

OVERVIEW OF BOOK OF 1 THESSALONIANS – FAITHFUL UNTIL HE RETURNS

INTRODUCTION:

Probably no NT book (other than Revelation) has more of a focus on the **Hope of Christ's Return** and how that should motivate holiness and perseverance than Paul's 2 letters to the church he founded in the city of Thessalonica. We will study **1 Thessalonians** this morning – written in 51 AD from the city of Corinth – so it was probably the second letter Paul wrote (with Galatians being the first).

Look at how each of the five chapters in the book ends with a **focus on the Second Coming** of the Lord Jesus Christ: each reference also highlights a concept that will be important in our study --

1:10 *“and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come.”* Are we truly longing for and anticipating the return of Jesus Christ?

2:19 *“For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming?”* The Greek word for coming here is **parousia** – very significant term – refers to the entire process of His Second Coming not just a singular event in a point in time

3:13 *“so that He may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints.”* The anticipation of Christ's Return should motivate **holiness**

4:16 *“For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.”* This sounds like a pretty **loud event** – not some silent and secret Rapture like you might have been taught

5:23 *“Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”* The Second Coming of Christ concludes the perseverance of the saints and marks the transition from the process of **Sanctification** to the enjoyment of eternal **Glorification**

This **emphasis on eschatology** flies in the face of some of the modern day minimization of the importance of teaching on last day events. You don't find the Apostle Paul shying away from teaching about the details of the Lord's Second Coming. Today you hear statements like:

- Eschatology is too uncertain; too debatable – Who cares .. We will find out when it happens
- Let's just agree that Christ is coming back and cut off our teaching at that point

Not so for Paul. He thinks a proper understanding of eschatology is crucial for Christian living today.

Let's back up and look first at **Paul's church planting activity** in his second missionary journey as he and his partners in the gospel founded the church in this strategic city. Luke recorded these events in the first 10 verses of **Acts 17**.

A. How did Paul end up in Thessalonica?

He was involved in a very successful campaign in Asia – **16:5** – “*So the churches were being strengthened in the faith, and were increasing in number daily.*” All of a sudden the Holy Spirit shut the doors in Asia Minor and God issued the famous **Macedonian Call** which will now redirect Paul's efforts to the mainland of Greece and then into Europe. So this was a major switch in continents. The port city of Philippi was his first destination and then he ended up in Thessalonica which was about 100 miles to the west and south, and a 4 day journey on foot. This was a strategic city on the main roadway to Rome with a population of maybe 200,000 – quite large for that day.

B. What was Paul's strategy for Evangelism and Church Planting?

Since there was a Jewish synagogue there (unlike in Philippi), Paul continued his normal practice of first preaching there to both the Jews and the Gentile proselytes. He could rely on their knowledge of the OT and present Jesus as the fulfillment of Messianic prophecy.

17:2-3 records Paul's ministry there for at least one month

“And according to Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures,³ explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, ‘This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ.’”

- Emphasis on Bible exposition
- Emphasis on the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ = the heart of the gospel message

C. What were the results?

17:4 *“And some of them [Jews] were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, along with a great multitude of the God-fearing Greeks and a number of the leading women.”*

This sounds very positive until you compare how the Bereans responded in the next city where Paul preached – **17:11-12** – “*Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so. Many of them therefore believed, along with a number of prominent Greek women and men.*” So we can say that the Thessalonians were somewhat deficient in their Bible study discipline and enthusiasm. They probably needed more time for instruction and discipleship than Paul was able to provide in his short stay.

D. How did the campaign in Thessalonica end?

17:5-10 *“But the Jews, becoming jealous and taking along some wicked men from the market place, formed a mob and set the city in an uproar; and coming upon the house of Jason, they were seeking to bring them out to the people. 6 And when they did not find them, they began dragging Jason and some brethren before the city authorities, shouting, ‘These men who have upset the world have come here also; 7 and Jason has welcomed them, and they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus.’ 8 And they stirred up the crowd and the city authorities who heard these things. 9 And when they had received a pledge*

from Jason and the others, they released them. 10 And the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea; and when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews.”

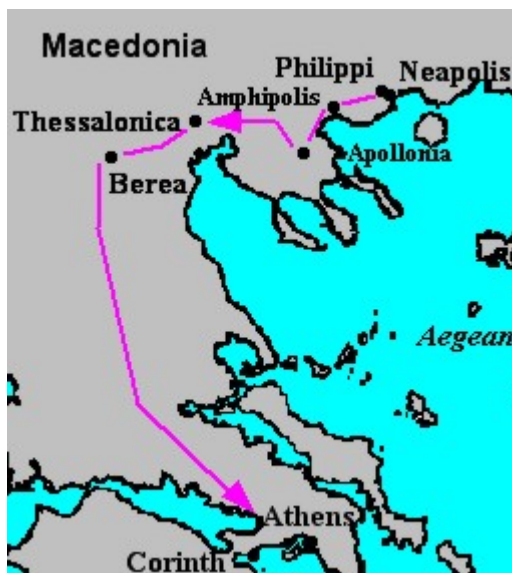
I find it interesting that their charge against Paul and his preaching validates that he was presenting Christ as the **Messiah-King** who was going to return to set up His 1,000 year kingdom on earth. There are several arguments for the millennial position that can be made from Paul's ministry at Thessalonica and this is one of them. Paul's teaching reflected the OT promises of the Messiah who would rule one day from David's throne in Jerusalem.

The opposition of the Jews did not stop at driving Paul out of town. They even pursued him to Berea and were prime agitators against Paul there.

17:13-14 *“But when the Jews of Thessalonica found out that the word of God had been proclaimed by Paul in Berea also, they came there likewise, agitating and stirring up the crowds. 14 And then immediately the brethren sent Paul out to go as far as the sea; and Silas and Timothy remained there.”*

Occasion for Writing – **What circumstances prompted Paul to write this letter when he did?**

- Paul fled southwest about 60 miles near the coast to Berea. Then traveled by sea to Athens, the capital of Greece. Paul ended up alone in Athens with Silas, after dispatching Timothy to bring back a report (**1 Thess. 3:1-2**) since he knew the believers were facing persecution and needed some encouragement.



- While he was ministering in Corinth, Timothy returned and brought his report. This was probably only 6-10 months after Paul had been forced to leave Thessalonica so the church was still very young. There was good news regarding their progress in faith and love. But there were **specific areas of concern** that Timothy shared as well. These were serious enough that they prompted Paul to respond. What were some of these concerns?
 - o A group of agitating Jews constantly attacked **Paul's ministry motives**. They claimed that since he was not one of the original 12 Apostles, he was not a genuine apostle. They also claimed that he was only in the ministry for the

money. They played up the fact that when hard times came, Paul had secretly left town. Paul addressed these false charges in **2:6-12**.

- There was the pressure of **ongoing persecution** of the Christians in Thessalonica. Some of these young believers had to endure hard times, like the loss of property or family tensions
- **Sexual immorality** was a major problem in the Greek culture of that day so this was an area Paul felt needed more exhortation.
- But the **major question** that Timothy brought back to Paul was the concern regarding those believers who had just died in the previous couple of months. Were they going to miss out on the blessings of participating in the millennial kingdom that Christ would set up on earth at His return (**4:13**)? The very question proves to be a powerful argument for the millennial position. Someone from the amillennial camp would not raise such a question. They were not concerned about the **eternal destiny** of those who had passed away. Their claim to heaven was undisputed. They were concerned about their **participation in the Millennial Kingdom**. I find that Christians today have very little anticipation or excitement surrounding reigning with Christ in His coming kingdom on earth.
- Another issue that was sparked by their anticipation of the return of Christ, was that some of them had actually **stopped working** and were just sitting around waiting. This misplaced application of theology placed a burden on other believers to provide for them. So there was confusion surrounding Paul's teaching on eschatology that needed to be clarified.

The **Purposes** for the book align with these concerns:

- Paul wanted to commend them for how they had responded positively to his gospel preaching and now had demonstrated a reputation of faith and love
- Paul wanted to defend the integrity of his ministry and his motives while he had labored among them
- Paul wanted to encourage them to persevere and focus on the blessed hope of the return of Christ in the face of ongoing persecution and hardship
- Paul wanted to stress the need for holiness and to walk worthy of their calling in Christ
- Paul wanted to assure them regarding the future participation of all believers – even those who had already died – in the coming Millennial Kingdom. Their mission must be to wait with anticipation and prepare themselves for the return of Christ.
- Paul wanted to rebuke those who misapplied the teaching of Christ's return to justify laziness in failing to fulfil their work responsibilities – pointing to his own example of earning money tentmaking so that he would not be a burden to the church
- Paul wanted to assure them of his desire to see them again, despite how he had been forced to depart out of town so abruptly before
- Paul wanted to warn them against the dangers of sexual immorality as he urges them to walk in the will of the Lord and please Him
- Paul wanted to reinforce a number of other essential Christian practices such as respect for their spiritual leaders, the exercise of discernment, and most importantly demonstrating love in practical ways to the brethren.

Big Idea: Church Planters Encourage Growing Disciples to Endure Persecution and Walk Worthy of Their Calling in Anticipation of the Lord's Return.

1 Thessalonians 3:13 “so that He may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints.”

Overview:

This is the Apostle Paul's **Discipleship Model for Church Planters**. His words of encouragement and clarification are set against the backdrop of anticipating the return of the Lord Jesus. The context of persecution can be perplexing to young believers but should be expected as the world's response to godliness. Conviction regarding God's program for the future offers hope and keeps the disciples on task – both in their pursuit of personal spiritual vitality and their maintenance of the bonds of fellowship with one another. The critical role of the Holy Spirit carries forward from their reception of the gospel to their evaluation of doctrine to their final perseverance with joy

I. (1:2 – 3:13) CHURCH PLANTERS PRESENT THEMSELVES AS ROLE MODELS IN PROCLAIMING THE GOSPEL IN THE FACE OF PERSECUTION as they encourage growing disciples to walk worthy of their calling

A. (1:1-10) Changed Lives (the Mark of Faithful Disciples) Spur Thanksgiving Because They Confirm God's Election and Our Faith

1. (1:2-5) 3 INSIGHTS REGARDING CHANGED LIVES

- a. (:2) The Interconnection of Changed lives –
Changed lives bind believers together in thanksgiving expressed in Prayer
“We give thanks to God always for all of you,
making mention of you in our prayers;”

These young Thessalonian believers had not been forgotten by the Apostle Paul. They were not just some statistics of ministry success. He remained genuinely concerned for their spiritual growth and thankful for their progress in the faith.

- b. (:3) The Identification of Changed Lives --
Changed lives can be identified by the fruit of the Holy Spirit
“constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father;”

This important triad of **faith**, **love** and **hope** should be the **brand identifier** of all genuine believers who have been transformed by the gospel.

- Their faith produced action.
- Their love motivated service.
- Their hope inspired endurance.

Christian converts must bear fruit to be confirmed as genuine.

Such fruit can only be produced by the Holy Spirit.

c. (:4-5) The Initiation of Changed Lives –

The initial change in response to the gospel proclamation confirms God's election

"knowing, brethren beloved by God, His choice of you; ⁵ for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake."

Paul is beginning to transition into his defense of his apostolic conduct.

2. (1:6-10) 3 ACTIVITIES RELATED TO BECOMING A GOOD EXAMPLE FOR OTHER BELIEVERS

a. (:6) Discipleship Imitation of Christ and of Christlike Leaders

"You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit,"

Opportunity to speak to our grandchildren on this topic while on vacation –

Recounting the faithfulness of God over our 50 years of marriage;

Thankful to God for the good spiritual examples He provided for us to imitate;

Calling on them to imitate godly examples and to become a godly example for others;

Who are you imitating?

What type of example are you providing?

b. (:7-8) Declarative Reputation of Gospel Proclamation and Faith Testimony –

"so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. ⁸ For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything."

c. (:9-10) Dedicated Devotion to God – Separation from the World to be Consecrated to God

"For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, ¹⁰ and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come."

Could be a reference to eschatological wrath – Jesus removing us from the outpouring of His wrath as it is described in the book of Revelation right before the millennial kingdom. This certainly fits the context of Paul's clarification on end time events.

Or just as possibly here, a reference to eternal wrath as the wages of sin – that from which Christ has redeemed us.

Both are true and connected.

Conversion involves an evident repentance so that there is a turning away from idolatry and worldliness and a devotion to serving the Lord.

[**Mark Dever: (1:10)** Christians are called to live a **Waiting life** –

- We wait for our salvation to be completed
- We wait for final glorification
- We wait for Christ to finally be revealed to the world
- We wait for the worries and pains of this life to be done
- We wait for God's name to be fully vindicated
- We wait for Jesus the Son of God to return from heaven and rescue us from God's coming wrath]

B. (2:1-12) Supernatural Boldness in Proclaiming the Gospel Requires Pure Motives and Proper Conduct (The Marks of Spirit-Filled Church Planters**)**

1. (:1-2) SUPERNATURAL BOLDNESS IN CHURCH PLANTING CAN BE IDENTIFIED BY THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE CONTEXT OF PERSECUTION

Importance of Self-sacrifice in spiritual leaders

For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain, ² but after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, as you know, we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition.

This is not a description of spiritual leaders who are motivated by money or popularity or power or self-promotion.

Would have been easy for the Apostle Paul to back away from public ministry – to take a lower profile. To shrink back in the face of persecution.

2. (:3-6) PURE MOTIVES IN CHURCH PLANTING SHOULD BE EVIDENT AS WELL -- **CHECKLIST OF PURE MOTIVES**

For our exhortation does not come from error or impurity or by way of deceit; ⁴ but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men but God, who examines our hearts. ⁵ For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed-- God is witness-- ⁶ nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority.

- a. Motivated by Ministry Integrity
- b. Motivated by Divine Commissioning
- c. Motivated by Divine Accountability
- d. Motivated by Personal Unselfishness

3. (:7-12) PAUL'S PICTURE OF THREE ROLE MODELS THAT ILLUSTRATE PROPER CONDUCT IN THE MINISTRY –

3 LEADERSHIP PROFILES OF UNSELFISH SERVANT LOVE

- a. (:7-8) Loving Mother -- Gentleness and Tender Care
“But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children. ⁸ Having thus a fond affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us.”
- b. (:9) Hard Worker – Church planters labor long and hard to both provide for physical needs (when necessary) and proclaim the gospel
“For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.”
- c. (:10-12) Faithful Father – Godly example and discipleship training of a Father with vision
“You are witnesses, and so is God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers; ¹¹ just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children, ¹² so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.”

[Paul viewed ministry similar to **parenting**.

Parenting is:

- Relational
- Sacrificial
- Patient
- Long-term

Spiritual growth occurs through investment in people. **Discipleship** involves more than communicating **information**.

Disciples need:

- Examples – behavior models
- Encouragement
- Personal investment]

C. (2:13-16) The Proper Response to God's Word Produces Godliness that Provokes Persecution – Leading to 2 very Different Outcomes:

- **Endurance for Believers**
- **Wrath for the Persecutors**

1. (:13a) THE PLEASURE OF GOD'S WORKERS – WHY ARE THEY THANKFUL? GOD'S WORKERS REJOICE TO SEE GOD'S WORD EMBRACED AND LIVED OUT

“And for this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received from us the word of God's message, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God,”

2. (:13b) THE POWER OF GOD’S WORD – WHAT DOES IT ACCOMPLISH?
GOD’S WORD TRANSFORMS AND ENERGIZES BELIEVERS TO LIVE
CHANGED LIVES

“which also performs its work in you who believe.”

3. (:14-16a) THE PERSEVERANCE OF GOD’S WITNESSES – WHO IS OPPOSING
GOD’S PROGRAM? AS BELIEVERS IMITATE THE HISTORIC PATTERN OF
GODLY LIVING THEY INEVITABLY FACE SEVERE PERSECUTION

“For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, for you also endured the same sufferings at the hands of your own countrymen, even as they did from the Jews,¹⁵ who both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out. They are not pleasing to God, but hostile to all men,¹⁶ hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles that they might be saved; with the result that they always fill up the measure of their sins.”

Difficulties are not signs that God has abandoned us.
Often they are tools God uses to strengthen us.

4. (:16b) THE PROVOKING OF GOD’S WRATH – HOW FAR DOES IT EXTEND?
GOD’S WRATH IS THE INEVITABLE DESTINY FOR ALL THOSE WHO
PERSECUTE HIS FAITHFUL GOSPEL PROCLAIMERS

“But wrath has come upon them to the utmost.” Speaking of eternal wrath here rather than eschatological wrath

**D. (2:17 – 3:13) Church Planters Feel the Burden of Encouraging Their Disciples to
Maturity** [skip over this section]

1. (2:17-20) PRESSING ON TO MATURITY – FAMILY FELLOWSHIP –
CHURCH PLANTERS (SPIRITUAL LEADERS) DESIRE TO BE WITH
THEIR DISCIPLES

“But we, brethren, having been bereft of you for a short while-- in person, not in spirit-- were all the more eager with great desire to see your face.¹⁸ For we wanted to come to you-- I, Paul, more than once-- and yet Satan thwarted us.¹⁹ For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming?²⁰ For you are our glory and joy.”

2. (3:1-5) PRESSING ON TO MATURITY – SACRIFICING SECURITY –
CHURCH PLANTERS SACRIFICE THEIR OWN SECURITY TO
ENCOURAGE THEIR DISCIPLES TO PERSEVERE

“Therefore when we could endure it no longer, we thought it best to be left behind at Athens alone;² and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith,³ so that no man may be disturbed by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we have

been destined for this. ⁴ For indeed when we were with you, we kept telling you in advance that we were going to suffer affliction; and so it came to pass, as you know. ⁵ For this reason, when I could endure it no longer, I also sent to find out about your faith, for fear that the tempter might have tempted you, and our labor should be in vain.”

3. **(3:6-8) PRESSING ON TO MATURITY – FEEDING ON FAITHFULNESS -- CHURCH PLANTERS ARE ENCOURAGED BY FAITHFUL DISCIPLES**

“But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always think kindly of us, longing to see us just as we also long to see you, ⁷ for this reason, brethren, in all our distress and affliction we were comforted about you through your faith; ⁸ for now we really live, if you stand firm in the Lord.”

4. **(3:9-13) PRESSING ON TO MATURITY – PERSEVERING IN PROGRESS -- CHURCH PLANTERS CONTINUE TO PRAY FOR THEIR DISCIPLES**

“For what thanks can we render to God for you in return for all the joy with which we rejoice before our God on your account, ¹⁰ as we night and day keep praying most earnestly that we may see your face, and may complete what is lacking in your faith? ¹¹ Now may our God and Father Himself and Jesus our Lord direct our way to you; ¹² and may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all men, just as we also do for you; ¹³ so that He may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints.”

II. (4:1 – 5:24) CHURCH PLANTERS CLARIFY SOME QUESTIONS SURROUNDING THE LORD’S RETURN – As they offer practical exhortations on how to walk in a manner that pleases God

A. (4:1-12) Growing Disciples Must Strive for Excellence in Pleasing God

1. (:1-2) OUR PRESENT LEVEL OF OBEDIENCE SHOULD BE THE FOUNDATION FOR STRIVING FOR EXCELLENCE IN PLEASING GOD (FOUR GENERAL PRINCIPLES)

Those first **4 general principles** can be applied to any area of morality – to all of the areas that Paul deals with in this chapter – love for the brethren; responsible work ethic

- **Follow the Directions**

“that, as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk ”

- **Please God**

“and please God”

- **Pursue Excellence**

“(just as you actually do walk), that you may excel still more.”

- **Ignorance is Not an Option**

“For you know what commandments we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus.”

2. (:3-12) THREE TARGET AREAS (WHERE WE MUST STRIVE FOR EXCELLENCE IN PLEASING GOD)

a. (:3-8) Sexual Purity

“For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; ⁴ that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, ⁵ not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; ⁶ and that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you. ⁷ For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification. ⁸ Consequently, he who rejects this is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you.”

b. (:9-10) Brotherly Love

“Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; ¹⁰ for indeed you do practice it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more,”

c. (:11-12) Responsible Living

“and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you; ¹² so that you may behave properly toward outsiders and not be in any need.”

God is honored not only through dramatic ministry
but through ordinary faithfulness.

B. (4:13-18) Conviction Regarding God’s Program for the Future — Gives Hope for the Bereaved

1. (:13) CONVICTION FREES THE BEREAVED FROM UNMITIGATED GRIEF (EMPHASIS ON KNOWLEDGE)

“But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve, as do the rest who have no hope.”

2. (:14) CONVICTION FOCUSES ON THE REALITY OF THE RESURRECTION AND RETURN OF CHRIST (EMPHASIS ON FAITH)

*“For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again,
even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.”*

2. (:15-17) CONVICTION FEEDS ON A KNOWLEDGE OF ESCHATOLOGY = GOD’S PROGRAM FOR THE FUTURE

“For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, and remain until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. ¹⁷

Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord.”

By the word of the Lord – Paul is repeating teaching that the Lord Jesus Himself provided during his earthly ministry – I think in part he is referencing Christ’s words in Matt. 24 in the Olivet Discourse

Relationship to **Matthew 24** – Olivet Discourse of Jesus

Matthew 24 and 1 Thessalonians 4 present a harmonious portrait of the return of the Lord Jesus Christ:

- He will return personally and visibly from heaven.
- His coming will be accompanied by glory, angels, and trumpet blasts.
- Believers will be gathered to Him.
- The event will be sudden, decisive, and world-shaping.
- It brings comfort, hope, and motivation for holy living.

3 Loud Public Markers:

- 1) **With a shout** – Traditional shout of the victorious commander in battle

Joel 2:11 *And the LORD utters His voice before His army*

- 2) **With the voice of the archangel** – Probably a reference to the archangel Michael who has a special relationship with God’s program for the nation of Israel (book of Daniel) – angels are directly associated with Christ’s return

2 Thess. 1:7 *and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire,*

- 3) **With the trumpet of God --**

Trumpet is blown to summon God’s people into His presence; also blown when the Lord was leading His people into battle

Definition of the Rapture – Although not specifically a term used in the bible, the Rapture is the supernatural catching away of the Church by Jesus Christ, in which deceased believers are resurrected, living believers are instantaneously transformed, and together they are caught up to meet the Lord in the air to be forever with Him.

(:18) CONCLUSION: Ultimately, a Message of **Hope** =
Comfort and Encouragement

“Therefore comfort one another with these words.”

C. (5:1-11) Conviction Regarding God’s Program for the Future — Keeps Us Spiritually Alert

1. (:1-3) TWO DIFFERENT DISCERNMENTS (PERSPECTIVES, EXPECTATIONS) REGARDING GOD’S PROGRAM FOR THE FUTURE (ESPECIALLY: THE COMING OF THE DAY OF THE LORD)

Informed vs Uninformed (or Misinformed)

Realistic vs Delusional (False Security)

“Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. ² For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. ³ While they are saying, ‘Peace and safety!’ then destruction will come upon them suddenly like birth pangs upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.”

Definition of the **Day of the Lord**: A study of the OT passages on the nature of the Day of the Lord reveals that it is:

1. **A Day of Judgment on Sin and Pride**

The prophets describe it as a time when God will humble human arrogance and punish wickedness.

Is. 2:12 *For the LORD of hosts will have a day of reckoning Against everyone who is proud and lofty, And against everyone who is lifted up, That he may be abased.*

The Lord alone will be exalted on that day

2. **A Day of Darkness and Terror for the Unrepentant**

Joel 2:1-2 *Blow a trumpet in Zion, And sound an alarm on My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, For the day of the LORD is coming; Surely it is near, ² A day of darkness and gloom, A day of clouds and thick darkness. As the dawn is spread over the mountains, So there is a great and mighty people; There has never been anything like it, Nor will there be again after it To the years of many generations.*

Zeph. 1:15 *A day of wrath is that day, A day of trouble and distress, A day of destruction and desolation, A day of darkness and gloom, A day of clouds and thick darkness,*

Summary: Rather than describing a single 24-hour period, it refers to a **time when God dramatically intervenes in history to judge sin, vindicate His righteousness, deliver His people, and establish His kingdom.** It may refer to historical judgments (such as Babylon's destruction of Jerusalem), but these historical "days of the Lord" anticipate the ultimate eschatological Day of the Lord.

The relationship between the Rapture and the Day of the Lord is clear. The Rapture removes the saints right before God's wrath is poured out during the Day of the Lord.

But the **timing** of when the Day of the Lord occurs is less obvious.

- The Pre-trib Rapture position believes the entire 70th week of Daniel – that 7 year period – can be defined as the Day of the Lord
- The Pre-wrath Rapture position believes that the church is still on earth until sometime after the middle of that 70th week when the Day of the Lord begins with the 6th and 7th seals described in the Book of Revelation

What we can say for sure about the Day of the Lord from this passage:

- 1) It comes secretly – a thief does not set an appointment for the time of his coming
- 2) It comes suddenly
- 3) It brings certain and inescapable destruction on the wicked

2. (:4-5) TWO DIFFERENT DOMAINS (SPHERES OF EXISTENCE)

Sons of Light vs Sons of Darkness

Sons of Day vs Sons of Night

“But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day should overtake you like a thief; ⁵ for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness;”

3. (:6-7) TWO DIFFERENT DISPOSITIONS (MINDSETS, MENTAL STATES)

Alert and Sober vs. Asleep and Drunk

“so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober. ⁷ For those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night.”

4.(:8) TWO DIFFERENT DRESS CODES

Protected with the Armor provided by God vs. Naked and Exposed

“But since we are of the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation.”

5. (:9-10) TWO DIFFERENT DESTINIES

Wrath and Destruction vs. Obtaining Deliverance

“For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁰ who died for us, that whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with Him.”

Once again you have the two references – to eschatological wrath and to God’s eternal wrath

(:11) CONCLUSION TO 4:13 – 5:11 – Ultimately a Message of **Hope** =
Comfort and Encouragement

*“Therefore encourage one another and build up one another,
just as you also are doing.”*

Prophecy is not intended to create **speculation**.

It is intended to **promote holiness**.

The question is not: "Can I predict the date?"

The question is: "If Christ came today, would He find me faithful?"

D. (5:12-15) 4 Responsibilities (Imperatives) for Maintaining Healthy Church Relationships

1. (:12-13a) APPRECIATE YOUR SPIRITUAL LEADERS

2. (:13b) ABIDE IN PEACE WITH ONE ANOTHER

3. (:14) APPROACH ONE ANOTHER IN LOVE AND SENSITIVITY
4. (:15) AGGRESSIVELY LOVE EVEN THOSE WHO HAVE HURT YOU

E. (5:16-18) 3 Perpetual Practices to Ensure Spiritual Vitality

Must be true in your personal walk with the Lord as well as in corporate worship

1. REJOICE ALWAYS
2. PRAY WITHOUT CEASING
3. GIVE THANKS IN EVERYTHING

Illustration:

A thermostat influences the environment.

A thermometer merely reflects it.

Many Christians act like thermometers.

Paul calls believers to be thermostats.

Through prayer, gratitude, and joy believers should **influence** the spiritual climate around them.

F. (5:19-22) Promote the Liberty of the Holy Spirit While Exercising Careful Discernment

1. (:19-20) PROMOTE THE LIBERTY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT
“Do not quench the Spirit; ²⁰ do not despise prophetic utterances.”
2. (:21-22) WHILE EXERCISING CAREFUL DISCERNMENT
*“But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good;
²² abstain from every form of evil.”*

(5:23-24) BENEDICTION -- ANTICIPATE COMPLETE SANCTIFICATION AT THE LORD’S RETURN BECAUSE OF GOD’S FAITHFULNESS IN PRESERVING HIS SAINTS

1. (:23) ENCOURAGEMENT IN ANTICIPATING COMPLETE SANCTIFICATION
“Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”
2. (:24) ASSURANCE OF COMPLETE SANCTIFICATION
“Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.”

(5:25-28) CLOSING REQUESTS

- A. (:25) PRAY FOR THE MISSIONARY TEAM – FOR PERSEVERANCE IN HOLINESS AND THE SPREAD OF THE GOSPEL

B. (:26) MAINTAIN CLOSE FELLOWSHIP (CONTEXT OF LOVE AND HOLINESS) WITH ALL BELIEVERS

C. (:27) COMMUNICATE THE TRUTH

D. (:28) GROW IN GRACE

Illustration: Imagine a young soldier deployed overseas. Before leaving, he tells his wife, "I'll be back." She does not know the exact day or hour, but the certainty of his return affects how she lives. She remains faithful, prepares for his arrival, and endures hardships with hope because she knows he is coming home.

Are we anticipating the return of the Lord?

Are we faithfully living in holiness and perseverance and bold testimony?