watching. Serving, but in all things having faith, hope and love. These are the boundaries of the Christian universe.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon raises the very pointed question:

Are these verses a biography of your life?

As surely as He died, He lives; as surely as He lives, He will come again.

I believe we need to recognize the fact that it is very important that we make the right start in our relationship with God. These verses give us the marks of a sound conversion.

If these things are not true of your life and experience, it is our eager desire to help you find Jesus Christ as your Savior and thus be one who has turned to God from your idols of:

fame,

popularity,

money,

education,

power,

to "serve the living and true God" in these days that remain; and all the while to:

"WAIT FOR HIS SON FROM HEAVEN,"

for He is going to come even as He said.

(Gifted Hands by Ben Carson, M.D. with Cecil Murphey)

And this is the reason. From that terrible day when I was 14 years old, my faith in God has been intensely personal and an important part of who I am. About that time I started to hum or sing a hymn that has continued to be my favorite, "Jesus Is All the World to Me." Whenever anything irritates me, that hymn dissolves my negativity. I've explained it this way to young people, "I have sunshine in my heart regardless of conditions around me."

I'm not afraid of anything as long as I think of Jesus Christ and my relationship to Him and remember that the One who created the universe can do anything. I also have evidence--my own experience--that God can do anything, because He changed me.

From age 14, I began to focus on the future. My mother's lessons--and those of several of my teachers--were at last paying off.

p. 60

You will note one final phrase in this section:

"JESUS, THE ONE WHO IS RESCUING US FROM THE WRATH WHICH IS COMING."

John 5:24

Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.

Hebrews 10:31

It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Revelation 20:11-15

And I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

2 Thessalonians 1:8, 9

dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,

John 12:48

He who rejects Me, and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day.

Hebrews 2:1-3

For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard,

The certainty of God's judgment is evident throughout the scripture. If we spurn the Savior and do not take the provision of God's love, the only thing left for God to do is exercise His judgment. Oh, our plea today is to "MAKE THE RIGHT START," to accept God's provision of love in Jesus Christ as your personal Savior.

2 Peter 3:9

The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

CONCLUSION:

What are some of the lessons that we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: Paul's prayers are filled with praise for his converts.

LESSON #2: His items of praise are:

"your work of faith,"

"your labor of love,"

"and your perseverance of hope."

LESSON #3: The affirmative response of the Thessalonians to the gospel was evidence of their election.

LESSON #4: An effective presentation of the gospel involves 4 things:

- 1.the preaching of the word
- 2.the power of the Holy Spirit
- 3.the full conviction of the hearer
- 4.the impact of a life that has been changed

LESSON #5: The "joy of the Holy Spirit" is not affected by affliction.

LESSON #6: It is the Lord's intention that the gospel message be "sounded forth" from us once we have received it.

LESSON #7: In the PAST they turned to God from idols; in the PRESENT serving God out of love; and looking to the FUTURE with hope, waiting for His Son from heaven.

LESSON #8: The certainty of God's wrath is communicated in this passage.

(Mistreated by Ron Lee Davis with James D. Denney)

On his syndicated radio broadcast, Dr. James Dobson recently described his father's spiritual legacy. He said that when he went to select the headstone for his father's grave, he never had to wonder what words to put on it. He knew exactly what the stone should say. The resting place of Dr. Dobson's father is marked only by his father's name and the words, "He prayed." I imagine the tomb of Joseph could have been marked by such words as "He forgave."

What sort of legacy are you leaving behind? What words would sum up the kind of life you have lived? Words like those which describe Joseph? Or words such as "Victim of mistreatment" or "Died in bitterness" or "Unforgiving to the end"? To grow old and die without bitterness is one of the greatest legacies we can leave our loved ones, our children, and our grandchildren.

"All the while I thought I was learning how to live," Leonardo da Vinci once said, "when I was really learning how to die."

p. 150

(Splashes of Joy in the Cesspools of Life  
by Barbara Johnson)

GOOD MORNING, HUMPTY DUMPTY, SIR,  
HOW AMAZING, YOU'RE STILL HERE!  
BY LEGEND YOU WERE SHATTERED,  
HOW COHESIVE YOU APPEAR.

HUMPTY JUMPED, AND SAID WITH A SMILE,  
"THE TALE OF HORSES AND MEN  
WASN'T THE END! THE KING HIMSELF,  
PUT ME TOGETHER AGAIN!"

pp. 120-21

On a dangerous seacoast where shipwrecks often occur, there was once a crude little lifesaving station. The building was just a hut. There was only one boat, but the few devoted members kept a constant watch over the sea and with no thought for themselves went out day and night, tirelessly searching for the lost.

Many lives were saved by this wonderful little station so it became famous. Some of those who were saved and various others in the surrounding area wanted to become associated with the station and gave of their time and money and effort for the support of this work. New boats were bought and crews trained. The little lifesaving station grew.

Some of the members of the lifesaving station were unhappy that the building was so crude and poorly equipped. They felt a more comfortable place should be provided so they replaced the emergency cots and beds and put better furniture in the enlarged building. Now the lifesaving station became a popular gathering place. It was used as sort of a club. Fewer members were now interested in going to the sea on life saving missions so they hired lifesaving crews to do this work. The lifesaving motifs still prevailed in the club's decorations and there was a liturgical lifeboat in the room where initiations were held.

About this time a large ship was wrecked off the coast and the hired crews brought in loads of cold, wet, half drowned people. They were dirty and sick and some of them had black skin and some had yellow skin. The beautiful new club was considerably messed up so the property committee had a shower house built outside the club where the victims of shipwrecks could be cleaned up before coming inside.

At the next meeting there was a split in the club membership. Most of the members wanted to stop the club's lifesaving activities as being unpleasant and a hindrance to the normal social life of the club. Some members insisted that lifesaving was their primary purpose and pointed out they were still called a lifesaving station. They were finally voted down and told if they wanted to save the lives of various kinds of people who were shipwrecked in those waters they could begin their own lifesaving station down the coast. They did.

As the years went by the new station experienced the same changes that had occurred in the old. It evolved into a club and yet another lifesaving station was founded. History continued to repeat itself, and, if you visit that coast today you will find a number of exclusive clubs along the shore. Shipwrecks are frequent in those waters but most of the people drown.