**Simple Studies**

**in**

**First Thessalonians**

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**Introduction**

Bible students do not agree as to which of the New Testament books was written first. Some believe it was Matthew, and others believe it was James, and yet others believe it was First Thessalonians.

Certain it is that this is the first of the books written by Paul. Ussher’s date for it is 54 A.D., which was less than twenty-five years after our Lord’s death and resurrection.

The city of Thessalonica still survives, though its name has lost its first syllable; it is now Saloniki, or Salonica.

The historical record of Paul’s first, and, so far as we know, his only visit to Thessalonica is contained in the 17th chapter of The Acts, and it is exceedingly brief, including only nine and a half verses. But that visit was one of the most amazing incidents in Paul’s most amazing career. Let us read the record in full:

“Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews: and Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ.

“And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.

“But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also; whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus. And they troubled the people, and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things. And when they had taken security of Jason, and of the other, they let them go. And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea.”

This was during Paul’s second missionary journey, when he had come into Macedonia in response to the Troas dream (**Acts 16:8-9**). His first stop in Macedonia was at Philippi, and from Philippi he came to Thessalonica.

A remarkable feature of First and Second Thessalonians is the wide range of doctrine contained in them. During an evangelistic campaign of less than a month, to which he had come an unknown stranger, the apostle was used in turning multitudes to Christ, and then taught the new converts in almost all the vital doctrines of the Christian faith. These Epistles, written only a few weeks later, review these doctrines, including the trinity of God, the tripartite nature of man, election, conversion, sanctification, practical living, resurrection, the day of Christ, the day of the Lord, the second coming of Christ to the earth, etc. “Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?” (**2Th. 2:5**)

But the doctrine most strongly emphasized in these Epistles is that of the rapture of the saints, that is, their catching away to meet the Lord in the air. In all the eight chapters of these Epistles this blessed hope is held forth. Indeed, in these the first of the messages addressed to the churches, is found the fullest teaching concerning this wonderful event, which may transpire at any moment of any day or any night. It would seem that the Holy Spirit was constrained to take the first opportunity to whisper into the ears of the infant church this sacred secret, in order that by it the newborn children of God might be kept in a separate path with their Lord, growing in grace and in the knowledge of him.

***I. The Three Tenses of Salvation (chapter 1).***

The salutation is from Paul, Silas and Timothy, and it is addressed “unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father, and in the Lord Jesus Christ.” It is difficult, if not impossible, for us to imagine the impact of such words upon the minds of these young converts, rescued so recently and so miraculously from raw paganism.

In his prayers for them the apostle gives thanks for three things: (1) their work of faith; (2) their labor of love; and (3) their patience of hope. We shall see the true relation of these three things a bit later.

He knows that they were the elect of God by the way they had received the gospel, believing it and acting upon it, becoming followers of the Lord and of his servant, despite the resulting affliction, and “with joy of the Holy Spirit.”

These young recruits had become examples to others throughout Macedonia and Achaia, for they had sent the message of the gospel out so widely that their new faith was the topic of conversation wherever Paul had been since leaving them. He did not need to speak of them at all, but he himself learned about them and heard about them wherever he went: how they had turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God; and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, who had delivered his people from the wrath to come.

Now we may return to those three things of **1Th. 1:3**, and fit them together in their order with the three things of **1Th. 1:9-10**.

1. Their work of faith consisted in their turning to God from idols. Mark, it was not a turning from idols to God, but it was a turning to God from idols. Many sinners try to turn from their sins to God, but it cannot be done that way. They must first turn to God before they can turn from their sins.

2. Their labor of love consisted in their serving the living and true God. Never before had they heard of the living God; they had heard only of dead gods. They had never before heard of the true God; all the gods they had known were false gods. They had fallen in love with God, and therefore they served him in a labor of love.

3. Their patience of hope was the result of their waiting for God’s Son from heaven. Patience is endurance, and they were enduring much affliction, because of the hope that was in them. “Tribulation works patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope makes not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given unto us” (**Rom. 5:3-5**).

The wrath to come, from which we are delivered, is **THE GREAT TRIBULATION**. That awful period of judgment will be a visitation of the wrath of God upon his enemies, and “God has not appointed us unto wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him” (**1Th. 5:9-10**).

The promise of **Rev. 3:10** assures us beyond doubt of our deliverance from **THE GREAT TRIBULATION**, for what it really says, correctly translated, is this: “Because thou hast kept my enduring word, I also will keep thee from the hour of trial, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth” (compare **Matt. 24:21**).

***II. A Father in the Gospel Ministering to His Children (chapter 2).***

We need not enter upon a detailed exposition of this chapter, for it is easily understood. But let the reader meditate upon it, and let him mark especially the consuming passion in the heart of the great apostle toward his children in the faith. **1Th. 2:7**, as the Revisers translate it, reads: “But we were gentle in the midst of 'you, as when a nurse cherishes her own children.” Mark that word, “her own children.” A children’s nurse in the hospital might speak of her little patients as “my children,” but, even so, the case would be quite different if she were a mother nursing her very own children.

Then, too, notice how he speaks in **1Th. 2:11** : “Ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children.” Again the Revisers have been more careful. They make it read like this: “Ye know how we dealt with each one of you, as a father with his own children, exhorting you, and encouraging you, and testifying, to the end that ye should walk worthily of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.”

He had suffered, and was still suffering, as they were; but all the time he had them in his heart, longing to see their faces with great desire. He had tried to come to them “once and again,” but Satan had hindered him. “For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy.”

Thus again he points onward and upward, to remind them of what awaited them at the end of the road. May it please God to keep us, as he kept Paul, in the power of the blessed hope, ever serving the living and true God, and waiting for his Son from heaven!

***III. Appointed to Afflictions (chapter 3).***

Like the preceding chapter, this one needs little exposition. Paul tells of sending Timothy from Athens to establish the Thessalonian believers and to comfort them concerning their faith, “that no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto. For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know.” Timothy had returned, bringing encouragement to the apostle, who was comforted over them in all his own affliction and distress by their faith: “for now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord” (**1Th. 3:8**). He thanks God for them, rejoicing over them, and prays night and day that he might come to them to perfect whatever may be lacking in their faith (**1Th. 3:10**). And then, in the end of the chapter, he again points on to the blessed hope: “Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you. And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you: to the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints” (**1Th. 3:11-13**).

The chief point in the chapter is that the children of God are appointed to afflictions while they are passing through this world on their way home. We are slow to learn it, but it is most clearly taught in the Scriptures, that, if we walk faithfully with God, we are to expect the world to hate us and to persecute us. Of course, a carnal Christian may get along pretty well with the world, but while he is doing that he need not expect to have that fellowship which is truly with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ, and which alone can bring fullness of joy (**1John 1:3-4**). If he be a child of God at all, he will sooner or later learn, and learn to his sorrow, that his loss is immeasureable. It is the solemn declaration of Scripture that friendship with the world is spiritual adultery and enmity with God (**Jas. 4:4**).

In **John 16:33** the Lord Jesus said: “In the world ye shall have tribulation.” That was not a threat; it was a promise; and it is followed by the encouraging word, “but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” The world hated him, and still hates him, because he has testified against it; that its Works are evil (**John 7:7**), and that means its religious works as well as other works; and the same world will hate you if you look it in the face and give a like testimony.

On his first missionary journey, Paul plainly told his converts that through much tribulation they must enter into the kingdom of God (**Acts 14:22**). The faithful preacher of the gospel will not tell people, as some preachers and so-called evangelists tell them today, that if they turn to the Lord everything will be easier for them. Quite to the contrary, Paul warned them of trouble ahead if they determined to follow Christ. Like Garibaldi told his recruits of the terrible experiences facing them, and like Winston Churchill told the English that he could promise them nothing but blood, and agony, and sweat, and tears; so the faithful messengers of the gospel will warn the people that tribulation awaits those who enlist under the banner of the Captain of our Salvation.

Of course, there is the end to be considered, the glorious end, where at his right hand there are pleasures for evermore (**Ps. 16:11**); but until the goal is reached, “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy” (**1Peter 4:12-13**). And let it be always remembered that, however great they may be, “the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us-ward” (**Rom. 8:18**). Keep looking up.

***IV. Pleasing God and Waiting for Our Lord (chapter 4).***

In this chapter, the serving of the living and true God and the waiting for his Son from heaven, mentioned in the first chapter, are presented in proper balance. The normal Christian is the Christian who is serving God in a true labor of love, and is looking with eager longing for his Lord’s return. If either of these elements be lacking, the Christian life is abnormal and out of balance.

***I. Pleasing God (*1Th. 4:1-12*).***

In this section we find the apostle giving wholesome instruction for clean living, warning particularly against the sin of fornication. As we read this passage, and other similar passages, such as **1Cor. 6:1-20**, we should remember the background of these early Christians who had come out of the filthiness of heathen religious systems, where fornication and kindred sins had been tolerated, and sometimes even encouraged and enjoined as a religious duty. We quote from the Revised Version, which is clearer than the older translation: “Finally then, brethren, we beseech and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that, as ye received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, even as ye do walk,—that ye abound more and more. For ye know what charge we gave you through the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye abstain from fornication; that each one of you know how to possess himself of his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in the passion of lust, even as the Gentiles who know not God; that no man transgress, and wrong his brother in the matter: because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as also we forewarned and testified. For God called us not for uncleanness, but in sanctification. Therefore he that rejects, rejects not man, but God, who gives his Holy Spirit unto you (**1Th. 4:1-8**).

This is all quite clear, if it be remembered that sanctification here as everywhere in Scripture, means separation, and that God is calling his children to walk in separation from the world and its evils, and in fellowship with him.

**1Th. 4:9-12** are also clear. In them the apostle commends the Thessalonians for their love toward each other, and urges them in this grace to abound more and more (compare **1Peter 1:22**). Then he exhorts them to “study to be quiet.” The word for “study” is “be ambitious.” “Make it your ambition to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, even as we charged you; that ye may walk becomingly toward them that are without, and may have need of nothing.”

***II. Waiting for Our Lord (*1Th. 4:13-18*).***

Here we have the norm of the doctrine of the rapture of the saved; that is, their catching up to meet the Lord in the air. Every doctrine of Scripture has its pattern, its standard, its norm; that is, some place in Scripture devoted to it, and making it clear. The norm of the doctrine of love is **1Cor. 13:1-13**; of resurrection, **1Cor. 15:1-58**; of faith, **Heb. 11:1-40**; of the second coming of Christ to the earth, **Matt. 24:1-51**. And here, in **1Th. 4:13-18**, we have the norm of the doctrine of the rapture. The word “rapture is from the Latin rapto, meaning “caught up” or “snatched away.”

There is no need to get off into forbidden bypaths concerning the rapture, if we are careful to consult the norm and listen to what it says, rather than building our doctrine upon isolated and unrelated texts. Let us now take up the study of this mountain peak in the Word of God.

1. “But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope” (**1Th. 4:13**). Our Heavenly Father desires us to know the truth about our dear ones who have gone on to be with him. As to their bodies they are “asleep,” but they themselves are “absent from the body, and present with the Lord” (**2Cor. 5:8**).

2. “For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him” (**1Th. 4:14**). On that wonderful day, the spirits of all the saved of all the ages will come out of heaven with their Lord and ours, to receive their glorified resurrection bodies.

3. “For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord” (**1Th. 4:15**). For the three years between his conversion and the beginning of his public ministry (**Gal. 1:15-18**), Saul of Tarsus, better known to us as Paul, was a student at the feet of the risen Christ, who appeared to him from time to time, instructing him in the gospel and committing to him that rich body of truth which we know as “Pauline” (**Gal. 1:11-12**).

4. “We which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent (precede, RV) them which are asleep” (**1Th. 4:15**). Those still living when that day comes will not be caught up before those who have fallen asleep.

5. “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God” (**1Th. 4:16**). There is no mistaking this language; it is too plain. It is not “a matter of interpretation,” for such language is incapable of interpretation. We may believe it, or we may not believe it; but let no one who .rejects it claim to believe it and talk about “interpretations.” It is “the Lord himself” who is coming, and not someone else. And when he comes he will come shouting. He will come with a shout, and with his shout there will be mingled the voice of Michael the archangel, and the trump of God. That seems to dispose “without a trace” of the notion of a silent rapture. No, it will be a noisy one. And there will be something on that day to be noisy about. O! What a day!

6. “The dead in Christ shall rise first” (**1Th. 4:16**). None of the lost dead will have a part in this resurrection (**Rev. 20:5-6**; **Rev. 20:11-15**). Only the saved will rise in this resurrection, and all the saved will rise. Those who talk about a “partial rapture” would do well to consider this. There certainly is no intimation of a division so far as the dead in Christ are concerned. And, as we shall see, there is no intimation of a division among those alive and remaining.

7. “Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up” (**1Th. 4:17**). You see? The saved, the born-again ones, only they, but all of them, will be caught up. The “partial rapture” theory, which teaches that not all the saved will be caught up, but only the particularly spiritual and deserving ones, is a mischievous and unscriptural notion, born of a lack of apprehension of the doctrine of grace. No one deserves to be caught up, but all the children of God will be caught up, despite their utter lack of deserving or merit. The rapture is a part of our salvation; and salvation, in all its parts, is by grace, through faith, plus nothing.

8. “Together with them” (**1Th. 4:17**). What a thrilling word!—“together with them.” Think of all the saints, all the saved of all the ages, rising from the earth in their glorified bodies, swept up out of this scene of sin and woe, drawn up by the all-powerful magnetism of him who is “upholding all things by the word of his power” (**Heb. 1:3**)!

9. “To meet the Lord in the air” (**1Th. 4:17**). That is enough. That leaves nothing to be desired. “To meet **THE LORD** in the air.”

10. “And so shall we ever be with the Lord” (**1Th. 4:17**). Glorious thought! How the heart swells with inexpressible joy, in the contemplation of an eternity with him whom our souls love!

*“Then with my Savior, Brother, Friend,
A blest eternity I’ll spend,
Triumphant in his grace,
Triumphant in his grace.”*

11. “Wherefore comfort one another with these words” (**1Th. 4:18**). Ah, yes, indeed! There are no other words like these. These are words calculated to set the heart of every child of God singing with David of old, saying, “I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope. My soul waitsh for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning” (**Ps. 130:5-6**).

***III. Drawing a Parallel.***

Our Lord must have had the rapture in mind when he uttered the comforting words of **John 14:1-31**. Let us compare the two passages:

1. Our Lord said: “Let not your heart be troubled”; and Paul said: “Sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.”

2. Our Lord said: “Ye believe in God, believe also in me”; and Paul said: “If we believe that Jesus died and rose again (just as God had promised), even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.”

3. Our Lord said: “If it were not so, I would have told you”; and Paul said: “This we say unto you by the word of the Lord.”

4. Our Lord said: “I will come again”; and Paul said: “The Lord himself shall descend from heaven.”

5. Our Lord said: “And receive you unto myself”; and Paul said: “We shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air”

6. Our Lord said: “That where I am, there ye may be also”; and Paul said: “So shall we ever be with the Lord.”

7. Our Lord said: “Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid”; and Paul said: “Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”

The resemblance between the two passages is too exact to be accidental, or incidental; it was so planned by the Spirit of Truth.

And so our path is marked out for us, and the end thereof: we are to so walk as to please God, and we are to be waiting for our Lord. We are to serve the living and true God, and wait for his Son from heaven. May he keep us in this blessed path, leading to that blessed end!

**IV. Looking for the Day (chapter 5).**

1. “The day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night” (**1Th. 5:1-3**). The subject now changes from “the day of Christ” when our Lord shall come to catch away his people, to “the day of the Lord” when he comes afterward with his saints to set up his kingdom. It was of this “day of the Lord” that our Lord Jesus himself was speaking in **Matt. 24:36-44** :

“But of that day and hour knows no one, not even the angels of heaven, neither the Son, but the Father only. And as were the days of Noah, so shall be the coming of the Son of man. For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and they knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall be the coming of the Son of man. Then shall two men be in the field; one is taken, and one is left: two women shall be grinding at the mill; one is taken, and one is left. Watch therefore: for ye know not on what day your Lord cometh. But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what watch the thief was coming, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken through. Therefore be ye also ready; for in an hour that ye think not the Son of man cometh.”

All this has no reference to the rapture of the saints, which has been described so fully in **1Th. 4:1-18**. Of course, it is true in both cases that wherever and whenever a believer and an unbeliever are found together, “one shall be taken and the other left.” At the rapture the believer will be caught away to meet his Lord in the air and the unbeliever will be left to go into the awful judgments of The Great Tribulation; while at the coming of the Lord to judge the world the unbeliever will be taken away by death and the believer will be left to enter with his Lord into the glory of the Kingdom. The passage in **Matt. 24:1-51** refers to our Lord’s coming to the earth as Son of man to re-establish David’s throne, sitting thereon, and reigning as King of kings and Lord of lords over the whole world. By that time the effect of the Rapture will have largely passed away as a “nine days’ wonder,” and when they shall be saying, “Peace and safety,” then destruction cometh upon them as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.

2. “But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief” (**1Th. 5:4-8**). The children of light will be taken away at the rapture. They are the children of the day; they are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let them not sleep, as do others; but let them watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken n the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.”

By “the hope of salvation” is not meant hoping to be saved, but rather the “blessed hope” which accompanies salvation (**Tit. 2:11-14**; **1John 3:1-3**). At the rapture we are to be changed into his image, transformed into his likeness. We are to be like him, for we shall see him as he is. This is the blessed hope related to our salvation, and we are to put it on as a helmet, protecting even our thoughts with the peace of God which passes all understanding, guarding our hearts and our thoughts in Christ Jesus (**Php. 4:7**, RV).

3. “For God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do” (**1Th. 5:9-11**). As we have already learned in our preceding chapters the wrath referred to here is that awful period of affliction called by our Lord himself THE GREAT TRIBULATION (**Matt. 24:21**). We are delivered from this “wrath to come” (**1Th. 1:9-10**). Let us again remind ourselves of the positive promise of **Rev 3:10** : “Because thou hast kept my enduring word, I also will keep thee from the hour of trial, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.”

In this connection it is interesting to note that the same Greek word, *gregoreuo*, is translated “watch” in **1Th. 5:6** and “wake” in **1Th. 5:10**. So the rapture is not to be limited to those who are especially watchful. It will not be a “partial rapture.” It is to include all those who have been born again up to the time of that great and wonderful event. The dead in Christ and the living in Christ will be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air.

4. “And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake. And be at peace among yourselves” (**1Th.5:12-13**). This exhortation is addressed to the people generally concerning their leaders (compare **Heb.13:7**, **17**).

5. “Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men. See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men” (**1Th. 5:14-15**). This exhortation is addressed to the leaders themselves showing how they should lead (compare **1Peter 5:1-4**).

6. “Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you” (**1Th. 5:16-18**). Here is a lovely program for every Christian, and whoever follows this program may know that just so far as he follows it, he is doing the will of God.

7. “Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (**1Th. 5:19-21**). The Holy Spirit must not be quenched. It is his office to speak through prophesying, but every prophesying should be carefully tested to see whether it be from the Spirit of Truth or not (compare **1John 4:1-6**). “He that prophase (if he is prophesying 'by the Spirit) speak unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort,” and he should be carefully heard, and his prophesying carefully heeded (**1Cor. 14:3**). But one must be careful to distinguish between the “Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.”

8. “Abstain from all appearance of evil” (**1Th. 5:22**). The Revision here reads, “Abstain from every form of evil.” Of course it is well also to abstain from the very appearance of evil whenever that is possible.

9. “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calls you, who also will do it” (**1Th. 5:23-24**). Here as well as in **Heb. 4:12** the soul and the spirit of man are distinguished rather than identified as the same thing. Man is not bipartite but tripartite, and the Word of God is careful to distinguish between that which is merely soulish or animal or natural on the one hand, and that which is spiritual on the other hand (compare **1Cor. 2:14**).

How good it is to read here that our sanctification will one day come to its full culmination, and our whole spirit and soul and body will be preserved unto that day, “blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ!” This is not because of anything in us, but because “faithful is he that calls you, who also will do it” (compare. **1Cor. 1:8-9**, **22; 1Th. 3:13**).

10. “Brethren, pray for us” (**1Th. 5:25**). What a gracious ministry is vouchsafed even to the humblest child of God, that he may pray and pray effectually even for an apostle of Christ!

11. “Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss” (**1Th. 5:26**). This was a common oriental salutation, as it is even to this day. The form of salutation is not to be looked upon as a matter of compulsion or legalism. The attitude of the heart is the thing that is important, and with the heart we should always “let brotherly love continue” (**Heb. 13:1**).

12. “I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren” (**1Th. 5:27**). The word “holy” is omitted from the Revision. Of course all God’s people are “holy brethren” (**Heb. 3:1**), but the point here is that the Epistle must be read to the whole church. Printing had not yet been invented, and therefore it was impracticable that each member should have a copy. How we ought to thank God for the art of printing by which it is possible for even the humblest child of God to have the whole Word of God for his very own!

13. “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen” (**1Th. 5:28**). This benediction, like all other benedictions in the Bible, is only for the children of God (compare **Eph. 6:24** with **1Cor. 16:22-23**).