

Paul's Letters to the **Thessalonians**



Lesson 1-Introduction and Praise in Christ!

Focus: 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

➤ **Introduction Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians**

- Paul had spent a number of pleasant days with the very young and growing church of Thessalonica. He had tender feelings for them. Paul encouraged them in this letter to pray, rejoice, and give thanks always! He also took some time in chapters four and five to speak especially about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ and the hope that “the dead in Christ” truly have for the resurrection to new life at the Second Coming!
- **Thessalonica was an important and well known city** in the times of Paul. It had a very active seaport for commerce and was also **the capital of the Roman province of Macedonia**. Additionally, it was located right along the **Via Egnatia**, which was the main road from Rome to the East. From the city, you could also see Mount Olympus which was the legendary home of the Greek Pantheon. This city was strengthened named by Cassander (One of the Greek Generals of Alexander the Great who divided up the Greek Empire after Alexander's death). Cassander named the city after his wife who was the half-sister of Alexander the Great. The population of the city in Paul's day was nearly **200,000 people**. Today, the city still survives and is often called by its shortened name, Salonika!
- This city had a fairly good population of Jews in Paul's day. They had a synagogue established there for worship (See Acts 17:1). A number of the Gentiles (non-Jewish people) in that city had believed in God through the influence of Judaism, since they had been disenchanted with the Greek and Roman practices of Paganism. These people were well prepared to receive the gospel of Jesus Christ and many began to do just that! Some of the Jews however, caused a big stir and caused Paul and his fellow laborers to move on into Berea to be free from the troubles and persecution (See Acts 17:5,10). Then the same Jews from Thessalonica came along to Berea and got Paul chased out of there even—he then had to move on to Athens (See Acts 17:11-16; esp. vs.13-15).
- Some Scholars believe that Paul only spent about 3 weeks in total in the city of Thessalonica due to Luke's reference of him preaching only “three Sabbaths” in the synagogue there (Acts 17:2), but there is some other evidence that suggests he had a longer stay: (1) Paul knew them well enough to receive two sizable offerings from them when he was away from them (Philippians 4:15,16). (2) There were many Gentile converts there which would have taken a good deal of time to win (1 Thess. 1:9; 2:14-16). Paul labored hard with them to reach their souls, “night and day” (1 Thess. 2:9; 2 Thess. 3:7-9).
- In Athens, Paul was met by Timothy and Silas (1 Thess. 3:1,2). Timothy was sent back to Thessalonica. Silas was then sent back to Macedonia—perhaps to Philippi. Later they all met up again in Corinth. **Paul wrote this letter from Corinth in A.D. 51 as he was serving the Corinthian church on his second missionary journey** (Compare Acts 18:1,5 and also 1 Thessalonians 1:1. Here Silas is called Silvanus).

➤ **Warm greetings and memories to the Church in Thessalonica (v.1-5)**

- Paul greeted the church in Thessalonica with warm greetings in the Lord. Clearly, as a church, they had a wonderful character in Jesus Christ and Paul was so thankful for their warm and loving

experience in God! (v.1-3). This church was **vibrant in Christ!** Clearly, they were not a church who just sat around and did nothing for the Lord. No, they were far from it! This church was a very active church for God! They were busy **laboring in love and sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ** with as many as they could. What an excellent example they set for us to be a vibrant and growing church filled with the love of Jesus Christ and active in service for God and for winning the souls of those who are lost from the saving power of Jesus Christ!

- Their calling and election in God were sure—evidenced by their great love for souls and also by their pursuit of holiness in Christ! (v.4) They knew who their Savior was!!!
- (v.5) The **gospel had come to them with power!** This was the demonstration of God’s Spirit! The Holy Spirit is promised to attend the working of the gospel in every place as God’s message is sincerely preached by consecrated workers for God! (See Matthew 28:18-20 and also John 16:8). The gospel work is not just some work of men, but it is a powerful work of God combined together with the labors of His consecrated and dedicated servants! It is a supernatural experience! **Paul and the other missionaries** had demonstrated their godly character there and set a good example before the believers. The church wanted to follow that example of piety, as also we ourselves should strive to do in every place and at all times!! **The believers in Thessalonica could be sure of the blessed power of the Gospel!! It was practical and it transformed the lives of those who believed it so that they might become pure and holy vessels for their Lord and Master, Jesus Christ!!**
- **Having a faith that looks forward to the Second Coming of Christ and which reaches out to other both by word and by godly example! (v.6-10)**
 - Sharing the gospel both by word and example makes a powerful impact on the lives of others. The believers in Thessalonica had seen this example in Paul and his fellow laborers! It had inspired true faith in them and had also led them to follow the same course and to win others by their life, teaching, and godly examples of loving faith!!
 - There were trials and afflictions to face as Satan fought against the newly planted faith of Christ! Satan stirred up the Jews of this city against many of these believers, but yet, they had “joy in the Holy Spirit” (v.6). (Acts 17:5). Wherever God’s true work is being done, Satan will always seek to raise his trouble and opposition to it, both by a false word against the believers and also by terrible actions of physical persecution if possible! **Nevertheless, God’s faithful ones can remain joyful in Christ!**
 - The example of these godly believers in Thessalonica spread far and near! It was wonderful! (v.7-9). **True conversion that leads to the throwing out of the idols in our lives** will be a very faithful and leavening witness to all those around us!
 - Finally, this chapter ends with the hope of the Second Coming!—a major theme in this letter of Paul! Looking forward to that coming of Christ and living the true gospel should produce and pure and holy faith in us! (see Titus 2:11-14).

Question (s) for the Heart:

Would you like to have the pure and true faith in Jesus Christ that produces a loving, righteous, and godly life? _____ (let it be our prayer to have such!)