



The Second Coming
of Christ

Thoughts from First Thessalonians ...

Prayers for the Brethren (cont.)

It is hard to comprehend the earnest desire that the Lord Jesus has for the salvation of even one soul. As the exhibition and embodiment of the concept that "God is love," Jesus was willing to leave the comfort zone of heaven willingly to seek and to save that which was lost. The scripture positively vibrates with the idea that if there were only one who would believe, Jesus would still have come and suffered. Thus, when the blind man who was healed at Siloam was put out of the synagogue because he would not back down on his stand that the One who healed him was a prophet, Jesus personally came to him to comfort and encourage him. The message resounds: Jesus cares for each soul.

The apostle Paul, as an imitator of His Lord, likewise had an intense desire for each person to be reconciled to God. But he also recognized that if a person were immersed into Christ but then at some point was pulled back into the world, the immersion was wasted. Therefore he continues to have great concern for the positive progress of each saint in each congregation, as exemplified in his prayers for the brethren in Thessalonica.

- **Increase and abound** — Part of his long petitioning was that both the Father and the Lord Jesus Himself would work to get Paul back to the brethren in Thessalonica. Part of his reasoning for this earnest desire and supplication was expressed as "may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another" (1 Thessalonians 3:12). One of God's major purposes is to have His love duplicated in His children. Jesus, in His "sermon on the mount," stated, "But I say to you, *love your enemies*, and pray for those who persecute you, in order that you may be the sons of your Father who is heaven" (Matthew 5:44,45). It is fitting, therefore, that Paul should petition the Almighty that the brethren would increase and abound in this love for one another. But the prayer for such love continues, that their love would also increase and abound "for all men, just as we also do for you." When the church loses its focus — when it forgets its mission is to seek and to save the lost — then everything slowly implodes. The apostle encouraged them to keep that focus, abounding in love for the lost among the souls of men, just as he increased and abounded in love for them.
- **Establish your hearts** — The Christian is not working on himself by himself; he has help and encouragement from the brethren, and help and encouragement from the Lord Himself. Paul explains, building off the "abounding in love" comments, "so that He may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness before our God and Father" (1 Thessalonians 3:13). Once again, the scripture emphasizes what God can do for those who are truly faithful in love toward Him and His word: He can make the heart of the saint *unblamable in holiness* while the Christian is still walking during the years of his earthly sojourn!
- **The coming of Christ** — "Be holy yourselves in all your behavior," was the admonition of the apostle Peter. He then quoted from the Law to emphasize his point, "because it is written," said he, " 'You shall be holy, for I am holy.' " (1 Peter 1:15,16). As the brethren "cleanse themselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Corinthians 7:1), they are "unblamable in holiness at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints."

Christians must be
found busy doing
the things that
please King Jesus

Jesus is coming again! He will bring with Him "those who have fallen asleep in Jesus," those who passed from earth and regarded by the King as faithful. The disciples of Christ therefore need to be found busy doing the things that please King Jesus: abounding in love for one another and for the lost, perfecting holiness, and eagerly awaiting the appearing the the King and Savior!

JAY WILSON