

# 1 Thessalonians

## Summary

Near the end of Paul's second missionary journey, he and his companions visited the bustling capital of Macedonia, a port city called Thessalonica (modern-day Greece). Acts chapter seventeen records that they spent several weeks preaching in synagogues there, and many Jews and Gentiles believed the message of Jesus Christ. However, a short time later, a group of rioters drove the missionaries out of town. To make up for their missed time, Paul sent Timothy back to Thessalonica a few months later to minister and then report back. Upon Timothy's return and update, Paul wrote two letters to the Thessalonians to guide and encourage them. In this first letter, Paul looks back to the first coming of Christ and looks forward to the future return of Christ to encourage this new Christian community.

## Author

The apostle Paul wrote the first letter to the church in Thessalonica. He includes the names of some of his missionary partners in his introduction to present them as a united group of ministers.

## Date

The date given by most scholars for the first letter to the Thessalonians is A.D. 51. Many scholars believe this is the earliest letter of Paul's that we have in Scripture.

## Primary Characters

Paul (1 Thessalonians 1-5)

Silas (1 Thessalonians 1)

Timothy (1 Thessalonians 1, 3)

## Historical Moments

Paul Writes His First Letter to the Thessalonians (1 Thessalonians 1-5)

Paul Makes This Second Missionary Journey to Thessalonica and Corinth (1 Thessalonians 2)

Timothy Is Sent to Thessalonica (1 Thessalonians 3)

## Major Theological Themes

**The Gospel Is Worth Everything and Nothing Can Stop It** - In this short little book, Paul speaks of the gospel over and over again. The good news of Jesus comes with power and conviction. It is accompanied by the Spirit and thrives even in the face of strong opposition. Knowing and sharing the gospel is more important than virtually anything else in the world.

**Jesus Will Return** - When we know the truth and understand the Scriptures, we live with absolute confidence that Jesus is coming again. We do not have to grieve and sorrow; we can face life and death with fearless certainty. Jesus came and He is coming back again.

**Faith in Jesus Places Us In a Family Now and Forever** - When we place our faith in Jesus and accept the gospel, we are immediately ushered into a new family; we become part of God's eternal community. In this life, we are not alone but are adopted and embraced by God. Paul uses imagery such as a nursing mother and an encouraging father when he writes of his relationship with the Thessalonians. There is a clear sense of intimacy and family love in his descriptions.

## Lessons Learned from 1 Thessalonians

**Be Prepared, Jesus Could Return at Any Time** - The teaching of the second coming of Jesus is not intended to create speculation and fanciful predictions. Instead, our confidence that Jesus will return is meant to move us to action. We should be prepared each day so that if Jesus returns, we are ready to meet Him. Ask yourself each morning, "If Jesus were to return today, what would I be sure to do before He arrives?"

**Seek Purity and Holiness** - Sometimes we look at the world today and think that the level of sexual immorality and impurity are something new. Things were just as bad back in the ancient world. Paul warned the people to avoid sexual immorality, to control their bodies, and to stop being lustful like the people who were part of their culture. These words speak loud and clear in our world today. Each new generation must learn to identify the sources of lust-producing thoughts and behaviors and flee from them.

**Fearless Hope** - No matter what we face in this life, we will be with Jesus in the end. Our Savior will return and bring into His kingdom all who have placed their faith in Him. The trumpet will sound, the dead in Christ will rise, and we will be with Jesus forever. We know how the story ends. We know who wins! Jesus is Lord now and forever. When you face hard times and when threats are all around, remember how the story ends. God wins, Jesus is on the throne, and you will be with Him forever. Place your hope in the Savior and fear not.