**Metadata**

* + Letter written (AD 52) during Paul’s second missionary journey while Paul was in Corinth (cf. Acts 18:1-17). Paul was in Corinth for 18 months (vs 11).
  + Thessalonica was a seacoast city (Thermaic gulf, of the Agean Sea), in the province of Macedonia. During Paul’s time it was a free Roman city. The city had much commerce (Egnatian Road, a natural harbor made it an important seaport). Diverse citizenship.
  + Apparently, the congregation established in Thessalonica was primarily Gentile. (cf. Acts 17:4; 1 Thessalonians 1:9)
  + The Epistle has been divided into 5 chapters and 89 verses.

**Outline of Book**

1. **Paul’s relationship with them (1-3)**
   1. Author identification (1:1)
   2. Paul thanks them (1:2-10)
   3. Paul’s record (2:1-16)
   4. His current status (2:17 - 3:10)
   5. His prayer for them (3:1-13)
2. **Exhortations and Teachings (4-5)**
   1. The proper Christian walk (4:1-12)
   2. The Lord’s second coming (4:13 – 5:11)
   3. Practical and assorted exhortations (5:12-22)
   4. Concluding prayer and benediction (5:23-28)

**Paul’s Purpose in Writing 1 Thessalonians**

* To give thanks for their fidelity
* To give a defense of his ministry among them
* To give them instructions on certain matters of which they were ignorant (especially regarding the Lord’s second coming)
* To warn about certain sinful attitudes that remained among them.

**Chapter Synopses**

1. The tone of Paul’s letter was one of thanksgiving as he praised the faithfulness of the church there. They were evangelical, had left the worship of pagan idols, and were eagerly awaiting the return of the Lord.
2. Paul defended his work among them as “not in vain.” His preaching was done amid conflict, but through it all the message of the gospel was preached with meekness. He called upon them to defend his behavior to others. He commended the Thessalonians for their faithfulness amid persecution, comparing them to the churches in Judea. He proclaimed them to be his “glory and joy.”
3. Paul expressed his concern for them. It had become so great that he had sent Timothy to them. The letter was Paul’s response to Timothy’s report. Timothy had reported their faithfulness and their expressions of charity which caused Paul to rejoice. He prayed for them.
4. In the face of sexual immorality in the city, Paul called for the Thessalonians to be pure. He called upon them to be industrious, loving one another, and living in such a way as to have a good reputation among the unbelievers. He comforted them by reminding them of Christ’s second coming.
5. Paul encouraged them to faithfulness in the realization that the Lord’s second coming will be “as a thief in the night.” He supplied for them various exhortations (beginning in verse 12) to instruct them in the practical aspect of living for Christ. Then he pronounced a final blessing upon them.

**Suggested Memory Work**

**(1:5)**, *“For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but in power…”*

**(2:13)**, *“…you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God…”*

**(3:12-13)**, *“…abound in love to one another…”*

**(4: 16-17)**, *“…the dead in Christ will rise first.”*

**(5:15)**, *“…always pursue what is good”*

**Difficult Passages**

* Define: *“cloak for covetousness”* (2:5)
* To what does *“but wrath has come upon them to the uttermost”* refer (2:16)
* What constitutes the hindrance of Satan? (2:18)
* Does the phrase *“our labor might be in vain”* indicate the possibility of apostasy? (3:5)
* Explain *“that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter”* (4:6)
* Explain (5:3).
* How may we *“quench the Spirit”* (5:19)
* What does *“pray without ceasing”* mean? (5:17)

**Doctrinal Considerations**

* The doctrine of election (1:4)
* The means by which the gospel comes (1:5-6)
* **The Second coming (1:10, 2:19, 3:13, 4:13-18; 5:1-11, 23)**
* The working of God’s word (2:13)
* **Sexual purity (4:1­-8**, perhaps in the context of pagan worship present in Thessalonica).
* Obtaining redemption through Jesus (5:9-10)
* The doctrine of sanctification (5:23-24)

**Practical Considerations**

* The Thessalonians were evangelistic (1:8)
* The importance and method of waiting for the Lord’s second coming (1:10, 3:12-13; 4:9-12, cf. 2 Thess. 3:6-15)
* Paul’s defense of his ministry among the Thessalonians serves as a good example of Christian behavior and work (2:1-12)
* The proper methodology of preaching (2:2-8)
* Walk a *“worthy walk”* (cf. 2:12; 1:8-10; 3:6; 3:12; 4:3: 4:9-12; 5:6,8; 5:12-22)
* We are *“appointed”* for afflictions. It is the lot of the Christian (3:2-5)
* Consider Paul’s concern for the Thessalonians, and his prayers for them (3:11-12; 5:23-28). Worthy of imitation.
* Sexual immorality is a rejection of God (3:8)
* The importance of a sober life as it impacts our preparation for eternity (5:4-8)
* Consider (5:12-13), and its impact on your relationship to the elders. Does it have other applications?
* Consider (5:14) with respect to the subject of Christian fellowship.
* The epistles of Paul are meant for all! (5:27)

**Questions to Consider**

* What does it mean to be the elect of God, and does this have an impact upon our behavior? (cf. Titus 2:11-12)
* Are you evangelistic? What are some ways to improve in this area?
* What is the proper Christian’s response to tribulation and persecution? (cf. 3:5, Paul was concerned about their faith because of the tribulation they were suffering).
* How does sexuality impact the Christian’s life (cf. 4:1-8)
* How does *“mind your own business”* constitute an expression of love? (4:9-11)
* Do you sufficiently focus on the Lord’s second

coming? How does this impact your daily life?

* Which of the miscellaneous exhortations of (5:12-22) help you most?

**Student Questions**

*(Use this space and back of page to prepare questions and comments for class discussion. Since this is not a “verse by verse” study, make sure that all your questions concerning the text are answered).*