Moreover, this work ethic is one that shows properly God’s gracious character to the fallen world of unbelievers around us who are here called “outsiders.” When a Christian works hard, minds his or her own business, and leads a quiet orderly life, he glorifies God and by this activity “behaves properly toward outsiders” by “not being in any need.”

Proverbs 21:25-26 - 25 The desire of the sluggard puts him to death. For his hands refuse to work; 26 All day long he is craving, While the righteous gives and does not hold back. NASB

1 Thessalonians 4:13-14 - 13 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. 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. NASU

A. 13 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. – Here Paul shifts his argument to obviously instruct them in area of doctrine of which they were either confused or had received insufficient instruction, thus his statement, “But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren.” The Thessalonians no doubt had many theological questions for Timothy upon his visit, many of which were obviously relayed to Paul which he addresses in these Thessalonians letters. It is clear from this verse and others like it, that Paul is answering questions or giving more complete framework to doctrinal issues that were of interest to them. At the top of this list were the eschatological issues of the state of believers who die, and the second coming of Christ, issues which Paul answers in detail from here to the end of the letter. Now of those Christians who have died he comments, “about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope.” We know for sure that these are Christians who have died because verse 15 contrasts these with “those who are alive.” It is interesting to note that this is very common in the New Testament which often speaks of Christians who die as those who have “fallen asleep.” Moreover, these are held in this verse in contrast to “the rest who have no hope.” The contrast is that Christians who die will certainly be reunited with their Christian loved ones at Christ’s second coming (v-14), therefore we do not “grieve” with unending sorrow “as the rest who have no hope,” a reference no doubt to unbelievers who do not posses the Christian hope of the resurrection of the dead. Instead we living Christians do have the hope that we will surely be reunited with Christians “who are asleep,” and this hope reassures us “so that you will not grieve as do the rest.” Dear Christian take hope from this verse, that every Christian friend or relative that you have ever had or will have who dies, will certainly see you again at the second coming of Christ, and you shall never again be cutoff from fellowship forever and ever, world without end.

1 Corinthians 15:20-24 - 20 But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. 21 For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive. 23 But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ’s at His coming. 24 Then comes the end, when He delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. NASB

2 Corinthians 4:14-15 - 14 knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you. NASB

2 Corinthians 5:1-4 - 1 For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 2 For indeed in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven; 3 inasmuch as we, having put it on, shall not be found naked. 4 For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed, but to be clothed, in order that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. NASB

This is not only repeated in many New Testament passages, but is the main focus of Paul’s detailed explanation of the second coming in verses 15-17, where in verse 17 he speaks explicitly of the reuniting, “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.”

B. 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. – Note well the reason for our hope. “Jesus died and rose again.” We Christians in fact “believe that Jesus died and rose again,” and this is our great assurance that He has conquered the grave. Paul’s point is this, if we “believe that Jesus died and rose again,” then “even so,” in the same manner we believe that “God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.” This is Paul’s instruction to the young Christians about a vital Christian truth concerning the resurrection of the dead. Notice, it is the Father’s plan or decree, “God” will bring “with Him,” (that is Christ), “those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.” The reuniting of Christian believers of all ages is the eternal decree of God, which has been His plan for us from before the beginning of time, a fact clear from His omniscience. This was also a key issue of Jesus’ teaching concerning His second coming.

Matthew 24:31 - 31 "And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other. NASB
Mark 13:27 - 27 "And then He will send forth the angels, and will gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest end of the earth, to the farthest end of heaven. NASB

1 Thessalonians 4:15 - 15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. NASU

A. 15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord – Now Paul is about to make a statement of incredible magnitude, “for this we say to you,” and he wants to assure his readers that this pronouncement is not his own, but in fact the Lord is the author of it. Calvin points out that what is about to be said is “incredible to the human mind and also promises what is above the power and choice of men, he premises that he does not bring forward anything that is his own, or that proceeds from men, but that the Lord is the author of it. It is probable, however, that the ‘word of the Lord’ means what was taken from His discourses.” Consider the supernatural nature of such an event as the Second Coming of Christ coming to resurrect those who are “asleep” in Him and to gather them with His living saints in the sky by an amazing appearance in the clouds. This is in fact an incredible statement. Here Paul makes specific reference to “the word of the Lord.” Some argue that Paul is giving an authoritative prophetic utterance of knowledge here while others maintain he is simply quoting a saying of Jesus, either from one of Jesus sermons or from an actual Gospel account such as Mark or Matthew’s record of the Olivet Discourse. Regardless of which of these may be true, the Lord Himself did give extensive teaching about His coming ‘parousia’ in the Olivet Discourse and in many other places as well which are recorded for us in the Gospels. In fact several commentators believe this is a direct reference to the Olivet Discourse, specifically the passage in Mark 13:24-27 and Matthew 24:30-31. I certainly do believe this myself. An analysis of this passage alongside of the Olivet Discourse reveals remarkable similarities (see attached chart on Text Comparison 1 Thess 4 and Matt 24).

Mark 13:24-27 - 24 "But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers that are in the heavens will be shaken. 26 "And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. 27 "And then He will send forth the angels, and will gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest end of the earth, to the farthest end of heaven. NASB
Matthew 24:29-31 - 29 "But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken, 30 and then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. 31 "And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other. NASB

Not only this but it is very apparent that resurrection of dead saints along with translation of living saints is a key feature in the Second Coming, one must acknowledge that this feature
exists as a key component of the Second Coming in every passage that speaks of it, whether or not it gives further details about this feature or not. In one context the writer may have in view a specific feature of the Second Coming such as the destruction of the wicked and unbelieving (2 Thes 1:7-10), or of the establishment of the Kingdom on earth (Rev 20:1-10), but that does mean then that the Second Coming does not include key features which are spoken of in other passages where the writer has that feature in view. Rather, we get a much clearer picture in our minds of all of the events which culminate at the Second Coming, and the order in which they do, as we piece together all the different passages which refer to it. And even though there are many passages which give many features and chronological order of events, the Second Coming is an event of such magnanimous proportions and supernatural intervention into the natural order of events that it we cannot get a perfect picture nor can we comprehend the whole nature and sense of what will happen, but will instead “marvel at” His glorious appearing with much wonder and awe (2 Thes 1:10). In summary, Paul’s specific reference to “the word of the Lord” in my view is a reference to the Olivet Discourse, either a direct quotation from Paul’s memory or his paraphrase of an Olivet passage. Regardless of the validity of my position on this, we understand that Paul is making the point that what he is about to say, he says as a direct quotation of God’s Word and by God’s authority, whether that be a previously recorded quote or not.

B. that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep – This statement by Paul actually continues into verse 16-17, where Paul further clarifies his meaning. It is clear from this verse however that Paul expects that Lord to return during his lifetime, or at the very least expects living believers to live in light of that expectation. This is clear from the words that “we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord.” This clearly shows that the Lord is coming and that there will be those who “alive and remain until the coming of the Lord.” But Paul’s main point in this verse is to show that the believers who have “fallen asleep in Jesus, v-14,” are going to precede those who are “alive and remain.” The meaning here is, that they who would be alive at “the coming of the Lord” Jesus, would not be ‘changed’ and received up into glory before those who were in there graves were raised up. This is his design in the words “will not precede those who have fallen asleep.” This point is very clear therefore, that is, at the Second Coming of Christ He will gather together His elect, and there will be a resurrection of dead believers which will precede the translation of living believers into the air to meet Christ when He comes. This is also clear from other passages.

John 11:25-26 - 25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies, 26 and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" NASB

1 Corinthians 6:14 - 14 Now God has not only raised the Lord, but will also raise us up through His power. NASB

Romans 8:11 - 11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you. NASB

1 Corinthians 15:50-54 - 51 Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. NASB

2 Corinthians 4:14 - 14 knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you. NASB

Mark 13:26-27 - 26 “And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. 27 "And then He will send forth the angels, and will gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest end of the earth, to the farthest end of heaven. NASB

1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 - 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. 17 Questions? shaansloan@att.net www.heavenslight.org