

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

OCTOBER 17TH, 2021 // BOOK OF 1 THESSALONIANS

INTRODUCTION (1 THESSALONIANS)

THE CITY

Thessalonica is a large port city on the Aegean Sea, originally built by Cassander, a General under Alexander the Great, in 315 B.C..

- It became a booming commercial city at the center of all trade routes leading north as well as the main east-west trade route.

Being at the center of all trade routes from the sea, the city grew to a population of 200,000.

- The ethnic and cultural diversity also brought a belief in Greek and Roman gods, pagan worship of idols, emperor worship, and devout loyalty to Caesar.

THE AUTHOR

Paul (Saul) was born in Tarsus (modern Turkey). He was a Roman citizen of Jewish decent.

- He was a highly educated Pharisee (religious leader) who persecuted Christians all the way up until his own conversion on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-21).

Paul goes on to lead three missionary journeys where he would plant churches and minister to the Gentiles.

- He would go on to write 13 letters to these churches and leaders, which make up almost half of the books contained in the NT, before being executed in Rome by Nero.

THE BIRTH OF A CHURCH

On Paul's second missionary journey, he and Silas lead a group into Thessalonica around 50 A.D..

- Preaching in the local synagogue, Paul converted many Gentiles and Jews (Acts 17:2-4). However, some Jews became jealous and caused a disturbance (17:5), accusing Paul of treason (17:7).

Before Paul could be arrested, they were sent away during the night (Acts 17:10). However, in the short time that Paul was in there, he was able to establish a church.

- This young church not only started in the height of persecution but grew despite it, all while being in a decaying culture with countless idols and false gods.

THE MESSAGE

Since Paul had to leave this young church so quickly, he sent Timothy to encourage them, then report back to him how they had endured the persecution.

- Timothy returned to Corinth with a positive report about the church. Paul then writes them a letter, praising them for their faith while living righteously in a godless culture.

GREETINGS (1 THESSALONIANS 1:1)

PAUL GREET THE THESSALONIAN CHRISTIANS

Paul's letter to the church starts by mentioning two others that they would have been familiar with.

- They would have known Silvanus (also known as Silas) from Paul's initial arrival in Thessalonica, and they would have known Timothy from him coming on behalf of Paul to encourage them.

WHO IS SILVANUS (SILAS)?

Silas was an early church leader who traveled with Paul on his second missionary journey.

- He is first seen as a leader and teacher in Jerusalem (Acts 15:22) and was invited to travel with Paul. While in Philippi with Paul, they were beaten and imprisoned, where the jailer, "having witnessed their faith," was saved and his family baptized (16:25-31).

WHO IS TIMOTHY?

Timothy was a resident of Lystra (city in the province of Galatia), where at a young age he was taught the scriptures by his mother and grandmother.

- Timothy was considered Paul's "true son in the faith (1Tim 1:2)." He accompanied Paul on his later missionary journeys and is mentioned in several of his letters.

GREETINGS

Paul uses his standard greeting, "grace and peace to you," when writing his letters. His greeting is loaded with truths that everything we have is a gift from God himself.

- Grace is the unmerited favor of God which we are so dependent on. Peace is another gift we experience in daily fellowship with God and eternally.

THANKSGIVING (1 THESSALONIANS 1:2-10)

GIVING THANKS TO GOD

Paul gave thanks to God for the church in Thessalonica because he knew what happened there was a work of God.

- Paul started the church but was only there about three weekends before being run out of town. Despite his short time there, and the less than ideal circumstances, the church was healthy and strong.

PRAYING TO GOD

Paul states that they "mention" them in their prayers constantly. This was typical of Paul's letters to people or churches, with the only exception being the church in Galatia, where he issued a strong rebuke.

- This connected Paul to the churches he established, showing he was constantly interceding for them, and they were not alone.

REMEMBRANCE

Paul was able to recall their work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in Christ Jesus. The church wasn't perfect, but these three great Christian virtues were being displayed in this young church.

- Paul's focus was not just the virtues of faith love and hope, but on what these virtues produced in their lives.

Their faith produced work. "Faith without works is dead...I will show you my faith by my works (James 2:14-26)."

- Their love produced labor. Out of their love for the Father and for their neighbor they labored.
- Their hope produced patience. The hope they have in Christ gave them to not only survive hard times, but to be triumph through them.

EVIDENCE OF ELECTION

Paul then reminds the church that they are loved by God, that He is in control, and they are chosen for this work.

- In the remaining verses of Ch. 1, we see Paul giving the church in Thessalonica several examples of why he was confident of their election. A confidence based on the evidence in their lives.

The "the gospel (good news) did not come to you in word only, but in power, in the Holy Spirit, and with full assurance."

- The gospel is not empty words, but it is the power to change minds, hearts, and lives through the Word of God and work of the Holy Spirit to move in our hearts, to convict, to comfort, and to instruct.

The Thessalonians responded to the Gospel by becoming followers (James 1:22).

- In the midst of persecution, they chose to turn from what they were following and imitate Paul's example of a Christ follower. In a display of discipleship, Paul often invites people to "imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ (1Cor.11:1)

The Thessalonians responded to Gospel by also becoming examples for others to follow.

- Even though they had only been following Christ for a short time there were those around them who needed to be shown how to follow Jesus, not just hearing about how to follow Him. The same is true for Christians today!

The Thessalonians responded by causing the Word of the Lord to go out. The work God did among them became known all over the region.

- The news of their transformation and turning from idols spread so rapidly and effectively that Paul says, "we don't need to say anything."

The Thessalonians turned from idols to serve God and wait for His Son, "who rescues us from the coming wrath."

- Paul points to the expectation of Jesus' return and to the heart of salvation. Closing with the truth that we are saved from something, and that something is the righteous wrath of a Holy God.

WHAT TYPE OF WITNESS ARE WE?

- **Are we just hearers of the word, or are hearers and doers of the word?**
- **Are we disciples that are making disciples that make disciples?**
- **Are we being a good witnesses to the Lord?**