

# 1 Thessalonians

**AUTHOR:** Paul

**TIME WRITTEN** A. .D. 51 from Corinth.

**POSITION IN THE BIBLE:**

- 52nd Book in the Bible
- 13th book in the New Testament
- 8th of 21 epistle books
- 1st of Paul's 13 books
- 51 have preceded it. 14 to follow it.

**CHAPTERS:** 5

**VERSES:** 89

**WORDS:** 1,875

**KEY WORD:** Holiness in Light Of Christ's Return

**TWO KEY PASSAGES:**

1. **1 Thessalonians 3:12-13** "And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you, 13 so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints."
2. **1 Thessalonians 4:16-18** - "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words."

**KEY CHAPTER:** 1 Thessalonians 4

**OBSERVATIONS ABOUT 1 THESSALONIANS:**

1. Paul has many pleasant memories of the days he spent with the infant church at Thessalonica.
  - a. Their faith, hope, love, and perseverance in the face of persecution are indeed exemplary.
  - b. Paul labors as a spiritual parent to the fledgling church have been richly rewarded, and his affection is visible in every line of his letter.
  - c. Paul encourages them to exact in their new-found faith:
    1. To increase in their love for one another.
    2. To rejoice.,
    3. To pray.
    4. To give thanks always.

- d. He closes his letter with instruction regarding the return of the Lord, whose advent signifies hope and comfort for Christians both living and dead.
2. Not only is this the first of two letters to the church at Thessalonica, it is his first letter period.
  - a. 2 Thessalonians will be his second letter.
  - b. Thus, Paul's first two of this thirteen letters were written to Thessalonica.
3. The city of Thessalonica.
  - a. In Paul's time, Thessalonica was the prominent seaport and the capital of the Roman province of Macedonia.
  - b. This prosperous city was located on the Via Egnatia, the main road from Rome to the East, within sight of Mount Olympus, legendary home of the Greek pantheon.
  - c. Cassander expanded and strengthened this site around 315 B.C. and renamed it after his wife, the half-sister of Alexander the great.
  - d. The Romans conquered Macedonia in 168 B.C. and organized it into a single province twenty-two years later with Thessalonica as the capital city.
  - e. Thessalonica became a "free city" under Augustus with its own authority to appoint a governing board of magistrates who were called "politarchs."
  - f. The strategic location assured Thessalonica of commercial success, and it boasted a population of perhaps 200,000 in the first century.
4. Paul and the Jewish population of Thessalonica.
  - a. Thessalonica had a sizeable Jewish population, and the ethical monotheism (belief in one God) of Judaism attracted many Gentiles who had become disenchanted with Greek paganism.
  - b. These God-fearers quickly responded to Paul's reasoning in the synagogue when he ministered there on his second missionary journey (Acts 17:10).
  - c. The Jews became jealous of Paul's success and organized a mob to oppose the Christian missionaries.
  - d. Not finding Paul and Silas, they dragged Jason, Paul and Silas' host, before the politarchs and accused him of harboring traitors of Rome.
  - e. The politarchs exacted a pledge guaranteeing the departure of Paul and Silas, who left that night for Berea, some 50 miles away.
  - f. After a time, the Thessalonian Jews raised an uproar in Berea so that Paul departed for Athens, leaving orders for Silas and Timothy to join him there (Acts 17:11-16).
  - g. Because of Luke's account in Acts, some scholars have reasoned that Paul was in Thessalonica for less than a month ("three Sabbaths." Acts 17:2), but other evidence suggests a longer stay.

1. Paul received two separate financial contributions from Philippi, 100 miles away, while he was in Thessalonica. Philippians 4:15-16
2. According to 1:9 and 2:14-16, most of the Thessalonian converts were Gentiles who came out of idolatry. This would imply an extensive ministry directed to the Gentiles after Paul's initial work with the Jews and Gentile God-fearers.
3. Paul worked "night" and "day" (2:9; 2 Thessalonians 3:7-9) during his time there.
  - a. He may have begun to work immediately, but Paul supported himself by tent-making which took many hours away from his ministry, requiring a longer stay to accomplish the extensive ministry of evangelism and teaching that took place in that city.
  - b. After Silas and Timothy met Paul in Athens (3:1-2), he sent Timothy to Thessalonica (Silas also went back to Macedonia probably Philippi), and his assistants joined him in Corinth (Acts 18:5; 1 Thessalonians 1:1) where Silas is called Silvanus.
  - c. From Corinth Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians in A.D. 51 as his response to Timothy's good report.
4. Paul sets forth the importance of Christ's second coming. For all who have obeyed Him when returns:
  - a. He will deliver. 1:10; 5:4-11
  - b. He will reward. 1:19
  - c. He will perfect. 3:13
  - d. He will sanctify. 5:23

## SUMMARY OF 1 THESSALONIANS

### INTRODUCTION:

- A. After Paul's forced separation from the Thessalonians, he grows increasingly concerned about the progress of their faith.
  1. His great relief upon hearing Timothy's positive report prompts him to write this warm epistle of:
    - a. Commendation
    - b. Exhortation
    - c. Consolation
  2. They are:
    - a. Commended for remaining steadfast under afflictions.
    - b. Exhorted to excel still more in their Christian walk.
    - c. Consoled concerning their Christian loved ones who have died.
- B. The theme of the coming of the Lord recurs throughout this epistle, and 4:13 - 5:11 is one of the fullest New Testament developments of this crucial truths.

C. There are two major sections in the book:

1. Paul's Personal Reflections on the Thessalonians. (1-3)
2. Paul's Instructions to the Thessalonians. (4-5)

### **PAUL'S PERSONAL REFLECTIONS ON THE THESSALONIANS. (1-3)**

A. Paul's typical salutation in the first verse combines the customary Greek ("grace" and Hebrew ("peace")) greetings of the day and enriches them with Christian content.

B. The opening chapter is a declaration of thanksgiving for the Thessalonians' metamorphosis from heathenism to Christian hope.

1. Faith, love, and hope (1:3) properly characterize the new lives of the Christians in Thessalonica.
2. In 1:1-16 Paul reviews his brief ministry in Thessalonica and defends his conduct and motives, apparently to answer enemies who are trying to impugn his character and message.
3. He sends Timothy to minister to them and is greatly relieved when Timothy reports the stability of their strength and love. 2:17 - 3:10
4. Paul therefore closes this historical section with a prayer that their faith may continue to deepen. 3:11-13

### **PAUL'S INSTRUCTIONS TO THE THESSALONIANS. (4-5)**

A. Paul deftly moves into a series of exhortations and instructions by encouraging the Thessalonians to continue progressing.

1. He reminds them of his previous teaching on sexual and social matters (4:1-12) since these Gentile Christians lack the moral upbringing in the Mosaic Law provided in the Jewish community.
2. Now rooted in the Word of God (2:13), the readers must resist the constant pressures of a pagan society.

B. Paul has taught them about the return of Christ, and they have become distressed over the deaths of some among them.

1. In 4:13-18 Paul comforts them with the assurance that all who die in Christ will be resurrected at His second coming.
2. Paul continues his discourse on eschatology by describing the coming day of the Lord. 5:1-11
3. In anticipation of this day, Christians are to "watch and be sober" as "sons of light" who are destined for eternal salvation, not wrath.
4. Paul requests the readers to deal with integrity toward one another and to continue growing spiritually. 5:12-22
5. The epistle closes with: 5:23-28
  - a. A wish for their sanctification.
  - b. Three requests.
  - c. A benediction.

