

FIRST EPISTLE OF PAUL TO THE THESSALONIANS

Slide 1 – Title Slide

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I. WRITER: Paul the apostle

II. AUDIENCE: Church at Thessalonica (1 Thessalonians 1:1)

Map

Map. Thessalonica is the capital city of the Roman province of Macedonia. Two other major cities in Macedonia were Philippi and Berea.

III. DATE: 50 A.D.

IV. NOTES:

First Thessalonians is believed to be the first epistle Paul wrote. It was written just months after leaving Thessalonica, perhaps from Corinth or some think Athens. MAP. Starting out on his second missionary journey, Paul and Silas stopped in Lystra to pick up Timothy. Moving west, they were hindered by the Holy Spirit from going south into the province of Asia and north into Bithynia. They arrived at Troas where Luke was added to the missionary team. Then Paul got the “Macedonian vision”. They crossed the Aegean Sea and now entered Europe for the first time. Their first stop was Philippi.

They were in Philippi for about two months. Then, leaving Luke behind, they left Philippi under pressure from the city officials and went westward toward Thessalonica about one hundred miles (160 kms). At Thessalonica they began to preach the gospel, at least for a short time (3 weeks – 3 sabbath days). The city was of fairly good size, perhaps about 100,000 people. The city had a synagogue which meant it had a large enough Jewish population there as well.

Acts 17:1-10 - ¹Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews: ²And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, ³Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ. ⁴And 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.

⁵But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. ⁶And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also; ⁷Whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, *one* Jesus. ⁸And they troubled the people and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things. ⁹And when they had taken security of Jason, and of the other, they let them go. ¹⁰And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming *thither* went into the synagogue of the Jews.

From Thessalonica they traveled fifty miles west to Berea. They were there a few weeks until the Jews from Thessalonica came to disrupt their preaching and Paul was forced to go on to Athens, leaving Silas and Timothy at Berea (Acts 17:11-15).

The Berean saints conducted Paul all the way to Athens. Paul gave the returning Bereans instruction to have Silas and Timothy join him immediately at Athens (Acts 17:15), which they did (1Thess 3:1). The two were then sent back to Macedonia to encourage the Thessalonian Christians and bring back a report about them. It would have been about three months now since Paul had left Thessalonica. He had become quite concerned about the converts there and sent Timothy to strengthen them and find out how they were doing under persecution (1Thess 3:1-5).

To me, it is unclear where Paul was when Timothy returned. He may have still been in Athens or due to a fruitless ministry there, moved further south to Corinth. Regardless, Timothy's report on Thessalonica was so encouraging that Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians from either Athens or Corinth almost immediately.

Paul is writing with gratitude and affection to a church that he had started after only a brief visit to their city. They had endured significant persecution and suffering but had remained faithful. He also wrote to correct any misconceptions they had about the second coming of Christ and the tribulation period, and to offer consolation concerning their loved ones who had died in Christ.

Slide 4 (Slide 3 is the hidden map)

Outline of 1 Thessalonians

Introduction (1:1-2)

I. The Lord's Coming: A Saving Truth (1:3-10)

II. The Lord's Coming: A Stimulating Truth (2:1-20)

III. The Lord's Coming: A Stabilizing Truth (3:1-13)

IV. The Lord's Coming: A Strengthening Truth (4:1-18)

V. The Lord's Coming: A Sanctifying Truth (5:1-22)

Conclusion (5:23-28)

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Introduction (1:1-2)

1:1-2 - ¹Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians *which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.* ²We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers;

Paul, Silas, and Timothy were all involved in the church plant at Thessalonica and everyone would have been familiar to them. Grace comes before peace. As was his custom, he starts out thanking God for them and lets them know he is praying for them.

I. The Lord's Coming: A Saving Truth (1:3-10)

1:3 - ³Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father;

Paul mentions three things in verse 3 that he is thankful to God for in them. First, he mentions their "work of faith". In the book of James, James writes of the works that salvation produces fruit, that is, the fruit that God produces through the believer. True, saving faith should produce works. If there are no works, that is proof their faith is dead.

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James 2:26 - For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

Good works are proof that the faith is true. True faith must have evidence. Second, Paul mentions "labour of love". What is the difference between "work" and "labour"? The word for labour does not refer to the exertion of energy in the work but the weariness from the exertion we are doing.

True *agape* love must "do" something because it is defined by doing whatever is needed to meet needs in the object being loved. This love is not a feeling. It requires action and is manifested and proven by labor.

1 John 3:17 - But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?

Third, Paul mentions their "patience of hope". Hope is manifested by patience. If there is no patience, it is because there is no hope. Just as if there is no labor, it is because there is no love. And if there is no good works, it is because there is no faith.

Hope does not mean "to wish for something" (i.e. rain) but means a confidence in a future event; an expectation that it will occur. This hope we have from the Holy Spirit gives us patience during trying circumstances.

Romans 8:24,25 - For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.

Romans 12:12 - Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;

1:4 - ⁴Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.

The word “election” means to choose. God chooses or elects all those who receive Him on His terms to salvation. It is available to all! God does not predetermine who will and who will not get saved as Calvinism teaches. But those who receive Christ on God’s terms are then chosen or elected to salvation. And this salvation is available to all:

1 Timothy 4:10 - For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.

Titus 2:11 - For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,

1 Timothy 2:4 - Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

2 Peter 3:9 - The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

1:5 - ⁵For our gospel came not unto you in word only, 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.

Paul mentions how the power of the Holy Ghost accompanied his preaching of the gospel to them.

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

Their affliction was probably in the form of persecution that happened to them soon after getting saved. Yet, despite that affliction, the Holy Spirit’s presence in their hearts resulted in them being full of joy. In his second epistle to the Corinthians, Paul also made mention of their joy in the face of afflictions:

2 Corinthians 8:1,2 - ¹Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; ²How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.

1:7-8 - ⁷So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. ⁸For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing.

Their fame had spread to all of Macedonia (includes the cities of Philippi and Berea) and Achaia (the province that includes Corinth and Athens). When a church gives itself over wholly to follow Christ, it encourages other churches around it, and serves as an exhortation and an example for them to follow.

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

They turned from their idols to God to serve Him and also "to wait for his Son". Serving and waiting. We are to be busy serving Christ in this world after we get saved, but we must never get too busy that we forget His promised return. A Christian should always be serving God, but also waiting for the return of Christ at the same time. That focus keeps us serving with the right heart.

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II. The Lord's Coming: A Stimulating Truth (2:1-20)

A. The totality of Paul's commitment (2:1-2)

Chapter 2 is dedicated mainly to Paul defending his conduct in Thessalonica. Perhaps those Jews who were persecuting the Thessalonian church were also attacking Paul's character. He reminds them of his devotion to them, and that he was, in every way, an example to them of the things he preached.

2:1 - ¹For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain:

His ministry in Thessalonica was not "in vain" meaning for nothing. It bore much fruit and resulted in a NT church being planted there.

2:2 - ²But 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.

He reminds them of their shameful treatment at Philippi, where they were publicly whipped and then placed into prison. Despite that persecution, they remained bold to speak the gospel to those at Thessalonica, despite the much contention they faced there.

B. The transparency of Paul's conduct (2:3-12)

2:3 - ³For our exhortation *was* not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile:

Paul did not try to allure them with false pretenses or deceive them in any way. It was not of uncleanness; such as the teachings of the Gentile philosophers whose gods were celebrated for their adulteries and immorality.

Our gospel, he is saying, is pure; came from a pure and holy God, and produces purity in the hearts and lives of those that receive it. It was not in guile; Paul had no hidden agendas or sinister motives for preaching.

2:4 - ⁴But 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 our hearts.

Paul makes it clear that he seeks to please God in his presentation of the gospel, not men. He refused to compromise his presentation to make it more palatable or popular. And we need to always keep in mind, no matter what ministry we are in, that Christ is ultimately our judge and all we do in our ministries will be judged by Christ. But especially those who teach or preach the word of God:

James 3:1 - ¹My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation (judgment).

God tries the hearts of those who teach and preach His word: our motives for doing so are also judged. Do we teach to receive admiration of men? If so, the time and effort spent in that ministry of teaching is then in danger of being wood, hay, and stubble at the judgment seat of Christ.

2:5-6 - ⁵For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloak of covetousness; God is witness: ⁶Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ.

They did not flatter their hearers, nor were they interested in approval. They gave them the word of God straight. God had ordained that those who teach and preach the gospel are allowed to “live off the gospel” meaning to receive monetary support from those they minister to. But in Thessalonica, Paul chose not to be “burdensome” to them meaning he chose not to exercise this right to receive support.

2:7-8 - ⁷But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children: ⁸So 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.

As ambassador’s for Christ, we should always be mindful that we represent Him whenever we are witnessing, and “must not strive”, but be “gentle unto all men”:

2 Timothy 2:24-25 - And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all *men*, apt to teach, patient, ²⁵In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;

2:9-10 - ⁹For 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. ¹⁰Ye *are* witnesses, and God *also*, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe:

Paul and his team worked jobs (in his case, made and sold tents) to support themselves while they disciplined those in Thessalonica. He wants them to recall how they lived before them, purely, justly, and unprovable. Discipling is really what Paul describes here, just as Christ disciplined His disciples: it is living with them, and by our life rubbing off on them (not just our teaching and our words, but our life).

2:11-12 - ¹¹As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father *doth* his children, ¹²That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.

Paul, the church planter, considered his disciples as a father would his children. And as such he worked with them in three ways: exhorting, comforting, and charging. Exhorting is to encourage and motivate people to obey. Charging is teaching.

Just what was he exhorting, comforting, and charging them to do? To "walk worthy of God". Once again, Paul stresses the fact that Christians are "ambassadors" for Christ, representing Him to the world.

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C. The triumph of Paul's converts (2:13-14)

2:13 - ¹³For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received *it not as* the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.

Paul reminded them that they received the preaching of Paul as it was, the word of God. They were not tripped up by the thinking of "well, that's just your opinion, or that's just your interpretation". By receiving the word of God, it resulted in them being born again by the word of God.

1 Peter 1:23 - Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

And this is something we cannot overlook when dealing with a lost person. Do they accept the Bible as the "word of God"? If not, they will dismiss everything we tell them.

2:14 - ¹⁴For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches 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:

Paul refers to the persecution of the saints at Jerusalem, and how these at Thessalonica were suffering in a similar manner: being persecuted by their own countrymen.

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D. The tragedy of Paul's countrymen (2:15-16)

2:15-16 - ¹⁵Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men: ¹⁶Forbidding 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.

Paul tells us that those who persecute the saints "please not God". They did not please God, nor seek to please him; though they pretended that their opposition to the Gospel was through their zeal for God's glory. They were hypocrites of the worst kind. They were also "contrary to all men". It means they were hostile to all men: by forbidding saints to preach to Gentiles. This sin will be laid to their charge at the judgment! (NEXT)

E. The tangibility of Paul's crown (2:17-20)

2:17 - ¹⁷But we, brethren, being taken from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavoured the more abundantly to see your face with great desire.

While Paul was apart from them physically, he greatly desired to see them again and help them spiritually. He did not forget about them for a minute.

2:18 - ¹⁸Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us.

He mentions that Satan "hindered" him and his group from coming to them. Can Satan do anything that God does not allow? No! So, what was God accomplishing by allowing Paul to be hindered from returning to Thessalonica? Good question. Maybe it was teach Paul that God was able to protect and grow those Christians without him.

Sometimes we may not be allowed to stay directly involved in a ministry so we learn that it is God's church and not ours. Maybe it is so that God can use others in the work (Paul planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase). I.E. Work with Lao Hmong.

2:19-20 - ¹⁹For 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? ²⁰For ye are our glory and joy.

These converts were his glory and crown. One commentator (unknown) wrote about this passage:

"I can have no prospects from earth; I have forsaken all for the Gospel; and esteem every thing this earth can afford as dross and dung, that I may gain Christ. Why then should I continually labor at the risk of my life, preaching the Gospel? Is it not to get your souls saved, that ye may be my crown of rejoicing in the day of Christ? For this I labor; and, having planted the Gospel among you, I wish to take every opportunity of watering it, that it may grow up unto the glory of God."

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III. The Lord's Coming: A Stabilizing Truth (3:1-13)

A. Paul's concern (3:1-5)

3:1-5 ¹Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone; ²And 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: ³That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto. ⁴For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know. ⁵For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain.

Paul was so concerned about this young church that he sent Timothy back to them while he awaited at Athens or maybe Corinth. Timothy's mission was to "establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith: that no man should be moved by these afflictions:". Paul's concern was heightened because these new converts immediately faced severe persecution: how would they handle it?

He had warned them that they would probably suffer tribulation. However, receiving a warning about something does not guarantee that a person will face the trial without falling. Paul was concerned that the efforts of Satan against them might have been successful, so he sent Timothy to check up on them.

B. Paul's comfort (3:6-10)

3:6-8 - ⁶But now when Timotheus came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us, as we also to see you: ⁷Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith: ⁸For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.

Timothy reported on their "faith and charity", the two things Paul loved to see in his spiritual children. Hearing that, Paul was comforted even while he was enduring persecution. Their faith in Christ was so important to this man of God that he states, "For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord". As if to say, "Your steadfastness in the faith gives me new life and comfort." Notice that while Satan hindered Paul from coming to see them and edify and comfort them, God was always there protecting them.

3:9-10 - ⁹For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God; ¹⁰Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith?

Paul was praying for them night and day. The persecution that hit the saints at Thessalonica could only happen if God allowed it. The hindering of Paul coming to them by Satan could only happen if God also allowed it. Now notice the result; they grew in faith and charity (v. 6). Paul rejoiced at their spiritual growth in Christ even without his presence to guide and teach them. Perhaps God knew that Paul needed to learn that God could accomplish their growth without him. I.E. Lao Hmong churches.

C. Paul's compulsion (3:11-13)

3:11-12 - ¹¹Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you. ¹²And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all *men*, even as we *do* toward you:

Paul's desire for these spiritual children is that they develop the same love for each other and for the lost that he has for them. We can never forget how important it is to Christ that we love each other in our church, and the message it sends to the lost around us.

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John 13:34,35 - ³⁴A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. ³⁵By this shall all *men* know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

¹³To 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.

Keeping our mind focused on the second coming of Jesus Christ will help us to live a life that is blameless, unreprouvable, being a good testimony to both the lost and the saved.

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IV. The Lord's Coming: A Strengthening Truth (4:1-18)

A. Our mighty potential (4:1-2)

4:1-2 - ¹Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort *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. ²For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus.

Paul reminded them of what had been committed to them. He remained in Thessalonica long enough to see people saved and to teach them what they should believe and how they should behave as Christians. Paul reminded them of their mighty potential as Christians, that they would abound more and more.

B. Our moral purity (4:3-8)

4:3 - ³For this is the will of God, *even* your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication:

Fornication means any sex outside of marriage, any sexual sin. Immorality was common among the Gentiles. It may have been that, in Timothy's report of the Thessalonians saints, he mentioned that there was some moral laxness that caused Paul to insert this exhortation to abstain from fornication. Or maybe Paul just inserted it here as preventive medicine.

4:4-8 - ⁴That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; ⁵Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God: ⁶That no *man* go beyond and defraud his brother in *any* matter: because that the Lord *is* the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified. ⁷For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness. ⁸He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit.

Some people interpret the word vessel in verse 4 to mean your wife, so it would read something like, "Let every man use his wife for the purpose alone for which God created her, and instituted marriage". Some other commentators think it means to possess one's own body in sanctification and honour. Either way is fine. Dr. S.M. Davis broadens the interpretation of the passage. After he had done a lengthy word study, he applies it to the whole process of obtaining our spouse. (Slide 12)

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"For it is God's will for you to be sanctified, set apart to holiness, so that you don't get involved in fornication. If you are going to do this, then you are going to have to know how to acquire (which is another meaning of the Greek word translated as "possess") your wife ("vessel") in a holy way, instead of an unholy way, and in a way that shows her incredible value. You must not tolerate lustful passions or wrong affections that desire someone or something that you should not have. That is the way people do it who do not know God. No person should step over the fences that God has put in place and raise expectations that cheat a brother or sister in Christ in any way. Because the Lord is the avenger of all those who do that kind of thing. As we also forewarned you and gave you illustrations about it. This is important, because God has not called us to uncleanness, but unto holiness. And anyone who despises these truths is not despising the man who teaches or preaches them, but he is despising God who has also given us the Holy Spirit to live in us and to testify of the truth of these things."

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C. Our measured progress (4:9-10)

4:9-10 - ⁹But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another. ¹⁰And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more;

Paul acknowledged that they have "love for one another" down fairly well, and He gives God the credit for it, since he was not there to teach them. And then he encourages them to increase in it.

D. Our manifest purpose (4:11-12)

4:11-12 - ¹¹And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; ¹²That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and *that* ye may have lack of nothing.

Paul instructed them to refrain from speaking too much and meddling in the affairs of others. We are to be focused on our own walk with God. Hard work has three benefits: that we would appear honest to those lost around us, that we would be able to support ourselves and our families ("that ye would have lack of nothing"), and that we would be too busy to get into sin or trouble.

E. Our magnificent prospect (4:13-18)

4:13-18 - ¹³But 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. ¹⁴For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. ¹⁵For 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 them which are asleep. ¹⁶For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: ¹⁷Then we which are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. ¹⁸Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

The Second Coming of Christ will be in two stages. The first stage is the Rapture of the saints and the second is the return of Jesus Christ to the earth to set up His millennial kingdom.

Paul teaches about the rapture and resurrection of the dead. The word rapture does not appear in the Bible, but the words "caught up" does. It means to seize or to catch away. The term "Rapture" is used to mean those who are "caught up or seized" and taken to Heaven.

So, those who are alive at the rapture will not "prevent", which means precede or go before those that have already died. At the trumpet, the dead in Christ shall rise first, then those which are alive shall be "caught up" together with those whose bodies that are resurrected and both will meet the Lord in the air and taken to Heaven. These words are to comfort us in this life, to be our "hope".

The rapture will then start the 7-year tribulation period on earth where the Antichrist will rise to power. At the end of this 7-year period, the Lord Jesus Christ will return to earth to establish his 1,000-year reign. What will the saved be doing in heaven during the 7-year tribulation period? There will be the marriage supper of the Lamb and the Judgment seat of Christ.

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V. The Lord's Coming: A Sanctifying Truth (5:1-22)

A. A word of explanation (5:1-11)

5:1-3 - ¹But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. ²For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. ³For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.

The rapture is the part that comes as a "thief in the night". It will take everyone by surprise. The saved and the lost. But once it happens, it starts off the tribulation ("then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape"). And the tribulation is a period of seven years that is very well chronicled in the book of the Revelation.

Notice Paul says, "we" when talking about the rapture, but "they" when talking about the tribulation: the saints will be raptured out before the tribulation: a pre-tribulation and pre-millennial rapture.

5:4-5 - ⁴But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. ⁵Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.

Even though we have no idea when the exact day of the rapture will be, we have clues. Paul tells us that it should not overtake us as a thief: we should **always** be ready. Just as Christ warned His disciples in Matthew 24 to always be ready, because His return for His saints would come upon many (the lost) as a thief in the night, but that His saints should always be ready.

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Matthew 24:36-44 - But of that day and hour knoweth no *man*, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. ³⁷But as the days of Noe *were*, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. ³⁸For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, ³⁹And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. ⁴⁰Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. ⁴¹Two *women shall be grinding at the mill*; the one shall be taken, and the other left. ⁴²Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. ⁴³But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. ⁴⁴Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.

5:6-8 - ⁶Therefore let us not sleep, as *do* others; but let us watch and be sober. ⁷For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. ⁸But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.

Paul describes lost people as those who are asleep to their spiritual condition, that they are dead in their sin. As a drunk person, they are incapable of understanding that their sin is taking them to Hell.

Saved people, on the other hand, are to be sober, meaning to be awake or alert to the spiritual battle around them. The breastplate protects the heart; the helmet protects the head. Our affections and our thoughts are to be kept protected from the enemy. We are not to love the things that this world has to offer. We are not to allow ourselves to be seduced by its philosophies, attitudes, and attractions. This world is not our home.

5:9 - ⁹For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,

God hath not appointed His saints to wrath (the tribulation), but to obtain salvation from God's wrath during the tribulation. His statement is another scriptural support for a pre-tribulation rapture. However, there will be many people who get saved during the tribulation. They will suffer, not from God's wrath, but mostly from persecution at the hands of the Antichrist.

5:10 - ¹⁰Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.

Paul completed his thought in saying that at the time of the rapture, whether we are still alive to experience it, or our bodies have died and will be resurrected; we will live together with Him. When He returns for His saints, He will not go back to heaven without them and leave them to go through the tribulation period. They will return to heaven with Him.

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

These thoughts should comfort us knowing that God will take us to Heaven before the tribulation. However, if, as some teach, that the saints must go through the tribulation period, how would that bring us comfort?

B. A word of exhortation (5:12-22)

5:12-13 - ¹²And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; ¹³And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. *And be at peace among yourselves.*

Paul exhorts them to "know" or "consider" those who do God's work. Paul says in verse 13 to "esteem them very highly in love for their works sake". Those involved in the work of God deserve our highest respect and honor. In Hebrews 13, he is even more specific about how church members are to treat those "over them in the Lord" (i.e., their pastors):

Hebrews 13:7,17 - ⁷Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of *their* conversation. ¹⁷Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that *is* unprofitable for you.

Paul then gives several commands to this church full of new converts help them begin their new life in Christ on the right footing. Think of this as the Christian's 10 commandments. Worth memorizing.

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

1. Warn them that are unruly meaning those who are not willing to submit. These are those who still have a rebellious spirit after salvation.
2. Comfort the feebleminded (weak in mind), support the weak, be patient toward all men. These three commands describe an attitude of patience and kindness towards other saints who need encouragement, and towards the lost.

5:15 - ¹⁵See that none render evil for evil unto any *man*; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all *men*.

3. Saved people should not get revenge when mistreated whether with the saved in the church or lost people outside the church.

5:16 - ¹⁶Rejoice evermore.

4. A saint should spend part of every day in devotions rejoicing and praising God for all He has done for them. Our focus should be on those things that cause us to rejoice, not the circumstances around us that cause anxiety.

5:17 - ¹⁷Pray without ceasing.

5. Prayer needs to be emphasized over and over again to God's saints. Christ said in **Matthew 26:41** Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak.

5:18 - ¹⁸In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

6. Being thankful will keep our hearts warm towards Him.

5:19 - ¹⁹Quench not the Spirit.

7. Do nothing that causes the Holy Ghost to be grieved or quenched. This would include, but not limited to, bitterness, unforgiveness, murmuring, complaining, and unconfessed sin.

5:20 - ²⁰Despise not prophesyings.

8. What are "prophesyings"? Preaching. Always listen to the preaching with an open heart and mind, taking in all that God has to say to us through the man of God. If our hearts are pricked, don't get bitter towards the messenger or the message.

5:21 - ²¹Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.

9. Compare everything with Scripture. Cleave to the truth and reject that which does not line up with scripture.

5:22 - ²²Abstain from all appearance of evil.

10. Keep away from anything that looks questionable. How does something look to the lost? Would Christ do it?

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Conclusion (5:23-28)

5:23 - ²³And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and *I pray God* your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

God's image is a trinity – God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. We learn from Genesis 1 that God made man in His image. Therefore man is also a trinity – body, soul, and spirit.

5:24 - ²⁴Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.

God's callings are God's enablings. If God calls you to something, He promised that he will enable us to do it. God will never asks us to do anything that He will not empower us to do. So, if we are convinced that God has called us to do something, we can be confident that He will enable us to do it.

That does not mean if He has called us to do ministry, to teach a class, or to preach that we do not have to prepare. It means that if we do our part and prepare and do our best; He will enable us to complete the task He's called us to do.

Philippians 4:13 - ¹³I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

5:25 - ²⁵Brethren, pray for us.

Paul once again asked people to pray for him, which we have already discussed previously.

5:26 - ²⁶Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss.

Greeting the brethren with an "holy kiss" is equivalent to our hugging or handshakes. It is not required to do so unless you are in a culture where that is still practiced today.

5:27-28 - ²⁷I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren. ²⁸The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you. Amen.

Paul also insisted that this letter be read to all the saved.

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And so ends Paul's first epistle to the Thessalonians...