



A Brief Overview of 1 THESSALONIANS

Chapters 4 & 5

Outline – 1 Thessalonians 1-5

- I. Comfort and Encouragement to Persevere in Adversity (1-3):
 - A. Salutation (1:1).
 - B. **Remembrance:** The Thessalonians' conversion was worth remembering, and they should be encouraged by it, as was Paul (1:2-2:16).
 - C. **Comfort:** The Thessalonians' spiritual well-being and persistence was once a cause of great concern to Paul, but it is now a source of great strength and comfort (2:17-3:13).
- II. Doctrinal Explanations and Moral Admonitions (4-5):
 - A. **Continue:** Abound in purity, holiness and love (4:1-12)
 - B. **Comfort:** Certainty and timing of Jesus' return (4:13-5:11)
 - C. **Distinguish:** Treat others based on status and stature (5:12-15)
 - D. **Revelation:** Cling to God's Word and reject error (5:16-22)
 - E. Closing and Benediction (5:23-28)

The Sorrow of Ignorance

10. [Chris Z.] Before Paul's writing, what hope did the Thessalonians have for their brethren, who had died in Christ?

*But I do not want you to be ¹ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you ³sorrow as others who have ²no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. 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 by no means precede those who are asleep.** (4:13-15)*

- Had no hope – assumed they were dead, gone forever.
- **Progression:** Ignorance → Hopelessness → Unnecessary Sorrow

Nature of the Lord's Return

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words. (4:16-18)

- Destroys premillennial notion of a **silent, invisible** return and an **earthly** reign in Jerusalem for 1000 years **followed** by resurrection.
- See also: **Jeremiah 22:24-30; Matthew 1:11-12**

Remembering Words of Comfort

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.
Therefore comfort one another with these words. (4:16-18)

11. [Dean] Why would they need to “comfort one another” if they all received the same words? Lessons?
- Proves that knowledge, words can be powerful in changing people, comforting them (**1 John 1:4; 2 Timothy 3:16-17**). ... How?
 - **Halts Progression:** Ignorance → Hopelessness → Unnecessary Sorrow
 - In severe distress, we are all capable of forgetting, needing reminder.
 - The strong today may be the weak tomorrow (**Job 4:1-6; Galatians 6:1-2**).



1 THESSALONIANS 5:1-28

Watch and Be Sober

“Like a Thief in the Night”

1. [Michael V.] How is the Lord’s return like a thief and a pregnant woman?

*But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For you yourselves know perfectly that **the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night**. For when they say, “Peace and safety!” then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And **they shall not escape**. (5:1-3)*

- It will be destructive, sudden, inevitable – but seem so remote people will procrastinate, forget, or even deny (**Matthew 24:42-25:30; 2 Peter 3:1-10**).
- Therefore, steadfast vigilance is required on our part ... How?

Light or Darkness?

2. [Caleb V.] What does it mean to be a “son of light” or “son of day”? Contrast this with being a “son of night” or “son of darkness”.

But you, brethren, are **not in darkness**, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. **You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness.** Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. (5:4-7)

- Take advantage of opportunity now (**John 9:4; Ephesians 5:14-18**).
- “Sons of the day” realize that all is open, obvious before God as in daylight.
- “Sons of the night” think their path is hidden, that no one sees their sins (**Isaiah 29:15; 47:10**).
- Avoid works of darkness (**John 3:19-21; Romans 13:12-14; Ephesians 5:5-13**)

“Take up the whole armor of God”

3. When does the Christian take off his spiritual armor?

But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation. (5:8)

- Armor is required as long as enemy threatens (**1 Peter 5:8-9; Romans 13:12-14; Ephesians 6:10-19**).
- Rest when fighting is over, when we rest in Jesus (**1 Thessalonians 4:14**).
- Armor is provided by God, like what He wears Himself (**Ephesians 6:13; Isaiah 59:16-18**)!

“Desire to Depart and Be with Christ”

4. How do we “live together with Him” with those who “sleep” (verse 10)?
For God did **not appoint us** to wrath, but to **obtain salvation** through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we **wake or sleep**, we should **live together with Him**. Therefore **comfort each other** and edify one another, **just as you also are doing**. (5:9-11)
- Condensed summary of **4:15-17**: Whether dead or alive, neither state will prevent us from living (future tense) with Christ.
 - Sheds no light on state of the dead.
 - Other passages indicate continued consciousness and service after death (**Revelation 7:15; 22:3; Philippians 1:23**).

“For they keep watch over your souls”

And we **urge** you, brethren, to **recognize** those who **labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake. **Be at peace among yourselves.** (5:12-13)**

5. [Lance] Who are “those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you”? Could this refer to evangelists?
 - Only elders are called “overseers” and placed “over us” (**Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Peter 5:1-5; Hebrews 13:7, 17**).
 - Where is the verse placing evangelists “over us”?
 - Nobody likes having someone “over” them.
 - Admonition to “*be at peace*” directly addresses carnal nature to dominate and maintain conflict until “on top” (**1 Cor. 3:1-3; James 3:14-18; Gal. 5:15**).
 - Respect shown in submission, especially if disagree (**Heb. 13:17; 1 Pet. 5:5**).

“Making a Distinction ...”

Now we exhort you, brethren, ¹warn those who are unruly, ²comfort the fainthearted, ³uphold the weak, ¹⁻³be patient with all. See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all. (5:14-15)

6. [Matt. D] How do we distinguish among the “unruly, ... fainthearted, ... weak”? How do we know who fits in what category?

And on ¹some have compassion, making a distinction; but ²others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh. (Jude 22-23)

- Must use **judgment** which is developed with **experience** (trial and error, learning from our mistakes, learning from others) – “**through reason of use have their senses exercised to discern**” (Hebrews 5:14).
- Sympathy, understanding are not the same as “tolerance”.

“Nothing through selfish ambition ...”

7. What should be the overarching principle for all of our interactions with others? Why does revenge not comply with this principle?

Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, **be patient with all**. See that **no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all**. (5:14-15)

- Whether or not we are **truly** acting in someone’s best interests will help us navigate, **patiently** working through each case as it demands.

Let **nothing** be done **through selfish ambition or conceit**, but in lowliness of mind **let each esteem others better than himself**. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but **also for the interests of others**. (Philip. 2:3-4)

- Eliminates possibility of revenge or any self-seeking.

“Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, rejoice!”

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies. Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil. (5:16-22)

8. [Cary] If joy is an emotion, something we feel, how could the Holy Spirit command them and us through Paul to “rejoice always”?
- Consider original audience and their challenges (e.g., youth, persecution).
 - **Choose** to rejoice (**Phi. 4:4-13**), through meditation & prayer.
 - Faith and wisdom grow stronger in persecution (**James 1:2-8**)
 - Counted worthy to suffer, stamp of approval (**1 Corinthians 10:13; Acts 5:41; 2 Thessalonians 1:5**)
 - Grow in knowledge and strength of God’s Word. Next ...

“Do not quench the Spirit”

Do **not quench** the Spirit. Do **not despise** prophecies. **Test all** things; **hold fast** what is good. **Abstain** from every form of evil. (5:19-22)

9. [Brad] How would the Thessalonians have “quenched the Spirit” or “despised prophecies”? How would this apply to us today?
- Generally, miraculous gifts could be silenced by the prophet (1 Cor. 14:32).
 - Preferred some spiritual gifts over others (1 Corinthians 14:1-19).
 - Failed to use gift of revelation entirely, or may have ignored, dismissed whatever it already produced (2 Timothy 1:6-8; 1 Timothy 4:14).
 - We may do this by neglecting the Scriptures or unwittingly cozying to sin, error, evil influences wearing disguises of varying “forms” and doctrines (Matthew 7:15-20; 1 Corinthians 15:33) ...

“Test all things”

Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies. **Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain** from every form of evil. (5:19-22)

10. Are Christians to be simple, naïve, gullible people, who believe everyone who claims to speak for God? Explain. Providing supporting Scriptures. Is this limited to testing false prophets?
- No, “do **not believe every spirit**, but **test** the spirits, whether they are of God; **because many false prophets** have gone out into the world.” (1 John 4:1-6)
 - Bereans were commended for double-checking the apostle Paul, and he was no false prophet or false teacher (**Acts 17:11**)!

The Faithful God

Now **may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.** Brethren, pray for us. Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss. I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read to all the holy brethren. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen. (5:23-28)

11. How is God “faithful”? Is not faith a requirement for us to believe in Him, not the other way around?
- “Faithful” can mean loyal, trustworthy.
 - That God will fulfill His promises, we can absolutely trust!
 - Encouraging to take confidence in His complete sanctification and whole preservation of us!

“I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read to all the holy brethren.”
(5:27)

12. [Jeff] How would this practice affect the Bible’s compilation? How can it provide confidence in the textual integrity of the Bible?

In 2 Tim 3:16-17 Paul explains that “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.” Thus, we must infer that the inspired writings were meant to be used to teach, reprove, correct, and train us to be acceptable to God.

Passages like 1 Thes. 5:27 (“I adjure you by the Lord to have this letter read to all the brethren.”) and Col. 4:16 (“ When this letter is read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and you, for your part read my letter that is coming from Laodicea”) further emphasize that these God-breathed, Inspired writings were to be shared with other Christians.

I gain confidence in the scriptures understanding that the books of the bible were written by inspired writers in different times in different places, but ALL these books share a common author - GOD. This is why these books can weave together to share God and His plan for us.

The fact that these books were written over so many years by so many authors, but have survived throughout history is a testament to their authenticity in and of itself. Also, the fact that the gospels and letters that were written were delivered and immediately shared, resulting in copies and distribution throughout the brethren. This also speaks to the textual integrity of the Bible.

Ensuring Wide Distribution of Originals

“I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read to all the holy brethren.”
(5:27)

12. [Jeff] How would this practice affect the Bible’s compilation? How can it provide confidence in the textual integrity of the Bible?

- Help the proliferation and collection of Scriptures (**Colossians 4:16**).
- This practice would seed the Bible we have today.

*“Therefore, brethren, **stand fast and hold the traditions** which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle.”* (**2 Thessalonians 2:15**)

- Because Paul’s epistle was authoritative – even grounds for withdrawal, if violated – it was critical to ensure broad access and imposters exposed!
- Understanding this practice and its urgency gives us confidence today in the **textual integrity** of the Bible.

Key Lessons – From All of 1 Thessalonians

1. **2nd Coming** – *Watch*: Jesus sudden return at unknown time
2. **Resurrection** – *Comfort*: Dead in Christ raised at Jesus' return.
3. **Remember** – Basis of our faith in the face of persecution.
4. **People Skills** – Gentleness, expressed thankfulness, and making a distinction.
5. **Truth** – Cling to God's Word and reject error.
6. **Ongoing Growth** – “*Abound more and more*”
7. **Faithful God** – Trust God to keep His promises.
8. **Love** – Expressed as evangelism and benevolence to saints.
9. **Mutual Encouragement** – “*knit together*” in Christ.
10. **Example** – Are you watching the NT saints? What are others seeing in you?
11. **Holiness** – Sexual and moral purity.
12. **Credibility** – Testing of foundation in enduring persecution.