

Analysis of
1 THESSALONIANS

"RELATIONSHIP, REVIEW, AND RAPTURE"

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Prepared by James T. Bartsch
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A1 THE RELATION OF PAUL TO THE CHURCH OF THESSALONICA 1 - 3

B1 His Greeting 1:1

- C1 The writers: "Paul and Silvanus and Timothy: ¹
- C2 The recipients: "the church of the Thessalonians"
- C3 The blessing: Grace and peace

B2 His Prayer of Thanks 1:2-3

- C1 The recipient: God 1:2
- C2 The time: always
- C3 The subjects: all of you
- C4 The vehicle: prayers
- C5 The content: remembering their 1:3
 - D1 "Work of faith"
 - D2 "Labor of love"
 - D3 "Steadfastness of hope"

¹ 1 Thess. 1:1 - Paul, Silvanus, Timothy: Note that Paul consistently refers to "our" ministry, i.e. of the Apostolic "Team". For simplicity's sake, reference is made throughout only to the Apostle himself. Silvanus is the Roman spelling of the name of the man we know better as Silas (Acts 16:25).

B3 His Assurance of God's Choice of Them 1:4-10

- C1 The statement of his knowledge 1:4
- C2 The evidences of his knowledge 1:5-10
 - D1 The power behind the presentation of the gospel 1:5a
 - D2 The character of the presenters 1:5b
 - E1 Men of proven character
 - E2 Working for the benefit of the Thessalonians
 - D3 Their imitation 1:6
 - E1 Their role models
 - E2 Their actions
 - D4 Their serving as a pattern to all believers 1:7-10
 - E1 The location 1:7
 - E2 The action: 1:8
 - F1 "The word of the Lord" rang out from them
 - F2 Their "faith toward God" has gone out
 - E3 The result: Paul had no need to speak anything 1:8
 - E4 The proof: They themselves [i.e. other contacts in Macedonia, Achaia and elsewhere] relate 1:9a
 - F1 The apostolic entrance into Thessalonica 1:9b
 - F2 How the Thessalonians turned to God from the idols 1:9c-10
 - G1 "To serve a living and true God" 1:9d
 - G2 To await God's Son from the heavens 1:10

B4 His Approval of His Initial Ministry toward Them 2:1-12

- C1 His successful beginning (his entrance not in vain) 2:1
- C2 His boldness despite persecution 2:2

- C3 His straightforward exhortation 2:3
- C4 His desire to please God, not men 2:4
- C5 The absence of improper motives 2:5-7
- C6 His gentleness among them as a nursing mother 2:7
- C7 His sacrifice 2:8-9
- C8 His ethical conduct 2:10
- C9 His speaking as a father 2:11-12

B5 His Thanks for Their Acceptance of God's Word 2:13-16

- C1 Paul's ceaseless thanks to God 2:13
- C2 Their welcoming of the apostolic word
- C3 Their imitation of the churches of Judea 2:14-16

B6 His Eagerness to See Them 2:17 - 3:13

- C1 His thwarted desire 2:17-20
- C2 The ministry of Timothy 3:1-10
- C3 The Prayer of Paul 3:11-13

A2 THE COMMANDS AND TEACHING OF PAUL TO THE CHURCH OF THESSALONICA 4-5

B1 Refresher Commands: They must be... 4:1-12

- C1 Improving in their walk 4:1-2
- C2 Sanctified in their moral behavior 4:3-8
- C3 Increasing in their brotherly love 4:9-10
- C4 Diligent in their work 4:11-12

B2 Teaching Concerning Those Dead in Christ 4:13-18

- C1 His desire for them 4:13
 - D1 To be knowledgeable concerning those sleeping ²
 - D2 That they do not grieve as the rest [unbelievers], "who have no hope"
- C2 His assurance concerning the future 4:14-17
 - D1 The belief about the past 4:14
 - E1 That Jesus died
 - E2 That He rose again
 - D2 The belief about the future: God will bring with Jesus ³ (when He returns) the ones who slept through Him (i.e. the dead in Christ)
 - D3 The details of believers in relation to Christ's return (the Rapture) 4:15-17
 - E1 The certainty of the details: "For this we say to you by the word of the Lord" ⁴ 4:15
 - E2 The order: The living ⁵ do not precede those having slept (the dead in Christ)
 - E3 The descent of Christ from heaven 4:16
 - F1 With word of command
 - F2 With voice of archangel

² 1 Thess. 4:13 subtitle - those sleeping: Obviously a euphemism for death for the Christian. It is an appropriate term because death, for the believer, is temporary. All are born spiritually dead (separated from God) and dying physically (when physical death is complete, our soul will be separated from our body). If spiritual death is not remedied before the arrival of physical death, the horrible end will be "second death" (separation from God eternally in the lake of fire and brimstone - Rev. 20:10-15).

³ 1 Thess. 4:14 subtitle - bring with Jesus. Those who have died "in Christ," i.e. having placed their trust in Jesus, are presently with Him. Their bodies are in the grave but their living spirits go to be with Jesus. Apparently the dead in Christ are given temporary, spiritual bodies, able to wear clothing (Rev. 6:11). When Jesus returns to retrieve His bride, the Church, from this earth as He promised (John 14:1-6), taking them to His Father's house, He will bring along with Him the departed Church age spirits.

⁴ 1 Thess. 4:15 - by the word of the Lord: Jesus personally revealed the following to Paul.

⁵ 1 Thess. 4:15 - we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord: "(Paul) thought that Christ would probably return in his lifetime, or at least he allowed for its possibility." Thomas L. Constable, 1 Thessalonians, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, Victor Books, II, 704.

- F3 With trumpet of God
- E4 The destiny of believers 4:16-17
 - F1 "The dead in Christ will rise first" ⁶ 4:16
 - F2 The living will be snatched "up" ⁷ together with them in the clouds" 4:17
- E5 The culmination of the event: Unto a meeting with "the Lord in the air" ⁸ 4:17
- E6 The goal of the event: For believers always to be with the Lord! 4:17
- C3 His instruction that they comfort one another 4:18
- B3 Teaching Concerning Times, Seasons and the Day of the Lord 5:1-11**
 - C1 Their awareness of future events 5:1-2
 - D1 Their not needing to be informed concerning the times and seasons
 - D2 Their present knowledge of the *sudden* coming of the Day of the Lord ⁹ (as a thief in the night)

⁶ 1 Thess. 4:16 - dead in Christ will rise first: The spirits who come with Jesus from heaven will be reunited with their previously decomposed bodies, now resurrected into glorious bodies of a spiritual dimension now forevermore impervious to either sin or its consequence, death! For a fuller description of this event, see 1 Cor. 15:35-58.

⁷ 1 Thess. 4:17 title - snatched up: The Greek word is *harpagesometha*, a future passive statement of fact from *harpadzo*, which means "to grab or seize by force, with the purpose of removing and/or controlling" (*Greek-English Lexicon the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains* by Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, Editors). Jesus will personally come to the air somewhere above earth and issue a command, rescuing resurrected and living Christians from Planet Earth, which is about to become the target of sudden destruction during the following "Day of the Lord" (1 Thess. 5:2-3). The word "Rapture" is the English transliteration of this Greek word from the Latin Vulgate.

Just as the dead believers have been given glorious resurrection bodies, so are the living believers, without ever having had to die first! Paul reveals in 1 Cor. 15:51-54 a mystery (previously unrevealed truth): "We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed!" Though Paul does not here explicitly mention this transformation of mortal living bodies into immortal ones, it is implied. How could untransformed bodies possibly ascend into oxygen deprived heights?

⁸ 1 Thess. 4:17 - in the air: Our first glimpse (in our glorified, resurrection type bodies) of relatives and of Jesus himself will not be in heaven. It will be a fantastic reunion somewhere up in the air!

⁹ 1 Thess. 5:2 - day of the Lord: "The day of the Lord is a future period of time in which God will be at work in world affairs more directly and dramatically than He has been since the earthly ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a time referred to by many Old Testament prophets (e.g., Isa. 13:9-11; Joel 2:28-32; Zeph. 1:14-18; 3:14-15). As these and other Old Testament verses indicate, the day of the Lord will include both judgment and blessing. That day begins immediately after the Rapture of the church and ends with the conclusion of the Millennium" (Constable, 705).

- C2 The illusory nature of the Day of the Lord 5:3
 - D1 The [world's] proclamation of peace and safety ¹⁰
 - D2 The coming of sudden destruction on them (i.e. the world, not the Christians, who have been raptured)
 - D3 The analogy of labor pains
 - D4 The absence of any escape!
- C3 The believers' non-participation in the Day of the Lord 5:4-10
 - D1 Their identity: "brothers" 5:4a
 - D2 Their orientation: "not in darkness," so that day will not overtake them as a thief ¹¹ (5:4b) 5:4b-5
 - E1 For all you sons of light are 5:5
 - E2 And sons of day
 - E3 Not we are of night
 - E4 Nor of darkness
 - D3 Their responsibility 5:6-8
 - E1 Let us not sleep as the rest (unbelievers) do 5:6
 - E2 Let us watch and be sober 5:6-7
 - F1 Those who sleep, do so by night 5:7
 - F2 Those who get drunk do so by night

¹⁰ 1 Thess. 5:3 - peace and safety: "This day will begin when world conditions appear calm rather than calamitous. This peace will come with the signing of the seven-year covenant, predicted in Daniel 9:27" (Constable, 705). With all Christians gone, there will, for a period of time, be no more tension between good and evil. Man will construct his own humanistic utopia and, for awhile, it will seem as though world peace has been achieved! What an illusion!

¹¹ 1 Thess. 5:4 - day ... overtake you like a thief: No clearer statement could be made of a pre-tribulation rapture. The Day of the Lord is characterized by sudden, unexpected destruction and the darkness of night. Believers sons of light and sons of day! We are not of night nor of darkness! Praise God, Church Age believers are exempted from the time of unprecedented trouble which is to try the whole world (see Revelation 3:10). The order of events is clearly Rapture (1 Thess. 4), followed by Tribulation (1 Thess. 5). God, through Messiah Jesus our Master, has not destined us believers for wrath (*orge*, the flavor of the Tribulation period) but for the acquisition of salvation (1 Thess. 5:9)! Praise God!

See the following references to wrath (*orge*) during the Tribulation period: 6:16 "wrath of the Lamb;" 6:17 "the great day of their wrath has come;" 11:18 "Your wrath came;" 14:10 "wine of the wrath (Grk. *thumos*) of God ... cup of His anger (Grk. *orge*);" 16:19 "cup of the wine of His fierce wrath;" 19:15 "and Himself [Jesus] treads the press of the wine of the fury (*thumos*) of the wrath (*orge*) of the God of the Almighty" (19:15 is my literal Greek rendering).

- E3 Since we are of day, let us be sober 5:8
 - F1 Putting on a breastplate
 - G1 Of faith
 - G2 Of love
 - F2 Putting on a helmet: hope of salvation
- D4 Their destiny 5:9-10
 - E1 Their non-appointment by God to wrath 5:9
 - E2 Their appointment to acquisition of salvation 5:9-10
 - F1 The Master of their salvation: Jesus Christ 5:9
 - F2 The provision of salvation: His having died for us 5:10
 - F3 The purpose of salvation: living with Christ
 - G1 Whether we watch [live (vigilantly)]
 - G2 Or sleep [die]
- C4 Their corporate need 5:11
 - D1 Urge one another
 - D2 Build up each one the other
- B4 Instructions Relating to the Assembly 5:12-13**
 - C1 Regarding leaders 5:12-13
 - D1 The request for them to know their leaders 5:12
 - E1 Laboring among them
 - E2 Leading them in the Lord
 - E3 Admonishing them
 - D2 The request for them to love their leaders 5:13
 - E1 The degree: Most exceedingly
 - E2 The reason: "Because of their work"
 - C2 Regarding one another: Be at peace among yourselves 5:13

B5 Concluding Exhortations 5:14-22

- C1 The responsibility of the assembly toward types of people among them 5:14-15
 - D1 Admonish the idle 5:14
 - D2 Console the faint-hearted
 - D3 Hold on to those who are weak
 - D4 Be longsuffering with all men
 - D5 The stance regarding those who mistreat 5:15
 - E1 Avoid returning evil against anyone
 - E2 Always pursue good
 - F1 In regard to one another (as fellow-believers)
 - F2 In regard to all men
- C2 The responsibility of individuals regarding their own spiritual lives 5:16-18
 - D1 Always rejoice 5:16
 - D2 Pray unceasingly 5:17
 - D3 Give thanks 5:18
 - E1 The circumstances: in everything
 - E2 The reason: "for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus"

B6 Concluding Prayer 5:23-24

- C1 For the activity of God: (Lit.) Himself, moreover - the God of the peace - may He set you apart wholly and completely 5:23a
- C2 For the effect in the Thessalonians: blameless may they be preserved 5:23b
 - D1 The completeness of their preservation
 - E1 The spirit
 - E2 And the soul
 - E3 And the body

D2 The culmination of their preservation: in the coming¹² of the Master of us - Jesus Christ

C3 For the achievement: Faithful is the one calling you, who indeed will do it¹³ 5:24

B7 Farewell 5:25-28

C1 The request for prayer 5:25

C2 The exhortation to greet one another with a set-apart kiss 5:26

C3 The charge to read the letter to all the brothers 5:27

C4 The benediction of Christ's grace upon them 5:28

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¹² 1 Thess. 5:24 - coming: Presumably this coming is the Rapture, to which Paul referred earlier in his letter (4:13-18).

¹³ 1 Thess. 5:24 title - who indeed will do it: Though the believer appropriates salvation by faith in Jesus Christ (John 3:16) without any effort of his own (Ephesians 2:8-9), and though the effect of his salvation is pre-ordained good works (Eph. 2:10), his eternal security is wholly dependent upon God, who alone is sufficiently faithful to ensure it!