

1 Thessalonians

Chapter 1

Greeting

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace.

1:1 *Silas*. He accompanied Paul on most of his second missionary journey. (CSB)

Aka Silas; leading member of the Church in Jerusalem; proclaimer of God's Word. After the Jerusalem Council, he accompanied Paul to Antioch to deliver the Council's decision (Ac 15, esp v 22). During their travels together, they met Timothy in Lystra. (TLSB)

Timothy. Recipient. Both he and Silas helped Paul found the Thessalonian church (see Ac 17:1–14). (CSB)

Son of a Greek man and a Jewish woman (cf Ac 16:1). His mother had become a Christian a few years earlier when Paul and Barnabas preached in the city. (TLSB)

Both were trusted junior co-workers who accompanied St Paul in the proclamation of the Gospel. Though separated for a while, they were now reunited with Paul in Corinth. They had visited with him in Thessalonica in AD 49 (cf Ac 17:1–14). Both were selected by Paul for his second missionary journey (Ac 15:36–40; 16:1–5). (TLSB)

Thessalonians. In the first century, Thessalonica was the capital city of the province of Macedonia and the largest city on the Greek Peninsula. Today it is called Thessaloniki (or Salonika) and is still located on the Thermaic Gulf in Greece. (TLSB)

in. Indicates the vital union and living relationship that Christians have with the Father and the Son (see Jn 14:23; 17:21). The close connection between the Father and the Son points to the Trinitarian relationship (see 3:11; 2Th 1:2, 8, 12; 2:16; 3:5). (CSB)

Father and the Lord Jesus Christ – This expresses the close relation and vital union of believers with the triune God. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 4)

The close association of Jesus with the Father shows the highest place given to Him.

Lord. Gk *kyrios*, translation of the divine name Yahweh. It was the name given to Jesus Christ to show His divinity. The omission of the Holy Spirit here does not mean that the Church existed without the Holy Spirit. Wherever God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ exist, the Holy Spirit is also there. (TLSB)

Grace and peace. Paul addressed his letter to the church, or congregation, of the Thessalonians, not merely to the officers, the presbyters and deacons, but to all the members. There were no hierarchical distinctions in those days, neither did men think of restricting the study of the Word of God to the preachers or priests. The entire congregation, all the true believers in Christ in the city, were in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. This profound and stately expression does not denote merely a fellowship with God and the Savior Jesus Christ,

but it emphasizes that the entire life of the believers is in God, that their entire sphere, their whole state of existence, is in the Lord, Rom. 16, 11; John 15, 4; 1 John 2, 5; 5, 20. The fact that the Christians are in Christ and in God, the two persons of the Godhead being one in essence, makes them new creatures, separates them from the world and consecrates them to the Lord. The apostolic salutation to this congregation of consecrated believers is brief, but comprehensive: Grace to you and peace. He wishes that the kindness, the favor, the mercy of God may be theirs for the sake of Christ, and that thus they might enter into the right relation with God once more, a relation which had been torn asunder by the Fall. He that is the possessor of the grace of God through Jesus Christ will also be sure of the peace with God in Jesus Christ. (Kretzmann)

1:1 As a good shepherd, Paul wants to keep in touch with the flock of God. Labor in God's kingdom is not a one-man job. We must not forget to visit and follow up with those who are in Christ Jesus. We must work in God's kingdom by joining hands with other brothers and sisters. God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ sustain the Church and carry it in the palm of Their hand. • Lord, thank You that the Church is rooted in You and not in feeble human beings. As feeble as we are, help us to join hands, as did Paul, Silas, and Timothy, and labor in Your kingdom. Amen. (TLSB)

The Thessalonians' Faith and Example

2 We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, 3 remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. 4 For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, 5 because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. 6 And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, 7 so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. 8 For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything. 9 For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, 10 and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

1:2 *thank.* For the fruit of faith God produced in the lives of the Thessalonians. (TLSB)

The present tense denotes a continual remembrance of his fellow believers in prayers. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 4)

constantly mentioning. Either as often as they prayed or contemplated God. (TLSB)

1:3 The triad of faith, hope and love is found often in the NT (5:8; Ro 5:2–5; 1Co 13:13; Gal 5:5–6; Col 1:4–5; Heb 6:10–12; 10:22–24; 1Pe 1:3–8, 21–22). (CSB)

Gifts of the Holy Spirit that remain with God's people when all others vanish. The greatest of all is love (1Co 13). Though listed separately, the three are connected. (TLSB)

work of faith. Faith produces action (see Ro 1:5; 16:26; Gal 5:6; 2Th 1:11; Jas 2:14–26). (CSB)

Literally, “of the work of faith.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 4)

labor of love – This type of love is not, of course, exclusive, conditional, or self-serving. It is, on the contrary, inclusive, absolute, and sacrificial. God’s love is active. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 4)

steadfastness – Endurance is not passive acquiescence of life’s twists and turns, but firm resolve and quiet strength to meet adversity. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 4)

hope. Not unfounded wishful thinking, but firm confidence in our Lord Jesus Christ and his return (v. 10). See Heb 6:18–20. (CSB)

Christian hope makes possible our joyful endurance of trials and tribulations. Hope is not mere wishful thinking, but the confident expectation that God will do as he promises. Hope is a synonym of faith. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 4)

1:4 know. The reasons for Paul’s conviction regarding their election are stated in vv. 5–10. (CSB)

brothers. United to each other through union with Christ. This term is used 28 times in the two letters to the Thessalonians. (CSB)

Refers to God’s family, the Church. (TLSB)

loved ... chosen. Both words speak of God’s electing love (see Col 3:12; 2Th 2:13). (CSB)

Their faith and love show that God chose the Thessalonians. Paul does not speak of election in the abstract but notes its concrete effects in Christians’ daily lives due to the Gospel’s impact. (TLSB)

The doctrine of election is a difficult truth for many Christians to accept, and indeed it is impossible to fully understand. Edward Koehler defines it, “The doctrine of predestination (election) is this: Whatever God has done, is doing, and will still do..to bring us to faith in Christ and preserve us in this faith (Summary of Christian Doctrine, p. 182). It is intended as a doctrine of comfort for Christians, but at the same time it must not be used to exclude others from God’s plan of salvation, which is for all people. Paul’s purpose in mentioning it here, it would seem, is to provide further motivation for the Thessalonian Christians to persist in the “work..labor..and..endurance” produced by their Christian “faith..love..and..hope.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 4)

1:5 our gospel. The gospel preached by Paul, Silas and Timothy and that they themselves had received by faith. It is first of all God the Father’s (2:8) because he originated it, and Christ’s (3:2) because it springs from his atoning death. (CSB)

A shared Gospel. Paul received it from the Lord, but it is the same message preached by the other apostles (1Co 15:3; Gal 2:9). (TLSB)

Paul did not travel to Thessalonica because of favorable “scouting reports” or because an ancient market analyst suggested it as a great place to start a congregation. Rather Paul received a revelation from the Lord that God’s people in Macedonia needed to hear the Good News. Paul’s ministry, then, was prompted and sustained by grace. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 4)

power. The power that delivered them from spiritual bondage. That power is of the Holy Spirit (see Ro 15:13, 18–19; 1Co 2:4–5), but it also resides in the gospel itself (see Ro 1:16). (CSB)

The good news of our Lord Jesus Christ always has power to change lives (Heb 4:12). The Word's power may be demonstrated in visible, supernatural miracles in areas that have not been reached with the Gospel. (TLSB)

Holy Spirit. Jesus said the Spirit would testify about Him. The Spirit is always present when the Gospel is preached (cf Jn 15:26). (TLSB)

full conviction. Such conviction, on the part of both the preachers and the Thessalonians, was also of the Holy Spirit. (CSB)

Not delivered with doubt or uncertainty. Full clarity, understanding, and certainty come from the Holy Spirit, who persuades and convicts on the basis of Christ's accomplished work.

plarophoria is a rare word in the NT, occurring elsewhere only in Col 2:2; Heb 6:11; 10:22. The noun refers to "full confidence, certainty, assurance" that God's promises are true, reliable, and will be fulfilled. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 4)

proved to be among – Paul and his companions, by God's grace, were empowered to set a godly example of faith and endurance in Christ. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 4)

1:6 imitators. The order in Christian imitation: (1) Believers in Macedonia and Achaia imitated the Thessalonians (v. 7), just as the Thessalonians imitated the churches in Judea (2:14); (2) the Thessalonians imitated Paul, just as the Corinthians did (1Co 4:6; 11:1) and just as all believers were to imitate their leaders (2Th 3:7, 9; 1Ti 4:12; Tit 2:7; 1Pe 5:3); (3) Paul imitated Christ (1Co 11:1) as did the Thessalonians (v. 6); (4) all were to imitate God (Eph 5:1). (CSB)

The Thessalonians followed Christ's and the apostles' examples by suffering persecution gladly for the sake of their faith in the Gospel (1Co 11:1). (TLSB)

mimatas is responsible for the English words mimic and mime. The basic meaning is "to behave in the same manner as someone else. As Paul uses this term, he is calling the Christian church to an active obedience, not simply a shallow or careless resemblance. To imitate means to recognize the authority of Jesus' person and Word, and to permit God to shape and mold our faith and life according to his pattern. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 4)

much affliction. Such as recorded in Ac 17:5–14 (see also 1Th 2:14). (CSB)

Trouble or hardship that Christians may have due to their faith and witness. Some of Paul's hosts in Thessalonica were definitely persecuted by their fellow countrymen (Ac 17:1–9). (TLSB)

The Thessalonians accepted their trials – not with regret, but with inner peace, a display of the Holy Spirit in their hearts and lives. To remain faithful to our Lord in such instances is to be an imitator of him who was faithful to the end. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 4)

This attitude of the heart is always accompanied with the joy of the Holy Ghost, in the very midst of much affliction, No matter how much hostility and persecution the believers must contend

with, no matter how seriously the wretchedness and misery of this present life seek to create doubt and unhappiness in their hearts, they have the assurance of the Holy Ghost in the Word, and therefore they are, in their heart of hearts, satisfied, joyful, happy. (Kretzmann)

1:7 Rome had divided the Greek Peninsula into two provinces, Macedonia (north) and Achaia (south). (TLSB)

an example – In classical Greek, *tupos*, “type, model” can mean either a mold, die or stamp; or the imprint left by it in clay, metal, etc. For example, in John 20:25, Thomas speaks of seeing the *tupos*, “mark” or “imprint,” left by the nails in Christ’s hands and feet. Acts 23:25 uses the word for the “seal” or “signature” of the Roman official Claudius, which he affixed to a legal document he wrote on behalf of Paul; the imprint signified that the document was genuine and authoritative. The idea is similar to Eph 1:13, which speaks of Christians being “sealed” with the Holy Spirit, that is, signed with God’s name and signature in Baptism. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 4)

Macedonia and Achaia. The two Roman provinces into which Greece was then divided (see Ac 19:21; Ro 15:26). (CSB)

1:8 *the word of the Lord sounded forth* – The word *edzacheo*, literally “to echo out,” is usually translated “rang out” or “resounded.” The English derivative “echo,” which would imply that it is the Lord’s Word that resonates in us and off of us. We Christians do not make up our own gospel; rather, we affirm and faithfully sound forth the words the Lord has spoken, as in the worship liturgy. The idea is the same as that of Christians as reflectors of God’s light. A colorful translation might be “thundered forth,” since the verb is in the perfect tense to give the idea of a continuing echo. A loud thunderclap reverberates for some time. In the mountains or in a canyon, the echo of thunder is awesome, as the Israelites experienced at the foot of Mt Sinai. (Ex 19:16-19) (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 4)

This is not flattery (cf 2:5–6). As in the popular saying “Actions speak louder than words,” news of the Thessalonians’ faith, love, and hope rooted in the Gospel spread far wider than their immediate environment. The Thessalonians functioned as a missionary church by proclaiming the Gospel they received by word and life. (TLSB)

everywhere. In every place they visited or knew about (see Ro 1:8; 1Co 1:2; 2Co 2:14; 1Ti 2:8). The news spread because Thessalonica was on the important Egnatian Way; it was also a busy seaport and the capital of the Roman province of Macedonia. (CSB)

Throughout Macedonia and Achaia, the ancient Grecian country, the larger part of what is now the Balkan Peninsula, the Gospel had been disseminated, people had gone forth, even in this brief space of time since Paul first preached there, endeavoring to spread the seed of the Gospel doctrine throughout the country. Surely a splendid example of interest and zeal for all Christians to imitate. By thus taking advantage of their opportunities, the Thessalonians had caused their faith to be known, to be spoken of everywhere. Cp. Rom. 1, 8; Col. 1, 6. 23. The rapid, powerfully spreading conversion was exciting attention everywhere, so that there was nothing for Paul to add; the facts spoke more loudly than his words. (Kretzmann)

1:9–10† Three marks of true conversion: (1) turning from idols, (2) serving God and (3) waiting for Christ to return. In his two short letters to the Thessalonians, Paul speaks much of the second coming of Christ (v. 10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:13–5:4; 5:23–24; 2Th 1:7–10; 2:1–12). (CSB)

1:9 *they themselves* – So great was the sensation which the faith of the Thessalonians had caused in all the cities along the trade routes of the Eastern Mediterranean that, as the apostle writes: For of their own accord people make mention concerning us what manner of entrance we had toward you, and how you turned to God from the idols to serve the living and true God. This was surely a novel experience for the apostle. Before he so much as had an opportunity to refer to the willing acceptance which the Thessalonians gave to the Gospel, in order to incite others to emulation and to open a way for the preaching of the Gospel, people told him of their own accord what they knew of the situation in Thessalonica, of the willingness with which the Thessalonians had received the Gospel-message. (Kretzmann)

idols to serve – It was known everywhere how they had turned away from the worship of idols with the express intention of serving only the living, the true God. The God of the Gospel-preaching is the living God, as opposed to all dead idol-images; He is the true, the real God, as opposed to the imaginary, lying idols. To serve this true God in faith and love, that is the life of the believers, therein they find true and lasting happiness. The service of all false gods and imaginary deities is a slavery which the conscience of the idolaters denounces, which they themselves abhor; the service of the true God is the outflow of the relation of love which obtains between the heavenly Father and His children. (Kretzmann)

Before the Gospel came to them, the Gentile Thessalonians worshiped idols. Forsaking idol worship and coming to the true and living God was important evidence of true conversion in the first century. (TLSB)

to serve – First, they turned to God from Idols. Second, they came to “serve the living and true God.” The verb *douleuo*, “serve,” is from the same root as *doulos*, “slave” – a term the apostle Paul proudly uses for himself in the introductions to some of his epistles. It underlines the nature of Christian service as rendered to a Master who has ownership of all aspects of our life. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 4)

1:10 *and to wait* – Third, they were waiting for the return of the Lord. Their anticipation of the parousia led to dedicated service. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 4)

The second coming of our Lord was actively expected by the Early Church and thought of as near. (TLSB)

Jesus. And the best is yet to be: And to wait for the coming of His Son from the heavens, whom He raised from the dead, Jesus, the Deliverer from the wrath to come. While the believers lead their lives of faith and love, serving God and their but fellow-men in the simplicity of their hearts, their minds are looking forward to, they are eagerly expecting, they are anxiously awaiting, the coming of the Son of God, who will return from heaven in the fullness of His divine glory, Matt. 25, 31. It was this Son whom God raised from the dead and exalted to the right hand of His power. The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the great fact by which He has definitely and incontrovertibly been proved to be the Son of God with power, Rom. 1, 4. (Kretzmann)

wrath.† A reference to the final judgment (see note on Ro 1:18; cf. Lk 3:7 and note); millennialists think it refers to a future period of tribulation. (CSB)

Divine judgment to come upon the unbelieving on the Last Day. (TLSB)

1:2–10 The Thessalonians become model Christians in words and deeds due to the impact of the Gospel in their lives and the fruit of the Spirit demonstrated in their faith, love, and hope. Compared to the Thessalonians, we are much poorer in our faith, labor of love, and steadfastness of hope. Even without hardship or persecution, we are slow to confess our faith and live it out in love. The Lord knows each one of us and our specific situation. His Spirit has created faith in us and gives us power and full conviction. Despite our weaknesses and failings, His unfailing love and forgiveness will sustain us to be His witnesses. • Thank You, Lord, for the victorious life You gave to the Thessalonians. Make us also an exemplary witness for the Gospel, so that Your name may be glorified far beyond our community. Amen. (TLSB)