



The Lighthouse

NEW TESTAMENT NOTES

1 Thessalonians

Mark W. Fenison, ThM.

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Published Under the Authority of

Victory Baptist Church
3 Alpine Court, Vader WA 98593

Contents

Introduction	4
Text and Commentary	12
The Biblical Attitude toward Torture	40
The View of Historical Anabaptists to Torture	42
Pre-Trib Advocates between the 1 st and 16 th Centuries	43
We are Not Appointed Unto Wrath	52

Introduction

Theme: The theme is comprised of three distinct but interdependent thoughts. First, the primary theme is the afflictions of the Christian life in this world.

And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost: - 1 Thes. 1:6

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. - 1 Thes. 2:2

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. 1 Thes. 2:9

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: 1 Thes. 2:15

That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto. 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.- 1 Thes. 3:3-4

Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith: - 1 Thes. 1:7

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. - 1 Thes. 4:13

The Lighthouse New Testament Notes

Second, the letter is full of encouragement and comfort which is designed to help them endure such afflictions. These encouragements fall into two distinct classes. First various sources of encouragements and comforts that help us endure afflictions and then second, the Second Coming of Christ that actually delivers us from all afflictions is the ultimate comfort. The Second Coming is like a bright light at the end of a tunnel of afflictions that provides ultimate hope to endure afflictions until His coming.

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:

1 Thes. 3:2

Wherefore comfort one another with these words.- 1 Thes. 4:18

Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do. – 1 Thes. 5:11

Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men. – 1 Thes. 5:14

And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come. – 1 Thes. 1:10

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? 1 Thes. 2:19

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. 1 Thes. 3:13

Added to the above is the entire section of 1 Thes. 4:13-5:11 which is explicitly stated for the purpose to provide “*comfort*”

The Lighthouse New Testament Notes

(4:17; 5:11). Therefore, the theme is, “Comforts for enduring affliction.”

In this life they shall suffer tribulation (Jn. 16:33) and through much tribulation they shall enter the future kingdom of God (Acts 14:22). Therefore, they are “*appointed*” to tribulation (3:3-4) but not to wrath (1:9-10; 5:9-10) because Christ suffered their wrath on the cross. Their introduction to the gospel came with great afflictions (1:6). The entrance of Paul into their lives was characterized by great distresses (2:2). Paul’s primary goal in writing this letter is that they will not be “*moved by these afflictions*” but endure them by finding comfort here and now and hope for deliverance to come.

That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto. 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. – 1 Thes. 3:3-4

This is not a letter about how to escape tribulation, but how to endure tribulation by finding comfort and hope in the midst of tribulation. New Testament believers gloried in tribulations (Rom. 5:3) rather than sought to be delivered from such. They saw them as opportunities to glorify Christ and gain eternal rewards. Early Baptists gladly gave themselves up to martyrdom believing they were already in the Great Tribulation and facing the Great Whore and that is precisely why they believed the coming of the Lord was near at hand (Lk. 21:28).

Date: The date is usually placed around A.D. 50 to 51. The problem in dating the book is due to the problem of dating the precise year of Paul’s call to the ministry in Acts 9 and the period of time he stayed in Tarsus and at Antioch before being called,

The Lighthouse New Testament Notes

ordained and sent forth as a missionary by the congregation at Antioch. This epistle was most likely written at Corinth.

Writer: The very first verse in the greetings of this letter identifies Paul, Silas and Timothy as the co-contributors in producing this letter. (1:1). I think Paul wrote many of his letters in collaboration with the gifted ministers that accompanied him on his missionary endeavors. Since most of his letters were orally dictated to another member of his group who did the actual writing, others could hear what he was saying and could interrupt and make suggestions or comments. I can see them sitting around a table or camp fire and discussing the issues of a certain congregation and what would be the best way to approach those issues. Through this cooperative interactive process the Holy Spirit impressed upon the mind of Paul the best approach. There is wisdom in a multitude of counselors.

Audience: Take a look at the map of Paul's Second Missionary Journey on page 8 so you can follow along with the following description of his journey from Turkey to Greece. The city of Thessalonica is found in modern day Greece. These were Greek speaking people who lived in northwestern Greece in the province of Macedonia. Paul preached the gospel at Thessalonica on his second missionary journey. While in Troas (Acts 16:8), in Asia minor or what is the east coast of modern Turkey today, he received a vision from the Lord wherein a man called him to come over to Macedonia to preach the gospel (Acts 16:9-10). In two days (Acts 16:11) he crossed over the Aegean Sea that separates modern Turkey and Greece to the upper North East coast of Greece in the province of Macedonia. He landed at Neapolis (Acts 16:11) and then proceeded to Philippi (Acts 16:12). After establishing a congregation at Philippi (Acts 16:13-40), he

The Lighthouse New Testament Notes

proceeded to pass through “*Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica*” (Acts 17:1). At Thessalonica he ran into stiff opposition and persecution by the Jews (Acts 17:2-9). However, they were successful in constituting a sizable congregation (Acts 17:4) before they had to flee for their lives at night to Berea (Acts 17:10). The members of this congregation are described by Luke in the following words: *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.* – Acts 17:4

The congregation at Thessalonica was fitly framed together by Paul through obedience to the Baptist Pattern. John The Baptist was sent by God to “*make ready a people prepared for the Lord*” (Lk. 1:17). He acted as the part of “*the friend of the bridegroom*” in preparing and presenting the bride to Christ (Jn. 3:29). Paul acted in the same capacity in preparing and presenting each congregation as a “*chaste virgin*” to Christ (2 Cor. 11:2). The Baptist method of preparation was a three-fold pattern. He first preached the gospel (Jn. 3:36), then secondarily baptized repentant (Mt. 3:6-8) believers in Christ (Acts 19:4) and thirdly taught them, thus making “*disciples*” of them (Jn. 4:1-2). Jesus adopted the very same three-fold pattern and commissioned it as the authorized pattern for making disciples unto the end of the world (Mt. 28:19-20). Paul was sent out as a church called, ordained and authorized missionary to administer the very same Baptist Pattern (Acts 13:1-4). This is the pattern administered by Paul in Thessalonica. Hence, the congregation at Thessalonica was “*fitly framed together*” or “*built up*” according to the Baptist Pattern.

It is dishonest for anyone to apply Pauline letters to the post-apostolic era Christians who are divided up into various conflicting denominations and doctrine. The “*we...us....ye....you*” of the Pauline epistles were Christians of like faith and order found in congregations of like faith and order. This congregation was constituted, set in order, or fitly framed together according to the

The Lighthouse New Testament Notes

Great Commission pattern as authorized missionaries from the congregation at Antioch (Acts 13; 1-4; 18:20). The Great Commission pattern was established by John the Baptist and adopted by Christ. The specifics of how they were constituted and under what adverse circumstances they were constituted are the subject material of the first three chapters. Today, New Testament congregations are those who have been constituted after the Great Commission pattern and are like faith and order with the congregations of the New Testament.

Outline

Theme: 1 Thes. 3:3-4 – Finding Comfort in afflictions

Greetings: 1:1-3

- A. Our Entrance unto you in much affliction– 1:4-2:18 (see 1:8; 2:2)
 - 1. How Our Gospel came to you in much affliction– 1:4-8 (see 1:8)
 - a. The gospel came as proof of your election – v. 4
 - b. The gospel came in more than mere word – v. 5a
 - c. The gospel came in transforming power – vv. 5b-8
 - 2. How we came to you in much affliction– 1:9-2:18 (see 2:2)
 - a. We came to you with an effectual ministry – 1:9-2:1
 - b. We came to you out of previous afflictions – v. 2
 - c. We came to you in purity and sincerity – vv. 3-6
 - d. We came to you as Nursing mothers – vv. 7-8

The Lighthouse New Testament Notes

- e. We came to you as Mothers in birth pangs – vv. 9-10
 - f. We came to you as Nurturing Father's – vv. 11-12
- B. Our Comforts in afflictions – 2:20-5:11(see 3:2, 7; 4:18; 5:11)**
- 1. The Comfort of your faithfulness at His return – 2:19-20
 - 2. The Comfort of knowing afflictions are Normal – 3:1-6
 - 3. The Comfort of knowing your faithfulness in afflictions – 3:7-13
 - 4. The Comfort of abounding faithfulness till Jesus Comes – 4:1-12
 - 5. The Comfort in the funeral Parlor – 4:13-18
 - 6. The Comfort found in Watching for His Coming – 5:1-8
 - 7. The Comfort of deliverance from eternal wrath – 5:9-11
- C. Our Final Exhortations – 5:12-27**

Salutations – 5:28

The Lighthouse New Testament Notes



Paul's Second Missionary Journey



Ancient ruins of Thessalonica in downtown modern Thessalonica

*The First Letter to the Congregation at
Thessalonica*

Greetings – 1:1-3

Chapter 1

1 Paul, and Silvanus,¹ and Timotheus,² unto the congregation³ of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father⁴ and in the Lord

¹ “**Silvanus**” – Silas took the place of Barnabas, as Paul’s missionary partner (Acts 15:40). Silas is called a “*prophet*” in the congregation at Antioch (Acts 15:32). The leadership at Antioch was a mixture of “*prophets and teachers*” (Acts 14:1). He was one of the leaders that stood up and vocally supported Paul after Paul returned to Antioch from Jerusalem with the apostolic letter (Acts 15:32-34).

² “**Timotheus**” – Timothy came from the congregation at Lystra (Acts 16:1-2). His father was a Greek (Acts 16:3, the Greek imperfect tense indicates his father was dead). His mother was a Jew who raised him with the help of his grandmother in the Jewish faith (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15). He was circumcised by Paul (Acts 16:3) in order that he could minister to the Jews. In contrast, Paul refused to circumcise the Gentile Titus in order to defend the truth of the gospel that did not require circumcision to be saved.

³ “**Unto the Congregation of the Thessalonians**” - All of Paul’s epistles were either addressed to a specific congregation or were designed to be read in the congregations (Col. 4:16). The “*we...us....ye...you*” of the Pauline epistles are water immersed members of the congregations founded by Paul, all of which, were of like faith and order with each other. The pronouns “*we....us...ye....you*” do not refer to post-apostolic Christians divided into denominations contrary to each other in faith and order. The use of the Greek term *ekklesia* (translated “church”) has never been used for anything universal or invisible prior to the New Testament era or its secular use during the New Testament era. Between A.D. 100 and A.D. 411 there are no groups of Christians that used this term to describe either a universal visible or universal invisible entity. Between A.D. 411 and the Reformation there is no group that used this term to describe a universal invisible entity. Both the universal visible and universal invisible

The Lighthouse New Testament Notes

Jesus Christ:⁵ 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 [1Cor.13:13] in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father;

A. *Our Entrance unto you in much affliction– 1:4-2:18 (see 1:6; 2:2)*

1. *How our Gospel came to you in Much Affliction (v. 6) – 1:4-8*

4 Knowing,⁶ brethren beloved, your election⁷ of God.

application originated with groups who were attempting to justify their existence apart from congregations that had either disfellowshipped them or excommunicated them. Today it is used by those who justify their irresponsibility to serve outside of a congregational body.

⁴ “**In God the Father**” – There were many pagan assemblies that worshipped some kind of god. However, the congregations of Christ worshipped only the God of the Old Testament Scriptures.

⁵ “**In the Lord Jesus Christ**” – There were Jewish congregations or assemblies in nearly every city who worshipped the God of the Old Testament, who recognized God as “the Father” but repudiated Jesus Christ as His Son.

⁶ “**Knowing**” – Although election occurred before the foundation of the world when we were not present or existent (Eph. 1:4; 2 Thes. 2:13; 2 Tim. 1:7), they can know they are God’s elect by the way the gospel comes to God’s elect (v. 5). The elect can “know” they are saved and going to heaven (Job 19:25-26; Psa. 73:23-25; 2 Tim. 1:12; 1 Jn. 5:13) because of the change wrought in us by the new birth.

⁷ “**Election**” – is not a result of foreseen faith, but rather election is “*to salvation*” (2 Thess. 2:13) foreordained by God (Rom. 8:28-30) in order that we should bring forth fruits of holiness (Eph. 1:4b) in order that we might be

The Lighthouse New Testament Notes

5 For our gospel came not unto you in word only⁸, 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.⁹

6 And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost:¹⁰

“*blameless*” before God. Election is based upon God’s purpose “*of grace*” (Rom. 11:6) and therefore not based upon foreseen works good or evil (Rom. 9:11).

⁸ “**Came not...in word only but also**” – The Gospel itself cannot save anyone. However, when it comes “*in the Holy Ghost*” it always comes in “*power*” and “*in much assurance*” and is effectual to salvation. Paul is not providing these characteristics in order that they might know who is and who is not a true gospel preacher, but how they can know they have been elected to salvation. It is not the preacher of the gospel that needs “*much assurance*”, but the person unto whom the gospel has come unto.

⁹ “**What manner of men we were among you**” – An additional proof of their election is that the gospel produced the same kind of change in them which they saw in those who preached it to them, so that “ye became followers of us” (v. 7). Genuine salvation produces the same kind of persons. So when the Thessalonians’ preached the gospel, those saved by their ministry were transformed into people like unto them (v. 8). The gospel, when empowered by God reproduces the same kind of persons (“Christ-like” persons). The Great Commission when administered, reproduces disciples of like faith and order.

¹⁰ “**Received the Word in much affliction**” – Paul introduces the first aspect of the theme of this letter. The Christian life from beginning till end is characterized by afflictions. The Greek term translated “*affliction*” is *thilipsis* which is elsewhere translated “*tribulation*.” Christians are appointed unto tribulation (3:3-4).

God's Creative Word

God uses human instrumentality to bring the gospel unto the exterior ear of His elect. However, when God quickens his elect, it is a creative act of God (Eph. 2:10 “*For we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus...*”). When God created light out of darkness in Genesis 1:2-3, He simply spoke it into existence – that is an effectual call. Likewise, when he regenerates his elect He empowers the gospel word as His creative word to effectually call into existence the metaphorical light of the saving knowledge of Christ, which is declared in the gospel, into the heart of his elect, transforming it from a darkened, unbelieving, hardened heart to a new believing heart:

For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. – 2 Cor. 4:6

This is how faith originates in the heart of man, it is produced by God's word of command (Gr. *rhema* translated “*word*” in Rom. 10:17).

At this command of God, the former state of our heart which is described by Paul in Ephesians 4:18-19 is reversed from:

Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

The degenerate state of the heart is characterized by spiritual separation from God as the source of light (“*darkened*”), of life (“*alienated from the life of God*”) and of righteousness (“*given themselves over...to all uncleanness*”). - CONTINUED

The Lighthouse New Testament Notes

It is the state of the unregenerate heart that prevents any man from coming to Christ in faith (Jn. 6:44). Their heart is not merely in a state of spiritual separation from God but in active opposition to God (Rom. 8:7) so that it is impossible for them to please God (Rom. 8:8).

This creative act of God reverses this degenerate state of the heart, thus transforming the heart into a “*new heart*” (Ezek. 36:26-27) as the Holy Spirit writes the Law of God upon this heart, thus giving the heart a desire for the things of God (2 Cor. 3:3-6). Hence, a person can know his election by God when the gospel comes in creative power of the Holy Spirit that produces “much assurance” and complete transformation into a new creature.

7 So that ye were ensamples [examples] to all that believe in Macedonia¹¹ and Achaia.¹²

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 Godward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing.

2. *How we came to you in much Affliction (2:2) – vv. 1:9-2:19*

a. *We came to you with an effectual ministry – vv 9-2:1*

9 For they themselves shew 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 [Jn. 17:3];

10 And to wait for his Son from heaven,¹³ whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.¹⁴

¹¹ “**Macedonia**” – This is the North East province found in modern Greece. [see map, p. 8]

¹² “**Achaia**” – This is the Southern province in modern Greece. [see map, p. 8]

Chapter 2

1 For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain:¹⁵

b. We came to you out of previous afflictions – v. 2

2 But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, [treated] as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention [debate].

c. We came to you in purity and unselfishly – vv. 3-6

¹³ “**To serve.....And to wait**” – This waiting is to be characterized by serving. The Second Coming of Christ provides the ultimate basis for presently enduring affliction or tribulation. His coming is like the bright light at the end of a dark tunnel of suffering. As we see the day approaching it should increase our joy and stabilize us in our trials (Lk. 21:28).

¹⁴ “**Delivered us from the wrath to come**” – His basis for this declaration is their initial salvation when they “*turned to God from idols*” (v. 9) to trust in “*whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus*”. It is the substitutionary atonement by Christ that “*delivered us from the wrath to come.*” This wrath to come cannot be referring to temporal wrath in the final seven years of this age because both the lost and saved in the apostolic age were equally delivered from any kind of future temporal wrath. The saved had already been delivered from the wrath to come, but the lost during the apostolic age had not been delivered from the wrath to come and yet they did not live to see the Great Tribulation. The death and resurrection of Christ delivered us from eternal wrath but the lost were not delivered from such wrath to come. The death and resurrection of Christ do not deliver Christians from tribulation.

¹⁵ “**Our entrance unto you**” – is the topic first explicitly stated in 1:9 but first introduced in 1:6b as the instruments through which the gospel came to them in power. However, it is also the continuing topic of 2:1-16 where Paul explains the afflictions endured by them at the time when they received the gospel and were constituted into a congregation. He wanted them to know they were not alone in suffering afflictions for Christ. It is comforting to know we are not alone in our afflictions. It is also another evidence of genuine salvation, which is another comfort (2 Cor. 1:3-6).

The Lighthouse New Testament Notes

3 For our exhortation [instruction] was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile [deceit]:

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 [to test] our hearts.

5 For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke [thing that conceal] of covetousness; [excessive desire] God is witness:

6 Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome,¹⁶ as the apostles of Christ.¹⁷

d. We came to you as nursing mothers – vv. 7-8

7 But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth [tenderly cares for] 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.

¹⁶ “**Burdensome**” – Paul denies that their use of the gospel was to advance their own cause or for selfish and deceitful purposes (vv. 3-6) that imposed a burden on them. Rather, their aim was to wholly benefit them (vv. 7-10) at their own expense.

¹⁷ “**Apostles of Christ**” – The plural is used here to describe Paul, Silas and Timothy. Only Paul was an “apostle” in the technical sense among the three or one who personally was an eyewitness of the risen Christ and personally called. The term “apostle” is also used in a non-technical meaning of a church authorized and sent missionary. Both Paul and Silas had been sent out by the congregation at Antioch as their authorized representatives. Timothy had been sent by the congregation at Lystra (Acts 16:1-4).

The Lighthouse New Testament Notes

e. We came to you as Mothers in birthpangs – vv. 9-10

9 For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail [birth or labor pains]: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable [accused] 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:

f. We came to you as Nurturing Fathers – vv. 11-12

11 As ye know how we exhorted [strongly urge] and comforted and charged [to hold responsible] every one of you, as a father doth his children,¹⁸

12 That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called¹⁹ you unto his kingdom²⁰ 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

¹⁸ “**As a Father**” Paul uses three different metaphors to convey how careful they were to help them. First, he uses the metaphor of a nurse with a new born infant (vv. 7-8). Second, he uses the metaphor of a child bearing mother who suffers birth pangs in behalf of her unborn infant (vv.9-10). Last, he uses the metaphor of a Father who raises his children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (v. 11).

¹⁹ “**Hath called**” – represents a present tense active participle. This is not something they have already attained but are being called to enter. At the point of new birth we are translated into the spiritual kingdom of God (Col. 1:13). This text refers to the future kingdom at the coming of Christ.

The Lighthouse New Testament Notes

received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God,²¹ which effectually worketh²² also in you that believe.

B. Our Comforts in much Affliction – 2:14-5:11

1. The Comfort of identifying with afflictions of the first congregations – vv. 14-18

14 For ye, brethren, became followers of the congregations 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:

²¹ “**The word of God**” – Isaiah prophesied that the Biblical canon would be completed “*among my disciples*” (Isa. 8:16) which has specific reference to the apostles who were given to Israel as special signs (Isa. 8:17; Heb. 2:4, 11). Jesus explicitly predicted that the Holy Spirit would recall His words and lead them into all truth and it would be by their word future generations would come to faith in Christ. The apostles understood what they were conveying to the churches in writing was inspired Scripture (2 Pet. 3:15-17). John realized he was completing the last book of the Testimony of Christ (Isa. 8:16; Rev. 1:3) and sealed it (Rev. 22:17-18) realizing that the next revelation from God would be Christ from heaven (Isa. 8:18; Rev. 22:19-20). Their written word is the record of what they orally communicated to the congregations.

²² “**Effectually worketh**” – translates the Greek term *energo* from which we get our English term “energy.” The very same term is translated “*effectual*” in Ephesians 3:20 describing the “*power*” of the internal working of the Holy Spirit within believers. Their reception of God’s Word is attributed to its “*effectual*” empowerment of the word by the Holy Spirit (1:5) that results in “*much assurance*” of salvation. Jesus said “*no man can come to me*” in faith except the Father draw him (Jn. 6:44). He does not draw all men without exception (Jn. 6:64-65) but “*all*” that he does draw do come to Christ by faith (Jn. 6:45).

The Lighthouse New Testament Notes

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.

17 But we, brethren, being taken from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavored [attempted] 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.

2. The Comfort of your faithfulness at His coming – vv. 19-20

19 For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing?²³ Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?²⁴

20 For ye are our glory and joy.

²³ **“Crown of rejoicing”** – *“The five crowns are identified as the Everlasting Crown (Victory) in 1 Cor. 9:25, The Soul Winner’s Crown of rejoicing in Philip. 4:1 and here, Crown of Righteousness in 2 Tim. 4:8, Crown of Life in Jas. 1:12 and Rev. 2:10, and the Crown of Glory in 1 Pet. 5:4. These crowns will be awarded to qualifying believers at the Bema Seat judgment that follows the Rapture (1 Cor. 3:10-15). The Crown of Life is for those believers who remain faithful to the Gospel even under persecution (Jas. 1:12).”* – Larry Killion, **The Landmark Edition of the King James New Testament**, Ephesians

²⁴ **“At His coming”** – The rewarding of the Bride occurs after the kingdom coming of Jesus Christ, after he has come as King of kings and Lord of lords and after he has conquered all the kingdoms of this world (Rev. 19:5). This is the coming when Israel shall see him and mourn and be saved (Rev. 1:7) for which all the congregations of Christ are waiting and watching unto.

3. *The Comfort of knowing afflictions are results of Faithfulness – 3:1-7*

Chapter 3

1 Wherefore when we could no longer forbear [refrain], we thought it good to be left at Athens alone;

2 And sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellow labourer 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 [Rev. 1:9; 7:9-14].

4 For verily, [truly] when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation [Jn.16:33]; even as it came to pass, and ye know [Acts 17:5-10].

4. *The Comfort of your faithfulness in afflictions– vv. 7-12*

5 For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, [refrain] I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter [Mt. 4:1], have tempted you [1Cor. 10:13], and our labour be in vain [Rom. 12:21].

6 But now when Timotheus came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings [news] of your faith and charity, [Godlike love] 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 you²⁵ in all our affliction and distress by your faith [3Jn. 1:4]:

8 For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord [2Thess. 2:15].

²⁵ “**We were comforted over you**” – Your faithfulness to Christ under afflictions encourages those who brought the gospel to you that their labor was not in vain. Afflictions manifest our faith and faithfulness.

The Lighthouse New Testament Notes

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 [complete] that which is lacking in your faith [Eph. 1:15-16]?

11 Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you [Ps. 31:3-5].

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:

5. *The Comfort of Abounding Faithfulness till Jesus Comes – 3:13-4:12*

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.²⁶

Chapter 4

1 Furthermore then we beseech [request urgently] you, brethren, and exhort [strongly urge] 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.

²⁶ “**At the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints**” – There is no coming “*for*” his saints as opposed to another coming “*with*” his saints. When Christ comes “*with all his saints*” in heaven (1 Thes. 4:14) it will be “*for*” his saints still on earth (1 Thes. 4:15-17). This is the same coming described in Matthew 24:31 when he brings all the saints with him and while still in the clouds he gathers all the saints on earth unto him.

The Lighthouse New Testament Notes

3 For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: ²⁷

Sanctification

“**Sanctification**” – The terms “*holy...saint....holiness...sanctify...sanctification*” are all from the very same root word. It means to “set apart” unto something. The prostitutes in the temple worship at Corinth were called “hagioi” or “saints.” Therefore, the term has no inherent moral implications. What determines the moral implication is what something or someone is set apart unto. The prostitutes at Corinth were set apart unto immorality. God’s people are set apart unto obedience to His will.

It is God’s revealed will that we be wholly sanctified in spirit, soul and body (1 Thes. 5:23). However, that is not accomplished instantly or perfectly in this present life (1 Jn. 1:8-10; Philip. 3:10-12). Our salvation is designed by God to accomplish entire sanctification in various stages and degrees which are never fully completed until all the influence of sin is entirely removed from us in glorification. Our spirit has been sanctified or set apart unto God by regeneration which is a creative act of God (Eph. 2:10;

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²⁷ “**Fornication**” – Translates the Greek term “pornea” from whence we get the root word for our English word “pornography.” In the physical sense it refers to all of the illicit or illegal sexual activities that are condemned in Leviticus 18 including adultery. In a spiritual or metaphorical sense it refers to any unfaithfulness to your covenant relationship with God or to anything you substitute for God as your chief love.

4:24; Col. 3:10; Tit. 3:5; Jn. 3:6). Our body will be sanctified completely by transformation in the rapture or resurrection (1 Cor. 15:51-57). Our soul is being progressively conformed to the image of His Son (Rom. 8:29) from glory to glory (2 Cor. 3:18) through our submission to the power of the indwelling Spirit manifested by the fruit of the Spirit and “good works.” We are to “put on” the new man which is created after the image of God in righteousness and true holiness” (Eph. 4:24) by submitting to the Spirit. This is what it means to walk “in the Spirit.” As we walk in the Spirit we redeem that time, by making it count for God’s glory and preserve it in eternal rewards in heaven. Our completed sanctification is obtained by the redemptive work of Christ (Heb. 10:10,14).

It is vitally important not to confuse justification by faith with progressive sanctification. Although, justification by faith without works does set us apart unto God positionally, it is based strictly upon the works of righteousness performed in the physical body of Jesus Christ that satisfied the full righteous and penal demands of the Law in our behalf and only obtained through imputation. In contrast, progressive sanctification has only to do with good works produced in and through our own physical body by the indwelling power of the Spirit.

4 That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel²⁸ in sanctification and honour;

5 Not in the lust of concupiscence, [immoral passion] even as the Gentiles²⁹ which know not God:

²⁸ “**To possess his vessel**” – Your body is the vehicle of expression for your intellect, will and emotions or your soul. Hence, the way in which your body is used or abused reveals at that time the internal state of your soul.

The Lighthouse New Testament Notes

6 That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter:³⁰ because that the Lord is the avenger [punisher] 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, [to hold in contempt] 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 [Rom. 1:19].

10 And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech [urgently request] you, brethren, that ye increase more and more;

11 And that ye study to be quiet,³¹ 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,³² and that ye may have lack of nothing.

²⁹ “**Gentiles**” – This term is modified or further explained as referring to those “*which know not God.*” This assembly was constituted out of a majority of Gentile believers (Acts 17:4). The term was used by Jews for all races outside of Israel and the ordained worship of God. It is used as a synonym for “the world” (Rom. 11:11-12). It is used in the ceremonial law for those who are “unclean”. It is translated “nations” and used for the “saved” who live outside the New Jerusalem on the new earth (Rev. 21:24).

³⁰ “**Go beyond and defraud his brother**” – To take advantage or use your brother for selfish designs.

³¹ “**Study to be quiet**” – The control of the tongue is one of the greatest signs of spiritual maturity (James 3:2-18). To know when to speak and what to say is the sign of great wisdom and maturity. Such maturity does not come naturally. It comes from applying ourselves studiously to God’s Word and learning by trial and error.

The Coming of Christ

In 1 Thessalonians 4:14-17 Paul describes the nature of Christ's Coming. It is a coming both "*with*" the saints from heaven "*for*" the saints on earth. It is a very visible loud event ("shout" and "sound" of a trumpet). It has a specific order in regard to the elect. The resurrection of the bodies of the saints he brings with them occurs first. Thus the saints coming with him are first united with their new glorified bodies. Second, those who survive the ordeal on earth (Rev. 6-18) are then caught up into the clouds to "*meet*" the Lord and the resurrected saints. The term "*meet*" is used of those returning to the very place from whence they left after going out to meet a party (Acts 28:15). The Lord then proceeds down to earth which begins "*The Day of the Lord.*"

In 1 Thessalonians 5:1-8 Paul deals with the time of this same coming (v. 1). The time of His coming cannot presently be known and so Paul cannot tell them when it will occur, as no man knows that time (Mt. 24:36; Acts 1:5-6). However, that does not mean it cannot be known to those who are watching for those things, because it is those things beginning to come to pass that announces it is at hand (vv. 2-8; Mt. 24:32-34; Lk. 21:28).

Hence, Paul calls them to "*watch*" because it comes as thief in the

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³² "**Them that are without**" – God puts lights in dark places. We are the light of the world and how we act and what we say either glorifies God before men or becomes a stumbling block to the gospel. We are the salt of the earth, but if the salt has lost its saltiness, it becomes useless for its primary purpose. God's primary purpose for leaving us on earth is to glorify him by our witness before the lost world. This is a qualification for those who would fill the office of bishop/pastor/elder (1 Tim. 3:7). An immoral testimony before the world is grounds for exclusion from the membership of the congregation (1 Cor. 5:1, 11-13).

The Lighthouse New Testament Notes

night **only** upon those who are either in darkness (the lost) or those who sleep (Christians not watching as directed), but it – does not come as a thief upon those watching as directed (v. 4). The term “*watch*” comes from the military and the practice of placing a guard at a sentry post for a period of time. The guard

was trained to know what to watch for (Lk. 21:28). When they spotted anything that seemed threatening they were to sound a trumpet or alert the others. The Jews divided the night into four watches or four periods of time when they changed the guard (Mk. 13:35). Jesus trained his disciples in knowing what they were to be watching for that would signify His soon return (Mt. 24:32-35). When these things began to come to pass, they knew His coming was nigh at hand (Lk. 21:28). Hence, one is not watching for the coming of the Lord if they are not watching for those very things that announce His soon return. The lost are not watching because they are “*in darkness*” (5:4) and children of the night. Many Christians are not watching but “*sleep*.” Christians living a worldly life are not watching, as watching prevents that kind of living. Christians deceived by false theories of His coming are also not watching but “*sleep*.” For example, those who embrace the Pre-trib theory of Christ’s coming are not watching for His return, as this false theory prevents them from watching for those very things Christ instructed that would announce his imminent coming.

There are no Christians between the first and sixteenth century that embraced a Pre-trib theory. Every group cited by Pre-trib advocates during this time period, when examined more closely, were expecting an imminent return of Christ because they believed they were already in the period described in Revelation 6-18, already facing the Antichrist (Pope) and the Great Whore. This is the true doctrine of imminent expectation. The coming of Christ is imminent when those very specific things Christ predicted would

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The Lighthouse New Testament Notes

immediately precede His coming begin to come to pass – “*And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.*” – Lk. 21:28. Paul repudiates any kind of Pre-trib expectation of His coming in 2 Thess. 2:1-12.

6. *The Comfort in the funeral Parlor – 4:13-18*

13 But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep,³³ that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.³⁴

14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.³⁵

³³ “**Them which are asleep**” – The death of the saint is euphemistically described as sleep. A person who is “asleep” is simply not a conscious participant in this world, but their mind is very active in the world into which they have gone – dream world. Heaven is a dream world without any nightmares and to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord (2Cor. 5:8). The human body when laid in the grave takes the appearance of sleep (Dan. 12:2). The human body is the vehicle of expression for the soul. It expresses the joy, sorrow, hate, love, etc. of the soul. When the body is laid under the sod, it ceases to be the expression of the soul and so the vehicular expression of the soul no longer exists “under the sun” because the soul has departed from the body either into hell or heaven.

³⁴ “**Sorrow not even as others which have no hope**” – The sorrow is about physical death not about escaping the Great Tribulation through the rapture.

³⁵ “**Them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him**” – Those whom Jesus brings with him are those who are first united with their bodies before the living saint is caught up to be with the Lord in the air. This is absolute proof that the spirit of saints are not destroyed at the death of the body but go to be present with the Lord. This is also absolute proof that the very same coming of Christ is both a coming “with” saints “for” the living saints.

The Lighthouse New Testament Notes

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 [precede] them which are asleep.³⁶

16 For the Lord himself [Rev. 1:7] shall descend from heaven with a shout [Rev. 11:15-18], with the voice of the archangel [Jude 1:9], and with the trump of God.³⁷ 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 meet³⁸ the Lord in the air [Mt. 24:31]: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.³⁹

³⁶ **“We which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord”** – Those who are “alive” at His coming have survived the dreadful period preceding his coming. The Greek term translated “remain” can be translated “survive.” Not all the saints “survive” but many die during this period (Rev.2:10; 6:9; 7:14; 11:7; 13:7, 15; 14:13)

³⁷ **“With a shout...with the trump”** This is no secret silent unobservable coming. This is the public coming of Christ when “every eye” shall see him (Rev. 1:7) and every ear shall hear him. This is the “blessed Hope” when he comes openly and publicly in great glory (Tit. 2:13 – see commentary note).

³⁸ **“Meet”** – This Greek term is used in Acts where the Romans went out to “meet” Paul on the Apian Way (Acts 28:15) and then immediately turned around with him and returned to the place they had left. The saints will “meet” Christ in the air and fall in behind him and return to earth as He continues to descend to Armageddon.

³⁹ **“Comfort one another”** – This is specifically given to be comfort in the funeral parlor to escape sorrow as those who have no hope. This is not comfort about escaping any future tribulation.

7. *The Comfort found in watching for His Coming— 5:1-8*

Chapter 5

1 But of the times and the seasons,⁴⁰ [Mt.24:36; Acts 1:5-6] brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you.

2 For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord⁴¹ so cometh as a thief in the night [2 Pet. 3:10-12].

⁴⁰ **“But of the times and the seasons”** – There was no need for him to write about the time of the Lord’s coming with his saints for His saints because it could not now be known by any man, as it was like the coming of a *“thief in the night”* (Mt. 24:36; Acts 1:7-8). However, for those who watch for those signs that usher it in, it will not come upon them as a thief in the night (v. 4). It only comes upon those who are either *“in darkness”* (v. 4-5) or Christians who are *“sleep”* and therefore do not recognize or accept those signs that announce it (v. 6-7). Christians who embrace the Pre-trib coming are *“asleep”* as their very theory forbids them to watch for the very things that will announce its arrival (Mt. 24:32-34).

⁴¹ **“The day of the Lord”** - This term is never used by Old Testament Prophets as a time of tribulation upon the lost world, but the assault and absolute destruction of ancient cities which by extension are used to prophesy the ultimate fall of the kingdoms of this world by Christ at Armageddon. (Isa. 13:9; Ezek. 30:3; Joel 2:1-2; Amos 5:18; Obadiah 1:15-17; Zeph. 1:14-17; Zech. 14:1-4, 9; Isa. 65:17-25). The conquest of these cities (Nineveh, Jerusalem, Babylon, etc.) took years by human kings, but the battle of Armageddon whereby Christ overthrows the kingdoms of this world in a final decisive battle will not take years. The eschatological “day of the Lord” is always preceded by celestial signs (Joel 2:13; 3:14-15; Mt. 24:29-30; Rev. 6:12).

The Day of The Lord

The Day of the Lord: This eschatological phrase is synonymous with “*the day of our Lord Jesus Christ*” or “*the Day of Christ*” in the New Testament (1 Cor. 1:8; 5:5; 2 Cor. 1:14; 1 Thes. 5:1-2; 2 Thes. 2:3). It is the day when the resurrection and rapture of the Saints occur in the air (Mt. 24:30-31), followed by their immediate descent with Christ to Armageddon where Christ subdues the kingdom’s of this world and ushers in his millennial kingdom (Mt. 25:31; 1 Cor. 15:24). In the Old and New Testament Scriptures it is always preceded by celestial signs (Joel 2:31; 3:14-16; Mt. 24:29-31; Rev. 6:12). In the Old Testament it is always used for the complete destruction and downfall of city kingdoms (Jerusalem, Nineveh, and Babylon) and by eschatological extension it is applied to the complete destruction and downfall of the kingdoms of this world by Jesus Christ. Although, it took human kings years to destroy cities by their armies, the battle of Armageddon will not take years for Christ to overthrow the kings of this world and usher in His kingdom but his wrath will come upon them “*suddenly*” (1 Thes. 5:4) and swiftly. “*The day of the Lord*” terminates the day of man or the reign of the kingdoms of this world and ushers in the kingdom of God on earth. The Day of the Lord begins with His coming in the air and concludes with the Great White Seat Judgment (Rev. 20) after which the Son turns over the kingdoms of this world to the Father (1 Cor. 15:24) who ushers in a new heaven and a new earth and the everlasting kingdom.

The Olivet Discourse is a description of the downfall and complete destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and by prophetic extension the downfall and complete destruction of the kingdoms

- CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

The Lighthouse New Testament Notes

of this world at the Second Coming of Christ. The celestial signs that precede the Day of the Lord

occur in Matthew 24:29 immediately preceding His coming in the clouds with all the saints wherein he gathers all the elect from the earth unto him in the clouds before descending to establish his earthly kingdom upon the earth (Mt. 24:30-31; 25:31). In the book of Revelation, the celestial signs do not occur until the sixth seal in Revelation 6:12. When the chronological order provided by Christ is compared to the book of Revelation then Matthew 24:29 occurs in Revelation 6:12. The next event in the Olivet discourse after Matthew 24:29 is the revelation of Christ from heaven (Mt. 24:30-31). Likewise, at the close of the sixth seal the world sees Christ coming (Rev. 6:15-17). However, there is a pause before His coming is fully described (Rev. 19:12-20) as other things are revealed which are parallel with the events of previous seals (Rev. 8-18). After each of these things are revealed the writer brings the reader back to the same chronological point of His return (Rev. 11:15-18; 14; 16:15-18; 19:5) until that revelation is dealt with completely in relation to those things that follow it (Rev. 19:12-22:2). The scroll only has seven seals and the opening of the seventh seal completes it by ushering in His kingdom upon earth (Rev.11:18). For fuller defenses of this view see my book “**The Day of the Lord**” which can be downloaded freely at:

http://victorybaptistchurch.webstarts.com/uploads/When_does_the_Day_of_the_Lord_Begin.pdf

3 For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them [Rev. 19:12-20], as travail [birth pains] upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.⁴²

⁴² “**Sudden Destruction**” – The day of the Lord is not a drawn out period of tribulation but “*sudden destruction*” when the Lord descends at Armageddon and destroys the whole army by the word of His mouth (Rev. 19:12-20). Just

The Lighthouse New Testament Notes

4 But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.⁴³ [Rev. 16:15]

5 Ye are all the children of light [Matt. 5:16], and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness [Eph. 5:8].

6 Therefore let us not sleep,⁴⁴ as do others; but let us watch⁴⁵ [Rev. 16:15] and be sober [discreet].

prior to His descent from heaven, the armies gathered against Israel will think they have won and the battle is over as they have already apparently won and are about to annihilate Israel.

⁴³ “**That day should not over take you as a thief**” – We are told the explicit signs that announce it is at hand (Mt. 24:32-34) so that we will not be taken by surprise. However, prior to those preceding signs, none know that day or hour or the times and seasons (Mt. 24:36; Acts 1:5-6). True

⁴⁴ “**Let us not sleep**” – This does not refer to physical death because that is appointed by God. This refers to being unaware of, or rejecting the very signs that announce His coming is at hand. Christians who are not living in the will of God when these signs begin to come to pass of God are asleep or else they would be living in God’s will. Christians whose eschatological view of the end times forbids them to view such signs as announcing His coming are asleep.

⁴⁵ “**Watch**” – This is a military term that describes those placed on guard duty. The Jews divided the night into four watches (6-9 p.m., 9-12 p.m. 12-3 a.m. and 3-6 a.m. – Mk. 13:35). The last watch was called *proee* translated “*morning*” (Mk. 13:35). It was during this watch that Christ arose from the grave (Mk. 16:9). A person on “*watch*” had to be alert and actually watching for specific signs of the enemies approach and then respond appropriately to warn others of impending dangers. There are specific signs or dangers that Christ has warned His disciples that would immediately precede and announce his coming (Lk. 21:28-32). Those who are not watching for these specific preceding events that announce and usher in His coming are not watching for Christ’s return. The very nature of the Pretrib theory prevents those who embrace it from watching for His return. Paul explicitly condemns all pre-trib rapture theories in 2 Thess. 2:1-3.

The Lighthouse New Testament Notes

7 For they that sleep, sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night [Jn. 3:19].

8 But let us, who are of the day,⁴⁶ be sober [temperate, calm and collective in spirit], putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation [Eph. 6:10-18].

8. *The Comfort of deliverance from eternal wrath – vv. 9-10*

9 For God hath not appointed us to wrath,⁴⁷ but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ [1 Thes. 1:9-10],

10 Who died for us,⁴⁸ that, whether we wake or sleep,⁴⁹ we should live together with him.

⁴⁶ “**The day**” – The term day can be used for a twenty-four hour period (Gen. 1:4) or it can be used of an extended period (Gen. 2:4). Here it refers to an extended period which begins with the night of destruction by the coming of Christ and ends with the Great White Seat Judgment.

⁴⁷ “**Wrath**” – The “*salvation*” already obtained “by our Lord Jesus Christ” which delivers us from wrath to come is not a pretrib coming deliverance from the Great Tribulation, but the wrath endured by His Son on the cross “*who died for us*.” None of the readers of this letter or the lost people living at his day experienced the Great Tribulation. However, that does not mean the lost who died will not experience this wrath of God, as this is the wrath poured out upon His Son on Calvary when “*he died for us*” so that whether we are physically alive (“wake”) or physically dead (“sleep”) we never experience this wrath. However, the lost world will experience this wrath whether they are alive or dead.

⁴⁸ “**Who died for us**” – This is the “*salvation*” already obtained by Jesus Christ that has already delivered us from the wrath to come. The lost, whether living and dying at the time this epistle was written or at any other time will not be delivered from this wrath to come. The living saints at the time of this letter were all delivered from this wrath to come, as will be the living at the time Christ’s return. The rapture and resurrection precede His coming in wrath at Armageddon (see commentary notes on 2 Thess. 1:7-10).

The Lighthouse New Testament Notes

11 Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify [build up] one another, even as also ye do.

Final Exhortations while you wait for His Coming – 5:12-28

12 And we beseech [urgently request] you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish [lit. Gk. place before their mind] you;⁵⁰

13 And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake.⁵¹ And be at peace among yourselves.

14 Now we exhort [strongly urge] you, brethren, warn them that are unruly,⁵² comfort the feebleminded, support the weak,⁵³ be patient toward all men.

⁴⁹ **“Wake or sleep”** - Here the words are used euphemistically for being physically alive or dead.

⁵⁰ **“Are over you”** – He is speaking of the ordained members whose work is to serve you in building you up in the faith. This refers to those who have the position of “the head” in the congregational body (1 Cor. 12:20) or positions of leadership authority, those the Holy Spirit has made “overseers” of the flock (Acts 20:28). Their authority lies in their ministry of the Word and you are to follow them no further than they follow Christ (1 Cor. 11:2). They are to “admonish” you. This term literally means to “place before the mind” or to lovingly confront you with your responsibilities in the Lord.

⁵¹ **“Love them for their work’s sake”** – You don’t have to love them for their personality sake, or love them because they are sinless. Love covers a multitude of imperfections. However, we are to love them for their “work’s sake. The Lord has established different means for protecting the purity and faithfulness of his congregations in the faith once delivered. One of those means is a qualified ministry “sound in the faith” that will teach and defend the faith. That is their chief work. Other means to preserve the congregation in purity and faithfulness is church discipline (2 Thes. 3:6).

The Lighthouse New Testament Notes

15 See that none render evil for evil unto any man [Matt. 7:12]; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men.

16 Rejoice evermore.⁵⁴

17 Pray without ceasing⁵⁵

18 In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you [Ps. 69:30].

19 Quench [to put out a fire] not the Spirit [Eph. 4:30].⁵⁶

20 Despise not prophesying. [1 Cor. 14:3]⁵⁷

21 Prove [verify] all things; hold fast [seize and retain] that which is good.

22 Abstain [refrain] from all appearance [outward form] of evil [wickedness].

⁵² “**Warn the unruly**” – He is referring to those who openly violate the order or teaching of the faith once delivered in principle or in precept.

⁵⁴ “**Rejoice evermore.**” – This has nothing to do with your emotions or cheerfulness. You can rejoice even in sorrows over the loss of a loved one in a funeral, knowing where they are. This is a command, not an expression of feeling. This is the ability to see the silver lining in even the darkest clouds and thanking God for it. This is realizing that things could be worse and you would deserve it if they were worse, but thanking God they are not and praising Him for His mercy.

⁵⁵ “**Pray without ceasing.**” – This refers to a continuing dependant state of mind that relies upon the presence and power of the Spirit of God to live moment by moment as you redeem the time or make it count for His glory.

⁵⁶ “**Quench not the Spirit.**”⁵⁶ - Don’t offend God’s Spirit by doing and saying things that rob Him of His glory and rob you from being used by him.

⁵⁷ “**Despise not prophesying.**” – While the Biblical canon was incomplete, the gift of prophecy was needful in not only supplying the scriptures, but in revealing God’s will to his congregations concerning church order.

The Lighthouse New Testament Notes

23 And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body⁵⁸ be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.⁵⁹

24 Faithful is he that calleth you [1 Cor. 1:26-20; Rom. 8:28-30], who also will do it [Isa. 46:9-10].

25 Brethren, pray for us⁶⁰

⁵⁸ **“Spirit and soul and body”** - Man is made in the triune image of God in addition to the moral and ruling image of God. Salvation is designed and applied to all three aspects of the human nature. The “spirit” of man is the object of the past tense aspect of salvation (Jn. 3:6). The “spirit” allowed you to fellowship with evil spirits prior to new birth and with God’s Spirit after new birth. Hence, your spirit is your other world consciousness. Your physical body is the object of the future tense salvation at His return (1 Cor. 15:51-55). Your body allows you to interact with the physical world, and is therefore your outer world consciousness. Your soul is your self-consciousness or inner world consciousness of emotions, intellect and will. As the soul interacts and expresses itself through your body moment by moment, that outward expression is your life. Your life is saved for the glory of God daily as it expresses itself in obedience to God’s revealed will. The unredeemed body and its natural cravings under the law of sin is not a cooperative partner with your born again spirit (Rom. 7:14-25; Gal. 5:16-25). Only as your soul comes under the willing submission to the Holy Spirit can your body be brought under subjection for the glory of God. Therefore, your whole spirit, soul and body are set apart (sanctified) unto God.

⁵⁹ **“Preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ”** There is no other worthy goal than to reach for sinless perfection in spirit, soul and body. Any other motive is sin. Although sinlessness must be our goal, for which we are ever reaching to attain, it is unattainable in this life (Philip. 3:10-12; 1 Jn. 1:8-10). But as many as are mature, that will always be their daily and lifelong motive and goal. Any less is an unworthy goal.

⁶⁰ **“Brethren, pray for us.”**- Only Christians have access to God by prayer. Only Christians can come boldly before the Lord in prayer due to their acceptance, because of Christ. Samuel considered it sin if he failed to pray for the people of God. The list of people and congregations that Paul prayed for was a long list. Praying for others not only

The Lighthouse New Testament Notes

26 Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss.⁶¹

27 I charge [place under oath] you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren.⁶²

28 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

benefits those we pray for but benefits us as it keeps us ever reminded of God's presence in our own lives.

⁶¹ “**Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss.**” – This was and still is the Eastern cultural form of greeting and affection. The Western culture accomplishes the same thing by either a handshake and/or a hug.

⁶² “**This epistle be read unto all the holy brethren**” -. The pastor or some other designated speaker would take letters addressed to their congregations and orally read them to the assembly (Rev. 1:3). Paul wrote all his letters so they would be applicable to all apostolic congregations of Christians. Again the “*we...us...ye....you*” people of his letters were members of congregations of like faith and order that he personally constituted or were constituted by other apostles. He is not speaking about or addressing Christians divided into conflicting denominations of contradictory faith and order. These were “*holy*” or separated brethren by salvation, water immersion and by membership in congregations of like faith and order.

The Biblical Attitude Toward Torture For Christ

others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: - Heb. 11:35

The writer of Hebrews claims some were sawn in half. Old Testament saints refused deliverance from torture, because they saw it as an opportunity to glorify God and receive greater reward in the resurrection. Old Testament saints were not seeking deliverance from their sufferings for Christ.

New Testament saints counted suffering for Christ a privilege:

And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; - Rom. 5:3

Those already saved and baptized members of the congregations were told they would enter the future kingdom through tribulations:

Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. - Acts 14:22

That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto. - 1 Thes. 3:3

In the book of Revelation the saints are pictured as “companions in tribulation” with Christ and they come out of such tribulation:

I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. - Rev. 1:9

The Lighthouse New Testament Notes

*Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: **be thou faithful unto death**, and I will give thee a crown of life. – Rev. 2:10*

*And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, **These are they which came out of great tribulation**, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. – Rev. 7:14*

The only “Great Tribulation” existent by the seventh chapter of Revelation is one predicted by Christ in Matthew 24 which is “The” Great Tribulation. Finally, the definite article is found in the Greek text of Revelation 7:14 which literally reads “The Tribulation the Great”.

The View of Historical Anabaptists and the Great Tribulation

There were a people that lived and perpetuated the New Testament faith and practice under a variety of names given to them by their enemies between the third and sixteenth centuries that the Roman Catholic Church called Anabaptists.

Landmark Baptists claim these Anabaptists as their ancient forefathers and run their line of perpetuity through the Anabaptist lineage.

Historical Anabaptists were united together in the belief that they were already in the Great Tribulation suffering for their faith because they believed the Pope to be the Antichrist predicted in Revelation 12-13 and identified themselves as the “remnant” in Revelation 12 in the wilderness that were faithful to the commandments of Christ. They believed they were facing the Great Whore in the Roman Catholic Church of Revelation 17-18. These facts are indisputable as every Baptist historian knows this is true of their view. However, these Anabaptists were strongly premillennial and they were post-tribulation.

It is because they viewed themselves already in the Great Tribulation, facing the Anti-Christ and Great Whore that they believed in the imminent return of Christ in keeping with Luke 21:28.

There are no pretribblers among our Baptist martyrs between the third and sixteenth centuries. Indeed, there are no pretrib advocates at all between the second and sixteenth centuries.

Pre-trib Advocates between the 1st and 16th Centuries?

Recently, some advocates for the Pre-trib theory have suggested that there were believers in the Pre-trib rapture prior to the 16th century. However, the cases they provide are simply passages jerked out of context from those who clearly believed they would be or were already in the Great Tribulation facing the Anti-Christ. There are three sources quoted by advocates of the Pre-trib theory and they are -

1. *Irenaeus*

Irenaeus (130 A.D. – 202 AD) was a bishop of the church in Lyons, France. He was an eyewitness to the Apostle John (who wrote the Book of Revelation) and a disciple of Polycarp, the first of the Apostle John's disciples. Irenaeus is most-known for his five-volume treatise, *Against Heresies* in which he exposed the false religions and cults of his day along with advice for how to share the Gospel with those who were a part of them.

On the subject of the Rapture, in *Against Heresies 5.29*, he wrote:

“Those nations however, who did not of themselves raise up their eyes unto heaven, nor returned thanks to their Maker, nor wished to behold the light of truth, but who were like blind mice concealed in the depths of ignorance, the word justly reckons “as waste water from a sink, and as the turning-weight of a balance — in fact, as nothing;”(1) so far useful and serviceable to the just, as

stubble conduces towards the growth of the wheat, and its straw, by means of combustion, serves for working gold. And therefore, when in the end the Church shall be suddenly caught up from this, it is said, “There shall be tribulation such as has not been since the beginning, neither shall be.”(2) For this is the last contest of the righteous, in which, when they overcome they are crowned with incorruption.”

However, this very quote repudiates pretribbism, as Irenaus says, “*For this is the last contest of the righteous, in which when they overcome they are crowned.*” He is referring to the time of “*tribulation*” just referred to. If this is not sufficiently plain, then previous to this statement, Irenaeus said:

“And they shall lay Babylon waste, and burn her with fire, and shall give their kingdom to the beast, and put the Church to flight. After that they shall be destroyed by the coming of the Lord.” – Irenaeus, “Against Heresies” section 5.26

2. Cyprian

Cyprian (200 AD – 258 AD) – Cyprian was Bishop of the church in Carthage. During his short stint as leader of the church, he guided the flock through intense persecution at the hands of the Roman Empire. In 258 AD after spending seven months of confinement to his home by order of Roman authorities, he was beheaded for his faith. Several of his works still exist today.

The Lighthouse New Testament Notes

They quote Cyprian without giving the reader the precise location of their quote found in Treatises of Cyprian which is:

*“We who see that terrible things have begun, and know that still more terrible things are imminent, may regard it as the greatest advantage to depart from it as quickly as possible. Do you not give God thanks, do you not congratulate yourself, **that by an early departure you are taken away, and delivered from the shipwrecks and disasters that are imminent?** Let us greet the day which assigns each of us to his own home, **which snatches us hence,** and sets us free from the snares of the world and restores us to paradise and the kingdom.”*

The section from which this is plucked is entitled “Of the Mortality” and is dealing with the departure to the Lord **by physical death** not by rapture. When this quotation is placed back in its fuller context, it is clearly seen that it is physical death he is referring to. He is simply arguing that departure from this world by physical death at this time should be considered a blessing rather than living through such terrible things about to come upon the world:

*“**Laying aside the fear of death,** let us think on the immortality which follows. By this let us show ourselves to be what we believe, that we do not **grieve over the departure of those dear to us,** and that when **the day of our summons shall arrive,** we come without delay and without resistance to the Lord when He Himself calls us. And this, as it ought always to be done by God’s servants, much more ought to be done now – now that the world is collapsing and is oppressed with the tempests of mischievous ills; in order that we who see that terrible things have begun, and know that **still more terrible***

The Lighthouse New Testament Notes

things are imminent, may regard it as the greatest advantage to depart from it as quickly as possible. If in your dwelling the walls were shaking with age, the roofs above you were trembling, and the house, now worn out and wearied, were threatening an immediate destruction to its structure crumbling with age, so would you not with all speed depart? If, when you were on a voyage, an angry and raging tempest. By the waves violently aroused, foretold the coming shipwreck, would you not quickly seek the harbor? Lo, the world is changing and passing away, and witnesses to its ruin not now by its age, but by the end of things. And do you not give God thanks, do you not congratulate yourself, that by an earlier departure, and delivered from the shipwrecks and disasters that are imminent?” - Cyprian, The Treatise of Cyprian, “Of the Immortality” sections 24, 25

He is speaking of the advantage of physical death of the saint to go be with the Lord as a greater blessing than continuing to live at the “end of things” wherein are “terrible things” that have been predicted.

However, Cyprian believed Christians would be still on earth facing the Antichrist:

*For you ought to know and to believe, and hold it for certain, that the day of affliction has begun to hang over our heads, and **the end of the world and the time of Antichrist to draw near**, so that we must all stand prepared for the battle (Cyprian, The Epistles of Cyprian, 55.1).*

3. *Ephraim The Syrian*

Ephraim (306 AD – 373 AD) was made a deacon in the church in Syria in 338 and later became the bishop of Nisibis. Although he was made a “saint” in the Roman Catholic Church, he was not involved in Catholicism and did not even live in the Roman Empire until the final years of his life. The book Pseudo Ephraim was one of his still existing works. It was called “Pseudo” because of later dispute over authorship.

Pretrib advocates quote these sections from his work:

“Why therefore do we not reject every care of earthly actions and prepare ourselves for the meeting of the Lord Christ, so that he may draw us from the confusion, which overwhelms all the world? Believe you me, dearest brother, because the coming (advent) of the Lord is nigh, believe you me, because the end of the world is at hand, believe me, because it is the very last time.....For all the saints and elect of God are gathered, prior to the tribulation that is to come, and are taken to the Lord lest they see the confusion that is to overwhelm the world because of our sins. And so, brothers most dear to me, it is the eleventh hour, and the end of the world comes to the harvest, and angels, armed and prepared, hold sickles in their hands, awaiting the empire of the Lord. And we think that the earth exists with blind infidelity, arriving at its downfall early. Commotions are brought forth, wars of diverse peoples and battles and incursions of the barbarians threaten, and our regions shall be desolated, and we neither become very much afraid of the report nor of the appearance, in order that we may at least do penance; because they hurl fear at us, and we do not wish

The Lighthouse New Testament Notes

to be changed, although we at least stand in need of penance for our actions!”

By reading these quotes anyone would naturally believe Ephraim had a pre-trib rapture expectation. However, when these quotations are placed back into the fuller context, the writer is not speaking about the Great “*tribulation that is to come*” in Matthew 24:15-29 that comes from the Antichrist, but he is referring to the wrath that comes from Christ that is poured out upon the antichrist and world at the coming that destroys the Antichrist. Indeed, he repeatedly states that the things of Matthew 24:5-14 have already been fulfilled and the only other thing that has not yet been fulfilled is the coming of the Antichrist period in Matthew 24:15-29. Here is the full passage:

*Section I Dearly beloved brothers, believe the Holy Spirit who speaks in us. **We have already told you that the end of the world is near, the consummation remains.** Has not faith withered away among mankind? How many foolish things are seen among youths, how many crimes among prelates, how many lies among priests, how many perjuries among deacons! There are evil deeds among the ministers, adulteries in the aged, wantonness in the youths—in mature women false faces, in virgins dangerous traces! In the midst of all this there are the wars with the Persians, and we see struggles with diverse nations threatening and "kingdom rising against kingdom." When the Roman empire begins to be consumed by the sword, the coming of the Evil One is at hand. It is necessary that the world come to an end at the completion of the Roman empire. In those days two brothers will come to the Roman empire who will rule with one mind; but because one will surpass the other, there will be a schism between them. And so the*

Adversary will be loosed and will stir up hatred between the Persian and Roman empires. In those days many will rise up against Rome; the Jewish people will be her adversaries. There will be stirrings of nations and evil reports, pestilences, famines, and earth quakes in various places. All nations will receive captives; there will be wars and rumors of wars. From the rising to the setting of the sun the sword will devour much. The times will be so dangerous that in fear and trembling they will not permit thought of better things, because many will be the oppressions and desolations of regions that are to come.

*Section II We ought to understand thoroughly therefore, my brothers, what is imminent or overhanging. Already there have been hunger and plagues, violent movements of nations and signs, which have been predicted by the Lord, they have already been fulfilled (consummated), and there is not other which remains, except the advent of the wicked one in the completion of the Roman kingdom. Why therefore are we occupied with worldly business, and why is our mind held fixed on the lusts of the world or on the anxieties of the ages? Why therefore do we not reject every care of worldly business, and why is our mind held fixed on the lusts of the world or on the anxieties of the ages? Why therefore do we not reject every care of earthly actions and prepare ourselves for the meeting of the Lord Christ, so that he may draw us from the confusion, which overwhelms all the world? Believe you me, dearest brother, because the coming (advent) of the Lord is nigh, believe you me, **because the end of the world is at hand**, believe me, **because it is the very last time**. Or do you not believe unless you see with your eyes? See to it that this sentence be not fulfilled among you of the prophet who declares: "Woe to those*

The Lighthouse New Testament Notes

*who desire to see the day of the Lord!" For all the saints and elect of God are gathered, prior to the tribulation that is to come, and are taken to the Lord **lest they see the confusion that is to overwhelm the world** because of our sins. And so, brothers most dear to me, **it is the eleventh hour, and the end of the world comes to the harvest, and angels, armed and prepared, hold sickles in their hands, awaiting the empire of the Lord.** And we think that the earth exists with blind infidelity, arriving at its downfall early. Commotions are brought forth, wars of diverse peoples and battles and incursions of the barbarians threaten, and our regions shall be desolated, and we neither become very much afraid of the report nor of the appearance, in order that we may at least do penance; because they hurl fear at us, and we do not wish to be changed, although we at least stand in need of penance for our actions!*

So he believes that Christians have already lived through those things described in Matthew 24:5-14 and yet he believes "The Day of the Lord" is still yet future after the Anti-Christ is revealed and is the day when the Antichrist is destroyed. However, he believes Christians will be on earth during the days of the Antichrist as he goes on to say:

In those days people shall not be buried, neither Christian, nor heretic, neither Jew, nor pagan, because of fear and dread there is not one who buries them; because all people, while they are fleeing, ignore them. – Section IV.

When the day of the Lord comes to destroy the Antichrist he describes that time as a period of "confusion" on earth:

The Lighthouse New Testament Notes

Arise, O sleeping ones, arise, meet Christ, because his hour of judgment has come! Then Christ shall come and the enemy shall be **thrown into confusion**, and the Lord shall destroy him by the spirit of his mouth. And he shall be bound and shall be plunged into the abyss of everlasting fire alive with his father Satan; and all people, who do his wishes, shall perish with him forever; but the righteous ones shall inherit everlasting life with the Lord forever and ever. – Section X

Ephraim believed all those things listed in Matthew 24:5-14 had already been fulfilled. The next imminent event from his perspective was not the coming of Christ but the coming of the “wicked one.”

We ought to understand thoroughly therefore, my brothers, what is imminent or overhanging. Already there have been *hunger and plagues, violent movements of nations and signs, which have been predicted by the Lord,* **they have already been fulfilled (consummated), and there is not other which remains, except the advent of the wicked one**

So he believed that he was living somewhere between Matthew 24:14 and Matthew 24:15. This is hardly a Pre-trib view. At best, his view was mid-tribulational.

We are not Appointed unto Wrath!

The Lighthouse New Testament Notes

That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto. – 1 Thes. 3:3

For they themselves shew 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; And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come. – 1 Thes. 2:9-10

For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him– 1 Thes. 5:9-10

We are “*appointed to*” afflictions (Gr. *thilispis* – “tribulations”) but we have already been delivered from eternal wrath to come through the atonement of Christ (1 Thes. 2:9-10). Both 1 Thessalonians 2:9-10 and 5:9-10 refer to the cross and eternal wrath due to sin that we have already been delivered from.

Neither are we appointed to the day of wrath at which time Christ descends upon the world at Armageddon and destroys not merely the armies gathered against them, but overthrows the kingdoms of this world.

Neither are we the objects of God’s wrath between Revelation 4-18. The lost, but elect Jews are “sealed” from physical harm during this period (Rev. 7:1-8), but the saints are already sealed by the Spirit of God, but are not protected from the wrath of the world and the Antichrist (Rev. 7:9-14). However, we are not the subjects of God’s wrath under the trumpets (Rev. 9:20-21) or the vials (Rev. 16:2, 9, 10) but the saints are preserved from God’s wrath, as

The Lighthouse New Testament Notes

the children of Israel were preserved in the land of Goshen (Rev. 16:15).

When God unleashed the ten plagues upon Egypt (a type of the world) the children of Israel were not objects of that wrath. Likewise, during the seals, trumpets and vials, God's people are preserved from these things, but are the objects of Satan's wrath.