

1 Thessalonians 1 – Study Notes

Contextual Summary

1 Thessalonians 1 opens Paul's first letter to the young church at Thessalonica — a congregation born amid persecution yet marked by faith, love, and hope. Paul commends their example as a model for other believers and highlights the transforming power of the gospel received "not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost." The chapter emphasizes assurance, election in service (not salvation to faith), and the believer's confident expectation of Christ's return. Their faith became a public testimony of grace, not a means of earning it.

1. "Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ."

Paul greets them as a community "in" God — denoting spiritual union and security. "Grace be unto you, and peace" captures the essence of the gospel: unearned favor producing spiritual rest.

2–3. "We give thanks to God always for you all... remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope..."

Faith produces response, love produces endurance, and hope sustains perseverance. These virtues do not condition salvation but describe fellowship in grace. "Work of faith" points to service springing from belief, not belief proven by works.

4. "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God."

"Election" (eklogē, Gk.) here concerns God's choice of them as a body for witness and service, not arbitrary predestination to salvation. They were chosen "in Christ" by faith — their response confirming God's plan of grace for the church.

5. “For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost...”

The message carried divine conviction, not human persuasion. “Power” (dynamis, Gk.) refers to the Spirit’s convincing influence upon hearers. Assurance follows truth understood — “ye know what manner of men we were among you.” Paul’s example reinforced, not replaced, the message.

6. “And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost.”

Persecution did not quench their faith. “Followers” (mimētai, Gk.) means imitators — they reflected the apostolic example through Spirit-given joy amid suffering. Joy under pressure verifies fellowship with Christ, not the possession of salvation.

7–8. “So that ye were ensamples to all that believe... for from you sounded out the word of the Lord...”

Their testimony resounded (exēchētai, Gk., “echoed forth”) through Macedonia and Achaia. Evangelistic zeal is the natural overflow of gratitude, not obligation. “In every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad” highlights their influence without implying perfection.

9. “For they themselves shew 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.”

“Turned” (epistrepsate, Gk.) expresses repentance — a change of mind regarding false gods. Their service flowed from regeneration already received, not from self-reformation. Salvation changes worship’s object, not the method of earning acceptance.

10. “And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.”

“Wait” (anamenein, Gk.) means to expect eagerly. The “wrath to come” refers to future tribulation and divine judgment from which believers are exempt. “Delivered” (ryomenon, Gk.) is present participle — a continual deliverance rooted in eternal security.

Koine Greek Linguistic Notes

Eklogē (Gk., v.4): “election,” divine choice for service in Christ.

Dynamis (Gk., v.5): “power,” enabling strength of the Spirit.

Mimētai (Gk., v.6): “followers,” imitators through example.

Exēchētai (Gk., v.8): “sounded out,” echoed forth like a trumpet call.

Epistrepsate (Gk., v.9): “turned,” changed direction of trust.

Anamenein (Gk., v.10): “to wait expectantly,” steady anticipation.

Ryomenon (Gk., v.10): “delivered,” rescued and continually preserved.

Doctrinal Insight

1 Thessalonians 1 displays the pattern of grace in action: salvation received by faith alone, followed by fruitful living empowered by the Spirit. Election describes God’s plan for the church, not forced belief. The believer’s assurance rests in Christ’s resurrection and deliverance from future wrath. The Thessalonians’ faith shows that spiritual vitality springs from confidence in eternal security, not from striving for it.

Free Grace Summary

Salvation is received through faith, not through perseverance or works.

Election refers to God’s purpose for His people, not predetermination of individuals.

The Holy Spirit empowers faith and joy amid persecution.

Repentance means turning to God in belief, not reforming behavior to earn salvation.

Christ's resurrection secures deliverance from all wrath — eternal and eschatological.

1 Thessalonians 1 presents the believer's testimony as evidence of grace's power, never as a condition of grace itself — salvation is secure because Christ alone delivers and sustains.

1 Thessalonians 2 – Study Notes

Contextual Summary

1 Thessalonians 2 continues Paul's heartfelt recollection of his ministry among the Thessalonians. He defends his sincerity against slander, reminding them that his motives were pure and his message unchanged by opposition. Paul likens his ministry to both a nurturing mother and an encouraging father — emphasizing gentleness, integrity, and gratitude. He commends the Thessalonians for receiving the Word of God as divine truth and enduring persecution faithfully. The chapter concludes with Paul's joy and affection for them, describing them as his "hope, joy, and crown of rejoicing" in Christ's presence.

1–2. "For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain."

Paul recalls their ministry's fruitfulness despite hardship. "Entrance" (eisodon, Gk.) refers to the initial gospel visit. Persecution at Philippi did not silence them; rather, they "were bold in our God" (eparrēusiasametha, Gk.) to preach. Boldness in grace arises from assurance, not pride.

3–4. "For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile."

Paul distinguishes genuine gospel ministry from manipulation. "Guile" (dolos, Gk.) means deceitful intent. They spoke "as we were allowed of God, to be put in trust with the gospel." "Allowed" (dokimazō, Gk.) conveys approval after testing. Stewardship, not self-promotion, defines grace-based ministry.

5–6. “For neither at any time used we flattering words... nor of men sought we glory.”

Paul renounces financial exploitation and fame-seeking. His confidence came from divine approval, not human applause. Grace motivates ministry by gratitude, never gain.

7–8. “But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children.”

Gentleness (ἐπιόι, Gk.) contrasts manipulation. Paul’s compassion mirrors Christ’s. He cherished them so deeply that he shared “not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls.” Love, not law, builds lasting fellowship.

9. “For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail... because we would not be chargeable unto any of you.”

Paul supported himself as a tentmaker to avoid burdening the church. Grace values integrity in ministry. His toil reflected sincerity, not spiritual superiority.

10–12. “Ye are witnesses... how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves...”

Paul’s conduct was consistent with grace. “Holily” (hosiōs) emphasizes devotion to God; “justly” (dikaiōs) points to fairness; “unblameably” (amemptōs) reflects integrity. He exhorted them “as a father doth his children” — encouraging, comforting, and urging them to walk worthy of their calling. Worthiness concerns fellowship, not justification.

13. “For this cause also thank we God without ceasing... because, when ye received the word of God... ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God.”

Their response validated the Word's divine power. "Received" (edexasthe, Gk.) implies welcoming with faith. The Word "effectually worketh" (energeitai) in believers — an ongoing sanctifying process, not a condition of salvation.

14–16. "For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God... for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen."

Their persecution mirrored that of Judean believers. Suffering does not contradict grace; it confirms participation in Christ's testimony. The opponents "forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles" show the resistance of unbelief, not the failure of divine purpose.

17–18. "But we, brethren, being taken from you for a short time... endeavoured the more abundantly to see your face with great desire."

"Taken" (aporphanisthentes, Gk.) literally means "orphaned." Paul's separation was emotional, not spiritual. Satan hindered (enekopsen) their reunion, but opposition cannot obstruct eternal fellowship.

19–20. "For 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?"

The Thessalonians themselves are Paul's "crown" (stephanos, Gk.) — a reward of rejoicing at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Their eternal security assures his eternal joy.

Koine Greek Linguistic Notes

Eisodon (Gk., v.1): "entrance," initial coming or introduction.

Eparrēsiasametha (Gk., v.2): "we were bold," confident courage in God.

Dokimazō (Gk., v.4): "approved," tested and entrusted.

Dolos (Gk., v.3): “guile,” deceitful craftiness.

Ēpioi (Gk., v.7): “gentle,” tender, mild in spirit.

Amemptōs (Gk., v.10): “unblameably,” beyond reproach in conduct.

Aporphanisthentes (Gk., v.17): “being orphaned,” torn apart emotionally.

Stephanos (Gk., v.19): “crown,” wreath of reward and joy.

Doctrinal Insight

1 Thessalonians 2 portrays authentic ministry as grace-driven, not self-centered. Paul’s transparency and love reveal how the gospel shapes relationships. True discipleship stems from spiritual parenthood, not control. The Thessalonians’ endurance under persecution demonstrates the power of grace to sustain, not to guarantee performance. Eternal security undergirds Paul’s joy — his confidence that those he served will stand with him in Christ’s presence forever.

Free Grace Summary

Ministry integrity flows from gratitude, not ambition.

Faithful service seeks God’s approval, not man’s applause.

The believer’s worthiness concerns fellowship and reward, not salvation.

God’s Word transforms believers progressively, never conditionally.

Satan can hinder fellowship but not eternal destiny.

1 Thessalonians 2 reveals that the fruit of ministry is relational — believers themselves become the “crown” of rejoicing because salvation in Christ is secure and everlasting.

1 Thessalonians 3 – Study Notes

Contextual Summary

1 Thessalonians 3 continues Paul's expression of pastoral care and thanksgiving for the Thessalonian believers. Unable to return due to persecution, Paul sends Timothy to strengthen and comfort them amid trials. Timothy's encouraging report renews Paul's joy and gratitude. The chapter centers on steadfastness under affliction and the sustaining power of divine love. Paul's prayer concludes the section — that their faith would mature, their love abound, and their hearts be established in holiness at Christ's coming. The focus is encouragement in endurance, not fear of losing salvation.

1–2. "Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone; and 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."

Paul's concern reflects fatherly affection. "Establish" (stērixai, Gk.) means to strengthen firmly; "comfort" (parakalesai) means to encourage alongside. Timothy's mission was not corrective but confirmational — to stabilize their faith under pressure.

3–4. "That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto."

"Moved" (sainesthai, Gk.) originally described a dog wagging its tail — a picture of emotional shaking. Paul reminds them that suffering is not evidence of divine disfavor but part of the believer's calling. Affliction is expected in service, not earned by sin.

5. "For 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 feared Satan's discouragement might render their faith ineffective in fellowship, not nullify their salvation. The "tempter" (peirazōn) seeks to distract believers from joy and endurance, never able to undo regeneration.

6–7. “But now when Timotheus came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity...”

Timothy’s report brought “good tidings” (euangelisamenou, Gk.), the same term for “gospel.” Their perseverance was good news to Paul’s weary heart. “Faith and charity” summarize mature fellowship — belief expressed through love.

8. “For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.”

“Stand fast” (stēkete, Gk.) denotes firm perseverance in faith. Paul’s joy was tied to their stability, not their existence. Their steadfastness reaffirmed the fruit of his ministry and God’s sustaining grace.

9–10. “For what thanks can we render to God again for you... praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith?”

“Perfect” (katartisai, Gk.) means to adjust, strengthen, or complete — not to question their salvation, but to further mature their faith. Even strong believers need refinement and encouragement.

11–13. “Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you.”

Paul prays for reunion and spiritual growth. “Increase and abound” (pleonasai kai perisseusai, Gk.) describe overflowing love toward all. The result: “to the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God.” This “holiness” refers to blameless conduct, not sinless perfection or basis for eternal life.

Koine Greek Linguistic Notes

Stērixai (Gk., v.2): “establish,” make firm or stable.

Parakalesai (Gk., v.2): “comfort,” to encourage or exhort alongside.

Sainesthai (Gk., v.3): “moved,” shaken or disturbed emotionally.

Peirazōn (Gk., v.5): “tempter,” one who tests or entices.

Euangelisamenou (Gk., v.6): “brought good tidings,” shared good news.

Stēkete (Gk., v.8): “stand fast,” remain steadfast or firm.

Katartisai (Gk., v.10): “perfect,” to equip or strengthen further.

Pleonasai kai perisseusai (Gk., v.12): “increase and abound,” overflow abundantly.

Doctrinal Insight

1 Thessalonians 3 teaches that affliction tests faith but cannot touch salvation. Paul’s deep care exemplifies the ministry of grace — strengthening, not controlling. The believer’s endurance is proof of fellowship, not evidence of justification. Growth in holiness reflects transformation by grace, not maintenance of salvation. The chapter ends in confident anticipation of Christ’s return, assuring believers of divine establishment, not probation.

Free Grace Summary

Trials refine fellowship, not determine eternal destiny.

The tempter can hinder joy but cannot reverse salvation.

Maturity (“perfecting faith”) means strengthening assurance, not achieving perfection.

Love abounding flows from gratitude, not effort to earn favor.

Holiness here denotes practical godliness in light of security in Christ.

1 Thessalonians 3 portrays grace as both the root and the strength of perseverance — believers stand firm not to remain saved, but because they already are eternally secure in Christ.

1 Thessalonians 4 – Study Notes

Contextual Summary

1 Thessalonians 4 transitions from Paul's gratitude for the Thessalonians' faith to exhortations for holy living and hope in Christ's return. The chapter has two main themes: practical sanctification and prophetic comfort. Believers are reminded to walk in holiness, love one another, and live quietly, all while anticipating the imminent rapture of the Church. Paul comforts the grieving by assuring them that departed believers will rise first when Christ returns. The emphasis is not fear of loss, but encouragement rooted in eternal security and the blessed hope.

1–2. “Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren... that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more.”

“Walk” (peripatein, Gk.) describes daily conduct. Pleasing God flows from gratitude, not guilt. “Abound” (perisseuete) means to overflow — sanctification expands through fellowship, not compulsion.

3–5. “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication...”

“Sanctification” (hagiasmos, Gk.) here means practical holiness — separation from immorality. This concerns behavior, not justification. Each believer should “possess his vessel” (skeuos, body) “in sanctification and honour,” controlling desires through the Spirit's power, not asceticism.

6–8. “That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter...”

Paul condemns exploiting others, especially in sexual or financial matters. “Defraud” (pleonektein, Gk.) means to overreach or take advantage. God avenges wrongdoing through

temporal discipline, not eternal loss. The believer's calling is to purity, empowered by the indwelling Spirit.

9–10. “But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you...”

“Brotherly love” (philadelphia, Gk.) is divinely taught (theodidaktoi). Their growing love demonstrates spiritual maturity, not proof of salvation. Grace teaches the heart, not the law.

11–12. “And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands...”

“Study” (philotimeisthai, Gk.) means to make it an ambition. Christians are to live peaceably and responsibly, earning respect before outsiders. Grace encourages diligence, not dependence.

13. “But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep...”

“Asleep” (koimōmenōn, Gk.) refers to physical death — the believer's body rests while the soul is present with Christ (2 Cor. 5:8). Paul comforts them: death does not end fellowship in Christ.

14. “For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.”

Faith in Christ's resurrection guarantees our own. “If we believe” introduces a first-class condition — since we do believe. God will reunite all believers at Christ's coming.

15–16. “For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord...”

The rapture is a direct revelation. “The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout... and the dead in Christ shall rise first.” This resurrection precedes the translation of living

believers. “Shout” (keleusma, Gk.) denotes a commanding call — the voice of authority summoning His own.

17. “Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air...”

“Caught up” (harpagēsometha, Gk.) means to seize or snatch away suddenly — the rapture. Believers meet the Lord in the air, not on earth. The event is distinct from the Second Coming. “So shall we ever be with the Lord” guarantees eternal union and security.

18. “Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”

The doctrine of the rapture is meant for comfort, not confusion. “Comfort” (parakaleite) means to encourage. Eternal security makes future hope certain, transforming grief into joy.

Koine Greek Linguistic Notes

Peripatein (Gk., v.1): “walk,” live or conduct oneself.

Hagiasmos (Gk., v.3): “sanctification,” set-apart living.

Skeuos (Gk., v.4): “vessel,” one’s body.

Pleonektein (Gk., v.6): “defraud,” to overreach or exploit.

Theodidaktōi (Gk., v.9): “taught of God,” divinely instructed.

Philotimeisthai (Gk., v.11): “to be ambitious,” aspire earnestly.

Koimōmenōn (Gk., v.13): “asleep,” euphemism for death of believers.

Keleusma (Gk., v.16): “shout,” authoritative command.

Harpagēsometha (Gk., v.17): “caught up,” to snatch away suddenly.

Doctrinal Insight

1 Thessalonians 4 clarifies that sanctification is practical holiness resulting from salvation, not a condition for it. The rapture reveals the believer's ultimate destiny — resurrection and eternal presence with Christ. Death cannot separate the believer from divine fellowship. The hope of Christ's return motivates purity, diligence, and comfort. Eternal security undergirds this promise: those "in Christ" will never be left behind.

Free Grace Summary

Sanctification pertains to conduct, not justification.

The Spirit enables holy living; the flesh cannot.

The rapture guarantees reunion with all believers and eternal fellowship with Christ.

Death for the believer is temporary rest, not separation from God.

"Ever with the Lord" assures unbreakable eternal security.

1 Thessalonians 4 presents holiness for today and hope for tomorrow — both flowing from grace, never from works or fear.

1 Thessalonians 5 – Study Notes

Contextual Summary

1 Thessalonians 5 concludes Paul's first letter with two themes: prophetic awareness and practical godliness. The chapter opens with the "Day of the Lord," a time of future judgment for unbelievers, contrasted with the believer's security and watchfulness. Paul exhorts the Thessalonians to live alert, sober, and hopeful — not in fear. The rest of the chapter offers brief, Spirit-led commands for community life, gratitude, and discernment. Paul ends with assurance of complete sanctification by the faithful God who preserves every believer blameless until Christ's return.

1–3. “But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you.”

“Times and seasons” (chronōn kai kairōn, Gk.) refer to chronological and appointed periods. The “Day of the Lord” comes “as a thief in the night” — unexpected to the world, not to believers. Unbelievers cry “peace and safety” before sudden destruction, showing false security apart from Christ.

4–5. “But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.”

Believers are “children of light” (huiōi phōtos). Darkness represents ignorance and unbelief, not backsliding. The rapture (4:16–17) precedes this day of judgment; thus, believers await deliverance, not wrath.

6–8. “Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.”

“Sleep” (katheudōmen, Gk.) means spiritual indifference, not loss of salvation. “Sober” (nēphōmen) indicates self-controlled alertness. The imagery of armor — “breastplate of faith and love,” “helmet, the hope of salvation” — reflects readiness through assurance. The “hope of salvation” here means confident expectation of deliverance from wrath, not the condition of eternal life.

9–10. “For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.”

“Wrath” (orgē, Gk.) refers to eschatological judgment, not hell for the believer. “Obtain salvation” (peripoiēsin sōtērias) means to receive deliverance from coming tribulation. The believer’s destiny is eternal fellowship — “whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.”

11. “Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.”

Encouragement (parakaleite) and edification (oikodomeite) are mutual ministries. Prophetic truth strengthens fellowship, not fear.

12–13. “And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you... and to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake.”

Paul calls for respect toward spiritual leaders. “Know” (eidōnai, Gk.) means to recognize with appreciation. Esteem grows from love, not hierarchy.

14–15. “Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly...”

Pastoral responsibility extends to all believers. “Unruly” (ataktous) refers to those undisciplined or idle. Grace disciplines with patience — “be patient toward all men,” reflecting divine long-suffering.

16–18. “Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks.”

Three continual commands summarize the believer’s walk. “Rejoice” (chairete) flows from grace assurance. “Pray without ceasing” (adialeiptōs) implies ongoing communion. “Give thanks” (eucharisteite) — gratitude is the atmosphere of grace, not circumstance-based.

19–22. “Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil.”

“Quench” (sbennute, Gk.) means to stifle or suppress. The Spirit’s fire is resisted by unbelief or legalism. “Prove” (dokimazete) calls for discernment — testing, not cynicism. “Abstain” (apechesthe) means to avoid every form of evil, not every misunderstood perception.

23–24. “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly... Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.”

This is a prayer for experiential sanctification, not conditional preservation. “Sanctify” (hagiasai) means set apart in daily life; “wholly” (holoteleis) means complete in every part. God’s faithfulness ensures both positional and practical preservation. The promise “who also will do it” seals eternal security.

Koine Greek Linguistic Notes

Chronōn kai kairōn (Gk., v.1): “times and seasons,” chronological and appointed eras.

Huioi phōtos (Gk., v.5): “children of light,” denoting saved believers.

Katheudōmen (Gk., v.6): “sleep,” spiritual indifference.

Nēphōmen (Gk., v.6): “sober,” disciplined and alert.

Peripoiēsın sōtērias (Gk., v.9): “obtain salvation,” receive deliverance.

Ataktous (Gk., v.14): “unruly,” disorderly or idle.

Adialeiptōs (Gk., v.17): “without ceasing,” continual habit.

Sbennute (Gk., v.19): “quench,” extinguish or suppress.

Hagiasai (Gk., v.23): “sanctify,” set apart.

Holoteleis (Gk., v.23): “wholly,” complete or entire.

Doctrinal Insight

1 Thessalonians 5 assures believers of their deliverance from divine wrath and highlights the lifestyle fitting for those who are already secure in Christ. Watchfulness, gratitude, and discernment flow from assurance, not anxiety. God Himself completes the believer’s sanctification — a process grounded in His faithfulness, not our performance. The rapture is a promise of rescue, not reward, and the “Day of the Lord” will not overtake the redeemed.

Free Grace Summary

The “Day of the Lord” concerns judgment for unbelievers, not for the Church.

Believers are destined for deliverance, not wrath.

Sanctification is progressive fellowship growth, not a condition of salvation.

The Spirit’s presence can be stifled, but never withdrawn.

God’s faithfulness guarantees preservation of every believer.

1 Thessalonians 5 closes with triumphant assurance: the God who saved will also sanctify and sustain — forever.