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A1044 – October 31, 2010 – 1 Thessalonians
Living In Light Of Christ's Any Moment Return

Alright, today we're going to begin working with Paul's epistle to the Thessalonians so if you open your Bible to the index we want to review the whole corpus of Paul's writings. If you look at your index you have OT and NT. In the OT you have 39 books and in the NT you have 27 books for a total of 66 books, what theologians call the divine library. We say this material is inspired. Someone asked a few weeks ago, "In 2 Tim 3:16 is the "All" in "All Scripture is God-breathed" limited? And how does the "All" relate to the Apocrypha." Well, in the first question, the answer is yes, the "All" in 2 Tim 3:16 is limited to the OT writings. The reason is because of verse 15; we always interpret in context. Context, context, context and verse 15 sets the context. This was written by Paul to Timothy. Timothy was one of Paul's fellow workers and observe what Paul writes to Timothy. "and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings." What sacred writings? The Old Testament. Timothy was not raised on the New Testament. The New Testament hadn't been written yet. So verse 15 refers to the Old Testament. Then he says, "the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." Then he began verse 16 with the expression "All Scripture is *theopneustos*." So the "All," which is *pas*, is limited to the Old Testament in this context. It's not to say that later Scripture, the New Testament, is not God-breathed. It's just to say that the Old Testament is God-breathed. Now, to see that the New Testament writings of Paul the apostle are equally God-breathed, turn to second Peter 3:16. Always you can remember these two passages because second Timothy 3:16, and second Peter 3:16 same chapter and verse divisions. Here's Peter, and he's talking about Paul and Paul's letters and he says in verse 16, "as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own

destruction. Notice expression "as they do the rest of the Scriptures." That puts Paul's writings on par with the Old Testament. Now the second question is "how does the "All" relate to the Apocrypha? Well, first of all, what is the Apocrypha? If you have a friend who is Roman Catholic and you look at their Bible they'll have 14 other books between the OT and the NT. This is called the Apocrypha or secret writings. They're good history to read but they're not divinely inspired. And we know that because of two reasons that stand in cause-effect relationship. Reason one is the cause, namely that the Apocrypha books say there were no prophets living at the time they were written; reason two is the effect of this: the Jews didn't accept them as divinely inspired. The reason they are considered canonical today is because the Council of Trent (1546-1563) voted they were divinely inspired. But neither OT Israel nor the NT Church recognized them as divinely inspired. You should know that most Bibles throughout church history have contained the Apocrypha. Beginning with Jerome who translated the Bible into Latin in the 4th century BC the Apocrypha has been included. But the church did not accept the Apocrypha as canonical. They simply said they were good for background reading on history and forgetting word studies to understand the original meanings of certain words during the inter-testament period. It was only when the reformers in the 1500s began to question certain doctrines taught by the Roman Catholic Church, such as prayers for the dead, indulgences, et.al... that the Roman Catholic Church had a Council and confirmed that the Apocrypha were canonical literature. So, no, Paul, in writing 2 Timothy 3:16, "All Scripture is God breathed" did not intend that to include the Apocrypha. The Apocrypha was not considered by Paul to be Scripture.

Alright, let's move on. In your index to the NT all 13 of Paul's letters are in the NT section. In the list you see the four Gospels; Matthew, Mark, Luke and John; Acts; then Romans. Romans is the first book written by Paul in the list. And Romans is the church's first systematic theology but Romans is not the first letter Paul wrote which tells us that the order of his letters in your Bible is not the order in which they were written. The order in your Bible is due to the length of his letters. His longest letter first tapering off to his shortest letter, Titus. So, while that may interest us we'd like to know the actual order in which he wrote his letters.

Why do we want to know the actual order? What difference does it make? All the letters were written under divine inspiration and are infallible so who

cares? Well, the truth of the matter is that the apostles were human beings and as human beings they grew spiritually. Therefore there is a progression in their thought as the Lord taught them new truths. It should be quite evident that when Paul finished his ministry he knew a lot more than when he began. That doesn't make his later writings more important than his earlier or more inspired, it's just an observation that the human element in inspiration is protected and so we can see Paul's spiritual development through his writings. And what we would expect is that his earlier writings would be more basic, more fundamental and his later writings would be more advanced, more profound.

Now, the easiest way to remember the order Paul wrote these books is to connect them to his four missionary journeys. These journeys are described in Acts 13-28 and I've given you a handout so let's look at the handout.

Paul the Learner	Paul the Evangelist					Paul the Trainer		
Paul spends nearly 3 years at Damascus and 10 years in obscurity in Syria and Cilicia before he is ready for mission work	1st Journey Acts 13-14:28	The Jerusalem Council (A.D.50) Acts 15	2nd Journey Acts 15:36-18:22	3rd Journey Acts 18:23-19:14	4th Journey 1st Imprisonment (Caesarea & Rome) Acts 21:15-28:31	Freedom	2nd Imprisonment (Rome)	
	Galatians (A.D.49)			1 Thessalonians (A.D.51)	1 Corinthians (A.D.55)	Ephesians (A.D.60)	1 Timothy (A.D.62)	2 Timothy (A.D.57)
				2 Thessalonians (A.D.51)	2nd Corinthians (A.D.55)	Colossians (A.D.61)	Titus (A.D.66)	
					Romans (A.D.56,57)	Philemon (A.D.61)		
						Philippians (A.D.62)		

What we're interested in right now is Paul's missionary journeys. So find Paul's 1st Journey and stay with me. 1st Journey described in Acts 13-14. Now drop down, how many letters did Paul write out of that Journey? One. What

is it? Galatians. What year did he write it? AD49. We just finished Galatians a few months ago. What was the basic doctrine Paul taught the Galatians? The doctrines of justification by grace through faith and sanctification by grace through faith. Always remember that both justification and sanctification occur by the same mechanics, you're not justified by grace through faith and then you're sanctified by works, you're justified by grace through faith and you're sanctified by grace through faith. That's the Book of Galatians. Then on your handout, the next box to the right is the Jerusalem Council that occurred in Acts 15:1-35, it was AD50. After the Jerusalem Council you see the 2nd Journey. Drop down, how many epistles did Paul write? Two. 1 Thessalonians and 2 Thessalonians, both AD51. These are the next two letters we'll be studying. If you want the verses for the 2nd Journey they are Acts 15:36-18:22. What is written in 1 and 2 Thessalonians has its background in Acts 15:36-18:22. Next, 3rd Journey. How many letters? Three. Do you see the pattern? 1st Journey, one letter, 2nd Journey, two letters, 3rd Journey, three letters. This makes it easy to remember. So to be thorough, on the 3rd Journey Paul writes 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians and Romans. Then we come to the 4th Journey, or what they call the 1st Imprisonment, which was actually a missionary journey too since Paul evangelized the whole Praetorian Guard in Rome. And during that 4th Journey he writes, you guessed it, four epistles, so that stays with the pattern. The four are Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon and Philippians. Then the last three break the pattern, they come after the Book of Acts was written, and they are 1 Timothy, Titus and 2 Timothy. In all that's thirteen epistles which is a very large chunk of your NT.

Now we've already taught Paul's earliest epistle, Galatians, today we're going to move to his second epistle, 1 Thessalonians. This is strategic. The strategy has three stages. The first stage was to study the Book of Acts verse by verse to get the background. We've done that. The Book of Acts is one of the most misunderstood books in the NT, especially since the rise of the charismatic movement a century ago. You can't make Acts normative for all time. Acts is by nature a transitional book. And transitions by definition aren't normal. So we study Acts to discover what happened in history not what must happen. Acts gives us a report of what happened, not doctrine. Never build doctrine from Acts because if you do you'll wind up with contradictions. Rather you build doctrine from the epistles. But Acts is the historical background for the epistles so you want to have a handle on Acts. If you missed that study I

suggest you get that series on MP3 and work through it. It will answer a lot of questions; it's one of the most critical books to understand today.

The second aspect of this strategy is to recognize that Paul grew spiritually throughout his writings. Paul was an apostle and every letter he wrote is inspired by God the Holy Spirit but Paul did grow spiritually. So we would expect to find a progression of spiritual growth in Paul's writings. We said in Acts that as Paul advanced spiritually his focus shifted from evangelism to training. Early on Paul was vocal, he was interactive, he was in the synagogue, he was in the streets, and he was in the lecture halls of the ancient world, so early on he's very public in his ministry and very evangelistic. Later Paul realized his time on earth was coming to an end and so he begins to shift from evangelism to training. Paul begins to isolate himself and spend time with his best students, men who were elders by that time, and pour into them his knowledge through teaching so they would be firmly established. So he begins to slip away and become more private, he's studying more, he's writing more, he's behind closed doors and you can see this by the chart, that as he nears the end of his ministry he writes much more. That's a sign you are near the end and you want to leave something in the hands of the people that they can go back to over and over and establish more and more men who could lead the church, more and more men who could preach the word when he was gone.

The third aspect of this strategy is to see doctrinal advancement in Paul's writings. In other words, Paul's later writings are more advanced doctrinally than his earlier writings. And these can be placed in three categories. First, there are infancy writings and by that we mean the focus is on the basic Christian doctrine. Infancy is just a label, it's not knocking it, just like a baby needs milk to grow, a new or immature believer needs milk doctrine and this first category is all about milk doctrine. Second, there are childhood writings and these focus on intermediate Christian doctrine. You've been through the basics, you've grown on the milk, now it's time to start eating meat and so this category is sort of a mixture of milk and meat. Third, there are adult writings and these focus on advanced Christian doctrine. This is pure meat; you're on an advanced diet of Bible doctrine. So there's progression from infancy to childhood to adulthood in Paul's epistles. There is a clear advancement through Paul's writings so let's see what writings are in what categories.

The first category, the infant writings he wrote on missionary journey's 1, 2 and 3, so you might shade the box somewhere, somehow annotate that the books from these three journeys' are all in the first category of what I call infancy, they cover basic Christian doctrine, milk. Now don't be embarrassed if you haven't grown beyond this milk stage. There's very little training going on in Christian circles today so most Christians never grow out of the milk stage. But if you know anything about milk, they call mothers' milk liquid gold, these are basic, these are the building blocks of the Christian life and without these you can never get to the deep doctrine, you just can't do it because learning Christianity is step by step, lesson by lesson and you don't learn lesson 54 before you learn lessons 1-53. There's an order and a sequence to learning Christianity. So the infant doctrines are essential.

Your milk doctrine is Galatians which is about justification by grace alone through faith alone and sanctification by grace through faith alone. You want to understand how a sinner gets right with God and how a saved sinner can then grow spiritually, that's fundamental. If you haven't got that you haven't got anything. Then you have 1 Thessalonians and 2 Thessalonians and they are both about Bible prophecy. Bible prophecy is very practical for day to day living; this is where we're headed in this series. When I get up in the morning what's my basic focus from morning till evening, what do I think about? And prayerfully you will learn how to focus your attention on Christ's any-moment coming. That is a fundamental focus to living the Christian life. Then you have 1 and 2 Corinthians, they're both dealing with problems of carnality, the stuff new believers struggle with, breaking old sin patterns and creating new godly patterns and finally you have Romans and Romans deals with the righteousness of God and the salvific plan of God, the big picture of how God is running history. And all six of these books are basic Christianity.

The second category is the fourth missionary journey, those four books listed below where it says Paul's 1st Imprisonment. All four of those are what we've called childhood and they focus on intermediate Christian doctrine. The structure in these books is always doctrine first and then application or experience, how the doctrine works. So there's a mix of doctrine and experience in these books. Ephesians deals with the unity of Jew and Gentile in one body called the Church which is a new people of God that is neither Jew nor Gentile. Philippians furthers this by dealing with unity, how to

maintain unity in doctrine, how to be likeminded. Colossians is about the pre-eminence of Christ, how Christ is central to Christian thinking which will spur you on to spiritual maturity. Philemon is doctrine. So these four are intermediate doctrines - you're moving from milk doctrine to meat doctrine.

The third group is everything after Paul's imprisonment, so you can mark those three books somehow to demarcate that this is adulthood and these books all present advanced Bible doctrine, pure meat. These three books are called the Pastoral epistles which means they are all about shepherding. They are very important because they were written after the events of the Book of Acts. And since Acts is a transitional book and not the norm, Paul wrote the Pastoral epistles in order to give us a picture of the normative Church. People always want to get back to Acts. Actually they should want to get back to the Pastoral epistles because they are defining the norm of the Church. These three epistles are almost purely doctrinal. There is very little about experience in the Pastoral Epistles. So 1 Timothy deals with how to guard the church against false teachers, how to deal with various groups in the church that are upsetting people. That's all for mature believers. You don't send baby believers in to solve difficult problems. Titus gives you the qualifications of elders and how to spot false teachers. It is very intensely doctrinal. Finally 2 Timothy gives a challenge to endure; in it Paul predicts the church will go apostate and so he encourages pastors to endure with sound teaching assuring them that God is faithful. And whether people listen to the word or not is not your concern, just preach the word!

Now that we've given the sequence of Paul's writings do you see the trend of Paul's writings? We have these three stages of Paul's writings that advance from infancy to childhood to adulthood. And what the Charismatics and neo-Pentecostals and Assembly of God want us to do is go back to the infancy stage, things like Acts and 1 Corinthians and stay there in immaturity. Apparently that's where all the real spirituality is taking place and those of us who love doctrine are just the old fuddy duddies who take the Bible too seriously. Well, they don't really follow Paul because Paul's life begins with an emphasis on experience and ends with an emphasis on doctrine. I think some Christians, particularly here at our congregation, go through this and they wonder as they grew up in the Christian life where all the emotions went. And they start to wonder this because someone comes in and says, you guys are bunch of duds, where's your emotion, I need to see the emotion; I

need to see hands waving in the air. And they want to see all this because they wrongly attribute emotion to the Holy Spirit, so when they don't see emotion they say I don't see the Holy Spirit. Emotions are not the Holy Spirit. I can sit down with you over a Texas Ranger baseball game and we can generate a lot of emotions. Now is that the Holy Spirit? And so if enough people say where are your emotions, you start to wonder, is something wrong with me? And you get a complex about it. Nothing is wrong with you. You just grew up. It's fine, don't worry about it, Paul went through the same thing. It didn't mean he lost his spirituality or something, it's a natural progression. Who in our society are the people who have all the emotions, they're up one day they're down the next, its chaos and every parent has a time with this stage. Teenagers. That's a period of instability and so when the teenagers come in and they're all over the place, every other day there's a crisis - one day it's boo hoo and the next day their on cloud nine. Just ignore it, its immaturity. Advanced spirituality is always accompanied by stability in life, a relaxed mental attitude and not a lot of emotion. So the tendency in Paul's growth is to emphasize doctrine more and more as he develops and to leave all this experiential stuff behind.

Let me give you an outline of the book and the theme and then we'll go into one of the unique things of 1 Thessalonians. As far as the structure of the book there are a number of different suggestions. It's very frustrating because on one hand, this is a letter, it's just a letter that was written from Paul to his friends at Thessalonica, and it's not like Paul sat down and said, alright, how do I want to structure my letter? You don't sit down and structure a letter; you sit down and structure a doctoral thesis. On one hand you say, we shouldn't even outline the letter because it's not meant to be outlined, it's just a personal letter. On the other hand you want to outline it so you can remember it. If we were the Thessalonians it would be much easier to remember but we're not the Thessalonians, we're the Fredericksburgians and so we're reading someone else's letter. It's not as personal to us and we don't read it personally. Therefore one of the best things to do is to outline the letter and isolate the major theme so we have something to remember, a focus so five years from now we don't say, huh, what's 1 Thessalonians all about and we run around like clueless Christians, not even knowing our own book. Outlines help us remember.

One of the easiest to follow is Dr Walvoord's suggestion. Many of you know Dr Walvoord through his writings. I got to meet him once at a conference about a year or two before he passed away. And I happened to win one of his books at that conference and I got him to sign it. Not that we're worshipping him or anything but Dr Walvoord has been a giant as far as God's plan for teaching prophecy in the 20th century is concerned. Dr Walvoord almost single handedly informed much of the Church about the great doctrine of the Rapture of the Church. And since 1 Thessalonians gives more attention to the Rapture of the Church than any other NT book I figured it might be good to read Dr Walvoord's commentary on it. He says you can divide it by chapters. Chapter divisions are not inspired, of course, they were added in the year 1227AD by Stephen Langton, an Archbishop of Canterbury. The reason they were added is because it makes it easier for everyone to get on the same page. Sometimes chapter divisions are unfortunate because they break the flow of thought but in most cases they're not too much of a hindrance to seeing the flow. 1 Thessalonians was broken into five chapters and Dr Walvoord breaks it up into these five chapters. Chapter 1 he calls Salvation, chapter 2 he calls Service, chapter 3 he calls Sanctification, chapter 4 he calls Surety and chapter 5 he calls Safety. So if you want a device to help you learn and keep in mind 1 Thessalonians the 5 S', Salvation, Service, Sanctification, Surety and Safety should be memorized. So let's go through these then we'll come to the major theme.

To see how chapter 1 focuses on Salvation observe verse 4, "knowing, brethren beloved by God, His choice of you;" notice the doctrine of election which relates to salvation. Verse 5, "for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction;" notice the gospel and the Holy Spirit, both relate to salvation and verse 8, "For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth." Notice the evangelism that also relates to salvation. And verse 9, "For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God," turning to God from idols is the doctrine of repentance and it too relates to salvation. So the major theme of chapter 1 is our first S, Salvation.

If chapter 1 is salvation then chapter 2 focuses on Service so let's see how it's related. In 2:8, "Having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased to

impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives” that’s service. They gave their own lives to them to serve them as an example of how to live the Christian life. Verse 9, “For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you,” that’s the example of service. Verse 11, “just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children ¹²so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.” They say the believer is in training for reigning. And our training is in service to one another, so he’s trying to get them to follow their example of service. So chapter 2 describes the second S, Service.

Chapter 1 is Salvation, chapter 2 is Service, now chapter 3, the third S is Sanctification. We mean phase two of Sanctification, experiential or progressive sanctification, how to grow in the Christian life. Notice 3:6, Timothy had been sent to check up on them because they were under intense trial and persecution and here’s the report, verse 6, “But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always think kindly of us, longing to see us just as we also long to see you, ⁷for this reason, brethren, in all our distress and affliction we were comforted about you through your faith;” they were walking by faith and you have to walk by faith if you’re going to grow spiritually. And here we have reported that they were walking by faith through the trials and tribulations they were facing. So chapter 3 contributes to the third S, Sanctification.

Chapter 1 is Salvation, chapter 2 is Service, chapter 3 is Sanctification and Chapter 4, the fourth S, is Surety. We can be sure about the resurrection of our lost loved one’s. What’s the future for believers that have passed away before us? What will happen to them when the Lord returns for us? 1 Thess 4:14, “For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.” Verse 16, “for the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.” These words give assurance to us so we can be Sure, that’s our fourth S, Surety.

Salvation, Service, Sanctification, Surety and now chapter 5 is the fifth S, is Safety. Chapter 5 deals largely with the day of the Lord, an Old Testament concept that confused the Thessalonians. It was a day of darkness and of wrath and the Thessalonians were afraid they would have to enter the day of the Lord. So Paul assures them of their Safety. Verse 2, "for you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. 3 while they are saying, "peace and safety!" Then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape. 4 but you, brethren, are not in darkness, that that they would overtake you like a thief;" and now come down to verse nine. "For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with him." And therefore chapter 5 Paul gives us the fifth S, which is Safety. So that's how will divide the book will divided into five basic chapters which we have laid before us and will utilize the 5 S' of Thessalonians to work our way through.

Now what this will do for you if you just want a simple tool, if you want to learn where some of the truths related to these 5S's are found in the Bible, that you memorize the 5S's; salvation, 1 Thessalonians 1, service, 1 Thessalonians 2, sanctification, 1 Thessalonians 3, surety, 1 Thessalonians 4 and safety, 1 Thessalonians 5. It's not an exhaustive treatment of these five doctrines, these five great areas of Christian truth, but it will give you a chapter to turn to if you need some data about one of these five doctrines.

Now, I mentioned Dr. Walvoord earlier and we want to quote from him. He was an expert on Bible prophecy and he, along with other scholars, noticed that 1 Thessalonians has an interesting trait. He says "In this epistle there is constant reference to future things, each chapter closing with some allusion to prophecy." So prophecy is a dominant theme in 1st Thessalonians. And since prophecy is in the infant stage of Paul's writings and we know prophecy is an infant truth. It's basic and crucial to the Christian life, to living practically on a day by day basis, to walking by faith through the trials and tribulations we all face. Now let's check and see if Dr. Walvoord was correct. Does each chapter end with some allusion to prophecy?

Chapter 1, verse 9, "For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a

living and true God, ¹⁰and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, *that is* Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.” Notice the last expression, “the wrath to come” that refers to a future wrath coming upon the world. But believers are rescued from the wrath.

Turn to the end of chapter 2, verse 19, “for who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at his coming?” There’s the Lord Jesus at his coming. That clearly is a reference to prophecy.

Now if you’ll turn to the end of chapter 3, verse 13, “so that He may establish your hearts without blame in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.” So again we see the coming of the Lord Jesus mentioned, that’s a prophetic truth. Jesus is coming back whether people realize it or not.

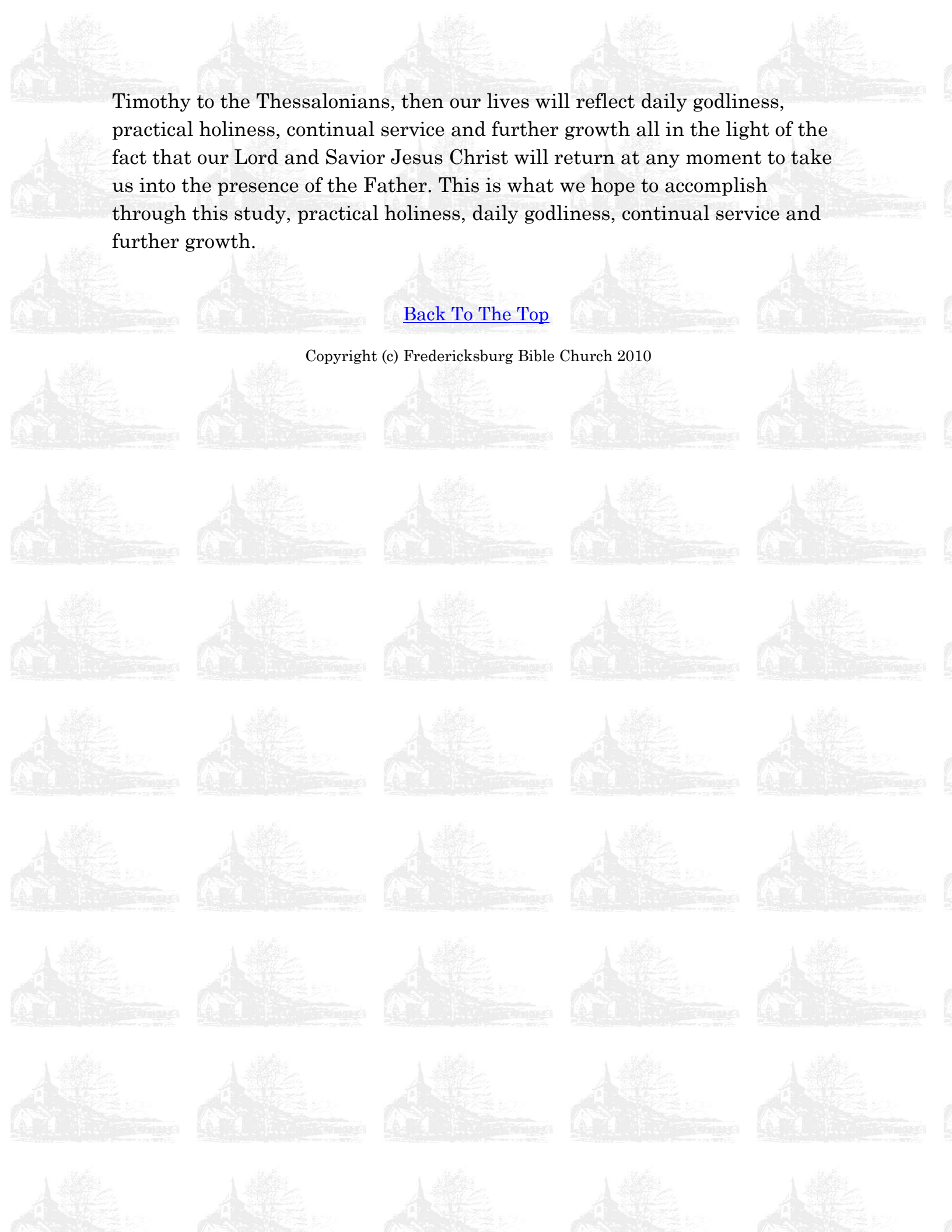
At the end of chapter 4 we have the most extensive note on prophecy. But we’re just going to read verse 17 because Dr. Walvoord’s point is simply to show that the end of each chapter concludes with an allusion to prophecy. “Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.” Obviously that’s not present truth, that’s the future truth, so again the chapter ends with a reference to prophecy.

Finally, in chapter 5, which is also very, very prophetic, come to the end of the chapter in verse 23. As Paul concludes his letter he says, “now may the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” So again, the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is in you and this he concludes on a prophetic note.

Now what can we say in conclusion is the theme of 1st Thessalonians. The theme of 1st Thessalonians is practical living in light of Christ’s any moment return. Let’s repeat that: practical living in light of Christ’s any moment return. Now when we say Christ is returning it presupposes that he’s already come. You can’t return somewhere you’ve never been. So **all** the references to Christ coming in this letter referred to his second coming. They also presuppose a second doctrine: the resurrection, the physical, literal, bodily

resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ in the first century. He comes back is not a come back to the spirit, oooooooh, spooky thing in the air. He's going to come back in a literal, real, physical, human body. The same body that he was resurrected in, in the first century. The same body that Mary and Martha saw, the same body that the disciples saw, the same body the Thomas, doubting Thomas, reached out and touched the nail scarred hands, and put his hand in his side, the same body that over 500 people saw. The resurrected body of Christ is right now seated at the right hand of the father in the heavenly places. And he's going to return in that body. Now, in light of the fact that he is going to return, how ought we to be living. We're not told when he will return. We're only told that he is going to return. So, his coming is both uncertain and certain. It's uncertain as to when it will occur, it is certain as to the fact that it will occur. Now, when you were little boy or girl and you knew your mother or your father was going away for a few minutes and they told you to behave you probably sat there as a little child and considered whether you would be able to get away with whatever you wanted to do before they returned and somehow you would be able to escape being caught. And you knew there was risk. But you weighed the risk versus the satisfaction you got out of doing whatever it is you wanted to do. And there were times when you were caught red-handed. And it was very unpleasant. Because you are embarrassed. And the look on your face told all. Now we have all done that. And we all understand the principle that it is certain our parents would return. But it was uncertain when they would return. And we made decisions based on that as to how we would live in the present, waiting for their return.

Now the Christian understands that the Lord Jesus Christ has departed and now sits at the right hand of the father on high. And he knows that the Lord Jesus Christ will stand up off of the Father's throne and will return. This is certain. It is not so certain when it will occur. The believers of the first century truly lived in light of his any moment return. They expected him to return very soon. We now live almost 2000 years after Christ's ascension to the right hand of the Father. And we have lost much of this expectancy. Christians no longer live in light of Christ's any moment return. For if the Lord has delayed His return for almost 2000 years surely, we reason, it will be delayed a lot longer. And therefore the first epistle to the Thessalonians is a very, very important and very practical letter that needs to be recovered by the church and lived in light of. If we heed the teaching of Paul and Silas and



Timothy to the Thessalonians, then our lives will reflect daily godliness, practical holiness, continual service and further growth all in the light of the fact that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will return at any moment to take us into the presence of the Father. This is what we hope to accomplish through this study, practical holiness, daily godliness, continual service and further growth.

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