

1 Thessalonians 1

Jesus

I. Introduction

- **Author:** Apostle Paul's first Epistle
- **Date:** 52-53 AD
- **Place written:** Corinth
- **Recipients:** Thessalonians
 1. **Thessalonica:** Roman Colony
 2. 50 miles west of Philippi/100 miles north of Athens
 3. Chief city of Macedonia
 4. First named Thera for its well known hot springs
 5. Home base of one of 4 generals of Alexander 316BC as prophesied in Daniel 8 and 11
 6. General renamed city after wife: *Thessalonike* half-sister of Al the Great
 7. **Known today as Salonika**

- **Church Planted during Paul's 2nd Missionary Journey**
 1. Paul/Silas on way to Asia/pick up Timothy in Lystra
 2. Prevented by Spirit from going south or north go west to Troas for further instructions
 - **In Troas:** Paul sees a vision of Man from Macedonia calling for help head that way
 - **Luke joins** the group/Pronoun in Acts changes from "they" to "**we**" Acts 16:10
 - **Cross the Aegean Sea** to Philippi [Greece] find Lydia [Man from Mac]
 - **Paul leads Lydia/other ladies to the Lord**
 - Paul/Silas/Timothy/Luke /Establish **Church of Philippi**

Church membership in Philippi is **very diverse...**

Acts 16:16 [Luke narrates] Now it happened, as we went to prayer, that a certain **slave girl possessed** with a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much profit by fortune-telling. ¹⁷ This girl followed Paul and us, and cried out, saying, "These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation." ¹⁸ And this she did for many days. But Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And he came out that very hour. ¹⁹ But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they **seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to the authorities.**

Besides ex-demon possessed slave girl a certain jailer is added to the roster of the Church of Philippi

Acts 16:25 [Dungeon in Stocks] ... at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. ²⁶ Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed. ²⁷ And the keeper of the prison, awaking from sleep and seeing the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners had fled, drew his sword and was about to kill himself. ²⁸ But Paul called with a loud voice, saying, "Do yourself no harm, for we are all here."²⁹ Then he called for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. ³⁰ And he brought them out and said, "**Sirs, what must I do to be saved?**" ³¹ So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household." ³² Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. ³³ And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And

immediately he and all his family were baptized. 34 Now when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them; and he rejoiced, **having believed in God with all his household.** 35 And when it was day, the magistrates sent the officers, saying, "Let those men go." 36 So the keeper of the prison reported these words to Paul, saying, "The magistrates have sent to let you go. Now therefore depart, and go in peace." 37 But Paul said to them, "They have beaten us openly, uncondemned Romans, and have thrown us into prison. And now do they put us out secretly? No indeed! Let them come themselves and get us out." 38 And the officers told these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Romans. 39 Then they came and pleaded with them and brought them out, and asked them to depart from the city. 40 So they went out of the prison and entered the house of Lydia; and when they had seen the brethren, they encouraged them and departed.

3. Beaten/Bruised they head to Thessalonica
4. Paul/boys stay 3 Sabbaths; i.e., **little less than month**
5. Establish Church of Thessalonica/Led many to Jesus/Taught them great doctrines
6. Chased out of Thessalonica to Beria. Legalist follow Paul...
7. Chased out of Beria to Athens Mars Hill. Silas/Timothy stay Beria.
8. After Athens Paul goes to Corinth for 18 months [wrote 4 books inc. Romans]
9. Timothy/Silas meet Paul in Corinth bring **word of Thesalonians**

1 Thessalonians 3:6 ...now that Timothy has come to us from you, and **brought us good news of your faith and love**, and that you always have good remembrance of us, greatly desiring to see us, as we also to see you— 7 therefore, brethren, in all our affliction and distress we were **comforted concerning you by your faith.** 8 **For now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord.**

- Timothy also brings list of questions to Paul from new believers in Thessalonica
- This Epistle answers their questions. **They are very interested in Jesus' return**

Paul did not consider this subject to be above the head of the new converts. Yet, there are churches today that have been in existence for more than on hundred years whose members have but a vague understanding of the rapture and the coming of Christ to establish His kingdom on earth. The Thessalonian church was not even a month old and Paul was teaching them these great doctrines! [JV McGee]

- **Paul taught them the imminent return of Jesus**

Paul presents the second coming of Christ in relationship to believers [Rapture] as a comfort, and this forms the theme of the epistle. This emphasis is in sharp contrast to Jesus catastrophic and cataclysmic coming in glory to establish His kingdom by putting down all unrighteousness. [JV McGee]

Revelation 19:11 Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. 12 His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. 13 He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. 14 And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. 15 Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. 16 And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: **KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.**

Not very comforting: Different event than rapture, snatching away of saints

- **Major theme in 2 Thessalonians** **2nd Coming** of Christ to Judge/Set up Kingdom
- **Major Theme in 1 Thessalonians** **Rapture** of believers being a **purifying hope**

1 John 3:2 Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. 3 And everyone who has this hope in Him **purifies himself, just as He is pure.**

- Paul's experience during his 3 weeks in Thessalonica...

Acts 17:1 [Paul] **came to Thessalonica**, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. 2 Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for **three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures**, 3 explaining and demonstrating that the Christ **had to suffer and rise again from the dead**, and saying, "This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ." 4 And some of them were persuaded; and a great multitude of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women, joined **Paul and Silas**. 5 But the Jews who were not persuaded, becoming envious, took some of the evil men from the marketplace, and gathering a mob, set all the city in an uproar and attacked the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. 6 But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, "These who have **turned the world upside down** have come here too. 7 Jason has harbored them, and these are all acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is **another king—Jesus**." 8 And they troubled the crowd and the rulers of the city when they heard these things. 9 So when they had taken security from Jason and the rest, they let them go. 10 Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea.

- **Paul heads to Beria** to a noble people who checked out the Word
- Non-believing Jews come from Thessalonica and chase him out
- **Paul heads to Athens** where he discourses on Mars hill till Resurrection
- **Paul heads to Corinth**
 1. 18 Month ministry in Corinth
 2. Meets fellow tentmakers Aquila/Priscilla
 3. Joined by Timothy/Silas
 4. Writes 1 and 2 Thessalonians [1 Thes. first book of NT written?]

While in Corinth Paul sends Tim back to Thessalonica to see how his new friends are doing
1 Thes. is Paul's response back to the Thessalonians **after hearing Timothy's good report...**

II. Greeting

1 Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

- **Greetings to Thessalonians from...**
 1. **Paul** Apostle called to the Gentiles
 2. **Timothy** Joined Paul in Derbe. Disciple of Paul. Pastor
 3. **Silas/Silvanus** Commended by church in Jerusalem as a leader

1 Peter 5:12 ...Silvanus, our **faithful brother** as I consider him

- **Grace precedes peace:** Peace with God/Peace of God

SUMMARY Greeting

III. Their Good Example

2 We give **thanks to God always for you all**, making mention of you in our prayers, 3 remembering without ceasing your **work of faith, labor of**

love, and **patience of hope** in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father, 4 knowing, beloved brethren, your **election by God**.

- **This after only about 6 months old.** And continued to be an amazing church...

2 Thessalonians 1:3 We are bound to **thank God always** for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because **your faith grows exceedingly**, and the love of every one of you all **abounds toward each other...**

- Work of **Faith** Spiritual Work Continued trust/reliance on Jesus

John 6:29 What is the work of God? To believe in the One He sent

- Labor of **Love** Physical Work Faith without works is dead
- Patience of **Hope** Motivation Expectation of the Rapture at any time

1 Corinthians 13:13 And now abide **faith, hope, love**, these three; but the **greatest of these is love**.

**Faith, Hope and Love...We won't need faith/hope when we get there
The only thing we take to Heaven and keep is love for one another**

- **v4 I know of your election by God?** Election made sure by fruit of our lives

2 Peter 1:10 ... be even more diligent to make your call and **election sure**, for **if you do these things** [Grow in faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness **and love**] you will never stumble; 11 for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 13:5 [To the failing church of Corinth] **Examine yourselves** as to whether you are in the faith. **Test yourselves**. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified. [lit. *do not stand the test*]6 But I trust that you will know that we are not disqualified.

- **Signs of Salvation:** Faith, hope and above all...**love**

I give thanks for what God is doing in you...for you
I give thanks for what you are doing for God...yielding to His Spirit/**Bearing fruit**

3 John 1:4 I have **no greater joy** than to hear that **my children walk in truth**.

5 For our gospel did not come to you in **word only, but also in power**, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you **for your sake**.

**Your lives make it obvious that the Holy Spirit is led this work
God's Word is validated good fruit...Good Tree bears Good Fruit**

- **What kind of men we were:** Self-sacrificing for your sake
- **Came to you beaten/bruised but your were worth it...**

6 And you became followers of **us and of the Lord**, having **received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit**

- **v6** Became followers of us and the Lord

1 Corinthians 4:16 Therefore I urge you, **imitate me.**

1 Corinthians 11:1 **Imitate me**, just as I also imitate Christ.

Example? Saved/taught by Paul even as Paul was being afflicted

Much affliction can mean much growth...**if you know how to use it. Right response...**

James 1:2 My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, **3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.** **4** But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

2 Timothy 3:12 [Might as well benefit] ...all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

As Paul: Thessalonians would face affliction with joy in the Holy Spirit

- Much affliction from man yet much **Joy of the Holy Spirit**

Acts 5:41 So they departed from the presence of the council, **rejoicing** that they were counted **worthy to suffer shame for His name.**

Galatians 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, **joy**, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness...

Facing Affliction with Joy...Thriving in Affliction

To be examples of God's power to those around us...**As we were your examples...**

7...you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe.

You saw our response to suffering and were encouraged

People are watching your response to suffering and they are encouraged

- Paul continued to boast of their faith in 2 Thes.

2 Thessalonians 1:4 ... we ourselves **boast of you among the churches** of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure...

- **Motivation to keep on keeping on through suffering?**

1. **Joy in Spirit:** Understanding that affliction means joy. Partake in His sufferings/closer
2. **Urgency:** People need to be saved before Jesus returns...

These baby Christians months old were boldly preaching the Word of God!

8 For **from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth**, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything.

Matthew 5:14 **"You are the light of the world.** A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. **15** Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.

2 Corinthians 2:14 Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and

through us **diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place.**

People notice what God is doing in you!
Word of God is Sounding from You...People are talking about you...

9 For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and **how you 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 **who delivers us from the wrath to come.**

▪ **What are people seeing in your lives?**

- | | |
|---|---------------|
| 1. Turning from idols: Seeking truth in Jesus alone | Work of Faith |
| 2. Turning to God: Exemplified in loving one another | Labor of Love |
| 3. Excitement for Jesus return...
Hope | Patient in |

Jesus **who delivers us from the wrath to come**

Coming of Jesus is spoken of at the end of all 5 Chapters of this book

Q. Why is this young church thriving in the midst of such affliction?

A. v10 They were motivated by the vibrant expectation the Rapture could happen at any minute

Focused like a laser beam on Jesus Christ... not the AC

SUMMARY Their Good Example