



PAUL'S LETTERS TO THE  
THESSALONIANS

Lesson 2 • 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10  
September 12, 2021



# LESSON PLAN



Lesson	Date	Passage
1	9/5/2021	Introduction
2	9/12/2021	1 Thessalonians 1:1-10
3	9/19/2021	1 Thessalonians 2:1-16
4	9/26/2021	1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:13
5	10/3/2021	1 Thessalonians 4:1-12
6	10/10/2021	1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11
7	10/17/2021	1 Thessalonians 5:12-28
8	10/24/2021	2 Thessalonians 1:1-12
9	10/31/2021	2 Thessalonians 2:1-12
10	11/7/2021	2 Thessalonians 2:13-3:5
11	11/14/2021	2 Thessalonians 3:6-18
12	11/21/2021	Review
13	11/28/2021	Reading and Reflection

## Passage Outline

- Personal Greeting (1:1)
- Godward Thanksgiving (1:2-3)
- Gospel Encouragement (1:4-10)



5 minutes – 11:10 to 11:15

- Review the circumstances of Paul's ministry to the Thessalonians
- Read the passage 1 Thes. 1:1-10
- Review outline

## Personal Greeting (v. 1)

- The pull of personal connection
- Authors – Paul (primary), Silas, (companion) Timothy (sent to report)
- Recipients
- A spiritual blessing
  - Grace – The gift of salvation and the power to live for God
  - Peace – Inner calm that comes from salvation and living for Christ



10 minutes – 11:15 to 11:25

Illustration:

- **How many of you have traveled overseas and stayed with a family while you were there?**
- Imagine you take a 3-month trip to England
- You stay with a family and become very close
- Forced to leave to leave abruptly due to local unrest and the threat of being harm
- After months of being back home you hear nothing from this family. **What would you think? What would you do?** (fear the worst, try to get news)
- In a time of personal correspondence, think of what it was like for Paul. Especially in a time when the only way of connecting with the Thessalonians is sending an envoy and writing letters
- As we noted last week, the opening of this letter follows the standard format by opening with a greeting in verse 1. Let's take a look at this verse. There are three parts to Paul's greeting.
- **Who are the three individuals who this letter is from and what do we know about them?**

- Paul – the apostle who is the primary author and voice of the letter
- Silas (Silvanus) – a faithful companion to Paul
- Timothy – Paul’s student who was sent to Thessalonica to provide a report on the church there
- **Who are the recipients?**
  - The church in Thessalonica (the people)
  - The church in God the Father and Jesus the Lord (their identity)
  - The believers in other churches (instruction in 5:27)
- The last part of this greeting is a blessing
  - This was a common element of a greeting at that time; **what two elements do we see here?**
  - Grace – A wish or hope for God’s goodness; echoes not just the blessing of the gift of salvation, but God’s enabling power to live for Him
  - Peace (Shalom) – A wish or hope for tranquility; points to the inner calm and spiritual peace that comes from salvation and living for Christ

## Godward Thanksgiving (v. 2-3)

- It's breadth and depth (thanks to God)
  - Always
  - All of you
  - Constantly (presented to God)
- It's source (remembering before God)
  - Their work of faith
  - Their labor of love
  - Their steadfast hope in Christ



10 minutes – 11:25 to 11:35

- In verses 2 and 3, Paul begins his letter with expressions of their thanksgiving.
- Note it's breadth and depth; **How do we see this in verse 2?**
  - Thankful to God...
  - Always...
  - All of you...
  - Constantly... Mentioning to God; the emphasis here is not merely on the fact that they remembered the Thessalonians, but that they regularly presented them before God in prayer.
- Paul also reveals its source (note they were recently with the Thessalonians)
  - **Why would Paul be remembering them before God? What's his motivation?** Probably fueled by concerns over their persecution and Timothy's report
  - **What virtues of these believers did Paul and his companions remember?**
    - Their work of faith  
The visible effect of the gospel producing good works in their lives; evidence of the reality of their faith
    - Their labor of love  
**When we think of love toward others, what usually comes to mind?**

**What does the word labor here imply?** Strenuous effort, working hard at; not emotion

**Likely towards who?** Others in the church, Paul and his companions; the leadership of the church; the church and believers everywhere

- Their steadfastness of hope in Christ

**What would this have looked like for the Thessalonians?**

Idea here is of endurance in the midst of hard circumstances; stability in the midst of adversity; faithfulness in the midst of opposition and hostility

## Gospel Encouragement (v. 4-10)

- Recipients of the Gospel (v. 4-5a)
- Imitators of the Gospel (v. 5b-7)
- Messengers of the Gospel (v. 8-10)



20 minutes – 11:35 to 11:55

- Paul continues in verse 4 with words of encouragement that are founded in the work of the Gospel.
- Paul's words here are not only rooted in his heartfelt thanksgiving, but they would have been received as encouragement by the believers in Thessalonica.
- So how does Paul encourage these believers in the midst of persecution and suffering? Let's pick up in verse 4.
- Paul starts off reminding them of something that is certain. He begins with the words, "For we know..."
- **What truths does Paul know and want them to remember in verse 4?**
  - First, that they are loved by God; not based in our works or merit, but because of His love for us; God saves us out of His great love for us. As believers, we are loved by God. Not because we deserve it, but because he **wants** to. **Does that truth stir your heart? Does it continue to amaze you?** What a comfort to know that God saves us out His great love, so that His great name may be glorified.
  - Second, that God has chosen them; we did not choose God; it is God's initiative to save us. We do not force God's hand through a sinner's prayer.



We do not open our heart's door to allow God to enter. We do not have the intellect or means to work out our own salvation. God chooses us. God grants us the faith to believe. God makes us new, gives us a new identity in Christ, and transforms our hearts so that we may do His will. This is the miracle of the Gospel in us.

- In the first half of verse 5, Paul provides the reason for his conviction. **Why does he have confidence in their election?**
  - The Gospel came to them in word (the message); they believed and trusted in Jesus
  - The Gospel came to them in power (the Spirit); whether in miracles or heart transformation, the power of the Spirit in their lives was evident
  - The Gospel produced a deep conviction in them; the idea here is that they was a firm commitment to what they believed; it is not just being convinced of the truth, but an intention to live out that truth whatever it cost them
  - Is this true of us? Do we fully believe in Jesus in an obeying way? Let me turn that phrase around and also ask "Do we obey God in a believing way?" Do we obey God because we have faith and believe that what he says is true. Is there evidence of belief in our lives seen in the way we obey, even when nobody is around? Are we committed to living out the Gospel in our lives event when it is inconvenient or costs us something?
- In the last half of verse 5, Paul then turns from their knowing of God's sovereign choice in salvation to their knowing the kind of example Paul and his companions were among them.
  - Paul points them to the model of their lives among them; not to make much of their example, but to encourage them for the way they became imitators of a Gospel-driven life.
  - The point is that just as Paul's spiritual walk matched his preaching and teaching, the conduct and lives of the Thessalonian believers matched Paul's teaching as well. There was a consistent pattern from what Paul did, to what he taught them to do, to what the Thessalonians did.
  - And they did this while under affliction and persecution; in a situation where their faith may come at a great cost.
  - What is even more, is that they did so with the joy of the Spirit. Despite the sufferings they knew could come upon them because of the gospel, they received and followed the of-Christ message with joy given by the Holy Spirit. Some of them **might** soon face opposition and trials because of their faith, yet they found joy in their sufferings knowing that they shared in the sufferings of Christ.
  - Paul notes in verse 7, the result of their imitating Paul's example of living out the gospel in the midst of great suffering with joy. This new church became an example for the rest of the Christian churches in that region.

According to one commentary, this is one of the few texts in the NT where a whole congregation is viewed as a model for other churches. This was an exceptional church in the way they responded to persecution. Perhaps because of the strategic location, they became a model not only to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia, **but to us as well.**

- Paul concludes his Gospel encouragement in verse 8 with the evidence and results of their example.
  - Paul begins noting how their example had been a ringing proclamation for the Gospel sounding out like a bell throughout the region. To the point that there was nothing more that Paul needed to say. Their example of faith was more than enough.
  - **What were some of the reports about the church in Thessalonica?**
    - Their open welcome and kind reception of Paul and his companions
    - How they turned away from idols to God; they abandoned idols and pagan worship; they did not add Jesus to their faith, they placed all their trust and hope in Him
    - We will soon see that the Thessalonians were confused about what would happen to those who died before the Lord's coming. Despite this confusion, their hope for His return was solid. They waited for Christ's return and an end to suffering. The word for wait here refers to the hope the people of God have for the salvation and eternal mercy of God. The expectation of the Lord's coming is linked strongly with their example to other churches and with their steadfastness in the face of great persecution.
  - **What do we make of their example? How does it encourage us?**
  - **What kind of example are leaving for others; our children, our friends, and unbelievers?**
  - **How does the manner in which we respond to suffering and difficulty leave an example?**



5 minutes – 11:55 to 12:00

- **What can we learn from Paul's example of thankfulness?**
- **What can we learn from the Thessalonians example of faithfulness?**
- **Are our hearts stirred and motivated like we see from Paul here in the opening of this lesson?**