

1st Thessalonians

"What Every Church Should Be"

(1st Thessalonians 1:1-10)

How did Paul come to write 1st Thessalonians? Acts 17 indicates that after Paul and his companions started the church in Thessalonica, mob action resulted in the need for them to quickly move on. When Paul and Silas left Thessalonica, they proceeded about 40 miles west on the Egnation Way to Berea. When Paul ran into trouble there he left for Athens while Silas and Timothy stayed in Berea. From Athens, Paul sent word for Timothy and Silas to join him in Athens and they did. Paul sent Timothy back to Thessalonica to check on the church, and he and Silas made their way to Corinth. When Timothy arrived in Corinth and gave a good report concerning the church in Thessalonica, Paul wrote 1st Thessalonians.

The Text: 1 Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace. 2 We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, 3 remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. 4 For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, 5 because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. 6 And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, 7 so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. 8 For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything. 9 For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, 10 and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come. (ESV)

Who Was Silvanus? He was a Roman citizen also known as "Silas." He was sent with Paul and Barnabas from Jerusalem to Antioch at the outcome of the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15 (Acts 15:22). He was sent by the Church in Jerusalem along with Judas to act as witnesses for the leaders of the Jerusalem church as Paul and Barnabas presented the outcome of the Jerusalem Council to the Gentile believers in Antioch (Acts 15:27). He was selected by Paul to go on Paul's second missionary journey when Paul and Barnabas parted ways (Acts 15:40). He was jailed in Philippi with Paul (Acts 16:16-29). He was with Paul in Thessalonica on the second Missionary Journey (Acts 17:1-9). He was with Paul in Berea on the second Missionary Journey and remained there with Timothy when Paul continued on to Athens (Acts 17:10-15). He and Timothy reunited with Paul on the second missionary journey at Corinth (Acts 18:1-17). He was with Paul and Timothy when Paul wrote the Thessalonians letters. He, under the direction of Peter, drafted Peter's first letter (1st Peter 5:12).

Who Was Timothy? The convert and friend of Paul from Lystra. Timothy was the son of an unlawful mixed marriage of a Jewess, Eunice, and an unnamed Greek man (Acts 16:1-3). He ultimately became Paul's right-hand man. Paul sent him to the church at Thessalonica from Athens after Paul had been forced to leave the Thessalonian church too soon and he provided Paul with a good report (1st Thessalonians 3:2) upon his return. He eventually became the pastor of the Church in Ephesus and was the addressee of two letters from Paul (1st and 2nd Timothy).

The Purposes of writing 1st Thessalonians: In the first chapter of 1st Thessalonians, we see that Paul's purpose is to commend them for their exemplary living under persecution. What did Paul do: (1) He gave thanks for them, (2) He constantly prayed for them, (3) He remembered them and kept them on his mind and (4) He made judgments about them (i.e. he assessed their maturity level). What stood out about the Thessalonians in Paul's mind? (1) Their faith that works (They repented and changed their ways....idols), (2) Their labor of love (They became servants of the living God) and (3) Their patience in waiting (They were not going to be easily knocked off course).

Analysis: Warren Wiersbe remarks of Paul's description of the Thessalonians: They were an Elect, Exemplary, Enthusiastic and Expectant people. In his assessment he noted that Paul picked up on some obvious facts about salvation. For instance, it begins with God, it involves God's love, it involves faith, it involves the Trinity, and it changes one's life. According to Paul, these people were worthy of their name as "Christians." They received the word. They followed their spiritual leaders. They suffered for Christ, and they encouraged other churches. They were focused Christians. The Thessalonian believers had placed their faith in Jesus Christ in the past, they were loving Christ in the present and they were hoping in his future return. Paul continually referred to the believers as brothers emphasizing their equality with him and his companions before their God. This is a long way from the Pharisee who wanted to kill all the Christians before he met Christ to now acknowledging Gentiles as his brothers in God. The way that the Thessalonians were behaving clearly convinced Paul that they had been chosen by God.

Calvary Bible Church and the Thessalonian Letters: The Constitution of the Calvary Bible Church (CBC) makes reference to 1st Thessalonians 1:10 in support of its Statement of Doctrinal Beliefs as recorded in Article III.N. Regarding the "Second Advent of Christ" the statement reads: "*We believe in that "blessed hope," the personal, imminent, pre-tribulation and premillennial coming of the Lord Jesus Christ for His redeemed ones, and in His subsequent return to earth, with His saints, to establish His millennial kingdom.*" As you can see, we believe that there are two distinct events associated with Jesus' second coming; a time when he comes for his saints (i.e., redeemed ones), or the Rapture, and his subsequent return to the earth at the end of the Great Tribulation as predicted in the last week of Daniel's seventy weeks (i.e., the end of the 490 years decreed on his people & city). In 1st Thessalonians 1:10, Paul described believers as those who "wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead – Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath."

Next Week: "Helping the Baby Grow Up (1st Thessalonians 2:1-12)"