

1 Thessalonians

Chapter 1

Introduction:

1. The apostle Paul is the writer of this encouraging and practical letter to the church of the Thessalonians. vs. 1
2. Paul had been saved for about eighteen years and been a missionary for about eight years when he penned this letter on his second missionary journey. This is Paul's first letter.
3. In Paul's day, Thessalonica was a huge city of over 200,000 people. It was the capital city of the Roman province of Macedonia.
4. The birth of this church can be seen in **Acts 17:1-10**. It was certainly a rocky beginning.
 - Paul, Silas, and Timothy immediately went into the Jewish synagogue and spent three weeks explaining exactly who Jesus Christ was. vs. 1-3
 - Some of the Jews believed and began to associate with Paul, but a great multitude of Gentiles believed, including many prominent women in Thessalonica. vs. 4
 - The unbelieving Jews stirred up the entire city, caused a mob scene, and dragged Jason (Paul's host) and many other believers before the rulers and charged them with treason. vs. 5-9
 - Things were heating up, so the Thessalonian believers thought it best for Paul and his co-laborers to slip out of town while they were able to (vs. 10). What a start for a new church. They didn't cover that in Church Planting 101 in Bible College!
 - The events of **Acts 17:1-10** most likely happened over a period of several months, allowing Paul to root and ground these new believers in the truth of God.
5. Paul escapes to Berea and then on to Athens. While in Athens, Paul sent Timothy back to Thessalonica to continue teaching the new converts there.
1 Thessalonians 3:1-2
6. Finally, Paul, Silas, and Timothy meet up together again at Corinth (**Acts 18:5**). Timothy reported to Paul the state of the infant church and it is from here that Paul wrote the book of Thessalonians, around A.D. 51-52.

Verse 1

1. In Paul's day, people didn't sign their name at the end of the letter, but rather at the beginning. Although Paul mentions Silas and Timothy out of courtesy, Paul is clearly the writer of this epistle. 3:5
2. Paul addresses this group of people (saved Jews and Gentiles) as "*the church of the Thessalonians.*"
3. What made them a church? It was the spiritual position they shared. Paul says that they are **in** God the Father and **in** the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - A local church is a called out assembly of believers who have been joined together in Christ, as part of His body. **1 Corinthians 12:13**

- They were **physically** in Thessalonica, but **spiritually** they were in God the Father and Jesus Christ. What a wonderful place to be!
4. Paul greets them with the words "*grace*" and "*peace*."
 5. The world is looking for **grace** to make it through the hard times of life, and the world clamors after **peace** (world peace, internal peace, peace in their relationships).
 6. But to find the precious commodities of grace and peace, you have to go to the source of grace and peace - God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. You will not find them anywhere else.

Verse 2

1. Paul was so thankful for these new converts and prayed for them regularly. Paul's prayer life was truly amazing. What he said of the Thessalonians, he said of so many others. **Romans 1:9; 1 Corinthians 1:4; Philippians 1:4; Colossians 1:3; 2 Timothy 1:3; Philemon 4; 1 Thessalonians 3:10**
2. This little verse teaches us three things about our prayer lives:
 - They should include thankfulness. "*we give thanks*" - **cf. Ephesians 5:20; Colossians 1:3, 2:7, 3:15, 4:2**
 - They should be consistent. "*always*" - cf. 5:17
 - They should include others. "*making mention of you*"
3. Many times, we only remember "us" in prayer - our needs, our wants, our problems.
4. Like Paul, we must remember to pray for others. It is so crucial. How much of your prayer life is spent praying for others? **Colossians 4:12**

Verse 3

1. This verse gives us in summary form what the Christian life is all about.
2. When Paul prayed for the Thessalonians, he remembered three things about them:
 - Their work of faith
 - Their labor of love
 - Their patience of hope
3. These three are the key components that are designed to bring fullness in the life of a believer. They represent spiritual maturity.
 - The Christian life **functions** on the basis of faith (our faith resting in God's Word and applying God's Word to the details of our lives). 2:13; **cf. 2 Timothy 3:16-17**
 - The Christian life should be **motivated** by love (love for Christ and love for people). 3:12, 4:9-10; **cf. 2 Corinthians 5:14**
 - The Christian life is **sustained** by hope (we patiently continue our work of faith and labor of love, knowing that Christ could return at any moment). 4:16-18; **cf. Titus 2:13**
4. These same three characteristics of the Christian life are seen in verses 9-10.
 - Work of faith - "*ye turned to God from idols*"
 - Labor of love - "*to serve the living and true God*"
 - Patience of hope - "*and to wait for his Son from heaven*"
5. We also see these three as a progression when you serve God in a ministry:

- **Work of faith** - you begin a ministry, not fully knowing all you are getting into. You begin serving in that ministry as a work of faith, trusting Christ and His Word. Paul could not have imagined all that would happen when he began the work in Thessalonica.
 - **Labor of love** - after a while, it becomes a labor of love. You develop a deep love and bond to those you are ministering to. 2:8
 - **Patience of hope** - even when you go through difficult times of trial in your ministry (and you will), you stay faithful and determined, knowing that Christ will return and remember your work of faith and labor of love. **Hebrews 6:10**
6. Isn't it interesting that we see all three of these (faith, hope, love) in **1 Corinthians 13:13**?
- "And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity."
 - If love doesn't motivate us, all that we do will be hollow and empty.
7. One other sidenote before leaving this incredible verse - notice Paul did not say that we are doing this **for** our Lord Jesus Christ, but rather "**in** our Lord Jesus Christ."
- The Christian life is **not** you trying to muster the strength and willpower to do something for Jesus.
 - All that we do must find its power, strength, and substance in Christ. All that we do **in Him** is done in the sight of God the Father. God the Father will only reward us for what we have done in and through Christ and His divine power.