

1.1 Greeting

1. The letter is from Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy
2. For the church of the Thessalonians. This describes the recipients as a church of the town of Thessalonika, as to place on the earth.
3. Their being is portrayed as in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
4. The greeting is "Grace " and "peace" – a greeting we see in many of Paul's letters.

1.2-10 The thanksgiving for the Thessalonians: what the apostles know about them.

1. In the context of their prayers, they are thanking God continually for the Thessalonians.
2. In the presence of God the Father, as they pray, the basis of this thanksgiving is their memory of them. They recall such things as
 - [a] their works based on their trust in God
 - [b] intense labour of their costly love to one another
 - [c] the consistency of their hope in the Lord Jesus
3. Due to the sort of reception they had among the Thessalonians, the writers are convinced of the election of the Thessalonians.
4. This conviction of the writers is based upon the
 - [a] reception of their preached gospel. It was not simply that it was heard, it was not a matter of the word only being stated. It was also the reception in the hearers; their deep conviction of the truth of the gospel when heard was an evidence of the power of the Holy Spirit attending the word.
 - [b] reception of the apostles themselves and the imitation of their life in that the Thessalonians, like them, were able to endure much persecution in holding fast to what they had heard and believed. So much so that their joy was evident even under pressure and it has become an example to all the surrounding Macedonia.
5. The Thessalonians are really a model to Macedonia and Achaia, their faith has become well known. The apostles don't need to speak about it, the surrounding people tell it back to them what sort of reception they had among them. Indeed, they tell how the Thessalonians
 - [a] turned from idols to serve the living and true God
 - [b] they are focused upon waiting for God's Son, whom He resurrected, to come from heaven
 - [c] they know Jesus rescues them from the coming wrath.

2. 1-12 What the Thessalonians know about them. An appeal to what the Thessalonians can also remember and verify

1. While the Thessalonians can vouch for the fact that the apostolic visit was not in vain, they can also testify that it was accompanied by much suffering. After the buffeting in Philippi, they had courage to declare their "good news" in the face of much opposition.
2. There was no deceit in the apostolic delivery – what God had entrusted them to speak they handed on, conscious of doing it before God.
3. They did not play to their audience, there was no flattery and no monetary gain was involved.
4. Indeed, as a nurse cares for the children in her charge, the apostles were gentle, made no demands and shared themselves as openly as they shared their gospel.
5. The apostles had worked for their keep, they had not been a burden on their listeners. The Thessalonians would know how upright, pure and blameless was their conduct among them. They were not 'glory seekers'.
6. They would remember that like a father with his children, the apostles pleaded and urged them to live a life worthy of God.

2.13-16 The Thessalonian's reception of the gospel, like the Judean Christians, involved a lot of external pressure.

1. What impressed the apostles was that the Thessalonians received the preached word as really the word of God – which works in those who trust it.
2. There is a comparison here; like the Judean churches in their suffering under the local Jewish people, the Thessalonians received the word in the aggressive setting of suffering from their compatriots.
3. These Jewish persecutors of the Judean churches killed the Lord and the prophets before Him. They have driven the apostles out and also hinder the work of their speaking to the Gentiles.

4. Paul sees this action of the Jews as filling up the measure of their sins and that wrath of God has caught up with them at last.

2.17- 19 The strong desire to see them again.

1. So strong was the experience of 'fathering' the Thessalonians, and so dear had they become, the apostles felt orphaned by the loss of their recent charges.
2. Paul, in particular, wanted to see them again, 'face to face' – but Satan blocked their way.
3. He sees the Thessalonians as their joy and their crown – as their boast - before the Lord Jesus at his coming.

3. 1-5 Why it was that Timothy was sent when Paul was in Athens.

1. It was because of this concern for the Thessalonians that Paul consented to be left alone in Athens as Timothy was sent back to encourage the Thessalonians, so that their faith would not be shaken by the persecutions they were enduring.
2. The Thessalonians had, of course, understood that persecutions were part and parcel of their destiny as Christians. Indeed, what the apostles had warned them of had come to pass for them.
3. So it was the persecutions that were the motivation in Paul's disturbance for them, that the tempter might tempt them through the suffering; and so their apostolic labour might be in vain. This may sound to us self-serving, but Paul seems to understand that, once the gospel has taken root, and in this case under trying external circumstances, it is not that he states that they can fall away so much, as that he secures their evangelistic labour that has already been exerted, by a strong 'after care' which exhorts, encourages the Thessalonians. He is aware of the tempter's work and that the Satanic enemy can block him [2.18] as much as he can wear down the Thessalonians [3.5].

3.6-13 Timothy's re-assuring report: the apostles can 'live' again.

1. In Corinth, Timothy has now returned from Thessalonika with a good report of their faith and love. It was the case that their longing for the Thessalonians was mutual and this re-assured Paul and encouraged him concerning their continuing trust in God.
2. The apostles can now 'live' knowing that the Thessalonians are standing firm. In the Lord. What he means by 'living' is that they have joy before the Lord because of the Thessalonians. That is, knowledge of their current firmness in holding under pressure registers in the apostles as a joy before God. They can know that it is well with their charges.
3. Notwithstanding, they still pray earnestly to see them 'face to face' – for then they can restore whatever is lacking in their faith.
4. The substance of their prayer is that God would [a] direct their way to the Thessalonians, [b] make them increase in love and for one another [c] strengthen their hearts in holiness so that they may be blameless at the coming of the Lord.

4. 1-12 Apostolic instruction in love, holiness and general life.

1. As the Thessalonians have learned from the apostles how they should live – they are urged by Paul to do so more and more.
2. Speaking through the Lord Jesus, the apostles gave instructions to them. These instructions were as follows:
 - [a] the will of God was their sanctification
 - [b] And so: they should abstain from fornication
 - [c] each person should know how to control his own body in holiness and honour
 - [i] not with lustful passions – that is like the Gentiles who don't know God
 - [ii] not to exploit a brother or sister in lustful passion – God would avenge that! This is so simply because He calls us to holiness and not impurity.
 - [iii] to reject this instruction is to reject God's authority ie. The God who gives his Holy Spirit to you.
3. Concerning the love of brothers and sisters, they already show that God has taught them this. Nevertheless Paul urges them to do so more and more. They should aspire to
 - [a] live quietly,

- [b] work with their hands – the apostles had told them to do this
- [c] behave properly to outsiders
- [d] be dependant on no-one

4.13-18 Concerning those who have died, don't grieve but rather have hope.

1. The apostle brings a comforting word to the Thessalonians in respect of those who have died.
2. The basis of things is this: Because the Lord has died and resurrected, so it is that through Jesus, God will bring those who have died along with Him when He comes.
3. The apostles declare by the word of the Lord – here they are speaking what Jesus wants to say through them – that:
 - [a] we who are left alive until the coming of the Lord will not precede those who have fallen asleep [ie died]
 - [b] the Lord Himself, shouting his command, accompanied by the archangel's call and the sound of God's trumpet, will descend from heaven.
 - [c] the dead in Christ will rise first
 - [d] then we, who are alive, left upon the earth, will be caught up in the clouds together with them, to meet the Lord in the air.
 - [e] So, we will be with the Lord forever.
4. These are the comforting words of the apostle.

5. 1-12 Christians are awake and sober, not asleep and drunken.

1. As to the matter of timing the Thessalonians are already aware that:
 - [a] the day of the Lord will come unannounced and unable to be predicted – like a thief in the night. [When everyone is tucked up and feeling secure.]
 - [b] So, when everyone is saying that the conditions are one's of 'Peace and safety' that is when sudden destruction will come upon people, rather as labour pains begin unannounced and unexpected for a pregnant woman.
2. However, the Thessalonians – and all Christians - are not in that darkness for the day to surprise them. They are children of the day and light not of night and the darkness. We are awake and sober, and not asleep and in a drunken stupor. Christians are awake to these things and sober therefore, for they understand that the earth has an impending day coming to it when Jesus shall return. This day we know about through the Lord's, and his apostle's, teaching. We are not in the dark about what is the next thing on God's times and seasons [5.1]. We are in the know – we have revelation. Paul states that what makes us children of the day is revelation from God and the response we make to that – it wakes us up and so we become sober about what is coming.
3. Being of the day, and sober, we are armed by faith, love and hope.
4. We also know that God has not destined us for wrath but for salvation through our Lord, Jesus Christ. It is He who has died for us, so that, whether we are alive on the earth still, or have died, we shall live with Him.
5. The Thessalonians should, as they are already doing, comfort [strengthen] each other and establish each other - make each other foundationally strong - with these apostolic words.

5.12-22 Final exhortations

1. The local assembly is to respect those who work among them, who have charge over them and admonish them – he is describing local elders. They are to be esteemed because of the work that they do.
2. Where people are idle they should be admonished, the faint hearted and weak are to be patiently helped.
3. People are to be not vengeful but to seek to do good to one another.
4. They are to:
 - [a] always rejoice and give thanks, constantly praying and not stopping in that
 - [b] Do not quench the Spirit
 - [d] Do not despise the words of the prophets; but they must test everything and hold fast to what is good – what survives the test
 - [e] Abstain from every form of evil

5.23-28 Benediction and Greetings

1. God is a God of peace
2. He will sanctify us entirely – may our spirit, soul and body be kept sound [whole] and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.
3. God is faithful – as He calls us so He will do this.
This states that the call of the Lord to the Thessalonians is the beginning of their sanctification which will come to its goal at the Lord's second coming. Throughout this we are to think of God who is faithful and He will bring us to the goal which His call has begun in us [Philippians 1.6] .
4. Paul asks the Thessalonians to pray for the apostles there in Corinth.
5. They are to greet each other with a holy kiss.
6. Read the letter to everyone.
7. The grace of the Lord be with them.