

1 Thessalonians Chapter 1

There is, in my opinion, no doubt at all that the letter to the Thessalonians was written by Paul. Thessalonica was a seaport city. It was located in the Macedonian area. This might have been the largest city in Macedonia. The seaport made it a large city. Thessalonica was a mixture of Greeks and Romans. Many Jewish merchants headquartered here.

In Thessalonica, Paul's main subject to the people was the resurrection of Jesus Christ and His second coming. Paul was the founder of the church in Thessalonica. It was on his second journey that Paul founded the church. There was not as much resistance from the Jews here, as in some of the other areas. Let me say there was much persecution here, but not from Judaizers in the church.

It is believed that this is the first of the letters of Paul to be written. It is also believed that Paul wrote this from Corinth. It was written somewhere around 50 A.D. Give or take a year or two.

1 Thessalonians 1:1 "Paul, and Silvanus, 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."

“Silvanus”, a companion of Paul on the second missionary journey (Acts 15-18), later a writer for Peter (1 Peter 5:12), also called Silas.

“Paul, and Silvanus, and Timothy”: Paul’s salutation takes the form of an everyday letter of the Hellenistic world. The names Silas (Silvanus’), and Timothy (Timotheus), are their names in Latin. Silas and Timothy are mentioned not as coauthors but as a courtesy since they were Paul’s companions while he was in Thessalonica.

“Timothy” was Paul’s most notable disciple (Phil. 2:17-23), who traveled on the second and third missionary journeys and stayed near Paul during his first Roman imprisonment (Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:1; Philemon 1). Later he served in Ephesus (1 Tim. 1:3), and spend some time in prison (Heb. 13:23).

Paul’s first letter to Timothy, while he was ministering in the church at Ephesus, instructed him regarding life in the church (1 Tim. 3:15). In his second letter, Paul called Timothy to be strong (2 Tim. 2:1), and faithfully preach as he faced death and was about to turn his ministry over to Timothy (2 Tim. 4:1-8).

“God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ”: Since Paul’s initial converts were Jewish, he made it unmistakably clear that this “church”, was not a Jewish assembly, but rather one which gathered in the name of Jesus, the Son of God (Acts 17:2-3). Who is both Lord God and Messiah. This emphasis on the equality between God and the Lord Jesus is a part of the introduction in all Paul’s epistles (1 John 2:23).

Silas had taken the place of Barnabas on Paul's second missionary journey (Acts 15:22-18:15). Timothy had joined them at Lystra, his hometown (Acts 16:1-3), and had also just recently visited the Thessalonians at Paul's request (3:2).

“The Church”: Greek ekklesia (“assembly”): Since Jesus used this term (Matt. 16:18), it had become a technical term among the early believers for a local group of baptized Christians.

In the New Testament, the word never refers to a building, and in its technical sense is carefully distinguished from Israel as designating those who are “in the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ.”

While local churches are implied, the more normative sense of the term may also signify all believers in Christ (Acts 8:3; 9:31; 1 Cor. 12:28; 15:9; Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18).

This is a typical Pauline greeting to these people he loved so well. In Corinthians, Paul was defending his right to lead them and he reminded them that he was an apostle, called of God. He does not call himself that here, because he knows these people already believe that he was called of God to do this work. He feels that no explanation of who he is will be necessary.

Silvanus is the same person as Silas. We know that Paul had high regard for him. They had been imprisoned together for the gospel of Jesus. Of course, Timotheus is Timothy. It was not unusual for them to be with Paul. Timothy was an understudy of Paul. It seems that both Timothy and Silas had helped Paul in the founding of the church at Thessalonica.

Paul is very proud of this church. He feels they are grounded in the Truth of the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. We have mentioned in other lessons that there is a message in the name "Lord Jesus Christ". Jesus means Jehovah Savior, Christ means Messiah, the Anointed One.

To call Him Lord means that you have turned your will over to Him. Paul wishes unmerited favor for them (grace). If they know the King of Peace (Jesus Christ), they have perfect peace. Grace and peace are free blessings poured out on mankind by the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Thessalonians 1:2 "We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers;"

“Our prayers”: Paul and his companions prayed frequently for the entire flock and 3 of those prayers are offered in this letter (1:2-3; 3:11-13; 5:23-24).

Paul never stopped being concerned about the churches that he had begun. He prayed for them regularly. Paul had very little to reprimand them for, he gave thanks to God for them.

1 Thessalonians 1:3 "Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father;"

“Your work of faith”: refers to the Thessalonians’ conversion when they “turned to God from idols” (verse 9).

The 3-fold combination of faith, hope and love is a Pauline favorite (5:8; 1 Cor. 13-13; Col. 1:4-5). Paul refers here to the fulfillment of ministry duties which resulted from these three spiritual attitudes (verses 9-10).

“Labor of love”: concerns their practice of serving the “living and true God” (verse 9), and the “Patience” (i.e., perseverance). “Of hope”, has to do with their steadfastly waiting “for His Son from heaven” (verse 10).

It appears from the praise that Paul has for the church at Thessalonica, that he is very pleased with their faithfulness to Christianity. We see the main things that are important in the faithful Christian in, faith, hope and love.

1 Corinthians 13:13 "And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these [is] charity."

Charity, here is agape, which means God's kind of love. These three, faith, hope and love sum up a Christian. We have faith in Jesus, love His people as he would, and have hope of our resurrection in Him.

1 Thessalonians 1:4 "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God."

“Knowing ... your election”: Paul’s conviction of the genuineness of his readers’ conversion was based on subjective and objective factors.

The church is commonly called “the elect” (Rom. 8:33; Col., 3:12; 2 Tim. 2:10; Titus 1:1). In salvation, the initiating will is God’s, not man’s (John 1:13; Acts 13:46-48; Rom. 9:15-16; 1 Cor. 1:30; Col. 1:13; 2 Thess. 2:13; 2 Peter 1:1-2).

Man’s will participates in response to God’s promptings as Paul makes clear when he says the Thessalonians received the Word (verse 6), and they turned to God from idols (verse 9). These two responses describe faith and repentance, which God repeatedly calls sinners to do throughout Scripture (Acts 20-21).

The former relates to his own assurance of the gospel, the propriety of his Christian life, and to the effectiveness of his ministry produced by the Spirit’s power (verse 5). The objective factor concerns the Thessalonians’ becoming followers of Christ (verse 6), being examples to other believers (verse 7), and their gospel witness (verse 8).

Because of the faith, love, and hope in the previous verse, God has predestined us to the election of sonship in Him. We had to activate our will and have the faith, love and hope. He elected us to be His because of our decision. Paul says here, there is no question about it, you belong to God.

1 Thessalonians 1:5 "For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake."

“Our Gospel”: Paul called his message “our gospel,” because it was for him and all sinners to believe and especially for him to preach. He knew it did not originate with him, but was divinely authored; thus, he also called it “the gospel of God” (2:2, 9; Rom. 1:1). Because the person who made forgiveness possible is the Lord Jesus, he also referred to it as “the gospel of Christ” (3:2).

“Word only” It had to come in word (Rom. 10-13-17), and not word only, but in Holy Spirit power (1 Cor. 2:4-5), and in confidence (Isa. 55:11).

What manner of men”: The quality of the message was confirmed by the character of the lives of the preachers. Paul’s exemplary life served as an open book for all men to read, establishing the credibility of the power and grace of God essential to making the message of redemption believable to sinners.

Greek, euaggelion (“Good News”), is a technical term for the Christian message, stated succinctly (in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4).

Paul was not a man of just words, but of deeds as well. His deeds proved to all that he truly believed the words he brought to them. Paul's power to heal, his power to preach, and his power to endure persecution came from the power of the Holy Ghost within him.

Paul is assured that he does not have to explain who he is or what he stands for to these people. They believe in the work of Paul. The "we" in this indicates that Timothy and Silas are known of them also.

1 Thessalonians 1:6 "And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost:"

“Followers”: means “imitators.” (See also 1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1). The Thessalonians had become third generation mimics of Christ. Christ is the first; Paul is the second; and the Thessalonians are the third (1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1).

“Joy of the Holy Ghost”: (Rom. 14:17). Joy in the midst of suffering, evidenced the reality of their salvation, which included the indwelling Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19). It is a joy inspired by the Holy Spirit.

“Received”: (Greek dechomai) means to “receive in a respectful, obedient, and favorable way.”

Paul does not mean that these people became Paulites. They were Christians. They followed Paul because he showed them the way to follow Christ. We know from the book of Acts that Paul was so persecuted here by the Jews, that Paul had to depart.

This was not Jews, in the church. They were Jews who did not believe in Christ. They were not Judaizers. It is so strange that the greatest growth in the church is in time of persecution. The joy, they experienced then, was not experienced because of things that happened around them, but the opposite. This joy was from within, despite the persecutions around them.

1 Thessalonians 1:7 "So that ye were examples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia."

“Example” The Greek word “tupos”, was used to describe a seal that marked wax or a stamp that minted coins. Having become imitators of Christ (verse 6a), the readers were moral examples themselves (leaving their mark on others), that others could emulate. And the Thessalonians were fine examples in joyfully receiving the gospel amidst persecution (Verse 6b), and in sharing their faith with others (verse 8).

This is just saying that this church was doing so well that the other churches could look to them as an example of how the church was to function.

1 Thessalonians 1:8 "For 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."

The Greek word “execheo”, translated “sounded out,” means to “ring out.” The Thessalonians’ faith in Jesus resounded everywhere abroad. The idea is to reverberate. Wherever the Thessalonians went, the gospel given by the word of the Lord was heard. It resulted in a local outreach to Thessalonica, a national outreach to Macedonia and Achaia, and an international outreach to regions beyond.

Paul is saying here, that their good works speak for them wherever it is known of them. It seems that the gospel had spread from this city to other cities. We do not know whether people off the ships in the harbor came to church and carried the good news of their faith in God to other areas or whether they sent ministers forth with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

“We need not to speak anything”: Though it may appear that this church developed such a testimony in only 3 Sabbaths of preaching (Acts 17:2), spanning as little as 15 days. It is better to understand that Paul preached 3 Sabbaths in the synagogue before he had to relocate elsewhere in the city.

In all likelihood, Paul spent months not weeks, which account for:

- (1) The two collections he received from Philippi (Phil. 4:16);
- (2) The time he worked night and day (2:9; 2 Thess. 3:8); and
- (3) The depth of pastoral care evidenced in the letter (2:7-8, 11).

We do know that the verse above speaks of a spreading of the Word of God by these Thessalonians to other places, some quite far away. Paul, is just saying, it is a well-known fact of how you are spreading the true Word of God.

He also says, it was not necessary for him to carry the good news about them. The good news of their faith and work in God had spoken for itself.

1 Thessalonians 1:9 "For they themselves shew 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;"

“Ye turned”: (Greek epistrepho) describes their “conversion”, which is both positive (to God), and negative (from idols). This word describes what the bible elsewhere calls repentance (Matt. 3:1-2; 4:17; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 5:31; 20:21). Salvation involves a person’s turning from sin and trusting in false gods to Christ.

“Serve”: (Greek douleuo, “to perform the duties of a bonds slave”): A bonds slave was a person who had been sold to another, thus becoming his personal property. Socially this was a very undesirable condition; but spiritually being God’s servant was a privilege. Such was the readers’ relation to the Lord. Those converted to Christ abandoned the worship of dead idols to become willing slaves to the living God.

Not only does Paul not have to tell the other churches about Thessalonica, but the people in the other churches are telling Paul. This had been a society of idol worshippers, but when the Truth was presented to them, they had turned from idol worship, to the worship of the One True God.

We had spoken earlier in this lesson how Paul had been empowered by the Holy Ghost. It seems that this church at Thessalonica had been filled with this same power. These people were bearing fruit for Jesus, because they were filled with the Holy Spirit and power. They were living and ministering to others through the power of the Holy Ghost.

1 Thessalonians 1:10 "And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, [even] Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come."

“To wait”: signifies waiting with expectation, looking ahead in faith, to the fulfillment of Christ’s promises to return to the saints.

This is a recurring theme in the Thessalonian letters (3:13; 4:15-17; 5:8, 23; 2 Thess. 3:6-13; Acts 1:11; 2 Tim. 4:8; Titus 2:11-13). These passages indicate the immanency of the deliverance; it was something Paul felt could happen in their lifetime.

“Wrath to come”: (5:9; Rev. 6:16), refers to the time of the Great Tribulation (spoken of by Christ, Matt. 24:21), from which the saints of the church will be delivered. This can mean to evacuate out of a current distress (Rom. 7:24; Col. 1:13), or to exempt from entering a distress (John 12:27; 2 Cor. 1:10).

The wrath can refer either to God’s temporal wrath to come on the earth (Rev. 6:16-17; 19:15), or to God’s eternal wrath (John 3:36; Rom. 5:9-10).

(1 Thessalonians 5:9), develops the same idea. The emphasis in both passages on Christ's work of salvation from sin favors this being understood as the deliverance from the eternal wrath of God in hell because of salvation.

Paul felt that the coming of the Lord was very near. Of course, it was for him, because none of us live much beyond one hundred years old. It is near for each of us, whether we are part of those physical dead who rise first, or whether we are those living who will be changed in the twinkling of an eye. We shall rise, because He arose.

Our hope is of the resurrection in Him (Jesus). Notice, we are delivered from the wrath to come, not the tribulation to come. The wrath of God occurs the last three and one half years of the great tribulation period. When the wrath of God falls on this earth at the end of the Gentile age, we Christians will be standing around the throne of God in heaven.

Revelation 7:14 "And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

The tribulation was going on, but we are taken out of it. The wrath falls on the unbelievers.

Ephesians 5:6 "Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience."

Noah was not delivered from the flood; he was delivered in the flood. We are not delivered from tribulation, but in the tribulation. We are saved completely from the wrath of God.

Romans 5:9 "Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him."

The Son from heaven, of course, is Jesus Christ our Lord. Notice, that Paul brings up the fact that Jesus was raised from the dead. This letter is about the hope of the resurrection that Christians have because Jesus arose, and the second coming of Christ. Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life.

1 Thessalonians Chapter 1 Questions

1. Who wrote this letter?
2. Where was Thessalonica located?
3. What nationality was it made up of?
4. What was Paul's main subject in this letter?

5. When had Paul founded this church?
6. Was this an earlier letter or later letter of Paul's to the churches?
7. Where was Paul when he wrote this letter?
8. When was it believed that the letter was written?
9. Who was the other 2 with Paul that Paul mentions in the first verse?
10. Why did Paul not mention in this letter that he was called of God to be an apostle?
11. What is another name that we know Silvanus by?
12. Which one of these men was an understudy to Paul?
13. What are some of the reasons Paul is proud of this church?
14. What message is in the name, "Lord Jesus Christ"?
15. Grace and peace are _____ blessings poured out on mankind by the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
16. What kind of prayers did Paul pray for them?
17. What are three very important things to be found in a Christian?
18. Because of the _____, _____, and _____ God has predestinated them to election of sonship in Him.
19. Paul was not a man of just words, but what?
20. Where did Paul's power to heal, to preach, and to endure persecution come from?
21. These people were not Paulites, but _____.
22. What type of joy is spoken of in verse 6?
23. Who were they examples to?
24. What spoke for these Thessalonians and made it unnecessary for Paul to speak for them?
25. This had been a society of _____.
26. They turned from the idols to the _____.
27. What empowered them to minister to others?
28. How do we know we will arise?

29. We are delivered from the _____ to come.
30. Who does the wrath of God come on?
31. Noah was not delivered _____ the flood, but _____ the flood.
32. What justifies us?
33. _____ is the Resurrection and the Life.