

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

OCTOBER 16TH - 17TH, 2021 // BOOK OF 1 THESSALONIANS

ABOUT THE MAIN AUTHOR, PAUL

- Jewish-born near the border of Lebanon in modern day Turkey.
- Also a Roman citizen.
- A highly-educated religious leader and Pharisee that persecuted Christians until his dramatic conversion around 35 A.D.
- Ministered mostly to non-Jews.
- Executed by Nero in 68 A.D. in Rome.

THE CITY OF THESSALONICA

- A strong urban center of the Roman Empire in Greece with a population around 200,000.
- A booming commercial and affluent port city with a massive trade industry due to its geographic position.
- Extremely diverse because of the foreign merchants that lived there.

THE 1ST LETTER TO THE THESSALONIANS

- While in Corinth, Paul, Silas, and Timothy jointly wrote a letter to the church in Thessalonica around 51 A.D. After being run out of town on their first trip, Timothy was sent back to encourage the people.
- This church was a young and inexperienced congregation of mostly Gentiles (non-Jews).

THE PURPOSE AND THEMES OF THIS BOOK

- Paul wanted to encourage this young church to stay faithful, even though they were positioned in a very pagan society.
- He wanted to correct any theological misunderstandings they had and encourage them to grow in sanctification.
- Lastly, Paul wanted to tell them of coming persecution and the 2nd coming of Jesus.

GREETINGS 1 THESSALONIANS 1:1-3

"THE THESSALONIANS IN GOD THE FATHER"

Paul goes out of his way in his greeting to identify that this is a Christian church and this is a spiritual letter.

- God sees **the church as a gathering of followers of Jesus that may express their beliefs differently from culture to culture, but have the same views on God and our need to be saved.**

"GRACE TO YOU AND PEACE"

Grace is the unmerited favor of God. **Peace** comes from our daily fellowship with God. Jesus is the vessel by which we are able to have fellowship with God and live in grace.

- Grace and peace should be our prayers for all people, but especially for the church because **we know the means by which peace is attained.**

THANKFUL AND PRAYERFUL

Paul says that he, Silvanus (Silas), and Tim "always thank God" for the Thessalonians and that they pray for them "constantly."

- If we are honest, where are the majority of our prayers directed? **Do we take the time to thank God for others in our lives? Do we make it a point to lift others up in prayer before ourselves?**

FAITH, LOVE, AND HOPE

Paul commended them because their **faith produced works** (Js. 2:17), their **work was motivated by love**, and their **endurance was inspired by hope**.

- Christians would be wise to check their lives and notice how much we do out of pure love for God and others. **True faith, hope, and love only come from God.**

GOOD MODELS (1 THESSALONIANS 1:4-8A)

ALL THE CREDIT GOES TO GOD

If faith, hope, and love come from God, we shouldn't get the credit for our achievements. Paul makes this clear by saying, "He has chosen you." Though God chooses us, we have the responsibility to choose Him as well.

- When we make this choice **we are saved, not "in word only, but also in power, in the Holy Spirit."**

WE ARE CALLED TO MODEL OUR SALVATION

The gospel gives us clarity on Who Jesus is and how we're to live. The power of the Spirit saves our souls and enables us to live righteously. **Because God has had mercy on us, we are to take this message out to others who need to be saved.**

- The Thessalonians were doing this, and so should every body of Believers.

"IMITATORS OF US AND OF THE LORD"

Paul was able to model to the Thessalonians how to live because Jesus modeled it to him. He did this by not only **teaching the Word** (both established and being established), but by **living out the principles of God**.

- **We must be reminded that the image of Jesus is seen through Christians until He returns. So, how we live matters.**

EVEN DURING THE HARD TIMES

Paul said that "in spite of severe persecution, [they] welcomed the message with joy from the Holy Spirit." We learn a couple things here.

1. **Even severe hard times shouldn't shake the true believer's faith.**
2. **The gospel produces joy, even in suffering.**
3. **This is only possible by the power of the Holy Spirit.**

"YOU BECAME AN EXAMPLE"

As a result of their faithfulness to God, His commands, and sharing their faith during severe persecution, the Thessalonians became a beacon of light to all of Greece.

- **We're not only individual lights, but the Church body should be a light.** We're a symbiotic body, and when certain parts aren't functioning properly, the whole body suffers.

CHANGE OF DIRECTION (1 THESSALONIANS 1:8B-10)

TURNING FROM OUR IDOLS

Salvation is only possible if we're willing to turn from our ways and follow God's. Many are reluctant because they fear God's ways are not as good as our personal desires, but **if we simply look at the fruit of mankind's selfish patterns (Mt. 7) we see they don't work.**

- **God has better plans (Jr. 29:11) and has prepared an eternal home for us (Jn. 14:3).**

THE RESULT OF SERVING THE "LIVING GOD"

There are no manmade objects or institutions that are able to save and permanently change us. **We're saved by God's grace that delivers us of our pasts, so we can live properly in the present, and be prepared for our eternity.**

- History tells us that our ways are destined to fail. **Do we think the same "solutions" will get different results?**

"...FROM THE COMING WRATH."

Why is it important to turn from what we want and submit to what God wants? Why did Jesus die for the sins of humanity and offer a relationship with our Creator? Because God wanted to save us from His coming wrath.

- **We're self-destructive and evil apart from God, but He loves us and wants to save us. He also will not tolerate evil.**

FAITH, HOPE, AND LOVE

- Do we have **biblical faith**? If so, our works will be evidence of it (Js. 2:17).
- Are our **works motivated by a love of God and other people**, or are they self-serving?
- Do we have **endurance** because of our hope of Jesus' provision now and His 2nd coming in the future? Do we trust that He is in control?

THE CARRIERS OF THE LIGHT

- We are saved by God's grace and produce good things by His power. **Are we humble? Are we utterly dependent on Jesus?**
- **Do we model the gospel?** In other words, do we live out truth and love to those around us?
- Will we still be **faithful** in the middle of severe persecution?

WHAT ROAD WILL WE WALK?

- This all hinges on turning from our idols and submitting to the only true God.
- **Will we trust that His plans and direction for our lives are better than our own (Jer. 29:11)?** Do we understand this is our only hope? Has the fruit of society not proven this to us (Mt. 7:20)?

WHAT ROAD WILL WE WALK?

- God gives us over to what we want (Rm. 1:28) or He "rescues us from His coming wrath" and our own self-destruction. **Do we comprehend the ramifications of not choosing to follow God?**