

**THE FIRST EPISTLE
OF PAUL THE APOSTLE
TO THE THESSALONIANS**

Notes

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The scriptures used throughout these study notes are quoted from the Authorized or King James Version unless otherwise noted.

Notation **N2577/S2889** means word numbering from Novum 2577 and Strong's 2889.

All non-English (typically either Hebrew or Greek) words are written with English letters, in boldface and in italics, e.g. ***kosmos***.

All explanatory insertions within a scripture verse are enclosed in square brackets.

THE FIRST EPISTLE OF PAUL TO THE THESSALONIANS

Notes

Introduction

In his *Companion Bible* **E. W. Bullinger** writes the following:

This epistle is the earliest of the writings of Paul, having been sent out from Corinth about the end of 52 or the beginning of 53 A.D... (*The Companion Bible* page 1787)

Chapter 1 begins with greetings from Paul, Silvanus and Timothy and continues with thanksgiving, because of the work and love in faith of the Thessalonian believers, even though they were in much affliction. At the end of the chapter Paul explains that Jesus, the Son of God will deliver us from the wrath to come.

In **chapter 2** they (Paul, Silvanus and Timothy) remind the believers that in spite of the afflictions in Philippi they spoke the Gospel of God to the Thessalonians in gentleness and purity. They thank God that the Thessalonians received what they spoke as the word of God, which works in those that believe. In verse 16 it says that the people who forbid them to speak the word of God to the Gentiles must experience the wrath. The chapter ends explaining that at the coming of the Lord Jesus the Thessalonians will be the crown of their rejoicing.

In **chapter 3** Paul tells that he sent Timothy to Thessalonica to exhort and comfort them, because he could no longer bear not knowing how they were doing. When Timothy came back with good news about their faith Paul rejoiced. Paul says that he prays exceedingly night and day that he might see them again. The Lord will establish their hearts unblameable in holiness at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In **chapter 4** Paul first exhorts the believers to walk pleasing God according to the teaching they have received. Then he explains how the believers who have died in Christ will be raised and caught up in the clouds together with those believers who are alive, to meet the Lord in the air; and thus shall we ever be with the Lord.

In **chapter 5** Paul tells that the day of God's wrath will come like a thief in the night, but it will not surprise the believers. Therefore, he exhorts them to watch and to be sober spiritually. The chapter ends with exhortations to rejoice, to pray, to give thanks, to walk by the spirit etc. and charging that this epistle is read unto all the believers

CHAPTER 1

Paul, and Silvanus (*Silas Acts 16:19*), and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

²We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers;

³Remembering without ceasing your **work** [*ergon* N1860/S2041] of faith, and **labour** [*kopos* N2565/S2873 – *hard and tiring work*] of **love** [*agapē* N17/S26], and patience of **hope** [*elpis* N1513/S1680] in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father;

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

election – *eklogē* N1433/S1589 – This is put together from the prefix (which is also a pronoun) *ek* N1379/S1537 “*from out of, out from, forth from, from*” (*Thayer’s*) and from the verb *legō* N2673/S3004 “*to lay with, count with; to enumerate, recount, narrate, describe*” (*Thayer’s*). So, they have “*been counted out from*” some larger group. They have been chosen from among all the other people. They heard the call and responded to it. Then they were chosen.

⁵For our gospel came not unto you in **word** (*logos* – *speech*) only, but also in **power** [*dunamis* N1268/S1411], and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.

⁶And ye became **followers** [*mimētēs* N2921/S3402 – *an imitator*] of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much **affliction** [*thlipsis* N2119/S2347], with joy of the Holy Ghost.

⁷So that ye were (*became*) **ensamples** to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.

ensamples – *typos* N4526/S5179 – **1.** *the mark of a stroke or blow; print* **2.** *a figure formed by a blow or impression* (*Thayer’s*). The word typewriter comes from this.

⁸For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing.

⁹For they themselves **shew** (*report*) 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;

shew – *apaggellō* N474S518 – *to bring tidings (from a person or thing), bring word, report* (*Thayer’s*).

¹⁰And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised [*egeirō* N1304/S1453] from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from **the wrath** to come.

the wrath – *orgē* N3192/S3709 – Look at **Matthew 3:7**, **Luke 3:7** and **Rev. 19:15** (11 – 15) and in this epistle **2:16** and **5:9**! We will come back to this word when we come to chapter 4.

CHAPTER 2

For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance (*entry*) in unto you, that it was not in vain:

²But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi [**Look at Acts 16:11 – 40!**], we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much **contention** [*agōn, agōnia* N62/S74 – *contending, competing, battle*].

³For our **exhortation** [*paraklēsis* N3352/S3874] was not of **deceit** [*planē* N3573/S4106 *delusion*], nor of uncleanness, nor in guile (*deceitfulness*):

⁴But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.

⁵For neither at any time used (*behaved*) we (*with*) flattering words, as ye know, nor (*with*) a cloke of covetousness (*pretext for greediness*); God is witness:

⁶Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ (*i.e. requiring service and upkeeping*).

⁷But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse (*wet nurse, a nursing mother*) cherisheth (*tenderly cares for*) her children:

⁸So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have **imparted** [*metadidōmi* N2852/S3330 – *share*] unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.

⁹For ye remember, brethren, our **labour** [*kopos* N2565/S2873 – *hard and tiring work*] and **travail** [*mokhtos* N2963/S3449 – *hard and difficult labor, toil, travail, drudgery*]: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable (*burden*) unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God.

¹⁰Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe:

¹¹As ye know how we **exhorted** [*parakaleō* N3348/S3870] and comforted and **charged** (*witnessed*) every one of you, as a father doth his children,

charged – *martureō* N2776/S3140 – “to be a witness, to bear witness, testify, i.e. to affirm that one has seen or heard or experienced something ... (*Thayer's*). It is also used to promote something or to speak for something.

¹²That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.

¹³For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually **worketh** [*energeō* N1580/S1754] also in you that believe. [**Look up Philippians 2:13!**]

¹⁴For ye, brethren, became **followers** [*mimētēs* N2921/S3402 – *an imitator*] of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews:

¹⁵Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men:

¹⁶Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins
always: **for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.**

for the wrath [*orgē* N3192/S3709] **is come upon them to the uttermost** – Here the words **is come** in the Greek are a verb and it is *aorist indicative*, which means already ended action in the past. We know that the wrath of God is something that happens in the future. Therefore, it has to be understood here as a figure of speech which emphasizes that it surely will happen in the future.

to the uttermost – *eis telos* N4422/S5056 – *the final end.*

This could be translated like this:

”for the wrath will surely come upon them in the end.”

¹⁷But we, brethren, being taken from you for a short time in presence (*in face*), not in heart, **endeavoured** [*spoudazō* N4089/S4704] the more abundantly to see your face with great desire.

¹⁸Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan **hindered** us.

hindered – *egkoptō* N1316/S1465 – *to cut into, to impede one’s course by cutting off his way... (Thayer’s).*

¹⁹For what is our **hope** [*elpis* N1513/S1680], or **joy** [*khara* N4797/S5479], or crown of rejoicing? Are **not** [*oukhi*] even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his **coming**? (*Yes you are!*)

²⁰For ye are our **glory** [*doksa* N1250/S1391] and **joy** [*khara*].

coming – *parousia* N3428/S3952 – *presence, the coming, arrival, advent (Thayer’s).* This word was used about the coming of a duke or a king or some other highly esteemed person. In the NT this is used primarily of the coming of Jesus Christ and only regarding his second coming. (*Matthew 24:3, 27, 37, 39; I Cor. 15:23; I Thess. 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23; II Thess. 2:1, 8; II Peter 1:16; 3:4, 12; I John 2:28; James 5:7 and 8*). This is never used regarding his first coming.

CHAPTER 3

Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone; (*Acts 17:13 – 34*)

²And sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellowlabourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and **to comfort** [*parakaleō* N3348/S3870] you concerning your faith:

³That no man should be **moved** by these **afflictions** [*thlipsis* N2119/S2347]: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto.

moved – *sainō* N3961 II/S4525 – *to wag the tail*: of dogs... figuratively *to flatter, fawn upon...* and when used in passive voice as in here it means *to be agitated, disturbed or troubled (Thayer's)*.

⁴For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should **suffer tribulation** [*thlibō* N2118/S2346]; even as it came to pass, and ye know.

⁵For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent (*Timothy*) to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our **labour** [*kopos*] be in vain.

⁶But now when Timotheus came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us, as we also to see you: (*Acts 18:5, 1 – 5*)

⁷Therefore, brethren, we **were comforted** [*parakaleō*] over you in all our **affliction** [*thlipsis* N2119/S2347] and distress by your faith:

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

We live anyway, but if you stand fast we really live. It is a figure of speech emphasizing how much Paul was comforted hearing good news regarding their faith.

⁹For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all **the joy** [*khara*] wherewith we **joy** [*khairō* N4784/S5463] for your sakes before our God;

¹⁰Night and day **praying** [*deomai* N1054/S1189] exceedingly that we might see your face, and might **perfect** that which is lacking in your faith?

perfect – *katartidzō* N2380/S2675 – *to mend* (what has been broken or rent), *to repair... to fit out, equip, put in order, arrange, adjust (Thayer's)*. They were in great affliction, therefore their faith needed mending or strengthening.

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

¹²And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you:

¹³To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at **the coming** [*parousia* N3428/S3952] of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.

CHAPTER 4

Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and **exhort** [*parakaleō*] you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more.

²For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus.

³For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from **fornication**:

fornication – *porneia* N3664/S4202 – *fornication used properly of illicit sexual intercourse in general (Thayer's).*

⁴That every one of you should know how to possess (*control*) his vessel (*own body*) in sanctification and honour;

⁵Not in the lust of concupiscence (*the passion of lust*), even as the Gentiles which know not God:

⁶That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified (*even as we said before and testified to you*).

⁷For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.

⁸He therefore that despiseth (*rejects these commandments and instructions*), despiseth (*rejects*) not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit.

⁹But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.

¹⁰And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more;

¹¹And that ye study to be quiet (*live in peace*), and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you;

¹²That ye may walk honestly (*decently, in a proper way*) toward them that are without (*outside of the body of believers*), and that ye may have lack of nothing.

¹³But **I would not have you to be ignorant**, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

I would not have you to be ignorant – It is more accurately: *we would not have you to be not knowing*. This is a double negative which is a figure of speech and it emphasizes that he really wanted them to know this. This expression is used similarly six times in Paul's epistles (Romans 1:13; 11:25; I Cor. 10:1; 12:1; II Cor. 1:8 and here). The corresponding expression without the double negative *I want you to know* is used two times (I Cor. 11:3 and Col. 2:11).

¹⁴For if we believe that Jesus died and rose [*anistēmi* N412/S450 – *to stand up*] again, **even so them also which sleep** (*the born-again believers who have died*) **in Jesus will God bring with him**.

even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him – According to the Greek text these words should be translated like this: *even so God through Jesus will bring those who are asleep with him*.

¹⁵For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto **the coming** [*parousia* N3428/S3952] of the Lord shall not prevent (*in no way precede*) them which are asleep (*dead*).

¹⁶For the Lord himself shall (*will*) descend from heaven with a (*commanding*) shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with **the trump** [*salpinks* N3965/S4536] of God: and the dead in Christ shall (*will*) **rise** [*anistēmi*] first:

¹⁷Then we which are alive and remain shall (*will*) be caught up together with them in **the clouds** [*nefelē* N3003/S3507], to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever (*always*) be with the Lord.

¹⁸Wherefore **comfort** [*parakaleō*] one another with these words.

This is the first part of the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. The second part of his second coming is described in **II Thessalonians 1:6 – 10** verses.

The best epistles to read in the NT for people who are in afflictions or tribulations are II Corinthians and I and II Thessalonians. Let's read now **II Cor. 1:1 – 11** and **4:13 – 18!**

Let's also read two places in Matthew: **Matthew 24:1 – 42** (this describes the first part of Jesus Christ's second coming) and **Matthew 25:31 – 46** (this describes the second part of Jesus Christ's second coming).

I Cor. 15:51 & 52

⁵¹Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

⁵²In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for **the trumpet** [*salpinks*] shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

What is the last trump?

Rev. 8:1 & 2

And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.

²And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven **trumpets** [*salpinks*].

Rev. 10:5 – 7

⁵And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven,

⁶And swore by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer:

⁷But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin **to sound** [*salpidzō* N3966/S4537 – *to blow the trumpet*], the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.

The wrath of God begins when the seventh angel has blown the trumpet and the corresponding events have taken place:

Rev. 11:15 – 18

¹⁵ And the seventh angel **sounded** [*salpidzō* N3966/S4537 – *to blow the trumpet*]; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.

¹⁶ And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God,

¹⁷ Saying, We give thee thanks, O LORD God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned.

¹⁸ And the nations were angry, and thy **wrath** [*orgē* N3192/S3709] is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth.

I Thess. 1:9 & 10

⁹ For they themselves shew (*reported*) 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;

¹⁰ And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from **the wrath** [*orgē* N3192/S3709] to come.

CHAPTER 5

But of **the times** [*khronos* N4862/S5550] and **the seasons** [*kairos* N2254/S2540], brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you.

² For yourselves know perfectly (*exactly* or *accurately*) that **the day of the Lord** [*the day of God's wrath*] so cometh as a thief in the night.

³ For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail (*labor pains*) upon a woman with child (*a pregnant woman*); and they shall not escape.

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

⁵ Ye are all the children (*sons*) of light, and the children (*sons*) of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.

⁶ Therefore let us not sleep (*spiritually*), as do others; but let us watch (*spiritually*) and **be sober**.

sober – *nēfō* N3019/S3525 – *to be sober (Thayer's)*. It is used here figuratively and it means to be spiritually sober.

⁷ For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night.

⁸ But let us, who are of the day, **be sober** [*nēfō*], putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.

⁹ For God hath not appointed us to **wrath** [*orgē* N3192/S3709], but to obtain **salvation** [*sōtēria* N4362/S4991] by our Lord Jesus Christ,

¹⁰ Who died for us, that, whether we wake (*are watching*) or sleep(*ing*), we should live together with him.

- ¹¹ Wherefore **comfort** [*parakaleō*] yourselves together (*each other*), and edify one another, even as also ye do.
- ¹² And we beseech you, brethren, to know (*acknowledge*) them which labour (*work hard*) among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you;
- ¹³ And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves.
- ¹⁴ Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded (*who are discouraged*), support the weak, be patient toward all men.
- ¹⁵ See that none render (*repays*) evil for evil unto any man; but ever (*always*) **follow** [*diōkō* N1236/S1377 – *seek*] that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men.
- ¹⁶ Rejoice evermore (*always*).
- ¹⁷ Pray without ceasing.
- ¹⁸ In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.
- ¹⁹ Quench not (*Do not extinguish*) the Spirit.
- ²⁰ Despise not (*Do not despise*) prophesyings.
- ²¹ Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.
- ²² Abstain from all appearance of evil.
- ²³ And (*may*) the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and **I pray God** your whole **spirit** [*pneuma* N3618/S4151] and **soul** [*psukhē* N4902/S5590] and **body** [*sōma* N4357/S4983] be preserved blameless unto **the coming** [*parousia* N3428/S3952] of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I pray God – *These words have no counterparts in the Greek texts – should read may*. This verse should read like this:

May the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blamelessly in the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

- ²⁴ Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.
- ²⁵ Brethren, pray for us.
- ²⁶ Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss [*filēma* N4703/S5370].
- ²⁷ I charge you (*I force you to take an oath, adjure you, solemnly implore you*) by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the **holy** [*omitted according the most critical Greek texts*] brethren.
- ²⁸ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. **Amen** [*omitted according to all critical Greek texts*].