

***Pastor Jeremy M. Thomas***  
***Fredericksburg Bible Church***

*107 East Austin*

*Fredericksburg, Texas 78624*

*830-997-8834    [jthomas@fbgbible.org](mailto:jthomas@fbgbible.org)*

**A1045 – November 7, 2010 – Acts 17:1-10**  
**Paul's Journey To Thessalonica**

This morning we want to introduce the historical background of Paul's first epistle to the Thessalonians. Paul wrote two epistles to the Thessalonians probably separated only by a few months in the year AD51. There was an intense period of written communication between Paul and this newly established congregation. We want to know why. So turn to the Book of Acts chapter 1.

In the NT Gospels the nation Israel rejected their King, choosing rather to have Caesar as their king. And therefore their Kingdom program was delayed from the human standpoint, so far as it's restoration on earth was concerned. Therefore a new era was issued in. This is no change in the plan of God. God's plan never changes. But we have an unveiling of a new aspect of the plan of God called the Church. In Acts 1:7 Jesus gives His departing words, it's a commission related to the new era, the Church. All the apostles can think about is Israel's kingdom. But Jesus is giving them instruction that while it relates to the kingdom and is prior to the kingdom, a new organism will be formed called the Church. He says, in verse 7 "It is not for you to know times or seasons, which the Father has fixed by his own authority; <sup>8</sup>but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you;" and then He gives the three-fold structure that Luke follows in tracing the gospel as it spreads from Jerusalem to Rome. "And you shall be My witnesses, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." First, the witness will go to Jerusalem, and Luke treats the witness to Jerusalem in Acts 1-7. Second, the witness will go to Judea and Samaria, and Luke treats the witness to Judea and Samaria in Acts 8-9. So you have a spiraling out of the gospel. It begins in Jerusalem, as persecution arises in Jerusalem it spirals out to Judea and Samaria, and finally the gospel spirals out to the remotest parts of the earth, and Luke treats the

witness to the remotest parts of the earth in Acts 10-28. Those are the three divisions of the book of Acts.

The apostle, who is the key player in carrying the witness to this third area, the remotest parts of the earth, is Paul. Paul believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and was saved in Acts 9. Then he underwent three years of personal training by the Lord Jesus Christ in the Arabian Desert, face to face teaching. Then he tries out his training for 10 years in Syria and Cilicia. Finally, 13 years after his conversion, Paul comes to Antioch of Syria where he's teaching the word of God along with Barnabas, and others. Paul was distinctly gifted. One of the most powerful teachers of the word of God the church has ever known. In Acts 13 we have his 1<sup>st</sup> missionary journey. He and Barnabas take John Mark and they sail from Antioch to the island of Cyprus. They make their way across the island of Cyprus hitting the major cities and then they sail north to the city of Perga on the southern coast of Turkey. Here John Mark flakes out and goes home. We don't know all the reasons why but he quit right here. And we think Paul got sick with malaria here too and so while Paul is convalescing they head north into the highlands and come to the city of Pisidian Antioch in the territory of southern Galatia. Paul is going to enter into the synagogue, and give a historical framework presentation of the gospel; the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In the sermon he goes from historic event to historic event in the OT reminding his Jewish audience of the great truths of history and he's going to tie Jesus Christ into this history as the logical conclusion. Now it is very clear from this presentation that Paul understood the doctrine of justification by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone. Paul is going to go on to three other cities in the southern Galatian territory, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe, with this same message. And the prevailing response to Paul's gospel will be among the Gentiles, whom Paul and Barnabas recognize were justified grace through faith alone in Christ alone, independent of circumcision. By the end of chapter 14 Paul and Barnabas return to Antioch and give the report of the first missionary expedition and the good news of Gentile salvation. Soon after Paul left certain Judaizers crept into the churches of Galatia and tried to undermine Paul's gospel of justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. In response, Paul wrote the letter to the Galatians which we finished studying a few months ago.

In Acts 15, the problem of the Judaizers comes to a head and the first church council was convened in Jerusalem. The leadership of the church concludes that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone for both Jews and Gentiles. Gentiles do not have to go through Judaism to be saved; Gentiles do not have to be circumcised to be justified or sanctified. The gospel is the same for all men. The gospel is a decided issue. It is no longer open to investigation; the gospel is the death and resurrection of the God-man Jesus Christ for human sin and faith in Him is all that is required to be right with God. And if any denomination, any individual, any Council, any website, any self-proclaimer preaches something other than that message then that denomination, individual, counsel, website, is to be accursed because they have fundamentally rejected the person and work of Jesus Christ. There is no other gospel that can save.

After this, the second missionary journey begins in Acts 15:36. So let's pick up and read from verse 36. "After some days Paul said the Barnabas, "Let us return and visit the brethren in every city in which we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are." So where are they going to go? They're going to return to the Galatian region to check on the believers there and see how the letter to the Galatians was received. So the whole purpose of the second missionary journey, originally at least, is to merely follow up with the new believers in Galatia and provide them with some training in the word of God. But in verse 37 we have a problem. "Barnabas wanted to take John called Mark, along with them also. <sup>38</sup>but Paul kept insisting that they should not take them along who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work." That's referring to the first missionary journey where John Mark departed with them, but he flaked out along the way and went back to Antioch. So Paul doesn't want take him, Barnabas does want to take him. So we're going to have a split. A sovereign split. God the Holy Spirit is dividing Paul and Barnabas at this time into two missionary journeys; he's going to make one journey along one route, two journeys along two routes. Verse 39, "And there occurred such a sharp disagreement that they separated from one another, and Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus. <sup>40</sup>But Paul chose Silas and left, being committed by the brethren to the grace of the Lord. <sup>41</sup>And he was traveling through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches." You observe Barnabas going to Cyprus, which was his home turf, and you observe Paul as he travels to Syria and Cilicia, which was his home turf. These men were practical; they went to places

where they knew people, where they had already established relationships, it was logical for them to go to these places. They're not just wandering off into the wild blue yonder like some people that want to go into missions today. Also observe that Paul chose Silas in verse 40. Silas was a Jewish believer. So now we have two Jewish believers heading through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches. Barnabas and John Mark go the other way. We pick up with Paul and Silas in Acts 16, verse 1, "Paul and Silas came also to Derbe and to Lystra." Now where are these two places? They're in the southern Galatian region. So this is the original purpose of the whole second missionary journey, to return to these churches and strengthen them in the word of God. Notice the rest of verse 1, "And a disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek, <sup>2</sup>and he was well spoken of by the brethren who were in Lystra and Iconium. <sup>3</sup>Paul wanted this man to go with him; and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those parts, for they all knew that his father was a Greek." So now we have Paul and Silas, they're Jewish believers and Timothy whose mother was a Jew but whose father was a Greek. In this situation Timothy would have to decide whether he wanted to identify with the Jewish people or the Gentile people. That decision was made by circumcision, not for justification but simply for evangelistic purposes; it would be easier for Paul and Silas to enter into Jewish territories and evangelize if Timothy was circumcised. They were very successful strengthening some of these churches as well as in their evangelism; more and more people were being won to Jesus Christ. And as they head west they're blocked; blocked by the Holy Spirit to go into Asia toward Ephesus and the west coast of Asia so they have to travel north and bypass western Asia. And finally, they came to Troas.

Acts 16:9, "A vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing and appealing to him and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." Now Macedonia is across the Aegean Sea in Europe. So the gospel is heading west. The gospel is not heading east. This is one of the most significant visions in the entire history of the world. If it were not for this vision Paul probably would have never sailed across the Aegean to touch Europe with the gospel. For all we know the gospel may have gone to the East. But it went to the West. And ever since the East has continued to be dominated by pagan thinking, the Continuity of Being, that all is one, that everything differs only in degree. Hinduism, Buddhism, all the Eastern

religions hold to the Continuity of Being; that at base reality is one. Only in the West do we have the Creator-creature distinction, that all is two, the Creator is not the creature. That is fundamental to Christian thought in the West. So the gospel will permeate the West, into Europe and eventually into America because of this vision that Paul had in verse 9. It will change the West and mold the West all the way down to this very moment, despite many leaders who are trying to destroy it.

So in Acts 16:10, "When he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go into Macedonia, concluding that God called us to preach the gospel to them. <sup>11</sup>So putting out to sea from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and on the day following to Neapolis; <sup>12</sup>and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia, a Roman colony; and we were staying in the city for some days." Paul, Silas, and Timothy now came to Europe. They had quite a bit of success in Turkey. They were encouraged. But now they're going to run into very little success. Europe is a different place. And there are a series of things that happen in the next few cities that get Paul down. Paul is going to get depressed. When Paul finally reaches Corinth where he writes the letter to the Thessalonians he's very depressed. So watch how, as the gospel invades Europe, things start to go poorly. In verse 13 they're in Philippi and he says, "On the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to a riverside, where we were supposing that there would be a place of prayer; and we sat down and began speaking to the women who had assembled." In other words, there's no synagogue in Philippi. You had to have 10 Jewish men in a city to have a synagogue and they didn't have 10 Jewish men in Philippi. So the custom was if you have no synagogue in your city and you're Jewish you would go meet on Sabbath at the riverside. So already it's depressing in the sense that they don't have a good place to start with the gospel, they don't have a strong Jewish base, founded in the OT. Then in verse 14 we have the first convert in Europe, "a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening;" Now, she's at the riverside but she's not a Jew. She's a Gentile woman that has attached herself to certain Jewish people. She was a worshiper of God or a God-fearer. This is a class of Gentile people that got fed up with the polytheistic religions of Rome and they turned to the monotheistic religion of the Jews and have attached themselves, loosely, to the Jewish system of worship. They do have a convert, but it's not looking too good. Then in verse 16 it happened. Here they begin to run into trouble with

Gentile economics. They run into a slave girl who was being used because of her powers of divination. The idea that she could call up the dead and you could talk to your dead relatives and what she was really doing was having demons speak through her in the voice of your dead family members. And she was being used by the local crime ring to make a lot of money for these people. She starts bothering Paul and she does this for several days and finally Paul commands the demon to come out of her and the demon comes out of her and then she can no longer do her divination and this really upsets the economics of the crime ring. The bottom line is they have now upset some Gentile businessmen and they start a riot against Paul. They take Paul and Silas to the chief magistrates of the city, strip them down and beat them with rods. For some reason Timothy escapes this. Timothy was sort of like an errand boy and he may have been off somewhere else. So you can see the gospel is not being very well received in Europe. The crime ring is now making accusations against Paul and Silas and in verse 23 Paul and Silas are thrown in prison. This is when you get the story of the jailer and Paul and Silas are in the stocks and the jailer is guarding the prison and Paul and Silas are singing hymns and praying to the Lord and giving thanks to the Lord when suddenly an earthquake comes and the prison is basically dismantled and the jailer thinks the prisoners escaped so he's about to kill himself but Paul is a strong believer and he gets control of the situation, the jailer relaxes and finally through Paul and Silas this man and his family believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and are saved. So there are some encouraging things along the way in Europe but mostly it stinks.

The next day Paul puts the fear into the chief magistrates because Paul was a Roman citizen and they had beaten a Roman citizen which was against Roman law. So he uses his Roman citizenship to get out of the situation. The chief magistrates themselves came down to Paul and Silas and release them and they were begging Paul and Silas to leave the city. In verse 40 "They went out of the prison and entered the house of Lydia, and when they saw the brethren, they encourage them and departed." So here we are at Philippi, they're going to come down a road called the Via Egnatia to Thessalonica. The Via Egnatia was like the I-35 corridor. If Paul were to invade Texas, say by ship he would sail to Port Galveston, come up to Houston, stop there and evangelize. Then he would come up I-10 to San Antonio, stop there and evangelize. Then he would get on I-35N and traveled to Austin, stop there and evangelize. Then he would head north to Waco, he might stop there, but



then on up to Dallas-Fort Worth, he would stop there and evangelize. This was Paul's method. He stuck to the main highways and the major metropolitan cities. Paul reasoned that if he were to be most effective he could reach the most people by going to the major cities along the major highways and from there the believers could take the gospel to the surrounding rural areas. This is always Paul's approach wherever he goes. Hit the big cities, the university towns, the influential areas.

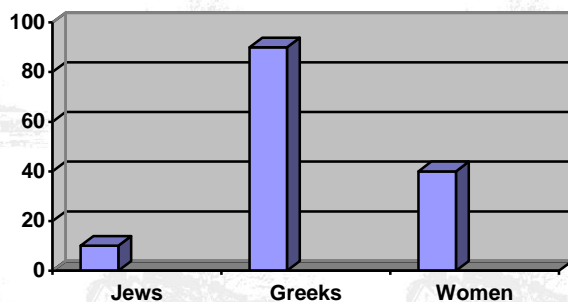
So in Acts 17 he's travelling down the Via Egnatia, **they travel through Amphipolis and Apollonia**, they didn't stop there, no synagogue, they come **to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews**. So this is an encouragement, at least they have a synagogue of Jews in Thessalonica. Thessalonica was a very large city at the time, approximately 200,000 people live there. In the centuries before there was another city there named Therma because it sat on the Thermaic Gulf and the waters there were warm. Then, when Alexander the Great died, his kingdom was divided into four parts and his four military generals each took one part and ruled it. This was all prophesied in the book of Daniel to a 'T' centuries before and so Alexander the Great's Empire was divided up. One of his military generals, Cassander, came to rule the region called Macedonia. The place where Paul had a vision of a man from Macedonia, saying, "Come over here and help us." So 320 years before Christ, Alexander the Great's military general, Cassander took over this region of Macedonia and he founded a city right next to Therma called, originally Thessaloniki. Thessaloniki was actually the name of Alexander the Great's step-sister. And over the centuries Thessaloniki grew and eventually overtook Therma and became this great metropolis of ~200,000 people. Paul has had the vision to come help them; he, Silas and Timothy have come. There's a synagogue, and so in verse two what do they do?

Paul stops. As verse 2 says, **according to his custom, he went to them, and he went to them, the Jews, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures**. Paul always went to the Jew first and he was doing this for **three Sabbaths**. There's debate at this point over how long Paul spent in Thessalonica because in Acts, Luke says he reasoned with the Jews for **three Sabbaths** which is a period of 15-21 days. Yet in 1 Thessalonians it says that Paul worked to earn a living while he was there and the content of the letter implies he had taught them a lot of doctrine. So

from Acts it sounds like a short visit, from 1 Thessalonians it sounds like a long visit. I don't think we can finally decide on the matter but my opinion is he wasn't there much more than a month. I conclude that from Paul's intense teaching schedule at Ephesus. If you spent one month with Paul you spent a year with me. So Paul could have easily taught them a tremendous amount of doctrine in one month. Coupled with the fact that they are obviously confused about certain doctrines that relate to prophecy indicates Paul covered the material pretty fast and so I think we can safely conclude that Paul was not in Thessalonica for much more than a month.

Verse 2 says he was in the synagogue for three Sabbaths reasoning with the Jews from the Scriptures. And verse 3 explains the reasoning process, two participles explain the two things Paul did, **explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead**, this is to overcome an obstacle in Jewish minds. They expected the Messiah to reign in glory, not to suffer. So Paul had to meet this Jewish objection. What was the objection? "Jesus can't be the Christ. Jesus was crucified on a cross. He was hung on a tree as a criminal. Jesus committed a capital crime and was punished. He can't be the Messiah." So Paul had to explain and give evidence from the OT Scriptures that indeed the Messiah had to suffer and rise again. Then show that Jesus did these things.

And what was the response in verse 4? **And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, along with a large number of the God-fearing Greeks and a number of the leading women.** Luke is precise and he's telling us something about the makeup of the Thessalonian congregation. **Some Jews, a large number of God-fearing Greeks, a number of the leading women.** Let's put this on a bar chart so we can visualize the makeup of the congregation. In column one we have the Jews, **some Jews**, the minority.





In column two you have the **God-fearing Greeks**. They were monotheists, they attended synagogue and studied Torah, and of them Luke says **a large number**, so the majority; finally, **the leading women**, that means the women who were higher up in the community, of them **a number**, meaning a significant amount, so they're somewhere in the middle. Notice the proportions. Commentators on Thessalonians have pointed out that 1 Thessalonians seems addressed primarily to Gentiles and here's the reason, the majority in the church were Gentile.

Verse 5, **But the Jews**, and uh, oh, here it comes, here comes the collision, someone would dare to put Christ up against Caesar, someone would actually bring absolutes into the situation. Just three Sabbaths and we're talking a city of 200,000 people and Paul's been there three weeks and a mob is going to form, the whole city of 200,000 people are going to start frothing at the mouth over Paul. Now just imagine someone waltzing into a town of 200,000 people and in three weeks he's got the whole place upset? That's power, that's influence and it wasn't because Paul was a nasty guy, it was because of the content of Paul's preaching. Paul preached that Christ was where our ultimate loyalty rests, not Caesar. And as long as your loyalty is to Christ who is sovereign over the State you're perceived as a threat to the State. This is why home school is a threat because the State is training our society in a particular framework of history and the majority of the home schoolers are training kids in a different framework of history. It's not a fact here or a fact there that causes the friction, it's an entire framework of history that is hated by the State. That's why the home school movement is crushed. Well, Paul was crushing the ultimate sovereignty of Caesar. It wasn't that Christians worshipped Christ that upset the State of Rome. The pagans worshipped other gods and goddesses and they were fine with it. It was that Christians worshipped Christ alone and not Christ and Caesar. That's what caused the rub. And so Paul preached Christ as King and this got them upset, someone's challenging Rome, it created a collision. So let's see the collision. Verse 5, **But the Jews becoming jealous and taking along some wicked men from the market place, formed a mob and set the city in an uproar; and attacking the house of Jason, they were seeking to bring them out to the people.** <sup>6</sup>When they did not find them, they *began* dragging Jason and some brethren before the city authorities, shouting, "These men who have upset the world have come here also; <sup>7</sup>and Jason has welcomed them, and they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar,

saying that there is another king, Jesus.” <sup>8</sup>They stirred up the crowd and the city authorities who heard these things. <sup>9</sup>And when they had received a pledge from Jason and the others, they released them.

Now, what we have here is a new believer, **Jason**, totally spoil things, and this is a lesson to learn. Paul has made waves, Paul in fact, liked making waves. Paul was a wave maker and had no problem going into a place and getting things stirred up; he saw that as a sign he was actually communicating the gospel. What Paul hated was when he failed to communicate the gospel clearly and people were confused. But when people began to line up on one side or the other Paul was happy. Even if the people on one side of the line picked up rocks to throw at him that made him happy. Why did that make Paul happy? Because he knew the gospel had gotten through on a clear channel. Paul knew that the gospel disrupts. It disrupts individuals, it disrupts families, and it disrupted Paul’s own family. Paul probably was never restored to his father after his told his father about his faith in Christ. So Paul knew personally what a disruption the gospel was. And the gospel disrupted the whole city of Thessalonica. So be happy if you get this kind of a response to the gospel, positive or negative, but don’t be happy if people get confused.

So Paul has been clear with the gospel and the two sides line up and notice where it all begins in v 5. **The Jews became jealous**, see, it doesn’t start with any kind of good motive, it starts with a sin problem of jealousy. Why? Because they want to have the influence, they want the people to follow after them. Just like in the Gospels with the Lord Jesus Christ. The moment the leadership saw that Jesus was getting popular what did they do? They got jealous and they went after Him. So what do they do here? They go after Paul. Same sinful flesh, same response. To get Paul they go **down** to the **market place and** pick out a few of the riff-raff of society, the bums who would take any job and they pay them to form a mob and **set the city in an uproar**.

And they **attacked the house of Jason, they were seeking to bring them out to the people**. They were trying to get Paul and Silas but Paul and Silas are missing. Why are Paul and Silas missing? We don’t know why. But apparently Paul and Silas were out at the moment. So instead they **drag Jason and some other believers before the city authorities**. Why has

Jason suddenly come on the scene? Jason happens to be the owner of the property where Paul and Silas were staying; he owned the house. And so the mob arrests the property owner, and then they bring the charge in verse 6, **These men who have upset the world** (that means they upset the social order, they've disturbed the social order, they've turned it "upside down,") mean it in the bad sense, but this is one of those back-handed compliments that Luke is so known for recording. How would you like it to be said of you that your ministry for Christ was so fantastic that it upset the whole world. Wow, I didn't know I did that. What a tremendous compliment! And this is their charge, and their charge is that Christ was King over all. Notice verse 7, **they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus**, so they've set Jesus against Caesar. Now if you're a student of the NT and you've studied a bit, I'm sure when you read that it reminds you of an argument you heard once before, something about Jesus being a King, something about Him being in competition with Caesar. And yes, you did hear it before; you heard it at the trial of Christ. You heard it at the trial before Pontius Pilate. It was exactly the charge that was leveled against Jesus, now leveled against His followers, and will always be leveled against His followers. And so they charge that they are introducing a Jewish King in competition with a Roman King. Was Paul teaching that Jesus was a King? Yes, he was. But was Paul teaching that King Jesus was in competition with King Caesar? No, he was not. God, in the book of Daniel, authorizes Gentile kings and Gentile kingdoms, but finally all Gentile kings and Gentile kingdoms will be removed and replaced by a Jewish King and the Jewish kingdom. King Jesus. That's what Paul taught. But King Jesus will not come to overthrow Gentile Caesars until the Jewish people repent. And so Paul does not pit King Jesus against King Caesar in the way they're charging. But they distort the ideas and so in v 9 a deal is made, something happens here that has serious repercussions, **And when they had received a pledge from Jason and the others, they released them.** To see what this is hold your place here and turn to 1 Thess 2:18. Paul sees far more sinister things in this deal that was worked out between the court and Jason than just a bail agreement.

In 1 Thess 2:18 Paul notices there's another problem entirely. Paul says: "For we wanted to come to you—I, Paul, more than once," that means over and over he wanted to come back to Thessalonica, but we couldn't because why? "Satan hindered us." Satan hindered us? How did Satan hinder you Paul?

What did he do, did he throw up a road block so Paul couldn't get through? What did Satan do? Why does he say Satan hindered him? Because of the **pledge from Jason and the others**. These believers worked out a deal that went something like this. Jason, you own that property down on 4<sup>th</sup> St, right? Right! Christians meet there, right? Right! Paul came in there, he used your property to proclaim this King Jesus, did he not Jason? Yes! Then let me tell you something, Jason. We'll let you out of jail for \$5,000, but Jason, if your friend Paul shows up again you go back to jail. That's the agreement; how clever of Satan. Satan fed this new believer a line, a pragmatic line; you can get off Scott-Free Jason if you pay this money. And Jason bought it, hook, line and sinker. Paul didn't instruct Jason to do that. Paul was willing to face the music and everywhere he goes he does face the music. But what this does is lock Paul out of Thessalonica, he can't go back now, he's jammed. If he goes back his fellow believer Jason will be locked up. And Paul's not going to do that. But now Paul is locked out of Thessalonica and so you see in verse 10 when Paul gets the news, "the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea." So that's all there is for Paul and Thessalonica. He and Silas were booted out after only a few weeks. Timothy apparently was not booted out so he still has access. But Paul, if he wants to communicate with the Thessalonians is going have to write letters, and thus the Thessalonian epistles.

So let's turn to 1 Thessalonians 3. Paul headed down to Berea, then to Athens where he gives his address on Mars Hill to the philosophers and finally he makes his way to Corinth. These are all cities along the Via Egnatia, the famous Roman highway. And by the time he gets to Corinth we said Paul is depressed. Europe was not looking too open to the gospel and it's not unthinkable that Paul had on his mind, it's time to quit, it's time to go back to Antioch; we're not having any success here. Now we don't have time to go into the four ways God encourages Paul at Corinth, but one of the ways is in 1 Thess 3:1-2. Paul and Silas are banned from Thessalonica but Timothy was not so Paul says, "when we could endure it no longer, we thought it best to be left in Athens alone, <sup>2</sup>and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith," so Timothy went back; Timothy taught them and encouraged them. And if you come down to verse 6 we get a glimpse of the report that Timothy brought back. And the report was a tremendous report. What an encouragement for Paul. Notice verse 6, "but now that Timothy has come to

us from you, and has brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always think kindly of us, longing to see us just as we also long to see you, <sup>7</sup>for this reason, brethren, in all our distress and affliction we were comforted about you through your faith; <sup>8</sup>for now we really live, if you stand firm in the Lord. <sup>9</sup>For what thanks can we render to God for you in return for all the joy with which we rejoice before our God on your account, <sup>10</sup>as we night and day keep praying most earnestly that we may see your face, and make complete what is lacking in your faith?" Do you hear in Paul's words the encouragement he received? Maybe you're down and out and things just keep going down, down, down, hang on, keep trusting the Lord and He'll send you encouragement. And so it was in response to Timothy's report that Paul wrote, along with Silas and Timothy, this letter to encourage the Thessalonians to keep pressing forward in the Christian life and I encourage all of you here to do the same. They lived in tumultuous times, they had to face persecution and we live in tumultuous times, we face an increasingly anti-Christian society where our loyalty is to Christ, not the new socialistic world order. And it's times like these that we need to continue as the Thessalonians to press forward, trusting the Lord, standing firm and loving one another.

That's the lesson and if you'll read 1 Thessalonians this afternoon, it's only about two pages in your Bible so it's not too much we're asking here. But with Acts fresh on your mind it will be a lot more meaningful to you. And next week we'll begin by looking at the first S, which is salvation. The first chapter of Thessalonians revolves around the theme of salvation and concludes with an exhortation to be patient and wait on the Lord's any moment deliverance of His saved ones.

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