

1 Thessalonians Chapter 1

July 13, 2025

1. Summary statement (1:2–3)

- a. In these 2 verses Paul expressed his gratitude to God **and** set forth in a brief statement why he was thankful for the Thessalonians.
- b. 1:2. Paul, Silas, and Timothy rejoiced together in what God had done in their converts' lives.
 - i. They continually and frequently gave thanks;
 - i. Get an idea of Paul's prayer life

Romans 1:9–10

"God, whom I serve with my whole heart in preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witness how constantly I remember you in my prayers at all times; and I pray that now at last by God's will the way may be opened for me to come to you."

Ephesians 1:18

"I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,"

Ephesians 3:16

"I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being,"

Philippians 1:4

"In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy"

Colossians 1:3

"We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you"

Colossians 1:9

"For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding."

1 Thessalonians 3:10

"Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith."

2 Thessalonians 1:11

"I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ."

Philemon 6

"I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ."

- ii. the Thessalonians were a constant **source of joy** to them.
- c. 1:3. **Three characteristics** of these believers stood out in Paul's mind.
 - i. **First**, they had performed an important **work produced by faith** in Christ.

- a) **Verse 9** mentions that they had turned to the true God from idols.
 - b) The reference is probably to **acts of duty, holiness, and benevolence**, which proved that they exercised *faith* in the Lord
 - c) Faith in Christ had produced true repentance.
 - ii. **Second**, they performed **labor** (*kopou*, “toil”) **prompted by love** for Christ.
 - a) **their kindness** toward
 - 1. the poor,
 - 2. the oppressed,
 - 3. and the afflicted; and
 - 4. all their acts which showed that they loved the *souls* of men.
 - b) serving God (**v. 9**)
 - c) in the midst of persecution (**v. 6**).
 - iii. **Third**, they had **endurance** (*hypo-monēs*) “a **bearing up patiently** under a heavy load”
 - a) **inspired by** (lit., “of”) **hope in Christ**.
 - b) Specifically, they were waiting for God’s Son from heaven (**1 Thes. 1:10**).
 - d. These **3 cardinal virtues** that should mark every Christian—**faith, love, and hope**—
 - i. stood out in the Thessalonian believers’ lives
- 1 Corinthians 13:13**
- “And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.”*
- ii. Their lives were certainly focused on Jesus Christ.
 - i. No wonder Paul and his companions
 - ii. gave thanks for them.
2. specific reasons (**1:4–10**)
- a. **1:4**. The Thessalonians’ response to the preaching of the gospel
 - i. indisputable proof of their salvation.
 - b. Paul addressed his fellow Christians as **brothers**.
 - i. He used this term (*adelphos*)
 - i. 15 times in this one brief epistle
 - ii. and 7 times in **2 Thessalonians**
 - ii. He recognized the equality of all the redeemed in the sight of their heavenly Father,
 - iii. The proof of God’s love for the Thessalonians
 - i. was their salvation.

- iv. From the word translated **chosen** (*eklektos*)
 - i. comes the English “**election**.”
 - i. Paul uses this word **1st to make a point** to the Jews
 - 1. Who have always contended that **they were a chosen race**
 - 2. Which was true during Old Testament times
 - b) **2ndly**, this term is used to help the **Gentiles** understand that God has chosen them to be part of His eternal family
 - 1. There would be no more discrimination of races.
 - c) Why is it **not** as right to **choose** an individual as a nation?
 - d) Why **not** as proper to **reject** an individual as a whole people?

John 6:44–45

“No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the Prophets: ‘They will all be taught by God.’ Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me.”

John 6:65

“He went on to say, “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled him.”

- e) The difficulty in putting divine election and human responsibility together is understanding how both can be true.
 - 1. *How* both can be true is apparently **incomprehensible** to finite human minds?
 - 2. **no one** has ever been **able to explain** this anti-nomy satisfactorily.
 - 3. This task **transcends human mental powers**,
- f) Equally clear is the fact
 - 1. that God holds each individual personally responsible
 - 2. for their decision to trust or **not to trust** in Jesus Christ

John 13:34–35

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

- g) **Equally true** is that **NOT** everyone who declares that they are included in the chosen, regardless of their demonstrative works of faith
 - 1. Are chosen of God

Matthew 7:21–23

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons

and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’

3. **1:5** The response of converts was a supernatural work of God,
- a. not a natural response to a sermon.
 - b. When Paul preached to them, he did not just share human opinion and philosophy

1 Corinthians 2:1–5

“When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, so that your faith might not rest on men’s wisdom, but on God’s power.”

- c. Rather, his message was marked by the **power** of God
 - i. The apostle evidently is not referring to any miracles
 - ii. but to the effect of the gospel on those who heard it.
 - iii. **It is possible** that there were miracles performed there,
 - 1. as there were in other places,
 - 2. but there is **no mention** of such a fact
 - d. **The Holy Spirit** brought it home to their hearts with **deep conviction**
 - e. **Not only** did Paul and his traveling companions preach a convincing message,
 - i. but they **also lived lives** consistent with that message
 - ii. The Thessalonians were **fully aware** of their teachers’ manner of life
4. **1:6.** They **became imitators** of their spiritual parents, the missionaries.
- a. The life of a preacher goes far to confirm the truth of the religion which he preaches
 - i. **Sadly**, many preachers have double lives
 - ii. Secret lives
 - b. Nothing is better to show them the evil of their own pagan lives
 - i. **than the contrast** between their lives with Paul’s
 - ii. This is normal Christian experience.
 - c. they **also imitated the Lord**.
 - d. This too is natural, and the order is true to life as well.
 - i. A new Christian **first looks to other** believers as his pattern,
 - e. but then **as he matures** he realizes that Jesus Christ is his best “model”
- 1 Peter 2:21**
- “To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.”*
- f. Despite **severe suffering** the Thessalonians **welcomed the message**.

- i. The Jews among them despised their unbelieving brothers
 - ii. They were especially antagonistic to the gospel in that city.
 - iii. The Gentile converts had to deal with **swift current of paganism** in the commercial Thessalonica.
 - iv. the **city's chief men's wives**, who had become Christians, had to go home to unbelieving husbands who would not have appreciated their newly sensitized consciences.
 - v. Yet in spite of trials, the Thessalonian believers possessed **joy** within,
 - 1. the joy of sins forgiven.
 - 2. It is interesting that Christians
 - a. who have tribulations in their daily walks
 - b. often seem to have greater joy in the Lord
 - c. than those who live in more comfortable climates.
 - 3. A Christian's joy should be determined **not by his circumstances** but by his relationship with Christ.
 - 4. This was true of the Thessalonians. The source of their joy was the indwelling **Holy Spirit**.
5. **1:7** The testimony of these Christians did not burn brightly merely at home;
- a. **Model** –
 - i. a mark,
 - ii. print,
 - iii. or impression,
 - iv. made by a stamp or die;
 - v. and then a resemblance,
 - vi. figure,
 - vii. pattern,
 - viii. a model after which anything is made
 - b. it also shone abroad to other people in other parts of **Macedonia**,
 - c. reaching even to **Achaia**, the neighboring province to the south.
 - i. Corinth was the capital of Achaia
 - ii. **This is where Paul is writing this letter from**
 - d. they in turn became the **object of imitation** by other believers.
 - e. This is a striking example of the effect a church in a city may have **on the country**
 - f. When Paul wrote to the Corinthians he pointed to these Macedonians as **a model** of sacrificial giving (**2 Cor. 8:1–8**).
 - i. He wrote that they had given money to help other believers even though they themselves were poor.

- ii. One of the most **revealing evidences** of a Christian's true spirituality is the way he manages his money.
- 6. **1:8.** This verse explains how the Thessalonians became examples to other Christians.
 - a. The word *ex-ē-chē-ta-i*, translated **rang out**, could be rendered "reverberated."
 - i. Like the sound of a trumpet
 - b. Paul saw the Thessalonians as amplifiers or relay stations

1 Thessalonians 1:8

"The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore, we do not need to say anything about it."

- c. A changed life speaks louder than words alone
- d. **When** words and a life that backs up those words **is seen**, - people change

1 Thessalonians 4:10–12

"And in fact, you do love all the brothers throughout Macedonia. Yet we urge you, brothers, to do so more and more. Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody."

- i. The evidence is indisputable
 - ii. Me and Barry Mattox
 - iii. No longer had the excuse that living totally for God was impossible
 - iv. **My faith wasn't just contained** in College Station, Texas
 - v. It has been heard in Houston, Gainesville, Orlando, Boston, Los Angeles and Sarasota
 - vi. I have studied the Bible with people from all over South America, Central America, Africa, Europe, Guam, China, England, Hawaii, and who knows where else
 - vii. I'm only one person
 - viii. What about the others who were converted in College Station, Texas.
- 7. **1:9.** Paul heard reports from Other people how the gospel changed their lives.
 - a. Such a radical shift in theology will certainly get around.
 - b. These believers had **turned to God from idols**.
 - i. This **strongly suggests** that many of those believers had been pagan Gentiles.
 - ii. The Jews, of course, abhorred idolatry.
 - iii. Someone has observed that: *"humans have the freedom to choose who their master will be, but they do not have the freedom to choose **no** master."*
 - c. BEST EVANGELISM IS SHARING HOW JESUS CHANGED YOUR LIFE.
 - i. Personal testimony is very powerful

- ii. Not a debate on doctrine
 - iii. “Proof is in the pudding”
- d. Their boldness to share the good news made an impact not just locally
- 8. **1:10. Not only** had the Thessalonians turned to God
 - a. but they were also awaiting the return of **His Son from heaven**
 - b. the Thessalonians were **looking for Jesus’ coming** through the clouds, literally, “out of the heavens.”
- 9. It is clear from this and from other parts of these two epistles,
 - a. that the return of the Lord Jesus to this world
 - b. was a prominent subject of Paul’s preaching at Thessalonica
 - i. They fully believed in it;
 - ii. they expected it.
 - iii. They were looking out for it,
 - iv. not knowing when it might occur,
 - v. and *as if* it might occur at any moment.

1 Thessalonians 5:1–3

“Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. ³ While people are saying, “Peace and safety,” destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.”

Matthew 24:36–44

“No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left. “Therefore, keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. So, you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.

- 10. The return of Jesus is a source of hope for Christians for several reasons,
 - a. Paul’s preaching encouraged them to “be ready”
 - b. Jesus’ deliverance of the saints **from the coming wrath** of God.
 - i. The wrath of God will be poured out on unrighteous people
 - ii. In the phrase “from the coming wrath” the word translated “from” means: that Christians are kept from it, not taken out of it.
 - c. **Bible talks about the wrath of God quite frequently**

i. What does the coming wrath mean?

Matthew 25:31–33

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.”

Matthew 25:41

“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.’”

Matthew 25:46

“Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”

Romans 2:4–8

“Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God’s kindness leads you toward repentance?”

But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God’s wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed. God “will give to each person according to what he has done.” To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger.”

11. The same verb (**rescues**) and preposition (**from**) are used in

2 Corinthians 1:10

“He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us”

- a. Obviously, this does not mean Paul died and was resurrected
- b. Christians will be kept away from God’s wrath,
- c. **not just kept safe through it**

12. This chapter, like every chapter in this epistle, closes with a reference to the return of Jesus Christ (1 Thes. 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:13–18, 5:23).

13. Question: Do you live as though Jesus is coming back soon?

14. He will come when you don’t expect it!

15. If you knew He would return this time next week, what would you do differently.

16. That is how the Thessalonians were living their lives.