

# English: Unlocked Literal Bible for 1 Thessalonians

Formatted for Translators

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Bible Text: The English Unlocked Literal Bible (ULB)

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# Introduction to 1 Thessalonians

## Part 1: General Introduction

### Outline of the Book of 1 Thessalonians

1. Greeting (1:1)
2. Prayer of thanksgiving for the Thessalonian Christians (1:2-10)
3. Paul's ministry in Thessalonica (2:1-16)
4. Paul's concerns for their spiritual growth
  - Like a mother (2:7)
  - Like a father (2:11)
5. Paul sends Timothy to the Thessalonians and Timothy reports back to Paul (3:1-13)
6. Practical instructions
  - Live to please God (4:1-12)
  - Comfort regarding those who have died (4:12-18)
  - Christ's return is a motive for godly living (5:1-11)
7. Closing blessings, thanks, and prayers (5:12-28)

### Who wrote 1 Thessalonians?

Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians. Paul was from the city of Tarsus. He had been known as Saul in his early life. Before becoming a Christian, Paul was a Pharisee. He persecuted Christians. After he became a Christian, he traveled several times throughout the Roman Empire telling people about Jesus.

Paul wrote this letter while staying in the city of Corinth. Of all Paul's letters that are in the Bible, many scholars think 1 Thessalonians was the first letter Paul wrote.

### What is the Book of 1 Thessalonians about?

Paul wrote this letter to the believers in the city of Thessalonica. He wrote it after the Jews in the city forced him to leave. In this letter he said he considered his visit to them a success, even though he was forced to leave.

Paul responded to the news from Timothy about the Thessalonian believers. The believers there were being persecuted. He encouraged them to continue living in a way that pleased God. He also comforted them by explaining what happens to those who die before Christ returns.

### How should the title of this book be translated?

Translators may choose to call this book by its traditional title, "1 Thessalonians" or "First Thessalonians." They may instead prefer to choose a clearer title, such as "Paul's First Letter to the Church in Thessalonica," or "The First Letter to the Christians in Thessalonica."

## Part 2: Important Religious and Cultural Concepts

### What is the "second coming" of Jesus?

Paul wrote much in this letter about Jesus's eventual return to Earth. When Jesus returns, he will judge all mankind. He will also rule over creation, and there will be peace everywhere.

What happens to those who die before the return of Christ?

Paul made clear that those who die before Christ's return will come back to life and be with Jesus. They will not remain dead forever. Paul wrote this to encourage the Thessalonians. For some of them worried that those who died would miss the great day when Jesus returns.

## Part 3: Important Translation Issues

What did Paul mean by the expressions "in Christ," "in the Lord," and others like them?

Paul used these phrases to express the idea of a very close union between Jesus Christ and believers—that believers belong to Christ. Belonging to Christ means the believer is saved and is made a friend with God.

These phrases also have specific meanings that depend on how Paul used them in a particular passage. Depending on the the context, the word "in" can mean "because of," "by means of," "that agrees with," "in submission to," "in the manner of," or "in regard to." The translator may represent those more immediate senses. But, if possible, it would be good for the translator to choose a word or phrase that represents both the immediate sense and the sense of "in union with." (See: inchrist)

What are the major issues in the text of the Book of 1 Thessalonians?

For the following verses, modern versions of the Bible differ from older versions. The ULB text has the modern reading and puts the older reading in a footnote. If a translation of the Bible exists in the general region, translators should consider using the reading found in those versions. If not, translators are advised to follow the modern reading.

- "May grace and peace be to you" (1:1). Some older translations read: "Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."
- "Instead, we were as gentle among you as a mother comforting her own children." (2:7) Other modern versions and older translations read, "Instead, we were like babies among you, as when a mother comforts her own children."
- "Timothy, our brother and fellow worker for God" (3:2). Some other translations read: "Timothy, our brother and servant of God."

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## 1 Thessalonians

**1** <sup>1</sup>Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: May grace and peace be to you. <sup>1</sup>

<sup>2</sup>We always give thanks to God for all of you as we mention you continually in our prayers. <sup>3</sup>We remember before our God and Father your work of faith, labor of love, and patient endurance of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

<sup>4</sup>Brothers loved by God, we know he has chosen you, <sup>5</sup>because our gospel came to you not in word only, but also in power, in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance. In the same way, you also know what kind of men we were among you for your sake.

<sup>6</sup>You became imitators of us and of the Lord when you received the word in much tribulation with joy from the Holy Spirit. <sup>7</sup>As a result, you became an example to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe.

<sup>8</sup>For from you the word of the Lord has rung out, and not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone out everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it. <sup>9</sup>For they themselves report concerning us what kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from the idols to serve the living and true God, <sup>10</sup>and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.

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<sup>1</sup>Some important and ancient Greek copies read, May grace and peace be to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ .

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# 1 Thessalonians 1 General Notes

## Structure and formatting

Verse 1 formally introduces this letter. Letters in the ancient Near East commonly had introductions of this type.

## Special concepts in this chapter

### Hardship

Other people persecuted the Christians in Thessalonica. But the Christians there handled it well.

## Links:

- [1 Thessalonians 1:1 Notes](#)
- [1 Thessalonians intro](#)

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### 1 Thessalonians 1:1

#### General Information:

Paul identifies himself as the writer of the letter and greets the church at Thessalonica.

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy to the church

The UDB makes clear that it was Paul who wrote this letter.

May grace and peace be to you

The terms "grace" and "peace" are metonyms for the person who acts toward people in a kindly and peaceful manner. Alternate translation: "May God be kind to you and give you peace"

peace be to you

The word "you" refers to the Thessalonian believers.

### 1 Thessalonians 1:2

#### General Information:

In this letter the words "we" and "us" refer to Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, unless otherwise noted. Also, the word "you" is plural and refers to the believers at the church of Thessalonica.

We always give thanks to God

Here "always" suggests that when Paul prays to God, he consistently presents the Thessalonians to God in his prayers.

we mention you continually in our prayers

"we continually pray for you"

### 1 Thessalonians 1:3

your work of faith, labor of love, and patient endurance of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ

"what you have done because you have faith in God, the hard work you have done because you love others, and how you always continued to hope in our Lord Jesus Christ"

patient endurance of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ

The Thessalonians confidently expected that Jesus would do all that he promised to do. Alternate translation: "firmness of your trust in our Lord Jesus Christ" or "continual trust in our Lord Jesus Christ"

### 1 Thessalonians 1:4

#### Connecting Statement:

Paul continues to give thanks for the believers at Thessalonica and praises them for their faith in God.

Brothers

Here this means fellow Christians, including both men and women.

we know

The word "we" refers to Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy but not the Thessalonian believers.

1 Thessalonians 1:5

not in word only

"not only in what we said"

but also in power, in the Holy Spirit

Possible meanings are 1) the Holy Spirit gave Paul and his companions the ability to preach the gospel powerfully or 2) the Holy Spirit made the preaching of the gospel have a powerful effect among the Thessalonian believers or 3) the Holy Spirit demonstrated the truth of the gospel preaching by means of miracles, signs, and wonders.

power, in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance

The abstract noun "assurance" can be translated as a verb. Alternate translation: "power and in the Holy Spirit, and God made you sure that it was true"

what kind of men

"how we conducted ourselves when"

1 Thessalonians 1:6

You became imitators

To "imitate" means to act like or to copy the behavior of another.

received the word

"welcomed the message" or "accepted what we had to say"

in much tribulation

"during a time of great suffering" or "in much persecution"

1 Thessalonians 1:7

Achaia

This is an ancient district in what is present-day Greece.

1 Thessalonians 1:8

the word of the Lord has rung out

"Word" here is a metonym for "message." Alternate translation: "the Lord's teachings have rung out"

has rung out

Here Paul speaks of the Christian witness produced by the Thessalonian believers as if it were a bell that was rung or a musical instrument that was being played.

1 Thessalonians 1:9

For they themselves

Paul is referring to the churches that already existed in the surrounding regions, who have heard about the Thessalonian believers.

they themselves

Here "themselves" is used to emphasize those people who had heard about the Thessalonian believers.

what kind of reception we had among you

The abstract noun "reception" can be expressed as the verb "receive" or "welcome." Alternate translation: "how warmly you received us" or "how warmly you welcomed us"

you turned to God from the idols to serve the living and true God

Here "turned to ... from" is a metaphor that means to start being loyal to one person and stop being loyal to someone else. Alternate translation: "you stopped worshiping idols and started serving the living and true God"

1 Thessalonians 1:10

his Son

This is an important title for Jesus that describes his relationship to God.

whom he raised from the dead

"whom God caused to live again so that he was no longer dead." The expression "the dead" describes all

dead people together in the underworld. To come back from among them speaks of becoming alive again.

who rescues us

Here Paul includes the Thessalonian believers.

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2 <sup>1</sup>For you yourselves know, brothers, that our coming to you was not useless.<sup>2</sup>Rather, as you know, though we previously suffered and were shamefully treated at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much struggling.

<sup>3</sup>For our exhortation was not from error, nor from uncleanness, nor from deceit.<sup>4</sup>Instead, just as we have been approved by God to be trusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please men, but God. He is the one who examines our hearts.

<sup>5</sup>For we never came with words of flattery, as you know, nor with a pretext to cover up greed—God is our witness.

<sup>6</sup>Nor did we seek glory from people, either from you or from others.

<sup>7</sup>We could have claimed privileges as apostles of Christ. <sup>1</sup> Instead, we were as gentle among you as a mother comforting her own children. <sup>2</sup> In this way we had affection for you. We were pleased to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives. For you had become very dear to us.<sup>9</sup>For you remember, brothers, our labor and toil. Night and day we were working so that we might not be a burden to any of you as we preached to you the gospel of God.

<sup>10</sup>You are witnesses, and God also, how holy, righteous, and blameless was our behavior toward you who believe.

<sup>11</sup>In the same way you know how we were with each one of you, as a father with his own children,<sup>12</sup> exhorting you and comforting you and urging you to walk in a manner that is worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.

<sup>13</sup>For this reason we also thank God constantly, that when you received God's message that you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of man, but just as it truly is, the word of God, which is also at work in you who believe.

<sup>14</sup>For you, brothers, became imitators of the churches of God that are in Judea in Christ Jesus. For you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen, as they did from the Jews<sup>15</sup> who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and who drove us out. They do not please God. Instead, they are hostile to all people.<sup>16</sup>They forbid us to speak to the Gentiles for them to be saved. The result is that they always fill up their sins to the limit. But wrath will overtake them in the end.

<sup>17</sup>But we, brothers, were separated from you for a short time, in person not in heart. We were especially eager, with great desire, to see your faces.<sup>18</sup>For we wished to come to you—indeed I, Paul, once and again—but Satan stopped us.<sup>19</sup>For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of pride in front of our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you?

<sup>20</sup>For you are our glory and joy.

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<sup>1</sup>Many copies include this sentence in verse 6.

<sup>2</sup>Some important and ancient Greek copies read, Instead, we were like babies among you, as when a mother comforts her own children .

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## 1 Thessalonians 2 General Notes

### Special concepts in this chapter

#### Christian witness

Paul values his "Christian witness" as evidence that the gospel is true. Paul says that being godly or holy bears witness to the non-Christian. Paul defends his character so that his witness is not affected. (See: testimony and godly and holy)

#### Links:

- [1 Thessalonians 2:1 Notes](#)



## 1 Thessalonians 2:1

Connecting Statement:

Paul begins to remind the Thessalonians of how he behaved when he was with them.

you yourselves

The words "you" and "yourselves" refer to the Thessalonian believers.

brothers

Here this means fellow Christians, including both men and women.

our coming

The word "our" refers to Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy but not the Thessalonian believers.

was not useless

This can be expressed in a positive manner. Alternate translation: "was very worthwhile"

## 1 Thessalonians 2:2

previously suffered and were shamefully treated

"were mistreated and insulted"

in much struggling

"while struggling under great opposition"

## 1 Thessalonians 2:3

was not from error, nor from uncleanness, nor from deceit

"was truthful, pure, and honest"

uncleanness

Ritual uncleanness here is a metaphor for guilt from having committed sin.

## 1 Thessalonians 2:4

approved by God to be trusted

Paul was tested and proven trustworthy by God.

we speak

Paul is referring to preaching the gospel message.

who examines our hearts

The word "hearts" is a metonym for a person's desires and thoughts. Alternate translation: "who knows our desires and thoughts"

## 1 Thessalonians 2:5

General Information:

Paul tells the Thessalonian believers that his conduct was not based in flattery, greed, or self glory.

we never came with words of flattery

"we never spoke to you with false praise"

## 1 Thessalonians 2:6

Nor did we seek glory from people

"And we did not try to make people praise us"

## 1 Thessalonians 2:7

as a mother comforting her own children

Just as a mother gently comforts her children, so Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy spoke gently to the Thessalonian believers.

## 1 Thessalonians 2:8

In this way we had affection for you

"This is how we demonstrated our affection for you"

we had affection for you

"we loved you"

We were pleased to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives

Paul speaks of the gospel message and his life and the lives of those with him as if they were a physical object that one could share with others. Alternate translation: "We were pleased not only to tell you the gospel of God but also to spend time with you and to help you"

you had become very dear to us

"we cared for you deeply"

1 Thessalonians 2:9

brothers

Here this means fellow Christians, including both men and women.

our labor and toil

The words "labor" and "toil" mean basically the same thing. Paul uses them to emphasize how hard they worked. Alternate translation: "how hard we worked"

Night and day we were working so that we might not be a burden to any of you

"We worked hard to make our own living so you would not need to support us"

1 Thessalonians 2:10

holy, righteous, and blameless

Paul uses three words that describe their good behavior toward the Thessalonian believers.

1 Thessalonians 2:11

as a father with his own children

Paul compares how he encouraged the Thessalonians to a father gently teaching his children how to behave.

1 Thessalonians 2:12

exhorting you and comforting you and urging you

The words "exhorting," "comforting," and "urging" are used together to express how passionately Paul's group exhorted the Thessalonians. Alternate translation: "strongly exhorted you"

into his own kingdom and glory

The word "glory" describes the word "kingdom." Alternate translation: "into his own glorious kingdom"

to walk in a manner that is worthy of God

"Walk" here is an metaphor for "live." Alternate translation: "to live so that people will think well of God"

1 Thessalonians 2:13

General Information:

Paul continues to use "we" to refer to himself and his traveling companions and "you" to the Thessalonian believers.

we also thank God constantly

Paul often thanks God for their acceptance of the gospel message he shared with them.

not as the word of man

"Word of man" here is a synecdoche for "a message that comes simply from a man." Alternate translation: "not a message that is made up by a man"

the word of God

"Word" here is a metonym for "message." Alternate translation: "the message that comes from God"

which is also at work in you who believe

Paul speaks of God's gospel message as if it were a person who was doing work. Alternate translation: "which those of you who believe are listening to and beginning to obey"

1 Thessalonians 2:14

brothers

Here this means fellow Christians, including both men and women.

became imitators of the churches

"became like the churches." The Thessalonian believers endured persecutions similar to those of the Judean believers.

from your own countrymen

"from other Thessalonians"

## 1 Thessalonians 2:15

General Information:

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## 1 Thessalonians 2:16

They forbid us to speak

"They try to make us stop speaking"

they always fill up their sins

Paul speaks as though someone can fill a container with his sins as with liquid.

wrath will overtake them in the end

This refers to God finally judging and punishing people for their sins.

## 1 Thessalonians 2:17

brothers

This means fellow Christians, including both men and women.

in person not in heart

Here "heart" represents thoughts and emotions. Though Paul and those traveling with him were not present physically in Thessalonica, they continued to care and think about the believers there. Alternate translation: "in person, but we continued to think about you"

to see your faces

Here "face" represents the entire person. Alternate translation: "to see you" or "to be with you"

## 1 Thessalonians 2:18

General Information:

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## 1 Thessalonians 2:19

For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of pride in front of our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you?

Paul uses rhetorical questions to emphasize the reasons he wants to come see the Thessalonian believers. Alternate translation: "For you are our hope, our joy, and our crown of pride in front our Lord Jesus at his coming."

For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of pride in front of our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you?

The Thessalonians are the reason that Paul and his fellow workers have hope and joy. Here "hope" means "certain expectation." Paul is certain that his work among them will be successful and that they will be with him at Christ's return. Alternate translation: "For what is the reason that we can be hopeful or joyful? What is our crown of pride in front of our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you?" or "For you are the reason that we are hopeful and joyful. You are our crown of pride in front of our Lord Jesus at his coming."

For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of pride in front of our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you?

Here "crown" refers to a laurel wreath awarded to victorious athletes. Here it is a metaphor meaning that the Thessalonians are the symbol that Paul's work was successful. Paul will be proud of them when they stand before Christ. Alternate translation: "For what is the reason we are hopeful and joyful. What is the reason that we can be proud of what we accomplished when we stand before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you?" or "For you are the reason that we are hopeful and joyful. You are our reason for being proud of what we accomplished when we stand before our Lord Jesus at his coming."

## 1 Thessalonians 2:20

General Information:

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3<sup>1</sup>Therefore, when we could no longer bear it, we thought it was good to be left behind at Athens alone.<sup>2</sup>We sent Timothy, our brother and fellow worker for God in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and comfort you regarding your faith, <sup>3</sup>so that no one would be shaken by these tribulations. For you yourselves know that for this we have been appointed.

<sup>4</sup>Truly, when we were with you, we told you in advance that we were about to suffer affliction, and it happened just so, as you know.<sup>5</sup>For this reason, when I could no longer endure it, I sent that I might know about your faith. Perhaps the tempter had somehow tempted you, and our labor was in vain.

<sup>6</sup>But Timothy came to us from you and brought us the good news of your faith and love. He told us that you always have good memories of us, and that you long to see us just as we also long to see you.<sup>7</sup>Because of this, brothers, we were comforted by you because of your faith, in all our distress and affliction.

<sup>8</sup>For now we live, if you stand firm in the Lord.<sup>9</sup>For what thanks can we give to God for you, for all the joy that we have before our God over you?<sup>10</sup>Night and day we pray very hard that we may see your face and provide what is lacking in your faith.

<sup>11</sup>May our God and Father himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way to you.<sup>12</sup>May the Lord make you increase and abound in love one for another and toward all people, as we also do for you.<sup>13</sup>May he strengthen your hearts so that they will be blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his holy people.

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<sup>1</sup>Some important and ancient Greek copies read, We sent Timothy, our brother and God's servant in the gospel of Christ .

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# 1 Thessalonians 3 General Notes

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## Links:

- [1 Thessalonians 3:1 Notes](#)

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### 1 Thessalonians 3:1

we could no longer bear it

"we could no longer endure worrying about you"

good to be left behind at Athens alone

"good for Silvanus and me to stay behind in Athens"

it was good

"it was proper" or "it was reasonable"

Athens

Athens was a city in the the Roman province of Achaia  
[1 Thessalonians 1:7-8]

### 1 Thessalonians 3:2

Connecting Statement:

Paul tells the believers he has sent Timothy to strengthen their faith.

our brother and fellow worker

These two expressions both describe Timothy.

### 1 Thessalonians 3:3

no one would be shaken

To be shaken is an idiom for being afraid. Alternate translation: "no one would be frightened away from trusting in Christ"

we have been appointed

Paul assumes that everyone knows that it was God who appointed them. This can be made explicit. Alternate translation: "God has appointed us"

1 Thessalonians 3:4

Truly

This word marks that there is more to the truth than what has just been said. Alternate translation: "Moreover"

to suffer affliction

"to be mistreated by others"

1 Thessalonians 3:5

I could no longer endure it

Paul is describing his own emotions by using an idiom. Alternate translation: "I could not continue to wait patiently"

I sent

It is implied that Paul sent Timothy. This can be made explicit. Alternate translation: "I sent Timothy"

our labor

"our hard work among you" or "our teaching among you"

in vain

"useless"

1 Thessalonians 3:6

Connecting Statement:

Paul tells his readers what Timothy reported when he returned from visiting them.

came to us

The word "us" refers to Paul and Silvanus.

the good news of your faith

It is understood that this refers to faith in Christ. This can be made explicit. Alternate translation: "a good report of your faith"

you always have good memories

When they think of Paul, they always have good thoughts about him.

you long to see us

"you desire to see us"

1 Thessalonians 3:7

brothers

Here "brothers" means fellow Christians.

because of your faith

This refers to faith in Christ. This can be made explicit. Alternate translation: "because of your faith in Christ"

in all our distress and affliction

The word "affliction" explains why they are in "distress." Alternate translation: "in all our distress caused by our afflictions"

1 Thessalonians 3:8

we live

This is an idiom that expresses living a satisfied life. Alternate translation: "we are very encouraged"

if you stand firm in the Lord

To "stand firm" is an idiom meaning to continue being faithful. Alternate translation: "if you continue to trust in the Lord"

1 Thessalonians 3:9

For what thanks can we give to God for you, for all the joy that we have before our God over you?

This rhetorical question can be expressed as a statement. Alternate translation: "We cannot thank God enough for what he has done for you! We greatly rejoice over you when we pray to our God!"

before our God

Paul speaks as if he and his companions were physically in God's presence. He is probably referring to the activity of praying.

1 Thessalonians 3:10

very hard

"fervently"

see your face

The word "face" refers to their whole person. Alternate translation: "visit you"

1 Thessalonians 3:11

May our God ... our Lord Jesus

Paul includes the Thessalonian believers with his ministry team.

May our God

"We pray that our God"

direct our way to you

Paul speaks as if he wants God to show him and his companions the route to take to visit the Thessalonian

Christians. He means that he wants God to make it possible for them to do so.

direct our way to you

The word "our" refers to Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy but not the Thessalonian believers.

Father himself

Here "himself" refers back to "Father" for emphasis.

1 Thessalonians 3:12

increase and abound in love

Paul speaks of love as an object that one could obtain more of.

1 Thessalonians 3:13

strengthen your hearts so that they will be

Here "heart" is a metonym for one's beliefs and convictions. Alternate translation: "strengthen you so that you will be"

at the coming of our Lord Jesus

"when Jesus comes back to earth"

with all his holy people

"with all those who belong to him"

<sup>4</sup> Finally, brothers, we earnestly appeal to you and exhort you in the Lord Jesus. As you received instructions from us about how you must walk and please God, also in this way walk, so that you do so even more.<sup>2</sup> For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus.

<sup>3</sup> For this is the will of God, your sanctification, that you avoid sexual immorality,<sup>4</sup> that each of you knows how to possess his own vessel in holiness and honor,<sup>5</sup> not in the passion of lust (as the Gentiles who do not know God).<sup>6</sup> Let no man transgress and wrong his brother in this matter. For the Lord is an avenger in all these things, just as we forewarned you and testified.

<sup>7</sup> For God did not call us to uncleanness, but to holiness.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, he who rejects this rejects not people, but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you.

<sup>9</sup> Regarding brotherly love, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, you do this for all the brothers who are in all Macedonia. But we exhort you, brothers, to do this even more.<sup>11</sup> We also exhort you to aspire to live quietly, take care of your own responsibilities, and labor with your hands, just as we commanded you,<sup>12</sup> so that you may walk properly before outsiders and not be in any need.

<sup>13</sup> We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who sleep, so that you do not grieve like the rest, who do not have hope.<sup>14</sup> For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.<sup>15</sup> For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left at the coming of the Lord, will surely not go before those who have fallen asleep.

<sup>16</sup> For the Lord himself will descend from heaven. He will come with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.<sup>17</sup> Then we who are alive, who are left, will together with them be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. In this way we will always be with the Lord.

<sup>18</sup> Therefore, comfort one another with these words.

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# 1 Thessalonians 4 General Notes

## Special concepts in this chapter

### Sexual immorality

Different cultures have different standards of sexual morality. These different cultural standards may make translating this passage difficult. Translators must also be aware of cultural taboos. These are topics considered improper to discuss.

### Dying before the return of Christ

In the early church, people apparently wondered what would happen if a believer died before Christ returned. They may have worried whether those dying before Christ returned would be part of the kingdom of God. Paul answers that concern.

"Caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air"

This passage refers to a time when Jesus calls to himself those who have believed in him. Scholars differ on whether or not this refers to Christ's final glorious return. (See: believe)

## Links:

- [1 Thessalonians 4:1 Notes](#)

## 1 Thessalonians 4:1

brothers

Here "brothers" means fellow Christians.

we earnestly appeal to you and exhort you

Paul uses "earnestly appeal to" and "exhort" to emphasize how strongly they exhort the believers.  
Alternate translation: "we strongly exhort you"

you received instructions from us

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "we taught you"

you must walk

Here "walk" is an expression for the way one is to live.  
Alternate translation: "you ought to live"

## 1 Thessalonians 4:2

through the Lord Jesus

Paul speaks of his instructions as if they were given by Jesus himself.

## 1 Thessalonians 4:3

you avoid sexual immorality

"you stay away from sexually immoral acts"

## 1 Thessalonians 4:4

knows how to possess his own vessel

Possible meanings are 1) "know how to live with his own wife" or 2) "know how to control his own body"

## 1 Thessalonians 4:5

in the passion of lust

"with wrongful sexual desire"

## 1 Thessalonians 4:6

no man

Here "man" refers to a man or a woman. "no one" or "no person"

transgress and wrong his brother

Possible meanings: 1) The words "transgress" and "wrong" are a doublet that emphasizes the idea of harming the brother. Alternate translation: "do very wrong things to his brother" 2) The word "transgress" refers to sinning against God, and "wrong his brother" refers to harming the brother. Alternate translation: "do what God had forbidden and wrong his brother"

the Lord is an avenger

This can be made explicit. Alternate translation: "the Lord will punish the one who transgressed and will defend the one who was wronged"

forewarned you and testified

"told you beforehand and strongly warned against"

## 1 Thessalonians 4:7

God did not call us to uncleanness, but to holiness

This can be stated in positive form. Alternate translation: "God called us to cleanness and holiness"

God did not call us

The word "us" refers to all believers.

## 1 Thessalonians 4:8

he who rejects this

"whoever disregards this teaching" or "whoever ignores this teaching"

rejects not people, but God

Paul stresses that this teaching is not from man, but from God.

## 1 Thessalonians 4:9

brotherly love

"love for fellow believers"

## 1 Thessalonians 4:10

you do this for all the brothers who are in all Macedonia

"you show love to the believers throughout Macedonia"



brothers

Here "brothers" means fellow Christians.

1 Thessalonians 4:11

to aspire

"to try to"

live quietly

Paul uses the word "quietly" as a metaphor to describe living at peace in one's community and not causing strife. Alternate translation: "live in a calm and orderly way"

take care of your own responsibilities

"do your own work" or "take care of the things that you are responsible for" or "do the things that you are responsible to do." This may also imply that we should not gossip and interfere in other people's concerns.

labor with your hands

This is a metaphor for living a productive life. Alternate translation: "work at your own jobs to earn what you need to live"

1 Thessalonians 4:12

walk properly

Here "walk" is a metaphor for "live" or "behave." Alternate translation: "behave properly"

properly

in a way that shows respect to others and earns their respect

before outsiders

Paul speaks of those who do not believe in Christ as if they are outside, in a place away from the believers. Alternate translation: "in the sight of those who do not believe in Christ"

1 Thessalonians 4:13

General Information:

Paul talks about believers who have died, those who are now alive, and those who will be alive when Christ returns.

We do not want you to be uninformed

This can be stated in positive form. Alternate translation: "We want you to be informed" or "We want you to know"

brothers

Here "brothers" means fellow Christians.

those who sleep

Here "sleep" is a euphemism for being dead. Alternate translation: "those who have died"

so that you do not grieve like the rest

"because we do not want you grieve like the rest"

grieve

mourn, be sad about something

like the rest, who do not have hope

Here "hope" means a certainty about the future. What those people do not have confidence about can be stated clearly. Alternate translation: "like people who do not have confidence in the future promise" or "like the people who are not sure that they will rise from the dead"

1 Thessalonians 4:14

if we believe

Here "we" refers to Paul and his audience.

rose again

"rose to live again"

those who have fallen asleep in him

Here "fallen asleep" is a polite way to refer to having died.

1 Thessalonians 4:15

by the word of the Lord

"Word" here is a metonym for "message." Alternate translation: "by means of understanding the teachings of the Lord"

at the coming of the Lord

"when the Lord returns"

1 Thessalonians 4:16

the Lord himself will descend

"the Lord himself will come down"

the archangel

"the chief angel"

the dead in Christ will rise first

The "dead in Christ" are those believers who have passed away. Alternate translation: "those who believe

in Jesus Christ, but who have already died, will rise first"

1 Thessalonians 4:17

we who are alive

Here "we" refers to all believers who have not died.

with them

The word "them" refers to the dead believers who were made alive again.

be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air

"meet the Lord Jesus in the sky"

1 Thessalonians 4:18

General Information:

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<sup>5</sup> Now concerning the times and seasons, brothers, you have no need that anything be written to you.<sup>2</sup> For you yourselves know perfectly well that the day of the Lord is coming like a thief in the night.<sup>3</sup> When they say, "Peace and safety," then sudden destruction will come on them. It will be like birth pains in a pregnant woman. They will in no way escape.

<sup>4</sup> But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that the day would overtake you like a thief.<sup>5</sup> For you are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We are not sons of the night or the darkness.<sup>6</sup> So then, let us not sleep as the rest do. Instead, let us keep watch and be sober.<sup>7</sup> For those who sleep do so at night, and those who get drunk do so at night.

<sup>8</sup> But since we belong to the day, we must stay sober and put on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation for our helmet.<sup>9</sup> For God did not appoint us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,<sup>10</sup> who died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him.<sup>11</sup> Therefore comfort one another and build each other up, just as you are already doing.

<sup>12</sup> We earnestly appeal to you, brothers, to acknowledge those who labor among you and who rule over you in the Lord and who instruct you,<sup>13</sup> and to esteem them highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves.<sup>14</sup> We exhort you, brothers: Warn those who are lazy, encourage the discouraged, help the weak, and be patient toward all.

<sup>15</sup> See that no one pays back evil for evil to anyone. Instead, pursue what is good for one another and for all.

<sup>16</sup> Rejoice always.<sup>17</sup> Pray without ceasing.<sup>18</sup> In everything give thanks. For this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

<sup>19</sup> Do not quench the Spirit.<sup>20</sup> Do not despise prophecies.<sup>21</sup> Test all things. Hold firmly to what is good.<sup>22</sup> Keep away from every kind of evil.

<sup>23</sup> May the God of peace sanctify you completely. May your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>24</sup> Faithful is he who calls you, the one who will also do it.

<sup>25</sup> Brothers, pray also for us.

<sup>26</sup> Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss.<sup>27</sup> I command you by the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers.

<sup>28</sup> The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

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# 1 Thessalonians 5 General Notes

## Structure and formatting

Paul concludes his letter in a way that was typical of letters in the ancient Near East.

## Special concepts in this chapter

### Day of the Lord

The exact time of the coming day of the Lord will be a surprise to the world. This is what the simile "like a thief in the night" means. Because of this, Christians are to live prepared for the coming of the Lord.

### Quench the Spirit

To quench the Spirit is to ignore or work against the Holy Spirit's guidance and work.

## Links:

- [1 Thessalonians 5:1 Notes](#)

## 1 Thessalonians 5:1

General Information:

In this chapter the words "we" and "us" refer to Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, unless otherwise noted. Also, the word "you" is plural and refers to the believers at the church of Thessalonica.

Connecting Statement:

Paul continues talking about the day Jesus will come back.

concerning the times and seasons

This is a figurative expression which states the same idea twice. It refers to the time when the Lord Jesus will return. Alternate Translation: "the exact time that the Lord will return."

brothers

Here "brothers" means fellow Christians.

## 1 Thessalonians 5:2

perfectly well

"very well" or "accurately"

like a thief in the night

Just as one does not know which night a thief may come, we do not know when the day of the Lord will come. Alternate translation: "unexpectedly"

## 1 Thessalonians 5:3

When they say

"When the people say"

then sudden destruction

"then unexpected destruction"

like birth pains in a pregnant woman

Just as a pregnant woman's birth pains come suddenly and do not stop until the birth is complete, the destruction will come, and people will not escape.

## 1 Thessalonians 5:4

you, brothers

Here "brothers" means fellow Christians.

are not in darkness

Paul speaks of evil and ignorance about God as if they were darkness. Alternate translation: "you are not unknowing, like people who live in the dark"

so that the day would overtake you like a thief

The Lord will come on a day when believers will not expect him to come, but that day will not "overtake" them—God will not destroy them on that day—because they will be ready for Jesus to return.

## 1 Thessalonians 5:5

For you are all sons of the light and sons of the day

Paul speaks of the truth as if it were light and day. Alternate translation: "For you know the truth, like people who live in the light, like people during the day"

We are not sons of the night or the darkness

Paul speaks of evil and ignorance about God as if they were darkness. Alternate translation: We are not unknowing, like people who live in the darkness, like people at night"

## 1 Thessalonians 5:6

let us not sleep as the rest do

Paul speaks of spiritual unawareness as if it were sleep. Alternate translation: "let us not be like others who are not aware that Jesus is coming back"

let us

The word "us" refers to all believers.

keep watch and be sober

Paul describes spiritual awareness as the opposite of sleep and drunkenness.

## 1 Thessalonians 5:7

For those who sleep do so at night

Just as when people sleep and do not know what is happening, so the people of this world do not know that Christ will return.

those who get drunk do so at night

Paul is stating that it is at night when people become drunk, so when people are unaware of Christ's return they do not live a self-controlled life.

## 1 Thessalonians 5:8

General Information:

In verses 8-10 the word "we" refers to all believers.

we belong to the day

Paul speaks of knowing the truth about God as belonging to the day. Alternate translation: "we know the truth" or "we have received the light of truth"

we must stay sober

Paul compares being sober to exercising self-control. Alternate translation: "let us exercise self-control"

put on faith and love as a breastplate

As a soldier would put on a breastplate to protect his body, a believer who lives by faith and love will find protection. Alternate translation: "protect ourselves with faith and love" or "protect ourselves by trusting Christ and loving him"

the hope of salvation for our helmet

Here "hope of salvation" means a certainty that Jesus will save his people. Here "helmet" is a metaphor. As a helmet protects a soldier's head, assurance of salvation protects the believer. Alternate translation: "protect ourselves by being certain that Christ will save us"

## 1 Thessalonians 5:9

General Information:

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## 1 Thessalonians 5:10

whether we are awake or asleep

These are polite ways of saying alive or dead. Alternate translation: "whether we are alive or dead"

## 1 Thessalonians 5:11

build each other up

Here "build" is a metaphor that means encourage. Alternate translation: "encourage each other"

## 1 Thessalonians 5:12

General Information:

Paul begins to give his final instructions to the church in Thessalonica.

brothers

Here "brothers" means fellow believers.

to acknowledge those who labor

"to esteem and appreciate those who are involved in leading"

who rule over you in the Lord

This refers to people God appointed to serve as leaders of the local group of believers.

## 1 Thessalonians 5:13

esteem them highly in love because of their work

Paul exhorts the believers to respect and love their church leaders.

## 1 Thessalonians 5:14

General Information:

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## 1 Thessalonians 5:15

General Information:

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## 1 Thessalonians 5:16

Rejoice always

Paul is exhorting the believers to maintain a spiritual attitude of rejoicing in all things.

## 1 Thessalonians 5:17

Pray without ceasing

Paul is exhorting the believers to be vigilant in prayer.

## 1 Thessalonians 5:18

In everything give thanks

Paul is exhorting the believers to express thankfulness in all things.

In everything

In all circumstances

For this is the will of God

Paul is referring to the behavior he just mentioned as being God's will for the believers.

## 1 Thessalonians 5:19

Do not quench the Spirit

"Do not stop the Holy Spirit from working among you"

## 1 Thessalonians 5:20

Do not despise prophecies

"Do not have contempt for prophecies" or "Do not hate anything the Holy Spirit tells someone"

## 1 Thessalonians 5:21

Test all things

"Make sure that all messages that seem to come from God truly come from him"

Hold firmly to what is good

Paul speaks of messages from the Holy Spirit as if they were objects that one could grasp in his hands.

## 1 Thessalonians 5:22

General Information:

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## 1 Thessalonians 5:23

sanctify you completely

This refers to God making a person sinless and perfect in his sight.

May your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless

Here the phrase "spirit, soul, and body" represents the whole person. If your language does not have three words for these parts you can state it as "your whole life" or "you." This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "May God make your whole life without sin" or "May God keep you completely blameless"

## 1 Thessalonians 5:24

Faithful is he who calls you

"He is faithful who calls you"

the one who will also do it

"he will be helping you"

## 1 Thessalonians 5:25

General Information:

Paul gives his closing statements.

## 1 Thessalonians 5:26

brothers

Here "brothers" means fellow Christians.

## 1 Thessalonians 5:27

I command you by the Lord to have this letter read

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "I urge you, as if the Lord were speaking to you, to have people read this letter" or "With the authority of the Lord, I direct you to read this letter"

## 1 Thessalonians 5:28

General Information:

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