

A Study of 1 & 2 Thessalonians (NIV 1984)

“To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”
(1 Thess. 1:1b and 2 Thess. 1:1b)

1 THESSALONIANS 4:9-10

The tone of this exhortation is markedly different from that of the preceding section. Here, Paul’s confidence in the readers is unmistakable. Again noting that his responsibility stems from God Himself and has already been received by the Thessalonians, Paul offers a brief reminder, encouraging the readers to grow in the behavior that they have already shown. Paul alluded to the Thessalonians’ love as one their three cardinal virtues in the initial thanksgiving section (1 Thessalonians 1:3). The centrality of such love in the Christian life is expressed, of course, in all parts of the New Testament. The supreme importance of love, rather than any specific issue or problem related to the Thessalonians’ behavior, is the likely reason for Paul’s including this discussion.

1) Note v.9. Now about what? About this Paul says he does not need to do what?

2) Note v.9. Who taught them to love each other?

The words “philadelphia” and “agapao” are used in this passage. The first word indicates a love that reflects their kinship in Jesus Christ. It implies first of all that Christians recognize the common bond of their shared relationship with God, which in turn motivates them to care for another as the closest of family members. The second word describes a self-sacrificial love regardless of the worthiness of the object.

Reconciled to God through His love and so drawn into a relationship with brothers and sisters in Christ, Christians must exercise the same kind of love to one another as an indispensable consequence.

3) Note v.9. Taught by God to love whom?

The phrase “to love” occurs in the present tense and is emphasizing continuing, constant love.

4) Note v.10. In the previous verse, we learned that they had been taught by God to love. Now, in this verse, were they in fact doing as they had been taught?

5) Note v.10. Whom did they love? They were urged to do what?

The word translated “do” in the first part of this verse suggests that their love is expressed in action, and the tense is again present, indicating a continuing action. Their love was not confined to those in their immediate circle but includes fellow Christians outside of Thessalonica. These observations indicate that the Thessalonian Christians were already actively communicating and sharing with other churches in Philippi, Berea, and perhaps elsewhere, exercising the universal love of God beyond the boundaries of convenience (cf. Acts 11:27-30).

The phrase translated “to do so more and more” implies that already their love abounds, but grounded in the love of God, it must continue to grow without limits. Such growth would include practicing love more consistently, more widely, at greater cost, and through the specific behaviors described in 1 Thess. 4:11-12.

1 THESSALONIANS 4:11-12

The division of the text at this point, reflected in the verse numbering and the NIV's paragraph break is somewhat misleading. A distinct element of Paul's exhortation appears here, dealing with Christian behavior in society, especially economic society. But the sentence structure of the Greek text indicates that Paul conceives of this subject as a continuation of the preceding instructions. Verses 11-12 are grammatically dependent on verse 10, presenting additional objects of the verb "urge." In essence, then, Paul presents the responsibilities of genuine Christian love, specifically because they remove burdens from others and remove obstacles that might prevent nonbelievers from coming to faith. Such behavior was a part of his own expression of love when he ministered in Thessalonica (1 Thessalonians 2:6b-12).

1) Note v.11. Make it your what?

"ambition" – originally the verb meant to consider something an honor or to aspire to something, but in the First Century it was commonly used in a less specific sense of striving after something.

2) Note v.11. Make it your ambition to lead what?

3) Note v.11. Make it your ambition to mind what?

4) Note v.11. Make it your ambition to work how?

5) Note v.11. Had Paul instructed them before of this teaching?

6) Note v.12. As noted in verse 11, the Thessalonians were to make it their ambition to do three things. Now, here in verse 12, they are told that if they do so, they will achieve what 2 results?

7) Note v.12. What word modifies the word "life" in this verse?

8) See 1 Peter 2:12, 15; 3:15. What did you learn?

1 THESSALONIANS 4:13-18

This section deals with a subject that the Thessalonians appear to be confused on; that is, the status of those Christians who have died prior to the Lord's return. It seems that Timothy has brought their concerns to Paul and he has now chosen to deal with the subject in this letter to them. [Please remember that Paul is answering their inquiries and not giving an exhaustive response to all questions on the resurrection of the dead and Second Coming of Christ.]

1) Note v.13. Paul did not want them to be what? About whom?

- "we do not want you to be ignorant" – represents a kind of emphatic, double-negative expression which is common in Greek rhetoric, it is the equivalent of "we want to inform you" (Note Romans 1:13; 1 Corinthians 10:1; 12:1; 2 Corinthians 1:8)
- "those who fall asleep" – more literally "those who are sleeping," it is a present participle indicating continuing action
- "to sleep" – it is a common euphemism for death in both Greek and Jewish literature

2) Note v.13. Paul does not want them to do what? Like what group? Who have what?

Paul's point is that grief without hope is fundamentally different from grief with hope. The statement might be paraphrased, "so that you will not have the same kind of grief as those with no hope." (Note Ephesians 2:12; 1 Corinthians 14:54-58; 2 Corinthians 4:17-18)

3) Note v.14. What does Paul lay as the foundation for believing in the resurrection of the dead?

4) Note v.14. Who will send Jesus? What group will He bring with Jesus ?

This is truly thought-provoking. Makes you want to know where the dead in Christ are waiting.

5) Note v.15. According to what?

6) Note v.15. We tell you that we who are what? Who are left till what?

7) Note v.15. Will certainly not do what?

8) Note v.16. Who will come down? From where?

9) Note v.16. Will do so with what 3?

10) Note v.16. The dead in Christ will do what?

- "loud command" – Note John 5:25-29
- "archangel" – Note Daniel 10:13; 12:1; Jude 9

The term suggests a chief angel; its use here stresses that the voice which announces Christ's return comes from the most authoritative of the Heavenly creatures.

Trumpets in the Old Testament were used in warfare (Numbers 10:9; 2 Chronicles 20:27-28) and during festivals and sacrifices, especially the Day of Atonement (Numbers 10:10; Leviticus 25:9). Perhaps more significant for our text is the use of the trumpet to call Israel to assembly (Numbers 10:7) or rather Israel from exile (Isaiah 27:13). Also significant is the trumpet sound which accompanies God's manifestation at Mount Sinai (Exodus 19:16). Likewise the trumpet is associated with God's judgment on the wicked and His deliverance of His people (Isaiah 27:13; Zechariah 9:14); Christ's coming again brings the final judgment and deliverance.

11) Note v.17. After that, who will be caught up?

12) Note v.17. Caught up together with them in the what? For what purpose?

13) Note v.17. So we will be with Whom? For what period of time?

14) Note v.18. What are the Thessalonians to do with these words?

15) Compare verse 13 with verse 18. What did you learn?

16) Compare 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 with Matthew 24:30-31. What did you learn?