

1 THESSALONIANS

Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians is one of the first letters of the New Testament. Based on information both in Acts and 1 Thessalonians, most scholars agree that Paul wrote it from _____[a] during his _____[b] missionary journey in late AD 50 or early AD 51. Although it's a rather brief letter, it's one of the most _____[c] and insightful portrayals of a healthy, growing first-century church. The Christians in Thessalonica possessed a faith, hope, and love that's downright inspirational.

THE CITY OF THESSALONICA

Thessalonica is one of the few cities visited by Paul that has existed continuously from his day to modern times. Today it remains one of Greece's most important cities, and its _____[d] largest city with a population of over 350,000 and a metropolitan area of about 815,000 (as of 2024). It's called Thessaloniki or Saloniki today.

The city was founded in about 315 B.C. by one of Alexander the Great's generals, Cassander, after he became the king of Macedonia after Alexander died. The _____[e] eventually conquered the area and all of Macedonia became a Roman province with Thessalonica as its capital around 148 B.C. It was eventually made a _____[f] city in the Roman Empire which means it enjoyed a significant measure of self-government. Its people were able to choose their own magistrates, known as "_____ [g]"—translated "city authorities" (ESV, NASB) or "city officials" (NIV) in Acts 17:6. Though skeptics once questioned Luke's use of that term, numerous ancient _____[h] found in Thessalonica have confirmed that Luke was accurate in his use of that term.

At the time of Paul's _____[i] missionary journey (around AD 49-52), Thessalonica was the _____[j] and most important city in _____[k], boasting a population that is estimated to have been around 200,000. It was a thriving _____[l] located at the head of a gulf on the Aegean Sea, and the _____[m] Way, the major east-west _____[n] linking Rome to the eastern regions of the empire, ran through Thessalonica near the harbor. William Barclay points out the strategic importance of such a bustling center of commerce for the spread of the gospel: "If Christianity was settled there, it was bound to spread east along the Egnatian Road until all Asia was conquered and West until it stormed even the city of Rome. The coming

of Christianity to Thessalonica was crucial to the making of it into a world religion.”

THE CHURCH IN THESSALONICA

Paul founded the church on his second missionary journey. After traveling west across Asia Minor to the region of Mysia, Paul and his mission team were forbidden by the _____[o] to preach to the south of Mysia. So, they pressed on to Troas, a city on the Aegean Sea, and that’s where Paul saw a _____[p] of a man from Macedonia pleading with him to come and _____[q] to them (Acts 16:6-10). Following the clear prompting of God, they sailed across the Aegean and came to _____[r]. After Paul, Silas, and Timothy left Philippi, they made the one-hundred-mile journey to Thessalonica.

As was Paul’s custom, he started preaching in the local _____[s] (Acts 17:1). He spent _____[t] Sabbaths proving that Jesus was the promised Old Testament Messiah and that he had to die and rise from the dead (Acts 17:2-3). As a result, several Jews were won to Christ as well as several God-fearing _____[u] (these were Gentiles who hung around the synagogue and believed in the God of the Old Testament but had not officially _____[v] to Judaism) (Acts 17:4). But it wasn’t just Jews and God-fearing Gentiles who were coming to Christ. Others were converted directly from _____[w] (1 Thess 1:9).

When the synagogue _____[x] saw that both Jews and righteous Gentiles were being converted to Christianity, they were filled with jealousy (Acts 17:5). They weren’t about to stand by and do nothing as several of their synagogue members were taken from them. The plan they hatched to stop these Christian missionaries was to gather a posse of _____[y] from the marketplace and go to Jason’s house—one of the local Christians with whom Paul and Silas must have been staying—and grab Paul and Silas. When they couldn’t find them, they snatched Jason and a handful of other believers and hauled them before the politarchs (“city authorities”) on false charges of _____[z] (“they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus”; Acts 17:7). After this frightening episode, it seems that Paul was banned from Thessalonica. The “bond” or “bail” or “security” or “legal pledge” that Jason made on behalf of the church (Acts 17:9) likely involved the promise that Paul and Silas, as the named perpetrators of the unrest, would not return to the city. That’s probably why _____[aa] returned to Thessalonica and brought back a _____[bb] of the situation to Paul (1 Thess 3:6-9).

How long was Paul in Thessalonica? The only time reference of Paul in

Thessalonica that is mentioned in Scripture are the three _____[cc] that Luke mentions (Acts 17:2). It's likely, however, that Paul stayed in Thessalonica longer than three weeks. In both 1 and 2 Thessalonians, he reminds the believers there that he had worked to _____[dd] himself while he was with them so that he wouldn't be a _____[ee] on anyone (1 Thess 2:9; 2 Thess 3:8). It's unlikely that he would have needed to set up shop and begin working if he were only going to be there three or four weeks. It's also unlikely that taking care of Paul's needs for only three or four weeks would have been considered a burden on the church there. There are a few other factors that also suggest a longer stay for Paul and Silas in Thessalonica. There's the deep _____[ff] that developed between Paul and the brethren (1 Thess 2:8; 3:6-10), the depth of _____[gg] Paul gave them (1 Thess 2:11-12), and the fact that the church in Philippi had sent Paul at least two _____[hh] gifts during his stay in Thessalonica; it's unlikely that multiple gifts would have been needed if Paul had stayed there for less than a month (Phil 4:16). Most likely he stayed three or four _____[ii].

WHY PAUL WROTE 1 THESSALONIANS

After Paul and Silas were forced to leave Thessalonica, they traveled to _____[jj], about _____[kk] miles away. Their ministry flourished in Berea until once more they encountered _____[ll] from a group of _____[mm] that had come from Thessalonica (Acts 17:13). Once again Paul was forced to leave a place where the gospel was being well received. From Berea he went to _____[nn] (Acts 17:15-34), and after Athens he went to _____[oo] (Acts 18:1).

The text of 1 Thessalonians helps fill in the gaps of this outline in Acts. Since Paul's forced separation from the church in Thessalonica, he was deeply concerned about them. He expressed his burning desire to find a way to see them, but _____[pp] kept thwarting him (1 Thess 2:17-18). He was so concerned about them that, when he was in _____[qq], he decided to send _____[rr] back to see them (1 Thess 3:1-2). Soon after Paul dispatched Timothy to Thessalonica from Athens, Paul decided to go to Corinth, and it was there that Timothy came to Paul with his _____[ss] report about the condition of the brethren in Thessalonica (Acts 18:5; 1 Thess 3:6-7). Paul wrote this letter as a response to Timothy's report.

CONTENT OF 1 THESSALONIANS

Even though Timothy's report about the church in Thessalonica was overwhelmingly _____[tt], there were some _____[uu] there that concerned Paul. So, Paul writes to _____[vv] them for their faithfulness and to _____[ww] them to continue in their

commitment to do God’s will. He also writes to _____[xx] them of his love and concern for them. And, finally, he writes to deal with the issues of _____[yy] that Timothy had raised.

Because the _____[zz] that had driven Paul and his team out of town hadn’t gone away, the church needs _____[aaa] to stand firm in the face of _____[bbb]. Paul reminded them of how they had “received the word in much _____[ccc]” (1 Thess 1:6) and how they had “endured the same _____[ddd] at the hands of your own countrymen, even as they did from the Jews” (1 Thess 2:14-16). And he told them that “we sent Timothy . . . to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith, so that no one would be disturbed by these _____[eee]; for you yourselves know that we have been destined for this” (1 Thess 3:2-3).

Also, it seems clear that Paul’s enemies—no doubt those who ran him out of both Thessalonica and Berea—were continuing to spread lies about him and his ministry colleagues. They claimed Paul was only in ministry to make _____[fff] and build their reputations. Paul’s failure to return to Thessalonica may have been used against him as “proof” that he really didn’t care about them. To counter these _____[ggg], Paul defends his _____[hhh] by emphasizing how he worked to _____[iii] himself, and emphasizing the undeniable love he demonstrated for the brethren during his stay there (1 Thess 2:1-12).

Another issue that Paul was concerned about was the need for the Christians there to _____[jjj] themselves responsibly. He exhorts them to “attend to your own business and work with your hands . . . so that you will behave properly toward outsiders and not be in any need” (1 Thess 4:11-12). And he reminds them of his own _____[kkk] of “working night and day so as not to be a _____[lll] to any of you” (1 Thess 2:9).

Paul was also concerned that the Christians do not slip back into pagan _____[mmm]. They must pursue sexual purity (1 Thess 4:3) and never forget that being a Christian means our direction, purpose, and _____[nnn] in life must be different (1 Thess 5:12-22).

Finally, Paul corrects some misunderstanding about the _____[ooo] of times. He’s especially concerned about their misunderstanding regarding the status of those who have _____[ppp] as Christians (1 Thess 4:13-18). Judging from the space given to it, Paul’s top reason for writing to the Thessalonians may have been to correct mistaken ideas concerning Christ’s _____[qqq] coming. After all, about one-fourth of the total verses of both 1 and 2 Thessalonians is dedicated to the topic of the second coming of Christ.

LESSONS FROM 1 THESSALONIANS

- The biblical _____[rrr] ethic does not allow unrestrained sexual expression (1 Thess 4:3-8).
- Fundamentally, Christianity is about having yourself be absorbed into _____[sss] and _____[ttt] (1 Thess 1:1).
- _____[uuu] God and drawing people to Him is our ultimate _____[vvv] (1 Thess 2:1-2). The word “vain” means something lacking in purpose or importance.
- Live your life for an audience of _____[www] (1 Thess 2:3-6)
- Our spiritual _____[xxx] depends on what we believe about _____[yyy] (1 Thess 2:13).
- Hold on to biblical _____[zzz] no matter what (1 Thess 2:14-16).
- Stay focused on Christ’s _____[aaaa] (1 Thess 2:19-20; 3:13; 4:13-18; 5:1-11).
- Stay aware of _____[bbbb] (1 Thess 2:18). Never lose awareness of what and who you are up against.
- Don’t ever stop growing your _____[cccc] (1 Thess 3:6-13).
- While on this earth, God expects us to be productive and hard-_____ [dddd], and to provide for our needs (1 Thess 4:11-12)
- Our spirits will be reunited with our _____[eeee] when Jesus returns (1 Thess 4:13-18).
- We will be reunited with God’s _____[ffff] when Jesus returns.

KEY PASSAGES FROM 1 THESSALONIANS

- 1 Thessalonians 1:2
- 1 Thessalonians 2:13
- 1 Thessalonians 3:11-13
- 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18
- 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

FILL-IN-THE-BLANK ANSWER KEY

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|------------------|---------------------|
| [a] Corinth | [ss] good |
| [b] second | [tt] positive |
| [c] positive | [uu] issues |
| [d] second | [vv] praise |
| [e] Romans | [ww] encourage |
| [f] free | [xx] reassure |
| [g] politarchs | [yy] concern |
| [h] inscriptions | [zz] persecution |
| [i] second | [aaa] encouragement |
| [j] largest | [bbb] adversity |
| [k] Macedonia | [ccc] tribulations |
| [l] seaport | [ddd] sufferings |
| [m] Egnatian | [eee] afflictions |
| [n] highway | [fff] money |
| [o] Holy Spirit | [ggg] lies |
| [p] vision | [hhh] integrity |
| [q] preach | [iii] support |
| [r] Philippi | [jjj] support |
| [s] synagogue | [kkk] example |
| [t] three | [lll] burden |
| [u] Gentiles | [mmm] immorality |
| [v] converted | [nnn] behavior |
| [w] paganism | [ooo] end |
| [x] leaders | [ppp] died |
| [y] thugs | [qqq] second |
| [z] treason | [rrr] sexual |
| [aa] Timothy | [sss] God |
| [bb] report | [ttt] Christ |
| [cc] Sabbaths | [uuu] Glorifying |
| [dd] support | [vvv] purpose |
| [ee] burden | [www] one |
| [ff] affection | [xxx] success |
| [gg] care | [yyy] Scripture |
| [hh] financial | [zzz] truth |
| [ii] months | [aaaa] return |
| [jj] Berea | [bbbb] Satan |
| [kk] fifty | [cccc] faith |
| [ll] opposition | [dddd] working |
| [mm] Jews | [eeee] bodies |
| [nn] Athens | [ffff] people |
| [oo] Corinth | |
| [pp] Satan | |
| [qq] Athens | |
| [rr] Timothy | |