



Overview for 1 Thessalonians

Purpose: To commend the Thessalonians for withstanding Satan, encourage them to live holy lives, and to reveal information to them about the coming of Christ for His Church.

Author: Paul

Date Written: About A.D. 51

Setting: Written from Corinth to a young church at Thessalonica, which had been established roughly two to three years earlier when Paul preached in that city for a period of about a month.

Key People: Paul, Silas, Timothy, saints of the church at Thessalonica

Summary: Paul, Silas, and Timothy sent this letter to the church of the Thessalonians although Paul wrote the letter in his own handwriting. Most Biblical historians believe this was likely the first epistle that Paul wrote, and possibly the first New Testament writing.

Paul was personally acquainted with the city of Thessalonica, having visited it on his second missionary journey. Luke recorded in the Book of Acts that Paul had preached the Gospel for at least three successive sabbaths in the Jewish synagogue at Thessalonica (see Acts 17:2). While some Jews responded to his teaching, 1 Thessalonians 1:9 seems to indicate that the majority were Gentiles. Paul started the church in Thessalonica while working night and day to support himself as a tent maker (1 Thessalonians 2:9).

This city was the capital of one of the four Roman districts of Macedonia, an area in what is now

northern Greece. It was ruled by a mercenary and wicked ruler, and while an important city, it was also a very wicked city. Many of the new Christians had worshipped idols (1 Thessalonians 1:9), but now they were faithful to the Lord. Their enthusiastic faith resulted in the Gospel message spreading everywhere in that region (1 Thessalonians 1:8).

Since Paul's initial visit had been somewhat brief, the Christians in Thessalonica needed to become mature in the knowledge of God's doctrine and plan. Information had come to Paul that some opposed him and were bringing confusion with false teachings and ideas. This caused much concern to Paul, so he had sent Timothy to find out the state of the Christians there (1 Thessalonians 3:1-5). Timothy's good report of their faith and love brought great joy to Paul (1 Thessalonians 3:6-10).

Paul began his letter by affirming and encouraging the Thessalonians in their faith, and exhorting them to live a holy life. He instructed them about the second coming of the Lord. There were concerns among the people because the Lord had not yet returned, and some Christians had already died. Paul's letter corrected any erroneous ideas about the relation between the resurrection of the dead and the coming of Christ.

He concluded his epistle with practical advice for Christian living, giving the Thessalonians a series of reminders on how to prepare themselves for the second coming of Christ, and then ended his letter with two benedictions and a request for prayer.

Timeline

Many of these dates are approximate, as reference materials differ slightly.

Jesus crucified; Pentecost; Church begun A.D. 30	Stephen martyred; Paul's conversion 35			Peter's ministry in Asia Minor 47	Jerusalem council 50	PAUL IMPRISONED (CAESAREA) 57-59	PAUL'S HOUSE ARREST 60-62	James (Jesus' brother) martyred 62	Peter & Paul martyred 67/68?	Jude martyred 72					
	PAUL IN CILICIA & SYRIA 35-46			PAUL'S MISSIONARY JOURNEYS 46-48	50-52	53-57	Paul's trip to Rome 59			Rome destroys Jerusalem 70					
			Holy Spirit falls on Gentiles 41	James (the apostle) martyred; Peter imprisoned 44											
				Galatians; James 49	1 & 2 Thessalonians 51/52	1 & 2 Corinthians 55	Romans 57	St. Mark 58/60	Ephesians; Colossians; Philemon 60	Philippians 61	St. Matthew; St. Luke 61/64	1 Timothy; Titus; 1 Peter 64	Jude 65	Acts; 2 Peter; 2 Timothy 66/68	Hebrews 68

Outline

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- I. Salutation: the writer and his companions, the recipients and their position, the double greeting (1:1)
- II. Paul's interest in the Thessalonians (1:2—3:13)
 - A. Paul's commendation of the Thessalonians (1:2-10)
 - B. Paul's conduct before the Thessalonians (2:1-12)
 - C. Paul's concern for the Thessalonians (2:13—3:13)
- III. Paul's instruction for the Thessalonians (4:1—5:22)
 - A. Concerning Christian maturity (4:1-12)
 - B. Concerning the dead (4:13-18)
 - C. Concerning the Day of the Lord (5:1-11)
 - D. Concerning Christian duties (5:12-22)
- IV. Conclusion (5:23-28)
 - A. The prayer (5:23-24)
 - B. The request (5:25)
 - C. The instruction (5:26)
 - D. The charge (5:27)
 - E. The benediction (5:28)