

August 15

Now we exhort you, brethren,...be patient toward all. 1 Thessalonians 5:14

THIS seems to imply that the better balanced amongst the Lord's people should look with sympathy upon and exercise patient forbearance not only toward the weak and those who lack courage, but toward all;

CONTEXT

F297-F300 "We exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient toward all men. See that none render evil for evil unto any, but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves and to all men." 1 Thess. 5:14,15

This exhortation is not to elders, but to the entire Church, including the elders... Different dispositions require different treatment by the parents, much more in the family of God there are such wide differences of disposition as to require special consideration one for the other. To take notice of each other's imperfections, from the standpoint of criticism, would be to do ourselves much injury, cultivating in our hearts a faultfinding disposition, keenly awake to the weaknesses and imperfections of others, and proportionately, perhaps, inclined to be blind to our own defects. Such criticism is entirely foreign to the spirit and intention of the Apostle's exhortation.

Those are addressed who have been begotten of the spirit of the truth, the spirit of holiness, the spirit of humility, the spirit of love. Such as are thus growing in the graces of the Spirit, will fear and criticize chiefly their own defects; while their love for others will lead them to make as many mental excuses and allowances for them as possible. But while this spirit of love is properly condoning the offenses and weaknesses of the brethren, it is to be on the alert, nevertheless, to do them good—not by bickering, strife, contention, chiding, fault-finding and slandering one another, but in a manner such as the Golden Rule, would approve. With gentleness, meekness, long-suffering and patience, it will seek to make allowance for each other's weaknesses, and at the same time to help each other out of them, each remembering his own weaknesses of some kind.

The *unruly* are not to be comforted and supported and encouraged in their wrong way; but in kindness, in love, they are to be admonished that God is a God of order; and that in proportion as we would grow in his likeness and favor we must observe rules of order. They should be admonished that nothing is further from the divine arrangement than anarchy...

ADMONISHING NOT A GENERAL ORDER

It would be a great mistake, however, to suppose that the Apostle, in using this general language to the Church, meant that every individual of the Church was to do such admonishing. To admonish wisely, helpfully, is a very delicate matter indeed, and remarkably few have a talent for it. The election of elders on the part of congregations is understood to signify the election of those of the number possessed of the largest measure of spiritual development, combined with natural qualifications to constitute them the representatives of the congregation, not only in respect to the leading of meetings, etc., but also in respect to keeping

including those who have too much courage and self-push.... Growth in knowledge helps us to grow in this grace of patience, for as we appreciate more and more the heavenly Father's patience with us it helps us to apply the same principle toward others. ...The thought that our heavenly Father has favored and called any one should make us

order in the meetings and admonishing unruly ones wisely, kindly, firmly. That this is the Apostle's thought is clearly shown in the two preceding verses, in which he says:

"We beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their works' sake. And be at peace amongst yourselves." 1 Thess. 5:12,13

If divine wisdom has been properly sought and properly exercised in the choosing of elders of a congregation, it follows that those thus chosen were very highly esteemed; and since novices are not to be chosen, it follows that these were appreciated and selected for their works' sake, because it was discerned by the brethren that they had a considerable measure of the holy spirit of love and wisdom and meekness, besides certain natural gifts and qualifications for this service. To "be at peace amongst yourselves," as the Apostle exhorts, would mean that, having chosen these elders to be the representatives of the congregation, the body in general would *look to them to perform the service to which they were chosen*, and would not attempt to take it each upon himself to be a reprover, or admonisher, etc."

(1Th 5:14 KJV) "Now we exhort you, brethren...be patient^{G3114} toward all men."

Strong's G3114 "makrothumeō...From the same as G3116; to be long spirited, that is, (objectively) forbearing or (subjectively) patient: - bear (suffer) long, be long-suffering, have (long) patience, be patient, patiently endure."

F306 "PATIENT TOWARD ALL"

In obeying this exhortation to exercise patience toward each other under all circumstances, the New Creatures will find that they are not only exercising the proper attitude toward each other, but that they are cultivating in themselves one of the grandest graces of the holy Spirit -- patience. Patience is a grace of the Spirit which will find abundant opportunity for exercise in all of life's affairs, toward those outside the Church as well as toward those within it, and it is well that we remember that the whole world has a *claim* upon our patience. We discern this only as we get clear views of the groaning creation's condition, revealed to us through the Scriptures... In it, too, we see that the great difficulty with the world is that they are under the delusions of our Adversary, "the god of this world," who now blinds and deceives them. 2 Cor. 4:4

Surely this knowledge should give us patience! And if we have patience with the world, much more should we have patience with those who are no longer of the world, but who have by God's grace come under the conditions of his forgiveness in Christ Jesus, have been adopted into his family, and are now seeking to walk in his steps. What loving and long-suffering patience we *should* have toward these fellow-disciples, members of the Lord's body! Surely we

extremely careful how we would co-operate with the Lord in respect to the call, and be as helpful as possible to all those who are seeking to walk with us in the footsteps of our Lord in the narrow way. Z. '03-24 R3136:3

could have nothing else than patience toward these; and surely our Lord and Master would specially disapprove and in some manner rebuke impatience toward any of them. Furthermore, we have great need of patience even in dealing with ourselves under present distress and weaknesses and battles with the world, the flesh and the Adversary. Learning to appreciate these facts will help to make us more patient toward all."

R2319 "MEAN CHRISTIANS AND NOBLE UNBELIEVERS..."

Should we not reasonably expect that the noble principles of true Christianity would attract all of the best minds of the world, and rather repel the meaner dispositions? Should we not expect that the doctrines of Christ, the spirit of his teachings, namely, meekness, gentleness, brotherly kindness, love, would attract all who have sympathy with these qualities, hence all of the noble-minded of the world?...

The facts of the case prove to us that proportionately a larger number of the world's noble-minded children reject the Lord and his Gospel, and that a larger proportion of the world's ignoble children accept the Gospel of Christ...

Those who find themselves morally and intellectually less fallen than some of their neighbors are inclined to a self-righteous feeling, even tho they would disclaim perfection. They are therefore the less inclined to acknowledge themselves to be nothing, unworthy of divine favor, and to bow themselves in the dust at the foot of the cross, and to receive, as an unmerited gift of God, the boon of eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord...

Not many great, not many learned, not many wise according to the course of this world, hath God chosen; but the poor of this world, rich in faith, to be heirs of the Kingdom.

The broader and clearer our view of the situation, the more will we be able to sympathize with those of our brethren in Christ who by nature are mean, ignoble, selfish, lacking in benevolence of thought and word and conduct. When we realize that God has accepted them,—not because of their good and noble character, but because they admit its deficiencies and because they desire to become reformed, transformed, by the renewing of their minds—then all who have the Lord's mind or spirit will likewise receive them. In proportion as we have the mind of Christ, the holy mind, we will view them from the divine standpoint of sympathy for their weaknesses...

From this standpoint we will learn to view them and to think of them not according to their flesh, not according to their natural tendencies and dispositions, but according to the spirit, according to the intentions of their minds, according to their covenant with the Lord..."

R2587 "Mercy rejoiceth against justice," the Apostle explains. (Jas. 2:13.) Divine Mercy

satisfied divine Justice, and thus prepared the way for the rescue of our race from the sentence of Justice: and so those who have become partakers of the divine spirit, and in whom it has reached a reasonable development, will permit their mercy to triumph over their conceptions of justice (for they have no law of justice over their fellows which needs to be satisfied).

While justice may not be blind in the Lord's people, while they may discern the faults of others most clearly, and while they may seek to let justice rule in respect to all of their own words, and thoughts, and actions, nevertheless they are to let mercy triumph in their hearts over justice as respects those who trespass against them, and they are not to hold resentments against those who have done them injury, nor to seek to avenge themselves and to inflict justice upon their opponents. Rather, they are to say, It is for God to be just; it is for me, who am a transgressor also against perfect justice, through the weaknesses which I have inherited, to have compassion upon my fellow-creature, who has inherited similar yet different weaknesses: it is for me to exercise accordingly the divine command, the blessed characteristic of mercy, compassion, forgiveness. And those who do so not only get rid of the evil works and sentiments of the world, the flesh and the devil, but increasingly become filled more and more with the spirit of love and gentleness and patient submission to the divine will, and thus the merciful are blessed even in the present time."

MERCY DRIVES THE WORKS OF THE FLESH OUT OF THE HEART

R2587 "Anger, malice, hatred, envy, strife... All of these qualities of selfishness are antagonized by mercy, and by it largely they are driven from their secret hidings and entrenched positions in our hearts... It is in proportion as we obtain the Lord's spirit of love that we manifest toward others mercy..."

How can we have malice toward those who are our enemies, if we love them and have mercy, compassion, upon them, and forgive them from our hearts? How can we have hatred toward them, if we have mercy upon them, and feel toward them only a forgiving spirit? And how can we be strifeless, if we have a merciful, a forgiving spirit ready to forgive trespasses against us, as we hope for forgiveness of our trespasses against the divine law?"

R3150 "With the child of God this patience and kindness are not merely put on, as grapes might be tied to a thorn-bush, but, on the contrary, they are the fruits of the spirit--growths from or results of having come into fellowship with God, learned of him, received of his spirit of holiness, spirit of love."

THE HIGHEST FORM OF PATIENCE

(Jas 1:4 KJV) "But let patience^{G5281 hupomone} have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

R3135 (From Harvest Truth Database V5.0 2006) "HOLD FAST THAT WHICH IS GOOD" 1 THESSALONIANS 5:14-28 -- JANUARY 25--

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

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

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

R5650 "In the New Testament there are two Greek words translated *patience*. One of these words signifies forbearance, longsuffering. The other carries the thought of cheerful or hopeful endurance. The latter is the word used in our text, and has a much deeper significance than attaches ordinarily to our word patience. This constancy--the endurance of evil in a cheerful, willing manner--represents an element of character, and not merely a temporary restraint of feeling or of action."

R5651 "THE NECESSITY FOR PATIENT ENDURANCE..."

The work to which we are called--the work of blessing all the families of the earth, as God's Millennial Kingdom, in joint-heirship with the Only Begotten Son of God, our great Redeemer. That will be a mighty work; and it is eminently proper that Jehovah should require that those whom He shall account worthy of that exalted position shall not only appreciate His goodness and His glorious character, and prefer His service to sin and iniquity, but demonstrate their thorough loyalty to the principles of righteousness and to His will to the extent of a joyful willingness to suffer on behalf of these principles. A transitory endurance of one or two or three brief trials would not prove the individual to have an established character for righteousness; but a patient, cheerful, endurance even unto death would be necessary to demonstrate such a character."

is needed along this line, to prevent friction amongst the Lord's people--to preserve the unity of the spirit in the bonds of love and peace.

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

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

"Be patient toward all" ⁽¹⁾ seems to imply that the better balanced amongst the Lord's people should look with sympathy upon and exercise patient forbearance toward the classes above mentioned;--not only toward the weak and those who lack courage, but toward *all*; including those who have too much courage and self-push. The Scriptures repeatedly admonish us, "Ye have need of patience," and day by day the advanced children of the Lord realize the truthfulness of this, and come to appreciate patience as one of the chief Christian graces. (1) ⁽²⁾ Growth in knowledge helps us to grow in this grace of patience, for as we appreciate more and more the heavenly Father's patience with us it helps us to apply the same principle toward others. (2) As we come to realize the great disaster that is upon our race as a whole--our fallen condition and how the fall has affected some more in one manner and others more in an-

⁽¹⁾ 1/3 Aug. 15 Manna, 1 Thess. 5:14

⁽²⁾ 1/3 Aug. 15 Manna

other--some chiefly mentally, some chiefly physically, and some chiefly morally, it enlarges our sympathy toward our fellow-creatures, and thus increases our *patience* in dealing with them. This is particularly true in respect to the household of faith, in which we recognize amongst those whom God has graciously called, some more blemished, perhaps, than ourselves in some particulars--though we may be more imperfect in others. ^[3]The thought that our heavenly Father has favored and called anyone should make us extremely careful how we would co-operate with the Lord in respect to the call, and be as helpful as possible to all those who are seeking to walk with us in the footsteps of our Lord in the narrow way. We certainly should have special patience, therefore, with the brethren. -Rom. 14:15; 1 Cor. 8:11.

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

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

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

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

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

"Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks." Only somewhat advanced pupils in the School of Christ are prepared clearly to comprehend this exhortation. Having surrendered their wills and all of the interests of the present life to the Lord, exchanging earthly interests for heavenly interests, the Lord's people are less disposed

than others to pray unceasingly for *earthly good things*. Having set their affections on things above, their prayers are in respect to those things--the heavenly robe, the heavenly food, the heavenly favor. Their prayers are specially for such leadings of divine providence and such assistance of divine grace as will enable them to rejoice always in such experiences as their gracious Lord may deem best for their spiritual development. More and more they find their prayers to consist of thanksgiving for blessings already received, as well as for those yet to come, which they grasp by the hand of faith.

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

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

"Quench not the Spirit.

"Despise not prophesyings.

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

"Abstain from every form of evil."

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

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

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

[3] 1/3 Aug. 15 Manna

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

Lord was a preacher; the apostles were preachers, and the Lord has since raised up instructors amongst his people. Hence, such service should not be despised or ignored.

We live in a time when the very reverse of this is true; when the danger is rather that too much time and too much attention may be given to preaching, and not sufficient to the other methods of inculcating truth and encouraging the Lord's flock, "edifying and building up yourselves in the most holy faith"--when too much reliance is apt to be placed upon a leader and a connected discourse.

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

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

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

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

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

ca, but respecting the spirit of the Church, the soul of the Church, and the body of the Church. In other words, his desire was that the Church at Thessalonica might continue to the full end of the Gospel age as a noble and faithful congregation of the Lord's body, full of his spirit and courageous in his work. As a matter of fact, we know that the Apostle's good wishes, or prayer did not come true; for this congregation, like the others he planted, died out: not heeding with sufficient care his injunctions and exhortations, not proving all things, not holding fast the good, not abstaining from evil, not being sanctified wholly, the spirit of the Lord in their midst was quenched, and as a congregation it died, or ceased to be--the light having blessed and confirmed some, passed on to other quarters, seeking those "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light."⁸

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

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

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

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

⁽⁵⁾ Aug. 18 Manna, 1 Thess. 5:21

⁽⁶⁾ ½ Aug. 19 Manna, 1 Thess. 5:22

⁽⁷⁾ ½ Aug. 19 Manna

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