

I THESSALONIANS 1:1-4

Introduction and Background:

- *Three of Paul's earliest letters that he wrote were I and II Thessalonians, along with the Book of Galatians.
- *Thessalonica was founded in 315 B.C. by one of Alexander the Great's generals - Cassander. This Roman province called Macedonia was given to him.
- *The city was first named "Therma" because of the "hot springs" in that area. Cassander later renamed it in memory of his wife, "Thessalonike", who was the half-sister of Alexander the Great.
- *Thessalonica was strategically located 50 miles west of Philippi and approximately 100 miles north of Athens. This city set right in the center of the whole Roman Empire and became a busy seaport off the northern coast of the Aegean Sea.
- *The church in Thessalonica was established on Paul's second missionary journey. At the end of Paul's first missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas separated and Paul replaced him with Silas. Paul and Silas then revisited the churches in Galatia and in Asia Minor, known as modern day Turkey.
- *Paul and Silas were in the northern city of Troas (modern day Turkey), when the Spirit of God put up a road-block that kept them from continuing south or even north. Paul had been given a vision of a man of Macedonia, asking them to come over and help them. So, they got on a ship and crossed over to the city of Philippi.

Acts 16:8-10 - And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas. Acts 16:9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. Acts 16:10 And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.

- *While there in Philippi, they met a certain woman named Lydia. She was a seller of purple and she had been worshipping God and opening her heart to the Lord. She led her whole household to Christ and there established a church.
- *Paul and Silas are arrested on false charges and beaten while there. They are put in stocks in the inner prison because of Paul proclaiming this new gospel of grace given to him. But God delivered them and they were able to lead the Philippian jailer and his household to faith only in Christ.

Acts 16:30-31 - And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? Acts 16:31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

- *Paul and his co-workers left Philippi and headed for the city of Thessalonica. Paul's commission was to take the gospel of grace to the Gentiles. He was known to start his ministry in the city by first going to the Jews' synagogue and being a witness, not only to the pagan Gentiles, but to his Jewish brethren in love.

Romans 1:16 - For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

- *We know from Acts 17 that Paul was there for only three Sabbaths. Paul had been there less than a month only, due to the great opposition of his new gospel. Paul then goes on to Berea and then Athens.

Acts 17:2 - And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures,

- *Even though Paul's ministry was very short, it was solid enough to leave behind a thriving church there in Thessalonica. Paul went on to Corinth, after leaving Athens, and was there for approximately 18 months. That is when Timothy and Silas came to Paul with some problems that were troubling the believers there.

- *Paul writes this letter of I Thessalonians in response to their questions, to instruct them further and to give them needed comfort. Paul wanted to assure his brethren there of his love for them. Paul had left their city quickly at night and he did not want them to think he had deserted them.
- *Paul wanted them to be grounded in the sound doctrine of his gospel of grace, particularly in reference to Christ's return. The church was going through severe persecution, but in this letter Paul is encouraging them to stand firm and to look for Christ's return.
- *In I Thessalonians, the emphasis is upon the Rapture of believers - the coming of the "Day of Christ" to take the body members of Christ out of this world.
- *In II Thessalonians, the emphasis is on Christ's return to the earth - that is called "The Day of the Lord" - to set up His Kingdom on earth. Paul wrote this second letter to assure them that the "day of the Lord" had not arrived yet.
- *These new Christians were confused about the return of Jesus Christ. Paul had told them that Christ would return in the air and take them home. They were concerned that their loved ones that had died would miss this "catching up" of the Rapture and be left behind.
- *Paul was trying to give some much needed answers to these young believers on how the return of Jesus is our hope and encouragement to us today.
- *The end of every chapter of this letter tells of the hope we have in Christ and His coming. Paul makes it clear in this epistle that the Rapture has to take place first before the "Day of the Lord", when Jesus Christ sets His feet on the earth during His 2nd coming and He comes to judge all mankind.
- *We today are looking for His appearing, watching patiently and seeking to live carefully until He takes us home.

I Thessalonians 1:1 - Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians *which is* in God the Father and *in* the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. This letter opens with the names of three men. Paul would always begin with his name first, by identifying the author. Here in I Thessalonians and II Thessalonians, Paul recognizes Silas and Timothy out of courtesy for how they played in the development of the Thessalonica Church.
2. [unto the church of the Thessalonians] The word "church" means a called out assembly. It is sometimes referred also as an universal, invisible body church - The Body of Christ Church.

Ephesians 1:22-23 - And hath put all *things* under his feet, and gave him *to be* the head over all *things* to the church, Eph. 1:23 Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.
3. Paul wants to make it clear that this is not just another assembly, but this church is one "which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ". This being one of Paul's first letters, he wanted to make it clear they were fused together in His spiritual body.
4. [Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.] This is Paul's formal introduction that he used in every one of his epistles. Grace comes first, followed by the peace of God.
 - a. Grace is God's undeserved favor in every aspect of our lives. Having that grace will give us a peace and calmness that we need in life's trials.
 - b. Peace is that calm quietness that we need when emotionally upset, especially during a difficult situation.

- c. Both the grace and the peace come from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ to all believers.

I Thessalonians 1:2 - We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers;

1. Paul gives thanks to this church because of the many things they were doing in presenting an example of how one is to live as a model church in that time.
2. Paul wanted them to be sure they knew how he felt about them. He wanted them to know of his love and what a blessing they were to him.

*In the next verse, Paul gives a pattern of how we are to show grace in the Christian life.

I Thessalonians 1:3 - Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father;

1. Paul mentions three of the Christian believer's ways to show grace in their life: work of faith; labour of love; and patience of hope.
2. Paul associated these three graces together in his love chapter: I Corinthians 13:13 - *And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.* Paul is citing the three steps in the lives of the Thessalonian believers on how they are to present themselves.

- a. "the work of faith" - how they turned to God from idols. This refers primarily to their conversion to God and now how they lived. They were trusting what Paul had taught them about God's Word in the short time he was there. Paul is not saying work is faith, or that faith is work. True faith produces change, and that produces good works.

Ephesians 2:10 - For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Titus 3:8 - *This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men.*

- b. "and labor of love" - love to God is expressed in obedience.

II Corinthians 5:14 - For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead:

*The Thessalonians were objects of persecution, and yet they served God. They were paying a price, but they stayed faithful.

*That "labor of love" showed their practice of serving the living and true God.

- c. "and patience of hope" - after these believers had turned to God from the idols they had worshipped, they are now waiting for the Lord's return. They are steadfastly waiting for God's Son to return from heaven.

Titus 2:13 - Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;

*This was their ability to endure earthly trials and persecution - which resulted from the assurance of eternal salvation.

I Thessalonians 1:4 - Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.

1. Paul was confident of these Thessalonian believers. Because of their hearts for God and the fruit in their lives, Paul believed God had moved on them.
2. God had chosen them to be part of the family of God (the elect). Election begins with God and works within us through His Word. God is all knowing (has foreknowledge), which means God already knows who will accept Him as their personal Lord and Savior and who will not.
3. We were saved when God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world and Paul was assured these believers were included in the family of God.

Ephesians 1:4 - According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

4. It does not teach that God chose some to be damned. Man has the free will choice and has human responsibility on how he chooses to live his life. Sinners should not use the election of God as an excuse for not believing in Christ.
5. God offers a free salvation to the lost world today. We can either choose Him or reject Him. Each person has the freedom to choose Christ.

(BLUE LINE) PAUL'S 1ST MISSIONARY JOURNEY
 (PINK LINE) START OF PAUL'S 2ND MISSIONARY JOURNEY

OHT-22: Paul's Journey to Rome

