

Easy-to-Read Version

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1 Thessalonians

The book of 1 Thessalonians may have been the earliest letter in the New Testament. It was written about 51 AD, a few months after Paul had visited Thessalonica. The letter describes much of what happened during that first visit. It shows the way Paul started a new church in this non-Jewish city.

Soon after leaving Thessalonica, Paul sent Timothy back to find out how the believers there were doing. Were they able to put up with the persecution they were facing because of their new faith? Or had they given up and returned to their old ways of living? Paul felt encouraged when Timothy brought back a good report about them. The Thessalonian believers were still faithful and showing their love for the Lord. They had good memories of Paul's time with them and were eager to see him again. Paul then sent them this letter to strengthen their faith with more encouraging words.

Paul wrote to the church in Thessalonica in a way they could understand. He did not introduce a lot of new ideas for them to learn. Instead, he reminded them of what they already knew. They already had a relationship with God. They already knew Paul's teachings. They also had examples of godly people they could follow. Like a wise counsellor, Paul gave them plain, direct advice that was easy to remember. It would help them do the things that they had already learned.

About half the letter recalls Paul's first visit to Thessalonica. It de-

scribes what had happened as a result of his time there. Paul thanks God for the faith, love and hope of the Thessalonian believers. He remembers that many of them had turned to God and away from idols. He says they had become an example for believers in other cities throughout Greece. And he reminds them of the example he had been for them—an example of courage, hard work and patient teaching.

The rest of the letter encourages the believers to live the kind of life that God wants. Paul reminds them to be different from non-believers. To do this, they would need to avoid sexual sin. They should always show love to each other. And they should work hard and be good examples to their community. Paul also answers questions about the return of the Lord Jesus. He then tells the Thessalonian church to be a family that encourages, corrects and supports each other. For this, they should let the Holy Spirit be their guide.

In the book of 1 Thessalonians, Paul... Thanks God for the believers and reminds them of his own example (1:1 – 3:13)

Encourages them to be devoted to God, love each other and work hard (4:1-12)

Gives further instruction about the return of the Lord Jesus (4:13 – 5:11)

Ends with a call to encourage and support each other (5:12-28)

1 Greetings from Paul, Silas and Timothy.

To the church in Thessalonica that belongs to God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Grace and peace be yours.

The Life and Faith of the Thessalonians

²We always thank God for all of you and remember you in our prayers. ³Every time we pray to God our Father, we remember all that you have done because of your faith. We remember the work you have done out of love. And we remember how faithful you have been because of your hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁴Brothers and sisters, God loves you. And we know that he has chosen you to be his people. ⁵When we brought the Good News to you, we came with more than words. We brought that Good News with power, with the Holy Spirit and with the sure knowledge that it was true. And you know what good examples we were for you while we were there. ⁶And you followed our example and the example of the Lord. You suffered much, but still you accepted the teaching with joy. The Holy Spirit gave you that joy.

⁷The result is that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. ⁸The Lord's teaching has spread from you throughout Greece and beyond. In fact, your faith in God has become known everywhere, so we never have to tell anyone about it. ⁹People everywhere are already telling the story about the good way you accepted us when we were there with you. They tell about how you stopped worshipping idols and changed to serve the living and true God. ¹⁰And you began waiting for God's Son to come from heaven—the Son God raised from death. He is Jesus, who saves us from God's angry judgment that is coming.

Paul's Work in Thessalonica

2 Brothers and sisters, you know that our visit to you was not a failure. ²But before we came to you, people in Philippi had abused us with insults and made us suffer. You know all about that. And then, when we came to you, many people there caused us trouble. We told you God's Good News but only because he gave us the courage we needed. ³We had nothing to gain by asking you to believe the Good News. We were not trying to trick or fool anyone. ⁴No, we did it because God is the one who gave us this work. And this was only after he tested us and saw that we could be trusted to do it. So when we speak, we are only trying to please God, not anyone else. He is the one who can see what is in our hearts.

⁵You know that we never tried to influence you by saying nice things about you. We were not trying to get your money. We had no greed to hide from you. God knows that this is true. ⁶We were not looking for praise from people—not from you or anyone else.

⁷When we were with you, as apostles of Christ we could have used our authority to make you help us. But we were very gentle* with you. We were like a mother caring for her little children. ⁸It was our deep love for you that made us happy to share God's Good News with you. But not only that—we were also happy to share even our own lives with you. That's how much we had come to love you. ⁹Brothers and sisters, I know that you remember how hard we worked. We worked night and day to support ourselves so that we would not be a burden to anyone while we did the work of telling you God's Good News.

*2:7 *But ... gentle* Several Greek copies have "But we became babies".

¹⁰When we were there with you believers, we were pure, honest and without fault in the way we lived. You know, just as God does, that this is true. ¹¹You know that we treated each one of you the way a father treats his own children. ¹²We encouraged you, we comforted you and we told you to live good lives for God. He calls you to be part of his glorious kingdom.

¹³Also, we always thank God because of the way you accepted his message. You heard it and accepted it as God's message, not our own. And it really is God's message. And it works in you who believe. ¹⁴Brothers and sisters, you are just like God's churches in Judea[†] that belong to Christ Jesus. I mean that you were mistreated by your own people, just as those believers were mistreated by other Jews. ¹⁵It was also Jews who killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets. And they drove us away from you. They are not pleasing to God, and they are against everyone else. ¹⁶I say this because they are trying to stop us from telling those who are not Jews how they can be saved. But those Jews are just adding more and more sins to the ones they already have. Now the time has come for them to suffer God's anger.

Paul's Desire to Visit Them Again

¹⁷Brothers and sisters, we were separated from you for a short time. But even though we were not there, our thoughts were still with you. We wanted very much to see you, and we tried very hard to do this. ¹⁸Yes, we wanted to come to you. I, Paul, tried more than once to come, but Satan stopped us. ¹⁹More than anyone, you are the ones who give us hope and joy. You are the reason we will

celebrate victory when our Lord Jesus Christ comes. ²⁰Yes, you bring us honour and joy.

3¹⁻²We could not come to you, but it was very hard to wait any longer. So we decided to send Timothy to you and stay in Athens alone. Timothy is our brother. He works with us for God to tell people the Good News about Christ. We sent Timothy to strengthen and encourage you in your faith. ³We sent him so that none of you would be upset by the troubles we have now. You yourselves know that we must have these troubles. ⁴Even when we were with you, we told you that we would all have to suffer. And you know that it happened just as we said. ⁵That is why I sent Timothy to you. I could not wait any longer. I had to know that you remain faithful. I was afraid that the devil might have defeated you with his temptations. Then our hard work would have been wasted.

⁶But now Timothy has come back from his visit with you and told us good news about your faithfulness and love. He told us that you always remember us in a good way. He told us that you want very much to see us again. And it is the same with us—we want very much to see you. ⁷So, brothers and sisters, in this time of so much trouble and suffering, we are encouraged. The fact that you remain faithful makes us feel so much better about you. ⁸Our life is really full if your faith in the Lord remains strong. ⁹We have so much joy before our God because of you! So we thank God for you. But we cannot thank him enough for all the joy we feel. ¹⁰Night and day we continue praying with all our heart that we can come there and see you again. We want to give you ev-

[†]2:14 *Judea* The Jewish land where Jesus lived and taught and where the church first began.

everything you need to make your faith strong.

¹¹We pray that our God and Father and our Lord Jesus will prepare the way for us to come to you. ¹²We pray that the Lord will make your love grow. We pray that he will give you more and more love for each other and for all people. We pray that you will love everyone in the same way we love you. ¹³This will strengthen your desire to do what is right, and you will be holy and without fault before our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.[‡]

A Life That Pleases God

4 Brothers and sisters, now I have some other things to tell you. We taught you how to live in a way that will please God. And you are living that way. Now we ask and encourage you in the Lord Jesus to live that way more and more. ²You know all that we told you to do by the authority of the Lord Jesus. ³God wants you to be holy. He wants you to stay away from sexual sins. ⁴God wants each one of you to learn to control your own body. Use your body in a way that is holy and that gives honour to God.[¶] ⁵Don't let your sexual desires control you like the people who don't know God. ⁶Never do wrong to any of your fellow believers or cheat them in this way. The Lord will punish those who do that. We have already told you this and warned you about it. ⁷God chose us to be holy. He does not want us to live in sin. ⁸So anyone who refuses to obey this teaching is refusing to obey God, not us. And God is the one who gives you his Holy Spirit.

⁹We don't need to write to you about having love for your brothers and sisters in God's family. He has already taught you to love each other. ¹⁰In fact, you love all the believers in Macedonia. We encourage you now, brothers and sisters, to show your love more and more.

¹¹Do all you can to live a peaceful life. Mind your own business, and earn your own living, as we told you before. ¹²If you do these things, then those who are not believers will respect the way you live. And you will not have to depend on others for what you need.

The Lord's Coming

¹³Brothers and sisters, we want you to know about those who have died. We don't want you to be sad like other people—those who have no hope. ¹⁴We believe that Jesus died, but we also believe that he rose again. So we believe that God will raise to life through Jesus any who have died and will gather them to be with him.

¹⁵What we tell you now is the Lord's own message. Those of us who are still living when the Lord comes again will join him, but not before those who have already died. ¹⁶The Lord himself will come down from heaven with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God. And the people who have died and were in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷After that, we who are still alive at that time will be gathered up with those who have died. We will be taken up in the clouds and meet the Lord in the air. And we will be with the Lord forever. ¹⁸So encourage each other with these words.

[‡]3:13 *holy ones* Or “holy angels”.

[¶]4:4 Or “God wants each of you to learn to live with your wife in a way that is holy and that gives honour to God.”

Be Ready for the Lord's Coming

5 Now, brothers and sisters, we don't need to write to you about times and dates. ²You know very well that the day when the Lord comes again will be a surprise, like a thief who comes at night. ³People will say, "We have peace and we are safe." At that time destruction will come to them quickly, like the pains of a woman giving birth. And those people will not escape.

⁴But you, brothers and sisters, are not living in darkness. And so that day will not surprise you like a thief. ⁵You are all people who belong to the light. You belong to the day. We don't belong to the night or to darkness. ⁶So we should not be like other people. We should not be sleeping. We should be awake and have self-control. ⁷People who sleep, sleep at night. People who drink too much, drink at night. ⁸But we belong to the day, so we should control ourselves. We should wear faith and love to protect us. And the hope of salvation should be our helmet.

⁹God did not choose us to suffer his anger. God chose us to have salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹⁰Jesus died for us so that we can live together with him. It is not important if we are alive or dead when he comes. ¹¹So encourage each other and help each other grow stronger in faith, just as you are already doing.

Final Instructions and Greetings

¹²Now brothers and sisters, we ask you to recognize the value of those who

work hard among you—those who, as followers of the Lord, serve as your leaders and tell you how to live. ¹³Show them the highest respect and love because of the work they do.

Live in peace with each other. ¹⁴We ask you, brothers and sisters, to warn those who will not work. Encourage those who are afraid. Help those who are weak. Be patient with everyone. ¹⁵No one should ever try to pay back wrong for wrong. But always try to do what is good for each other and for all people.

¹⁶Always be full of joy. ¹⁷Never stop praying. ¹⁸Whatever happens, always be thankful. This is how God wants you to live in Christ Jesus.

¹⁹Don't stop the work of the Holy Spirit. ²⁰Don't treat prophecy like something that is not important. ²¹But test everything. Keep what is good, ²²and stay away from everything that is evil.

²³We pray that God himself, the God of peace, will make you pure—belonging only to him. We pray that your whole self—spirit, soul and body—will be kept safe and be free from blame when our Lord Jesus Christ comes.

²⁴The one who calls you will do that for you. You can trust him.

²⁵Brothers and sisters, please pray for us. ²⁶Give all the brothers and sisters the special greeting of God's people.[§] ²⁷I tell you by the authority of the Lord to read this letter to all the believers there. ²⁸The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

§5:26 *the special greeting of God's people* Literally, "a holy kiss".