

First Thessalonians
Introduction

When did this congregation begin?

- 1) During Paul's second church-planting tour (Acts 15:35-18:22) that took place April 50 through September 52 AD
- 2) Paul visited Thessalonica during November 50 through January 51 AD (cf. Acts 17:1-9) following their physically painful visit to Philippi (cf. Acts 16:11-40).
- 3) The congregation of Philippi sent financial aid to Paul and his team during this time (cf. Philippians 4:16)

When was this letter written to this congregation?

- 1) During Paul's second church-planting tour (Acts 15:35-18:22) that took place April 50 through September 52 AD. Apparently in the timeframe of Acts 18:5.
- 2) Possibly written during the early summer of 51 AD while Paul was in Corinth, approximately 5-6 months after he left Thessalonica.

Who wrote this letter?

- 1) Paul, Silas, and Timothy

What was this congregation like?

- 1) General makeup of the congregation (cf. Acts 17:4)
 - a) Some Jewish believers
 - b) Several God-fearing Greek men who had previously associated with the synagogue but who remained uncircumcised
 - c) Several Greek men who had previously worshipped false gods (cf. 1:9)
 - d) Several prominent women
- 2) Specific men of the congregation
 - a) Aristarchus—Acts 19:29; 20:4; 27:2
 - b) Demas—2nd Timothy 4:10
 - c) Gaius—Acts 19:29
 - d) Jason—Acts 17:5-9
 - e) Secundus—Acts 20:4

Outline of the letter (Mayhue)

- 1) **Personal** comments—1:1-3:13
 - a) Paul's greeting—1:1
 - b) Paul's reminiscences—1:2-2:16
 - i) The church's birth and growth—1:2-10
 - ii) The shepherd's integrity—2:1-12
 - iii) The flock's faithfulness—2:13-16
 - c) Paul's updates—2:17-3:13
 - i) Paul's desire—2:17-20
 - ii) Timothy's visit—3:1-5
 - iii) Timothy's return—3:6-10
 - iv) Paul's pastoral prayer—3:11-13
- 2) **Pastoral** comments—4:1-5:28
 - a) Paul's exhortations—4:1-5:22
 - i) In general—4:1-2
 - ii) Sexual purity—4:3-8
 - iii) Interpersonal relationships—4:9-12
 - iv) The dead-in-Christ—4:13-18
 - v) Spiritual watchfulness—5:1-11
 - vi) Church harmony—5:12-15
 - vii) The Christian life—5:16-22
 - b) Paul's closing words—5:23-27
 - c) Paul's benediction—5:28

First Thessalonians 1:1
Paul's Greeting
Personal Comments—1:1-3:13

The authors—1:1a

- 1) ¹ *Paul* (cf. 2:18)
 - a) The primary author (cf. 2:18; 3:5; 5:27)
 - b) Has been a Christian for @ 15 years by this time.
 - c) Paul omits reference to his apostleship.
- 2) *and Silvanus* (a Latin name)
 - a) Used 3 x—cf. 2nd Corinthians 1:19; 2nd Thessalonians 1:1; 1st Peter 5:12
 - b) Silas (his Greek name) used 13x—cf. Acts 15:22-40; 16:19-29; 17:4-15; 18:5
 - c) He was a Roman citizen—cf. Acts 16:37
 - d) He was a leader among the Christians (cf. Acts 15:22) and a prophet (cf. Acts 15:32).
- 3) *and Timothy*,
 - a) Referred to 24 x in the New Testament
 - b) He was half-Jew and half-Greek (cf. Acts 16:1)
 - c) He had a godly mother and grandmother (cf. 2nd Timothy 1:5; 3:14-15)

The recipients—1:1b (cf. 5:27)

- 1) Paul's description
 - a) Emphasizing their relationship with the one true God—to *the congregation of the Thessalonians in* (the sphere of) *God the Father*
 - b) Emphasizing their relationship with Christ—and *to the congregation of the Thessalonians in ...* (the sphere of) *the Lord Jesus Christ*:
 - c) This single sphere emphasizes the equality of essence between the Father and the Son.
- 2) Historical background
 - a) Thessalonica was the most populous city in Macedonia.
 - b) Thessalonica was the commercial and political center.

The greeting—1:1c

- 1) Greek—*grace* (favor) *to you^{pl} ... from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*.
 - a) The common greeting was *charein* (rejoice); Paul changes this to *charis* (grace).
- 2) Jewish—and *peace* (wholeness) *from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*.
- 3) This single source emphasizes the equality of essence and purpose between the Father and the Son.
 - a) This is not saying that Jesus and the Father are one and the same person.

First Thessalonians 1:2-10
The Congregation's Birth and Growth
Paul's Reminiscences—1:2-2:16
Personal Comments—1:1-3:13

- 1) What is Paul doing?—1:2a ² *We give thanks to God always for all of you^{pl},*
- 2) What does Paul's gratitude look like?—1:2b-4
 - a) Godward—*making* [pres. mid. ptc.] *mention of you^{pl} in our prayers,*
 - b) Consistent—³ *constantly remembering your^{pl}* (emphatic) [pres. act. ptc.] (fruit and root; cf. 5:8; 1st Corinthians 13:13; Galatians 5:5-6; 1st Peter 1:21; Hebrews 10:22-24)
 - i) Faith is active—*work/activity* [ἔργον] *of faith* [πίστις],
 - ii) Love is serving—*and exhausting labor* [κόπος] *of love* [ἀγάπη],
 - iii) Hope is confident—*and the endurance* [ὑπομονή] *of hope* [ἐλπίς] *in our Lord Jesus Christ*
 - iv) Another reference to prayer—*in the presence of our God and Father,*
 - c) Theological—⁴ *knowing* [pf. act. ptc.], *brothers loved* [pf. pass. ptc. ἀγαπάω] *by God, your^{pl} election* [ἐκλογή], (cf. 2:12; 4:7; 5:9, 24; 2nd Thessalonians 2:13)
 - i) A genuine Christian congregation is to be comprised of believers.
- 3) Because the nature of one's conduct illustrates God's loving election—1:5-10
 - Note also the Tri-unity of God mentioned throughout
 - a) Paul's conduct—1:5
 - i) ⁵ *because our gospel ...*
 - (1) Negatively—*did not come to you^{pl} in word only,*
 - (2) Positively—*but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in full confidence/assurance;*
 - ii) *just as you^{pl} know what kind of people we were among you^{pl} for your^{pl} benefit.*
 - b) The Thessalonians' conduct—1:6-10 ⁶ *And you^{pl}* (emphatic) *became imitators of us and of the Lord, having welcomed the word in much distress* (cf. Acts 17:5-10) *with the joy of the Holy Spirit,* ⁷ *so that you^{pl} became patterns to all the believers in Macedonia (north) and Achaia (south).*
 - i) Echoing out—1:8 ⁸ *For from you^{pl} the word of the Lord has resounded, not only in Macedonia and in Achaia, but also in every place your^{pl} faith toward God has proceeded, so that we have no need to say anything.*
 - ii) Responding back—1:9-10 ⁹ *For they themselves report concerning us ...*
 - (1) Embraced—*what sort of reception we had with you^{pl},*
 - (2) Repented—*and how you^{pl} turned to God from idols*
 - Mt. Olympus, home to the Greek gods & goddesses, was only 50 miles to the southwest
 - (a) Concerning the present—*to serve* [pres. act. inf. δουλεύω] *the living and true/genuine God,*
 - (i) Not only alive but life-giving
 - (b) Concerning the future—¹⁰ *and to wait expectantly* [pres. act. inf.] *for His Son from* [ἐκ] *heaven, whom He raised from the dead, Jesus, who rescues us from* [ἀπό] *the coming wrath.* (cf. 5:9; Titus 2:11-13)
 - (i) The imminent return of Christ

First Thessalonians 2:1-8
The Shepherd's Integrity—part 1
Paul's Reminiscences—1:2-2:16
Personal Comments—1:1-3:13

- 1) Paul reminds the believers of God's previous work—2:1-2 ¹ *For you^{pl} yourselves know* ①, *brothers*,
 - a) Negatively: *that our coming to you^{pl} has not been without result.* (cf. 1:9-10)
 - b) Positively: ² *But ... we had the courage in our God to speak to you^{pl} the gospel of (from) God amid much conflict.* (cf. Acts 17:1-9)
 - i) *after we had previously suffered (physically) and were mistreated (legally) in Philippi, as you^{pl} know* ②, (cf. Acts 16:19-40)
 - c) The injuries and insults from Philippi did not silence them in Thessalonica.

- 2) Paul contrasts his teaching ministry among them—2:3-4 ³ *For ...*
 - a) Negatively: *our exhortation was ...*
 - i) True—*not out of error*
 - ii) Pure—*or uncleanness*
 - iii) Authentic—*or in deceit.*
 - b) Positively: ⁴ *But ... this is how we speak,*
 - i) Godward approval: *as we have been approved [dokimazo] by God to be entrusted with the gospel,* (cf. Ephesians 3:8; 1st Timothy 1:11-12; Titus 1:3)
 - ii) Godward pleasure:
 - (1) *not as pleasing people*
 - (2) *but (pleasing) God, who examines [dokimazo] our hearts.*
 - (a) cf. Psalm 7:9; 17:3; Jeremiah 11:20; 12:3; 17:9; Acts 1:24; 15:8; Romans 8:27; Revelation 2:23)

- 3) Paul contrasts his manner of serving God among them—2:5-8
 - a) Negatively: ⁵ *For we never came ...*
 - i) Self-interest—*in a word of flattery [kolakeia], as you^{pl} know* ③,
 - ii) Self-advantage—*nor in a pretense of greed—God is witness—*
 - iii) Self-honoring—⁶ *nor did we seek glory from people, either from you^{pl} or from others,*
 - (1) *although we could have imposed our weight as apostles of Christ.*
 - b) Positively:
 - i) Warm gentleness—⁷ *But we were gentle among you^{pl},*
 - (1) *like a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children.* (cf. Ephesians 5:29)
 - ii) Loving generosity—*being pleased ...*
 - (1) When? ⁸ *We longed for you^{pl} in this way,*
 - (2) What? *to share with you^{pl} ...*
 - (a) *not only the gospel of God*
 - (b) *but also our own lives,*
 - (3) Why? *because you^{pl} had become beloved to us.*

First Thessalonians 2:9-12
The Shepherd's Integrity—part 2
Paul's Reminiscences—1:2-2:16
Personal Comments—1:1-3:13

Introduction: Don't forget the 4-fold use of "know" in 2:1-12

- 1) Paul reminds the believers of the strenuous nature of his work—2:9 ⁹ *For you^{pl} remember, brothers,*
 - a) The spheres of his work
 - i) In both his business and his church related activity
 - b) The difficulties of his work
 - i) Emphasis on fatigue—*our exhausting labor* [*kopos*]
 - ii) Emphasis on external difficulties—*and hardship* [*mochthos*].
 - iii) Cf. 2nd Corinthians 11:27; 2nd Thessalonians 3:8
 - c) The description of his work—*For ...*
 - i) What was done? *we preached* [*kerusso*] *to you^{pl} the gospel of God.*
 - (1) Cf. Matthew 26:13; Mark 13:10; 14:9; 16:15; Galatians 2:2; Colossians 1:23
 - ii) How was this done? *by working night and day*
 - (1) While maintaining a side job to support himself financially
 - iii) Why was this done? *so that we might not be a (financial) burden to any of you^{pl},*
- 2) Paul reminds the believers of the consistent nature of his ministry—2:10-12
 - a) Two or more necessary witnesses—¹⁰ *You^{pl} are witnesses* [*martus*], *and so is God,*
 - b) Paul's behavior was above reproach—*how ... we behaved toward you^{pl} who believe* [pres. act. ptc.];
 - i) Positively
 - (1) *Devoutly* [*hosios*]—with superior moral qualities before God
 - (2) *and uprightly* [*dikaios*]—in accordance with God's standard, with integrity
 - ii) Negatively
 - (1) *and blamelessly* [*amemptos*]—faultless, without guilt
 - c) Paul's paternal behavior—¹¹ *just as you^{pl} know* ④ *how we treated ...*
 - i) Individually and collectively—*each one of you^{pl}*
 - ii) Paternally—*like a father with his own children* [*teknon*] (cf. mother in 2:7)
 - iii) Lovingly and authoritatively
 - (1) *exhorting* [*parakaleo*] *you^{pl}*—to come alongside and say what needs to be said
 - (2) *and encouraging* [*paramutheomai*],—to rouse, to console or cheer up
 - (3) ¹² *and imploring* [*marturomai*] *you^{pl}*—to make demands, to urge concerning a matter of great importance
 - iv) Godwardly—*to walk* [*peripateo*] *in a manner worthy* (appropriate to the dignity and standards) *of the God who calls you^{pl} into His own kingdom and glory.*
 - (1) The kingdom will be the unhindered visible display of the radiance of His glory.
- 3) Application
 - a) The pastor ought to live so that his life will bear close inspection. (A. T. Robertson)
 - b) To demean or tear down such a ministry as this meant the accusers were either ignorant or lying.

First Thessalonians 2:13-16
The Flock's Faithfulness
Paul's Reminiscences—1:2-2:16
Personal Comments—1:1-3:13

- 1) Thanking God through prayer for positive responses to God's Word—2:13
 - a) What? ¹³ *Therefore **we** (emphatic) also constantly thank [eucharisteo] God*
 - b) Why? *because when you^{pl} (objectively) received [paralambano] the word of God that you^{pl} heard from us, you^{pl} (subjectively) welcomed [dechomai] it*
 - i) Negatively—*not as the word of men*
 - ii) Positively—*but as it truly is, the word of God, which is operating [energeo] in you^{pl} who are (characterized by) trusting.*
 - (1) Paul knew his teaching was from God.
 - iii) The Word of God is the immediate tangible object of saving faith. (McCune)
 - (1) Cf. John 17:20; Romans 10:17
 - (2) “The self-authenticating Word of God had performed its work of convicting and convincing them of the truth of Paul's message (cf. 1Co 2:4-5; Col 1:6).” (Moody Bible Commentary)
 - iv) God is the ultimate object of saving faith
 - (1) Cf. Romans 4:24; 10:9-10
 - c) What is **my** attitude toward the teaching of God's Word? Do I consistently “put out the welcome mat” for the Word?
- 2) Thanking God through prayer for the willingness of believers to suffer—2:14-16 ¹⁴ *For **you^{pl}** (emphatic) became imitators (cf. 1:6), brothers, of the congregations of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea,*
 - a) What did their imitation look like? *because **you^{pl}** (emphatic) suffered the same things from your^{pl} own (Gentile) countrymen, just as they did from the Jews,*
 - b) What did the Jewish leaders do to deserve God's wrath?
 - i) Murder—¹⁵ *who killed both **the Lord** (emphatic) Jesus and their own prophets*
 - (1) Cf. Matthew 21:35-39; Mark 12:5-8; Luke 20:9-16
 - ii) Persecution—*and chased us out, (cf. Acts 17:5-10)*
 - iii) Displeasing to God—*and they are not pleasing to God*
 - iv) Contrariness—*and are opposed to all people,*
 - (1) Hindering evangelism—¹⁶ *hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they might be rescued, (cf. Acts 18:6)*
 - v) Increased wickedness—*so as always to fill up the measure of their sins.*
 - c) But God will judge—*But wrath has come upon them completely.*
 - i) Difficult to identify this wrath: Jerusalem's destruction in 70 AD? Tribulation period? Eternal wrath?

First Thessalonians 2:17-20
Paul's Desire
Paul's Updates—2:17-3:13
Personal Comments—1:1-3:13

- 1) Paul expresses his desire to see the Thessalonian believers again in person—2:17 ¹⁷ *But **we** (emphatic), brothers, ... we made exceedingly great effort [spoudazo] to see your^{pl} face*
 - a) When? *having been separated [aporphanizo] from you^{pl} for a short time*
 - i) Paul was unwillingly and abruptly separated from those he loved (cf. Acts 17:5-10). (Magill)
 - ii) Cf. the references to “mother” in 2:7 and “father” in 2:11
 - b) In what way? (*in presence, not in heart*)
 - c) How? *in great longing [epithumia]*.
- 2) Paul restates his desire—2:18 ¹⁸ *Therefore we desired [thelo] to come to you^{pl}*
 - a) More than once—(*I, Paul, time and again*)
 - b) Opposition—*but Satan thwarted/interrupted us.*
 - i) Cf. Romans 15:22
 - ii) Cf. with the Spirit's hindering Paul in Acts 16:6-7
- 3) Paul uses rhetorical questions to express his affections for them concerning the future—2:19
 - a) ¹⁹ *For who is our hope, or joy, or crown/reward [stephanos] of boasting?*
 - i) It is also characterized by being: imperishable (1st Corinthians 9:25); righteousness (2nd Timothy 4:8); life (James 1:12; Revelation 2:10); and glory (1st Peter 5:4).
 - ii) Not so much 5 rewards, but rather 5 aspects of one reward.
 - b) *Is it not even you^{pl}, in the presence of our Lord Jesus in His coming [parousia]?*
 - i) This is a reference to Jesus' return at the Rapture. Cf. 1st Corinthians 15:23; 1st Thessalonians 3:13; 4:15; 5:23; 2nd Thessalonians 2:1; James 5:7, 8; 1st John 2:28
- 4) Paul makes his affections for them extremely clear concerning the present—2:20
 - a) ²⁰ *For **you^{pl}** (emphatic) are our glory and joy.*

First Thessalonians 3:1-5
Timothy's Visit
Paul's Updates—2:17-3:13
Personal Comments—1:1-3:13

- 1) Paul's concern for the Thessalonian believers influenced his decision—3:1-2a
 - a) Concerning Paul—¹ *Therefore, ... we thought it good to be left in Athens alone,*
 - i) When? *when we could no longer endure* (he had resisted taking action), (cf. 3:5)
 - ii) Cf. Acts 17:15-18:1, 5
 - b) Concerning Timothy—² *and sent [pempo] Timothy,*
 - How is Timothy described? Is he qualified for this task? (cf. Philippians 2:19-24)
 - i) *our brother [adelphos]*
 - ii) *and a servant [diakonos] of God*
 - iii) *and our fellow worker [sunergos] in the gospel of Christ,*
- 2) Reminders—3:2b-4
 - a) Concerning sending Timothy back to Thessalonica—3:2b-3a
 - i) How will the Thessalonian believers respond to persecution?
 - (1) *to establish/stabilize [sterizo] you^{pl}*
 - (2) *and to encourage [parakaleo] you^{pl} concerning your^{pl} faith,*
 - ii) Why were these two things necessary?
 - (1) ³ *so that no one would be disturbed/shaken by these pressures [thlipsis];*
 - (a) Thus the need for Timothy's stabilizing work
 - b) Concerning their previous teaching—3:3b-4
 - i) By God's design—*for you^{pl} yourselves know that we are appointed for this* (pressure).
 - ii) By God's revelation—⁴ *For indeed ... we were telling you^{pl} in advance that we were going to be pressured [thlibo],*
 - (1) Prior teaching—*when we were with you^{pl},*
 - (2) Current fulfillment—*and so it has happened, as you know.*
 - iii) It is neither wise nor biblical to attempt to hide potential difficulties from new converts.
 - (1) Cf. Acts 14:21-23; Romans 5:1-5; 8:18-25; 2nd Corinthians 4:7-15; 6:1-10; 11:23-27; 12:7-10 Philippians 1:29; 2nd Timothy 3:12
- 3) Returning to the original topic—3:5 (cf. 3:1-2)
 - a) Paul was concerned for them—3:5a ⁵ *For this reason ... I sent [pempo] to learn about your^{pl} faith,*
 - i) When? *when I could no longer endure* (he had resisted taking action),
 - b) Why did Paul want to know how things were going in Thessalonica?—3:5b
 - i) Satan's efforts—*lest by some means the tempter [peirazo] (Satan; 2:18) had tempted [peirazo] you^{pl},* (cf. Matthew 4:3)
 - ii) Paul's efforts—*and our labor [kopos] would be for nothing.*
 - (1) He was concerned that some professing believers would turn out to be false converts in light of the persecution.

First Thessalonians 3:6-10
Timothy's Return
Paul's Updates—2:17-3:13
Personal Comments—1:1-3:13

- 1) Paul's encouragement concerning Timothy's good news—3:6-8
 - a) Spiritual encouragement—3:6-7 ⁶ *But ...* ⁷ *for this reason, brothers, ... we were encouraged ...*
 - i) When? *now Timothy*
 - (1) *has come to us* (in Corinth) *from your^{pl}*,
 - (a) Ca. April/May 51 AD (cf. Acts 18:5); Paul had been in Thessalonica November 50 through January 51, some 4-5 months earlier
 - (2) *and has brought us the good news* [*euaggelizo*]
 - (a) Report part 1—*of your^{pl} ...*
 - (i) Godward—*faith*
 - (ii) Manward—*and love* [*agape*],
 - (b) Report part 2—*and that your^{pl} have good remembrance of us*,
 - (i) *strongly desiring to see us*,
 - (ii) *just as we also desire to see your^{pl}*,
 - ii) In what circumstances? *in all our pressure* [*thlipsis*] *and distress* [*anagke*],
 - (1) Some manuscripts reverse the order to “distress and pressure”
 - iii) About what? *about your^{pl}*
 - iv) How did the encouragement come? *through* (news of) *your^{pl} faith*.
 - b) Spiritual refreshment—3:8 ⁸ *Because now we live*,
 - i) Why? *if* (1st class condition, assumed true) **you^{pl}** (emphatic) *stand steadfast in the Lord*.
 - ii) Remember Paul's concern in 3:5? Satan was ineffective in his efforts.
 - 2) Paul's question concerning inadequate gratitude—3:9-10
 - a) Godward gratitude—3:9 ⁹ *For what gratitude are we able to give back to God concerning your^{pl}*,
 - i) Joyful thoughts—*for all the joy with which we rejoice because of your^{pl} before* (in the presence of) *our God*,
 - b) Persistent prayer—3:10 *we keep praying intensely*
 - i) The time during which they prayed—¹⁰ *night and day*
 - ii) Two requests in prayer (marked by two infinitives)
 - (1) An emotional element—*to see your^{pl} face* (cf. 2:18; 3:11)
 - (2) A theological element—*and to complete* [*katartizo*] *what is lacking in your^{pl} faith?* (cf. 3:12-13)
 - (a) Since Paul had spent such a short time in Thessalonica (cf. Acts 17:1-10).
 - (b) These believers had been saved less than one year. They have more maturing to do.

Father, may my faith be an encouragement to other believers in our congregation.

First Thessalonians 3:11-13
Paul's Pastoral Prayer
Paul's Updates—2:17-3:13
Personal Comments—1:1-3:13

- 1) Paul offers his first wish-prayer for being reunited—3:11 ¹¹ *Now may ...*
 - Looks **back** to chapters 1-3
 - a) Unity of the two-fold Source (one essence, two persons)
 - i) *our God and Father himself*
 - ii) *and our Lord Jesus Christ*
 - b) Do what? (this explains the persistent praying of 3:10)
 - i) *Direct/clear* [aor. act. opt. 3rd person sing. of *kateuthuno*] *our way to you^{pl}*,
(1) Cf. OT: 1st Chronicles 29:18; Psalm 37:23 (36:23 LXX); 40:2 (39:2 LXX);
119:133 (118:133 LXX)
(2) Cf. NT: Luke 1:79; 2nd Thessalonians 3:5
 - ii) Remember how Satan had hindered previous attempts (cf. 2:18)
 - iii) Was this prayer answered? Cf. Acts 20:1-4; 1st Timothy 1:3

- 2) Paul offers his second wish-prayer for sanctification—3:12-13 ¹² *and may ...*
 - Looks **forward** to chapters 4-5
 - a) Who is the Source? *the Lord* (Jesus Christ)
 - b) For what? *cause you^{pl} to increase* [aor. act. opt. 3rd person sing. of *pleonazo*] *and abound/overflow* [aor. act. opt. 3rd person sing. of *perisseuo*] *in love* [*agape*]
 - i) Does God answer this prayer? Cf. 2nd Thessalonians 1:3
 - c) Abundant love for whom?
 - i) Those within the congregation—*for one another* (cf. John 13:35)
 - ii) Those outside the congregation—*and for all*, (cf. Matthew 5:43-44; Romans 5:8)
 - d) What is the standard/model of this love? *just as we do for you^{pl}*, (cf. 2:1-12; 3:1-5)
 - e) Why is this love necessary? ¹³ *in order to establish/stabilize* [aorist active infinitive of *sterizo*] *your^{pl} hearts blameless* [*amemptos*]
 - i) Stabilize—cf. 3:2; 2nd Thessalonians 2:17; 3:3; 1st Peter 5:10
 - ii) Blameless—cf. Luke 1:6; Philippians 2:15; 1st Thessalonians 2:10; 5:23
 - f) Who evaluates these sanctified hearts? *in holiness* [*hagiosune*] *in the presence of our God and Father*,
 - i) Holiness—cf. Romans 1:4; 2nd Corinthians 7:1
 - ii) Because God knows the heart (cf. Luke 16:15; Acts 1:24; 15:8; Romans 8:27; 1st John 3:20; Revelation 2:23)
 - iii) A reference to the Bema Seat judgment (cf. Romans 14:10; 2nd Corinthians 5:10)
 - g) When is this blamelessness necessary? *in the coming* [*parousia*] *of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His holy ones* [*hagios*].
 - i) “Coming” normally refers to the Rapture. Cf. 1st Corinthians 15:23; 1st Thessalonians 2:19; 4:15; 5:23; 2nd Thessalonians 2:1; James 5:7, 8; 1st John 2:28
 - ii) “His holy ones” refers to Christians (cf. Colossians 1:26; 2nd Thessalonians 1:10)
 - (1) It does not refer to angels

Someone has wisely said: what Paul prayed for he taught toward

First Thessalonians 4:1-2
Exhortations in General
Paul's Exhortations—4:1-5:22
Pastoral Comments—4:1-5:28

- 1) Paul emphasizes the need to avoid spiritual complacency—4:1 ¹ *Finally then, brothers,*
 - Based on what Paul prayed in 3:11-13 (cf. Philippians 3:1; 2nd Thessalonians 3:1)
 - a) What is Paul doing? *we ask/urge [erotao]* (cf. 5:12) *and encourage [parakaleo]* (cf. 2:11; 3:2, 7; 4:10, 18; 5:11, 14) *you^{pl} in the Lord Jesus*
 - b) What is the content of Paul's encouraging request? *that you^{pl} superabound;* (cf. 3:12; 4:10)
 - i) This is not a rebuke. Rather, they were doing well, but there is always room for improvement.
 - ii) "Sometimes Christians want to hear new truth when what they need is exhortation to excel still more, to press on to greater experiencing of old truths which they are already practicing to a limited degree." (Constable)
- 2) Paul emphasizes the need to obey their ongoing two-fold obligation—*just as you^{pl} received [paralambano]* (cf. 2:13) *from us how it is necessary for you^{pl}*
 - a) Lifestyle—*to walk [peripateo]* (cf. 2:12; 4:12)
 - b) Motivation—*and to please [aresko] God* (the Father), (cf. 2:4, 15)
 - c) Some manuscripts add a phrase similar to "*just as you are doing*"
- 3) Paul emphasizes the need to submit to authoritative commands—² *for you^{pl} know what instructions [parangelia]* (cf. 4:11) *we gave you^{pl} through the Lord Jesus.*
 - a) *Parangelia* was used of commands received from a superior officer to be passed on to others
- 4) Principles
 - a) It is not legalism for teachers of God's Word to expect increasing obedience from their hearers.
 - b) It is not legalism for teachers of God's Word to express the ongoing obligations of their hearers.
 - c) It is not legalism for teachers of God's Word to express their derivative authority.

First Thessalonians 4:3-8
Exhortations Concerning Sexual Purity
Paul's Exhortations—4:1-5:22
Pastoral Comments—4:1-5:28

- 1) Paul states God's will for them—4:3a ³ *For this is the will of God (the Father), your^{pl} (process of) sanctification [hagiasmos],*
 - a) Cf. 2nd Corinthians 7:1; Hebrews 12:14; 1st Peter 1:15-17

- 2) What are the aspects of sexual holiness?—4:3b-6
 - a) It is God's will for you to use the gift of sex for God's glory—*for you^{pl} to keep (yourselves) away [pres. mid. inf.] from sexual immorality [porneia],*
 - i) Cf. Genesis 39:7-12; Acts 15:29; Ephesians 5:3
 - ii) Forbids any sexual activity outside God's revealed design, including: premarital and extramarital sex, homosexuality, incest, pornography, and other perversions
 - b) It is God's will for you to use your physical body (sexual organs) for God's glory—⁴ *for each of you^{pl} to learn [pf. act. inf.] how to possess [pres. mid. inf.] his own vessel*
 - i) Positive—*in [en] sanctification [hagiasmos] and honor,*
 - ii) Negative—⁵ *not in [en] lustful passion [pathos epithumia]*
 - (1) In contrast to the world—*like the Gentiles who do not know God;*
 - (a) Cf. Psalm 79:6; 1st Corinthians 1:21; 2nd Thessalonians 1:8
 - iii) If believers would do this, they would avoid sexual immorality.
 - c) It is God's will for Christ to avenge sexual immorality against other believers—⁶ *that no one should ...*
 - i) What?
 - (1) *transgress [pres. act. inf.] and take advantage of [pres. act. inf.] his brother in this matter,*
 - (2) Those sinned against include: the sexual partner, parents, present or future spouses, other family members, present and future children, other church members, etc.
 - ii) Why? *because the Lord is the avenger concerning all these things,*
 - (1) Young converts were disciplined accordingly—*just as we also told you^{pl} beforehand and solemnly warned you^{pl}.*
 - (2) Cf. Hebrews 13:4

- 3) Why should believers pursue sexual holiness?—4:7-8
 - a) Purposes of God's effectual call—⁷ *For God did ... call us ...*
 - i) Negative—*not for [epi] (the purpose of) impurity [akatharsia]*
 - (1) Cf. Romans 1:24; 6:19; 2nd Corinthians 12:21; Galatians 5:19; Colossians 3:5
 - ii) Positive—*but in [en] (the sphere of) sanctification [hagiasmos].*
 - b) One's response to God's revelation concerning sexual purity—⁸ *Consequently the one disregarding this ...*
 - i) Negative—*is not disregarding man*
 - ii) Positive—*but God, who has also given His Holy [hagios] Spirit to you^{pl}.*
 - (1) Cf. 2nd Samuel 12:9, 10; Psalm 51:4
 - (2) The Father gives the Spirit to genuine believers (cf. Luke 11:13; John 14:26; Acts 2:33; Galatians 4:6).
 - (3) The Spirit enables believers to live a life of holiness.

First Thessalonians 4:9-12
Exhortations Concerning Interpersonal Relationships
Paul's Exhortations—4:1-5:22
Pastoral Comments—4:1-5:28

- 1) God teaches believers even when spiritual leaders are not present—4:9-10a ⁹ *Now concerning brotherly love [philadelphia] you^{pl} have no need for anyone to write to you^{pl},*
 - a) Because they practice love within the congregation—for **you^{pl}** (emphatic) *yourself are God-taught [theodidaktos]* (cf. Isaiah 54:13; John 6:45)
 - i) The work of the Spirit and the Word cf. Psalm 119:102; 1st John 2:20, 27
 - ii) For what purpose? *to love [agapao] one another;*
 - iii) Since God is love (1st John 4:7-8, 16) and He abides in us, He teaches us to be like Himself. (Magill)
 - b) Because they practice love with other congregations—¹⁰ *for indeed you^{pl} do so toward all the brothers who are in all of Macedonia.*
 - i) This would include Philippi (@ 80 miles), Berea (@ 40 miles), etc. Perhaps in part because Thessalonica was the capital city of Macedonia?
- 2) Believers need encouragement for specific aspects of the Christian life—4:10b-12 *But we are encouraging [parakaleo] you^{pl}, brothers,*
 - a) What are the things this congregation needs to hear?
 - i) Don't become complacent about your love—to *exceed still more*, (cf. 4:1)
 - ii) Remain ambitious in your Christian walk—¹¹ *and to aspire ...*
 - (1) Don't be distracted; calm down—to *lead a calm / tranquil life*,
 - (a) This counters restlessness.
 - (2) Don't be meddlesome; mind your own business—and *to focus on your^{pl} own business*,
 - (a) This counters being a busybody.
 - (3) Don't be lazy; be responsible—and *to work with your^{pl} own hands*,
 - (a) This counters idleness. There is dignity in manual labor and not being a burden to others.
 - (b) They failed in this area. Cf. 2nd Thessalonians 3:6-15
 - b) Paul had taught them these things in the short time he was in Thessalonica
 - i) *just as we* (authoritatively) *commanded you^{pl};*
 - c) Why does Paul encourage them to do these four things? ¹² *so that [hina] ...*
 - i) In relationship to unbelievers—you^{pl} *may behave appropriately toward outsiders,*
 - ii) In relationship with believers—and *may have need of nothing.*
 - iii) “The Christians who lived dishonorably and depended on unbelievers for their daily necessities because of an undisciplined life would have been a shame and a displeasure to God, plus a contradiction to the gospel. The brightest testimony to the power of God would be evidenced most convincingly by one with an industrious walk and an independent life.” (Mayhue)

First Thessalonians 4:13-18
Exhortations Concerning the Dead-in-Christ
Paul's Exhortations—4:1-5:22
Pastoral Comments—4:1-5:28

- 1) The need for new revelation—4:13-14
 - a) Paul informs them concerning Christians who have died—4:13a ¹³ *Now we do not desire you^{pl} to be uninformed, brothers, concerning those who are asleep,*
 - b) Paul reminds them of an important distinction—4:13b *so that you^{pl} may not grieve like the rest who have no hope* (cf. Eph. 2:12; Ti. 2:13).
 - i) Grief is still real for believers, but it is not hopeless grief. It is temporary, but not eternal.
 - c) Paul summarizes his teaching—4:14
 - i) Faith regarding the past—4:14a ¹⁴ *Because if* (1st class condition, assumed true for sake of argument) *we trust that Jesus died and rose again,*
 - ii) Faith regarding the future—4:14b *so also God* (the Father) *will bring with Him those who have been put to sleep through Jesus.*
- 2) The specific content of this new revelation—4:15-17
 - a) Christ is the Source of this revelation—4:15a ¹⁵ *For we say this to you^{pl} in the* (sphere of the) *word of the Lord,*
 - i) This is revelation not made known through the Old Testament.
 - b) Christ is the primary Content of this revelation—4:15b-17
 - i) Living believers will not see the Lord before believers who have died—4:15b *that **we** (emphatic) who are alive, who are left behind until the coming [parousia] of the Lord, will not* (in any way) *precede those who have fallen asleep.*
 - (1) Cf. *parousia* in 2:19 and 3:13
 - ii) The sequence of how believers meet Christ at His return—4:16-17
 - (1) ¹⁶ *Because the Lord Himself will come down from heaven* (cf. Acts 1:11)
 - (a) *in* (the sphere of) *an authoritative shout,*
 - (b) *in* (the sphere of) *the voice of an archangel,*
 - (i) Of which Michael is one (Dan. 10:13; Jude 1:9; Rev. 12:7)
 - (c) *and in* (the sphere of) *the trumpet of God,*
 - (i) cf. 1st Cor. 15:52
 - (2) *and the dead in* (the sphere of) *Christ with rise first.* (cf. 4:14)
 - (a) cf. Rom. 8:23
 - (b) OT saints are resurrected after the Tribulation (cf. Dan. 12:1-3)
 - (3) ¹⁷ *Then **we** (emphatic) who are alive, who are left behind, will suddenly be caught up [harpazo] together with them in the clouds to meet [apantesis] the Lord in the air,*
 - (a) The term “rapture” is from the Latin translation of *harpazo*.
 - (4) *and in this way we will always be with the Lord.* (cf. John 14:1-3)
- 3) Spiritual encouragement should be based on God's revelation to us—4:18 ¹⁸ *For this reason, encourage one another in* (the sphere of) *these words.*
 - a) This is the first of 20 commands in this letter.

First Thessalonians 5:1-11
Exhortations Concerning Spiritual Watchfulness
Paul's Exhortations—4:1-5:22
Pastoral Comments—4:1-5:28

- 1) Paul states the effects of his short-term teaching—5:1-3
 - a) The believers were taught well—5:1 ¹ *Now concerning the times [chronos] and the epochs [kairos] (cf. Acts 1:7; 3:19-21), brothers, you^{pl} have no need for anything to be written to you^{pl}. (cf. 2nd Thess. 2:5)*
 - b) The Day will be unwelcome—5:2 ² *For you^{pl} yourselves know accurately that the Day of the Lord is coming like a thief in the night.*
 - i) The Day of the Lord (cf. Acts 2:20; 1st Cor. 5:5; 2nd Cor. 1:14; 2nd Pet. 3:10) is distinct from the Day of Christ (cf. 1st Cor. 1:8; Phil. 1:6, 10; 2:16). The Day of the Lord refers to the Tribulation, Kingdom, and preparation for Eternity, while the Day of Christ refers to believers' evaluation by Christ.
 - ii) Two future aspects of the Day of the Lord include God's judgment at the end of Daniel's 70th week (Dan. 9:27; Rev. 19:11-21), and then again at the end of Christ's Kingdom (2nd Pet. 3:10; Rev. 20:7-15).
 - c) The Day of the Lord will be unexpected and unavoidable—5:3 ³ *For when they say, "Peace and security," then sudden destruction comes to them, as labor pains to a pregnant woman. And they will certainly not escape.*
- 2) Paul demonstrates a stark contrast of believers with the world—5:4-5
 - a) Stated negatively—⁴ *But you^{pl} (emphatic), brothers, are not in darkness, so that the Day should overtake you^{pl} like a thief.*
 - b) Stated positively—⁵ *You^{pl} (emphatic) are all sons of light and sons of day.*
 - c) Stated negatively—*We are not of night or of darkness.*
- 3) Paul gives them clear commands for spiritual watchfulness—5:6-11
 - a) ⁶ *So then, let us not sleep [katheudo], even as the others,*
 - i) This word for "sleep" is not the same as the one used in 4:13-15. Here the idea is that of spiritual indifference.
 - b) *but let us be alert/vigilant [gregoreuo] and clear-headed [nepho].*
 - i) In contrast to the normal behavior of the unsaved world—⁷ *For those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night.*
 - (1) This indifference to God is the natural characteristic of the unbeliever.
 - c) ⁸ *But ... let us (emphatic) be clear-headed [nepho],*
 - i) Why? *since we are of the day,*
 - ii) How can we be clear-headed? *having put on the breastplate of faith and love and a helmet, the hope of salvation.* (cf. Is. 59:17)
 - (1) Note the maturity triad of faith, hope, and love. (cf. 1:3; 1st Cor. 13:13)
 - iii) Why should we be clear-headed? ⁹ *Because God has appointed us ...*
 - (1) Stated negatively—*not for (Tribulation) wrath,* (cf. 1:10)
 - (2) Stated positively—*but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,*
 - (a) Jesus died in our place—¹⁰ *who died for [huper] us*
 - (b) We will share in Jesus' resurrection life—*so that whether (3rd class condition) we are alert or asleep we will live together with Him.*
 - d) ¹¹ *Therefore encourage [parakaleo] one another and build up [oikodomeo] each other,*
 - i) Encouragement—*just as you^{pl} also are doing.*

Why Study Prophecy?

Dr. Richard Mayhue, *1st and 2nd Thessalonians* (pp. 136-137)

- 1) About one-third of the Bible was prophetic when penned. To set aside this significant portion is to ignore a large part of what God has revealed. Paul wrote that all Scripture is profitable to equip (2 Tim 3:16-17); therefore, prophecy too is profitable.
- 2) Prophecy provides answers to life's questions that are found nowhere else. For example, the relationship between the resurrection and the rapture (1 Thess 4:13-18).
- 3) The study of prophecy follows in the footsteps of the prophets who desired to know the future things about the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Pet 1:10-11).
- 4) The study of prophecy encourages patient enduring in the midst of suffering and trials (James 5:7-11).
- 5) Prophetic expectation purifies (1 John 3:2-3).
- 6) Prophecy gives perspective on holy living today (1 Thess 5:6-9; Titus 2:11-14; 2 Pet 3:11-12).
- 7) Prophecy is the Christian's source of hope and encouragement (1 Thess 5:11; Titus 2:13).
- 8) Prophecy assures that persecution of the righteous will be avenged by God (2 Thess 1:5-10).
- 9) The study of prophecy promotes obedience and is the gateway to God's blessing (Rev 1:3; 22:7).
- 10) Prophetic study equips the Saints to refute those who mock the Christian hope (2 Pet 3:1-9).
- 11) Fulfilled prophecy proves that the Bible is true and inspires confidence in Scripture (Acts 13:32-35 with 42-43).
- 12) Prophecy provides a biblical basis for prayer (cf. Dan 9:1-10 with Jer 25:11-12).

First Thessalonians 5:12-15
Exhortations Concerning Church Harmony
Paul's Exhortations—4:1-5:22
Pastoral Comments—4:1-5:28

- 1) Attitude and actions of congregation members toward their pastors—5:12-13 ¹² *Now we ask [erotao] you^{pl}, brothers,*
 - a) *to know [eido]*
 - “And surely much of the tension that at times develops between the pastors and members would be dissipated if the members would learn to know and appreciate the (person and) duties and ministries of their spiritual leaders.” (Hiebert) Know both their strengths and weaknesses.
 - i) *those who labor (exhaustively) [kopiao] among [en] you^{pl}*
 - (1) Pastors have no right to be lazy or irresponsible
 - ii) *and lead [proistemi] you^{pl} in [en] the Lord*
 - (1) Giving protection, guidance, and direction
 - iii) *and admonish [noutheteo] you^{pl},*
 - (1) This word implies 3 things: something is wrong, the admonition comes in verbal form (either written or vocal), and the admonition springs out of concern for the person being admonished.
 - b) ¹³ *and esteem [hegeomai] them in the highest possible manner in love because of their work.*
 - i) But remember, the more we know about our pastors, the stronger the temptation to dislike what we know. Make an objective decision after weighing the facts and deliberately place high value on them.
 - ii) Evaluate their work, not their quirks. All pastors have some trait or habit that irritates someone. Don't focus on those things. Focus on their work of the spiritual shepherding of God's flock.
 - c) *Be at peace [eireneuo] among yourselves.*
- 2) Attitude and actions of congregation members toward other members—5:14-15 ¹⁴ *Now we encourage [parakaleo] you^{pl}, brothers,*
 - a) Some are out of step—*admonish [noutheteo] the disorderly [ataktos]*, (cf. 4:11-12)
 - b) Some are small of soul—*console [paramutheomai] the discouraged [oligopsuchos]*, (cf. 4:13-18)
 - i) They think their resources are limited.
 - c) Some are incapacitated—*help [antechomai] the weak*, (cf. 4:3-8)
 - i) They are not necessarily guilty in this. Sometimes it is just part of living in a fallen world.
 - d) Remember that change takes time—*be patient [makrotheumeo] toward everyone*. (cf. 3:12)
 - e) Avoid doing something harmful—¹⁵ *See to it that no one reciprocates evil for evil*,
 - i) The whole congregation is responsible for the conduct of each individual.
 - f) Always do something beneficial—*but always pursue what is good both to one another and to everyone*.

First Thessalonians 5:16-22
Exhortations Concerning the Christian Life
Paul's Exhortations—4:1-5:22
Pastoral Comments—4:1-5:28

- 1) Paul's commands concerning God's will—5:16-18
 - a) Three commands—5:16-18a
 - i) Have a persistent habit of joy—5:16 ¹⁶ *Rejoice always*,
 - ii) Have a persistent habit of prayer—5:17 ¹⁷ *pray unceasingly*,
(1) Cf. Paul's own example: Rom. 1:9; 2nd Tim. 1:3; 1st Thess. 1:2; 2:13
 - iii) Have a persistent habit of gratitude—5:18 ¹⁸ *give thanks in everything*,
 - b) What reason behind the commands—5:18b
 - i) *for this is the will [thelema] of God in Christ Jesus for you^{pl}*.

- 2) Paul's commands concerning God's Word—5:19-22
 - a) Negative: concerning unteachableness—5:19-20
 - i) ¹⁹ *Do not stifle [sbennumi] the Spirit*;
(1) In all His gifts, manifestations, and promptings. (Magill)
 - ii) ²⁰ *do not disparage [exoutheneo] prophecies*,
(1) Emphasis more on forth-telling rather than fore-telling.
(2) Don't treat them with contempt. Don't have a low opinion of them.
(3) Remember the genuine spiritual gift of prophecy: cf. Rom. 12:6; 1st Cor. 12:10
 - b) Positive: concerning discernment—5:21-22 ²¹ *but evaluate [dokimazo] everything*;
 - i) Response to good teaching—*hold on to [katecho] what (teaching) is good [kalos]*,
(1) Once the teaching has been tested according to the Standard and found acceptable, it should be fully embraced.
 - ii) Response to bad teaching—²² *keep yourselves away from [apecho] every kind of evil [poneros] (teaching)*.

First Thessalonians 5:23-27
Paul's Closing Words
Paul's Closing Words—5:23-28
Pastoral Comments—4:1-5:28

- 1) Pray for completeness—5:23-24
 - a) The wish-prayers stated—5:23
 - i) ²³ *Now may the God of peace himself sanctify [hagiazo] you^{pl} completely [holoteles];*
 - (1) Cf. Rom. 15:33; 16:20; 2nd Cor. 13:11; Phil. 4:9; Heb. 13:20
 - (2) No aspect of your person should lack holiness
 - ii) *and may your^{pl} spirit, soul, and body be kept complete [holokleros], without guilt [amemptos] in the coming [parousia] of our Lord Jesus Christ.*
 - (1) Man has body and soul—Matt. 10:28
 - (2) Man has body and spirit—James 2:26; 2nd Cor. 7:1
 - b) The Godward encouragement—5:24 ²⁴ *The One who (effectively) calls you^{pl} is faithful, who will also do it.*
- 2) Remember the necessity of praying for others—5:25 ²⁵ **Brothers** (emphatic), *pray for us.*
 - a) Paul regularly asked prayer from those to whom he wrote. Cf. Rom. 15:30-32; 2nd Cor. 1:11; Eph. 6:19-20; Phil. 1:19; Col. 4:3, 18; Philemon 1:22
- 3) Express appropriate affection to all—5:26 ²⁶ *Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss.*
 - a) This was done with a distinction in genders; males with males, females with females.
 - b) Cf. Rom. 16:16; 1st Cor. 16:20; 2nd Cor. 13:12; 1st Pet. 5:14
 - c) Something similar in our culture would be a hug/embrace, pat on the back, or a solid handshake.
- 4) The public reading of Scripture is of utmost importance—5:27 ²⁷ *I put you^{pl} under oath before the Lord to have this letter read (publicly) to all the holy brothers.*

First Thessalonians 5:28
Paul's Benediction
Paul's Closing Words—5:23-28
Pastoral Comments—4:1-5:28

- 1) ²⁸ *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you^{pl}. Amen.*
- 2) Compare with Paul's conclusions in his other letters
 - a) Similar blessings
 - i) Rom. 16:24
 - ii) 2nd Thess. 3:18
 - iii) 1st Cor. 16:23
 - b) Shorter blessings
 - i) Col. 4:18
 - ii) 2nd Tim. 4:22
 - iii) Titus 3:13
 - iv) 1st Tim. 6:21
 - c) Longer blessings
 - i) Gal. 6:18
 - ii) Phil. 4:23
 - iii) Philemon 1:25
 - iv) 2nd Cor. 13:14
 - v) Eph. 6:24
- 3) What is this grace of which he speaks?
 - a) An encompassing definition: *the freedom of a stronger person (a superior) to consider a weaker person (an inferior) pleasing to his purpose and to actively demonstrate goodwill to them.*
 - i) The stronger acts voluntarily, but he may be moved by the dependence or the request of the weaker party.
 - ii) This favor cannot coexist with anger or judgment.
 - iii) Such favor is usually temporary, for a specific situation only.
 - iv) There is always the possibility that this favor may be withdrawn.
 - v) Both parties do not mutually practice this favor.
 - b) Specific definition: *God's freedom to actively consider certain people as pleasing to His purpose, and, acting solely from His own graciousness, He actively demonstrates goodwill to whomever He chooses.*
 - i) This favor may be temporary or permanent.
 - ii) God never seeks the favor of humans.