The Chapters of 1 Thessalonians

Harold Willmington

Liberty University, hwillmington@liberty.edu
1 Thessalonians

SECTION OUTLINE ONE (1 THESALONIANS 1)
Paul opens his first letter to the Thessalonians by listing five characteristics of the church in Thessalonica.

I. IT IS AN ENERGETIC CHURCH (1:1-3): Paul gives thanks to God.
   A. For their strong faith (1:1-3a)
   B. For their labor of love (1:3b)

II. IT IS AN ELECT CHURCH (1:4): They have been chosen by God himself.

III. IT IS AN EXEMPLARY CHURCH (1:5-7)
   A. Paul's example to the church (1:5-6)
      1. His preaching is anointed by the Holy Spirit (1:5).
      2. His personal lifestyle is anointed by the Holy Spirit (1:6).
   B. Their example to the world (1:7): They are a model to all the believers in Greece.

IV. IT IS AN EVANGELISTIC CHURCH (1:8): Their faith in God has become known everywhere.

V. IT IS AN EXPECTANT CHURCH (1:9-10): They are looking forward to the return of Jesus from heaven.

SECTION OUTLINE TWO (1 THESALONIANS 2)
Paul talks about the trip he took to visit Thessalonica and about his desire to go again.

I. PAUL'S PAST TRIP TO THESSALONICA (2:1-16): The apostle overviews two factors concerning his visit to Thessalonica.
   A. How the gospel was relayed to the believers there (2:1-12): The preacher in the pulpit.
      1. Paul the persecuted (2:1-2): He speaks of his sufferings at Philippi just prior to coming to Thessalonica.
      2. Paul the pattern (2:3-6, 9-10): The apostle served as a positive role model to the church.
         a. Concerning his words (2:3-6, 10): Paul's preaching was bold, truthful, straightforward, and sincere.
         b. Concerning his works (2:9): Paul labored long, weary hours so that he would not be a burden to the church.
      3. Paul the parent (2:7-8, 11-12)
         a. He fed and cared for them as would a loving mother (2:7-8).
         b. He encouraged and comforted them as would a loving father (2:11-12).
   B. How the gospel was received by the believers there (2:13-16): The people in the pews.
      1. The enthusiasm (2:13): They accepted Paul's words as being from God.
      2. The enemies (2:14-16): They persevered through suffering and persecution.

II. PAUL'S PLANNED TRIP TO THESSALONICA (2:17-20)
   A. Why the apostle is anxious to revisit them (2:17, 19-20)
      1. They are his reward and crown (2:17, 19b).
      2. They are his pride and joy (2:19a, 20).
   B. Why the apostle has been unable to revisit them (2:18): He has been hindered by Satan.

SECTION OUTLINE THREE (1 THESALONIANS 3)
Paul talks more about his visit to the Thessalonians and rejoices over the good news Timothy has brought back to him about them.

I. PAUL’S REVIEW (3:1-5): The apostle calls to remembrance events both during and after his previous visit to Thessalonica.
   A. The action during his visit (3:4): While he was with them, Paul warned the church that they could expect future persecution because of their faith in Christ; this soon came to pass.
   B. The action after his visit (3:1-3, 5)
      1. Where he was (3:1): He was in Athens, experiencing great concerns over the spiritual welfare of the church in Thessalonica.
      2. What he did (1:2-3, 5): He sent Timothy to minister to them.

II. PAUL’S REPORT (3:6-9)
   A. The return of Timothy (3:6): Paul informs them that Timothy has brought back the joyous news that they are growing in faith and love.
   B. The rejoicing of Paul (3:7-9): The apostle is greatly comforted by this news.

III. PAUL’S REQUEST (3:10-13): Paul now lifts up a twofold prayer request.
   A. For himself (3:10-11): Paul asks God to permit him to visit the church again.
   B. For the church (3:12-13)
      1. That their love will both increase and overflow (3:12)
      2. That their hearts will be strengthened in matters of holiness (3:13)

SECTION OUTLINE FOUR (1 THESSALONIANS 4)
Paul discusses the glorious rapture of the church.

I. THE CHALLENGES IN VIEW OF THE RAPTURE (4:1-12)
   A. What we are to do (4:1-2): Believers are to live their lives in a way that is pleasing to God.
   B. How we are to do it (4:3-12)
      1. Be holy and pure (4:3-5, 7-8).
      2. Don’t defraud another believer (4:6).
      3. Love all believers (4:9-10).
      4. Take care of your own business (4:11).
      5. Earn your own living (4:12).

II. THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE RAPTURE (4:13-18)
   A. The purpose (4:13, 18): Paul explains the Rapture for two reasons:
      1. To clarify (4:13): He does not want them to be ignorant of God’s prophetic plan.
      2. To comfort (4:18): This glorious event may be used to encourage each other.
   B. The particulars (4:14-17)
      1. The return of the Lord (4:14, 16a-c)
         a. The saints (4:14): All believers currently in heaven will accompany him.
         b. The sound (4:16a-c)
            (1) A loud command (4:16a)
            (2) The voice of the archangel (4:16b)
            (3) The trumpet call of God (4:16c)
      2. The resurrection of the dead (4:16d): The bodies of dead believers will rise first.
      3. The rapture of the living (4:15, 17): The believers on earth will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air.

SECTION OUTLINE FIVE (1 THESSALONIANS 5)
Paul sets forth several rules for the church in light of the coming Rapture, then ends his letter with three requests.

I. THE RULES (5:1-22)
   A. Be watchful (5:1-10).
1. The action (5:1-2): The event Paul describes here is the Day of the Lord.
2. The reaction (5:3-10): There has been, is, and will be a twofold response to this terrible time of judgment.
   a. The response by the children of darkness (5:3, 7): In their drunken unbelief, the unsaved will believe all is quiet and peaceful until sudden destruction falls on them.
   b. The response by the children of light (5:4-6, 8-10): We are to put on the full armor of God, for God has saved us.

**B. Be helpful** (5:11, 14).
   1. Build one another up (5:11).
   2. Warn, encourage, be compassionate, and show patience with one another (5:14).

**C. Be respectful** (5:12-13): Honor and love your spiritual leaders.

**D. Be merciful** (5:15): Do not return evil for evil.

**E. Be joyful** (5:16): At all times.

**F. Be prayerful** (5:17): In all things.

**G. Be thankful** (5:18): No matter what happens.

**H. Be careful** (5:19-22)
   1. What not to do (5:19-20)
      a. Don’t quench the Spirit (5:19).
      b. Don’t despise prophecy (5:20).
   2. What to do (5:21-22)
      a. Do test everything (5:21).
      b. Do avoid every kind of evil (5:22).

**II. THE REASSURANCES (5:23-24)**

**A. What God will do** (5:23)
   1. At the present (5:23a): He will sanctify us through and through.
   2. In the future (5:23b): He will present us blameless at Christ’s coming.

**B. Why God will do it** (5:24): Because he is faithful.

**III. THE REQUESTS (5:25-28)**

**A. Pray for me** (5:25).

**B. Greet everyone for me** (5:26).

**C. Read this letter to all the Christians** (5:27-28).