

**1193 Strengthen, God's and brotherly love, rapture, and watchfulness - 1 Thess.(3)1–(5)28
(by Whirlwind)**

First, let us discuss how Paul sent Timothy to strengthen the faith of the believers in the Thessalonian church and also prayed for them. Second, it mentions Paul's hope that the disciples would demonstrate God's love. Third, it speaks of pleasing God and loving one another. Fourth, it addresses the transformation at the Lord Jesus' return and the rapture of Christians. Fifth, it discusses the need for Christians to remain watchful and vigilant at all times. Finally, it addresses one of the principles for Christian conduct—not to repay evil with evil—and discusses the trichotomy, which references a previous article.

Please note that this article is an expansion of the topicwise Bible study held on Sunday (6/7/26). Unless otherwise specified, verses refer to those in NASB95. If this article refers previous articles, they can all be found on our website, '<https://a-christian-voice.com/>'; click on 'Understanding Spiritual Life'.

1. Paul sent Timothy to strengthen their faith and pray for them

"Therefore when we could endure it no longer, we thought it best to be left behind at Athens alone, and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, 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. For indeed when we were with you, we kept telling you in advance that we were going to suffer affliction; and so it came to pass, as you know. 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. 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, for this reason, brethren, in all our distress and affliction we were comforted about you through your faith; for now we really live, if you stand firm in the Lord. 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, as we night and day keep praying most earnestly that we may see your face, and may complete what is lacking in your faith?"(1 Thessalonians 3:1-10)

The church in Thessalonica had only recently been established. Paul was concerned that their faith was not yet firm enough, fearing they might be shaken by various trials and that Satan's servants might tempt them. Unable to bear it any longer, he sent Timothy there to help them. Please note: we are not worthy to be directly attacked by Satan as Jesus was, but we are frequently attacked by his servants. You must understand that his servants do not walk around proclaiming, "I am a servant of Satan"—if that were the case, it would be far too simple. On the contrary, "...even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, ..." (2 Corinthians 11:14-15) We must discern; do not assume that all supernatural events are the work of God. Although they cannot do whatever they please, as long as God permits it—as at the beginning of the Book of Job—they can also perform certain supernatural acts.

When Timothy returned with the good news as described in the scripture, Paul said, "for now we really live, if you stand firm in the Lord."(1 Thessalonians 3:8) So he was saying that the growth in the believers' lives brought them to life. Paul therefore gave thanks to God, but in his view, their faith was still lacking and needed to be strengthened through face-to-face interaction. Isn't this similar to what Paul said to the church in Rome? "For I long to see you so that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established; that is, that I may be encouraged together with you while among you, each of us by the other's faith, both yours and mine."(Romans 1:11-12) At that time he said, "always in my prayers making request, if perhaps now at last by the will of God I may succeed in coming to you."(Romans 1:10) He did eventually arrive in Rome, but in chains; God did not fulfill his plans exactly as he had envisioned. Therefore, without God's permission, he could not impart spiritual gifts to others. We see that Paul was a man who obeyed God; here he says, "as we night and day keep praying most earnestly that we may see your face, and may complete what is lacking in your faith?"(1 Thessalonians 3:10) He could only pray, and it was only after receiving God's permission in prayer that he could proceed for such things.

Just as the Scripture says, it is "...for you yourselves know that we have been destined for this (affliction)."(1 Thessalonians 3:3). These trials refer to the sufferings God permits, not those we bring upon ourselves. At such times, we must remember what Jesus said: "In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."(John 16:33) The question is, do we really believe His words? He also said, "No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it."(1 Corinthians 10:13) When necessary, He intervenes directly, just as He did in the case of Job (see Job 38:1, 40:1-2). Another example from the Old Testament can be seen in the life of Abraham, and in the New Testament, the Lord Jesus Christ became incarnate to accomplish salvation. Finally, we must mention one point regarding trials: if someone claims to be a Christian yet experiences nothing but smooth sailing, they truly ought to reflect and ask themselves: could someone whom even Satan's servants deem unworthy of attack really be a true Christian?

2. Paul hopes the disciples will manifest God's love

"Now may our God and Father Himself and Jesus our Lord direct our way to you; and may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love (G26, God's love, noun) for one another, and for all people, just as we also do for you; so that He may establish your hearts without blame in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints."(1 Thessalonians 3:11-13)

The love spoken of here is God's love, which is indeed for all people, "For God so loved (G25, God's love, verb) the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."(John 3:16) We must still believe; otherwise, we cannot receive this love. Here, Paul is writing to the church, hoping that their love will grow to such a degree "so that He may establish your hearts without blame in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints."(1 Thessalonians 3:13) Doesn't this echo the earlier mention of "may complete" in 1 Thessalonians 3:10y? If they

were already holy, Paul would not have needed to tell them certain things face-to-face to make them complete.

3. Pleasing God and loving one another

"Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us instruction (G3582, command) as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you excel still more. For you know what commandments we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. 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. For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification. So, he who rejects this is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you.

Now as to the love of the brethren (G5360), you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love (G25, God's love) one another; for indeed you do practice it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more, and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you, so that you will behave properly toward outsiders and not be in any need."(1 Thessalonians 4:1-12)

The word "command" (G3582) appears only five times, but its meaning is clear, so I will not dwell on it further. As mentioned at the outset, they knew how to act in accordance with this command. The passage also clearly states God's will, which includes not oppressing one's brothers, conducting oneself properly, and working with one's own hands so that one lacks nothing: "So, he who rejects this is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you."(1 Thessalonians 4:8) Yet people possess free will; even when they know the truth, they can still choose according to their own will. Was this not how Adam fell? Was Paul not also concerned that they might be shaken by various trials? That is why Paul says, "Do not quench the Spirit."(1 Thessalonians 5:19)

Here we should specifically mention that the hymn chosen today uses existing music to which new lyrics have been set. The lyrics may not be particularly well-written, but we selected it primarily to illustrate the principle of "behave properly." Since this melody is a modern composition, it cannot be in the public domain, and there is no indication that they have the rights to use it. If this song disregards others' intellectual property, how can it be considered "behave properly"? It has merely set a bad example to Gentiles as well as Christians that is not pleasing to God.

Please note that the word "love of the brethren (G5360)" appears only six times, two of which are in this passage: "and in your godliness, brotherly kindness (G5360), and in your brotherly kindness (G5360), love (G26, God's love)."(2 Peter 1:7) Therefore, loving one's brothers is only the first step, as indicated by the use of the word "and." The other two instances are: "Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren (G5360), fervently love (G26, God's love) one another from the heart."(1 Peter

1:22) and "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love (G5360); give preference to one another in honor."(Romans 12:10) Consider also the verse before it: "Let love (G26, God's love) be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good."(Romans 12:9) Both passages teach that brotherly love must be grounded in God's love; without God's love, true brotherly love is impossible. The final instance is in Hebrews 13:1:

Let love of the brethren (G5360) continue. The following verse reads, "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it."(Hebrews 13:2) It does not explicitly state that it is based on God's love; however, considering that "what God tells us through the Bible is consistent," it becomes clear that this too is based on God's love.

4. The second coming of the Lord Jesus and the rapture of Christians

"But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 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. Therefore comfort one another with these words."(1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)

Those who have fallen asleep refer to those who have died on earth; some of them are already in heaven, as the Scripture says, "After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands."(Revelation 7:9) Note that at that time the throne was in heaven, so those people were already in heaven. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad."(2 Corinthians 5:10) Since they are already in heaven, they have evidently already been judged at the judgment seat of Christ; otherwise, this would contradict what was stated above.

Why is this? The judgment before the Great White Throne is indeed the judgment before Christ, but the judgment at the Great White Throne will occur at the time of Jesus' return. For those who are already in heaven, this has not yet taken place; therefore, they will not be judged before the Great White Throne, as they have already been judged at the judgment seat of Christ. In other words, the judgment seat of Christ and the judgement before Great White Throne are distinct; this differs significantly from the views of some who mistakenly believe the two are the same.

For others, "bring with Him" likely refers to what this passage states: "Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, ..." (Revelation 20:11-12). Only in this way is there consistency with the

Scriptures, for when we view matters in light of " what God tells us through the Bible is consistent," we see that this indeed involves bringing those—including both non-Christians and Christians—out of the dead.

Regarding the statement, "...the dead in Christ will rise first (1 Thessalonians 4:16), at that time they will be transformed, as the Scripture says, "Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory.""(1 Corinthians 15:50-54)

"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."(1 Thessalonians 4:17) Therefore, the Rapture is a biblical promise, "For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, ..." (1 Thessalonians 4:15); yet it does not specify when it will occur. Since God deems it unnecessary for us to know, out of respect for God, we should refrain from making wild guesses. Especially since we know that there are some things God deliberately chooses not to reveal, as in: "When the seven peals of thunder had spoken, I was about to write; and I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Seal up the things which the seven peals of thunder have spoken and do not write them.""(Revelation 10:4)

5. Christians must always be watchful and vigilant

"Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. 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. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief; for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness; so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober. For those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night. 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. For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him. Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing."(1 Thessalonians 5:1-11)

The coming of the Lord's day will be like a thief coming; this is consistent with what is said in 2 Peter 3:10 and Revelation 16:15. Therefore, no one knows when the Lord will return, and we must be watchful at all times. This does not mean we cannot sleep at all, but rather that we must remain spiritually alert, living a life of faith, hope, and love, and also "...put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation."(1 Thessalonians 5:8) Remember, the return of Jesus is certain, just as a pregnant woman will give birth when the time comes; she cannot escape the pains of childbirth. However, the response of Christians is

entirely different from that of non-Christians. For non-Christians, "There will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth dismay among nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken."(Luke 21:25-26) But for Christians, "But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."(Luke 21:28)

Then, in different words, it says, "...God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him."(John 3:17) Please look at the Scripture for yourself. As for the specific practice, it is what is described here: dying and living with Him. It is, "...we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life."(Romans 6:4) That is, "For indeed He was crucified because of weakness, yet He lives because of the power of God. For we also are weak in Him, yet we will live with Him because of the power of God directed toward you."(2 Corinthians 13:4) This is what the Scripture says: "It is a trustworthy statement: For if we died with Him, we will also live with Him."(2 Timothy 2:11) "Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing."(1 Thessalonians 5:11)

6. Do not repay evil with evil, and the trichotomy

"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. We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone. 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. Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. Do not quench the Spirit; do not despise prophetic utterances. But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; abstain from every form of evil.

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.

Brethren, pray for us. Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss. I adjure you by the Lord to have this letter read to all the brethren. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you."(1 Thessalonians 5:12-28)

At the very beginning, it essentially says, "The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching."(1 Timothy 5:17) It truly calls for us to "...esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another."(1 Thessalonians 5:13)

Then it addresses one of the principles for how brothers should conduct themselves—not only toward one another but toward everyone—always pursuing what is good: "If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men."(Romans 12:18) It speaks of what God's will is for you in Christ Jesus; on this point, please look for yourself at the very clear

Scripture, and then express his own desire: "Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass."(1 Thessalonians 5:23-24) Yes, all we can do is look to Him with all our hearts, just as Paul did: "I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."(Philippians 3:14)

Finally, Paul asked, "Brethren, pray for us."(1 Thessalonians 5:25) Here we see that even very spiritual people need others to pray for them. Do not assume that you are merely someone who prays for others and do not need intercession yourself. When the day comes that you realize this is wrong, you can only hope it is not too late. Be humble; we are no more spiritual than Paul was.

The passage here in 1 Thessalonians 5:23 directly addresses the trichotomy—that humans are composed of spirit, soul, and body. From the perspective of "not discounting the words of the Bible", the trichotomy is correct. I do not understand why some people speak of the dichotomy—that is, that a person consists of only two parts, the spirit and soul together inseparable, and the body. This can only mean that those people are indeed compromising the Word of God. In fact, if we consider the New Testament and the Old Testament together, we see that when a person dies, the spirit departs first; when the soul leaves the body, the person dies. This also demonstrates that the trichotomy is correct. Previously, in "1089 Revelation of Jesus Christ and Right Trichotomy – Revelation (1)," under the section "3. The appearance of Jesus and the correct trichotomy," we discussed in considerable detail why the trichotomy is correct. Please refer to that article.