

August 16

In everything give thanks. 1Thessalonians 5:18

HAVING the condition of heart which is in fellowship with the Lord and fully devoted to the doing of His will, the Lord's people not only implore His blessing at the beginning of each day, and present their

R2353 "The lesson of *faith*, to those who have become the Lord's consecrated people, is not merely faith in doctrines and theories, nor, indeed, chiefly this faith. The chief feature of faith is confidence in God; that what he has promised he is able and willing to fulfill. This faith grasps not only the things to come, but also the things present; this faith rejoices not only in the glory that shall be revealed, but rejoices also in the sufferings and trials and difficulties and all the rich experiences which an all-wise Father sees best to permit. Let us therefore, as the Apostle exhorts, rejoice evermore, "in everything giving thanks."--1 Thess. 5:18; Eph. 5:20.

The best illustrations of this true faith, this *continuous confidence in God*, is found, as we should expect, in our dear Redeemer's experiences and their narrative. Realizing that he was in the world for the purpose of serving the divine plan, he realized also continually the supervision of divine wisdom in respect to all his affairs: consequently he not only went to the Father frequently in prayer, and went to the Word of the Lord for guidance, but every experience through which he passed, and all the opposition with which he met, he recognized as being under the divine *supervision*. He knew that he was fully consecrated to the Father, and seeking not his own will but the will of him that sent him; he knew consequently that the Father's providential care was superintending all the affairs of his life.

This is forcibly illustrated in his answer to Pilate; when the latter said to him, "Knowest thou not that I have power either to deliver thee or to put thee to death?" Jesus answered, "Thou couldest have no power, except it were given thee of my Father." Again he said, with respect to the cup of suffering and ignominy, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" Indeed, it was sufficient for him in any and every matter to realize that the Father was controlling: this thought gave him courage to do, to suffer and to bear.

And similar confidence in divine Providence is necessary to all who would come off conquerors through him who loved us and died for us. If we can feel sure that we have fully surrendered ourselves to God according to his call, we may also feel sure that all things are working for our *good*...

"WHAT IS FAITH'S FOUNDATION STRONG?"

In our text, after the Apostle has urged us to be "content with such things as ye have," he adds the reason or ground upon which this advice is given, saying, "For he hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Yes; this is the true ground of contentment, the realization of the Lord's care, and that the Lord's wisdom and grace are being exercised towards us,--and that such things as he grants are the things which are best for us, and which we would choose

thanks at the close of each day, but in all of life's affairs they seek to remember that they have consecrated their all to the Lord, and by faith look up to Him in all the affairs of life;--and in proportion to the importance of their undertakings they, by faith, realize the association of God's providence with all the interests of life and give thanks accordingly.

for ourselves, if we had sufficient wisdom and insight into all the circumstances of the case.

The Apostle adds, "So then we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, I will not fear what man shall do unto me." The whole world has wondered at the intelligent courage of the humble ones of the Lord's people. The secret of their courage and of their strength is in their confidence that the Lord is their helper, that he, with wisdom and love which are infinite, is both able and willing to make all things work together for their good."

F685-686 "Thanksgiving must largely take the place of requests, from the time that we learn of the lengths and breadths and heights and depths of the divine provision, for both the New Creation and for our dear ones according to the flesh, and for all the families of the earth. What could we ask for more or better than God has already promised?"

Surely we could ask nothing more than has been promised respecting the future glories of the New Creation; nor could we ask more respecting the present joys of the same class. Every provision that reason could imagine, every want, every necessity, has already been anticipated for us and provided--given to us for the taking. We merely lack wisdom as to how to take, how to appropriate these divine provisions. Giving thanks, therefore, we merely ask for wisdom and grace so to partake of them that our joy may be full. Our requests, therefore, must be for increased filling with the holy Spirit--wisdom from above."

February 22 Manna "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have. *Hebrews 13:5*"

Selfish prayers are too expensive. Some have gained wealth and lost the truth and its service; some have gained health, only to find that with it they gained other trials no less severe: some have had their dear ones restored to them from the very jaws of death, only to wish afterward that God had not answered their prayers--or, more correctly, to wish that they had accepted the Lord's wisdom and providences trustfully, contentedly, uncomplainingly...Spiritual Israel should use wisely such things as are within their reach--accepting all as God's gifts with thanksgiving; but their petitions should be for spiritual gifts -- including patient endurance and heart contentment."

R2352-2354 "We, by the grace of God, have found the pearl of great price, and are not only content with the terms upon which it is offered to us, but most gladly, willingly, joyfully, we count all else but loss and dross that we may retain our ownership in it,--win Christ, and be found in him,--members of the body of the great Prophet, Priest and King, who shortly, as the antitype of Moses,

This is the will of God concerning us;--He wills that we live in such an attitude of constant regard for His will and for His blessing;--and He wills it in respect to us because it will be the condition most favorable to our progress in the narrow way, and which will best assist us in making our calling and election sure. Z'03-25 R3136:6

shall stand forth as the deliverer of all who love righteousness, from the bondage of Sin and Satan.--Acts 3:22,23.

All who have intelligently taken the position of followers of Christ, knew from their start in the narrow way to expect trials and difficulties and adversities, and have said to the Master:--

"Not for ease or worldly pleasure,
Nor for fame my prayer shall be;
Gladly will I toil and suffer,
Only let me walk with thee, close to thee."

We should view every affair and incident of this present life that is not painful as a cause for thankfulness to the Lord; because it is that much less than our covenant might legitimately require...

Viewed from the proper standpoint, all the trials and difficulties which come to us will be seen to be mercies and blessings, designed to shape us in conformity with the lines of character manifested in our Lord and Head, and to polish us and to make us fit for the inheritance of the saints in light...

FEW ARE APPRECIATIVE -- FEW VALUE THE THINGS THAT THEY HAVE

But evidently only the smaller number of those who have named the name of Christ, and who have made consecration of life and time and influence and all things to him, have ever appreciated these matters in their true light; and hence, not only are the so-called Christian nations the most discontented peoples of the world, but professed Christians are often among the most discontented and unhappy...

Brethren, these things ought not so to be. See to it that they do not so continue. Remember that according to our covenant we sacrificed all of our earthly interests and rights, that we might become sharers with our Master in the divine nature and all the heavenly promises. Remember that the only things of an earthly kind promised us by the Lord are that we shall have the things *needful*...

If your health is not the best, do not go mourning and complaining all your days; be thankful -- thankful that it is not worse, remembering that as a member of the fallen race the full penalty of sin against you is pain and suffering unto death. Whatever therefore you have, that is moderate or endurable or in some measure enjoyable, be very thankful, very grateful, and make the most of it...

If your position in life is a lowly one, and requires continual labor to secure the things needful, do not complain, but, on the contrary, render thanks -- thanks for the health and strength to perform the needed labor; thanks for the realization that the present brief life is only the schooling time, and that the lessons of the present, rightly learned, will bring riches of grace and glory which the world could neither give nor take away. Think then, on the other hand, of the

fact that your condition is in some respects more favorable than that of some others who seem to be more prosperous or better situated: how many who have had wealth and leisure have found in them a curse! How many who have not been cursed by wealth have found that the deceitfulness of riches and the pride they are apt to induce are hindrances instead of helps in the "narrow way;" how many have found the meaning of the Lord's words, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom of God." ...

The time is short; and those of the Lord's people who do not soon start to cultivate a spirit of contentment and thankfulness will not only not be fit for the Kingdom, but will as sharers of the world's spirit of discontent be in sore distress with the world very shortly, in the great time of trouble. Contentment and the faith which it implies, are necessary to godliness; and whoever is attempting godliness without striving for cultivation of contentment will surely make a failure of it. Godliness and the fruits of the spirit, meekness, patience, gentleness, longsuffering, brotherly-kindness, love, will not grow in the garden

of the soul, where the weeds of discontent are permitted to sap the strength and vitiate the air with their noxious presence and influence.

The sentiment of one of our precious hymns is quite to the point, and we desire, for ourselves and for all of the Lord's people, that condition of faith and consecration and contentment which will permit us to sing from the heart, with the spirit and with the understanding also, the words:--

"Content with beholding his face,
My all to his pleasure resigned,
No changes of season or place
Can make any change in my mind.

"While blest with the sense of his love
A palace a toy would appear,
And prisons would palaces prove,
If Jesus still dwelt with me there."

Who can tell that the Lord may not ultimately put some such tests to us, as these mentioned by the poet which were applied to himself and to others of the faithful in the past? Let us remember that we will not be

faithful in large things unless we have learned to be faithful in little things. Let each, therefore, begin, and faithfully continue, a transformation of his life along these lines of godliness with contentment in the most trifling affairs of life. He will thus not only be making himself and others the happier in the present time, but he will be preparing himself for greater trials and tests that the Lord may be pleased to impose later, to prove to what extent we are overcomers of the world and of its spirit.

"This is the victory that overcometh the world, even your *faith*;" because faith lies at the foundation of all loyalty to God and his cause. Faith in the divine supervision of all our affairs not only gives peace and content, but it saps the root of all selfish ambitions and vain gloryings and boastings; because of our faith in the Lord's Word, that "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted and he that exalteth himself shall be abased." Faith in the Lord's supervision *prefers* the Lord's arrangement to any other as respects the sufferings of this present time and the glory that is to follow; and hence it doth not puff up but builds up in the character-likeness of our Redeemer."

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"HOLD FAST THAT WHICH IS GOOD"

1 THESSALONIANS 5:14-28

--JANUARY 25--

OUR LESSON is a summary statement of the proper attitude for the Lord's people to maintain in order that they may grow in grace and through faithfulness finally come off conquerors through their Redeemer. Although addressed to the saints at Thessalonica, these noble words have been a source of strength, encouragement and discipline to the faithful in Christ Jesus from their writing to the present time. No child of God can afford to ignore nor to neglect these words of divine counsel, and in proportion as each of us gives heed to them our lives will surely be the more Christ-like, and we will thus be the more pleasing to the Lord, and eventually make our calling and election sure to joint-heirship with him in the Millennial Kingdom, and its glories and its service to the world of mankind. Let us take up these apostolic injunctions seriatim.

Not the elders alone are exhorted by the Apostle, as though they were a separate class, exercising control and treating the brethren as their wards; he addresses the "brethren"--the entire Church, including the sisters also. But this does not signify that the counsel would not apply specially to the elders; because they were selected as amongst the brethren most advanced in Christian doctrine and practice, and as the representatives of the Church, to specially look after the interests of the Lord's flock. These apostolic words apply to each member of the flock in proportion to his capacity and ability, but would naturally come with special force to the elders who, under God's providence, had the oversight of his Church, "to feed the flock." (Acts 20:28.) While, therefore, all the brethren are to see to the carrying out of the injunctions here given, the elders in every Church should feel a special responsibility respecting them--a responsibility derived from the position they occupy as representatives of the Church,--its standard-bearers.

The unruly are here contrasted with the feeble-minded or faint-hearted and the weak. The divine arrangement is full of order as well as full of liberty; and, rightly understood, liberty can best be conserved by order; and order best be maintained through a reasonable recognition of personal liberty. The mistake frequently made, not only by earthly law-givers and disciplinarians, but also in the Church of Christ, is along the line of extremes, either in one or the other of these directions. Some misunderstand liberty to mean lawlessness, disorder, unruliness. Others with equally good intentions, no doubt, are disposed to carry order and obedience to rules to such an extent as to dwarf the individual liberties of the flock. Great grace is needed along this line, to prevent friction amongst the Lord's people--to preserve the unity of the spirit in the bonds of love and peace.

We are not to have such false ideas of personal liberty as would ignore rules, law, order, in the assemblies of the Lord's people; and

those disposed to be unruly, self-conscious, thrusting themselves forward, without the request of the Church, need to be held in check--to be "warned"--to be shown that their course is contrary to the spirit of the Lord and all the arrangements instituted by the apostles, his representatives. They need to be "warned" also that their course would mean injury to the Church, instead of blessing and peace and joy and development; and injury to themselves, in that it would develop in them a combativeness or self-esteem, already too large, and might thus not only work injury to the cause, but hinder themselves from attaining the character-likeness necessary to a share in the Kingdom.

But while some might need thus to be warned and held in check, others, faint-hearted and weak, would need aid, support, encouragement;--naturally backward, diffident, lacking in combativeness and self-esteem, they need to be pushed to the front a little, in order to bring out what talents they really possess, for their own encouragement and for the blessing also of the entire household of faith.

"Be patient toward all" ⁽¹⁾ seems to imply that the better balanced amongst the Lord's people should look with sympathy upon and exercise patient forbearance toward the classes above mentioned;--not only toward the weak and those who lack courage, but toward *all*; including those who have too much courage and self-push. The Scriptures repeatedly admonish us, "Ye have need of patience," and day by day the advanced children of the Lord realize the truthfulness of this, and come to appreciate patience as one of the chief Christian graces. (1) ⁽²⁾ Growth in knowledge helps us to grow in this grace of patience, for as we appreciate more and more the heavenly Father's patience with us it helps us to apply the same principle toward others. (2) As we come to realize the great disaster that is upon our race as a whole--our fallen condition and how the fall has affected some more in one manner and others more in another--some chiefly mentally, some chiefly physically, and some chiefly morally, it enlarges our sympathy toward our fellow-creatures, and thus increases our *patience* in dealing with them. This is particularly true in respect to the household of faith, in which we recognize amongst those whom God has graciously called, some more blemished, perhaps, than ourselves in some particulars--though we may be more imperfect in others. ⁽³⁾ The thought that our heavenly Father has favored and called anyone should make us

(1) 1/3 Aug. 15 Manna, 1 Thess. 5:14

(2) 1/3 Aug. 15 Manna

(3) 1/3 Aug. 15 Manna

extremely careful how we would co-operate with the Lord in respect to the call, and be as helpful as possible to all those who are seeking to walk with us in the footsteps of our Lord in the narrow way. We certainly should have special patience, therefore, with the brethren. - Rom. 14:15; 1 Cor. 8:11.

"See that none render evil for evil unto any." This exhortation has a special force when we remember how much evil treatment was heaped upon the followers of our Lord at that time; and that the writer himself, as well as those specially addressed, had suffered much on account of their faithfulness in dispensing the Word of the Lord, the Word of life, the good tidings. The exhortation means that the Lord's followers are not to attempt to retaliate upon their enemies by doing them evil in return, or in any manner to "get even with them." The Lord's exhortation is that we seek to render good in return for the evil we receive, and includes our language as well as our conduct, we are not to give word for word, railing for railing, accusation for accusation, slander for slander any more than blow for blow. It includes also our very thoughts, for we are not even to render anger for anger, malice for malice, envy for envy. Two evils can never make a good--two wrongs will never make a right. Our sympathy for our blinded enemies is to cultivate our patience and forbearance toward them in thought, word and deed.--1 Pet. 2:21-23.

The Lord's people, so far from ever turning aside to render railing for railing or evil for evil, are uniformly to "pursue that which is good"--that which is right, that which the Lord approves. This will mean that each member of the Royal Priesthood will pursue righteousness to the extent of his ability--pursue every good and noble sentiment, and seek to live as nearly as possible up to the high standard of righteousness, perfection, exemplified absolutely in our Lord. This pursuit of goodness is to be maintained not only amongst the brethren, where all are professing the same pursuit, but also toward others--in our dealings with the world. Some of the world can learn more of the gospel through witnessing our avoidance of evil and our constant pursuit of righteousness, than by anything we can say to them;--and possibly as they discern the new life in us they may gradually come to have "an ear to hear" the message of good tidings which has wrought this change in us.

The worldly spirit does not approve this part of the Apostle's counsel, but urges, rather, that we should treat others as they treat us--that we should "give as good as we get,"--meaning that we should give as bad as we get. By way of saying as good a word as they can in their own favor along these lines they sometimes accuse the Lord's followers of cowardice. Courage is one of the noble qualities of humanity, and it is quite a trial to some to be considered timid or lacking in courage; and to such this enjoined restraint of word and act is a particular trial. It is not true, however, that the Lord's counsel tends to effeminacy or lack of courage. This matter is well stated in the language of another, as follows:--

"One feature which stands out clear in the society founded by Christ and his apostles is the extraordinary heroism which was shown in the face of death and tortures, not only by men, but by feeble women and tender children. It amazed the heathen magistrates who were striving after *fortitude* by the aid of philosophy. It amazed the wild savages, who mistook gentleness for cowardice, when they found it was harder to terrify the missionary who came with the Gospel than the invader who came in battle array. Quiet endurance may be *more heroic* than violent resistance, and the Christian law of bearing personal insults and injuries meekly tends to the development of the highest courage and truest manliness. There is nothing more courageous, more heroic, in all history than living up to this precept."

"Rejoice evermore" is the same exhortation that in our last lesson we saw the Apostle sending to the Philippians. The Christian's rejoicing is not hysterical, but founded on established principles, upon promises and comforting assurances of the divine Word which stands firm amid all the storms and trials and shocks of life.

"Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks." Only somewhat advanced pupils in the School of Christ are prepared clearly to comprehend this exhortation. Having surrendered their wills and all of the interests of the present life to the Lord, exchanging earthly interests for heavenly interests, the Lord's people are less disposed than others to pray unceasingly for *earthly good things*. Having set their affections on things above, their prayers are in respect to those things,--the heavenly robe, the heavenly food, the heavenly favor. Their prayers are specially for such leadings of divine providence and such assistance of divine grace as will enable them to rejoice always in such experiences as their gracious Lord may deem best for their spiritual development. More and more they find their prayers to consist of thanksgiving for blessings already

received, as well as for those yet to come, which they grasp by the hand of faith.

Their prayers are without ceasing, in that, ^[4]having the condition of heart which is in fellowship with the Lord and fully devoted to the doing of his will, they not only implore his blessing at the beginning of each day, and present their thanks at the close of each day, but in all of life's affairs they seek to remember that they have consecrated their all to the Lord, and by faith look up to him in all of the affairs of life;--and in proportion to the importance of their undertakings they, by faith, realize the association of God's providence with all the interests of life and give thanks accordingly. This is the will of God concerning us;-- he wills that we live in such an attitude of constant regard for his will and for his blessing;--and he wills it in respect to us because it will be the condition most favorable to our progress in the narrow way, and which will best assist us in making our calling and election sure.

Having stated succinctly the Church's proper attitude toward the Lord to be one of continued rejoicing, prayer and thanksgiving and acceptance of his divine providences, the Apostle next briefly admonishes them respecting their attitude toward each other in the Church, in their feasting together on the Word of the Lord;--saying,

"Quench not the Spirit.

"Despise not prophesyings.

"Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.

"Abstain from every form of evil."

By following these admonitions, their fellowship in the Lord would be the more profitable--they would, as a congregation of the Lord's followers, be helped onward the more toward the grand standard to which we are called. The spirit of the Lord amongst his people is compared to "a flame of sacred love" for the Lord and all connected with his cause: this flame is enkindled through the divine message in each one individually, when begotten of the holy spirit, and appertains, therefore, to the Church collectively, under the guidance of that spirit. In proportion as the church grows in knowledge and in love and in fellowship with the Lord this "flame of sacred love" will make it a light in the world,--as a city set on a hill, which cannot be hid. This is a different figure from the use of fire as a symbol of destruction.

True, the flame of sacred love does not consume and destroy sin, but sympathy with sin; sin is not a part of the new creature, which opposes it and desires to have it consumed,--that the light of righteousness and truth may shine the more brightly. This "flame of sacred love" may, indeed, consume our mortal bodies, as living sacrifices in the service of the truth; but with such a consumption the new mind is fully in accord, and rejoices, realizing that it has in heaven an enduring habitation, and counting it all joy to be reckoned worthy to suffer for the Lord's cause. The more this "flame of sacred love" burns, individually and collectively in the Church, the greater will be the progress in all good things. Hence we are to be specially on guard, that our words and conduct and the general management of the interests of Zion in our midst shall permit this spirit of love to have free course in all our hearts and lives--that it be not quenched either with false doctrines or forms and ceremonies, or too rigid rules or by worldly spirit or by cares of this life or by any other thing, circumstance or condition under our control.

The Church is not to despise prophesyings: the Apostle does not mean that we are not to despise the prophecies of the holy men of old who spoke as they were moved by the holy spirit--it would be unnecessary to caution the Church on that subject. The exhortation is, not to despise prophesyings that may be done in our midst. As we have previously seen, the gift of prophecy in the sense of foretelling coming events was to some extent in the Church in the Apostle's day, as one of the gifts of the spirit, to mark out the Lord's people and to assist in establishing them at a time when the inspired messages of the Lord were unavailable. We find, however, that the Apostle frequently used this word "prophecy" in respect to *public utterance*, declamation, preaching. The early churches were accustomed to having general gatherings for their mutual assistance and upbuilding, and may have been in danger of thinking more of the gifts of miracles and tongues than of connected and logical discourse respecting the truth. The Apostle points out that without discarding the other blessings, this one should not be despised--our Lord was a preacher; the apostles were preachers, and the Lord has since raised up instructors amongst his people. Hence, such service should not be despised or ignored.

We live in a time when the very reverse of this is true; when the danger is rather that too much time and too much attention may

[4] Aug. 16 Manna, 1 Thess 5:18

be given to preaching, and not sufficient to the other methods of inculcating truth and encouraging the Lord's flock, "edifying and building up yourselves in the most holy faith"--when too much reliance is apt to be placed upon a leader and a connected discourse.

"Prove all things, hold fast that which is good." ⁽⁵⁾ However much they should ever come to respect prophesyings, or public preaching, the Lord's people should learn proportionately not to receive what they might hear without proper examination and criticism: they should prove all things that they hear, should exercise discrimination of mind, as to what is logically and scripturally supported, and what is mere conjecture and possibly sophistry. They should prove what they hear, with a view to holding fast everything that stands the test of the divine Word, and shows itself to be in accordance with the holy spirit; and they should as promptly and thoroughly reject whatever will not stand these tests. Alas! the Lord's people today greatly need to give attention to this exhortation; for much is being presented in the name of the Lord and as the teaching of his Word that is neither logical nor scriptural--that is supported neither by the letter nor the spirit of the Word;--much that is not good, and should be rejected. With such a discrimination prevailing amongst the Lord's consecrated ones, how much of the chaff of nominal "orthodoxy" would be rejected, and what a hungering and thirsting and searching there soon would be for the good Word of God, that would stand these tests! Let us diligently heed the Apostle's exhortation on this point.

"Abstain from every *form* of evil" (Rev. Ver.) gives the Apostle's thought. There are various evils which present themselves; some in their true hideousness, and some under a cloak of hypocrisy--some openly and boldly admitting their evil character and endeavoring to decoy the Lord's people into sin; others, garbing themselves as angels of light, would seek to mislead and to deceive. ⁽⁶⁾ The exhortation is that everything that is evil, whether it have a good form or a bad form, is to be resisted and opposed. We may not say with some, "Let us do evil that good may follow." The Lord's people must be loyal to the *principles* of righteousness, under any and all circumstances. To do otherwise would be surely to undermine the character which they are seeking to build up.

⁽⁷⁾ To abstain from every *appearance* of evil is another thought--a different one from what the Apostle's words in the original would warrant; nevertheless, they represent a sound principle. We surely should abstain not only from evil things, whatever their form or garb, but we should abstain so far as possible from doing things that we know to be good, which our friends or neighbors might misunderstand and consider to be evil things. The spirit of a sound mind dictates that not only evil in its every form, but everything that has an evil appearance, even, should be avoided--that our influence for the Lord and the truth may be the greater.

In closing, the Apostle pronounces his benediction. It is an invocation--the expression of his heart's desire on their behalf--that the God of *peace* would sanctify them wholly. He thus emphasizes the fact that God is not a God of confusion, anarchy, turmoil and disturbance, but a God of peace; and that in proportion as we are taught of him in the School of Christ we will become lovers of peace, and the peace of God will dwell in us and will abound in us more and more, and cause us to be not unfruitful in regard to holy character, and will make us advocates and promoters of peace in our words and deeds. As it is written, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God." Peace in the heart, manifesting itself in the look and word and conduct, is, as the Apostle intimates, an evidence of whole or complete setting apart, and that God's spirit has come into such a sanctified heart and is filling it with his peace, the peace of God which passeth all understanding.

"And may your spirit, soul and body be preserved entire, without blame, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." (R.V.) The Apostle could mean this only in respect to the Church, as a whole, and not concerning the individual members; because he surely did not expect the Christians at Thessalonica without exception to live until the presence of the Lord, even as he did not himself expect to live until that time, and so declared. (2 Tim. 4:7,8; 2 Pet. 1:12-15.) The Apostle is not, therefore, to be understood as speaking of the spirit and soul and body of each individual Christian at Thessalonica, but respecting the spirit of the Church, the soul of the Church, and the body of the Church. In other words, his desire was

that the Church at Thessalonica might continue to the full end of the Gospel age as a noble and faithful congregation of the Lord's body, full of his spirit and courageous in his work. As a matter of fact, we know that the Apostle's good wishes, or prayer did not come true; for this congregation, like the others he planted, died out: not heeding with sufficient care his injunctions and exhortations, not proving all things, not holding fast the good, not abstaining from evil, not being sanctified wholly, the spirit of the Lord in their midst was quenched, and as a congregation it died, or ceased to be--the light having blessed and confirmed some, passed on to other quarters, seeking those "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light."

"Faithful is he that called you, who will also do it." The fact that the Thessalonica Church has not been kept in accordance with the Apostle's prayer, is not to be charged to unfaithfulness on God's part, but to neglect and unfaithfulness on the part of those whom the Apostle addressed, or their successors in that congregation. So it is with every one of us who has been called of the Lord. It is for us to hear and to heed the Lord's message through his servants, if we would make our calling and our election sure. If not disposed to hear his message in the way he has sent it, the fault lies at our own door. Faithful is he who called us, who would rejoice to do for us abundantly better things than we could ask or think, if we accept his provisions in faith and follow the directions of his Word.

"Brethren, pray for us." There was nothing of the pope or lord about the Apostle--no feeling of such a superiority to the others of the Lord's flock that he could pray for them to their advantage, but needed not their prayers. Similar is the spirit of all who are in the proper relationship with the Lord--a spirit of humility and appreciation of all the household of faith, and of their petitions at the throne of grace--a realization that the humblest of the Lord's people has access to the throne of heavenly grace, and may there obtain mercy and find strength to help in every time of need.

"Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss." This was the ancient style of greeting, corresponding to our present style of saluting with the hand or with the hat or by shaking hands. The custom of men kissing each other is still followed in eastern countries. The Apostle's thought is that there should be thorough cordiality amongst all who claim membership in the body of Christ, and that this fellowship should be manifested by the accustomed form of greeting,--whatever reasonable form that might be. Possibly he meant--"I greet," etc., implying that he would love to be with them and greet them personally, and now did so by letter.

Before invoking the Lord's blessing upon the Church, the Apostle charged most strongly that this epistle should not be considered as a private message or letter to those in whose care it was sent, but that it should be considered as his address to the entire company of the Lord's faithful, and should be read to them all. The Apostle seemed to fear that there might be a spirit of censorship amongst the leading brethren which might lead them to preserve his letter to themselves, and to dole it out second-hand to the Church, either as a whole or such parts of it as in their judgment would be *prudent*. Such a spirit on the part of the elders in any Church would be reprehensible. God's Word is for God's people, and whoever would hinder its flow would surely offend the Master himself. That the elders at Thessalonica were faithful is apparent from the fact that the epistle was delivered to the Church. Some today need caution along this same line: many preachers and teachers have discerned in *The Plan of the Ages* the light of the Millennial dawn, but, instead of heralding it to others, have sought to hide it from the Lord's people that they might use it as a personal illuminant to cause themselves to shine before their flocks. They consider this cunning,--"wise and prudent,"--forgetting that the Lord declares that he *hides* his deep things from the wise and prudent and reveals them unto babes. (Luke 10:21.) True to our Lord's words, this class rarely makes much progress;--the truth passes on and ere long they are in comparative darkness;--because they received not the truth in the love of it, but in the love of self. (2 Thess. 2:10.) Loyalty to the Lord and to his flock and to his Truth, through whatever channel it comes, demands that it shall be heralded by each of us to the extent of our ability and in its purity and as speedily as possible,--consistent with the condition and interests of those for whom the Lord intended it--his flock. Shepherds who feed themselves and not the flock are warned by the Lord of his displeasure, and could not be expected to thrive spiritually, or otherwise to enjoy the light of the Lord's face.--Ezek. 34:2,7-10.

⁽⁵⁾ Aug. 18 Manna, 1 Thess. 5:21

⁽⁶⁾ ½ Aug. 19 Manna, 1 Thess. 5:22

⁽⁷⁾ ½ Aug. 19 Manna

*What is the Soul, What is the Spirit, and What is the Body of Man? is treated in MILLENNIAL DAWN, Vol. V., chaps. 8 and 12.