

**The Community of Faith, Love, Hope
That Was Built by God's Grace
[1 THESSALONIANS]**

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Introduction

What is a community? How should the body of the Lord be established as the Lord's community? How should the Lord's church and the Lord-centered community be?

I personally became interested in community by studying Paul theology at Westminster Theological Seminary. So, as I was studying theology, I was studying intermittently by buying books and reading books about church and community. I did so because I wanted to learn. I really wanted to know what the Bible says about the true church and community. The reason I wanted to know and learn about the church was because I was kept on hearing the negative news about the church. As I kept hearing the negative news about the church, I had been in a lot of trouble and asked myself these kinds of questions: 'Certainly what the Bible says about the church or community is not like this, but why is it like this now?', 'Why there is quarrel, dispute and division within the church?' So when I was about to finish my study at Fuller Theological Seminary, I wrote my graduation thesis on the Christ-centered community based on Philippians 2:1-4.

One of my goals that I have is to meditate and preach all the Paul's letter in the New Testament before I finish my ministry. As I was doing so, I finally finished meditating and preaching 1 Thessalonians last Sunday which I started about two years ago. Since I had been putting my 1 Thessalonians writings together as after I preached my sermons on 1 Thessalonians each week, it wasn't hard for me to put all the writings together. After I did so, I changed the title of the book of 1 Thessalonians from "The community that was loved and chosen by God" to "The Community of Faith, Love, Hope That Was Built by God's Grace". The reason why I changed the title was because I realized that Apostle Paul mentioned "grace" not only at the beginning of the letter in 1:1 but also at the end of the letter in 5:28. I thought that the key theme that binds the whole book of 1 Thessalonians is "grace". And when I thought about what kind of church the Thessalonian church was again, 1 Thessalonians 1:3 came into my mind: "We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ." I thought that the phrases "your work produced by faith," "your labor prompted by love" and "your endurance inspired by hope" that are mentioned in this verse are good descriptions of the Thessalonian church as a whole. So I thought that the Thessalonian church was the community of faith, love, hope that was build by God's grace, I titled the book "The Community of Faith, Love, Hope That Was Built by God's Grace".

I am grateful and glad that I have finished this manuscript of 1 Thessalonians by God's grace. I hope and pray that this book may be beneficial in learning about the biblical ecclesiology and biblical community. As we learn, let us pray that we may each seek to serve the Lord's church and pursue the community that the Lord teaches.

As I hold onto the the Lord's promise "... I will build my church ..." (Mt.16:18),

Pastor James Kim
(February 2019, Thinking of the Victory Presbyterian Church)

When I remember and pray

[1 Thessalonians 1:1-3]

What do you think is the best thing that you can do for a person you love? I think it is prayer. I think prayer is the best thing we can do for our loved ones. As I am trying to pray to God for the people I love, there is one thing that I have learned about prayer through the Paul's letter in the New Testament. It is to remember and pray for the loved one. For example, in Philippians 1:3, Paul wrote to the Philippian church saints whom he loved with the affection of Christ "... every time I remember you". He also wrote to the Ephesians church saints "remembering you in my prayers" (Eph. 1:16). So I began to say to my brothers and sisters in Christ around me, "I'm praying for you" as I try to have a habit of remembering them in my prayers. Then, on November 13, 2012, when I was meditating on the Word of God before the Morning Prayer, I saw my writing on my personal blog: 'I am remembering you and praying. In doing so, God impresses you in my heart. Jesus is praying in remembrance of me. The reason is because I am imprinted in Jesus' heart.'

In 1 Thessalonians 1:2, Apostle Paul wrote to the Thessalonian church saints: "We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers." Paul always gave thanks to God because of the Philippian church saints (Phil. 1:3). How could he always thank God? How can we always thank God when we pray for our loved ones? Paul always thanked God for the Philippian church saints whom he loved with the affection of Jesus Christ (v. 8) because he saw with his spiritual eyes what God had been doing in their lives (v. 6). When we pray for the ones we love with the affection of Jesus Christ, we must always thank God because we see what God has been doing in their lives with our spiritual eyes instead of seeing their transgression with our physical eyes (Prov. 17:9). When Paul remembered the Thessalonian church saints and prayed for them, he gave thanks to God always (1 Thess. 1:2). Why did Paul always give thanks to God whenever he prayed to God for them? The reason was because Paul constantly remembered something before Father God. It was the Thessalonian church saints' work of faith, labor of love and steadfastness of hope in the Lord Jesus Christ (v. 3). In other words, Paul gave thanks to God always whenever he remembered the Thessalonian church saints because of their work of faith, labor of love and steadfastness of hope. So I would like to receive the grace that God gives us as we meditated on the three reasons why Paul gave thanks to God whenever he remembered the Thessalonian church saints and prayed for them under the heading "When I remember and pray".

First, the reason why Paul gave thanks to God always whenever he remembered the Thessalonian church saints was because of their work of faith.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 1:3 – "constantly bearing in mind your work of faith" What was the work of faith of the Thessalonian church saints, whom Paul constantly remembered and gave thanks to God in his prayers? We can summarize their work of faith in three ways:

- (1) The Thessalonian church saints' work of faith was that the gospel didn't come to them in word only but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 1:5 – "for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction;" God's amazing work of faith in the Thessalonian church saints was that when they heard the gospel of Jesus Christ through Paul, the gospel didn't come to them in word only but also in power, in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. As result, they turned to God from

idols to serve the living and true God (v. 9). It is the God's amazing work of faith that the Thessalonian church saints were saved by hearing the gospel through Paul and had assurance of salvation so that they turned to God from idols and served Him. Are we witnessing this work of faith?

(2) The Thessalonian church saints' work of faith was that they received God's word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 1:6 – “You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit.” The God's amazing work of faith that was manifested in the Thessalonian church saints was that they received the word of God in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit since they believed in Jesus. What a wonderful work of faith? If they didn't believe in Jesus, they didn't have to go through the much tribulation. But they did believe in Jesus and received His word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit. And when they received His word that they heard through Paul and his co-workers, they “accepted it not as the word of men but for what it really is, the word of God” 2:13). And the word of God was at work in them who believed (v. 13). Are we witnessing this work of faith?

(3) The Thessalonian church saints' work of faith was that their faith had become known everywhere.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 1:8 – “The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia-- your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it.” The God's amazing work of faith that was manifested in the Thessalonian church saints was that their faith in God has become known everywhere. What a beautiful image of the believers it is. What amazing word of their faith it was to see that the work of faith didn't only appeared among them but also known to everywhere through them. The work of their faith in turning to God from idols in repentance and serving the living and true God was known everywhere. Dare we witnessing this work of faith in our lives?

Apostle Paul, who witnessed this work of faith in the lives of the Thessalonian church saints, always, thanked God as he remembered them in his prayers (1:2-3). He thanked God continually (2:13). I hope and pray that this kind of thanksgiving be with us.

Second, the reason why Paul gave thanks to God always whenever he remembered the Thessalonian church saints was because of their labor prompted by love.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 1:3: "... your labor prompted by love" What was the labor of love of the Thessalonian church saints, whom Paul always remembered and prayed for them in his prayers? We can sum up their labor of love in five ways:

(1) The Thessalonian church saints' labor of love was that they became imitators of Paul, his co-workers, and the Lord.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 1:6 – “You became imitators of us and of the Lord; in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit.” The Thessalonian church saints' amazing labor of love was their labor and hardship in preaching the gospel of God like Paul and his co-workers (2:9). Also, like Paul and his co-workers who suffered in preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Thessalonian church saints also suffered from their own countrymen (v. 14). They suffered by the Jews who were hostile to all men (v. 15). In short, the Thessalonian church saints' labor of love was

participation in the suffering of Paul and his co-workers in preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. They also suffered for the gospel. Are we witnessing this labor of love in our lives?

(2) The Thessalonian church saints' labor of love was that they loved one another.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 4:9 – “Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another.” The labor of love that was manifested among the Thessalonian church saints was that like Paul and his co-workers who loved them (3:12) they loved one another as they were taught by God (4:9). Especially, they appreciated and esteemed those who diligently labored among them, those who had charged over them in the Lord and gave them instruction (5:12-13). And as Paul urged them to do, the Thessalonian church saints admonished the unruly, encouraged the fainthearted, helped the weak and were patient with everyone (v. 14). They didn't repay another with evil for evil but always sought after that which was good for one another and for all people (v. 15). Paul, who remembered this labor of love by the Thessalonian church saints and thanked God continually, prayed for them that their love to increase and to overflow for each other and for everyone else (3:12). Are we witnessing this kind of labor of love in our lives?

Why do you think the Thessalonian church saints did this labor of love? I think the reason is because the Thessalonian church saints received the love of God. Look at 1 Thessalonians 1:4 – “For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you.” The Thessalonian church saints were those who received God's chosen love. The God's amazing labor of love that was demonstrated in them was God chose them because God loved them. How do we know this? We know this because Paul and his co-workers' gospel came to them not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction (v. 5). In a word, the wonderful work of God's love of the Thessalonian church saints can be seen in their work of faith. They, who received this amazing love of God, lived as God's elected people. This is their labor of love. As the God's elected people, it was their labor of love that the Thessalonian church saints to live a life worthy of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Are we witnessing this labor of love in our lives?

(3) The Thessalonian church saints' labor of love was to comfort one another.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 4:18 – “Therefore comfort one another with these words.” Our God is “God of all comfort” (2 Cor. 1:3). He comforts us in all our affliction (v. 4). He does so so that we can endure the suffering patiently (v. 6). Also, God comforts us so that we can comfort those in any trouble (v. 4). That is, we receive comfort so that we can comfort others (v. 6). Therefore, we should be comforted Christians. And we should comfort our neighbors just as God comforts us. Especially, we should comfort our neighbors who are suffering in many ways, those who lost their loved ones. This is what the Bible 1 Thessalonians 4:13 says, “Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope.” Paul didn't want the Thessalonian church saints to grieve about those who are dead as they were hopeless. The reason was because there is a certain hope for those who believe in Jesus. What is that certain hope? It is the resurrection of the dead. Look at 1 Thessalonians 4:14 – “We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.”

We, Christians, believe that Jesus died on the cross to forgive our sins according to the Scriptures. We also believe that Jesus rose from the grave on the third day, according to Scripture (1 Cor. 15:3-4). Therefore, we believe that the Lord will bring back the dead saints to life when Jesus returns to this world, and that He will bring them with Him (1 Thess. 4:14-16). And the Lord will lead us all into heaven. And we will be with the Lord forever (v.17). The Bible says “Therefore comfort one another with these words” (v. 18). We must comfort our brothers and sisters in Christ who are sad because of the death of their loved ones.

We should comfort them with the hope of this second coming of Jesus, the hope of the resurrection of the dead, and the hope of living with Him forever in heaven (5:14).

(4) The Thessalonian church saints' labor of love was to build each other up.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 5:11 – “Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.” The Lord is building His church (Mt. 16:18). As we hold onto this promise of Jesus and pray to God, we must humbly join the Lord’s work in building His church. In other words, we should use the Lord’s given gifts to build up His church (1 Cor. 14:3-5, 12, 26) as we make every effort to build each other up (1 Thess 5:11). How can we build each other up? This is what Paul said to the saints of the church in Ephesus: “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen” (Eph. 4:29). We can build each other up by speaking what is helpful for building others up such as encouraging and comforting words that can benefit those who listen. We can also build each other up by loving one another with the sacrificial love of Jesus (2 Cor. 12:15). Especially, we should love those who are weak by helping the weak (1 Thess. 5:14). We must hold on to those who are weak in faith by encouraging them with the Word of God so that they may stand firm in their faith.

(5) The Thessalonian church saints' labor of love was to live in peace with each other.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 5:13 – “Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other.” We Christians must live in peace with people. We must live in peace with everyone, not only with our family members, but also all members of the church, friends and co-workers and so on. This is what Proverbs 17:1 says, “Better a dry crust with peace and quiet than a house full of feasting, with strife.” This means that it is better to live in peace in poor family rather than a rich family with strife. Then how can we live in peace with each other? I thought of it in five ways: (a) We must be patient with everyone (1 Thess. 5:14). (b) We must sacrifice ourselves (Mk. 9:50). (c) We must deny ourselves (8:34). (d) We must be humble (9:34-37). (e) We must serve (9:41).

We must work hard for the glory of God. Especially we must do the labor of love. Although we already love each other with the teachings of God like the Thessalonian church saints (1 Thess. 4:9), God wants us to love each other more and more. This was Paul's prayer for the Thessalonian church saints. I pray that this prayer will be our prayer as well: “May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you.” Apostle Paul, who witnessed this labor of love in the lives of the Thessalonian church saints, always thanked God as he remembered them and prayed to God (1:2-3). He continually thanked God (2:13). I hope and pray that we also have this thanksgiving in our hearts.

Third and last, the reason why Paul gave thanks to God always whenever he remembered the Thessalonian church saints was because of their steadfastness of hope.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 1:3 – “... and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father.” What was the steadfastness of hope of the Thessalonian church saints that Paul was continually thanked God for whenever he remembered and prayed for them? We can summarize it two ways:

(1) The Thessalonian church saints' steadfastness of hope was to wait for Jesus' from heaven.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 1:10 – “and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead--Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.” Before the gospel came to the Thessalonians “not simply with

words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction” (v. 5) (before they believe in Jesus), they were idolaters (v. 9). And God loved and chose such idolaters (v. 4) that he called them into His kingdom and glory (2:12). Therefore, they were Paul’s hope, glory and joy in the presence of Lord Jesus when He comes (vv. 19-20).

Do we have anyone who will become our hope, glory and joy in the presence of our Lord Jesus when He comes? Our hope is the second coming of Jesus. And our steadfastness of hope is to pray, expect and wait for His second coming. Are we waiting for His second coming? Those saints who wait for His second coming don’t grieve like the non-believers when their fellow saints die (4:13). The reason is because they believe that Jesus died and rose again (v. 14). Also it is because they believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in Him (v. 14). In short, the saints who are waiting for the second coming of Jesus are joyful in hope, patient in affliction and faithful in prayer (Rom. 12:12). Do we have this joy and patient?

(2) The Thessalonian church saints’ steadfastness of hope was to live a holy life.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 3:13 – “May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.” For Paul’s hope, joy and glory, the Thessalonian church saints, he prayed that they might be blameless and holy in the presence of God and Father when Lord Jesus comes with all His holy ones. A similar prayer is found in 1 Thessalonians 5:23 – “May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Why did Paul pray like this? The reason was their sanctification was the will of God (4:3). Because God had not called them for the purpose of impurity but in sanctification (v. 7), Paul urged the Thessalonian church saints to abstain from sexual immorality and to know how to possess their own wives in sanctification and honor, not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who didn’t know God (vv. 3-5). That’s right. The life of the saints who are waiting the Lord’s return is a holy life. If we are praying, expecting, and waiting for Jesus’ return, we must be holy according to God’s will. Are we living the holy life now?

Paul continually remembered the Thessalonian church saints and thanked God because they showed steadfastness of hope by living the holy life as they waited for the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ (1:2-3). I hope and pray that we too have this kind of thanksgiving.

Apostle Paul always remembered and thanked God for the Thessalonian church saints. The reason was that he constantly remembered their work of faith, labor of love and steadfastness of hope in Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of God and Father. I hope and pray that we too have this work of faith, labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father so that whenever we remember and pray for each other we can give thanks to God.

The Victory community of faith, love, hope

“We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers; constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father” (1 Thessalonians 1:2-3).

Today, I want to give thanks to God for the 30th anniversary celebration of our Victory Presbyterian Church. As we worship God together, I want to think about what kind of victory community we should be. I would like to receive three lessons from 1 Thessalonians 1:2-3.

First, the Victory community must become a community of faith.

What kind of community is the community of faith? The community of faith is the community that hears the word of Christ. Look at Romans 10:17 – “Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.” Faith comes from hearing the word of Christ. I hope and pray that all of our Victory community members grow in faith as we all hear the word of Christ. Our Victory community must become a church that does not shake in many afflictions (1 Thess. 3:3). The community of faith is a church that receives the word of God in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit, just like the Thessalonian church saints. Look at 1 Thessalonians 1:6 – “You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit.” Like the Thessalonian church saints who faith in God had become known everywhere (v. 8), I hope and pray that our faith becomes known not only in this city but wherever we go.

Second, the Victory community must become a community of love.

What kind of community is the community of love? The community of love is a community in which brothers and sisters in Christ love each other with the love of Jesus Christ. Also, the community of love is the community in which the people accept one another just as Christ accepted them. Look at Romans 15:7 – “Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.” Victory church must be a church that maintains unity in diversity. Although we have three different ministries (Korean, English and Hispanic Ministries), we have become one with the precious blood of Jesus Christ. And we should keep on striving to keep the unity of the Spirit even though we are different in terms of counties, cultures, languages and so on. We must accept each other as Jesus accepted us in order to keep the unity of the church. The community of love is also a community that encourages, comforts, and urges each other. Look at 1 Thessalonians 2:11-12: “For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.” Paul, with his co-workers Silas and Timothy (1:1) who served the Thessalonian church, dealt each of the Thessalonian church saints by encouraging, comforting and urging them (2:11-12). Likewise, the Victory community members should labor in love by encouraging, comforting, and urging each other. We should love each other as we have been taught to do so (4:9). I hope and pray that the Lord continually build His church as the community of love.

Third, the Victory community must become a community of hope.

What kind of community is the community of hope? The community of hope is a community that waits for Jesus' return. Look at 1 Thessalonians 1:10 – “and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead--

Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.” The Thessalonian church was the community awaiting Jesus' return. So Paul wrote the church saints and told them “about those who fall asleep” that is ‘those who died in Jesus Christ’ in 4:13. The reason was because Paul didn’t want them to grieve like the rest of men, who had no hope (v. 13). Paul also told the Thessalonian church saints “about times and dates” (5:1ff.). The reason was because Paul wanted to prepare them for the return of Jesus Christ. So Paul said to them, “So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet” (vv. 6-8). Like the Thessalonian church, I hope and pray that the Victory community can become a community that waits for the Second Coming of Jesus.

The Victory Presbyterian Church is the Lord’s church and the Lord is building His church as the community of faith, the community of love and the community of hope. I hope and pray that the Lord continually build the Victory community so that our faith becomes known everywhere, we may love each other with His love and we may prepare as we hope for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

Labor of love

“We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you” (1 Thessalonians 1:3-4).

There is joy when I love. There is a joy that the Lord gives when I love my neighbor with His love. There is joy of fellowship in sharing and in giving within the loving members of the Lord. In particular, I have joy of sharing God's love through heart to heart conversations with fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. Also, the Lord has given me the joy of meditating on God's Word and sharing my quiet time meditation writings with other. However, I still have not tasted the joy of obeying the commandment of Jesus, “Love your enemies” (Mt. 5:44). Maybe it's because there is no enemy I think yet in my personal relationship. But even if it is not the enemy, I want to taste the joy of the Lord by loving those people who give me hard times and those who hurts my heart. I want to experience the divine joy of the Lord in full. So I sometimes praise this hymn “Jesus Comes With Pow'r to Gladden”: (1) “Jesus comes with pow'r to glad-den, When love shines in, Ev'ry life that woe can sadden, When love shines in. Love will teach us how to pray, Love will drive the gloom away, Turn our darkness into day, When love shines in. When love shines in, When love shines in, How the heart is tuned to singing, When love shines in, When love shines in, When love shines in, Joy and peace to others bringing When love shines in (Internet). I hope and pray that we may love our neighbors with His love and enjoy His joy in full.

When we look at 1 Thessalonians 1:3, Paul mentioned about the Thessalonian church saints' labor of love as he and his co-workers Silas and Timothy (v. 1) remembered them in their prayers and thanked God (v. 2). After I read verses 1 through 3 and read verse 4, I got an answer to the question ‘How could Paul know about the Thessalonian church saints' labor of love. And the answer is “God's love”. In other words, the Thessalonian church saints were able to do the labor of love because they were being loved by God (v. 4). And the love of God they received was the love that God chose them (v. 4), that was God's chosen or electing love. Among the multitude of people, God loved the Thessalonian church saints so He chose them in Him before the creation of the world (cf. Eph. 1:4). In other words, God who loved the Thessalonian church saints foreknew and predestined them (Rom. 8:29-30; Eph. 1:4-5), called them, sanctify them by the Holy Spirit and regenerated them by giving them grace of repentance and the truth to believe in Him (conversion) (2 Thess. 2:13-14), that is salvation. This is what the Westminster Confession of Faith says about effectual calling: “All those whom God hath predestined unto life, and those only, He is pleased, in His appointed and accepted time, effectually to call, by His Word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ; enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God; taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them a heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and, by His almighty power determining them to that which is good; and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ; yet so as they come most freely, being made willing by His grace” (WCF). Therefore, since the Thessalonian church saints were loved by the Lord with the wonderful and amazing love of God (1 Thess. 1:4), they were able to love each other as they had been taught by God (4:9). In fact, they loved all the brothers throughout Macedonia (v. 10). Then what was the “labor of love” that they practiced (1:3)? As Paul exhorted them, they strove to live a quiet life, to mind their own business and to work with their hands (4:11). And they encouraged one another (v. 18). They also “encouraged one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing” (v. 11). They respected those who worked hard among them, who were over them in the Lord and who admonished them (v. 12). They held them in the highest regard in love because of their work (v. 13). They warned those who were idle, encouraged the timid, helped the weak, and were patient with everyone (v. 14). They didn't pay back wrong for wrong, but always tried to be kind to each other and to everyone else (v. 15). They always had pleasant

memories of Paul and his co-workers and they longed to see them (3:6). Paul, who continually remembered the Thessalonian church saints' labor of love before God and Father (1:3) and always thanked God for all of them (v. 2), said in 2:8 – “We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us.” In this verse, I have meditated on Paul's labor of love toward the Thessalonian church saints. In other words, Paul's labor of love toward them was giving not only the gospel of God but his life as well (v. 8). When I meditated on this Paul's labor of love, I remembered John 10, which I meditated on at the early Morning Prayer meeting. The key point of John 10 is that Jesus, the Good Shepherd, laid down his life for the sheep (Jn. 10:11, 15, 17). Jesus' labor of love, which He gave His life on the cross for such sinners like us, was Paul's labor of love. And in Paul's labor of love, Apostle Paul was delighted to give his own life to the Thessalonian church saints (1 Thess. 2:8). If Paul had that delight, I am sure Jesus was much more delighted in giving His own life on the cross for us, whom God loved and chose. This reminds me Zephaniah 3:17 – “The LORD your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing.” I think Jesus, who takes great delight in us and who rejoices over us, was very delighted to give His precious life on the cross for us and our salvation. Although He cried on the cross to his Heavenly Father, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Mt. 27:46) and went through extreme suffering that I cannot comprehend even a little bit, I am sure Jesus was extremely delighted to die on the cross for us. As Jesus had done this labor of love, Apostle Paul imitated His labor of love and loved the Thessalonian church saints so much that he was delighted to give his life to them (1 Thess. 2:8). And I think the Thessalonian church saints imitated Paul who imitated Jesus (cf. 1 Cor. 11:1) and they also did the labor of love in giving not only the gospel but their lives as well.

We all need to labor in love as God's loving ones. We are those who have been chosen in love by God the Father. We are the ones who have received the love from the Son of God Jesus who was delighted to give His own life for us on the cross. God the Holy Spirit still dwells in us and is bearing the fruit of love (Gal. 5:22). Thus we are all those who have received the love of the Triune God. Therefore, with the love of God, we must do the labor of love like the saints of the Thessalonian church. May the Lord make us to love our neighbors with His love, in giving not only the gospel of Jesus Christ but also our lives as well.

We know that God has chosen you (1)

[1 Thessalonians 1:4-5]

A guy who used to come to our church a long time ago asked me: 'Why did God choose some to go to heaven, and didn't choose some to go to hell? God is unfair.' At that time I was a middle school student and I couldn't answer his question. Although I thought that he could think that God is unfair, I didn't agree with him. Perhaps I did not agree with him because I believed that perfect God can not be unfair. And yet, I was unable to answer his question why God chose some to go to heaven and not the others because I didn't have strong faith or biblical knowledge to answer his question. But now, I think I can answer his question like this: 'God's justice is that it is God's righteousness for all of us to go to hell because we all have sinned.' But God loved us and chose us among so many people to believe in Jesus Christ. And He saved us and gave us every spiritual blessing in Christ. Look at Ephesians 1:3-5: "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will--." Isn't this completely the grace of God? What great grace it is that God loved us and chose us in Christ before the creation of the world. So the question we have to throw here is "How do I know that God has chosen me?" Do you believe that you were chosen by God? If you answered "Yes", how do you know that you are chosen by God?

In 1 Thessalonians 1:4, Apostle Paul wrote to the Thessalonian church saints "For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you." How did Paul and his co-workers Silas and Timothy (v. 1) know that God chose the Thessalonian church saints? I found the answer in verse 5: "because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction." Paul and his co-workers knew that God chose the Thessalonian church saints because when they preached the gospel to them, the gospel came to them not simply with words but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction (v. 5). When we proclaimed the gospel to our beloved people who don't believe in Jesus, why didn't they accept and believe in Jesus Christ? Why do they seem to have no change in their lives? The reason is that the gospel we preached to them was just spoken in mere words. In other words, because the gospel we preached didn't come with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction (v. 5). What does it mean to say that the gospel came with power, with the Holy Spirit, and with deep conviction?

First, let us consider the meaning that the gospel of Jesus Christ came with power.

When we proclaim the gospel to our beloved family members, friends and neighbors, there is the Word of God that we must believe. That Word of God is Romans 1:16 – "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile." This letter from Apostle Paul to the saints of the Roman church states that Paul wasn't ashamed of the gospel because he believed that the gospel is the power of God for the salvation to all who believe. The gospel of Jesus Christ we preach is the power of God for salvation to all who believe. Here, what is "salvation"? Pastor Lloyd Jones said the three things: (1) First, it is salvation from guilt. If we are guilty, we have to take responsibility. And the responsibility is death [(Rom. 6:23) "The wages of sin is death". Death, the punishment of sin, is (a) physical death, (b) spiritual death, and (c) eternal death (eternal punishment in hell). But Jesus took our punishment for us by dying on the cross. Therefore, we were saved. We have avoided punishment. Rather, we were blessed with eternal life. (2) Second, free from the slave of sin. We used to follow "the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air"

(Eph. 2:2-3). In other words, we were the slaves of Satan. But by the Jesus' death on the cross, we became servants of Jesus Christ. (3) Third, salvation from the pollution of sin. Our nature is contaminated by sin. When God created us, we were good, but because of Adam's sin our nature was corrupted. But because of Jesus' death on the cross, we have been saved from the pollution of sin and our nature has become good and clean. That is, the gospel of Jesus Christ is the power of God to give this salvation to all who believes in Jesus.

How can we know that God has chosen us? It is by the fact that when we heard the gospel of Jesus Christ and the gospel came to us in power, we were saved from sin (salvation from guilt, salvation from the slave of sin and salvation from the pollution of sin). We can know that we have been chosen by God by the fact that when we heard the gospel and believed in Jesus, our sins were forgiven, we were no longer slaves of Satan, but the servants of the Lord and we had been enjoying the eternal life. We who were chosen by God have already experienced the power of God's salvation. We also experienced the power of the blood of Jesus. Therefore, we who are chosen by God are those who live by the power of the gospel and by the power of God (2 Cor. 13:4).

Second, let us consider the meaning that the gospel of Jesus Christ came with the Holy Spirit.

There is a Bible verse that we must believe when we share the gospel of Jesus Christ with our loved ones, such as family members and friends. It is 1 Corinthians 12:3 – “Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, “Jesus be cursed,” and no one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit.” When the gospel of Jesus Christ was revealed by the Holy Spirit to the God's chosen people in Thessalonica, the power of God appeared and they heard the gospel and believed in Jesus Christ and confessed Jesus as Lord. The Bible Ephesians 1:13 says: “And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit.” What does it mean? It means that when we heard the gospel of salvation and believed in Jesus Christ, God gave us the promised Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit who dwells in us is the confirmation that we believe in Jesus. Without the work of the Holy Spirit, we cannot confess that Jesus is Lord even if we hear the gospel. Without the work of the Holy Spirit, our hearts will not be opened (Acts 16:14). Without the work of the Holy Spirit we cannot realize our sins, nor can we confess or repent our sins. In Acts 2, when Apostle Peter, who was filled with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, boldly proclaimed the gospel of Jesus Christ, about 3,000 people heard the gospel and “were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’” (Acts 2:37) Then Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (v. 38). “Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day” (v. 41). When the gospel is preached and when the Holy Spirit works, the hearts of those who hear it will be opened and will listen to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Also, they will confess and repent their sins and accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

We must seek the work of the Holy Spirit. That's why we must pray to God. The reason why we should pray when we share the gospel with our family, friends, or neighbors is because the Holy Spirit will open the hearts of those who hear the gospel we preach. Also, when the Holy Spirit works, then those who hear the gospel can confess their sins and truly repent and accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

Third and last, let us consider the meaning that the gospel of Jesus Christ came with deep conviction.

We have a Bible verse that we must believe when we share the gospel of Jesus Christ with our loved ones, such as family members and friends. And that Bible verse is Philippians 1: 6 – “being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” Apostle Paul had conviction.

And the conviction was that God would for sure complete the good work which was the work of salvation in the Philippian church saints. This Paul's conviction was never a conviction based on the Philippians. Rather, his confidence was based on God. In other words, Paul was convinced that faithful God who chose the Philippian church saints before the creation of the world would surely save them. That was why Paul always thanked God and rejoiced when he prayed for the Philippian church saints. We too must have this conviction. In other words, we must have assurance and faith that those whom God loves and whom He has chosen before the creation of the world will be saved. God who started the good work of salvation in the Thessalonian church saint's life used Paul and his co-workers to preach the gospel to the Thessalonians. Not only did God manifest the power of God, but He also opened their hearts to hear the gospel and to receive Him as the Lord and Savior. In the process, there was "deep conviction" in the Thessalonian church saints' hearts. I think there were at least two deep convictions: (1) First, it was a deep conviction of sin. In the gospel of Jesus Christ that was preached by Paul and his co-workers, there was a message of forgiveness of sins through the death of Jesus on the cross (Lk. 24:47, Acts 10:43, 13:38, Eph. 1:7). Therefore, when hearing the gospel of Jesus Christ, the heart of a person who hears the message of forgiveness of sins must have the assurance of forgiveness of sin through the power of God and the work of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, a man who is convicted of sin repents of his sins in his piercings in his own conscience, and his sins are being wiped out (Acts 3:19). (2) Second, it was a deep conviction of salvation. When the Holy Spirit works, not only there is the deep conviction of sins by hearing the gospel of Jesus Christ but also there is deep conviction of salvation. We believe that by the resurrection from the death of Jesus Christ, we who believe in Him are justified to God because the righteousness of Jesus was imputed to us (Rom. 4:25). Look at 1 John 5:11-12: "And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life."

How did Paul know that the Thessalonian church saints were chosen by God? How could Paul say to them, "For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you"? (1 Thess. 1:4) The reason was that when Paul and his co-workers preached the gospel to them, the gospel came to them "not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction" (v. 5).

Among the American gospel songs that I like, there is song called "Why have you chosen me?" The reason I like this song is because the lyrics came to my heart. This is how the song goes:

(1) Why have You chosen me out of millions Your child to be?
You know all the wrong that I've done
O, how could You pardon me, forgive my iniquity
To save me, give Jesus Your Son

(2) I am amazed to know that a God so great could love me so
He's willing and wanting to bless
His grace is so wonderful, His mercy's so bountiful
I can't understand it, I confess

(chorus)

But Lord, help me be what You want me to be
Your Word I will strive to obey
My life I now give, for You I will live
And walk by Your side all the way"

We know that God has chosen you (2)

[1 Thessalonians 1:4-10]

Several years ago, a pastor from the same presbytery asked me to come to his church with other examination committee pastors and do the floor test for those who were trained his church to become an elder and ordained deacon. In my memory, I still cannot forget that one of the testees for the ordained deacon asked one of us the pastors this question: 'I learned that if we believe in Jesus not only that we will be saved but we will not lose our salvation. But how about if we commit sins and do things worst that the non-believers? Will we still go to heaven?' At that time, I heard his question from the side and kind of knew what he was asking. But I couldn't answer his question because a pastor who was sitting beside me answered the question. So I kept quiet. My answer was that eventhough we aren't being saved by our own efforts but by God's grace and by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, but after we begin to believe in Him, we must faithfully and naturally do good deeds. In other words, even though we are saved by faith in Jesus Christ by God's grace, after we begin to believe in Him we must live faithful life. We must work faithfully in good works (Eph. 2:10). But the problem is that many of us Christians are mistreating the doctrine of being saved only by faith and by God's grace and after we do things that are worse than unbelievers instead of doing good. In a word, we are not being a good example to the world that we aren't playing the role of light and salt in this world. So the non-believers in this world know that we aren't true believers but just mere church goers. Not only that, but even the brothers and sisters in Christ who go to church together with us question whether we really are born again Christians or not. They don't even call us "Christians" or "believers". They just say we are "church members" who go to church.

We have already meditated on how Paul knew that the Thessalonian church saints were chosen by God based on 1 Thessalonians 1:4-5. The reason was that when Paul preached the gospel to them, it came to them "not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction" (v. 5). In other words, when Paul preached the gospel to the people in the Thessalonica region, the power of the gospel and the power of God's salvation appeared, and because of the work of the Holy Spirit they opened their hearts and heard the gospel of Jesus Christ and believed in Him. That was how Paul knew that the Thessalonian church saints were chosen by God. Was that all? Was that all that the Thessalonian church saints were chosen by God because the gospel came to them not simply with words but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction?

I would like to think more about how Paul knew that God chose the Thessalonian church saints beside the fact that the gospel came to them "not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction" (v. 5). I want to think about how the Thessalonian church saints lived their Christian life after they believed in Jesus in three ways:

First, the Thessalonian church saints became imitators of the Lord.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 1:6 – "You became imitators of us and of the Lord; in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit." Is it okay to live worse than the non-believers after we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, thinking that once we are saved we will never lost our salvation? Is it okay not to fulfill our responsibilities as Christians even though we said that we are saved by God's grace? If we truly know the grace of God, we must endeavor to take on our responsibilities even more with the power of God's grace. That was what Paul did. Knowing and confessing that "by the grace of God I am what I am" Paul worked harder than all other apostles, yet not he, but the grace of God that was with him (1 Cor. 15:10).

What do you think we Christians should work hard on? What do you think is an important responsibility for us? Is it preaching the the gospel? Is it doing good deeds? Is it obeying the Jesus' twofold command of loving God and loving neighbors? Is it to serving the Lord's church? All of these are important responsibilities that we Christians have to bear. My personal thought is that the more important responsibility than these is that each of us is becoming imitators of Jesus. The reason I think this way is because, for example, what if we don't imitate Jesus and preach the gospel to our family members who don't believe in Jesus? So, I think it is also important that we live worthy of the gospel of Christ in our gospel ministry (Phil. 1:27). We must preach the gospel by living a life worthy of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In 1 Thessalonians 1:6, Paul wrote the letter to the Thessalonian church saints and said that they became imitators of Paul and his co-workers and of the Lord. When I first read this word, I wondered why Paul didn't say to the Thessalonian church saints, 'You became imitators of the Lord and of us,' but said "You became imitators of us and of the Lord." Why did Paul say like that? I came to know the reason by reading Dr. Kim's book 'The Lecture on the Book of Thessalonians'. The reason was that Paul and his co-workers (Silas and Timothy) not only preached the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Thessalonian church saints, but also they showed them a life of imitating Jesus by living worthy of His gospel. Paul also wrote a similar statement to the Corinthian church saints: "Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1). This is what Dr. Seyoon Kim said: 'The gospel preachers proclaim the gospel in words. But at the same time, they must draw the gospel through their lives. ... This is the mission and calling of the gospel preachers' (Kim). Are we fulfilling this mission and calling now?

The Thessalonian church saints weren't only become imitators of Paul and his co-workers who were gospel preachers, but also they became imitators of the Lord Jesus Christ which was the core of the gospel through their lives worthy of the gospel. How was this possible? How did the Thessalonian church saints become imitators of Paul, of his co-workers, and of the Lord? I found the answer in verse 6: "... you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit." It was the Word of God that the Thessalonian church saints were able to imitate Paul, his co-workers and the Lord. In other words, they were imitators of Paul, of his co-workers and of the Lord because they welcomed the message with joy given by the Holy Spirit in spite of severe suffering. Here the severe suffering of the Thessalonian church saints was that they were persecuted by the Jews (2:14). The Jews persecuted the Thessalonian church by provoking the citizens of Thessalonica, saying that what Paul preached was not Judaism. So the Jews mobilized the thugs from the market place to terrorize the Christians and persecute the Christians by accusing them to the Roman rulers (Kim Seyoon). In the meantime, the Thessalonian church saints received the word of God with the joy of the Holy Spirit. In other words, in severe suffering they accepted God's Word with joy through the work of the Holy Spirit and obeyed it (KJV Bible Commentary). This is the work of the Holy Spirit. How can we know this? We know this because without the work of the Holy Spirit, they would be sad and couldn't rejoice in many tribulations and persecutions. Not only that, without the work of the Holy Spirit, they wouldn't listen to the Word of God and obey it in the midst of severe suffering. The work of the Holy Spirit makes us more and more eager to hear the Word of God when we are in a lot of suffering. Moreover the work of the Holy Spirit makes us not only to receive the Word humbly, but also to obey God's will that we have realized through that Word. As a result, the Holy Spirit molds us wit His Word in the midst of suffering and makes us holy and to imitate Jesus. As a result, what happened to the Thessalonian church saints? Look at 1 Thessalonians 1:7 - "so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia." In other words, the Thessalonian church saints, who became imitators of the Lord by imitating Paul, Silas, and Timothy, became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. Here, the capital city of Macedonia was Thessalonica. What this meant was that the Thessalonian church saints' example of imitating the Lord's servants and the Lord had spread not only to the city of Thessalonica, the capital of Macedonia, but also to the entire region of Macedonia. Can you imagine? For example, can you imagine that the exemplary life that resembles the Lord of our Victorious Presbyterian Church family is spreading to all believers not only in Southern California but in the whole California as well? Furthermore, the example of the Thessalonian church saints in imitating Jesus Christ had set an example for all believers in "Achaia" as well. Here, "Achaia" was the capital of Corinth, and Apostle Paul wrote the letters of 1 and 2 Thessalonians.

What this means, perhaps, is that the example of the Thessalonian church saints had been spread to all the believers in Achaia through Paul who was in Corinth.

What is the lesson that we should learn from the Thessalonian church saints? The lesson is that if all our members of Victorious Presbyterian church are chosen by God, then like the Thessalonian church saints we must live an exemplary life of faith. The church as a whole must live the exemplary life of faith at least to all other believers in other churches living in our community. I hope and pray that we all imitate Jesus Christ and live the exemplary life of faith at home, at work and so on so that we live a true Christian life chosen by God as the exemplary Christians.

Second, the Thessalonian church saints' faith in God had become known everywhere.

Is your faith growing now? Is your faith more solid this year than last year? In order for our faith to grow and become stronger, we must listen to the Word of Christ. Look at Romans 10:17 – “Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.” So we are not only listening to God's Word, but also studying the Bible. Not only that, but we also go home and read and meditate on the Word of God in a quiet time. Nevertheless, if we see our faith isn't growing and our faith is shaking when we are in a difficult circumstance, we can be frustrated. What is the problem? I have looked at the answer in 1 Thessalonians 1:6 – “... in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit.” I have thought of two reasons based on this verse why our faith isn't growing as well as we expected. Maybe the first reason is because we have no hardships. If we have hardships, we will be able to test our faith. In other words, we can kind of know how much faith do we have through hardships. And I think through hardships we realize how little our faith is. Thus we cry out to God in a struggle to trust Him more and more. And we go back to the Bible and read the Word of God diligently to hear the voice of God. This reminds me Psalms 119:67 – “Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I obey your word.” Through suffering, we realize that we are disobeying the God's word, and thus we repent and keep the Word of God. This is certainly the grace of God. And this is the great benefit that suffering gives us. Not only that we realize our faith is little through suffering, but we also realize our sin of going astray and repent that sin to God. And we learn the Lord's decrees (v. 71). Our faith may not be growing because there is no fruitful benefit of suffering in our lives. Another reason why our faith isn't growing and is not strong is because we aren't welcoming the word of God with the joy of the Holy Spirit (1 Thess. 1:6). How can we receive the Word of God with joy in our sufferings? Aren't we receiving the Word of God in sorrow? Isn't that natural? How could the Thessalonian church saints receive the Word of God with joy while they were suffering because they believed in Jesus? This is the work of the Holy Spirit. They could never do that with their own strength. The Holy Spirit who dwelled in them made them to welcome the Word of God with joy even in many afflictions. How did the Holy Spirit cause them to do so? Look at 1 Thessalonians 1:5 – “because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction.” The Holy Spirit gave them the joy in their hearts with the gospel of Jesus Christ. In other words, the Holy Spirit made the Thessalonian church saints to gladly accept the Word of God through Jesus Christ, the ultimate good news. This is the way we receive God's Word with joy in our suffering. It is the Gospel!

Look at 1 Thessalonians 1:8 – “The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia-- your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it.” Apostle Paul knew that the Thessalonian church saints were loved and chosen by God because their faith in God had become known everywhere (v. 8). Here I have briefly considered three things about the faith of the Thessalonian church saints:

(1) The faith of the Thessalonian church saints was toward God.

The Thessalonian church saints were persecuted by the Jews because they believed in Jesus. Nevertheless,

their faith in God had become known everywhere in the midst of severe suffering. How was this possible? I think that the severe suffering gave them an opportunity to receive the Word of God with the joy of the Holy Spirit and thus their faith grew and became stronger. When we suffer because of our faith in Jesus, I think there are two general responses: Whether we grumble against God because of suffering and commit sin against God or our faith in God becomes more and more solid. Which one is your response? I still remember one of our church members Mrs. Jang when she was in a nursing home. Whenever I visited her, we praised God together and she memorized Psalms 23 and the Lord's Prayer. And she told me often that she really wanted to see Jesus. How could she do that when she was lying down on the bed most of her time and was slowly dying? I think her faith in God grew stronger than when she used to come to our church until she died. Shouldn't we also have this kind of faith?

(2) The faith of the Thessalonian church saints had become known because the Lord's message rang out from them in Macedonia and Achaia.

Isn't it amazing that the Thessalonian church saints not only kept their faith in severe sufferings but also the Lord's message rang out in Macedonia and Achaia? Not only they kept their faith even in severe sufferings by welcoming the message with the joy of the Holy Spirit even in severe sufferings but they also preached the Word of God. In other words, the Thessalonian church saints proclaimed the gospel of Jesus Christ in the midst of severe sufferings. Obviously, if they kept on preaching the gospel, the Jews would keep on persecuting the Thessalonian church saints more and more. But the Thessalonian church saints kept on preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. As a result, the Lord's message spread to Macedonia and Achaia. Imagine that our church members are being persecuted here in Los Angeles because of our faith in Jesus Christ. But let's say even in the midst of persecution we keep preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ and as a result the gospel spread not only in California but also in Nevada. Won't we be surprised? Those who preach the gospel love Jesus. They love Jesus more than their own lives. That's why even in the face of any adversity, suffering, and life threat, they will never abandon their faith and compromise with this world. Rather, they stand firmly in faith and boldly proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ upon the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Shouldn't we be like them?

(3) Apostle Paul and his co-workers had no need to say anything about Thessalonian church saints' faith.

There is Korean saying 'I have lost my word.' I think the Koreans are using that word usually when they are dumbfounded. But I think it can be also used when they are so surprised and amazed. For example, a person who travels to the United States from Korea and sees the magnificent Grand Canyon and lost his word because he is so surprised in front of the Grand Canyon. In 1 Thessalonians 1:8, Apostle Paul said that "we do not need to say anything about it." What does that mean? Doesn't it mean that they had nothing to say about the reputed faith of the Thessalonian church saints? What could Paul said when he heard about the Thessalonian church saints' faith that he and his co-workers had not need to say anything? I personally do not have anything to say about faith of those people around me who have stronger faith in God. What do I have to say to the believers who have a greater faith than a pastor like me? I can't feel the need. I am just surprised to see the brothers and sisters in Christ who trust in God alone and endure with patience even in the midst of crisis and adversity?

I hope and pray that all of us have this amazing faith. I hope and pray that all of us stand firm in our faith in God in any adversity and hardship, and be victorious. So I hope that our faith in God can become known everywhere.

May the gospel come to you not simply with words

“because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake” (1 Thessalonians 1:5).

What does it mean to say that the gospel comes to us simply with words? A commentator interpreted this: 'Speech unaccompanied by the convincing power of the Holy Spirit' (Commentary). As a pastor, I ask myself, "How many times did I preach like this? Sermons that are not accompanied by the convincing power of the Holy Spirit may convey knowledge to hearers, but it is perhaps natural that those sermons cannot make any difference in them. As a preacher, this is a serious problem. So I pray to God as I prepare a sermon for coming Lord's Day that the gospel may not come to those who will hear just simply with words. How then should I preach? How do I want the gospel to come to the congregation this Lord's Day? I have three prayer requests based on 1 Thessalonians 1:5.

First, I pray that the gospel will come to the congregation “with power”.

What is "power" here? I think Romans 1:16 answers this question: “I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.” In other words, the "power" in 1 Thessalonians 1:5 is "the power of God for salvation of everyone who believes". The power of God for salvation is the work of faith (1 Thess. 1:3) in the hearts of those who hear the gospel. In other words, when the gospel came to the Thessalonians with power, they believed in Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord. Paul explained this in 1 Thessalonians 1:9 – “... you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.” I hope and pray that when I preach the gospel, may the gospel come to the congregation with power so that they may turn to God from idols.

Second, I pray that the gospel will come to the congregation “with the Holy Spirit”.

The gospel came to the Thessalonians not simply words but with the Holy Spirit means that they welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit and became imitators of Paul, his co-workers and of the Lord in spite of severe suffering (v. 6). And the Thessalonian church saints who welcomed the gospel with the joy of the Holy Spirit had become the laborers of love (v. 3). When the gospel came to them with the Holy Spirit, the Thessalonian church saints who were former enemies of God loved God and loved their neighbors. What a marvelous work of the gospel? This fact is stated in 1 Thessalonians 1:9 as “to serve the living and true God”. I hope and pray that when I preach the gospel, may the gospel come to the congregation with Holy Spirit so that they may serve the living and true God.

Third and last, I pray that the gospel will come to the congregation “with full conviction”.

What does it mean? It means that when the gospel was proclaimed to the Thessalonians, the Holy Spirit worked mightily in their hearts and persuaded them with the gospel. They were persuaded that Jesus Christ is their Savior and Lord. To the Thessalonian church saints who were persuaded, what kind of conviction did they have? It was hope (v. 3). Apostle Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 1:10 – “and to wait for His Son from heaven,” The

reason why they waited in the hope of Jesus coming again was because the conviction of Jesus' second coming was dominating the minds of the Thessalonian church saints. I hope and pray that the gospel will come to those who hear with great conviction when I preach the gospel to the congregation. Not only did they have the great conviction about the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ but also about His second coming.

The gospel of God should not be conveyed in vain

[1 Thessalonians 2:1-6]

Did you have any experience in trying something and ending it with no profit? For example, at the beginning of last week, I planned to go to see a movie with my beloved family but we couldn't watch it because we found out that the movie ticket was already sold out. Perhaps one of the words we can use in this situation is that was 'vain effort' or 'a trip in vain'. Have you ever thought that after visiting someone and spending time with him or her and you felt that you made the trip in vain? Why did you think that way? Is it because you weren't able to communicate with him/her well? Is it because your meeting didn't go as you planned? If the meeting wasn't profitable to both of you, I am sure you can think that you made the trip in vain. In other words, if the meeting wasn't fruitful, then you may think that the meeting was in vain. But my personal thought is that our meeting in the Lord is not in vain. In other words, the Lord-centered meeting and the gospel-centered meeting is never in vain. Although it seems like the meeting isn't helpful and profitable to each other, or at least to the other side so that we may think the meeting is in vain, I think that God never makes that meeting in vain.

In 1 Thessalonians 2:1, Apostle Paul wrote a letter to the Thessalonian church saints like this: "For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain." This letter states that the Thessalonian church saints knew that the Paul's visit to the Thessalonica with his co-workers was not in vain. Here we should think briefly about how Paul went to Thessalonica, the capital of Macedonia, with his co-workers. To do so, we have to see Acts chapters 16-17. Although Paul tried to go to Asia during his second missionary trip, the Holy Spirit forbade him to speak the word in Asia (Acts 16:6). So Paul tried to go to Bithynia but the Spirit of Jesus didn't permit him (v. 7). So Paul and his co-workers went to Troas and Paul saw a vision in the night: "a man of Macedonia was standing and appealing to him, and saying, 'Come over to Macedonia and help us'" (vv. 8-9). Paul then talked to his co-workers and concluded that God had called them to go to Macedonia and preach the gospel to the people there (v. 10). And the first city they went to in Macedonia was Philippi (v. 12). Philippi was the first city of Macedonia and it was a Roman colony. There, when Paul and Silas were looking for a place to pray, they met a woman named Lydia (vv. 13-14). And the Lord opened her heart to listen to Paul's words and to respond to the things that were spoken by Paul (v. 14). She became a believer and her household had been baptized as well (vv. 14-15). Not only them, but the jailer who was guarding Paul and Silas who were in prison (v. 23) and all his household believed in Jesus and were baptized (vv. 30-33). But there Paul and Silas suffered and were mistreated (1 Thess. 2:2) and went down to Thessalonica (Acts 17). Paul, who arrived at Thessalonica, went into the Jewish synagogue according his custom and explained and gave evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead and said, "This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ" (Acts 17:1-3). When he did so, "our gospel did not come to you in a word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction" (1 Thess. 1:5). As a result, the Thessalonians turned to God from idols and served the living and true God (v. 9). And they waited for Jesus, the Son of God, from heaven who was raised from the dead (v. 10).

Therefore, Apostle Paul wrote to the Thessalonian church saints in 1 Thessalonians 2:1 that "For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain." In other words, Paul said that in the past he knew what happened when he and his co-workers arrived at Thessalonica and preached the gospel of Jesus Christ, as well as the Thessalonian church saints. What happened? When Paul preached the gospel, the gospel came to them in power, in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction and they had full assurance of salvation by the work of the Holy Spirit (1:5). As a result, the Thessalonian church saints turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God (v. 9). Also, they became people waiting for Jesus' return (v. 10). In thinking about this, Paul told the Thessalonian

church saints that he and his co-workers' coming to them was not in vain (2:1). Not only Paul knew it but also the Thessalonian church saints as well.

In order for the gospel of God not to be conveyed in vain, what should we do? I would like to receive two lessons from Thessalonians 2:1-6.

First, we must be approved by God in order to convey the gospel of God not in vain.

Do you think you should listen to your pastor unconditionally even though you cannot trust him? Can you still listen to your pastor's sermon even though you know that he loves money more than God? Do you think you should listen to him even though some of the church members got hurt from him and left the church? As far as the credibility of priests (priests, monks, pastors) is concerned, in the 2015 survey, 29.6% answered that they trust the clergy and 35.3% do not. Among them, Catholic priest was the most reliable (51.3%). Only then was Buddhist monk (38.7%) and lastly pastors (only 17%) (Internet). I had meditated the Word of God in October 2011 under the heading, 'How should we react to our pastor (our father) who is a hypocrite?' The Word of God was Matthew 23:3 – "So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach." The word "hypocrite" (Ex. Mt. 23:15) refers to an actor who acts visibly or falsely as an "actor" (WSNTDICT). Jesus said in two things about the scribes and the Pharisees in the context of Matthew 23:3: (1) They do not practice what they preached (v. 3b). (2) They do things for men to see (v. 5). As I was meditating on this Word of God, I wrote these words in the introduction: 'How should we respond to a situation where when we go to work and see our boss who is a Christian and a church officer but he is a hypocrite? How should we respond to a situation where when we go to church and see our pastor who is good at preaching and teaching the Bible but he is a hypocrite? How about when our father who is a church officer and is praised by the church members because he looks holy man but we see his hypocrisy at home? Maybe we don't want to see our hypocrite boss. Maybe we don't want to hear our hypocrite pastor's sermon and teaching and we think about moving to another church. When we look at our father who doesn't live a true faith life, we may lose our respect for him and may want to leave faith in disappointment and leave the church. What should we do?' Perhaps we will not listen to the hypocrite.

If we are hypocrites, do you think that the people will listen the gospel that we preach to them? Do you think they will listen to us if only our lips resemble Jesus, but our hearts, our actions and our lives don't resemble Him? If we say to them 'Believe in Jesus,' will they hear us? That's why it is very important for us to live the right life as those who proclaim the gospel and not just preach the right gospel. Then what should we do to live a right life as those who proclaim the gospel? Look at 1 Thessalonians 1:6 – "You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit." We must be imitators of the Lord. Then we must proclaim the gospel. In other words, not only we proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ with our lips, but also at the same time we must show people the image of Jesus, the core of the gospel, in our lives. Not only that we should proclaim the gospel, but at the same time we must draw it through our lives. This is our mission and calling as the gospel preacher (Kim). Not only did the Thessalonian church saints imitate Paul and his co-workers, who were gospel preachers, but they also became the example of the Lord Jesus Christ whom Paul and his co-workers draw in their lives for the Thessalonian church saints. How was this possible? It was because they received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit and obeyed it (v. 6). The work of the Holy Spirit makes us more and more eager to hear the Word of God when we are in a lot of suffering. Not only that the Spirit enables us to receive His Word humbly and to obey God's will that we have realized through that Word. As a result, the Holy Spirit makes us holy and made us to be like Him in the midst of sufferings.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 2:4 – "but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who examines our hearts." Apostle Paul wrote to the Thessalonian church saints and said that he and his co-workers (Silas and Timothy) had been approved by God. The meaning of

this word is that Paul and his co-workers were recognized by God. In other words, Paul knew that God had recognized him as a faithful worker (Kim Seyoon). Consider this word once from Paul's point of view. Before he believed in Jesus, Paul persecuted the church (1 Cor. 15:9). So he wrote to Timothy in 1 Timothy 1:13 like this: "Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man," But he wasn't only saved by believing in Jesus, but also he became an apostle to the Gentiles. And the Lord considered him faithful and appointed him to His service (1 Tim. 1:12). So in 1 Corinthians 15: 9-10 he confessed: "For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them--yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me." Paul knew that he was not only saved by God's grace, but also by the grace of God, he became the apostle to the Gentiles and the Lord considered him faithful and appointed him to His service. So he gave thanks to God and worked faithfully in the Lord's work with the God's grace. He even regarded his life worth nothing to himself, if only he could finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus had given him – "the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace" (Acts 20:24). One interesting point is that Apostle Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 2:4 that he had been approved by God and it means God tested Paul with trials and he passed.

A good example of this is the story of God testing Abraham in Genesis chapter 22. What was God's test given to Abraham in that story? It was offering Isaac, whom God promised to Abraham and gave to him when he was 100 years old and whom Abraham loved, by going to the region of Moriah and sacrifice Isaac there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains God told him about (v. 2). How did Abraham respond to this test of God? Abraham went to the place God had told him about and built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. And he bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on the top of the wood. Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son (vv. 9-10). Then the angel of the Lord called out to Abraham from heaven and said to him, "Abraham! Abraham! Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son" (vv. 11-12). Abraham passed the test of God. This was how the psalmist prayed to God: "Test me, O LORD, and try me, examine my heart and my mind" (Ps. 26:2). I think we should pray like the psalmist too. The reason is because our hearts and our minds should be tested. It is because our will should be consistent with the Lord's will through the test. It is because our conscience must be clean in front of the people as well as in the presence of the Lord, even through the test. Though we may had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials, if we pass the trials with the God's grace and faith in Him, then our faith will be refine by fire and may be proved genuine (1 Pet. 1:6-7). Apostle Paul who preached the gospel of God with this kind of genuine faith that was tested and refined by fire didn't please men but God who examined his heart (1 Thess. 2:4). This is what Dr. Seyoon Kim said: 'Paul was always conscious of the fact that he had to report to the Lord in the final judgment how he proclaimed the gospel since he was approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. So the only purpose of Paul's life was to please God. It wasn't to please people. He tried to be faithful in fulfilling his duty which the Lord had entrusted to him in front of God who examined his heart.' His logic was based on 2 Corinthians 5:10 – "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad." So Paul wrote the letter to the Thessalonian church saints and said to them without any hesitation: "For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed--God is witness--" (1 Thess. 2:5). Paul didn't preach the gospel for his own interests by being cunning and cheating on others with vile words (Park). In other words, he didn't choose the words that the congregation liked to hear in order to be applauded by people and to become popular. Also he didn't even preach the gospel of God to receive more money (Kim). According to Professor Kim Seyoon, Dio Chrysostom criticized the wandering philosophers during Apostle Paul's time that they were speaking flattery to get money from the audience. So the wandering philosophers didn't teach the truth clearly, but always taught it distorted (Kim). I think there is no difference now. Many pastors aren't speaking the truth but distorting it in order to receive offerings from church members. Now, rather than preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ at the pulpit, we the pastors are tempted to speak out in flattery to the people in order to please them. "This is the reason why the gospel in Korea seems to be powerless. The gospel is incredibly distorted.

That's why there is no manifestation of power in changing the values, the ethics, the lives, and the culture' (Kim). I agree. Why is there no change in our lives? Isn't it because the power of the gospel isn't manifesting? Why isn't there the manifestation of the power of the gospel? Isn't it because the distorted gospel is being preached? Then why is the distorted gospel being preached? The reason is because we, the pastors, are only trying to please people rather than to please God. This isn't the attitude of the person being approved by God. Rather, this is the attitude of the person who wants to be approved by people. We must be approved by God. We must please God who examines our hearts. In order to do that, we must preach the gospel of God. We must preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. We must preach the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In doing so, there will be a remarkable work of salvation, as "our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction" (1 Thess. 1:5).

Second, we must speak the gospel of God boldly with the help of our God in order to convey the gospel of God not in vain.

At the beginning of the year 2017, I learned from internet news that a new book was published by Kim Hyung Suk, the author I like from high school. The title of the book was 'I survived a hundred years'. When I saw the title, I wanted to buy it and read it. Perhaps it was because the Lord has given me the attitude that we should live in the perspective of death as I had been serving the elders in our church. I wondered how he wrote the book from his perspective who is almost 100 years old. So I bought it and read it. I would like to share with you some of his writings that made me to think: 'When we are young, we need courage. When we are adult, we need faith. And when we are old, we need wisdom. There must be courage for good will and noble goal. There must be an ethical belief of knowing what is good and what is evil. There must be a firm belief for a clear goal and purpose of life. There must be wisdom to withdraw and inherit. There must be wisdom that doesn't take office or position until death. There must be wisdom to prevent intellectual regression.' What do you think of this? Among the three things that Kim Jyung Suk talked about, that is "courage", "faith" and "wisdom", I would like to take a moment to think about "courage" in relation to 1 Thessalonians 2:2. According to Kim, we need courage when we are young and that courage is for good will and noble goal. I agree. And I think that "good will" and "noble goal" should go together in courage. The reason is because if the young man doesn't have the good will but have evil will and does his best to pursue his noble goal, I think he will be harmful rather than beneficial to the kingdom of God. On the other hand, if the young man has a good will but is without noble goal, no matter how courageous he can be in achieving his goal, it is questionable how much it will benefit the kingdom of God.

Whenever I remember our church young people and pray to God, I am praying that the Lord to raise each one of them up to be a Christ-centered visionary leader to go out and to expand the kingdom of God. Also I pray that the Lord to build them up as the courageous soldiers of Jesus Christ, such as Gideon's 300 soldiers. I want to see our church young people to stand firmly on the rock of faith to carry the dream of the Lord with courage and to fulfill that dream for the glory of God. In that process, I am sure there will be many challenges. They will meet many difficulties. But in the midst of all those challenges and difficulties, it is my prayer that they will look upon the Lord and walk the way of the Lord faithfully. A good model is a young missionary Jim Elliot. Although he was martyred at the young age of 29 for doing mission work in Ecuador, I think and believe that he is the good model for all of us, especially the young people in our church. The noble goal of his life was to go to Ecuador and preach the gospel to the native people with confidence in God's calling after he graduated from college. As he prepared for mission and to preach the gospel to the native people in Ecuador, he met with a former missionary to Ecuador who had previously did mission work to the natives, and he found out that the native people were very violent and dangerous. And his parents and friends thought that it would be more effective for Eliot to stay in America and do youth ministry than to be in the dangerous mission field. Nonetheless, Eliot took the risk and went to Ecuador with four other missionary co-workers. Eventually, on January 8, 1956, he and his four co-workers were killed by the native warriors. Although they had guns, they didn't use them. The reason was that their guns were meant to

protect themselves from the wild beasts of the jungle and not to protect themselves from dangerous natives. They were killed as they tried to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. They were martyred. Do not you think that Jim Elliot had lived a courageous life with the noble goal?

Look at 1 Thessalonians 2:2 – “We had previously suffered and been insulted in Philippi, as you know, but with the help of our God we dared to tell you his gospel in spite of strong opposition.” In fulfilling the God’s calling of preaching the gospel of God’s grace, Paul boldly preached the gospel in spite of strong opposition. And he got that strong opposition in his preaching ministry when he was in Philippi, before he came to the Thessalonica. And this fact was also known to the Thessalonian church saints. Why did Paul mention this to them even though they already knew that Paul had previously suffered and been insulted in Philippi? I am not sure why Paul mentioned this to the Thessalonian church saints who were also going through severe suffering (1:6). I think the reason was that Paul tried to encourage them who became imitators of Paul, his co-workers and of the Lord and were participating in suffering for the gospel. The reason I think this way is because the word “boldness” in 1 Thessalonians 2:2 contains the meaning of ‘honesty’ and ‘courage to speak’ (Kim). Paul encouraged the Thessalonian church saints to be courageous in the midst of suffering as well as to convey the gospel of God in transparent and honest manner (Kim).

We must convey the gospel of Jesus Christ in a transparent and honest manner with the help of our God. When we do that, we will have difficulties and hardships. In particular, we may suffer from those who dislike, oppose, and mock the gospel of Christ. Nevertheless, we must boldly proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. We also need to pray to God like the apostles: “Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness” (Acts 4:29). We also have to ask a prayer request to our church members, like Paul: “Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should” (Eph. 6:19-20).

Third and last, we must not seek glory from people in order to convey the gospel of God not in vain.

It seems so sweet to be praised by people. I think if we take that sweetness we will keep on trying to get praise and respect and glory by more and more people. Then when we become addicted to that sweet taste, we will surely become slaves of people and not the servants of the Lord. Imagine when we become slaves of people and keep on trying to receive recognition and exaltation by people. Then we will live in an ugly shape that is falling apart as we do whatever we can to receive them. I think a good example is King Saul in the Old Testament. Paul considered himself small before he became a king (1 Sam. 15:17). But after he won the battle against the Amalekites, he set up a monument in his own honor (v. 12), even as he disobey God's command (vv. 3, 8-9). King Saul disobeyed the Lord and pounced on the plunder and did evil in the eyes of the Lord (v. 19). Nevertheless, he caught hold of the hem of Samuel's robe (v. 27) and begged him to honor him before the elders of his people and before Israel (v. 30). What an ugly scene. Do we want to be exalted by the people?

Look at 1 Thessalonians 2:6 – “nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority.” Not only did Apostle Paul didn’t try to please men (v.4), but he also didn’t seek glory from men (v. 6). If he sought glory from men, he could have asserted his authority as an apostle (v. 6). If he did, he would have received at least some of the service and hospitality in the church. And he didn’t even have to work night and day (v. 9). The reason was that he could ask the Thessalonian church saints to support his living in order to get his living (1Cor. 9:14) (Kim Seyoon). He could just live a life of being a burden to them (1 Thess. 2:9). But he didn’t. Not only he didn’t assert his apostolic authority (v. 6), but he

also didn't abuse that authority. The reason was because he wasn't a preacher of the gospel who sought glory from men.

The more we seek glory from men, the more we will want to receive glory from them. Not only it is dangerous to have a desire to possess, but also it is dangerous to have a desire for honor. What good it is if we have a glorious honor in people's view? Don't we all have to go back to dust? What is the use of a glorious resume during funeral service if he is already dead? It is all meaningless and meaningless. God didn't give his begotten Son Jesus and died on the cross for us to waste our lives like that in vain. Let us all recall the words of Jesus: "If I glorify Myself, My glory is nothing" If we glorify ourselves, it is of no value. Let's not forget and pray to God this way: "Not to us, O LORD, not to us, But to Your name give glory Because of Your lovingkindness, because of Your truth" (Ps. 115:1).

We must convey the gospel of God not in vain. To do that, we must be approved by God. We must pass the God's test through trials. Therefore, we should be the ones who please God who examines our hearts. We should never use flattering speech with a pretext for greed in order to please people (1 Thess. 2:5). We must boldly proclaim the gospel with the help of God. As we all follow the Lord's example and participate in His suffering for the gospel, we shouldn't be afraid but courageously preach the gospel of Christ. Like Paul and the Thessalonian church saints, we must convey the gospel courageously and in a transparent manner in the midst of suffering. We must not preach the gospel to receive glory from people. We must preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to glorify God!

Because you had become so dear to us

[1 Thessalonians 2:7-12]

If you have only one hour left to live and can only make one phone call, who will you call and what will you say? When I asked myself this question, I will make one phone call to my beloved wife and I will tell her "I love you". What would you say to who? We have to think about what to say to our loved ones in terms of death. The reason is because we only have time to love. We live a short life even if we live only to love. If we know this, we must live our lives confessing "I love you" to those whom we love. And we must live to express our love to them.

This is what Apostle Paul said to the Thessalonian church saints in 1 Thessalonians 2:8, "We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us." We can see that Paul loved the Thessalonian church saints very much. Paul longed for them. If we see Paul said to the Philippian church saints, "God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus" (Phil. 1:8), I think he really longed for all the churches' brothers and sisters in Christ with the affection of Christ Jesus. And when he said "God is our witness," he sincerely and truthfully loved them with the affection of Christ Jesus before God who examined his heart (1 Thess. 2:4-5). I would like to meditate on 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12 under the heading "Because you had become so dear to us" and want to receive five lessons about how Paul loved the Thessalonian church saints.

First, Paul was gentle among the Thessalonian church saints like a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 2:7 – "But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children." I am sure you mothers who have raised a baby remember how you raise your kid. When I think about our three children, my wife remembers a lot of things about when they were little kids even though I don't. One thing that I clearly remember is when our son Dillon was a baby and my wife was going to the graduate school, I raised Dillon for almost one and half year. Haha. And I think this shows that a mother loves her children more than a father. And I think the mother knows her baby better than the father. She seems to understand what her baby is saying better than the father. And she seems to know why her baby is crying better than the father. And when she knows that her baby is crying because the baby is hungry. So she immediately embraces the baby and breast feeds the baby. And when the baby eats enough milk in the mother's arm, the the baby falls asleep.

If we look at the Old Testament, we can find some stories about "a nursing mother". One of them is the story of the baby Moses' nursing mother in Exodus 2. The baby Moses' sister asked Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and call a nurse for you from the Hebrew women that she may nurse the child for you?" (v. 7) Then the daughter of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, told her to do so, and eventually the Moses' sister brought Moses' mother and she nursed Moses (vv. 8-9). Another nursing mother's story is the Mephibosheth's nursing mother in 2 Samuel chapter 4. When the report came to the city that Saul and Jonathan died in the war of Jezreel, the Mephibosheth's nursing mother took Mephibosheth and fled. "And it happened that in her hurry to flee, he fell and became lame" (v. 4). In this story, I think the nursing mother's role was to protect the baby. A similar nursing mother's role is found in the story of Joash the son of Ahaziah (2 Chron. 22:11). When Athaliah tried to kill all the princes, the Joash's nursing mother hid him in the bedroom to avoid death (v. 11). In these two stories, the role of the nursing mothers was to protect the royal offspring or the prince and they risked their own lives to do so.

In 1 Thessalonians 2:7, Apostle Paul told the Thessalonian church saints, “But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children.” Can you imagine Paul, who didn’t even marry, tenderly cared for the Thessalonian church saints like the nursing mother caring for her baby? It isn’t easy even for women who aren’t married to care for a baby tenderly and how did Paul, who was a single man, tenderly care for the Thessalonian church saints like the nursing mother tenderly cared for her own children? How did he care them tenderly like the nursing mother? And what does that mean? The meaning can be understood by verse 6: “... even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority.” Paul didn’t assert his authority as an apostle of Christ to the Thessalonian church saints. The original meaning of this word is ‘to be able to exercise authority as an apostle of Christ’. In other words, as a preacher of the gospel, Paul had the authority to ask the Thessalonian church saints for financial support for his livelihood, but Paul didn’t (Kim, 1 Cor. 9:14). Rather, he sacrificially loved them like the nursing mother taking caring of her baby tenderly. Would a mother loves her children sacrificially claim her mother’s authority over her children? Of course not. She will give up her mother’s authority to love her children. This is what Paul said to the Corinthians church saints in 1 Corinthians 9:12 – “If others share the right over you, do we not more? Nevertheless, we did not use this right, but we endure all things so that we will cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ.” Although Paul had the apostolic right over the Corinthians church saints, he didn’t use that right, but instead he endured all things. The reason was because he didn’t want any hindrance to the gospel of Christ. By doing this Paul was able to establish the true authority of apostle. Dr. Seyoon Kim said: ‘There was true spiritual authority when he always had consciousness that he was entrusted with the gospel of Christ, when he wanted to please God who examined his heart, when he tried to fulfill God’s will with fear and trembling, and when he didn’t compromise with men, when he didn’t deny his own covetousness, when he didn’t distort the truth but proclaimed the gospel honestly and courageously. ... Fundamentally, Paul’s true authority comes from his self-understanding as a gospel preacher ’(Kim).

The true authority of a pastor like me must come from my understanding as a gospel preacher. In other words, because of the consciousness of God’s grace in not only saving such sinner like me but calling me to be the pastor, I must refuse to exercise the given pastoral authority over the church congregation and live a life of not hindering the gospel of Christ. In doing so, the true authority of pastor will be established. I think the parents’ authority is the same. The true authority of the parents is not to insist the parents’ authority over their children, but to endure all things without using the right of parents for the gospel of Christ. In particular, a pastor like me should endure all things, without using the pastoral authority, so that there is no obstacle in communicating the gospel to the sheep that the Lord has entrusted to me. This is what I wrote: ‘I need to endure all things without exercising my right. The purpose is so that there is no hindrance to the gospel of Christ (1 Cor. 9:12).’ I am keeping this Word of God in my mind: “And the Lord’s servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful” (2 Tim. 2:24).

We are evangelists who preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. And as the evangelists, we must not be obstacles to the gospel and to those whom we preach. To do so, we must not approach them by claiming our right and our authority as evangelists. Rather, we must love them, be gentle with them and serve them humbly with the affection of Christ Jesus and care them tenderly like the nursing mother caring for her children. We must never show to them the appearance of the authoritarian evangelists, like an authoritarian father who advocates his authority over his children. Rather, we should love them with the sacrificial love of Jesus, just as the nursing mother sacrifices herself for the baby. Let me share this Korean hymn “Precious Love, the Love of Mother”:

- (v. 1) Precious love, the love of mother, Broad and deep beyond all praise!
Precious love, it stirs my spirit Gives me gladness all my days.
Mother pray'd when I was weeping, Made my sorrows all her own;
And when I was glad and smiling Sang her praises at the Throne.
- (v. 2) Precious Book, my mother's Bible, Which she read me morn and night.
Still I see her read, and, pausing, Call some treasure to my sight:

"Whosoever but believeth Shall receive eternal life."
Precious words of her reciting, Still my strength in mortal strife!

- (v. 3) When I lie alone and troubled, Restless with exhausting fears,
Mother's voice, in hymns she sang me, Echoes living in my ears:
"From the rock flow springs of water; In the desert flowers grow."
"Those who walk the way with Jesus Need fear nothing here below."
- (v. 4) Mother's life was sweet and humble, Strong and firm in doing right.
I can make my life worth living With her ever in my sight.
Mother, in a world of tempests, Fought the good fight all her days;
Soon, by streams of living water, I shall live with her always.

Second, Paul was delighted to share with the Thessalonian church saints not only the gospel of God but his life as well.

I am sure the mothers who suffered when they had a baby know that their love for their child doesn't end with just feeding him or her. So they will do their best to give their kid everything he or she needs such as foods, clothes and so on. They are even willing to give their lives for their beloved child. Isn't this mother's love? This reminds me the Korean hymn "Precious Love, the Love of Mother": "Precious love, the love of mother, Broad and deep beyond all praise! Precious love, it stirs my spirit Gives me gladness all my days. Mother pray'd when I was weeping, Made my sorrows all her own; And when I was glad and smiling Sang her praises at the Throne" (v. 1). In your heart, aren't you confessing that your mother's love is broad, deep, wide and precious? Mother's love for her child is a love that gives and gives even her own life. And she delights in giving her life for her beloved child because she loves her child with the sacrificial mother's large and wide love.

Apostle Paul loved the Corinthians church saints. Look at 2 Corinthians 12:15 – "So I will very gladly spend for you everything I have and expend myself as well. If I love you more, will you love me less?" Paul loved the Corinthians church saints as if the mother had wasted herself for her children. When I thought about this, a young missionary Jim Elliott came into my mind. At the age of 29 and a missionary to Ecuador, he was martyred with his four co-workers. Then a daily newspaper in the United States at the time wrote like this on the cover page: "What an unnecessary waste!" (Internet) Did the young missionaries really waste their precious lives? Jim Eliot's goal was to go to Ecuador with conviction of God's calling and preach the gospel to the natives after he graduated from college. As he prepares for his mission, he met with a missionary who had previously did mission work to the natives in Ecuador. And he found out that the natives were violent and dangerous. So his parents and friends thought Eliot would be more effective in staying in America and do the youth ministry than going to the dangerous mission field. Nonetheless, Elliot took the risk and went to Ecuador with his four other co-workers. And eventually, on January 8, 1956, he and his four co-workers were killed by the native warriors. Although Elliot and his four co-workers had guns, they didn't use them because their guns were meant to protect themselves from the wild beasts of the jungle and not to protect themselves from dangerous natives. They were killed because they tried to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. They were martyred. Jim Eliot, a martyr, said this when he was a college student: "He is no fool who gives us what he can not keep to gain that which he cannot lose" (Elliot). What do you think of this word? Don't you want to be such a person, who gives up what he cannot keep to gain for the sake of gain that which he cannot lose?

Look at 1 Thessalonians 2:8 – "We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us." Apostle Paul was delighted to share with the Thessalonian church saints not only the gospel but his life as well. Why? The reason was because he loved

them so much with the love of God (v. 8). For their eternal life, Paul didn't spare his physical life to them. Shouldn't we also love our beloved people like this? Shouldn't we delight to share not only the gospel to the beloved ones but also our lives as well?

This is what Jesus said in John 15:13-14: "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command." So like Jesus, Apostle Paul didn't spare his life for the beloved friends, the Thessalonian church saints. This is possible only with the love of Jesus. This is what the prophet Isaiah said, "Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you!" (Isa. 49:15) Our Heavenly Father who is rich in mercy is the Father who not only forgets us but cannot forget us. And this Heavenly Father loved us so much that He gave His only begotten Son Jesus on the cross for our salvation. For our eternal life, God gave Jesus and the gospel. We also should give our life to our loved ones, along with the gospel of Jesus. "He is no fool who gives us what he can not keep to gain that which he cannot lose" (Elliot).

Third, Paul worked night and day in order not to be burden to anyone while he preached the gospel of God to the Thessalonian church saints.

Don't you think that it is parents' hearts that they don't want to be burden to their children? Couple of years ago, I read a new article under the heading 'Don't want to burden my children for managing the grave management ... Removing grave in Japan'. The article was about the removing the ancestral tombs are spreading in Japan. And the reason is mainly because the Japanese parents don't want to burden their children with tomb management (Internet). This is probably because Japanese parents are disciplined not to burden others in any way. The American parents teach their children to yield. On the other hand, the Korean parents teach their children not to lose (Internet).

Look at 1 Thessalonians 2:9 – "Surely you remember, brothers, our toil and hardship; we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you." Apostle Paul worked very hard not to be burden to the Thessalonian church saints whom he loved (v. 9). And the Thessalonian church saints knew this because they saw Paul preached the gospel to them as he was working night and day (v. 9). In other words, Paul worked hard at night and day, not to give the material burden to the Thessalonian church saints, and to preach the gospel of God to them. I think we can call this ministry of preach gospel as Paul was working 'tent maker mission'. What is tent maker mission? It is doing mission by working and earning money. Actually, in Acts 18:3, Apostle Paul worked as a tentmaker and did the mission. This is what Dr. Seyoon Kim said: 'Paul was a tentmaker missionary. Paul didn't try to earn money by preaching the gospel. He tried to keep his livelihood by working with his own hands so that he would not be burden to anyone. So he wasn't under indebtedness to anyone. By doing so, he didn't owe any debt to anyone. That was why there was nothing for Paul to hesitate (Kim). If Paul claimed his apostolic rights and asked the Thessalonian church saints for financial help, then perhaps he would not have correctly proclaimed the gospel of Jesus Christ. Rather, he could have used flattery in order to please and satisfy them (1 Thess. 2:4-5).

At the time of Apostle Paul, there were people in the Thessalonian church who were idle and busybodies who were reluctant to work and used their hands to reach out to their brothers and sisters in Christ for help. So Paul said to the Thessalonian church saints in 2 Thessalonians 3:10 – "For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat." That was why when Paul was with them, he wasn't idle nor did he eat anyone's food without paying for it but worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that he would not be burden to any of the Thessalonian church saints and that he could be an example to them (vv. 7-9). As an apostle, Paul could have asserted his apostolic right to the Thessalonian church saints. In other words, Paul had right to ask for help. But he gave up that right and worked hard night and day and preached the gospel to the Thessalonian

church saints. Why? He did so in order to make himself a model for them to follow (v. 9). In 2 Corinthians 12:14, we can see that Paul tried not to be a burden to the Corinthian church saints: “Now I am ready to visit you for the third time, and I will not be a burden to you, because what I want is not your possessions but you. After all, children should not have to save up for their parents, but parents for their children.” Isn’t it true that the parents have to save up for their children instead of the children should save up for their parents? Why do the parents do it? Isn’t it for their beloved children? If the parents do genuinely love their children, I am sure they don’t want to be burdened to their children. Instead, they want to help their children. Isn’t that right? Look at 2 Corinthians 11:9 – “And when I was with you and needed something, I was not a burden to anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied what I needed. I have kept myself from being a burden to you in any way, and will continue to do so.” Apostle Paul was in need when he was with the Corinthians. Nevertheless, he didn’t ask the Corinthian church saints for help even though he had the right to do so. The reason was because Paul didn’t want to burden them and thus he tried really hard not to be a burden to them. Now the question is how Paul managed to cover his need. First, he worked hard day and night, and the Philippians church saints sent his needs again and again when he was ministering in Thessalonica (Phil. 4:16).

I am sure there aren’t many parents among us who try to put a burden on their children. Rather, we are trying to avoid burdening our children in any way. Why are we doing that? Isn’t it because we love our children? This was also the love of Paul, the spiritual mother to the Thessalonian church saints. He worked day and night to avoid burdening them. In so doing he preached the gospel to them. Shouldn’t we do that too? I hope and pray that we, like Apostle Paul, preach the gospel of God without giving any burden to those whom we love.

Fourth, Paul lived holy, righteous and blameless life while he was among the Thessalonian church saints.

When I was living in Korea in 2001, I attended a church renewal pastoral council meeting and listened to a sermon by Pastor John Oh. I still cannot forget what he said in his sermon: ‘If we lower the standard we will fail’. Here, the “standard” that he was talking about was Jesus. What he emphasized was that we should become like Jesus. His last sermon was this: ‘Today’s last hour is our standard. Jesus Christ. We must never lower our standard. If we lower it, we will become secularized. If we lower it, we will fail. If we lower it, there is no difference between us and the people in this world. We have to precisely confirm our standard’ (Oh). He said that even though it is hard, even we have to bear our own cross, even we live an exhausted life because we are denying ourselves, we must not give up in trying to imitate Jesus. He exhorted us not to lower the standard and never to give up imitating Jesus. In doing so, the Lord will complement us (Internet). I then wrote these words, meditating on the Word of God, on July 19, 2009, after hearing the sermon by Pastor John Oh: ‘I remember the words of Pastor John Oh, who said that if we lower the standard, we will fail. We shouldn’t lower the standard in showing an example to our beloved ones. To do so, we must become Moses and not Aaron. When Aaron was with the Israelites, he committed a sin of making a golden calf. However, Moses had intimate fellowship with God in Mount Sinai for 40 days and received the Ten Commandments from God. We must have time apart from people and be alone with God. We should put the vertical relationship with God first and spend time with Him in a lonely place. In doing so, we will be able to show holy life to those whom we love. We should never live in harmony with the world by lowering the standard of holiness.’ We must not ease the standard of life as the saints. Now that we have eased it, we are living a life that is no different from the people of this world. We must return to the standard of the Bible to live a distinct life of the saints. If we continue to lower our standard, we will perish.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 2:10 – “You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed.” What does it mean? Paul was holy before God, and righteous and blameless in the sight of men. Therefore, whether in front of God or in front of the Thessalonian church saints, they couldn’t find fault with him (Park). The fact that he was holy before God means that he was separated to God from sin

(Believer's Bible commentary). And the fact that Paul was righteous means he did the right thing in the eyes of God and people. In other words, he lived according to the will of God and according to the Word (commandment) of God. In fact, Paul lived a blameless life before God and people. That doesn't mean that he lived as a perfect man without committing any sin. It means Paul didn't act shamefully before God and people (The College Press NIV commentary). As he lived like that, he prayed for the Thessalonian church saints as follows: "May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (5:23). Paul was holy, righteous and blameless (2:10). He showed an example to the beloved Thessalonian church saints. So he said to them, "You are witnesses, and so is God" (v. 10). In other words, Paul's example of life is that God and people were his witnesses. Paul not only became the example to the Thessalonian church saints, but he also prayed for them: "May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones" (3:13). What was the result? As a result, the Thessalonian church saints became an example to all believers in Macedonia and Achaia (1:7).

We too should be holy, righteous, and blameless like Paul (2:10). We must live by God's word and God's will, seeking holy life that is separated from sin. Therefore, we must not be found fault with in front of God and people. A good example is Daniel in the Old Testament. King Darius appointed 120 satraps over the kingdom and over them 3 commissioners of whom Daniel was one of them (Dan. 6:1-2). At that time Daniel was quickening his mind over other prime ministers and princes, so King Darius tried to rule him over the whole nation (v. 3). Then, other prime ministers and dignitaries tried to prosecute him for finding fault or wrong in dealing with the state affairs, but found no evidence or no fault (v. 4). Because Daniel was faithful and had never committed wrongs or offenses, they could not find any fault with Daniel (v. 4, verse 6). Gentlemen, should not we be here? Like Daniel, no matter how much we hate and are hated by us, the unbelievers should try to find fault in us. So, as we have said, the apostle Paul told the believers in the Corinthian church, "Be imitators of me, just as I have been imitators of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11: 1). You will be able to tell. I wish you and me to go to such a place. "Then this Daniel began distinguishing himself among the commissioners and satraps because he possessed an extraordinary spirit, and the king planned to appoint him over the entire kingdom" (v. 3). "Then the commissioners and satraps began trying to find a ground of accusation against Daniel in regard to government affairs; but they could find no ground of accusation or evidence of corruption" (v. 4). It was because Daniel was faithful and no negligence or corruption was to be found in him (v. 4). Shouldn't we be like Daniel? No matter how much we are hated by the non-believers and they try to find fault in us, shouldn't there be any? Then we can say to our beloved brothers and sisters in Christ like what Paul said to the Corinthian church saints, "Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1). I hope and pray that we will be able to do so.

Fifth and last, Paul encouraged, comforted and urged the Thessalonian church saints like a father who dealt with his own children.

What do you think the father's role is in child-rearing? I believe that God has given authority to the father of the family. And our duty as a head of the family is to lead our family with this divine authority that God has given us. Then how should the father lead the family well? I thought of three things:

(1) We the fathers, the head of the family, shouldn't abuse the authority God has given us.

If we abuse the authority given by God, we will never earn the respect and the hearts of our children. So we must use God's given authority wisely so that there can be peace and order in our home. Nowadays, I think the father's authority seems to have fallen on the ground. Since the wife is ignoring her husband's authority, her children are also ignoring their father's authority in following their mother's example. I think this is a serious problem. Although the abuse of the father's authority is a serious problem, the

neglecting the father's authority is a serious problem as well.

(2) We the fathers, the head of the family, should trust our children.

Of course this may not be easy. Especially if we think that our children are lying to us, it will be very difficult for us to trust them. But if we fully trust God and commit our children to God, we can trust our children. We must devote ourselves in trusting our children by trusting God. In doing so, we will be able to earn the hearts of our children. Although we want and expect the quick result, it may not seem obvious and may take some time for our children to gradually trust and follow us as we devote ourselves to trusting them.

(3) We the fathers, the head of the family, should have heart to heart conversation with our children.

In particular, we should have heart to heart conversation with our sons. Of course this will not be easy either. Especially to the fathers who don't speak that much, it may not be familiar to talk with their children. But we have to do it. We must deliberately try to have conversation with our children. We need to open each other's hearts and communicate truthfully rather than just having a formal dialogue. When we have heart to heart conversation with our children, we will be able to lead our children well.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 2:11 – “For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children.” Isn't it interesting to see that Paul not only said that he was gentle among the Thessalonian church saints “as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children” (v. 7) but also he said that he dealt with each of them “as a father deals with his own children” (v. 11). When I think of this fact, I think Paul loved the Thessalonian church saints in a balanced way. In other words, Paul didn't lean toward one way as the nursing mother tenderly caring for her own children but at the same time he loved them as the father did to his children. How will our children be if our children, who grow up in our homes, receive only the mother's love without receiving the father's love? On the contrary, what if our children grew up with only receiving the father's love and not the mother's love? What does it mean? It means that our children should receive both the father's love and the mother's love. In that sense, I think Paul loved the Thessalonian church saints with both the mother's love and the father's love in the balanced way. Then what does it mean when Paul said “as a father would his own children” in verse 11? It means Paul told the Thessalonian church saints that he was the father of their faith (Kim). What do you think the father of your faith or your spiritual father does?

(1) The spiritual father admonishes his beloved spiritual children.

Look at 1 Corinthians 4:14 – “I do not write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children.” Here, the literally meaning of the Greek word “admonish” is to put in mind with the purpose of warning and reproof. This presupposes that the other party is doing something wrong and intends to fix it and correct it. In a word, as their spiritual father Paul warned the Corinthians church saints to change. And he told them that if they ignored the warning and didn't change, then there would be judgment (punishment). The motive behind this Paul's admonishment was love. It was because he loved the Corinthians church saints that he admonished them.

(2) The spiritual Father shows an example to his beloved spiritual children.

Look at 1 Corinthians 4:16 – “Therefore I exhort you, be imitators of me.” Paul showed the example to the Corinthians church saints in two ways. The first one was that Paul didn't exceed what is written (v. 6) and the second one was that Paul was without honor for Christ's sake (v. 10). Paul sent Timothy, his faithful spiritual son

whom he loved, to the Corinthians church saints to remind them of Paul's life in Christ Jesus so that they might imitate him (v. 17). What is very important here is that Paul's life in Christ Jesus was consistent with what he taught everywhere in every church. In other words, Paul's actions and teachings were consistent with one another.

When we look at 1 Thessalonians 2:11-12, what did Paul do for the Thessalonian church saints “as a father dealt with his children”? Paul said the three things:

(1) Paul exhorted the Thessalonian church saints.

Here, the word ‘exhortation’ is to persuade other person’s will with words to make him/her to determine to do good deeds (Park). For example, Paul exhorted the Thessalonian church saints in 1 Thessalonians 4:1 – “Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you excel still more.”

(2) Paul encouraged the Thessalonian church saints.

Here, the word ‘encouragement’ means to edify a discouraged person (Park). For example, in 1 Thessalonians 5:11, Paul encouraged the Thessalonian church saints like this: “Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing.”

(3) Paul urged the Thessalonian church saints.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 4:3-6: “For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; and that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you.” By this we can see that Paul not only exhorted and encouraged the Thessalonian church saints as their spiritual father, but also he even urged them. In fact, the role of a father in the home is to urge his children with the truth when they are at risk of sinning or actually committing sins against God.

Why did Paul exhort, encouraged and urged the Thessalonian church saints? What was the purpose? Look at 1 Thessalonians 2:12 – “so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.” The purpose was so that the Thessalonian church saints to walk in the manner worthy of the God who called them into His own kingdom and glory.

How should we express our love for the ones we love? We have meditated on five things based on 1 Thessalonians 2:6-12: (1) We should be gentle among them like a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children. (2) We should be delighted to share with them not only the gospel of God but our lives as well. (3) We should work night and day in order not to be burden to them while we preach the gospel of God to them. (4) We should live holy, righteous and blameless life while we are among them. (5) We should encourage, comfort and urge them like a father who deals with his own children. I hope and pray that we will be able to practice in our homes and churches according to the lessons we have received through this Word of God.

You are our glory and joy

[1 Thessalonians 2:13-20]

What should we do if we love someone? If we love someone, don't you think we are going to think about him/her? Not only that, we will concern about him/her and will try to figure out his/her mind. And we will pray to God, remembering our beloved one. And we will sincerely confess that we love him/her.

Apostle Paul confessed his love to the Thessalonian church saints: "... you had become very dear to us" (1 Thess. 2:8). Based on this word and 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12, we already meditated about how Paul loved them. He loved them five ways: (1) Paul was gentle among them like a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children (v. 7). (2) Paul was delighted to share with them not only the gospel of God but his life as well (v. 8). (3) Paul worked night and day in order not to be burden to them while he preached the gospel of God to them (v. 9). (4) Paul lived holy, righteous and blameless life while he was among them (v. 10). (5) Paul encouraged, comforted and urged them like a father who deals with his own children (v. 11).

Today I would like to meditate on 1 Thessalonians 2:13-20 under the heading "You are our glory and joy". Look at verses 19-20: "For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? For you are our glory and joy." What do we eagerly expect and hope for? It is the second coming of Jesus. In other words, what we should eagerly anticipate and desire is the coming of the Lord Jesus. This is what the Lord Jesus clearly said in Revelation 22:20 – "Yes, I am coming quickly." Apostle John who heard this responded, "Amen Come, Lord Jesus". This should be our response. We, like Apostle John, must hear the words of the Lord, "I am coming quickly," and respond faithfully, "Amen, Lord Jesus, come." In order for us to respond in this way, we must always live a life of preparation for the coming of the Lord Jesus, believing that the Lord Jesus is coming again for sure.

How should we prepare for the second coming of the Lord Jesus? There are four things we can think of:

First, we must listen carefully to the lesson of the Word of the "The Parable of the Ten Virgins" in Matthew 25: 1-13.

Among the ten virgins, five of them were foolish so they went out to meet the bridegroom with only their lamps. And the rest of the five were wise so, not only they took oil in jars along with their lamps (Mt. 25:1-4). "The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep" (v. 5). "At midnight the cry rang out: 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!' Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps" (vv. 6-7). At that time, the five foolish virgins who didn't prepare the oil asked the wise virgins to share their oil because their lamps were going out (v. 8). The five wise virgins who heard them saying told the five foolish virgins: "No ... there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves" (v. 9). But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom came, and the wise virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet, and the door was shut (v. 10). After the door was shut, the foolish virgins came and said, 'Sir! Sir! Open the door for us!' (v. 11). But the bridegroom said, "I tell you the truth, I don't know you" (v. 12). Jesus, who said this parable, conclusively said: "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour" (v. 13). What do you think the lesson of this parable tells us? The lesson is that we all should be awake because we don't know when the the Lord Jesus is coming.

Second, we who prepare for the second coming of the Lord Jesus must be sober and fully armed with faith, love and hope of salvation.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 5:8 – “But since we are of the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation.” We must know that the Lord's day comes like a thief in the night (v. 2). And we must know that the Lord suddenly comes when people say “Peace and safety!” (v. 3). Therefore, we should not sleep as others do, but we must be alert and sober (v. 6). We must be sober and fully armed with faith, love and hope of salvation (v. 8). We who are preparing for the coming of the Lord Jesus must stand firm in our faith. We must stand firm in our faith so whatever temptations or tribulations come, we must not be shaken. In addition, we must love God and love our neighbors by obeying the twofold command of Jesus. This is our breastplate (now a bulletproof vest) that protects us from Satan's attacks. And we must wear “a helmet, the hope of salvation” (v. 8). How important is the helmet that protects our head in the war? That helmet is the hope of salvation. This reminds me Jonah 2:9 – “... Salvation comes from the LORD.” The Lord is our hope of salvation. We must be sober and awake in faith in Him who is the hope of our salvation. And we must obey the Lord's word by loving God and loving our neighbors.

Third, we who prepare for the second coming of the Lord Jesus must be self-controlled and alert and pray to God.

Look at 1 Peter 5:8 – “Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.” Look at Matthew 26:41 – “Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak.” Jesus went to Gethsemane the night before he was crucified and prayed (v. 36). And “Jesus said to his disciples, ‘Sit here while I pray.’ He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. ‘My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death,’ he said to them. ‘Stay here and keep watch’” (Mk. 14:32-34). And Jesus went a little further, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him (v. 35): “Abba, Father, ... everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will” (v. 36). “Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. ‘Simon,’ he said to Peter, ‘are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour? Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak’” (vv. 37-38). We who are preparing for the second coming of Jesus must know that our enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour (1 Pet. 5:8). The devil is trying very hard to make us abandon our faith and leave the Lord and leave the church. We who are engaging in this spiritual war must be awake and prayed so that we may not be tempted by the devil.

Fourth and last, we who prepare for the second coming of the Lord Jesus must always give ourselves fully to the work of the Lord.

Look at 1 Corinthians 15:58 – “Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.” We who are preparing for the second coming of the Lord Jesus should always give ourselves fully to the work of the Lord with the resurrection faith even in any tribulation and persecution. The reason is that our labor in the Lord isn't in vain.

Then what is the Lord's work that we should always strive to do? It is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. Before when I had Morning Prayer, I meditated on the book of Mark with its similar passages from Mark 8:35 and 10:29-30 and I learned about how we should live for Jesus as His disciples. Look at Mark 8:35 – “For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it.” Look at Mark

10:29-30: "I tell you the truth," Jesus replied, "no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields--and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life." As I was meditating on these two verses, Jesus taught me that I should give up my life, my family and whatever I have for the sake of Jesus and His gospel. In other words, it is not my life, my family, or my possession that I have to put in the top priority but Jesus and His gospel. This was the mission of Apostle Paul. Look at Acts 20:24 – "However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me--the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace." Paul considered his life worthy nothing to him in completing the task the Lord Jesus gave him. So as he wrote a letter to the Thessalonian church saints, he said in 1 Thessalonians 2:2 – "but after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, as you know, we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition." Paul who had been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel (v. 4) had suffered and had been mistreated in Philippi and came to Thessalonica and boldly spoke the gospel of God to the Thessalonians amid much opposition (v. 2). When he did so, the gospel came to them not in word only but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction (1:5). As a result, the Thessalonians left their idols and turned to God to serve the living and true God (v. 9). Not only that, they waited for the Son of God from heaven, whom God raised from the dead (v. 10). And they became imitators of Paul, his co-workers and of the Lord, "having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit" (v. 6). So the Thessalonians became the example to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia (v. 7). Not only did the words of the Lord sound forth from them, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place their faith toward God had gone forth (v. 8).

So Apostle Paul always thanked God and prayed for the Thessalonian church saints (1:2). He couldn't but give thanks to God when he remembered their work of faith, labor of love and steadfastness of hope in the Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of God and Father (v. 3). In particular, in 1 Thessalonians 2:13-20, Paul constantly thanked God that when the Thessalonian church saints received the word of God, they accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God (2:13). When you receive the word of God through a pastor like me, do you receive it as the word of God or as the words of man? Of course, when I preach, I don't speak 100% God's Word. But at least when I quoted the Bible verses and said the word of God, do you receive it as the word of God? In June, 2016, I meditated on Jeremiah 23:16 under the heading 'We should not listen to the words from this kind of pastor'. The Bible says: "This is what the LORD Almighty says: "Do not listen to what the prophets are prophesying to you; they fill you with false hopes. They speak visions from their own minds, not from the mouth of the LORD."

First, I want to meditate on what kind of pastor we shouldn't listen to:

(1) We shouldn't listen to the words of the pastor who hurts and scatters the congregation.

Look at Jeremiah 23:1 – "Woe to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of my pasture!" declares the LORD." How did the Israel shepherds hurt and scattered the God's flocks of his pasture? They didn't attend to the God's people but did evil (v. 2). Even now, there are pastors who don't look after God's people but do evil. They take care of themselves rather than caring for the church members (Ezek. 34:2). They are busy feeding their stomach. They don't strengthen the weak members, heal the sick or bind up the injured, don't bring back the strays or search for the lost (v. 4). But they are "butting all the weak sheep with your (their) horns until you (they) have driven them away" (v. 21). So the congregations are hurt by those pastors, and eventually they leave the church and are scattered all over the place. We must not listen to these pastors' words.

(2) We shouldn't listen to the words of the pastor who do an offensive and horrible thing.

Look at Jeremiah 23:13-14: “Moreover, among the prophets of Samaria I saw an offensive thing: They prophesied by Baal and led My people Israel astray. Also among the prophets of Jerusalem I have seen a horrible thing: The committing of adultery and walking in falsehood; And they strengthen the hands of evildoers, So that no one has turned back from his wickedness All of them have become to Me like Sodom, And her inhabitants like Gomorrah.” The prophets of the northern Israel were foolish. They relied on Baal instead of God and prophesied, making God’s people Israel going astray. How foolish they were. Then how about the prophets of the southern Judah? They did horrible thing. They committed adultery. The land was full of adulterers (v. 10) and the prophets too (v. 14). They lived a life and strengthened the hands of evildoers, so that no one turned from his wickedness (v. 14). What a detestable thing. There are still a lot of pastors doing this abominable thing now. They preach and give the church members false comfort and encouragement so that the church members go out into the world, forsake God's word, and sin against God boldly. They don’t preach about sins and repentance. Rather, they are reinforcing the church members to go out into the world and boldly commit sins against God. Also many pastors are guilty of adultery. They are doing abominable things in the sight of God. In addition, many pastors rely on money rather than on God. And they are making a lot of people wrong because they rely on money and preach vain blessings or preach sermons about money. They are foolish in the sight of God. Don’t listen to the words of these pastors who are doing these foolish and abominable things.

(3) We shouldn’t listen to the word of the pastor who speaks a lie.

Look at Jeremiah 23:25-26: “I have heard what the prophets say who prophesy lies in my name. They say, 'I had a dream! I had a dream!' How long will this continue in the hearts of these lying prophets, who prophesy the delusions of their own minds?” The prophets who prophesied lies in the name of God said “I had a dream! I had a dream!” (v. 25) They told the people false dreams and led them astray with their reckless lies (v. 32). As a result, the false prophets tried to make the Israelites to forget God (v. 27). The false prophets who prophesied lies in the name of God tried to cause the people of God to forget the name of God (v. 27). There are still pastors who make false prophecy in the name of Jesus. They said that they have received the gift of prophecy and prophesied to the members of the church. Some of them just talk about their dreams. They speak as though their dreams came from God. They are telling their dreams to be equivalent to the Word of God. They speak their dream that isn’t from the Bible at all, and make a false prophecy to the congregation as if it were equivalent to the Word of God. What is surprising and strange, however, is that there are some church members who find their prophecies that they are right. And there are also some members who want to receive blessing prayer from those pastors. We must not listen to the words of the pastors who speak a lie.

(4) We shouldn’t listen to the words of the pastor who steals the word of God.

Look at Jeremiah 23:30 – “Therefore," declares the LORD, "I am against the prophets who steal from one another words supposedly from me.” The false prophets stole the word of God. God spoke to the true prophet whom He had raised and commanded him to speak His words to the Israelites. But the false prophets, whom God didn’t speak and raised, prophesied their own lies. As they stole the word of God, they prophesied falsely to the Israelites, the delusions of their mind (v.26). Out of their hearts came theft (Mt. 15:19) so they stole the word of God and prophesied lies to the Israelites. Then the Israelites shouldn’t have listened to their words. We must not listen to the words of the pastor who steals the Word of God. We shouldn’t listen to the words of the pastor who steals the finances of God, but also we shouldn’t listen to the pastor who steals the word of God. We shouldn’t listen to the pastor who steals other pastor’s sermons as well.

Second and the last, what kind of pastor we should listen to:

It is the pastor who receives the word of God and speaks the word of God faithfully.

Look at Jeremiah 23:28-29: "Let the prophet who has a dream tell his dream, but let the one who has my word speak it faithfully. For what has straw to do with grain?" declares the LORD. 'Is not my word like fire," declares the LORD,' and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?" Out of many false prophets, Jeremiah was a true prophet. Before God formed him in the womb God knew him and set him apart. And God appointed Jeremiah as a prophet to the nations (1:5). God said to him, "Do not say, 'I am only a child.' You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you" (v. 7). The prophet Jeremiah obeyed this word of God. He received the word of God. And he spoke the word of God to the Israelites faithfully. He spoke the word of God boldly by believing its power. The power of the Word is that God's Word is like a fire and a hammer (v. 29). We must receive the words of the pastor who has received the word of God and has proclaimed to us faithfully. When we receive the word of God through the servant of God, as in the Thessalonian church saints, we must receive it humbly, not as the word of man but as the word of God (1 Thess. 2:13). Then the word of God will be at work in us who believe (v. 13). And the work of God's word is that our hearts will be burning within us (Lk. 24:32). As a result, our cold heart will melt down. Also, the power of God's Word is that it will break our hardened hearts. No matter how hard or stubborn we are, the word of God, like the hammer, can break our hearts thoroughly. As we trust this power of the word of God and look upon Him, we should hear the words of the pastor who receives the word of God and speaks to us faithfully.

Apostle Paul thanked God continually because , then the Thessalonian church saints received the word of God, which they heard from Paul, they accepted it not as the word of men, but as the word of God (1 Thess. 2:13). Not only that, but Paul thanked God continually for knowing that the word of God was at work in them who believed (v. 13). Here, what does it mean that the word of God worked in the Thessalonian church saints? Look at 1 Thessalonians 2:14 – "For you, brothers, became imitators of God's churches in Judea, which are in Christ Jesus: You suffered from your own countrymen the same things those churches suffered from the Jews." The Thessalonian church saints who not only received the word of God but also believed in it became imitators of God's churches in Judea (v. 14). That means that the Thessalonian church saints suffered also by their own countrymen, just as the God's churches in Judea suffered by the Jews (v. 14). In other words, the reason why Paul thanked God was because they endured the suffering they received from their own countrymen the same things those churches suffered from the Jews (v. 14, Park). What was the suffering they endured? In other words, what what the suffering the Thessalonian church saints suffer? It was "the same things those churches suffered from the Jews" (v. 14). Then what kind of persecution did the God's churches saints in Judea received? Look at 1 Thessalonians 2:15-16: "who killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets and also drove us out. They displease God and are hostile to all men in their effort to keep us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved. In this way they always heap up their sins to the limit. The wrath of God has come upon them at last." The suffering that the God's churches saints in Judea received was first of all the Jews killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets (v. 15). Moreover, the Jews persecuted not only Paul and his co-workers but all other apostles as well (Park). Because the Jews drove them out (v. 15), Paul and his co-workers went to the Gentiles to preach the gospel to them for salvation (v. 16). But the Jews prevented Paul and his coworkers from preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles for salvation (v.16). As a result, the wrath of God had come upon the Jews at last who always heaped up their sins to the limit (v. 16).

To the Thessalonian church saints who suffered by the Jews, Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 2:17, " But, brothers, when we were torn away from you for a short time (in person, not in thought), out of our intense longing we made every effort to see you." What would your heart be like if you find that you are far away from your beloved family and that your beloved family is suffering from disease? If you stand in the position of Paul, what do you think will happen to you when you think of the family of the Thessalonian church saints who were suffering?

Wouldn't you try your best to see your beloved family? Apostle Paul was like that. He made every effort to see them (v. 17). The reason is because Paul loved them so much that he was delighted to share with them his life as well (v. 8). However, Paul came to know that the Thessalonian church saints whom he loved were suffering from their own countrymen because of Jesus and His gospel. So he wrote to them: "But, brothers, when we were torn away from you for a short time (in person, not in thought), out of our intense longing we made every effort to see you" (v. 17). Although Paul's body was away from the beloved Thessalonica, but his heart didn't leave them. His heart was always with them. And it seems that Paul had tried very hard to see them again. Actually, Paul tried to go to them "again and again" (v. 18). But Satan stopped him (v. 18). We don't know how Satan stopped Paul from going to Thessalonica. But here we need to think about one thing. We need to distinguish between Satan's blocking from the Holy Spirit's blocking.

First, a good example that the Holy Spirit's blocking can be found in Acts 16. When Paul and his co-workers tried to go to Asia to preach the word, they were "forbidden by the Holy Spirit" (v. 6). So "after they came to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them" (v. 7). The Holy Spirit stopped Paul and his co-workers twice in going to Asia. Why did the Holy Spirit block their way? And in 1 Thessalonians 2:18, Satan stopped Paul from going to Thessalonica. Although Paul tried to go to Thessalonica because the Thessalonian church saints who he dearly loved were suffering, Satan stopped him from doing so. What was Satan's purpose here? Why did Satan stop Paul from going to Thessalonica? Isn't this even done in the sovereignty of God because without God's permission Satan couldn't stop Paul from going to Thessalonica (cf. Job 1-2). How can we distinguish between the Holy Spirit's blocking and Satan's blocking? For example, how do we know whether it is the Holy Spirit who is blocking or Satan is blocking when we try to preach the gospel diligently for the glory of God with plan and prayer but it didn't go as we planned? I think it is a very difficult question. Although it is not easy for us to distinguish between the Holy Spirit's blocking and Satan's blocking, one thing that is clear is that there are two distinct purposes for those two kinds of blocking. What are those two distinct purposes? In Acts 16, the Holy Spirit blocked Paul from going into Asia because God's priority for him and his co-workers to preach was Macedonia (Philippians, Thessalonica). But in 1 Thessalonians 2:18, Satan prevented Paul from going to the Thessalonica to see the Thessalonian church saints was so that Paul couldn't preach the gospel to them. I think Satan blocked Paul from going to the Thessalonica to preach the gospel to them, so that the Thessalonian church saints would not be comforted in their suffering. And if they couldn't get comfort, then they would be discouraged and would not be able to endure persecution and suffering and would depart from their faith. As I was meditating on this, it reminded me Luke 8:12 – "Those along the path are the ones who hear, and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved." When I meditated on this word, I thought that perhaps Satan prevented Paul from going to Thessalonica so that the Thessalonians wouldn't believe in Jesus and be saved. The way Satan used to accomplish that purpose was to take the word out of their hearts (v. 12). In other words, Satan prevented Paul from going to Thessalonica so that Paul couldn't preach the word of God to the Thessalonian church saints. Not only that, I think Satan would have made the Thessalonian church saints who had heard the word to be choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures so they they couldn't mature (v. 14). I also think that Satan's intention of blocking Paul from going to Thessalonica was to make the Thessalonian church saints to fall away from the Lord (Lk. 8:13) in their suffering (1 Thess. 2:14).

Apostle Paul really sought to go to the Thessalonian Church saints because he saw them spiritually honorable (Park). Look at 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20: "For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? Indeed, you are our glory and joy." What does it mean? For Paul, the Thessalonian church saints were hope, joy and crown of glory. When the Lord Jesus comes back, Paul's hope, joy, crown and glory were the Thessalonian church saints who heard the gospel of Jesus Christ from Paul and believed in Jesus Christ by God's grace and fought the good fight of faith to the end and kept the faith. The same is true of the Philippian church saints. Look at Philippians 4:1 – "Therefore, my brothers, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, that is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends!" The same is true of the Corinthian church saints. Look at 2 Corinthians 1:14 – "as you have understood us in part, you

will come to understand fully that you can boast of us just as we will boast of you in the day of the Lord Jesus.”

When the Lord comes back to this earth, what can we offer to Him? Isn't it each soul, the fruit of the gospel, whom we have reached out and preached the gospel? Isn't it those souls whom we have loved and served with the affection of Christ Jesus? Isn't it all those people who we have labored not in vain (Phil. 2:16)? I think they are the fruits whom we can offer to the Lord when He comes back again. They are our hope, joy, crown and glory. I hope and pray that we can be filled with glory and joy in front of the Lord.

I was encouraged about you because of your faith

[1 Thessalonians 3:1-7]

Have you ever felt the limits of patience? Therefore, have you ever prayed to God, 'God, how long should I endure this affliction?' The longer and worse the pain and adversity we have, the more we feel the limits of patience. At that time, we ask God "How long?" and cry out to God. In Scripture Psalm 119, the psalmist did so. Even though he put his hope in God's word and longed for God's salvation (v. 81), there was no answer from God. So he prayed to God, "My eyes fail, looking for your promise; I say, "When will you comfort me?"

This is what Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 3:7 to the Thessalonian church saints: "Therefore, brothers, in all our distress and persecution we were encouraged about you because of your faith." I would like to think about Paul who was encouraged by the Thessalonian church saints in three ways under the title 'I was encouraged about you because of your faith'.

First, Paul could endure it no longer.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 3:1, 5: "Therefore when we could endure it no longer, we thought it best to be left behind at Athens alone, ... For this reason, when I could endure it no longer, I also sent to find out about your faith, for fear that the tempter might have tempted you, and our labor would be in vain." What would your heart be if you knew that your beloved family who is far away was in great difficulty and hardship? Wouldn't you be anxious and worry? And would you not try to go see him/her? Earlier this year, my church elder Yoon was driving with me all the way to Sierra Vista, Arizona because he was concerned about the health of my father-in-law who was sick. We drove about 9 hours and went straight to a Sierra Vista hospital where my father-in-law was with his wife. When we arrived at the hospital around 2 am, we saw both of my parents-in-law sleeping. So we prayed silently and went to a motel near by and slept there. Next day in the morning, we visited the hospital again and worshiped God together. After we drove all the back to California and stopped by at a California hospital where one of our church members was in Intensive Care Unit due to big car accident. Why did we do that? Wasn't it because we were concerned about both of them?

In 1 Thessalonians 3:1 and 5, Apostle Paul wrote a letter to the Thessalonian church saints and said "when we could endure it no longer" (v. 1) and "when I could endure it no longer" (v. 5). In other words, Paul was unable to endure any longer when he thought about the Thessalonian church saints (Park). HE could no longer wait and endure. What was the reason? Why couldn't Paul endure any longer when he thought about the Thessalonian church saints? The reason is because Paul wanted to know their faith (v. 5). The reason why Paul wanted to know their faith was because they were suffering affliction (v. 4). That was why Paul was concerned about them (v. 5). The concern was that Satan might tempted them when they were afflicted, and made Paul's and his co-workers' labor to be vain (v. 5). Don't you have this kind of concern as well? For example, won't you be very concern when a person whom you reached out and shared the gospel and he started believing in Jesus Christ but decided not to go to church anymore because he was tempted by Satan when he was suffering and affliction for long time? Will you not hope and pray that he will endure the suffering and affliction faithfully without leaving the church? What would your heart be if he couldn't overcome suffering and affliction and fall into temptation, left the faith and left the church? Won't you be very concerned that all your labor will be in vain?

When we look at Judges 10:16, we can see the glimpse of God's unbearable heart toward the Israelites:

“Then they got rid of the foreign gods among them and served the LORD. And he could bear Israel's misery no longer.” The reason God had an unbearable heart toward the Israelites was because He saw their misery and their suffering (v. 16). Then why were they suffering in misery? It was because the Israelites served the Baals and the Ashtoreths, and the gods of Aram, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the Ammonites and the gods of the Philistines and because they forsook the LORD and no longer served him (v. 6). So God became angry with them and sold them into the hands of the Philistines and the Ammonites (v. 7). So The Philistines and the Ammonites afflicted the Israelites for 18 years (v. 8). “The sons of Ammon crossed the Jordan to fight also against Judah, Benjamin, and the house of Ephraim, so that Israel was greatly distressed” (v. 9). Because of this terrible affliction, the Israelites cried out to God, and they confessed to God that they had forsaken God and served the Baals (vv. 10, 15). And they put away the foreign gods from among them and served the Lord (v.16). At that time, God could bear the misery of Israel no longer (v. 16). God could no longer see the suffering of the Israelites. God's heart toward the suffering Israelites was no longer bearable. So God raised up the Jephthah the Gileadite (11:1) and delivered the Israelites from the sons of Ammon (v. 32).

Our God's heart toward us is unbearable. God could no longer see that we were perishing forever. Therefore, with an unbearable heart, God sent His begotten Son Jesus to this world and eventually to die on the cross in order to deliver us from eternal destruction. And when His Son Jesus cried on the cross "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mt. 27:46; Mk. 15:34), He endured, even though He had heard. Heavenly Father was longsuffering (Exod. 34:6). Why did He do it? The reason is that God couldn't see us forever destroyed. That was why in order to save us and give us eternal life, God gave His only Son Jesus to die on the cross. God loves us so much (Jn. 3:16) that He couldn't bear to see that we were destroyed forever even though He could bear to see His one and only Son Jesus to die on the cross. We who have received this love of God, what should we do? We must love one soul with the unbearable heart of Heavenly Father. And we must preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to that one soul in the love of God. I want this to be our prayer topic: "Heavenly Father, give me Your unbearable heart. Father, grant me the heart of Jesus Christ "(Phil. 1:8).

Second, Paul sent Timothy.

What would you do if you knew that your beloved family member who is far away was in great difficulty and hardship? Would you not only pray to God for him, but also try to go and see him anyway you can? What is the reason? Isn't it that you try to help him and encourage him to endure the difficulties and hardship to overcome? But what if you try to go and see him but you cannot? Then won't you find someone else who can go for you? Who will you send instead of you? Obviously you will not send anybody. Rather, you will send someone whom you trust.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 3:2 – “We sent Timothy, who is our brother and God's fellow worker in spreading the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith.” Here, we see that Paul sent his spiritual son Timothy instead to the Thessalonian church saints. It was because out of intense longing Paul wanted to go to them so he tried again and again but Satan stopped him (2:17-18). So Paul sent Timothy, “our brother and God's fellow worker in spreading the gospel of Christ” (3:2). What was the purpose? Why did Paul send Timothy to the Thessalonian church? Look at 1 Thessalonians 3:2b-3: “... to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith, so that no one would be disturbed by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we have been destined for this.” The purpose was to strengthen and encourage the Thessalonian church saints as to their faith so that no one would be disturbed by the afflictions. Here, the word ‘disturb’ may mean “flattering’ based on the meaning ‘a dog shakes its tail’. So Dr. Park Yun-sun said: ‘When a Christian is suffering, Satan flatters as if a dog shakes its tail, so that he may compromise with sin and walks on a comfortable path. Therefore, the believers need to be careful not to be attracted to the flattery of the devil’ (Park). These afflictions were known to the Thessalonian church saints already because Paul already told them that they were going to suffer affliction when he was with them and it actually came

to pass (v. 4). So since Paul could endure it no longer, he sent Timothy to them who were going through affliction in order to find out about their faith (v. 5). Then, how did Timothy go to the Thessalonian church and strengthen and encourage the saints in the church? I looked up the answer in 1 Corinthians 4:17. This, of course, is what Paul said to the Corinthian church saints, but I think it also can apply to the Thessalonian church saints as well: "By this I have sent to you Timothy, my beloved and faithful son, in the Lord, For this reason I am sending to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church." Since Timothy went to the Corinthian church and reminded the saints of Paul's way of life in Christ Jesus, I think that was what he did also to the Thessalonian church saints. I think that was one of the reason why Paul introduced to them Timothy as "our brother and God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ" (1 Thess. 3:2). How did Timothy, God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, strengthen and comfort their faith? Don't you think he preached the gospel of Christ to them?

We can see the similar case in the Philippian church. In Philippians 2:19-20, this is what Paul wrote to the Philippian church saints: "But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, so that I also may be encouraged when I learn of your condition. For I have no one else of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare." Why did Paul want in the Lord to send Timothy to the Philippian church saints? The reason is that Paul wanted to be encouraged by learning their condition (v. 19). In other words, Paul sent Timothy to the Philippian church so that through him he might hear the news about the church saints and be encouraged. So before sending Timothy to the Philippian church saints Paul introduced Timothy to them through this letter of the 1 Thessalonians. In that introduction verse 21 came to my mind: "For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus." What did Paul mean? What did he try to say to the Philippian church saints? He said that everyone sought their own interests and not those of Christ Jesus but Timothy sought the work of Christ Jesus. In addition to that, Paul wanted to send Timothy to the Philippian church saints because Timothy genuinely was concerned for their welfare (v. 20). Here, the word "genuinely" means 'the father's sincerity to his son' (Park). That is to say, as the father sincerely concerned about his son's welfare, Paul told the Philippian church saints that Timothy was the one who was sincerely concern about their welfare.

Who would be genuinely concerned about our welfare? He is our God. God is the One who genuinely and faithfully concerns about our welfare. He who knows that we cannot save ourselves from sin and eternal destruction on our own sent His only begotten Son Jesus, who is the true "Timothy" (meaning: 'honoring God') who truly honors Heavenly Father, to die on the cross in order to saved us. And Jesus who died on the cross and resurrected from the dead, sent the Comforter Holy Spirit to us. And the Spirit of God who dwells in us strengthens us and builds our faith on the Rock Jesus Christ with the Word of God in the midst of adversity and tribulation. Therefore, the Holy Spirit makes us to stand firm and comforts us in our afflictions. That Holy Spirit wants to use us tools of comfort. The Lord is sending us now. The Lord is sending us to our beloved brothers and sisters in Christ who are suffering. We who are sent by the Lord should be obedient to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and go and comfort them and strengthen them who are in distress and adversity. I hope and pray that all of us can be used by the Lord like Timothy.

Third and last, Paul was comforted.

Our God is the God of all comfort. God comforts us in all our afflictions. This comfort of God works in us and makes us to endure any hardship. And God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God (2 Cor. 1:3-7). But we are not comforting others, but God of comfort enables us to comfort them (vv. 3-4). In addition, where sin increases, grace abounds all the more (Rom. 5:20), where the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows (2 Cor. 1:5). And God's comfort enables us to endure suffering (vv. 3-6). We must bear in mind that the suffering and comfort we have is for someone's comfort and

salvation (v. 6). God's people who comforts others are beautiful.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 3:7 – “for this reason, brethren, in all our distress and affliction we were comforted about you through your faith.” Paul said that in all his distress and affliction he was comforted about the Thessalonian church saints through their faith. Shouldn't Paul comfort them? Some may think that a pastor should comfort his church members instead of the church members to comfort the pastor. But what we should know is that we should comfort each other (4:18). The relationship between Apostle Paul and the Roman church saints was like that. They comforted each other. They were comforted by each other's faith (Rom. 1:12). The Roman church saints' faith was proclaimed through out the whole world (v. 8) and Paul's faith was serving in his spirit in the preaching of the gospel of His Son and doing the will of God (vv. 9, 10).

The relationship between the pastor and the saints is not to quarrel and fight. In particular, the relationship between the pastor and the saints isn't to hurt each other and to give hard time. Rather, the relationship between the pastor and the saints is a relationship that comforts and strengthens each other's faith. How can the saints comfort their pastor? It is possible with their faith (3:7). That was Paul wrote to the Thessalonian church saints, “in our distress and affliction we were comforted about you through your faith” (v.7). How then did Paul learn the faith of the Thessalonian church saints? It was through Timothy whom Paul sent to them and came back to Paul and informed Paul: “But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always think kindly of us, longing to see us just as we also long to see you” (v. 6). Timothy, a servant of God who preaches the gospel of God, was sent to the Thessalonian church in order to strengthen and encourage the Thessalonian church saints as to their faith so that no one would be disturbed by the afflictions (vv. 2-3). And when he came back to Paul from the Thessalonian church, he brought him good news of their faith and love (v. 6). In other words, Timothy told Paul that the Thessalonian church saints were standing firm in faith in the midst of suffering affliction as well as good news of love for Paul and his co-workers. Here the word "good news" is the same as the word "gospel" in Greek. To Paul, it was that much good news that the Thessalonian church saints were standing firm in their faith and they always thought kindly of Paul and his co-workers. For this reason, Paul was comforted by their faith in all his distress and affliction (v. 7).

When your faith grows, it comforts me. I pray that your faith grows as you diligently read, hear, meditate, and study the Word of God. I cannot help but be thankful, joyful, and comforting when I see you standing firm in your faith, holding on to the Word of God and persevering and overcoming in difficulties and hardships.

Last Friday was my uncle and also our church former visitation pastor Pastor Andrew Kim's 10th year of deceased. When I think of him, one of the things I cannot forget is that it seemed like he knew his impending death and told me the last words when he was in hospital. Among those words, he asked me to lead his funeral worship service and gave me the Bible verse for me to preach. The Bible verse was Isaiah 40:1 – “Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.” Pastor Kim wanted me to comfort all those who would attend his funeral service with this Word of God. I was comforted by the God's glorious presence in that funeral service. May the same glorious God's presence comfort you as well.

Good news of love

"But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always think kindly of us, longing to see us just as we also long to see you" (1 Thessalonians 3:6).

Apostle Paul constantly thanked God because the Thessalonian church saints received the word of God, which Paul preached, not as man's words but what it really was, the word of God (1 Thess. 2:13). He also constantly thanked God because the word of God was working in them who believed (v. 13). In the midst of giving thanks to God constantly Paul has serious concern. And that serious concern was that when the Thessalonian church saints were suffering they might be tempted by the tempter and his and his co-workers' labor would be in vain (3:5). So since Paul could endure it no longer (vv. 1, 5), he sent Timothy to them. And Timothy returned to Paul with good news about their faith and love (v. 6). Here, we can think of two things regarding the good news of faith and love which Paul heard. The two are "good news of faith" and "good news of love".

The good news of the faith that Paul heard was that the Thessalonian church saints were standing firm in the Lord in the midst of suffering (v. 8). Also he heard that they were living a life that pleased God (4:1). How did they live the life that pleased God? They did so by living their holy life with was the will of God (v. 3). Paul, who heard this good news of their faith, not only was comforted (3:7) but also rejoiced with all the joy (v. 9). So Paul wanted to thank God in return and confessed that 'Now I really live' (vv. 8, 9). And when he heard this good news, Paul wanted to see them more so night and day he prayed most earnestly (v. 10). The reason was because he wanted to see their faces and to supply what was lacking in their faith (v. 10).

Then what was the good news of love that Apostle Paul heard from Timothy? It was the news that the Thessalonian church saints always had pleasant memories of Paul and his co-workers and that they longed to see Paul and his co-workers, just as Paul and his co-workers longed to see them (v. 6). That was why Paul constantly thanked God. He also thanked God because the Thessalonian church saints were loving one another as they were taught by God (4:9). They loved one another even for all the brethren who are in all Macedonia (v. 10). Furthermore, the Thessalonian church saints, like Paul and his coworkers, worked and labored hard (2:9) and suffered (v. 14). In other words, they participated in suffering for the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul, who heard this good news of love through Timothy, gave thanks to God continually. Do we have this kind of thanksgiving?

I hope and pray that they are more good news of love. Also, I hope and pray that there are more good news of preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ and of participating in His suffering. In other words, I hope and pray that we can hear the good news of love that all of us are living the worthy of His gospel. I hope and pray that we may hear the good news of love that all of us love each other as we have been taught by God to do so that we may please our God.

You must stand firm in the Lord

[1 Thessalonians 3:8-13]

Are you standing firm in your faith (1 Cor. 16:13) so that you are not being shaken by any difficulty and adversity? This is what the Bible Isaiah 7:9b says, “If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all.” If we don’t believe in Jesus firmly, we cannot stand firm. Therefore, we must firmly believe in Jesus. We must stand firm in our faith (1 Cor. 16:13). To do so, we must stand firm in the word of the Lord. May the Lord establish our footsteps in His word (Ps. 119:133). This is what the Bible James 5:8 says, “You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord’s coming is near.”

When we read 1 Thessalonians 3:8, this is what Paul said to the Thessalonian church saints: “for now we really live, if you stand firm in the Lord.” Based on this word, I want to think about how we can stand firm in the Lord under the title “You must stand firm in the Lord.”

First, we must be supplied what is lacking in our faith in order for us to stand firm in the Lord.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 3:10 – “Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith.” What is faith? When we say “faith”, we often think about Hebrews 11:1 – “Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.” Last year, a pastor came to our church and preached during the Sunday service. And this is what I wrote down as I was listening to his sermon: ‘Faith is hoping that God will surely fulfill His promise that He has given to us no matter how pessimistic situation that we are in.’ What do you think? Do you think this is faith? Are you hopping that God will fulfill His promise even in the midst of very pessimistic situation? A good example is Abraham, the ancestor of faith. His pessimistic situation was that he and his wife Sarah could no longer have a baby. Look at Romans 4:19 – “Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead--since he was about a hundred years old--and that Sarah’s womb was also dead.” What was the word of God’s promise that Abraham believed and hoped for even in this very pessimistic situation? Look at Romans 4:18 – “Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, ‘So shall your offspring be’.” Abraham didn’t waver through unbelief regarding this promise of God but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God (v. 20) even though the fact was that his body was as good as dead and that Sarah’s womb was also dead (v. 19). He was fully persuaded that God had power to do what He had promised (v. 21). Aren’t we seeking this kind of faith?

The Thessalonian church saints who received the letter from Apostle Paul were also people of faith. To what extent they were the people of faith was Paul always thanked God for all of them whenever he remembered them (1 Thess. 1:2-3). Their work of faith (v. 3) was that they welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit in spite of severe suffering (v. 6). What a wonderful work of their faith? They didn’t have to suffer if they didn’t believe in Jesus. But because they believe in Him, they suffered. But in the midst of severe suffering they welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. When they received the word of God of God, which they they heard from Paul and his co-workers, they accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God (2:13). And the Word was worked in them who believed (v. 13). Not only that, their faith in God had become known everywhere (v. 8). In other words, the amazing work of their faith in God was that their faith in God had become known everywhere. What a beautiful believer’s picture is? How amazing is the work of their faith that their work of faith didn’t only appeared among them, but also had appeared in every place through them. There

faith of turning to God from idols to serve the living and true God became known everywhere. Therefore, Apostle Paul rejoiced in all joy because of the Thessalonian church saints (3:9). This was Paul's greatest joy in ministry. The greatest joy was that as the faith of the Thessalonian church saints grew, they walked in the truth. In this joy, Paul worshiped God with thanksgiving (v. 9, MacArthur). Nevertheless, Paul wanted to find out about their faith (3:5) he sent Timothy, who was his brother and God's fellow worker in spreading the gospel of Christ (v. 2) because he could stand it no longer (vv. 1, 5). The reason was that they were being persecuted (v. 4). That was why Paul was concerned when he thought of the Thessalonian church saints (v. 5). And that concern was that Satan might tempt them and their efforts might have been useless (v. 5). That was why Paul sent Timothy to the Thessalonica church in order to strengthened and encouraged them in their faith (v. 2). The purpose was so that no one would be unsettled by the trials (vv. 2b-3). Then Timothy came back from Thessalonica and told Paul about the Thessalonian church saints' good news of their faith and love (v. 6). In other words, Timothy told Paul that the Thessalonian church saints were standing firm in their faith even in the midst of severe suffering, as well as the good news of love for Paul and his co-workers. Therefore, Paul was encouraged in all his distress and persecution (v. 7). Therefore, Paul said, 'Now I really live' because the Thessalonian church saints stand firm in the Lord (v. 8).

But in 1 Thessalonians 3:10, Apostle Paul wrote to the Thessalonian church saints: "Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith." Isn't it strange? Didn't Paul always thank God for the Thessalonian church saints because of their work of faith (1:2-3)? Not only that, didn't Paul heard from Timothy that they were standing firm in the Lord in the midst of their severe suffering? (2:8) Then why did Paul say that their faith was lacking? (3:10) It was because their faith wasn't perfect. That was why since Paul could stand it no longer, he sent Timothy to them in order to find about their faith. In particular, since Paul already told the Thessalonian church saints about suffering affliction and so it came to pass he was very concerned about their faith whether they were standing firm in the Lord or were shaken by affliction and the tempter (vv. 4-5). So Paul prayed most earnestly to God night and day so that the Lord may complete what was lacking in their faith (v. 10). Not only that, Paul pleaded with his God and Father Himself and Jesus his Lord to direct his way to them (v. 11). Not only did he ask, but he actually tried to go and see the Thessalonian church saints' face more than once. But Satan hindered him (2:17-18).

We must pray to God. We must pray not only for our own faith but also for the faith of our family members and the church members. And as we pray, we need to realize how little our faith is when we face difficulties. So we must pray to God for the progress of our faith (Phil. 1:25). Therefore, we hope and pray that our faith will grow and become stronger so that we don't waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God but is strengthened in our faith and give glory to God (Rom. 4:20).

Second, our love must increase and overflow for each other in order for us to stand firm in the Lord.

What should we do in order for our church to stand firm in the Lord? First, the church must stand firm in the Word of God. We must all stand firm in our faith. In order to do that, we must not only pray to God for the progress of our faith, but also we must be diligent in listening and meditating on the Word of God. So each of our faith must grow. As our church family grows in faith, our church can stand firm in the Lord in any tribulation and adversity. Also, we must love one another with the love of the Lord. When we love each other and keep the unity of the church, the church can stand firm in the Lord. That was why Paul prayed for the Philippian church that their love may abound more and more (Phil. 1:9).

Look at 1 Thessalonians 3:12 – "May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you." This was Paul's another earnest prayer for the Thessalonian church saints. When I meditated on this Paul's prayer, I remembered 1 Thessalonians 1:3 that we already meditated. One of the

reasons why Paul always thanked God whenever he remembered the Thessalonian church saints in his prayer was because of their labor of love. In 1 Thessalonians 4:9-10 we can see some evidence that they were already doing the labor of love: “Now about brotherly love we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other. And in fact, you do love all the brothers throughout Macedonia. Yet we urge you, brothers, to do so more and more.” In 1 Thessalonians 3:12, we can divide the Paul’s prayer for the Thessalonian church saints into three:

- (1) In the words “just as ours does for you” we should rethink about how Paul loved the Thessalonian church saints.

I thought of eight things: (a) Paul remembered them and prayed to God (1:2, 3). (b) Paul preached the gospel to them when they were idolatry, before they believed in Jesus (v. 5). (c) Paul did not assert his apostolic authority to them, but he was gentle among them, like a mother caring for her little children (2:7). (d) Paul was pleased to give them not only the gospel but even his life (v. 8). (e) Paul worked night and day in order not to be a burden to them (v. 9). (f) Paul was holy, righteous and blameless when he was among them (v. 10). (g) Paul encouraged, comforted and urged them to live lives worthy of God as a father deals with his own children (vv. 11-12). (h) Paul made every effort to see them out of his intense longing (v. 17).

- (2) In the words, “May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else” we should think about how the Thessalonian church saints loved each other (4:9) and loved all the brothers (v. 10).

How did the Thessalonian church saints love each other? Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 4:9, “Now about brotherly love we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other.” I would like to think about how they love each other in six ways:

- (a) The Thessalonian church saints loved each other by not only welcoming the message with the joy of the Holy Spirit (1:6) but also by their faith becoming known everywhere (v. 8). I think this is loving each other. I think that the ways in which the church can loves each other is to receive the word of God and grow in faith. This is strengthening each other and being joy to one another. This is considering and loving each other.
- (b) The Thessalonian church saints suffered together (2:14). I think suffering together because of their faith in Jesus Christ and because of persecution as fellow brothers and sisters in Christ is loving each other.
- (c) The Thessalonian church saints lead a quiet life, to mind their own business and to work with their hands (4:11).
- (d) The Thessalonian church saints encouraged each other (4:18). Paul didn’t want them to grieve like the non-believers who had no hope (v. 13). The reason is because there is a clear hope for those who believe in Jesus. Do you know what that hope is? It is the resurrection of the dead (v. 14). Paul encouraged the Thessalonian church saints to encourage each other with this faith and hope of resurrection (4:18) since they were waiting for the Son of God from heaven (1:10). Although they were already doing this labor of love, Paul encouraged them to do more.

- (e) The Thessalonian church saints encouraged one another and build each other up. Look at 1 Thessalonians 5:11 – “Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.” Although the Thessalonian church saints were already encouraging and building each other up, Paul encouraged them to do so more. Paul especially encouraged them to encourage the timid and to help the weak (v. 14).
- (f) The Thessalonian church saints lived in peace with each other. Look at 1 Thessalonians 5:13 – “Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other.” Although they were living in peace with each other, Paul encouraged them to do so more. And in order for them to do so, Paul encouraged them to be patient with everyone (v. 14).

(3) What we must think about is how the Thessalonian church saints loved all the brothers.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 4:10 – “And in fact, you do love all the brothers throughout Macedonia. Yet we urge you, brothers, to do so more and more.” I think they loved all their brothers throughout Macedonia by becoming an example to all the believers in Macedonia (1:7).

I hope and pray that we all love one another more and more in this age of love growing cold (Mt. 24:12). I also hope and pray that wherever we go, whether to our family, our church, our work and so on, we may love one another with God’s love. I hope and pray that we may shine the light of His love in this dark world as His instrument of love. As we get to know more about God’s love in sending His one and only Son Jesus to die on the cross, we can become His instrument of love. In doing so, we will be able to love our family members, our church members, and even our neighbors outside our church.

Third and last, we must prepare to welcome Jesus with the hope of His second coming in order for us to stand firm in the Lord.

What can we do if we don’t see the hope of the future, no matter how hard we try? We must rejoice in the word of God even though we don’t see the future hope. The reason is because the word of God gives us hope. God’s promise word gives us hope. The Psalmist prayed to God in Psalm 119:49 – “Remember your word to your servant, for you have given me hope.” We must have hope in the God’s promise word, no matter what circumstances we are in. Although there seems to be no hope in our sight, we must have hope in the promise that the Lord our hope has given us. The clear and definite hope is the second coming of Jesus. Jesus clearly told us “Yes, I am coming soon” (Rev. 22:20). Therefore, we must hold on to this Lord’s promise by faith and prepare to receive Him as we desire for His return.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 3:13 – “May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.” As Paul continued to write to the Thessalonian church saints, Paul told them what kind of prayer he was offering to God for them. The first prayer was about the faith of the Thessalonian church saints. Paul asked the Lord to supply what was lacking in their faith (v. 10). The second prayer was about their love. Paul asked the Lord to increase and overflow their love so that they might be able to love not only each other but also everyone (v. 12). And Paul’s third prayer was about the hope of the Thessalonian church saints. Paul prayed to God for to strengthen their hearts so that they might stand firm in the Lord in the midst of persecution and suffering and that they might love each other and their neighbors. Not only that, but Paul also prayed that the Thessalonian church saints not only believed in Jesus’ second coming but also to be ready to welcome Him in hope. And that preparation was that the Thessalonian church saints would be blameless and holy in the presence of their God and Father (v. 13). The reason was that God didn’t call them to be impure, but to live a holy life (4:7). It is God’s will that they should be sanctified (v. 3).

Apostle Paul already knew that the Thessalonian church saints were waiting for Jesus, the Son of God, from heaven (1:10). For them who were waiting for the second coming of Jesus, Paul prayed that when our Lord Jesus comes with all the saints, they would be holy and blameless in the presence of God and Father (3:13). Paul didn't pray like this only for the Thessalonian church saints. Look what Paul said in Colossians 1:22 – “yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach.” Here, the holy and blameless saints are “the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing” (Eph. 5:27).

I hope and pray that the Lord builds His church like “the church in all glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless” (v. 27). So when Jesus, the Bridegroom, comes back to this world, I hope and pray that the Church, the bride, can be prepared as the holy and blameless bridal church.

“Will our lamps be filled and ready When the Bridegroom comes? ...
Oh, there'll be a glorious meeting
When the Bridegroom comes! And a hallelujah greeting
When the Bridegroom comes! In the night, that solemn night,
Will our lamps be burning bright, When the Bridegroom comes?
Oh, be ready! Oh, be ready! Oh, be ready When the Bride-groom comes!
Oh, be ready! Oh, be ready! Oh, be ready When the Bride-groom comes!

[Hymn: “Will Our Lamps be Filled and Ready!]

I hope and pray that we all firmly believe in Jesus and stand firm in the Lord (Isa. 7:9). I hope and pray that the Lord establish our faith on the Rock Jesus Christ. In order for us to stand firm in the Lord, what is lacking in our faith must be supplied. Also, we must be filled with His love more and more. And let us prepare to welcome our Lord Jesus Christ with the hope of His second coming!

You excel still more

[1 Thessalonians 4:1-8]

Have you ever heard the word “Me Too movement”? “Me Too movement” is a movement against sexual harassment and sexual assault. The movement began to spread virally in October 2017 as a hashtag on social media in an attempt to demonstrate the widespread prevalence of sexual assault and harassment, especially in the workplace. It followed sexual-abuse allegations against Harvey Weinstein (Internet).

Why are there so many people who suffer sexual violence? Why did the perpetrators commit sexual assault and rape against them? I think it is because of the unsatisfying lust in people. Look at Ezekiel 16:28-29: “You engaged in prostitution with the Assyrians too, because you were insatiable; and even after that, you still were not satisfied. Then you increased your promiscuity to include Babylonia, a land of merchants, but even with this you were not satisfied.” Of course, this is what the Lord said to the Israelites who had repeatedly been subjected to spiritual adultery through prophet Ezekiel. In the sight of God, the Israelites were committing the sins of spiritual adultery in which they relied more on Assyria and Babylon than God with their unsatisfying spiritual lust. But if we apply this word to this age, Satan stimulates a lustfulness that is not satisfying but is burning like the fire of greed in us (Prov. 19: 24-29) so that we may desire other person’s body beside our spouse’s and commit sexual sin against God. Especially now, Satan is persistently attacking the church leaders, tempting them to commit sexual immorality and sinning against God. Satan is not only hardening our hearts (Jer 9:14, Heb. 3:13), making our faces obstinate and stubborn (Jer. 6:28, Ezek. 2:4) and our hearts paralyze (1 Tim. 4:2) but also makes us to commit sins of fornication boldly both in front of other church brothers and sisters in Christ, and even before our families. Satan is making us to keep on sinning against God even after we get disciplined by God. Now Satan is making us not stop sinning with eyes full of adultery (2 Pet. 2:14). Satan is filling us with lust and greed in our hearts. What should we do? We must live a holy life according to God’s will (1 Thess. 4:3). Then what should we do to live a holy life according to God’s will? I want to think about the three things from 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8:

First, we must avoid sexual immorality and not pursue passionate lust in order to live the holy life according to God’s will.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 4:3, 5: “It is God’s will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; ... not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God.” Apostle Paul not only prayed for the beloved Thessalonian church saints to be holy in the presence of God and Father (3:13), but also he told them the will of God toward them is sanctification (4:3). He also told them that God had not called them for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification (v. 7). Then Paul told them what they should do to live according to God’s calling and His will:

(1) It was to avoid sexual immorality.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 4:3 – “It is God’s will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality.” In order to avoid sexual immorality, we must first forsake “a spirit of prostitution” in us (Hos. 5:4). The reason is because if we have the spirit of prostitution, then we don’t acknowledge the Lord (v. 4). If we don’t forsake the the spirit of prostitution in us, then we will see a woman with a lust [a lust of dissatisfaction (Prov. 27:20, 1 Jn. 2:16)], which is already committing adultery with the mind (Mt. 15:19). This is because there is covetousness in our hearts. And this covetousness in our hearts makes us to even

covet our neighbor's wife (Exod. 20:17) and to commit adultery in our hearts. We must also avoid sexual immorality (1 Thess. 4:3). The reason is because the spirit of prostitution doesn't acknowledge the Lord (Hos. 5:4). Then, how can we forsake the act of sexual immorality? We must make a covenant with our eyes (Job 31: 1). The reason is because the lust of our eyes (1 Jn. 2:16) cannot never be satisfied (Prov. 27:20). With eyes full of adultery, they never stop sinning (2 Pet. 2:14). Rev. Lloyd Jones said in his book "Darkness and Light": 'Your eyes are a problem. If you see something, your mind follows it. ... If there is something that makes you to be tempted, do not look at it! ... Don't let your eyes covet that thing. Do not let yourself get away from looking straight ahead. ... Make a covenant with your eyes and look straight ahead. Just look at holiness and heaven and walk toward the direction which the Lord directs you' (Jones). We must keep in mind that our bodies aren't meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord (1 Cor. 6:13). So we must flee from sexual immorality (v. 18). We must honor God with our bodies (v. 20) because our bodies aren't ours but Christ's (v. 15). Shall we then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! (v. 15)

(2) It was not to follow passionate lust like unbelievers.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 4:5 – “not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God.” Have you ever heard of "SEVEN DEADLY SINS"? When I think about “SEVEN DEADLY SINS” it reminds me a movie "Seven"(1995). The film then featured famous actors such as Brad Pitt, Morgan Freeman and Kevin Spacey, and the plot of the film showed a series of murders with the motif of original sin. The theme of the film is that human cannot escape from the seven original sins such as, gluttony, greed, sloth, pride, lust, envy, and wrath (Internet). One of the seven sins mentioned here is "LUST". And lust is a disorderly desire for physical pleasure. This is what Proverbs 6:25 says: “Do not lust in your heart after her beauty or let her captivate you with her eyes.” The reason is because if we lust in our hearts after “the immoral woman” (v. 24), “the prostitute” (v. 26), we will eventually go bankrupt and lose our lives (v. 26). How many men are now exploring the beauty of prostitutes and dating them and lost all of their wealth? Look at Proverbs 29:3 – “A man who loves wisdom brings joy to his father, but a companion of prostitutes squanders his wealth.” Then how can we not see the beauty of the prostitutes and not have passionate lust? Look at Proverbs 6:20-24: “My son, keep your father's commands and do not forsake your mother's teaching. Bind them upon your heart forever; fasten them around your neck. When you walk, they will guide you; when you sleep, they will watch over you; when you awake, they will speak to you. For these commands are a lamp, this teaching is a light, and the corrections of discipline are the way to life, keeping you from the immoral woman, from the smooth tongue of the wayward wife.” In order for us not to covet the beauty of the prostitutes, we must desire the word of God in our hearts. We must always keep God's command and God's law in our hearts and keep His words and do not leave them (Ref. 3:1-3; 7:1-3). The reason is because the Word of God will guide us, watch over us and will speak to us (6:22). In other words, because God's command is a lamp, it guides us, and because it is a light, it protects us from the forces of darkness. And it gives us "reproofs of instruction" (v. 23). Therefore, when we don't leave God's command and God's law but always keep it in our hearts, then it will keep us from falling into the words of the prostitutes. As we read 1 Thessalonians 4:5 already, Paul exhorted the Thessalonian church saints not to follow “passionate lust like the heathen who do not know God.” What does it mean? There are two meanings. The passive meaning is that unbelievers who don't know God follow lust, but since you are believers in God you shouldn't follow your passionate lust. In other words, the believers who know God should not follow passionate lust. The active meaning is that since the Thessalonian church saints are believers who know God, they must seek sanctification which is the will of God.

We have to work harder to live a holy life according to God's will. In order to do that, we must avoid sexual immorality and passionate lust. We must get rid of all of our adulterous hearts. We are the pure and clean

church, the Bridegroom of Jesus Christ. Therefore, all of us must be Christians with pure heart. And we who are pure in heart should seek the purity of the flesh. No one can say, “I have kept my heart pure; I am clean and without sin” (Prov. 20:9). We who believe in Jesus and His blood on the cross believe that our sins are forgiven and that our hearts have been cleansed. And we try our best to keep ourselves clean from all the things that come from the heart that make us unclean such as “evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander (Mt. 15:18-19) and the acts of the sinful nature such as “sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like” (Gal. 5:19-21). This is our prayer to God: “Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me” (Ps. 51:10). And we keep our way pure by living according to His word (Ps. 119:9). We live our Christian life before our God whose eyes are too pure to look on evil (Hab. 1:13). We purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God (1 Cor. 7:1). We who are pure in heart experience the presence of God. “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God” (Mt. 5:8).

- (1) Would you be free from your bur-den of sin There's pow'r in the Blood, pow'r in the Blood.
Would you o'er e-vil a vic-to-ry win There's won-der-ful pow'r in the Blood.
 - (2) Would you be free from your pas-sion and pride There's pow'r in the Blood, pow'r in the Blood.
Come for a cleans-ing to Cal-va-ry's tide. There's won-der-ful pow'r in the Blood.
 - (3) Would you be whit-er, much whit-er than snow There's pow'r in the Blood, pow'r in the Blood.
Sin stains are lost in its life-giv-ing flow. There's won-der-ful pow'r in the Blood.
 - (4) Would you do ser-vice for Je-sus your King There's pow'r in the Blood, pow'r in the Blood.
Would you live dai-ly His prais-es to sing There's won-der-ful pow'r in the Blood.
- (chorus)
There is pow'r, pow'r, won-der-working pow'r In the blood of the Lamb.
There is pow'r pow'r won-der-working pow'r In the pre-cious blood of the Lamb.

[Hymn: “Would You be Free From Your Burden of Sin”]

Second, we must know how to possess our own spouse in sanctification and honor in order to live the holy life according to God’s will.

What do you think is a marriage life? How should the couple live their marriage life? I personally think that it is really hard for the couple live their marriage life faithfully to the end. It is not so easy for the couple to live together until the end without divorce. Especially, in this age of divorce due to the marital conflict and affair, we cannot but to struggle about what kind of marriage life we should live in the sight of God.

Why do you think people are having an affair? I meditated on the Word of God three times based on the three Bible verses concerning this question.

- (1) Proverbs 5:8 – “Keep to a path far from her, do not go near the door of her house.”

This Bible verse tells us why a man has an affair with another woman. The reason is because he is not keeping himself far away from the woman he needs to stay away from. Here, the woman that the man should keep himself far away is “an adulteress” (v. 3). The reason is because if the man stays close to her, then “in the end she is bitter as gall, sharp as a double-edged sword” (v. 4). Of course, she won’t be like that at first. Who will continue to have an affair if he experiences “bitter as gall and sharp as a double-edged sword”? But what he doesn’t know is that only the bitterness and pain remain afterwards. Another reason to keep the woman away is that “lest you give your best strength to others and your years to one

who is cruel, lest strangers feast on your wealth and your toil enrich another man's house" (vv. 9-10). In fact, we see and hear not only are those who have lost honor and riches due to the affair, but those who are even being killed. If he sleeps with another man's wife (6:29), her husband will be jealous and be furious and he will show no mercy when he takes revenge (v. 34). "He will not accept any compensation; he will refuse the bribe, however great it is" (v. 35). What would a jealous husband do to a man who slept with his wife? Will he not you kill him? Aren't these things actually happening? Another reason to keep the woman away is that if we get close to her our life will groan at the end of our life, when our flesh and body are spent (5:11). And this is what we are going to say: "You will say, "How I hated discipline! How my heart spurned correction! I would not obey my teachers or listen to my instructors. I have come to the brink of utter ruin in the midst of the whole assembly" (vv. 12-14). Actually, do those who have an affair listen if we rebuke them in love? Look at Proverbs 6:27-28: "Can a man scoop fire into his lap without his clothes being burned? Can a man walk on hot coals without his feet being scorched?" A man who sleeps with another woman is like a man who scoops fire into his lap. Although he may say that he loves her, but doesn't know that it is destroying himself and his shame will never be wipe away (vv. 32-33).

(2) Ecclesiastes 7:7 – "Extortion turns a wise man into a fool, and a bribe corrupts the heart."

What does "extortion" means? It means "the practice of obtaining something, especially money, through force or threats" (Internet). Then we do people commit extortion? It is because of their covetousness. The reason why there is affair is because of covetousness. Look at Exodus 20:17 – "You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor." God clearly commanded not to covet our neighbor's wife, the reason why we covet her is because of the greed in us. And if we are greedy, we cannot always satisfied with our wives' breasts (Prov. 5:19). Not only that, if we are greedy, we covet another woman. So we look at her as we are drawn by the lust of our eyes. And our ears start to hear what she says. Our eyes cannot be satisfied even though we look at many women (Eccle. 1:8). Greed does not know enough (Isa. 56:11). So Satan tempts us with the lustful desires of sinful nature and causes us to sin (2 Pet. 2:18). Satan makes us to covet other women.

(3) Colossians 3:13 – " Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you."

Another reason why we are having an affair is because we don't forgive each other. Even though the Scripture commands us to forgive each other as the Lord forgave us, we refuse to do so and thus are having an affair. To explain this more specifically, the greatest reason why couples do not forgive each other is because they don't know the Lord has forgiven them. And because they don't understand the Lord's forgiveness, they don't forgive each other. Not only that, the couple are dissatisfied with each other and their complaints are increasing. As a result, they don't accept each other, and cannot tolerate each other. The couples who don't tolerate each other are those who have already refused to forgive each other in their hearts. Because the couple refuses to forgive and tolerate each other had have many complaints toward each other, there is a high probability that the married couples will become interested in the other person than their spouse. There are many married couples who have experienced a lot of failures due to their immaturity and have chosen a comfortable way to let go of troubles and conflicts rather than struggle to resolve each other's problems and conflicts in the Lord. In the midst of this, rather than trying to keep the unity of the couple in the Lord, the couples who continue to defend themselves from each other and saying "I am right and you are wrong", and their marital relationship gets worse and worse. So their perspective toward each other is pessimistic and living together as husband and wife is not too burdensome. Therefore, they are jealous of the other couple in comparison with other marriages, eventually fantasize their situation

of escape their own situation and to get away from their own spouse and thus have an affair.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 4:4 – “that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor.” Apostle encouraged the Thessalonian church saints who were living a holy life already, to do more and more (v. 1) by avoiding sexual immorality (v. 3) and not following passionate lust (v. 5). Then he exhorted them to know how to possess their own vessel in sanctification and honor (v. 4). Good News Translation says “Each of you should know how to live with your wife in a holy and honorable way.” I personally think that this is very important. The reason is because when husbands know how to treat their wives with holiness and honor, then they will avoid sexual immorality and will not follow passionate lust. If the couple is living their married life with clean and respectful heart, will they give a glimpse of the temptation to commit adultery and lustful sin? Then what does it mean by possessing “his own vessel in sanctification and honor”? First, we, husbands, must treat our wives in “sanctification”. It means that the husbands should avoid sexual immorality and not follow passionate lust and treat their wives as they pursue God’s holiness. We must live a clean married life. In other words, we must live the holy married life. Can you imagine that we husbands first pursue a holy life with pure heart, and then our wives as well then what would be our married life? Would not it be more and more sanctified, more holy, and a cleaner married life? Also, we should treat our wives in “honor.” We should respect our spouse. .

If the married couple doesn’t have respect for each other, what would their marriage life be? For example, what if the wife disobeys God’s word and doesn’t respect her husband? There is a book that I read in our 10th wedding anniversary and it’s called "The Love She Most Desires & The Respect He Desperately Needs", written by Dr. Emerson Eggerichs. When I was reading that book at that time, I received precious challenges and lessons. One of those challenges and lessons was that if a wife is not loved by her husband with the Lord’s love, she will not honor her husband, and a husband who is not respected by his wife will not love her with the Lord’s love (Crazy Cycle). That is why the husband must receive respect from his wife and the wife must receive the love from her husband. Then what does it mean by a husband live with his wife in honorable way? (GNT) I found the answer in 1 Corinthians 7:2-3: “But since there is so much immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband. The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband.” Here, the word "duty" refers to sexual obligation. In other words, the married couple has sexual toward each other and they must be faithful to their duty in order to avoid sexual immorality. They should meet each other's sexual needs. This is their responsibility as well as their privilege and enjoyment. The fact that husbands and wives need to know is that in fulfilling our responsibilities to meet each other's sexual needs, we don’t have authority over our own bodies but our spouse does (v. 4). Among the saints of the Corinthian church at that time, there were some who had false belief in seeking physical purity. That false belief was ascetic that not being married and not having sexual intercourse is spiritually superior. So those who had this false belief avoided marital sex in their marital relationship. So they used separated bedrooms. The Bible says that the reason for using separated bedrooms is to devote themselves to prayer (v. 5). And this is for a time. And then they should come together “so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control” (v. 5). This is why the couple should join together. In the end, I think the husband should live with his wife in honorable way (1 Thess. 4:4) means he should honor her body and fulfill his sexual obligation to her. When a couple respects one another and honors each other's body and faithfully fulfills each other's sexual duties and satisfies each other's sexual needs, the couple can avoid sexual immorality and passionate lust.

In order for us to live a holy life according to God's will, we must work harder to live a marital life with a clean and respectful heart. When married couples seek the holiness of God and honor the Lord, who is the Lord of both husband and wife, the couple is not only glorifying God, but also pleasing God. In addition, the married couple should possess each other in sanctification and honor, pursue the purity of their hearts and bodies and fulfill the sexual obligation toward each other, and then they would be able to overcome the temptation of sexual immorality and passionate lust. In doing so, the married couple can live a holy life that pleases God.

Third, we must not steal other person's wife in order to live the holy life according to God's will.

How should we act when we have conflicts with what we want and what God says in the Bible? For example, in the Bible, God says that we should always be satisfied with wife of our youth (Prov. 5:18, 19). But what if we covet our neighbor's wife? What must we do? We don't even need to ask this question because we know the answer. We know that we shouldn't covet our neighbor's wife but be satisfied with our wives according to the Scripture. But the problem is that when there is conflict between what we want and what God says in the Bible, we don't live according to what we say and believe. The Word of God is bound to collide with greed in us. At that moment our conscience tells us not to do as our greed desires, but we are determined to do what we want in our mind. In the end, we aren't living according to what we believe and say. Our hypocrisy is being exposed. Nevertheless, if we say in front of our brothers and sisters in Christ, 'I live by the grace of God,' we are making God's grace cheap.

When we look at Numbers 16, Korah son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, and certain Reubenites--Dathan and Abiram, sons of Eliab, and On son of Peleth--became insolent and rose up against Moses. With them were 250 Israelite men, well-known community leaders who had been appointed members of the council" (vv. 1-2). This group of the opposition said to Moses and Aaron: "You have gone too far! The whole community is holy, every one of them, and the LORD is with them. Why then do you set yourselves above the LORD's assembly?" (v. 3). The reason why they opposed Moses and Aaron was because they envied the the priesthood of Aaron and his sons. The Levites coveted the priesthood (Park Yun-sun). Why did the Levites covet the priesthood of Aaron and his sons? The reason was because the Korah and the Levites regarded their duty small. Listen to what Moses said to the Levites: "Isn't it enough for you that the God of Israel has separated you from the rest of the Israelite community and brought you near himself to do the work at the LORD's tabernacle and to stand before the community and minister to them?" (v. 9) Nevertheless, the Levites' duty wasn't small, they considered it small and they coveted the priesthood of Aaron and his sons that seemed to be bigger to them. Despite the fact that each of their duties was valued and they had to fulfill their duties faithfully, the Levitic descendants went to far. Because they regarded their duty that God had given them as small and light, their thoughts, words from their mouths and their actions went too far in going against Moses and Aaron. If our thoughts go too far, then our action will go very far as well. We must be very careful not to think, speak and act too far.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 4:6 – "and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you." What does it mean? It means that the Thessalonian church saints should not cross the bound of marriage and wrong their brothers and sisters in Christ in the church (BELIEVER'S BIBLE Commentary). How then did the Thessalonian church saints go beyond the bound of their marriages and wrong their church brethren? What was Paul thinking in his mind? He was thinking about stealing the wives of the other brethren in the church. That was why Paul exhorted the Thessalonian church saints to do more to live the holy life that pleased God and then not steal other brethren's wives within the church. It was Paul's warning to the brothers of the Thessalonian church not to wrong their brothers or to take advantage of them (v. 6). But if they would not take that warning, then the Lord would punish men for all such sins (v. 6).

How do you hear these words? Don't you wonder how Christians can steal other brethren's wife? But isn't the reality that even in the church, a pastor is stealing a wife of the church brother? A Christian website says that there is a "pattern" in the sexual violence of a pastor, saying that sexual violence among church ministers and female church members is serious. It is an article that analyzes the repeated patterns and suggests preventive measures, and says that there are six patterns (Internet): (1) The first step is called victim selection. Accidentally, it doesn't happen to anyone. In analysis, sexual violence cases in the church can be seen that the pastor and the victim

usually shared some sympathy with each other on a one-to-one basis. Those survivors who suffered from sexual violence said that they opened up their hearts and shared everything to their pastors. (2) If the pastor chooses this approach, then the second step is to gain the victim's trust. (3) The third step is to start working to meet their needs. (4) And the pastor thinks that he has formed a trust relationship with the victim, the next step is to isolate the victim with the word 'secret between just you and I'. (5) Then, when the victim appears to be more likely to depend on the perpetrator, the fifth step is sexual contact begins. According to the lawyer Kim Jae-ryun who represents the survivors of sexual violence in the church said, 'He does not start with the violent skin contact from the beginning. But he starts with the slight sexual contacts. As he repeats, he tells her 'Once I kiss you, I will be fine.' The victim responds "yes" to him, thinking that this is the last time. But it doesn't stop there. The pastor calls out the victim with the words 'I love you so much', 'I cannot sleep, I am going crazy' and so on. (6) Finally, the sixth step is to conciliate or control the victim after a trust-based relationship becomes a sexual relationship. In this process, the pastor said he did it because he loved her and made excuses with the the Bible passages. There are many cases where the criminal behaviors are justified when the pastor mentions the Bible passages to those women who followed him based on their deeper devotion. And the victim says sexual violence such as rape but the perpetrator says 'We were in love relationship.' 'The perpetrator says, 'Even if you speaks to the church members, no one will help you', 'Everyone will think that you are lying', 'If your parents find out, they will be shock', etc.. If this controlled situation continues, the victim will receive the bad influence mentally. Even though she is victim, she suffers from the guilty feeling that it is an accomplice, and, in severe case, she chooses to injure herself or cut off from this world.

We must to know who we are. So we must not go too far. We must not have sinful thoughts by coveting the other person's spouse. We must never have these thoughts for too long so that our saying and action don't go too far. What is the reason? This is what the Bible 1 Thessalonians 4:7 says: "For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life." The reason is because God called us to to live a holy life.

About brotherly love

[1 Thessalonians 4:9-12]

What if we don't regard others important but exalt ourselves more? I am sure we will be arrogant and look down on others and despise them. John Calvin said: 'Just as each person doesn't regard the others as important and exalts himself and the contempt from his proud heart is the most hindrance to the unity of brotherhood, when each person has humble heart that respect each other, the love grows the best.' Look at Romans 12:10 – "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves." We should love each other, honor one another, and respect each other. In doing so, the church will become more and more firmly established as a community of love, shines the light of love to the neighbors and glorify God.

In 1 Thessalonians 4:9, Apostle Paul talks to the Thessalonian church saints about brotherly love. I want to meditate on Paul's letter about this brotherly love in two ways. I hope and pray that we may learn how to love our brothers and sisters in Christ and to practice them.

First, Paul knew that the Thessalonian church saints themselves had been taught by God to love each other.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 4:9 – "Now about brotherly love we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other." How should we love each other? I learned the lesson in two ways from the book of Romans:

(1) We should not owe any debt except the debt of love.

Look at Romans 13:8 – "Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law." We are loved by someone, we are owing debt to him or her. The Bible says that we should owe the debt of love. But the same Bible says that we shouldn't owe anything to anyone except the debt of love. Of course, this doesn't mean that we shouldn't owe any debt at all. This means that even though we owe any debt we should pay back in conscience as we promised. That was why Paul said "Render to all what is due them" (v. 7). If we owe any debt, we must pay back with our conscience as true worshipers of God.

(2) We must keep the commandments of God.

One of God's commandments that we must obey is "YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, YOU SHALL NOT MURDER, YOU SHALL NOT STEAL, YOU SHALL NOT COVET" (v. 9). Those who love the Lord keep His commandments (Jn. 14:21). And those who keep the commandments of the Lord love one another as the Lord commands (15:12).

In 1 Thessalonians 4:9, Apostle Paul already knew that the Thessalonian church saints were taught by God and loved one another. Like Paul and his co-workers (3:12), they loved each other because they themselves had been taught by God to do so (4:9). Especially they loved and respected those who worked hard among them, who were over them in the Lord and who admonished them (5:12). They held them in the highest regard in love because of their work (v. 13). Moreover, they warned those who were idle, encouraged the timid, helped the weak and were

patient with everyone according to Paul's exhortation (v. 14). They made sure that nobody paid back wrong for wrong, but always tried to be kind to each other and to everyone else (v. 15). Paul who constantly remembered the Thessalonian church saints' labor of love and always thanked God (1:2-3) prayed that the Lord might make their love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else (3:12). The question I threw here is why did the Thessalonian church saints do this labor of love. And I found the reason in 1 Thessalonians 1:4 – "For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you." The reason why the Thessalonian church saints did the labor of love was because they received the God's chosen love. That was why Paul said to them, "Now about brotherly love we do not need to write to you" (4:9). It was because the Thessalonian church saints actually did love all the brothers throughout Macedonia (v. 10). Paul, who knew it, said to them, "Yet we urge you, brothers, to do so more and more" (v. 10). In other words, Paul exhorted the Thessalonian church saints to practice their love more actively (v. 10).

What we have to do more with effort is to our brothers and sisters in Christ. To do so, we must first be taught by God like the Thessalonian church saints. In other words, we must learn from God how to love one another. What is important in our learning from God how to love one another is how God has shown us His love. Look at Romans 5:8 – "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." God demonstrated His love for us by letting His only begotten Son Jesus Christ to die on the cross for us. We who received this love must love one another with this God's love. This is the commandment of Jesus. Jesus' commandment is this: "Love each other as I have loved you" (Jn. 15:12). When we love each other like Jesus, Jesus says that we are His friends (v. 14). And Jesus says that there is no greater love for a man if he lays down his life for his friends (v.13). We have already received this love from Jesus. Jesus demonstrated His greatest love (Rom. 5:8) for such sinners like us who were God's enemies (v. 10) by bearing all our sins and died on the cross for us. Therefore, we who received this love should love not only those who love us, but also those who persecute us (Mt. 5:44, 46). We should even love our enemies with the great love of Jesus. Then we will be able to experience God's joy in our hearts. When we keep His commands, we will remain in His love (Jn. 15:10). And when we love each other, God's divine joy will fill our hearts (v. 11).

Second and last, Paul told the Thessalonian church saints to lead a quiet life, to mind their own business and to work with their hands.

Do you think it is better to try to be rich, or is it more important to try to be a more truthful and sincere person? Look at Proverbs 28:6 – "Better a poor man whose walk is blameless than a rich man whose ways are perverse." The lesson that this Bible verse teaches us is that we should try to be more truthful and sincere than to try to be rich. We must not become rich people who act in two different ways. We must not act to do good deeds outwardly in front of people but inwardly do evil things. With God's given wisdom that we have received by seeking Him, we must understand that it is better to be poor than a liar (19:22). We must act sincerely and truthfully as God requires from us.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 4:11 – "Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you." Apostle Paul told the Thessalonian Church saints to lead a quiet life, to mind their own business and to work with their hands. This command teaches us specifically how the Thessalonian church saints should love their brothers more. I have divided this Paul's command into three parts:

(1) Paul's command was to "lead a quiet life."

Paul exhorted the Thessalonian church saints to lead the quiet life as they love their brothers and sisters in Christ more. This is opposite from "busybody". Look at 2 Thessalonians 3:11 – "We hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy; they are busybodies." During that time in the Thessalonians church,

there were some who had wrong eschatological hope who were idle, didn't work with their hands and were busybodies, making problem with the church. So Paul commanded and urged them in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread they ate (v. 12). In loving our brothers and sisters in Christ we must live an orderly life that is not being burdensome to them. We must not going around and cause trouble to other brothers and sisters in Christ.

(2) Paul's command was to 'mind your own business.'

Some brothers in the Thessalonian church saints who believed in the Lord's nearest second coming stopped working but rather interfered with the others' work and made problems. Those were idlers who extorted taxes (money) from other brethren for their daily needs and brought trouble to their brothers in the church. Paul, who knew this, exhorted those Thessalonian church brothers who were idlers and who don't do their work properly, but to intervene in the affairs of others in the church, to mind their own business.

(3) Paul's command was to "work with your hands."

At the time of Paul, there were some among the Thessalonian church saints who didn't do their work but while interfering with others. They didn't like to work. So Paul told them "If a man will not work, he shall not eat" (2 Thess. 3:10). When Paul told the Thessalonian church saints to work with their hands (1 Thess. 4:11), he was already showing a life of example to them. Look at 1 Thessalonians 2:9 – "Surely you remember, brothers, our toil and hardship; we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you." According to Dr. Seyoon Kim, Apostle Paul was working in a place called "insula" (a place to stay in the upper floor and a place to work in the lower level) and preached the gospel in order to lead the Gentiles to the Lord (Kim). Paul, who set the example to them first, instructed the Thessalonian church saints to carry the burden of their day-to-day life and to try to work with their own hands so that they might not give economic burden to other brothers in the church.

Do you know why Paul exhorted the Thessalonian church saints to lead a quiet life, to mind their own business and to work with their hands? The reason for this is explained in 1 Thessalonians 4:12 – "so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody." The reason was so that their daily life might win the respect of outsiders and that they would not dependent on anybody. So Paul was working day and night to preach the gospel of God.

The Lord has promised to build His church (Mt. 16:18). Our prayer is that the Lord will build the Victory Presbyterian Church as a community of love. Our responsibility is to love our brothers and sisters in Christ more and more. We should lead a quiet life, to mind our own business and to work with our hands. In doing so, we will be respected by unbelievers and will not be economically insufficient. Let us all become respected Christians to the world. I hope and pray that we will be able love our brothers and sisters in Christ more and more.

About those who fall asleep

[1 Thessalonians 4:13-21]

In a column titled "What the Bible has to say about life after death in 11 verses", a British Christian newspaper *Christine Today's* columnist, Allana Francis, said it is important to have right understanding about death and the life after death (Internet). Francis said that many people talk about their last wishes and funeral plans before they die, and death is something we all have to face it someday, but most of us are not prepared practically and spiritually. She also said that many people think and say death is uncomfortable experience. Most conversations about what happens after death tend to focus on the most negative ending. But for Christians, there is another bright, hopeful view of death. Death will bring the end of many things, but it will gain more than we can get from earthly life. As Christians, we are not only guaranteed a promised life after death but also eternal life that they will live with God forever. When we think about death, we have to leave our family and friends as death-facing beings, and in a broad sense we are afraid of death. But we can receive great comfort through the Word of God. Francis emphasized that death indeed leads to eternal life, and a better understanding of death is an important part of our faith journey (Internet).

In 1 Thessalonians 4:13, Apostle Paul wrote to the Thessalonian church saints: "Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope." Here, the phrase "those who fall asleep" refers to those who are already dead which is more appropriate translation to the original Greek. According to John 11:11, Jesus said to His disciples "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep," knowing that Lazarus was sick (v. 3) and died. Then the disciples heard His word and said to Jesus, "Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better" (v. 12). Although Jesus had been speaking of Lazarus' death, but His disciples thought He meant natural sleep (v. 13). So Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead" (v. 14). In this way the Bible says that Jesus is the One who referred to the dead as one who had fallen asleep. But beside Jesus, there are other Bible writers who referred to the dead as the one who had fallen asleep. The writer of the book of Acts Luke also referred to the dead as the one who fall asleep. Look at Acts 7:60 – "Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep." Apostle Peter also referred the dead as the one who fell asleep in 2 Peter 3:4 – "and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation." Among the Bible writers, Apostle Paul is the one who mostly expressed dead as the one who fell asleep. Not only he expressed it in 1 Thessalonians 4:13 but also in 1 Corinthians 15:6, 18, 51: "After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; ... Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. ... Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed." So Paul repeatedly referred the dead as the one who fell asleep. In fact, Paul told the Thessalonian church saints about "those who fall asleep" in 1 Thessalonians 4:13, but in verse 16 he said "the dead". In the end, Paul wrote this letter to the Thessalonian church saints, saying in 4:9-12 'about brotherly love' and then in verse 4:13-21 'about those who fell asleep' (already dead). And then he went to chapter 5:1-11 and told them about 'about times and dates', that is the time of Jesus' second coming. Then the question is 'Why did Paul write a letter to the Thessalonian church saints about those who fell asleep', those who were already dead? The reason for this was because Paul didn't want them to grieve like the rest of men, who had no hope (4:13). Here "the rest of men" refers to all who are in this world besides the Christians who believe in Jesus. In other words, "the rest of men, who have no hope", who grieve because of those who fall asleep are all non-believers in this world who do not believe in Jesus. Paul didn't want the beloved Thessalonian church saints to grieve like the non-believers who had no hope because of the death of the saints who believed in Jesus.

The non-believers who do not believe in Jesus says “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die” (1 Cor. 15:32). So they eat, drink, marry and take life easy like the people in the day of Noah entered the ark (Lk. 12:19; 17:27). The reason is because they believe death is the end. In other words, the non-believers grieve without hope as they eat, drink, enjoy and die because they don’t believe in the world after death. But Christians who believe in Jesus are not. In other words, we should not grieve like the non-believers who have no hope. In the meantime, Paul explained why we shouldn’t grieve in 1 Thessalonians 4:14 – “We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.” So I want to mediate 1 Thessalonians 4:13-21, under the title "About those who fall asleep", and think about why we shouldn’t grieve like the non-believers when our beloved fellow brother or sister in Christ dies in two ways:

First, we shouldn’t grieve like the non-believers when our beloved fellow brother or sister in Christ dies because we believe that Jesus died and rose again.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 4:14a: “We believe that Jesus died and rose again” Do you believe the truth that Jesus rose from the grave three days after he died on the cross? Or do you only believe that Jesus died on the cross but not His resurrection? Some of the Corinthian church saints said that there was no resurrection of the dead (1 Cor. 15:12). If there was no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ had been raised (vv. 13, 15, 16). And if Christ hadn’t been raised, then Paul’s preaching is useless and so was the Corinthian church saint’s faith (vv. 14, 17). More than that, Paul and his co-workers who were preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ found to be false witnesses about God (v. 15). “Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost” (v. 18). “We believe that Jesus died and rose again” (v. 19). However, the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 15:20 – “But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.” The gospel of Jesus Christ, which Paul preached to the Corinthian church, was “that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures (vv. 3-4).

Apostle Paul went to Thessalonica and went into a Jewish synagogue, “an on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures” and proclaimed the gospel of Jesus Christ. Look at Acts 17:1-3: “When they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue. As his custom was, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead. ‘This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Christ,’ he said.” As a result, some of the Jew were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks and not a few prominent women (v. 4). So Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 4:14, “We believe that Jesus died and rose again.” In other words, both Paul and the Thessalonian church saints believed that Jesus died and rose again. Therefore, Paul encouraged the Thessalonian church saints not to grieve as the non-believers who didn’t believe in the death and resurrection of Jesus because of “those who fall asleep” (v. 13).

Until we believed in Jesus, we were without hope and without God in the world. Look at Ephesians 2:12 – “remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.” “But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ” (v. 13). We were saved by the grace of God by believing in Jesus Christ (v. 8). Only by the grace of God we have received eternal life as the gift of God (Rom. 6:23), believing in Jesus Christ who died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures (1 Cor. 15:3-4). So now we have hope. And that hope is “the redemption of our bodies” (Rom. 8:23). At the last trumpet, we will all be changed (1 Cor. 15:51-52). Look at 1 Corinthians 15: 52-53: “in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.” Therefore, we are listening to Scripture Romans 8: 24-25 carefully: “For in this hope we were saved.

But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.”

Second and last, we shouldn't grieve like the non-believers when our beloved fellow brother or sister in Christ dies because God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in Him.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 4:14 – “... and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.” The Bible says that “hope that is seen is no hope at all” (Rom. 8:24). “But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently” (v. 25). Indeed, the Thessalonian church saints were patient with their endurance inspired by hope in their Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thess. 1:3). In other words, they waited for His Son Jesus from heaven, whom He raised from the dead (v. 10). Before the gospel came to them with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction (v. 5), they were idol worshipers (v. 9). God loved and chooses such idolaters (v. 4) and called them into His kingdom and glory (2:12). Therefore, the Thessalonian church saints became Paul's hope, joy and the crown in which Paul will glory in the presence of his Lord Jesus when He comes (vv. 19-20).

Our hope is the second coming of Jesus. And the patience of our hope is to pray, expect, and wait for His second coming. Do we have this kind of waiting? We who wait for His second coming, we don't grieve like the non-believers when our fellow brethren dies (4:13). The reason is because we believe that Jesus died and rose again (v. 14). Furthermore, we don't grieve because we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in Him (v. 14). In short, we who are waiting for the second coming of Jesus are joyful in hope, patient in affliction and faithful in prayer (Rom. 12:12). Also, the Thessalonian church saints's endurance of hope was to live a holy life. So when Paul prayed for them who were his hope, joy, crown and glory, he asked God to strengthen their hearts so that they would be blameless and holy in the presence of God and Father when Lord Jesus comes with all His holy ones (3:13). The reason why Paul prayed like this was because it is God's will for them to be sanctified (4:3). Paul urged the Thessalonian church saints to avoid sexual immorality, to learn to control their own bodies in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who didn't know God (vv. 3-5). The reason was because God didn't call them to be impure, but to live a holy life (v. 7).

We who wait for Jesus' second coming should live a holy life. If we pray, expect and wait for Jesus' return, we must live the holy life according to God's will. Paul, who was praying to God with thanksgiving in his heart whenever he remembered he remembered the Thessalonian church saints' endurance of hope in prayer (1:2-3), told them about the saints who died already not to grieve like the non-believers who had no hope because they believed that Jesus died and rose again and God will bring with Jesus those who had fallen asleep in Him (4:13-14). This presupposes that “the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first” (v. 16). In other words, those who are already dead in Christ will be resurrected first in the Lord's second coming, and then God will bring His resurrected saints with Jesus. Why is Jesus coming back to this world? Look at John 14:1-3: “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.” The reason Jesus will come back to this world is to take the redeemed children of God to heaven. In the end, Paul told the Thessalonian church saints that those who had already died in Christ were be resurrected and that God will bring them with Jesus (1 Thess. 4:14). After that, those who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air (v. 17). Therefore, Paul exhorted the Thessalonian church saints to comfort each other with these words (v.18). Let us believe in the truth that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in Him when we grieve because of the death of our beloved brother or sister in Christ. And let us believe that the Lord Himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in

Christ will rise first. Let us believe that after that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Let us believe that we will be with the Lord forever. I hope and pray that we may comfort one another with this sure and clear eternal hope in the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are not only guaranteed the promised life after death, but also promised eternal life with God. When we think about death, we have to leave our family and friends as death-bearing beings, and in a broad sense we are afraid of death. But we can receive great comfort through the word of God. The Word of God says that we should not grieve like the non-believers because of the death of our beloved brother or sister in Christ. The reason is because we believe that Jesus died and rose again. Jesus' resurrection is our resurrection. When the Lord Jesus returns, the saints who have already died will be raised again, and the living saints will be suddenly transformed and be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And we will be with the Lord forever in heaven. May the Holy Spirit comfort you with these words.

About times and dates

[1 Thessalonians 5:1-10]

This is what the Bible Romans 13:11 says to us: “And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.” Here, “the present time” refers to the time of the Lord’s second coming. And the time when the Lord’s second coming is near means that our salvation is near. It means that the final stage of our redemption that is glorification is near. Also, the time that Paul is talking about is the time for us to wake up from our slumber. And wake up from our slumber means wake up from the sleep of sin. This is the time when sin is to the extreme as the coming of the Lord is near. This is the time when the night is nearly over and the day is almost here (v. 12). How should we live at this time?

In 1 Thessalonians 5:1-2, Apostle Paul write to the Thessalonian church saints: “Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.” Here Paul spoke about “times and dates” (v. 1) and it referred to “the day of the Lord” (v. 2), the day that the Lord comes back to this world. Paul wrote to the Thessalonian church saints about the Lord’s second coming day and said that he didn’t need to write to them about that day (v. 1) because they were already taught by Paul when Paul was with them (WBC) and they knew “very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night” (v. 2). Here the phrase “the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night” doesn’t apply to the Thessalonian church saints, who turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God and who were waiting for the day when Jesus will return from heaven, whom God raised from the dead (1:9-10). Actually it applies to those who are in darkness (5:4), “those who sleep” (v. 7), that is, to those in this world who don’t believe in Jesus.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 5:3 – “While people are saying, “Peace and safety,” destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.” When those who are in darkness that is those who don’t believe in Jesus (v. 4) sleep (v. 7), thinking that they are in peace and safe, “destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman (v. 3). I am sure those sisters in Christ who went through labor pains know that when they were pregnant, the labor pains is sudden. Just as the Lord’s Day comes like a thief in the night, the destruction suddenly comes to unbelievers who are in darkness. And when the eternal destruction suddenly comes, the Bible says that all unbelievers in darkness can never escape their destruction (v.3). What a scary word? When I meditated on this, I remembered the words of the psalmist Asaph who realized the end of the wicked when he entered the sanctuary of God in Psalm 73:18-20: “Surely you place them on slippery ground; you cast them down to ruin. How suddenly are they destroyed, completely swept away by terrors! As a dream when one awakes, so when you arise, O Lord, you will despise them as fantasies.” How terrible is the end of the wicked? The Bible says that the Lord will cast the wicked down to ruin, will suddenly destroyed and will completely sweep them away by terrors. In other words, the wicked will be instantly destroyed and will face the terrible end. Just as a man wakes up from his sleep and ignores a dream, when the Lord arises, He will despise the wicked as fantasies. The Lord’s Day is a day of judgment for those who don’t believe in Jesus. When the Lord comes back to earth, the judgment will come upon those who don’t believe in Jesus. But the unbelievers in darkness don’t believe in the Lord’s impending return and judgment. So they will be eating, drinking and marrying until the day of Noah’s entry into the ark (Mt. 24:38). In other words, the unbelievers in darkness will eat and drink (1 Thess. 5:7). When they marry, they will say to themselves, ‘I am in peace and safe’ (v. 3). As they think that they are in peace and safe and when they are sleeping at night (v. 7), the Lord will come like a thief in the night (v. 2). In the end, the destruction will suddenly come on the unbelievers in the darkness say (v. 3) like the people who were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up the day Noah entered the ark, then the flood came and destroyed them all (Lk 17:27).

But for Christians who believe in Jesus, the day of Jesus' second coming is the day of salvation. In other words, for believers, the day of the Lord's second coming is the day of salvation through the judgment of the unbelievers. Look at 1 Thessalonians 5:9 – “For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Paul clearly told the Thessalonian church saints that God chose him and them to be saved only through Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, God had chosen the Thessalonian church saints who were loved by God (1:4) in order for them to receive salvation through Lord Jesus Christ (5:9). And that salvation is that Jesus died for them so that they might live together with Him whether they were awake or asleep (v. 10). In other words, when Jesus returns the Thessalonian church saints who believed that Jesus died and rose again (4:14) would live together with Him whether they were alive (“awake”) or dead (“asleep”). Paul already told the Thessalonian church saints in 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 about this truth: “According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.” Therefore, he continued to write to the Thessalonian church saints, saying that ‘you are not in darkness but you are all sons of the light and sons of the day’ so that the day of the Lord should not surprise them like a thief (5:4, 5). Paul, however, exhorted the Thessalonian church saints, who “do not belong to the night or to the darkness” (v. 5), in three ways:

First, Paul exhorted the Thessalonian church saints to alert and self-controlled.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 5:6-8: “So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled,” Those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night (v. 7). In short, those unbelievers who are in darkness (v. 4) sleep and get drunk at night (v. 7). But we who believe in Jesus Christ belong to the day (v. 8). Therefore, the Bible tells us the Christians who belong to the day to be alert and self-controlled (vv. 6, 8). We must be alert. In other words, we should be alert spiritually and not asleep. Here, being alert spiritually means two things according to Dr. Pak Yun-sun: (1) First being alert spiritually means to pray to God. Look at 1 Peter 4:7 – “The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray.” (2) Second, being alert spiritually means to act or live by the standard of the kingdom of God. Look at Romans 13:11-14: “And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.” We also must be self-controlled (1 Thess. 5:6, 8). In other words, we should not be deceived by the things of this world (Park). Look at Luke 21:34-36: ““Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap. For it will come upon all those who live on the face of the whole earth. Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man.” We must be alert and self-controlled and always pray to stand before the Lord. When we do so, we will not be deceived by the things of this world.

Second, Paul exhorted the Thessalonian church saints to put on faith and love as a breastplate.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 5:8a – “But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate,” In Paul's days, when the Roman soldiers went out to the battle, they were the armor

that protected their breasts and it was called “a breastplate”. The breastplate that Paul exhorted the Thessalonian church saints to put on was two kinds: (1) One was the ‘the breastplate of faith’. In other words, Paul wanted the Thessalonian church saints to trust God completely and to hold on to the Word of God's promise. One of the words of God's promise that Paul wanted them to hold on to was the promise word of Jesus' second coming (1:9). That was why Paul exhorted the Thessalonian church saints, who were waiting for Jesus from heaven (1:9), to believe that “God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in Him” (4:14). (2) The other one was ‘the breastplate of love’. In other words, Paul wanted the Thessalonian church saints to live in obedience to God's word because they loved God. Paul already knew that they loved each other so he said in 1 Thessalonians 4:9, “Now about brotherly love we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other.” Nevertheless, Paul told them that since they belonged to the day, they should be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as the breastplate (5:8).

Third and last, Paul exhorted the Thessalonian church saints to put on the hope of salvation as a helmet.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 5:8b – “... and the hope of salvation as a helmet.” Here, when Paul told the Thessalonian church saints to put on “a helmet, the hope of salvation” it probably reminded them the Roman soldiers wearing the helmet in order to protect their heads from their enemies. Likewise, in the spiritual warfare of the Thessalonian church saints as the soldiers of the Jesus’ cross, this helmet of the hope of salvation was crucial in fighting against their enemies Satan and his evil people. In Ephesians 6, the reason why Paul told to “put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes” (v. 11) was because so that “you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand” (v. 13). One of the full armor of God was “the helmet of salvation” (v. 17). I think the helmet of hope of salvation that Paul told the Thessalonian church saints to put on refers to the glorification in which the Lord establishes their hearts without blame in holiness before God and Father at the coming of Lord Jesus with all His saints (1 Thess. 3:13). Here, “glorification” is futuristic salvation of complete liberation from sin and its consequences to a place of sanctification (Internet). This futuristic salvation of glorification means: (1) Being raised a spiritual body (1 Cor 15:44), (2) Clothing with the imperishable (v. 53), (3) Clothing an eternal body (1 Thess. 4:17), and (4) Being in a perfect state that is without the possibility of sinning (Internet). Shouldn’t we put on this helmet of hope of salvation?

This is the time of salvation for those of us who believe in Jesus. In other words, the day when Jesus comes back to this world is near. When Jesus comes back to the world, two things will surely happen: Salvation and Judgment. For unbelievers who do not believe in Jesus, the Lord's Day will come like a thief at night (1 Thess. 5:2). “While they are saying, “Peace and safety!” then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape” (v. 3). But for us who believe in Jesus, the Lord's Day is a day of salvation. When Jesus comes back to earth, we will be transformed and will live with Him forever whether we are alive or dead. The dead in Christ will rise first, and then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord (v. 17). Therefore, we must prepare for the Lord's return. We need to be alert and self-controlled. We must be spiritually awake and persevere to pray to God. And we must not be deceived by the things of this world. We must put on the breastplate of faith and love. We must believe in God and live by faith as we hold on to the promises of God. We also need to love our neighbors with the love of the Lord. Let us have the hope of salvation that when Jesus comes back to this world, all of us will suddenly be transformed into a glorious body, a body that will no longer be corrupt, and a holy body without sin anymore and we will live with Him forever.

Build up one another

[1 Thessalonians 5:11-15]

The promise the Lord has given to our church is '... I ... will build my church ...' (Mt. 16:18). Victory Presbyterian Church is the Lord's church and the church that the Lord builds. As the Lord builds His church, we must all devote ourselves to participate in the Lord's building His Church with each of our gifts and talents. The mission of our church is to 'Build His church and His Kingdom.' And our vision is to "Raise the leaders!" We want to raise the Christ-centered visionary leaders and send them away to expand the Kingdom of God. May the Lord raise His servants and fulfill His will through His body, His church.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:11, Apostle Paul wrote to the Thessalonian church saints, "Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing." The Bible speaks of three virtues: (1) the virtue of man's character (Phil. 4:8), (2) the virtue of God (1 Pet. 2:9; 2 Pet. 1:3), and (3) the virtue of building a person or community (1 Cor. 14:3-5, 12, 17, 26) (Internet). In 1 Thessalonians 5:11, the virtue that Paul spoke about was the third one which was the virtue of building the person or the community. In other words, Paul exhorted the Thessalonian church saints to build up the virtue of the church. As an example, Paul exhorted the Corinthian church saints "Let all things be done for edification." Here, "all things" refers to the gifts that God had given to the Corinthian church saints. Listen to what Paul said to them: "But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation. One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself; but one who prophesies edifies the church. Now I wish that you all spoke in tongues, but even more that you would prophesy; and greater is one who prophesies than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may receive edifying" (vv. 3-5). Here, the word "edification" in Greek means 'to build a house'.

Have you ever seen the process of builders building a house? I read an internet article under the heading '10 points for building a decent house' (Internet). In the article, the writer of the article said that among the 10 points for building the decent house, the first one is the design and the design is the half of building the house. In other words, a good design is half of a good house. And the point I was interested in was the eighth point: 'The house is where people live.' The writer's argument is that the house should be safe and comfortable for people to live in. And he said that the builders should build the house thinking that my family will live in this house. When I thought about the first and eighth points out of the 10 points to build the decent house, I remembered my friend who is an architect. My friend helped me and my wife to design a guest house where my mother-in-law will live (since my father-in-law passed away in the process of building it). He really put his heart, energy, time and so on to design the beautiful guest house. So I asked him why he put so much into it. And he said because he considered me as his older brother that is family. In other words, he designed the guest house considering me as his older brother and my wife as his sister-in-law. We are just thankful. Besides building our guest house, when I think about building a house, I remember marking out a pillar around its bottom with a gauge for chiseling for building a traditional Korean-style house. The first thing the constructors usually do when they build the traditional Korean house is to place a main prop. Here, the main prop refers to a stone under the pillar. When they put the main prop, then they put the pillar on the main prop. However, there is one process that must go through when setting up the pillar on the main prop. It is difficult to put the pillar on the main prop, even if they choose the stone that is wide and flat. If they want to put the pillar on the main prop, they have to do a line work so that the surface of the foundation stone and the surface of the pillar fit well. The method of marking out the pillar around its bottom with the gauge for chiseling is simple. It is to cut and polish the face of the pillar and then put it on the foundation stone. It isn't to

grind the foundation stone, but to always trim the surface of the pillar that is built on it and then match it with the foundation stone. The standard is not the pillars, but the foundation stones. And the better they do this, the safer and stronger the house will be (Internet). Here, I thought about spiritual marking out the pillar around its bottom with the gauge for chiseling. It is to conform our lives to the words of the Lord who is the Rock (Mt. 7:24). In other words, it is to do the will of our Heavenly Father instead of just crying out "Lord, Lord" (v. 21). The important thing here is that the standard of our lives is the Lord and the Lord's will, just as the standard of the tradition Korean house is not the pillar but the foundation stone. That means that as the pillar matches the foundation stone and not other way around, we must conform our will to the Lord's will instead of Lord's will to our will. As the disciples of Jesus Christ, we must live according to the will of the Lord upon the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

What is the will of the Lord? In 1 Thessalonians 5:11, the Lord's will is to build the body of the Lord His church. Then, how shall we build the Lord's church as His disciples? I meditated on the three main points based on 1 Thessalonians 5:12-15.

First, we should esteem those who have charge over us and give us instruction very highly in love.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13: "But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another." I read one of the Korean internet articles that talked about the most respectable people in 30 fields (Internet). Among those 30 fields my interest was on the most respected people in Korean Protestant church. The first place was Pastor Paul Cho, a retired pastor of Full Gospel church, the second place was Pastor Han hum Ok, a retired pastor of Love church who passed away, the third place was Pastor Sam-Hwan Kim, a retired pastor of Myung-sung church, the fourth place was pastor Kyeong-jik Ham, a retired pastor of Young Rak church who passed away and the fifth place was pastor Young Joo Ha, a retired pastor of All Nations church who passed away. As I was reading the results of this survey, I thought of two things. One thing was that the most respected people in Korean Protestant church were the large church pastors. There was no pastor from the small churches or even from the medium size churches who were unknown to the public. So I thought that the survey was just a survey. Another thing that came to my thought was the among the most respected pastors in Korea, the Korea medias talked negative about the couple of them because of what they done. So when I think about this, I am not sure what is the point of being respected by people.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:13, Apostle Paul wrote to the Thessalonian church saints: "and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another." Here, Paul was talking about those who diligently labor among the Thessalonian church saints who had charge over them in the Lord and gave them instruction (v. 12). He exhorted them to esteem them very highly in love and live in peace with one another. When I think about esteeming the church leaders very highly in love, I remembered 1 Timothy 5:17 – "The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching." Here, "The elders who direct the affairs of the church" and "those (elders) whose work is preaching and teaching" refer to the kinds of elders in the church. And the two kinds of elders are "Teaching Elder" (TE) and "Ruling Elder" (RE). And here the "teaching elder" refers to pastor and the "ruling elder" refers to the elder whom we know. What Paul said is we need know that the teaching elder and the ruling elder are "worthy of double honor, especially, those whose work is preaching and teaching" (v. 17). Not only do we need to honor the church elders, but we also need to love them. Now the question is how can we love them? Look at John 14:21 – "Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him." From this word, we can know what we should love our church leaders, that is we should obey them. If we truly love our church leaders, we should obey them. One more thing that Paul encouraged the Thessalonian church saints to do was to live in peace with one another (1 Thess. 5:13). Although it

seems that Paul was exhorting the Thessalonian church saints to live in peace with their church leaders, I think he exhorted the church saints to live in peace with one another. The reason why Paul exhorted them to do so was because that was the way how they could express their love and respect to their church leaders. Just as children express their respect and love to their parents by loving each other and living peace with each other.

It seems to be a time when it is not easy for us to find church leaders whom we can respect and honor. If I ask you, 'Do you have a pastor you respect and honor?' can you say 'yes'? I think it is a blessing for you to have a beloved church leader or bible teacher whom you really love and respect. I hope and pray that we all love and honor those who guide and teach us in obedience to the word of God and in serving the Lord.

Second, we must be patient with everyone.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 5:14 – “We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone.” It was Friday when I went to exercise at the YMCA, I saw this writing in a picture frame hanging on the wall: “A lie has speed; but the Truth has endurance.” After I read this writing and reflected myself, I remembered that I speedily left the word of God, disobeyed His word and committed sin against God after Wednesday night prayer meeting. That was why I couldn't help myself but to acknowledge the saying that “A lie has speed.” But even next day Thursday, before Morning Prayer, I committed sin against God in my thoughts and emotion because I was angry at someone even though I knew in my mind that I had to love him. In this way, I was deceived by Satan's lies in my thoughts. And when I was sinning in my thoughts by falling into Satan's deceit and lie, I saw myself not only sinning speedily but also my patience was depleted rapidly. It was scary work of Satan. When I realized it, I confessed my sins to God and to my church members who came to that Morning Prayer. And when I was praying alone, after everybody left, I asked God to deliver me from the Satan's deceit and lie. I went to God just as I was, had fallen to Satan's deceit and lie and committed sins against God, and asked for help. And that night I got answer of my prayer. I experienced God's deliverance. God led me to the light of truth, who was afflicted with lies. Because God freed me from lies and sins, my heart was in peace. I was no longer writing a Satan's letter in my head. Rather, I was writing a letter of God's love in my heart. And as I was writing the letter of God's love, I became more committed to love. I committed myself to understand others little more and comfort them a little more. God helped me to renew my commitment to be patient a little bit more, knowing that there is patience in the truth.

We know from 1 Corinthians 13:4 that “Love is patient.” Although we know this truth, there are many times that we are not patient with our beloved family members. There are times when anger arose in us so that we don't forgive them because we got hurt from them. What should we do? This is what God said to Moses in Numbers 14:11, 27: “... How long will these people treat me with contempt? How long will they refuse to believe in me, in spite of all the miraculous signs I have performed among them? ... How long will this wicked community grumble against me? I have heard the complaints of these grumbling Israelites.” In thinking about the Israelites, God repeated “How long ...” three times to Moses. At the time of Exodus, the Israelites repeatedly sinned against God. They supposed to give thanks to God for what He had done for them such as, guiding them, protecting them, providing them and so on. But instead they repeatedly grumbled and complained. They even offered the prayer of complains in crying. When God saw it, God said to Moses and Aaron, “How long will this wicked community grumble against me?” (v. 27)

Our God is a long-suffering God. Here the word “long-suffering” is composed with “pain” and “patience” (Wayne Stiles, "Waiting on God"). God sees and knows that we keep on sinning against Him, and that He keeps on long-suffering with us. Can you imagine a long-suffering God who sees and knows we keep sinning against Him? Jesus suffered all sorts of suffering and died on the cross. When He cried out on the cross ‘My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?’ Father God heard His cry. How long must God be patient with us who keep sinning

against Him? When we realize the God's patience with us, shouldn't we also be patient with our neighbors?

In 1 Thessalonians 5:14, Apostle Paul wrote to the Thessalonian church saints: "We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone." In this passage, Paul exhorted the Thessalonian church saints four things in order to build the church's virtue:

(1) Paul urged the Thessalonian church saints to admonish the unruly.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 5:14 – "We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly" The Bible Proverbs talks about the lazy many times (Prov. 10, 12, 13, etc.), and the point is that the lazy will become poor. The reason for this is that the lazy person doesn't diligently work. He is poor because he works with a negligent hand (10:4). In a word, the lazy person refuses to work with his hands (21:25). Still, he makes problems. How does he makes problems? Look at 1 Timothy 5:13 – "Besides, they get into the habit of being idle and going about from house to house. And not only do they become idlers, but also gossips and busybodies, saying things they ought not to." The lazy person goes about from house to house and says thing he ought not to. In other words, a lazy young widow makes problems by going about from house to house and gossips and busybody, saying things she ought not to. These were people like this in the Thessalonian church. They weren't busy but busybodies (2 Thess. 3:11). They liked to meddle in others' work and thus stirred up the problems in the church. And they didn't practice brotherly love because they took taxes (money) from certain brothers in the church for the necessities of their own daily life. That was why Paul told the Thessalonian church saints to "admonish the unruly." We must all be diligent. The Bible says, "not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord" (Rom. 12:11). I hope and pray that all of us will be diligent, not idle, but zealous and serve the Lord.

(2) Paul urged the Thessalonian church saints to encourage the fainthearted.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 5:14 – "We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted," Last week I read an article about precious encouragement than complementary. In this article, the word 'courage' in the word 'encouragement' means 'a willingness to make an effort.' So encouragement means make someone to be willing to make the effort pr willing to try something. On the other hand, discouragement is what makes this willingness to disappear. In fact, encouragement is a word of courage, and it is to increase the will to challenge the future (Internet).

Among the brothers and sisters in the church, we will not worry about those who are strong hearts. The reason is because those with strong heart will be able to overcome any kinds of difficulties and hardships by being strong and courageous. But those who are weak in heart will be afraid and anxious in adversity and hardship. What they need is encouragement. The Scripture Hebrews 10:24 tells us to "consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds". We should consider one another. And when we see fellow brothers and sisters in Christ who do the Lord's work in loving others and doing good deeds, we should encourage them instead of criticize them. I personally think that the word 'I am glad I don't get criticize for the good work shouldn't be applied to us, Christians. Why do we criticize and say bad things about those who are doing the Lord's work faithfully? Not so. We should encourage them to work harder by complimenting them that they did a good job. I think even though it seems to us that they didn't do good job, we shouldn't gossip about about them. The Lord will judge. Our role should be comforting and encouraging them with the mindset of "You can do better next time."

(3) Paul urged the Thessalonian church saints to help the weak.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 5:14 – “We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak” When we look at the people in the church who are weak physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually, not only that we should pray for them but also we need to encourage them and help them. How can we help them? Of course, we should pray for them that God may hold them and help them and strengthen them. What is important, however, is that we can also help those who are weak by sharing the word of God with them. This is because the Word of God can encourage them, comfort them and strength them. The powerful word of God can restore them and revival them who are weak.

(4) Paul urged the Thessalonian church saints to be patient with everyone.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 5:14 – “We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone.” We must be patient with everyone in order to build the church. The Bible James 5:10 says, “Brothers, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.” When we apply this word to us, we need to make the ancestors of faith who were patient in their sufferings as our examples to follow. At the same time we must learn the patience of the farmer. Look at James 5:7 – “Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains.” With this farmer's patience we need to deal with each other. Just as the farmer plants seeds, we should plant seeds of love. And just as the farmer waits patiently for fruit, we should also wait patiently for the fruit of love. When we wait patiently for the fruit of love, there can be conflicts because of our differences. In such situation of conflict, we shouldn't be angry with the brothers and sisters in Christ who are made in the image of God. We must be patient with them. Look at Proverbs 19:11 – “A man's discretion makes him slow to anger, And it is his glory to overlook a transgression.” In particular, we must learn the God's patience toward us. See what Paul said about the God's patience toward him in 1 Timothy 1:16 – “But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.” As God displayed His unlimited patience toward Paul, God is now displaying His unlimited patience toward us. As we learn His unlimited patience, we must be patience with others as well. In doing so, the Lord's church can be firmly established in the midst of reconciliation.

Third and last, we must always seek after that which is good.

How shall we live as Christians in this world where good and evil coexist? I personally like Romans 12:21 – “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” We must suffer for doing good than doing evil because that is God's will. Look at 1 Peter 3:17 – “It is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.” Although our soul forlorn when they repay us evil for good (Ps. 35:12), we should never be tire of doing what is good (2 Thess. 3:13). We must turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it (Ps. 34:14).

Look at 1 Thessalonians 5:15 – “See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all people.” In this passage, Paul urged the Thessalonian church saints two things:

(1) Paul urged the Thessalonian church saints not to repay another with evil for evil.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 5:15 – “See that no one repays another with evil for evil” Of course we must not do evil to our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ in our church. But we must not do evil to the people who are outside of our church as well. The reason is because we are created in Christ Jesus to do good works (Eph. 2:10). But the problem is when someone outside the church or even in the church has done us

evil. What should we do then? The Scripture tells us not to repay evil for evil (1 Thess. 5:15, Rom. 12:17). Although other person has done evil to us, we should not do evil to him. Rather the Bible says, “not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead” (1 Pet. 3:9). The reason is because we are called for the very purpose (v. 9). We must bless him. We must even bless who did evil to us. The purpose is so that we may inherit a blessing (v. 9).

(2) Paul urged the Thessalonian church saints to always seek after that which is good for one another and for all people.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 5:15b – “... but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all people.” How is this possible? How can we seek good for all people? Here, I am sure “all people” includes those who have done harm to us, including those who have done us evil. Then how can we seek good for such people? I looked up Genesis 50:20 for the answer: “You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.” Because Joseph understood God’s sovereign will that even his older brothers intended to harm him, but God intended it for good to accomplish His good purpose through him, he reassured them that he would provide for them and their children and spoke kindly to them (v. 21). In a word, because Joseph tasted the goodness of God (Ps. 34:8), he was able to do good to his older brothers who tried to harm him.

Like Joseph, if we taste the goodness of God, we can also do good to those who try to harm us. When we understand and believe that God intends it for good to accomplish His sovereign good will through us, not only that we can truly forgive them but also we can do good to them. Like Joseph, who forgave his brothers and did good to them, we should always seek good not only for our family members but also for our church members as well. As we believe that God is good, His will toward us is always good (Rom. 12:2) and know that “in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have called according to his purpose” (8:28) and taste His goodness (Ps. 34:8), we will be able to always seek after that which is good for one another and for all people (1 Thess. 5:15).

Victory Presbyterian Church is the Lord’s church and the church that the Lord is building. The Lord commands us to build one another. We must humbly obey and participate in the Lord’s work of building His church. As we do so, we must strive to build each other up according to the Lord’s will. We should esteem those who have charge over us and give us instruction very highly in love. Also, we must admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone. We must always seek good. May the Lord use us as His instruments and continue to build His Church.

God's will for us in Christ Jesus

[1 Thessalonians 5:16-22]

Do you know what is God's will for you? Pastor Howard Hendricks said in his book, "Standing together": 'If you are not convinced that it is God's will for what you do, you can either give up when hardships come or if it is successful you will intercept it as your glory. As a result, the purpose of God will not be fulfilled.' What do you think of these words? Are you confident that it is God's will for you to do what you do now?

I think that one of the things we are very concerned and struggling in our Christian life is the will of God. So many times we pray to God and ask God to let us know what His will is. Especially when we meet difficulties and hardships, we tend to throw this question a lot. Nevertheless, we cannot understand what God's will is and why God causes us to suffer. So many times, we don't know what God's will is toward us. When I don't know what God's will is, I personally hold onto the Scripture Romans 12:2b: "... Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will." Through this Scripture, the truth that God is speaking to me is that God's will toward me is good, pleasing, and perfect. Although I don't understand God's will so many times, I believe that I am in God's sovereign will that is good, pleasing and perfect. I also believe that "... in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (8:28). However, there are some Bible verses in the Bible that clearly state what the will of God is. For example, the Scripture 1 Peter 3:16-17 says that it is God's will that we suffer while we are doing good with good conscience. Also the Scripture 1 Thessalonians 4:3 says "this is the will of God, your sanctification."

In 1 Thessalonians 5:18, Apostle Paul said to the Thessalonian church saints what God's will for them is: "in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." I want to think about what are the will of God are in five ways based on 1 Thessalonians 5:16-22 under the title "God's will for us in Christ Jesus":

First, God's will for us in Christ Jesus is "Rejoice always."

Look at 1 Thessalonians 5:16 – "Rejoice always." Are you rejoicing these days? Do you have joy in your heart? Or do you have worry, anxiety and sorrow? When I think about the word "rejoice", it reminds me the Scripture Nehemiah 8:10b: "... for the joy of the Lord is your strength." Although I personally like this word, in reality it isn't familiar with my life. I am still learning this word. When I think about this work, I ask myself 'Do I really live a life of joy because of the Lord?' I also ask myself, 'Is the joy of the Lord my strength?' How then can we rejoice in the Lord? Based on Nehemiah 8:10 and its' context, I meditated on three things:

(1) In order to rejoice in the Lord, we must not mourn or weep.

Look at Nehemiah 8:9 – "Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who were instructing the people said to them all, "This day is sacred to the LORD your God. Do not mourn or weep." For all the people had been weeping as they listened to the words of the Law." When the Israelites heard the Law of Moses through the scholar Ezra and understood the words of the Law through the Levites, they could not help but shed tears of repentance because their sins. In other words, they wept because of the conviction of sins through the Law (Ps 10:1). When the Israelites were weeping because of the conviction of their sins, Nehemiah, Ezra, and the Levites who taught the Israelites said to them 'Do not mourn or weep because this day is sacred to the Lord your God' (Neh. 8:9).

(2) In order to rejoice in the Lord, we must not grieve.

Look at Nehemiah 8:10-11: “Nehemiah said, “Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is sacred to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your strength. The Levites calmed all the people, saying, “Be still, for this is a sacred day. Do not grieve.” Why did the Israelites who were gathered at the Water Gate grieve? The reason was because they didn’t serve the Lord properly for a long time, not knowing what pleases God and offends God (Packer). Grievance makes us weaker than strengthening us. On the Lord’s day when we come to church and worship God, we must grieve when God exposes our sins through His holy presence. But this grievance cannot be our strength. We must be forgiven by God by repenting our sins as we rely on the blood of Jesus Christ. In doing so, we will be able to rejoice because our sins are forgiven and we are enjoying freedom from our sins.

(3) In order to rejoice in the Lord, we must understand the Word of God.

Look at Nehemiah 8:12 – “Then all the people went away to eat and drink, to send portions of food and to celebrate with great joy, because they now understood the words that had been made known to them.” The Israelites heard what Nehemiah, Ezra, and the Levites said and they stopped weeping and they rejoiced greatly. The reason was because they understood the words that had been made known to them (v. 12).

In 1 Thessalonians 5:16, Apostle Paul exhorted the Thessalonian church saints to rejoice always. How could they rejoice always, especially when they were in much tribulation (1:6) after they believed in Jesus and turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God (v. 9)? How could Paul, who said “Rejoice, always”, rejoice always? How can we rejoice always? I looked up four principles in 1 Thessalonians:

(1) The Thessalonians heard the gospel, the good news.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 1:5 – “for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.” This was because God loved the Thessalonians and chose them (v. 4). That was why when Paul preached the gospel to them, the gospel didn’t come to them in word only but also in power, in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction (v. 5). In order for us to rejoice always, we must first hear the gospel of Jesus Christ again and again. No matter how hard and sad we are because of heavy burdens in our hearts, we can rejoice if the gospel comes to us in power, in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction.

(2) The Thessalonian church saints received the word of God in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 1:6 – “You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit.” Here, the much tribulation of the Thessalonian church saints refers to the persecution of the Jews. The Jews persecuted the Thessalonian church saints by provoking the citizens of Thessalonica by saying that what Paul proclaimed was not Judaism. So the Jews mobilized the thugs from the marketplace to terrorize the Christians and persecuted the Christians by accusing them to the Roman rulers (Kim Se-yoon). In the meantime, the Thessalonian church saints received the word of God with the joy of the Holy Spirit. In other words, in much tribulation they received the word with joy of the Holy Spirit and obeyed it (KJV Bible Commentary). When they received the word of God, they received it not as the word of men but “what it really is, the word of God” (2:13). And that

Word of God performed its work in them who believed (v. 13). So they could rejoice always in much tribulation. This was the work of the Holy Spirit. How can we know that? We know it because without the work of the Holy Spirit, we cannot rejoice in much tribulation and persecution. Not only that, without the work of the Holy Spirit, we will not listen to the word of God and obey the word in the midst of much tribulation and persecution. The work of the Holy Spirit makes us more eager to hear the word of God, to receive it humbly and obey it even when we are in a lot of suffering. As a result, the Holy Spirit makes us holy and be like Jesus in the midst of suffering (1:6).

(3) The Thessalonian church saints hoped that Jesus, the Son of God, would come back from heaven.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 1:10 – “and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.” If we, like the Thessalonian church saints, wait for the Lord from heaven with hope of His second coming, we will be able to endure any kind of hardship and suffering and rejoice always (Prov. 10:28; Rom. 12:12).

(4) Paul was able to rejoice always in much tribulation because the Thessalonian church saints were his “joy”.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20: “For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? For you are our glory and joy.” Look at 1 Thessalonians 3:9 – “For what thanks can we render to God for you in return for all the joy with which we rejoice before our God on your account.” Not only the Thessalonian church saints but also the Philippian church saints were Paul’s joy and crown (Phil. 4:1). Because Paul had them who were his joy and crown, he was able to rejoice always in the midst of persecution and suffering. So he was able to exhort the Thessalonian church saints to “rejoice always” (1 Thess. 5:16).

Today God is saying to us, “Rejoice always.” No matter what situation we are in, God wants us to rejoice. To do so, we must always hear the good news of Jesus Christ. We must receive the Word of God by faith with the joy of the Holy Spirit. And we must live with the hope of the Jesus’ second coming by receiving the truth about the second coming of Jesus. And, like Apostle Paul, we must consider our brothers and sisters in Christ as our joy. In doing so, we will be able to always rejoice because of the Lord who is our true joy.

Second, God's will for us in Christ Jesus is "pray continually."

How do you pray to God when your heart is troubled and distressed? Few weeks ago at the Morning Prayer, I was strengthened by Psalms 10:17a, “You hear, O LORD, the desire of the afflicted ...” and the Holy Spirit helped to pray to God. In particular, the Holy Spirit made me to cry out my earnest desire to Father God and comforted me by enabling me to believe that God would answer my prayer. Our God listens to us (v. 17) when we are weak (v. 2), when we are helpless (vv. 9, 12), when we are lonely (v. 14) and when we are afflicted (v.17). Not only that God comforts us but also He delivers us from our hardships and afflictions (v. 18). Will you not tell your supplication to this God? When we pray to God, we must pray with these three assurances.

(1) We must pray to God with the assurance of salvation.

Look at Psalms 55:16 – “But I call to God, and the LORD saves me.” We can never have the assurance of salvation when we look at the situation we are in. Rather, we can not help but be in distress, worry and fear.

In order for us to have the assurance of salvation, we must not look at the situation we are in, but look at the God of salvation by faith who can surely able to deliver us. We must believe that our situation outside of our abilities is in God's sovereign hands and that God will even use our bad situation to work for the good (Rom. 8:28). The reason is because our God is good. We believe in our good God who has the power of salvation even in the circumstances that we are in. We must cry out to God with this faith. In other words, we must pray to God with the assurance of salvation. And we should pray in the name of Jesus (meaning 'God is salvation').

(2) We must pray to God with the assurance of answered of prayer.

Look at Psalms 55:17 – “Evening, morning and noon I cry out in distress, and he hears my voice.” One of the things that make us so unbearable is the silence of God. We go through very hard time when there is no answer from God no matter how hard we cry out to God. We feel the limitations of patience and become discouraged in prayer, unable to understand why God doesn't answer our prayers. Although we know that we should always pray and not give up as Jesus said (Lk. 18:1), we get discouraged and even stop praying to God. We stop praying to God, even though the problem we face is actually continuing to exist. The reason is because we no longer have assurance of answered prayer. But the Scripture tells us to have confidence in the answer of prayer. For example, look at John 16:24: "Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete." Jesus said that if we ask for anything in Jesus' name, we will receive. As we hold on to this Lord's promise, we must pray to God by faith.

(3) We must pray to God with the assurance that God will sustain us.

Look at Psalms 55:22 – “Cast your cares on the LORD and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous fall.” We must cast all our anxiety on Him because He cares for us (1 Pet. 5:7). We must cast all our cares on the Lord because He will sustain us (Ps. 55:22). It reminds me Isaiah 41:10 – “So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

Our God is the Immanuel God who is with us, the God who strengthens us and helps us. And our God is the God who upholds us with His righteous right hand. We must pray to God with faith and confidence that God will uphold us. In doing so, God will not allow us to be shaken.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:17, Apostle Paul told the Thessalonian church saints, “pray continually.” What does this mean? How can we pray to God continually? Here, “pray continually” doesn't mean pray repetitiously and continually without rest. It means to pray persistently and regularly (MacArthur). When we go to God with prayer topic, we shouldn't give up praying but and should pray persistently. But this is hard because Satan keeps coming to us and deceiving us. Satan continues to mislead us, especially when we think that the difficult situation we face is ongoing and our prayer seems not being answered. How does Satan mislead us? Satan comes to us from time to time and offers us a constantly deceptive shortcut. At that time, we must choose one of two things: (1) continually trusting God, praying, expecting, and waiting for God to answer our prayer or (2) choose the deceptive shortcut that Satan shows us and get what we want quickly (but the consequences of this choice can cause great suffering not only to us but also to our descendants). When your prayer doesn't get answer quickly, which one do you choose?

If we look back from the beginning of this letter to the Thessalonian church saints, we can understand why Paul exhorted them to pray continually. Especially when we look at 1 Thessalonians 1:2, Paul always thanked God for all of the Thessalonian church saints, mentioned them in his prayers. When I was meditating on this verse, I

asked this question to myself: ‘How can I always thank God when I pray for my beloved one?’ Then I wrote this: ‘Apostle Paul always thanked God whenever he remembered the Thessalonian church saints and prayed for them (Phil. 1:2) with the affection of Jesus Christ (v. 8). In order for us to always thank God when we pray for our beloved ones with the affection of Jesus Christ, we should see what God is doing in them with the eyes of faith (1 Thess. 1:3) rather than seeing their offense with our physical eyes [we should overlook their offense (Prov. 17:9)]. When I meditated these words with “pray continually” (1 Thess. 5:17), I think the reason why Paul exhorted the Thessalonian church saints to pray continually was that Paul wanted them to pray for each other with thanksgiving like him who prayed for them with always thanksgiving because he loved them (1:2). The lesson that this gives us is that we must always thank God and pray for our brothers and sisters in Christ whom we love. The reason is because we always remember before our God and Father their work of faith, the labor of love, and the endurance of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ (v. 3).

There is a person in the Bible who cried out to God continually. And that person is Samuel. Look at 1 Samuel 7:8 – “They said to Samuel, “Do not stop crying out to the LORD our God for us, that he may rescue us from the hand of the Philistines.” As the Israelites asked, Samuel didn’t sin against the Lord by failing to pray for them (12:23). In addition to Samuel, Apostle Paul also said in Acts 20:31 that when he was in Ephesus for three years he never stopped warning each of the Ephesian church saints night and day with tears. Not only Paul constantly remembered the Roman church saints in his prayers at all times (Rom. 1:9), he also constantly remembered Timothy in his prayers (2 Tim. 1:3). Not only did he always thank God for the Thessalonian church saints, but he also prayed most earnestly that he might see them again and supply what was lacking in their faith (3:10). The reason why Paul prayed like this for them was “so that no one would be unsettled by these trials” (v. 3). He was afraid that in some way the tempter might have tempted them and his and his coworkers’ efforts might have been useless (v. 5). We must pray to God for each other’s faith continually. In particular, we must be alert and self-controlled and pray to God (5:6). We should be spiritually sleeping but wake up and pray to God (Park, Yun-sun). Look at 1 Peter 4:7 – “The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray.” Look at Matthew 26:41 – “Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak.” If we don’t do this, we will be tempted and commit the sin of denying the Lord like Peter. We pray like the Lord taught us “... lead us not into temptation” (Lk. 11:4).

We must pray to God continually. We must pray to God persistently and regularly. In particular, we must always remember our brothers and sisters in Christ whom we love and constantly pray for them so that we may stand firmly on the rock of faith and trust God completely. The reason we should do so is that we should not be tempted by Satan. As we church prepare for the Groom Jesus’ second coming by being awoken and pray to God persistently and regularly, we will be prepared to be His glorious church and participate in the wedding of the Lamb.

Third, God's will for us in Christ Jesus is "give thanks in all circumstances."

Look at 1 Thessalonians 5:18 – “give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.” Do you thank God when you pray to Him? If “yes”, what do you thank God for? Do you thank God for your family? Apostle Paul thanked God when he remembered the Thessalonian church saints (1:2). It was because of their work of faith, labor of love and endurance of hope (v. 3).

(1) The Thessalonian church saints’ work of faith were three:

- (a) The gospel of Jesus Christ came to them not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction (v. 5). Therefore, they turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God (v. 9).
- (b) In spite of severe suffering, they welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit (v. 6).

(c) Their faith in God had become known everywhere (v. 8).

(2) The Thessalonian church saints' labor of love were three:

(a) Comforting one another (4:18),

(b) Building each other up (5:11),

(c) Living peace with each other (v. 13).

(3) The Thessalonian church saints' endurance of hope were two:

(a) Waiting for Jesus from heaven (1:10).

(b) Living a holy life (3:13)

In 1 Thessalonians 5:18, Paul exhorted the Thessalonian church saints to give thanks in all circumstances. Here, "to give thanks in all circumstances" means to give thanks in everything. It means to give thanks in every situation and in all circumstances (WBC). How is this possible? How can we give thanks to God in every situation/ every circumstance? How can we give thanks to God even if it seems a bad situation to us? I think the good example is Jonah. The Jonah's situation was never a situation to give thanks to God. He was in the belly of a great fish three days and nights (Jonah 1:17). He was suffering (2:2). He was thrown deep into the sea (v.3). He was banished from God's sight (v. 4). His life was ebbing away (v. 7). The earth beneath barred him in forever (v. 6). Even in this kind of situation Jonah offered a thanksgiving prayer to God (vv. 1, 9). How was this possible? It was because he remembered the grace of God's salvation in the past. Then what was the grace of God's salvation in the past that Jonah remembered? It was when he was thrown into the sea (1:15) God provided a great fish and swallowed him. And Jonah was inside the fish three days and three nights (v. 17). This was God's salvation in the past that Jonah experienced. I am sure this wasn't the God's salvation that Jonah expected. I think Jonah's expectation of God's salvation was not inside the great fish but directly on the dry land (2:10). But the sovereign God's salvation was to make the great fish to swallow Jonah (1:17). Nevertheless, Jonah gave thanks to God (2:1, 9).

We can not thank God when the answer to our prayers is not realized as we expected. The realization of prayer answered doesn't have to be as we expected and as we have prayed. The answer of our prayer belongs to God's sovereignty. Therefore, we must give thanks to God by believing that the sovereign will of God has been fulfilled. Also, we must give thanks to God as we remember God's salvation in the past. We must give thanks to God by believing that salvation belongs to the Lord (v. 9). We must give thanks to God for believing that God, who saved us in the past, will save us even now. We must give thanks to God by believing in the God of salvation is the same yesterday and today and forever (Heb. 13:8). We should pray with thanksgiving to God with confidence in salvation and hope of salvation. When Jonah offered the prayer of thanksgiving to God, God commanded the fish and the fish vomited Jonah onto dry land (Jonah 2:10). Jonah received the answer of his prayer from God. Jonah was saved by God. And then Jonah's situation finally changed: from inside the belly of the great fish to the dry land. When we give thanks to God of salvation by faith, we will receive an answer of our prayer from God. And we will experience God's salvation. God will change not just our mind but our situation as well. Salvation belongs to God (v. 9).

We can always thank God when we pray for our beloved brothers and sisters in Christ while we look at the God of salvation by faith. The reason is because we see by faith what God is doing in their lives (1 Thess. 1:3) rather than seeing their offense by our own physical eyes ["He who covers over an offense promotes love" (Prov. 17:9)]. Look at Philippians 4:6 – "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God." We must look at God in faith and look for conditions to be grateful, not to worry about anything, even in circumstances that may concern us. And we must pray to God with

thanksgiving. In his book "Institute of the Christian Religion," this is what John Calvin said about a prayer of thanksgiving: 'Thanksgiving is a part of prayer in which we acknowledge the grace of God toward us, confess it with praise, and turn all good things into His goodness.' When we think by faith about the grace of salvation that God has given to us by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we must give thanks God in our lifetime. We have the condition to thank God forever no matter what circumstances we are in. The condition is Jesus Christ. The condition is salvation. The condition is eternal life. Therefore, we must determine to thank God today. We must commit ourselves to give thanks to God in everything as we look to Jesus only by faith.

Fourth, God's will for us in Christ Jesus is not to put out the Spirit's fire and not treating prophecies with contempt.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 5:19-20: "Do not put out the Spirit's fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt." Have you ever watered the burning fire? Why do we put water on the burning fire? The reason is to turn off the fire. If we don't turn off the fire but want to make the fire burn more, then we should pour gasoline on the fire. A good example of this is when we go camping and when we want to have campfire at night, we collect firewood and then we put gasoline on the firewood and light it. Then the firewood will burn very well. After playing bonfire, what do we do before we sleep? We pour water over it to turn off the bonfire. We pour enough water on the bonfire to make sure that there is not even a small fire.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:19, Apostle Paul exhorted the Thessalonian church saints not to put out the Spirit's fire. What does that mean? Putting out the Spirit's fire is like putting out the bonfire. This is what the hymn "Come, Thou Burning Spirit, Come" says: "Come, Thou burning Spirit, Come; Lo! We stretch our hands to Thee; From the Father and the Son Let us now Thy glory see. Come, O Come great Spirit, Come! Let the mighty deed be done! Satisfy our souls' desire! Now we trust Thee for the fire; Fire, fire; fill us with Thy holy fire!" This hymn sings "Thou Burning Spirit" to "fill us with Thy holy fire!" Why did the song express the Holy Spirit like this? The Bible describes the Holy Spirit in various symbolic names, one of which is "fire" (water, wind, oil, pigeon). The Scripture Matthew 3:11 and Acts 2:3 describe the Holy Spirit as fire: "'I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire" (Mt. 3:11), "They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them" (Acts 2:3). In these words, Matthew 3:11 speaks of "baptism of the Holy Spirit" and Acts 2:3 speaks of "fill with the Holy Spirit." Here, the role of "fire" which is the symbol of the Holy Spirit is to burn all our sins in the baptism of the Holy Spirit and is related to the gifts of the Holy Spirit in fill with the Holy Spirit. If we think about Acts 2:3 in relation to 1 Thessalonians 5:19, "Do not put the Spirit's fire" means to respect the gifts of the Holy Spirit (Park Yun-sun) by not suppressing or stifling the gifts and by restraining the work of the Holy Spirit (Believer's Bible Commentary). If we think about Matthew 3:11 in relation to 1 Thessalonians 5:19, I think "Do not put the Spirit's fire" means not to continue sinning. For example, in 1 Thessalonians 4:7 Paul already urged the Thessalonian church saints not to be impure but to live a holy life. Specifically, do not steal another man's wife any more (v. 6) but to live the holy life according to God's calling (v. 7). So when Paul prayed for the Thessalonian church said, he prayed: "May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones" (3:13).

We must not put out the Holy Spirit. We must no longer commit sin in putting out the work of the Holy Spirit in sanctifying us. We must be holy according to God's will. We must live a holy life. Also, we must honor the gifts of the Holy Spirit that are given to each of us by God's grace. And we must not stifle the gifts of the Holy Spirit and restrain the work of the Holy Spirit. Rather, we must use the gifts of the Holy Spirit wisely and moderately in building the Lord's church with the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Then what does it mean by "do not treat prophecies with contempt"? (1 Thess. 5:20) Paul knew there were

some among the Thessalonian church saints who had wrong eschatological hope who didn't work with their hands but went around caused troubles (4:11). Why did they have the wrong eschatological hope? When we look at 1 Thessalonians 1:10, the Thessalonian church saints were waiting Jesus from heaven. And with that hope of His second coming, they endured in tribulation (v. 3). Then how could some of them have wrong eschatological hope? It was because they accepted the wrong prophecy. Then who would have given the wrong prophecy? Who made a false prophecy? Was it not false prophets or false teachers?

I still remember here in the Los Angeles, United State in the early 1990's, the church called Maranatha said and firmly believed that the day of rapture was October 28, 1992 midnight at 12 o'clock and there were many disturbances (Internet). At that time I couldn't understand how the Maranatha church people claimed to know the day of Lord's second coming and how people could be misled by the false prophesy. At that time and now, my unchanging thought is that we Christians should be very careful and guarded against false prophecy. In order to do so, we must stand firm in the Word of God. If we do so, there is a danger of treating prophecies with contempt. So I think Paul told the Thessalonian church saints that even though some of them had wrong eschatological hope, they shouldn't despise the prophetic utterances (1 Thess. 5:20). What Paul meant was the Thessalonian church saints shouldn't take the prophecies lightly but they should take them seriously (MacArthur). In particular, I think Paul exhorted them not to take the prophecies with contempt (5:20), considering that they received Paul's word and accepted it as the Word of God, not as the words of men (2:13). Of course, we should despise the false prophecies from the false prophets. But we should take the true prophecies from the word of God very seriously.

Look at Revelation 1:3 – “Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.” Here, the word “the time” refers to fulfillment of the future prophecy (Believer's Bible Commentary). And the prophecy that was given to Apostle John by the Lord and it refers to “the things which must soon take place” (v. 1). And the focus of the things which must soon take place is Jesus Christ “who is and who was and who is to come” (vv. 4, 8). This Jesus Christ is He who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood (v. 5b). And He made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father (v. 6). The Scripture says Jesus Christ is coming with the clouds (v. 7). Look at 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17: “For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.” When Jesus is coming with the clouds, every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him (Rev. 1:7). And all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him (v. 7). The reason is not because they will shed the tears of repentance when they see Jesus coming again, but will have guilt and fear of judgment (MacArthur). However, you and I who believe in Jesus will not have this guilt and fear of judgment. It is because we who are loved by God are released from our sins by His blood (v. 5b). Rather, the bride, the church will meet Jesus, the Bridegroom, with full joy when Jesus comes in the clouds (Jn. 3:29). Therefore, we who will meet Jesus with full joy must first believe that Jesus' second coming is near. When Jesus said to Apostle John “Yes, I am coming quickly”, John replied “Amen Come, Lord Jesus” (Rev. 22:20). Like Apostle John, we must hear the Jesus' voice saying “I am coming quickly.” And like John, we must say in faith “Amen Come, Lord Jesus.” As we firmly believe that Jesus is coming quickly, we must read, hear, and keep what is written in the Lord's prophecy with faith in the belief that the time of His second coming is near (1:3). We must read and hear the prophecy of Jesus' second coming and prepare for His second coming. We must prepare to meet Him by obeying His commands.

Fifth and last, God's will for us in Christ Jesus is to examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; abstain from every form of evil.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 5:21-22: “But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; abstain from every form of evil.” We should have concern for our body. The Lord gave us our body as a gift so we

must take care of it faithfully as the Lord's stewards. To do so, we must first identify what is beneficial (profit) and what is harm (loss) to our bodies. Then we have to take what is beneficial to our body and get rid of what is harmful to our body. Likewise, we must have great concern for our spiritual health. And we must faithfully bear our responsibility in taking care of our spiritual health. In order to do that, we must first take what is beneficial to our spiritual health by distinguishing what is beneficial and what is harmful, and we must consider what is harmful rubbish (trash, dung) (Phil. 3:7-8). We must do all this "for the sake of Christ" (v. 7).

In 1 Thessalonians 5:21-22, Apostle Paul exhorted the Thessalonian church saints to "examine everything; hold fast to that which is good; abstain from every form of evil." According to this exhortation, the Thessalonian church saints lived their lives of holding fast to that which was good and abstaining from every form of evil. In tribulation, they held fast to what was good and they rejected the tempters' temptations. What good things did the Thessalonian church saints hold fast and what evil things did they forsake? I thought of three things:

(1) The Thessalonian church saints hold fast to faith and abstained from disbelief.

The Thessalonian Church saints no longer worshiped idols (1:9) and followed their lustful passion (4:5) after they believed in Jesus Christ. Rather, in the midst of the tempters' temptations, they lived a holy life in obedience to the will of God y abstaining from sexual immorality (v. 3). In short, the Thessalonian church saints abandoned all temptation and stood firm in their faith (3:8) without being shaken (v. 3). Satan tries to deceive us and make us to distrust God. What is the purpose? The purpose is to make us complain and grumble in dissatisfaction and eventually sin against God. Why are we dissatisfied? The reason is greed. Satan doesn't want us to be satisfied with Jesus alone. So he infiltrates into us spiritual cancer cell which is greed and eventually causing us to sin in dissatisfaction, complaint, and resentment. And the sin is to disobey and to apostate God. We must be alert to this work of Satan. To do so, we must diligently listen to the words of Jesus Christ (Rom. 10:17) and obey so that our faith may grow as living faith. In other words, we must hold fast to faith and abstain from disbelief. And in order to abstain from disbelief, we must diligently hold fast to faith. I hope and pray that all of us may overcome disbelief by faith.

(2) The Thessalonian church saints hold fast to love and abstained from hate.

The Thessalonian church saints appreciated and esteemed Paul and his co-workers, who had charge over them in the Lord and gave instruction, very highly in love (5:12-13). In addition, they loved one another as they were taught by God and loved one another (4:9). Moreover, they also loved all the brethren who are in all Macedonia (v. 10). And they didn't wrong their brothers or took advantage of them (v. 6). Rather, they obeyed God's teaching and loved one another so there was nothing for Paul to say to them about brotherly love (v. 9). God is love (1 Jn. 4:8). But Satan is a lie. Satan infiltrates false love that is hate in us so that we may hate each other. Also, Satan makes us to have false idea that God hates us (Deut. 1:27). Therefore, Satan makes us forget about God's love. As a result, not only Satan makes us not to love each other but also unable to love each other. We must be alert to this work of Satan. Rather, we must overcome the Satan's temptations. In order to do so, we must understand God's chosen love more deeply, broadly, much, and higher. We must meditate, experience and enjoy more deeply God's saving love in choosing us in love before the foundation of the world and gave us the precious gift of faith to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. In doing so, we must overcome the sinful hatred of Satan with divine love of God.

(3) The Thessalonian church saints held fast to hope and abstained despair.

Although the Thessalonian church saints could have grieved as do the unbelievers who had no hope

because of those who were asleep (4:13), instead they waited in faith that Jesus died and rose again and God will bring with Him those who had fallen asleep in Jesus (v. 14) when Jesus comes back from heaven (1:10). They endured all tribulation in the hope that they “who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air” and so they shall always be with the Lord (v. 17; 5:10). And they endured all tribulation, hoping that God would sanctify them entirely and keep them blameless at the coming of their Lord Jesus Christ (5:23). We too should endure all tribulation with this hope. We must never sin against God in discouragement and despair. Although Satan makes us to despair in tribulation, our God makes us more desperately hope for Jesus' return in the tribulation. We must not forget: "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18).

It is more important to believe that God's will for us is good, pleasing and perfect (Rom. 12:2) than to know what God's will is for us. Even if we don't know God's will for us, we cannot but be comforted by the fact that we are in the sovereign will of God that is good and pleasing and perfect.

I personally like the gospel song “Gathered here, within this place”: “We will live as God has planned, Though at times we may not understand. Many things we may not see, But our faith will help us believe. From his word we learn the truth Through His love we all are born a new. With His help we will not fall For we know our God will prevail” (Lyrics section 2). God's will for us is to rejoice always, to pray continually, and to give thanks in everything. Also, we must not put out the Spirit's fire and not despise prophetic utterances. But we must examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; abstain from every form of evil. I hope and pray that all of us can live according to God's will for us and glorify God.

God is faithful and he will surely do it.

[1 Thessalonians 5:23-24]

It seems that many of us Christians who say that we believe in Jesus are not eagerly looking forward to the second coming of Jesus and are not preparing to welcome Him. We can know this by looking at our lives where we are busy in the accumulation of earthly things, rather than busy storing up treasures in heaven. Many of us, like the Israelites at the time of the Exodus, are looking back to this world, longing for the world things and pursuing them instead of looking forward to the Promised Land of heaven by faith. This is not a life of faith and a life of hope. How can we Christians who say that we wait for the second coming of Jesus are moving backward to this world, rather than heading toward the better Home? We who live this kind of Christian life are bound to be reproved by the Lord. It should never be so. We must become all those who will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

When Apostle Paul prayed to God for the Corinthian church saints, he had assurance that they would be blameless on the day of the Lord Jesus Christ and gave thanks to God as follow: “He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 1:8). What a precious prayer of thanksgiving? Think about I give thanks to God in my prayers for all of you when I pray for you because I know for sure that you will stand firm in faith and you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. Isn’t his precious prayer of thanksgiving? I want to off this kind of prayer to God. How could Paul able to offer such a thankful prayer to God? How could he be sure that the Corinthian church saints would be blameless on the day of Lord Jesus Christ? I find the answer in 1 Corinthians 1:9 – “God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.” The reason was because Paul looked at God who is faithful. If he looked at the Corinthian church saints rather than looking at faithful God, he would not be able to pray with assurance and give thanks to God. But when he looked at the faithful God, he was sure that He who chose them in love and called them would bring the salvation to completion. Do you have this assurance? Look at Philippians 1:6 – “being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” He who began a good work in us is faithful God. And our faithful God will carry the good work on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. It means that our faithful God who began the work of salvation in us will finish it on the completion. It is because our Lord is a faithful even though we are unfaithful (2 Tim. 2:13). I hope and pray that we look upon our faithful God in faith and wait in hope for His second coming.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:24, Apostle Paul said “The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.” Here, we can summarize what Paul said in three ways:

First, God called the Thessalonian church saints.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 5:24a: “The one who calls you” Here, the meaning of God’s calling is that God who loved the Thessalonians and chose them (Eph. 1:4) called them to salvation (MacArthur). The theological term for this is “God’s effectual call.” This is what the Westminster Confession of Faith chapter 10 says about “Of Effectual Calling”: “All those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only, He is pleased, in His appointed and accepted time, effectually to call, (1) by His Word and Spirit, (2) out of that state of sin and death in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ; (3) enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God; (4) taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them a heart of flesh; (5) renewing their wills, and, by His almighty power determining them to that which is good; (6) and effectually

drawing them to Jesus Christ; (7) yet so as they come most freely, being made willing by His grace.(8)”(WCF). I divided this confession into three parts and want to share some Bible verses:

(1) “All those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only, He is pleased, in His appointed and accepted time, effectually to call”:

Look at Romans 8:30 – “And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.” This scripture says that those whom God called to bring salvation, “he predestined.” The theological term for this is "predestination". ‘Predestination means that God already set our final destination, heaven or hell even before we reached there and even before we were born. Predestination teaches that our ultimate destiny is in God’s hand (R. C. Sproul). Look at Ephesians 1:4-5: “For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will--.” Look at Romans 8:29 – “For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.”

(2) “by His Word and Spirit”

Look at 1 Thessalonians 2:13-14: “But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” This Scripture says that those whom God predestined and called to salvation are sanctified by the Spirit that is regeneration. ‘All human beings are spiritually dead because the first man Adam’s sin was imputed to them (Eph. 2:1). Therefore, no one can seek God (1 Cor. 1:20) or believe in Christ (Jn 1:12, 13) and cannot do spiritual good (Ps. 14:3). Regeneration refers to a change as a new creation that restores spiritual life from this state of spiritual death (2 Cor. 5:17)’ (Internet). Following this inevitable consequence of the regeneration of the Holy Spirit is conversion and in conversion there are two elements: repentance and faith [“be saved ... through belief in the truth” (2 Thess. 2:13)]. ‘Here repentance is a passive element that recognizes one’s own sins by God’s grace of salvation and God’s mercy in Christ, and mourns and hates the sins and turns away from them. On the other hand, faith is an active element of devoting the whole life to God and going to Christ after repentance’ (Internet).

(3) “out of that state of sin and death in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ”

Look at 2 Timothy 1:9-10: “who has saved us and called us to a holy life--not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.” This Scripture says that God has saved us and this is completely God’s grace in Jesus Christ. Look at Ephesians 2:8-9: “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God -- not by works, so that no one can boast.”

Apostle Paul has already mentioned twice in 1 Thessalonians 2:12 and 4:7 about the "calling" in writing to the Thessalonian church saints. First, in 1 Thessalonians 2:12 he said: “so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.” When we look at this verse, we can know the purpose why Paul exhorted and encouraged and implored each one of the Thessalonian church saints as a father would his own children (v. 11). The purpose is so that they would walk in a manner worthy of the God who called them into

His own kingdom and glory (v. 12). In other words, Paul wanted the Thessalonian church saints to live in the manner worthy of the God who called them and who were saved. That was why Paul encouraged them to live like the one who were in the kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven, and to live for His glory. This is the life of the saved ones whom God is pleased with. After exhorting the Thessalonian church saints like this, Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 4:7, “For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification.” The reason Paul spoke to the Thessalonian church saints was because there were some among them who didn’t possess their own wife in sanctification and honor (v. 4) but pursued their lustful passion (v. 5) and stole the wife of another (v. 6) even though their sanctification was God’s will (v.3). That was why Paul told them “God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification” (v. 7). I have summarized these two words of Paul’s exhortations to the Thessalonian church saints like this: ‘The God who brought you into the kingdom of God and His glory called you to live in the manner worthy of God and to live in sanctification so that you may please Him.’ In short, the purpose God called us is to live as saved holy people of the kingdom of God. God called us to live like a saint.

Who are ‘saints? Why do we call Christians the saints? The meaning of saints is ‘holy people’. The word holy is a translation of the Hebrew word ‘qodesh’ and the Greek word hagios’. These words were originally derived from the words ‘cut’ and ‘separate’. Therefore, holy in the Bible means ‘a special person or a thing was set apart for sacred use’. So the things that were used in the tabernacle were called ‘sacred things’ and the priests who offered sacrifices to God instead of the people were called ‘priesthood’ (Internet). The reason why the Bible calls us ‘saints’ is because we have been separated from sin and the world through Jesus and have been set apart to imitate Jesus Christ. In particular, because God sent the Holy Spirit in us who are saved, we who received the gospel have received the Holy Spirit and we are now holy temple of the Holy Spirit. That’s why we are called ‘saints’ or ‘holy people’ (Internet). I hope and pray that we may please God by living as saints and God’s holy people.

Second, God who called the Thessalonian church saints has the sure thing to fulfill.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 5:24b: “... and He also will bring it to pass.” We can see Paul blessing the Thessalonian church saints as he finishes the letter from 1 Thessalonians 5:23 after he completed the exhortations from verses 1-22 (especially 16-22). And in that blessing, what we see in verses 23 and 24 is that God would make the Thessalonian church saints to obey the exhortations from verses 1 through 22 and the ultimate purpose of the exhortations is sanctification (MacArthur). Paul conclusively said that the sanctification would be accomplished by the faithful God (vv. 23-24). Look at verse 24: “Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.” Then, what is “it” here that faithful God would bring to pass in the Thessalonian church saints? I summarized it in two ways:

- (1) The “it” refers to the Thessalonian church saints’ sanctification that faithful God would bring to pass.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 5:23a – “Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely” Sanctification is important to us. This is because God, our Father, is holy. So God commanded the children of God to be holy (Lev. 19:2). This command means that we must be set apart as God is set apart. This is sanctification (Internet). This is what the Westminster Confession of Faith Chapter 13 says about sanctification: “They, who are once effectually called and regenerated, having a new heart and a new spirit created in them, are further sanctified really and personally, through the virtue of Christ’s death and resurrection, by His Word and Spirit dwelling in them; the dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed, and the several lusts thereof are more and more weakened and mortified, and they more and more quickened and strengthened in all saving graces, to the practice of true holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. This sanctification is throughout in the whole man, yet imperfect in this life; there abideth still some remnants of corruption in every part: whence ariseth a continual and irreconcilable war;

the flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh” (Section 1, 2) (WCF). In this confession of faith, we can know that God chose us in love before the foundation of the world for us to receive God's effectual calling, regeneration, and recreation of the new hearts and spirits in us and we are being sanctified by the Word of God and the Holy Spirit through the merit of Christ's death and resurrection.

The Scripture 1 Thessalonians 5:23 says that “Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely.” What does it mean? The one who sanctifies us entirely is the God of peace. It is the God of peace “Himself” who is sanctifying us entirely. In a word, the sanctification is the work of the God of peace Himself. Why does the Scripture say that the One who sanctifies us is “the God of peace”? God is the source of peace and the giver of peace. This God of peace enabled us to hear the gospel of peace (Eph. 6:15) and reconciled us to Him through the death of His Son when we were God’s enemies (Rom. 5:10). We, who are saved by faith in Jesus Christ, are enjoying the peace that God has given us because our Lord Jesus Christ who is our peace (Micah 5:5) dwells in us and the Holy Spirit is sanctifying us. In short, the reason why the God of peace is sanctifying us is because our sanctification is a necessary condition for peace (Phil. 4:6-9). After all, we will enjoy His peace completely and the God of peace will be with us forever (v. 9) because the God of peace is sanctifying us and will sanctify us entirely (1 Thess. 5:23).

(2) The “it” refers to the fact that faithful God will preserve the Thessalonian church saints’ souls and bodies completely without blame at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 5:23b – “... and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” In theology, there are two different theories. One of them is “trichotomy” and it is a term which signifies a division into 3 parts: body, soul, and spirit. Another theory is “bichotomy” and it refers to the view that a human being is a composite of two distinct components, body and soul (Internet). Our Presbyterian church follows the bichotomy theory. In other words, we believe that human beings consist of two parts: body and soul (Mt. 10:28; 1Cor. 2:14-15; 15:44, 46). This is what the Westminster Confession of Faith Chapter 13 says about “sanctification”: “In which war, although the remaining corruption, for a time, may much prevail, yet, through the continual supply of strength from the sanctifying Spirit of Christ, the regenerate part doth overcome; and so, the saints grow in grace, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (WCF). Although in this world where we have this body we may have a constant spiritual battle, but in the end, God will accomplish our sanctification completely.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:23, Paul blessed the Thessalonian church saints by saying that the God of peace Himself preserve their spirit and body without blame at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is what Park Yoon-sun said: ‘When the Lord returns, it is impossible for man’s power to preserve our spirit and body without sin and defilement. It is possible only by the God of peace, that is, the God who is the last victor. He will accomplish this by cleansing us with the blood of Jesus Christ and by the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit (1 Pet. 1:2; 1 Jn. 1:7, 9).

Third and last, God who called the Thessalonian church saints is faithful.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 5:24 – “Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.” Do you know that God, who has given us the word of promise, is faithful? This is what the Bible Hebrews 11:11 says, “By faith Abraham, even though he was past age--and Sarah herself was barren--was enabled to become a father because he considered him faithful who had made the promise.” Here the woman "Sarah" refers to Abraham's wife in Genesis. She was past the age of childbearing (Gen. 18:11) and couldn't have a baby. So she had no pleasure (v. 12). But God told Abraham “I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son” (v. 10). And when Sarah heard this at the entrance to the tent, she laughed (v. 15). Nevertheless, God who has

nothing hard for Him (v. 14) was gracious to Sarah and did for her what He had promised (21:1). So Sarah became pregnant and she bore a child at the age of ninety (17:17) and gave birth a son Isaac to her husband Abraham (21:2-3). Without weakening in his faith, Abraham faced the fact that his body was as good as dead since he was 100 years old and that Sarah's womb was also dead (Rom. 4:19). "Yet he didn't waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God" (v. 20). He was being fully persuaded that God had power to do what He had promised (v. 21). This kind of conviction is faith based on the faithful God.

As the Scripture Hebrews 10:23 says, we must hold unswervingly to the hope we profess because He who promised is faithful. We must believe in the faithful Lord. And we must not be shaken by firmly holding onto the promise of faithful Lord with this living hope that He who promised to us will fulfill it. This is what Paul said in 2 Timothy 2:13 – "If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself." What does it mean? It means that God is faithful even though we are faithless because God is faithful God. So the faithful God will complete the work of salvation that he started in us even though we are faithless because He is faithful. The faithful God will surely sanctify us completely and will preserve our spirit and body without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thess. 5:23). Therefore, we must live holy life of the saints faithfully with the assurance of salvation based on our faithful God. The faithful God, who has begun the good work of salvation in us, and is now still working, will complete the work of salvation until the day of the Lord Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:6).

God who called us is faithful. That's why our faithful God will surely accomplish it. Our faithful God will sanctify us entirely. He will preserve our spirit and body without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. May this blessing be upon you all.

Last four words

[1 Thessalonians 5:25-28]

There was a lot of rain outside during the last Thursday Morning Prayer meeting. As I listened to the sound of the falling rain, I began to think about how blessed I was when I meditated on the words I preached in that morning. I couldn't help myself but give thanks to God when I remembered God's love in not only saving me and giving me eternal life but also every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus. I also remembered my wedding service sermon in which the presiding pastor blessed me and my wife with the God's blessings, the man's blessings and the material blessing. I still remembered my father-in-law approached me after the wedding service and said, "James, it seems like you have received all three blessings from God." When I thought about all God's blessing in Jesus Christ and heard the sounds of the falling rains, I considered all His blessings as the rainy season of blessings. I also remembered the story that before my father-in-law died, he heard the voice of his fellow elder Jeong, whom he loved, through the handphone and his body shook. And when I thought about it, I thought that my father-in-law's last body shaking was his last gesture of love to elder Jeong. When elder Jeon heard that story, he cried a lot during my father-in-law's funeral service. When I thought about my father-in-law's last gesture of love, I remembered one of my church grandmothers, Mrs. Choe. When she was in St. Vincent hospital Intensive Care Unit, I visited her and had the last worship. After the last worship, I told her 'Grandma, I love you'. Then she nodded her head since she couldn't speak due to an oxygen respirator on her. This was the last gesture of love that she showed to me.

Someday we will all have a moment to express our last love to our beloved ones. At that last moment, what kind of love do you want to express to your beloved ones? If you can speak at the last minute, what do you want to say?

In 1 Thessalonians 5: 25-28, we see Apostle Paul saying the last four words at the final conclusion of his writing to the Thessalonian church saints. I want to meditate on those four last words one by one and want to receive the lessons the Lord gives to us.

The first word was "Brothers, pray for us."

Look at 1 Thessalonians 5:25 – "Brothers, pray for us." Have you ever ask your beloved brother or sister in Christ to pray for you? In my recollection, the first time when I share my prayer topic with fellow brother or sister in Christ was when I was junior in my college. I still remember clearly when I share my first prayer request to the sister in Christ who couldn't speak Korean at all because she was third generation Korean-American. That was the first time not only that I shared my prayer topic but also praying in English. I still cannot forget that moment when I prayed to God in English for the first time in my life even though I forgot what I said in my prayer for her. Haha. From that time on, I began to share my prayer topics little by little with my fellow brothers and sisters in Christ in the same Christian club. It is that occasion that I am still sharing my prayer requests with other brothers and sisters in Christ. I am sure we all have earnest prayer topics to God. I think among the prayer topics, the most prayer topics are for our family members who we love (especially children). The reason we ask others to pray for our family members is because they are very important to us. And we ask our beloved brothers and sisters in Christ to pray for our families because we want to pray together earnestly for them so that we may receive answers of our prayers from God.

When we look at 1 Thessalonians 5:25, Apostle Paul asked the Thessalonian church saints to prayer for

him and his co-workers as he concluded his letter to the Thessalonian Church saints, saying, “Brothers, pray for us. Paul asked them to pray for himself and his co-workers Silas and Timothy (1:1). Why did Paul ask the Thessalonian church saints to pray for himself and his co-workers? I found the answer in 2 Thessalonians 3:1 – “Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified, just as it did also with you.” I think here when Paul asked the Thessalonian church saints to pray for him and his co-workers, he reminded them what he already said in 1 Thessalonians 5:25 “Brothers, pray for us.” So in a sense, Paul asked them to pray for himself and Silas and Timothy twice. The reason was so that the word of the Lord would spread rapidly and be glorified. In short, Paul's purpose of asking the Thessalonian church saints to pray for him and his co-workers was to spread the word of the Lord. At the same time, in 2 Thessalonians 3:2, Paul asked them to pray that “we will be rescued from perverse and evil men.” This prayer request was not because Paul was selfish, but because he wanted to receive their prayer supports so that he could be rescued from perverse and evil men so that he could continue to preach the word of the Lord and spread it rapidly. In short, the reason Paul asked for the Thessalonian church saints to pray was to preach the word of the Lord. In some ways, Paul's purpose of prayer was not to be the safety of himself and his co-workers but to preach the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ to the ends of the earth. In other words, the real reason he asked for prayer was the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ rather than himself and his co-workers.

In addition to 2 Thessalonians 3:1-2, Paul asked prayers to the churches as he closed his letters. Look at Romans 15:30-31: “I urge you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in my struggle by praying to God for me. Pray that I may be rescued from the unbelievers in Judea and that my service in Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints there.” The reason why Paul wrote to the Roman church saints and asked them to pray for him was for his service. In other words, he asked them to pray for him so that he might continue to preach the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the letter Paul wrote to the church in Ephesus, this was what he said to the Ephesian church saints at the end of the letter: “Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should” (Eph. 6:19-20). In this prayer request, we can see that Paul's concern was to fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel. Since he “an ambassador in chains” in preaching this gospel, he asked the Ephesian church saints to pray for him so that he could declare the gospel fearlessly as he should. This is what Paul said in Colossians 4:3-4: “And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.” As Paul wrote to the various churches and asked the churches saints to pray so that he could boldly preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. This gives us a glimpse of how Paul was so eager to live by preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ according to the ministry that the Lord has given to him.

That is why it is important for the church saints to pray for their pastors. When you pray for your pastors, I hope you pray for them to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. Especially when you pray for your pastors, I hope that you will pray so that not only they may continue to understand the secret of the gospel of Jesus Christ, but also that they may live worthy of His gospel. Therefore, your pastors can live a life of preaching Jesus Christ not only through their lips but through their lives.

The second word was “Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss.”

What if someone spit on your face when you go to Africa? I am sure you will not like it at all. But the people of the Masai tribe in Africa spit in each other's face as an expression of delight. Although this is very unpleasant thing to us, it's a way of saying hello for them (Internet). Perhaps you've seen it on TV how the Middle Eastern people greet each other. They do so by kissing each other's cheeks. This is a strange greeting for the Korean people. The reason is because we usually greet each other by shaking each other's hands. The French people shake hands in a formal setting but in an informal setting they say "Bisous" among close friends. Here, “Bisous” is their way of greeting by kissing each other's cheek and making a kissing sound. The more you are

greeting him or her, the louder the kissing sound (Internet). “The bow is the traditional Korean greeting, although it is often accompanied by a handshake among men. To show respect when shaking hands, support your right forearm with your left hand” (Internet).

Look at 1 Thessalonians 5:26 – “Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss.” Apostle Paul said to the Thessalonian church saints to greet all the brothers "with a holy kiss." Here, greeting all the brothers with holy kisses refers to a gesture of affection toward one another. This gesture of affection “with a holy kiss” were used five times in the New Testament, four by Paul (Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor.16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12) and one by Peter (1 Pet. 5:14). As they end the letters, they encouraged the saints to greet each other with holy kiss as the gesture of affection (MacArthur). This gesture of affection was expressed in hugging and kissing by the first century Christians because they were one family of God in the Lord (MacArthur). The intention of this gesture of affection was to express God’s love for each other in the Lord as the family of God. Therefore, this kiss was never a passionate or physical, but holy (The Bible Knowledge commentary).

What if our children greet us, their parents, in the morning but there is no love and respect, what does that greeting mean? Likewise, if the brothers and sisters in the church express the love of Christ outwardly but are not in love toward each other in the heart, isn’t it only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal (1 Cor. 13:1)? If the brothers or sisters in the Lord don’t love each another, they are nothing (v. 2) even if they speak in the tongues of men and of angels (v. 1), have the gift of prophecy, can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and have faith that can move mountains (v. 2). This is what the Bible 1 Corinthians 13:3 says: “If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.”

We are one family of God in the Lord. And in the family of God there is the Lord’s love. We must love one another with the Lord’s love. The pastors must love the church members with the Lord’s love, and the church members also must love their pastors with the Lord’s love. In addition, we should express our affection to each other with love of God in our hearts and minds firmly believing that we are the Lord’s own family. Of course, the expression of affection may not be "holy kiss" which Paul spoke in 1 Thessalonians 5:26, but we must strive to express true love toward each other. For example, I think we can express our love for each other with bright smile, genuine handshake, or prayers. Therefore, when we keep the unity of the church family in the Lord by loving each other, we can please the Lord, who is the Head of the Church.

The third word was “I charge you before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers.”

Have you ever shared your letter with someone else? Or have you ever shared someone’s letter that you were impressed with with others? On December 1, 2018, I shared my friend’s son’s letter to God with many people through my internet ministry. Although my friends’ son Tobey went to the Lord after he wrote the letter to God, his letter touched so many people’s hearts including mine. So I even translated his English letter into Korean and share with many Korean speaking brothers and sisters in Christ. What a boy of faith Tobey was! When he was suffering with cancer, he prayed to God like this: “Even if I still have cancer,(which I am a little confident about) may you be able to use me as a walking testimony towards others and set a positive influence to those who don’t even know who you are. ... Even if I end up dead or if I continue to walk on this planet, may I be able to be told to future generations about my story and how YOU were the main impact on me. Even if I suffer through more chemotherapy, may I only know that you will be right there next to me.” How could I not share this letter of faith by the precious brother in Christ? The reason I shared the Tobey’s letter to many people was so that they also might be challenged by the Tobey’s prayer to God as it did to me.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 5:27 – “I charge you before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers.”

Apostle Paul commanded the Thessalonian church saints to read this letter to all the brothers. Here, “all the brothers” didn’t refer to only the male saints in the church. It referred to all the sisters in the church and even to the children. One commentary says that Paul commended the Thessalonian church saints to read this letter even to those who couldn’t read by themselves (A Commentary, Critical and Explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments). When I meditated on these words, I remembered the words of Nehemiah chapter 8. When all the people of Israel assembled as one man in the square before the Water Gate (Neh. 8:1), Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, which was made up of men and women and all who were able to understand (v. 2), and read it aloud from daybreak till noon (v. 3). “And all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law” (v. 3). It is interesting to note that the Bible says “men and women and all who were able to understand” (v. 2) and “he men, women and others who could understand” (v. 3). If we apply these words to our modern setting, it means that a pastor reads the bible in front of everyone who can understand the Bible. Even if a foreigner who don’t even understand Korean in our worship but listen to the Korean sermons and experience the work of the Holy Spirit, then how much more should people who understands Korean listen to the Korean sermon. When Paul commanded the Thessalonian church saints “to have this letter read to all the brothers” (1 Thess. 5:27), he meant that not only should they read it to only all the brothers but to everyone who could understand it. Why did Paul command the Thessalonian church saints to do so? The reason was because the words of God that was written 1 Thessalonians were very important (A Commentary, Critical and Explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments). Paul commanded the Thessalonian church saints to read publicly the very important Word of God. Isn’t this interesting? In the Old Testament, the word of God was read publicly in the synagogue, and in the New Testament Paul commanded to read the Thessalonians letter publicly (Believer’s Bible commentary).

This is what the Bible Revelation 1:3 says: “Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.” The time is near. The revelation of Jesus Christ, “what must soon take place” (v. 1) is near. Therefore, we must read, hear, and keep the words that are written in "the words of this prophecy" (v.3). As 1 Thessalonians 5:27 said, we must read the very important Word of God not only individually but also publicly. Our responsibility is to communicate the Word of God publicly as well. In other words, we must disclose, share, and communicate the word of God to others. I hope and pray that we all can devote ourselves to this ministry of the Word.

The fourth and the last word was “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.”

In closing the letter to the Thessalonian church saints, Paul mentioned three absolutely necessary elements in our Christian faithful life in 1 Thessalonians 5:25-27 (Believer’s Bible Commentary). The three keys to a successful Christian life are:

(1) Prayer.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 5:25 – “Brothers, pray for us.” Like Paul who asked the Thessalonian church saints to pray for him and his co-workers, we must share our prayer requests and pray for each other so that we can have successful Christian live.

(2) Love for the saints.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 5:26 – “Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss.” In order to make a successful Christian life together, we must love one another with the love of the Lord. In other words, when we all have the true fellowship of love in the Lord, we can all have successful Christian life together.

(3) Read and study the Word of God.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 5:27 – “I charge you before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers.” In order for all of us to live successful Christian life, we must all be devoted to the Word of God. A good example of this is the Early Church saints in Acts chapter 2. They were devoted to the apostles' teaching (Acts 2:42). In other words, after they believed in Jesus Christ, they continued to receive the teaching of the apostles (v. 42). Like them, we must continue to read, hear, meditate, and learn the Word of God. In doing so, all of us together can make a successful Christian life.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 5:28 – “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.” Apostle Paul concluded this letter of 1 Thessalonians by saying, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.” It is interesting to note that Paul usually ended his letters with the word “grace.” Look at 1 Corinthians 16:23-24: “The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you. My love to all of you in Christ Jesus. Amen.” Look at 2 Corinthians 13:14 – “May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” Look at Galatians 6:18 – “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen.” Look at Ephesians 6:24 – “Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love.” Look at Philippians 4:23 – “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.” Look at Colossians 4:18 – “I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.” When I think about these verses, I have come to think about how important the concept of “grace” was to Paul. As I was thinking about it 1 Corinthians 15:10 came to my mind: “But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.” Paul's concept of grace was that “I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God” (v. 9). He also referred to himself as “sinners – of whom I am the worst” (1 Tim.1:15) because he was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man who was shown mercy because he acted in ignorance and unbelief (v. 13). So he thanked Christ Jesus his Lord who had given him strength and considered him faithful, appointing him to His service (v. 12). So Paul worked harder than all the apostles (1 Cor. 15:10). And this Paul, who worked hard by God's grace, concluded his letter to the saints of the Thessalonian Church and said, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you” (1 Thess. 5:28). I think he did so because he wanted to commit the Thessalonian church saints to the Lord's grace. Look at Acts 20:32 – “Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.”

One interesting thing is that Paul not only end this letter to the Thessalonian church saints with “grace” (1 Thess. 5:28) but he also began with “grace”: “Paul, Silas and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace and peace to you” (1:1). When the the beginning and the end of the letter mention “grace”, this is called “Inclusio” in the biblical grammatical language. This refers to the sandwich structure in which the most important theme is introduced at the first and the last half of the text, and explains the theme in the middle (Internet). What this tells us is that the central theme that Paul wanted to mention to the Thessalonian church saints was “grace.” By God's grace the Thessalonians turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God (v. 9), the gospel came to them not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction (v. 5) and they became imitators of Paul, his co-workers and of the Lord in spite of severe suffering (v. 6). Moreover, by God's grace the Thessalonian church saints became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia (v. 7) and the Lord's message rang out from them not only in Macedonia and Achaia but their faith in God had become known everywhere (v. 8). And by God's grace they waited for His Son from heaven (v. 10). Since all these things were done by God's grace, Paul wrote this letter to the Thessalonian church saints and mentioned the “grace” at the beginning and end of the letter. That was why Paul wrote not only “Paul, Silas and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace and peace to you” (1:1) at the beginning of the letter but also at the end of the letter “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you” (5:28).

Apostle Paul gave the last four words to the beloved Thessalonica church saints as he finished writing the letter to the Thessalonians: (1) “Brothers, pray for us,” (v. 25), (2) “Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss” (v. 26), (3)

"I charge you before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers" (v. 27), and (4) "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you" (v. 28). How do you, as a letter of Christ, want to make a last word to your loved ones, your family, and your neighbors through your life and death?

Conclusion

The grace of God is with the Lord-centered community church that the Lord is building (1 Thess. 1:1; 5:28). When Apostle Paul started writing the letter to the Thessalonian church saints, he said “Paul, Silas and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace and peace to you” (1:1). Also at the end of the letter, he wrote to them “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you” (5:28). Paul, who began the letter with grace and ended the letter with grace, prayed that the God’s grace always be with the Thessalonian church saints because the Thessalonian church was found by the grace of God. Here, the Thessalonian church was found by the grace of God means that the Thessalonians, who were serving idols (1:9) were chosen by God in love (v. 4) and the gospel came to them with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction (v. 5) so that they turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God (v. 9). The community of the Thessalonian church saints served the living and true God was a community of faith. Not only did they welcome the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit in spite of severe suffering (v. 6), but also they received the word of God and accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which was at work in them who believed (2:13). Therefore, their faith didn’t disturb by the afflictions (3:3) and stood firm in the Lord (v. 8). And the word of the Lord had sounded forth from them, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place their faith toward God had gone forth (1:8). In short, the Thessalonian church was the community with the "work of faith" (v. 3). The Thessalonian church was also the community of love. The Thessalonian church saints, who were taught by God to love one another, love one another (4:9). They practiced this love to all the saints who were in all Macedonia (v. 10). So Paul said to them that he had no need for anyone to write to them about the love of the brethren (v. 9). In short, the Thessalonian church was the community of "labor of love" (1:3). The Thessalonian church was the community of hope. The Thessalonian church saints waited for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead (v. 10). They believed that Jesus died and rose again and God will bring with Him those who had fallen asleep in Jesus (4:14) and waited the Lord to descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God and the dead in Christ would rise first (v. 16). In short, the Thessalonian church was the community of "steadfastness of hope" (1:3).

The Thessalonian church was the community built by the grace of God. And this Thessalonian community was the community of faith, the community of love, and the community of hope. In short, the Thessalonian church was the community of faith, love, and hope, built by God's grace. I hope and pray that the Lord builds His church as the community of faith, love, and hope by God's grace.