

1 Thessalonians

Background Information

- Written by Paul from Corinth, most likely around 50 or 51 AD.
- Probably Paul's first letter.
- One of (perhaps the) earliest written Books of the New Testament.
- Paul and Silas planted the church in Thessalonica during Paul's second mission trip, as referenced in *Acts 17:1-10*.
- As Paul and Silas entered Thessalonica, Paul started preaching in the Jewish synagogue. Some Jews and a number of Greeks were converted but the other Jews started a riot. Paul and Silas were moved by night to Berea for their safety.
- As Paul wrote this letter, the Thessalonian church was still very young, probably only two or three years old. Thus, they needed spiritual maturity. It seems that some in the church were confused about Christ's Second Coming and the resurrection of the dead in the final days.
- Paul sent Timothy back to this church to check on them; this letter is a result of Timothy's visit and return to Paul.
- The letter is almost a personal letter, rather than a message of fixing some mistaken doctrine.

Chapter One

Even though Paul was able to teach in Thessalonica for a short period (probably between three weeks and three months), the seeds of the Gospel obviously fell on fertile ground. The entire first chapter basically brags on the Thessalonian church.

Some interesting notes:

- Verse 2: Notice that this church is constantly prayed for by Paul, Silas (Silvanus) and Timothy. Even though the church seems to be doing quite well, it still needs prayer.
- Verse 3: We see that 'work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope' (KJV) are mentioned. We see faith, hope and love in *1 Corinthians 13:13* which Paul wrote about 4-5 years after this letter.
- Verse 4: Election...
- Verse 5: Paul and the others feel confident to remind the church what kind of men they were - that they lived what they preached.
- Verse 6: These people welcomed the Gospel in spite of severe persecution.
- Verse 10: Jesus delivers us from the wrath to come.

Chapter Two

- Verses 5-6: Paul reminds the Thessalonians that they were not coaxed in to believing based on slick words and fancy talk, nor did they seek to get rich from the church.
- Verse 6: The Thessalonians (and us) are reminded that Paul and Silas could have made demands of them. It seems generally accepted that Paul is speaking about financial burdens. (*1 Corinthians 9:7-14*)

- Verse 7: Paul compares himself to a nursing mother taking care of her children with respect to the Thessalonian church.
- Verse 9: Since they did not want to be a burden on the Thessalonians (though they had the right), they worked night and day to support themselves.
- Verse 11: Completing the analogy from verse 7, Paul is now compared to a father and his children.
- Verse 12: Election...
- Verse 16: Free Will...
- Verse 18: Paul wanted to visit the Thessalonians but was hindered 'again and again' by Satan.

Discussion

- Consider the Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:3-9, Mark 4:2-9, and Luke 8:4-8) and the church at Thessalonica. Could the church have thrived in part because of the severe persecution mentioned in Chapter 1, Verse 6?
- Faith, hope and love are also prominent in 1 Corinthians 13:13. Consider how well the Thessalonian church was doing versus the nature of the Corinthian church.
- What is the 'wrath' in Chapter 1, Verse 10?
- 1 Thess 2:5 speaks of fancy, 'snake oil salesman' talk. Consider some examples of this sort of preaching. Is there a time for it?
- What demands can a preacher/leader/elder/member/whatever make of a church? Are there limits?
- Election vs. Free Will: only four verses apart. What's up?
- How could Paul be hindered 'again and again' by Satan??? (See Daniel 10:10-14, Ephesians 6:12)



"We should give thanks that my baseball is okay."

In every thing give thanks... 1 Thessalonians 5:18