

Class Outline
Epiphany 5 – Evening Prayer, Second Lesson
I Thessalonians
Week of February 10, 2019

- I. Opening Prayer.
- a. BLESSED Lord, who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning; Grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of thy holy Word, we may embrace, and ever hold fast, the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. *Amen.*
(Collect for the Second Sunday in Advent. BCP, p. 92.)
 - b. “This is a 1549 Collect, reflecting the new interest of the Reformation period in acquainting the people with the contents and teachings of the Bible. It has given a peculiar tone to this day, so that it is commonly called Bible Sunday, not only in the Anglican Communion, but throughout the Protestant world....The word “all” in the preamble is not insignificant; it recalls the criticism Cranmer expressed in the Preface of the 1549 Book that in the old medieval service books *all* the Scriptures were not read. The Prayer Book set forth an orderly schedule for the reading of the entire Bible during the course of every year. The words ‘patience’ and ‘comfort’ are used in their archaic meanings of steadfastness and encouragement. (Cf. on this Collect such Scriptural passages as John v.39, Acts xvii.11, 1 Cor. X.11, and 2 Tim. iii.16-17.)” (Shepherd, *The Oxford American Prayer Book Commentary* (1950), p. 92.)
- II. Flash Card (Memory Item) of the Week: **Name the Seven Deadly Sins.**¹
- a. Sin – a deliberate transgression against a law of God (four parts).
 - b. The first lists originated with the so-called Desert Fathers: ascetics, mystics and monks who lived in the Egyptian desert in the third century A.D.
 - c. Various lists were promulgated over time, but Pope Gregory I “standardized” the list in 590 A.D. They are not traditionally listed in any particular order.
 - i. **Lust** – an inordinate desire for or enjoyment of sexual pleasure.
 1. “But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.” Matthew 5:28
 2. This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. Galatians 5:16.
 - ii. **Envy** – sadness or discontent at the excellence, good fortune or success of another person.
 1. A sound heart is the life of the flesh: but envy the rottenness of the bones. Proverbs 14:30.
 2. For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. Titus 3:3.

¹ Sources consulted for the section on the Seven Deadly Sins include: Hardon, *Pocket Catholic Dictionary* (1980); Wikipedia – “Seven deadly sins”; and www.deadlysins.com (yes, there is such a site!).

- iii. **Greed** – avarice, cupidity or covetousness (*i.e.*, an excessive or insatiable desire for money or material things)
 - 1. And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. Luke 12:15.
 - 2. Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. 1 Cor. 6:10.
- iv. **Gluttony** – inordinate desire for the pleasure connected with food or drink.
 - 1. For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags. Poverbs 23:21.
 - 2. For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things. Philippians 3:19.
- v. **Wrath** - uncontrolled feelings of anger, rage, and even hatred, often involving a wish to seek vengeance.
 - 1. A wrathful man stirreth up strife: but he that is slow to anger appeaseth strife. Proverbs 15:18.
 - 2. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice. Ephesians 4:31.
- vi. **Pride** – an inordinate esteem of oneself. Sometimes called “the father of all sins.”
 - 1. Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall. Proverbs 16:18.
 - 2. He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. Luke 1:51.
- vii. **Sloth** – sluggishness of soul or boredom because of the exertion necessary for the performance of a good work.
 - 1. A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest, and poverty will come upon you like a vagabond, and want like an armed man. Proverbs 6:10-11 (RSV).
 - 2. And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises. Hebrews 6:11-12.
- d. Of course, these aren't the only sins, but nearly every sin you can think of falls into one or more of these categories.

III. Comments and Questions on the Previous Week's Readings from Colossians.

IV. Paul – Apostle to the Gentiles (page 13).

V. Introduction to I Thessalonians (page 5).

VI. Paul's Mission to Thessalonica (page 12).

VII. Closing Prayer

- a. O GOD, who, through the preaching of the blessed Apostle Saint Paul, hast caused the light of the Gospel to shine throughout the world; Grant, we beseech thee, that we, having his wonderful conversion in remembrance, may show forth our thankfulness unto thee for the same, by following the holy doctrine which he taught; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.* (Collect for the Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul. BCP, p. 229.)
- b. “This is the Collect of the late Gregorian Sacramentary and the Sarum Missal, as it was retouched in 1549 and expanded in 1662. The Latin and 1549 Collects put the emphasis upon St. Paul as a ‘teacher’; the 1662 form stresses his work as a ‘preacher,’ an estimate of his chief task that the Apostle himself would probably have accepted (see 1 Cor. i.17ff.). Again, the Latin Collect speaks only of our following his example; the Prayer Book version is more inclusive, for the gospel is both believing and doing.” (Shepherd, *The Oxford American Prayer Book Commentary* (1950), p. 229.) As we will discuss in more detail in Module 2 of this year’s classes, the Gregorian Sacramentary and the Sarum Missal were two of the sources that Thomas Cranmer used in composing the 1549 Prayer Book.

Recommended Reading: *The Case for Christ*, by Dr. Brant Pitre (2016). An outstanding example of using scripture – especially, like Paul, the Old Testament – and the writings of the early Church Fathers to answer questions such as:

- Were the Gospels really anonymous?
- Are the Gospels folklore? Or are they biographies?
- Were the four Gospels written too late to be reliable?
- What about the so-called “Lost Gospels,” such as “Q” and the Gospel of Thomas?
- Did Jesus claim to be God?
- Is Jesus divine in all four Gospels? Or only in John?
- Did Jesus fulfill the Jewish prophecies of the Messiah?
- Why was Jesus crucified?
- What is the evidence for the Resurrection?

Check out the five-part, introductory video series (actually audio recordings) by Dr. Pitre in which he addresses the fifth and the sixth bullet points above. He persuasively refutes those modern scholars who deny that Jesus claimed to be God in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, the “synoptic” Gospels.

- Part 1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YfQ-OKjl1ZQ>
- Part 2: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PCDXj3uaDC0>
- Part 3: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aPEZ_qxLiel
- Part 4: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2OllxB8ZS9E>
- Part 5: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hmj_06HE0w

Additional Resources

- St. Luke’s web page (www.episcopalnet.org) – Daily Offices, Ordo Kalendar, Tracts for Our Times, archived sermons, adult education classes...*and more!*
- St. Luke’s Facebook Page: – Upcoming events, daily Saints, interesting articles...*and more!* (<https://www.facebook.com/Saint-Lukes-Church-Sedona-AZ-1441369559466896/>)
- Andrew Scourby’s reading of I Thessalonians on YouTube. (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SOH_PhNC_zo)

NOTES:

Introduction: Thessalonica – like Sedona – was named for a founder’s wife. In 315 B.C., Cassander, the King of Macedon, rebuilt a city at the eastern end of the Mediterranean and named it after his wife – Thessalonica, step-sister of Alexander the Great. In 42 B.C. Thessalonica was named a “free city” because of the support it had provided to Octavius and Antony in their victory over Brutus and Cassius at Philippi. Thessalonica was the leading harbor in Macedonia and also lay upon the Via Egnatia – an important Roman highway. It was also the home of two well-known mystery religions based on the fertility cults of Dionysus and Orpheus. Consequently, Thessalonians were notorious for their extremely promiscuous behavior, including participation in wild orgies. It was also a center of emperor-worship. Paul and his companions clearly had their work cut out for them when they arrived in Thessalonica after being “shamefully treated” in Philippi. (I Thess. 2:1; Acts 16:13-40.)

I Thessalonians is widely regarded as, chronologically, the first of Paul’s letters in the New Testament, written in 50-51 A.D during Paul’s Second Missionary Journey. He likely wrote both I and II Thessalonians while staying in Corinth. In both letters, he addresses the concerns of the Thessalonians that they might have missed the **Parousia**. Paul writes primarily to correct that misapprehension. These two letters, along with the Olivet Discourse of Jesus (Matthew 24, 25; Mark 13; Luke 21) and the Apocalypse of John (Revelation) comprise most of the **eschatological** portions of the New Testament. Paul’s affection for the Thessalonians is nearly palpable, and he encourages them to love “more and more.”

The Macedonian Call: Paul’s first visit to Europe, beginning in Macedonia, was actively orchestrated by the Holy Spirit, resulting in the so-called Macedonian Call:

6 Now when [Paul and his companions] had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, 7 After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not. 8 And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas. 9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. 10 And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them. 11 Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis; 12 And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days. (Acts 16:6-12 KJV.)

Notable Thessalonians: As mentioned last week, Aristarchus accompanied Paul on various journeys (Acts 19:29; Acts 20:4), including Paul’s perilous Captive Journey from Sidon (in Syria) to Rome. (Acts 27:2; Colossians 4:10; Philemon 1:24.) Demas, who deserted Paul in Rome (“having loved this present world”), apparently ended up in Thessalonica. (II Timothy 4:10.)

Outline of Contents: (from Gundry, *A Survey of the New Testament* (2003), p. 362.)

- I. Introduction: Greeting (1:1)
 - A. Thanksgiving for the exemplary conversion of the Thessalonian believers (1:2-10)
 - B. Paul’s reminiscences concerning his ministry in Thessalonica (2:1-16)
 - C. Timothy’s glowing report about the progress of the Thessalonian Christians (2:17-3:10)
 - D. A prayer for the Thessalonian believers (3:11-13)
 - II. Exhortations (4:1-5:22)
 - A. To morality (4:1-8)
 - B. To mutual love (4:9-12)
 - C. To consolation over deceased fellow Christians because of their participation in the Parousia (4:13-18)
 - D. To expectant readiness for the Day of the Lord (5:1-11)
 - E. Miscellaneous exhortations (5:12-22)
- Conclusion: A Benediction and Final Instructions (5:23-28)

1 Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. **2** We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; **3** Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father; **4** Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. **5** For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. **6** And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost: **7** So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. **8** For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing. **9** For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; **10** And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.

v. 1: *Silvanus*: or Silas; *Timotheus*: Timothy

v. 4: *your election of God*: chosen by God to be participants in the blessings of the Gospel.

v. 9: *what manner of entering in we had unto you*: what a welcome we had among you

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Exegesis: Unlike in most of his other epistles, Paul does not assert his status as an apostle in the greeting, possibly because the Thessalonians received him so warmly and did not appear to question his authority. Contrast this opening with Paul’s greeting to the Galatians, where his authority had, apparently, been questioned: “Paul an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;) (Galatians 1:1.) Paul does later refer to himself – as well as Silas and Timothy – as “apostles” in 2:6, although scholars are not unanimous on whether Paul was using the term literally for all three of them. Little needs to be said about the laudatory tone of Paul’s greeting in today’s lesson. Despite the vehement resistance of the local Jewish community (Acts 17:1-14), the Thessalonians accepted the gospel in “power” and “much assurance” (v. 5) even under “much affliction” (v. 6). Their example “sounded out” throughout all of Macedonia and Achaia (v. 8). This, despite the difficulty of giving up former pagan practices (v. 9). Now, they were eagerly waiting for Jesus’ triumphant return (v.10).

Exposition: What a tremendous example of what a local church can and should be. What a contrast to the scathing rebuke Paul delivered to the Galatian churches: “O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?” Ouch! If Paul wrote a letter to St. Luke’s today, what would he congratulate us for? What would he say we should do better?

Question for Reflection: Is my faith always God-ward (v. 8)?

Spiritual Resolve: _____

1 For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain: **2** But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention. **3** For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile: **4** But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts. **5** For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloak of covetousness; God is witness: **6** Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ. **7** But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children: **8** So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us. **9** For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God. **10** Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe: **11** As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children, **12** That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory. **13** For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe. [**14** For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews: **15** Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men: **16** Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.]²

v. 1: *our entrance unto you*: our visit to you

v. 9: *because we would not be chargeable unto any of you*: that we might not burden any of you

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Exegesis: Paul was clearly still steaming (v. 2) from the shameful treatment – and the illegal beating – he and Silas had received in Philippi. (Acts 16:11-40). (Ironically, the church at Philippi ultimately proved to be perhaps Paul’s favorite.) Paul is often thought of as a passionate firebrand, but here he relies on particularly affectionate language and metaphors to describe his relationship with the Thessalonians: gentle as a nurse with a baby (v. 7); “affectionately desirous” of them (v. 8); they were “dear” to him (v.8); and he felt like a father with his children (v. 11). This was a special group of converts to Paul, and he treated them accordingly.

Exposition: Paul was always careful to avoid even the possibility of being subject to the charge of taking advantage of the charitable nature of his converts. He was a tentmaker by trade (Acts 18:1-3), and, as in other cities where he had established churches, he spent considerable amounts of time (“laboring night and day”) at his trade (v.9). What a contrast to some evangelists today who live lavish lifestyles and constantly plead for more and more “love offerings.” What a frustration it must have been for Paul to be spending hour after hour making a living instead of being out saving souls. Yet, he did what he had to do so he would not be a burden to the Thessalonians (v. 9). Given the ongoing efforts to harm Paul and to run him out of town (Acts 17:1-14), the Thessalonians’ ready acceptance of the gospel in both word and truth (v. 13) must have refreshed and encouraged Paul enormously.

Questions for Reflection: Is my life holy, just, and unblameable (v. 10)? What am I willing to do to make it more so?

Spiritual Resolve: _____

² Verses 14 through 16 were omitted from the 1943 revision of the Daily Office Lectionary, perhaps because of their potential for fomenting anti-Semitic sentiment. Yet, this ignores the fact that, in many ways, Paul remained an observant Jew even post-conversion, and he fervently hoped and labored for the salvation of his fellow Jews. (Romans 11.) Indeed, his first stop in any new city was almost always the local synagogue. Furthermore, it is simply a fact that the churches in Judaea were severely persecuted by the Jews – persecution which Paul was instrumental in starting! Both Jesus and Stephen, the first martyr, expressly made the point that the Jews habitually killed their prophets (Matthew 23:37; Acts 7:52), eventually killing Jesus himself, thus bringing wrath on themselves. In these verses, Paul is simply commending the Thessalonians for standing firm – like the churches in Judaea – in the face of fierce opposition from non-believing Jews.

17 But we, brethren, being taken from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavoured the more abundantly to see your face with great desire. 18 Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us. 19 For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? 20 For ye are our glory and joy.

3:1 Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone; 2 And sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellowlabourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith: 3 That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto. 4 For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know. 5 For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain. 6 But now when Timotheus came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us, as we also to see you: 7 Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith: 8 For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord. 9 For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God; 10 Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith? 11 Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you. 12 And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you: 13 To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his **saints**.

v. 3: *we are appointed thereunto*: this is to be our lot

v. 6: *charity*: love

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Exegesis: Paul’s anxiety over the well-being of the Thessalonians is so intense that one can almost hear his sigh of relief when Timothy returns with a favorable report of them (v. 6). Although Paul travelled through Macedonia at least two more times, and although he prayed “exceedingly” (v. 10) that he might see the Thessalonians again, we have no record of such a return visit.

Exposition: Absence truly made Paul’s heart grow fonder for the Thessalonians (v. 17), but Satan actively hindered Paul’s plans for a return visit (v. 18). Just as the Holy Spirit actively orchestrated – and accelerated – Paul’s visit to Macedonia (*see* Introduction: The Macedonian Call), Satan was hard at work attempting to frustrate Paul every step of the way. Paul refers to Satan ten times in his letters. He was “not ignorant of [Satan’s] devices” (II Corinthians 2:11), and he was aware that Satan could even transform himself into “an angel of light” (II Corinthians 11:14) to lead believers astray. As Paul warned: “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” (Ephesians 6:12.) Satan was – and is – the ring leader. The supernatural struggle for every believer’s soul continues today, as illustrated so imaginatively and effectively in C.S. Lewis’ *The Screwtape Letters*.

Today’s Question for Reflection can also be asked in reverse: Who will be my “crown of rejoicing” (v. 19) in the presence of the Lord on his return? Who will stand with me as evidence of my Christian witness?

Question for Reflection: Whose glory and joy am I (v. 20)?

Spiritual Resolve: _____

1 Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more. 2 For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus. 3 For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: 4 That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; 5 Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God: 6 That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified. 7 For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness. 8 He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit. 9 But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another. 10 And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more; 11 And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; 12 That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing.

v. 4: possess his vessel: the better translation is *take a wife for himself*

v. 5: *lust of concupiscence*: passion of lust

v. 6: *go beyond*: transgress

v. 7: *despiteth*: disregards

v. 11: *study to be quiet*: aspire to live quietly

v. 12: So that you may command the respect of outsiders and be dependent on nobody. (RSV)

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Exegesis: Even as Paul warns the Thessalonians not to slip back into the passion of lust (v. 5) – which must have been easy to do given the local, sex-laden culture – he expresses full confidence in the Thessalonians throughout today’s lesson. Even while congratulating them on the wonderful example they had set for the other believers in Macedonia (v. 10), Paul beseeches and exhorts them to “abound more and more” (v. 1) and to love the brethren “more and more” (v.10). In other words, he did not want them to rest on their laurels, either in their own spiritual development or in their witness and service to others. Verses 11 and 12 counsel the Thessalonians to set an example of quiet industry, responsibility and ethical behavior in the midst of a city that must have been raucous, somewhat perilous and full of temptation. Paul asks them to live a lifestyle that seems unlikely to have “turned the world upside down” as his accusers claimed (Acts 17:6.)

Exposition: Referring to the first Question for Reflection below, all of the commentators agree that “fornication” (v. 3) includes every form of sexual intercourse outside of marriage – bad news for the Thessalonians who enjoyed their visits to the local temples, which were often little more than brothels.

Despite being a Jew, Paul did not write his epistles in Hebrew; rather, he wrote in Greek, which was then in wide use throughout the Roman Empire. The frequent challenge of translating Greek into English (or any other language) is illustrated by Paul’s use of the word “porneia” (obviously, the root of the word “pornography”) in verse 3. The Authorized (King James) Version of 1611 translates “porneia” as “fornication.” Later Bible versions have translated the word as “sexual immorality,” “unchastity,” “sexual sin,” “lewdness,” and “whoredom.” Interestingly, the Revised Standard Version (1971) – a major revision of the Authorized Version – translated “porneia” as “unchastity,” but the more recent *New Revised Standard Version* (1989) returned to the Authorized Version’s translation of “fornication.” At least in this case, everything old is new again!

Paul carries the “*should* abstain” point in v. 3 even further in his epistle to the Ephesians: “But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not once be named among you, as becometh saints.” (Ephesians 5:3.)

Verses 1-8 are the assigned Epistle for the Second Sunday in Lent. (BCP, pp. 127-28.)

Questions for Reflection: What is fornication (v. 3)? How does this passage square with the sexual morality of the country in which I live?

Spiritual Resolve: _____

13 But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. **14** For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. **15** For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. **16** For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: **17** Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. **18** Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

v. 14: *if*: since

v. 15: *prevent*: precede

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Exegesis: Paul now shifts his focus to the very natural concern the Thessalonians had about Christ’s return – *i.e.*, the **Parousia**. Had they missed it? If not, when would it be? Common expectation was that Christ would return during their lifetimes. What about those believers who had already died? Timothy likely conveyed these questions to Paul when he (Timothy) returned from his visit to the Thessalonians (3:6). The gospels (with the Olivet Discourse) had not yet been written, and the Revelation to John (the Apocalypse) was almost 45 years in the future. In other words, the only written **eschatological** instruction available to the Thessalonians was this letter – Paul’s first known epistle. Paul’s teaching is brief and to the point: Christ will descend from heaven in a glorious and awe-inspiring manner; the dead will rise first and meet Christ in the air; the living will then meet Christ in the air; and all will “ever be with the Lord.”

Despite the fact that Paul probably had no access even to “drafts” of the gospels or of Luke’s Acts of the Apostles, his teaching is remarkably consistent with Jesus’ own words: “*30 And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31 And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.*” (Matthew 24:30-31); and in the account of Jesus’ ascension: “*9 And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. 10 And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; 11 Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.” (Acts 1:9-11.)*

Paul’s confidence in this teaching was such that he claimed it was “by the word of Lord” (v. 15) – in other words, the Thessalonians could believe his instruction as surely as if they heard it directly from Jesus. Perhaps Paul had received this teaching as part of the oral tradition, or perhaps he received it as a revelation from the Lord. We do not know for sure. However, contrast Paul’s confidence on this point with another passage in which Paul concedes that certain guidance on marriage constitutes his preference, not a command of the Lord: “But I speak this by permission, and not of commandment.” (I Corinthians 7:6.) Paul clearly possessed the intellectual honesty and the humility to know when to claim absolute authority versus personal opinion or preference.

Exposition: Not surprisingly, this poetic and powerful lesson is the assigned Epistle for the celebration of Holy Communion “At the Burial of the Dead.” (BCP, p. 268.)

Questions for Reflection: Do I believe this? Do I live my life as if I believe it?

Spiritual Resolve: _____

1 But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. **2** For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. **3** For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. **4** But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. **5** Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. **6** Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. **7** For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. **8** But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. **9** For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, **10** Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. **11** Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.

v. 9: *appointed*: destined

v. 11: *edify one another, even as also ye do*: build one another up, just as you are doing

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Exegesis: Although Paul says he has “no need” to write to the Thessalonians about “the times and the seasons” of Christ’s return, we do not know how or why the Thessalonians should already have had such knowledge. Perhaps Paul felt he had adequately addressed the issue when he established the church there. Interestingly, the phrase “times or seasons” appears only one other time in the New Testament, and it is used in the same context of questions about the end times. Moments before Jesus ascended into heaven, the disciples asked Him when He would restore the kingdom of Israel. Jesus responded: “It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” (Acts 1:7-8.) In the Olivet Discourse, Jesus clearly stated: “But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.... Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.” (Matthew 24:36, 42.) Paul and Jesus agree: the exact timing of the Parousia is not known by any man, but, the important thing is to be ready.

Exposition: Verse 6 echoes the Parable of the Ten Virgins (Matt. 25:1-13), which itself is part of the Olivet Discourse. Extending that teaching to musical form is the beautiful hymn, “Sleepers, Wake”:

Wake, awake for night is flying: The watchmen on the heights are crying,
 Awake, Jerusalem, arise! Midnight’s solemn hour is tolling,
 His chariot wheels are nearer rolling, He comes; prepare, ye virgins wise.
 Rise up, with willing feet Go forth, the Bridegroom meet: Alleluia!
 Bear through the night Your well-trimmed light, Speed forth to join the marriage rite.

(*1940 Hymnal*, Hymn 3.) If you search YouTube for “Andrew Remillard Wake Awake” you’ll find a lovely piano version of this hymn. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b09Mtt14JzQ>) Remillard has actually uploaded recordings of the entire(!) *1940 Hymnal*, which you can play continuously in (mostly) numerical order, with occasional ads interspersed.

Extra Credit Exercise: Because of the timing of Easter this year, the Daily Office Lectionary skips over the readings for the Sixth Sunday after Epiphany (BCP, xv-xvi) and moves on to the readings for Septuagesima. So, for extra credit go ahead and read the skipped-over passages: the last few verses of I Thessalonians (5:12-28); all of II Thessalonians, in which Paul reminds the nervous believers of his previous teaching on the **Parousia**; and the short letter of Jude, which famously exhorts believers to “contend for the faith once delivered to the saints” and cryptically refers to the dispute between the archangel Michael and the devil over the body of Moses!

Question for Reflection: Do verses 9-10 comfort and edify me?

Spiritual Resolve: _____

Glossary

eschatological (adj.) – pertaining to the theology of the “last things,” such as the resurrection of the dead, the Last Judgment, the end of this world, and the creation of a new one.

Parousia (n.) – “arrival” or “presence,” particularly as it relates to Jesus’ second coming.

saints (n.) – members of the church, set apart as God’s holy people. Christians are saints by virtue of being “in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 1:1; I Corinthians 1:2).

Paul’s Mission to Thessalonica

1 Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews; 2 And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures. 3 Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ. 4 And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few. 5 But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. 6 And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also; 7 Whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus. 8 And they troubled the people and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things. 9 And when they had taken security of Jason, and of the other, they let them go. 10 And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews. 11 These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. 12 Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few. 13 But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came thither also, and stirred up the people. 14 And then immediately the brethren sent away Paul to go as it were to the sea: but Silas and Timotheus abode there still. 15 And they that conducted Paul brought him unto Athens: and receiving a commandment unto Silas and Timotheus for to come to him with all speed, they departed. (Acts 17:1-15.)



Appendix

Paul – Apostle to the Gentiles

Following the Conversion of Paul: 10 And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord. 11 And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth, 12 And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight. 13 Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: 14 And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name. 15 But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: 16 For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake. (Acts 9:10-16.)

Paul in Antioch: 42 And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath. 43 Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God. 44 And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God. 45 But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. 46 Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. 47 For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth. 48 And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. (Acts 13:42-48.)

Paul in Corinth: 4 And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks. 5 And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ. 6 And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean; from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles. (Acts 18:4-6.)

Paul's Defense before the Jerusalem Mob: 12 And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there, 13 Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him. 14 And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth. 15 For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard. 16 And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord. 17 And it came to pass, that, when I was come again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance; 18 And saw him saying unto me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me. 19 And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee: 20 And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him. 21 And he said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles. 22 And they gave him audience unto this word, and then lifted up their voices, and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live. (Acts 22:12-22)

from Paul's Defense before Herod Agrippa: 13 At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me. 14 And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. 15 And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. 16 But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; 17 Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, 18 To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.

19 Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: 20 But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance. (Acts 26:13-20.)

from the Epistle to the Romans: 11 I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy. 12 Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness? 13 For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office: 14 If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them. (Romans 11:11-4.)

from the Epistle to the Galatians: 13 For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: 14 And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers. 15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, 16 To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: 17 Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus. (Galatians 1:13-17.)

from the Epistle to the Ephesians: 1 For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, 2 If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: 3 How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, 4 Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) 5 Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; 6 That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: 7 Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. 8 Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ. (Ephesians 3:1-8.)

from Paul's First Epistle to Timothy: Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not;) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity. (I Timothy 2:7; see also II Timothy 1:11.)

Paul, a Prisoner, Addressing the Jews in Rome. And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening. 24 And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not. 25 And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, 26 Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: 27 For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. 28 Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it. 29 And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, and had great reasoning among themselves. 30 And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, 31 Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him. (Acts 28:23-31.)