

I THESSALONIANS

Outlined Bible

Introduction: I Thessalonians is likely the second earliest of Paul's canonical letters. Unlike the second epistle to Thessalonica, this letter is positive in tone. Paul finds a number of things to commend about the church there and wants to clear up some confusion about the second coming of Christ.

Name — The book is named for the church that originally received it. (i.e. - Thessalonica)

Author—Paul. (I Thessalonians 1:1; 2:18)

Purpose — Paul's key purpose for writing to the Thessalonians was to prove his love for the Christians there. A second purpose in writing was to clarify the truth about the Lord's return.

I. Background of the book.

A. The city of Thessalonica.

1. Geographically, it was located 100 miles west of the city of Philippi at the mouth of the Gulf of Therma.
2. Thessalonica was located in the region of Macedonia and was its chief city.
 - a. As the seaport developed, Thessalonica became a commercially oriented city.
 - b. A loyal Roman city, it was declared a "free city" in 42 BC
 - c. In New Testament times, the city's population was about 200,000.
3. The city had a fairly large Jewish population but was predominantly Greek.

B. The church at Thessalonica.

1. The church was established at Thessalonica during Paul's second missionary journey.
 - a. On that journey, Paul was asked to leave Philippi. (Acts 16:39-40)
 - b. From there he went to Thessalonica where he began his evangelistic work in the synagogue. (Acts 17:2-3)
 - [1] Some converts were made there. (Acts 17:4)
 - [2] Jewish opposition incited a riot and brought false charges against Paul. (Acts 17:5-9)
 - [3] Paul's comrades offered a "peace bond" for Paul's release, and he left the city during the night.
 - c. Having been at Thessalonica only a short time, Paul moved on to Berea (Acts.17:10) where he again was forced to leave because of a riot.
 - d. From Berea, Paul moved on to Athens and then to Corinth. (Acts 17:11—18:4)
 - [1] From Athens, Paul sent Timothy back to Thessalonica. (3:1-2)
 - [2] Silas and Timothy rejoined (Acts 18:5), and Timothy brought a report about the condition of the church at Thessalonica. (3:6-8)
2. In Corinth, Paul penned and sent his first letter to the Thessalonians.
3. The date of the epistle is AD 51.

II. The message of the book.

- A. The main message of the book is the expectation of the second coming of Jesus Christ.
- B. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God. (4:16)

III. Outline of the book.

A. Paul's relationship to the church at Thessalonica. (1:1—3:13)

1. After a brief salutation (1:1), Paul offers words of thanksgiving for the conditions of the church at Thessalonica. (1:2-10)

2. He recounts the circumstances of his ministry there. (2:1-16)
3. Paul tells the Thessalonians he is eager to see them. (2:17-20)
4. He explains that Timothy had been sent to establish them in the faith. (3:1-5)
5. Timothy returned with an encouraging report about their faith. (3:6-10)
6. Paul prays for their further strengthening by the Lord. (3:11-13)

B. Exhortation of the saints. (I Thessalonians 4:1—5:28)

1. The apostle instructs the Christians to live holy and righteous lives. (4:1-12)
2. He describes what will happen when the Lord comes again. (4:13-18)
3. He gives counsel on personal attitudes and behavior connected with that second coming. (5:1-22)
4. Closing words. (5:23-28)

IV. Key themes of the book.

A. The second coming of the Lord.

1. One out of every 25 verses in the New Testament refers to the second coming of Jesus Christ.
2. The attestations of that coming are from various sources.
 - a. Jesus repeatedly promised that he would come again. (Matthew 25:31ff; John 14:3, etc.)
 - b. The apostles declared it.
 - [1] Peter. (Acts 3:19-20; II Peter 3:3-10)
 - [2] Paul. (4:16; I Corinthians 15:23)
 - [3] John. (Revelation 1:7)
 - c. Angels even said he would come again. (Acts 1:11)
3. Christ's first coming to this world was marked by lowliness and humility; his second coming will be marked by glory, splendor, and triumph. (1:7-10)
 - a. He will come "bodily" and visibly. (Acts 1:11; I Thessalonians 4:16; Philippians 3:21)
 - b. The arrival will be sudden and without warning. (4:16; 5:2; I Corinthians 15:52a)
 - c. The dead will be raised. (4:13-14; I Corinthians 15:52a)
 - d. The living will be changed and "caught up in the air" with the resurrected dead.
 - e. All humankind will appear before the Lord for judgment. (Matthew 25:32; Revelation 20:12)
 - f. An eternal separation will take place and the final sentence will be passed on to all men. (Matthew 25:33-34, 41)
 - g. The earth will be destroyed. (II Peter 3:10)
 - h. The kingdom will be delivered up to the Father. (I Corinthians 15:24)
4. Speculation about when this return will occur is pointless and fruitless.
 - a. Through the years, many individuals have claimed to know the exact time of Jesus' return.
 - b. Whenever anyone claims to set a date for Christ's second coming, they automatically mark themselves as a false prophet. (cf. Matthew 24:42; 25:13; Mark 13:32; II Peter 3:10)
5. Whatever the date, the Christian is to be prepared for his *parousia*, Greek meaning second coming.¹⁹ (5:4)

B. Living in light of Christ's coming.⁷

1. The doctrine of Christ's second coming, the Judgment, and the reward of heaven are our motivation to be faithful to our calling. (II Peter 3:11-14)
2. In the first Thessalonian letter, Paul concludes with practical exhortations in light of the future. (cf. 5:16-24)

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Summarized Bible

To the church of the Thessalonians

“We always thank God for all of you, mentioning you in our prayers. We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Thess.1:1-3)

Love and Encouragement Expressed

“You became imitators of us and of the Lord; in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. You became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia.” (1 Thess.1:6-7)

Comment: Suffering for the cause of Christ can either draw one closer to Him or push them away to relieve stress and strain one perceives - it is a choice.

“We had previously suffered and been insulted in Philippi, as you know, but with the help of our God we spoke his gospel to you in spite of strong opposition. The appeal we made did not spring from error or impure motives, nor trickery. On the contrary, we spoke as men approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We were not trying to please men but God, who tests our hearts. We never used flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed. We were not looking for praise from men, not from you or anyone else.” (1 Thess.2:2-6)

“We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us. Surely you remember our toil and hardship for we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God. We dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.” (1 Thess.2:8-9)

“You became imitators of God's churches in Judea since you also suffered from your own countrymen.” (1 Thess. 2:14)

“When we were torn away from you for a short time (in person, not in thought), out of our intense longing we made every effort to see you — but Satan stopped us.” (1 Thess.2:17-19)

“When we could stand it no longer, we thought it best to be left by ourselves in Athens. We sent Timothy, who is our brother and God's fellow worker in spreading the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith, that no one would be unsettled by these trials. In fact, we kept telling you that we would be persecuted. For this reason, I sent Timothy to find out about your faith. I was afraid that in some way the tempter might have tempted you and our efforts might have been useless.” (1 Thess.3:1-5)

“Timothy has just now come to us from you and has brought good news about your faith and love. How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you? Night and day, we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith.” (1 Thess.3:6; 9-10)

“May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.” (1 Thess.3:12-13)

“It is God's will that you should be sanctified (cleansed. made Holy-ISBE) that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not

in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God; and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish men for all such sins. For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit.” (1 Thess.4:3-8)

“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.” (1 Thess.4:11-12)

The Dead in Christ

“Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep (die), or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord (the 2nd Coming), will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the 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 dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air to be with the Lord forever.” (1 Thess.4:13-18)

“You know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. ... But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. So then, let us not be like others, but let us be alert and self-controlled. ... Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing. Live in peace with each other. Warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone. Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else. Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.” (1 Thess.5:2-21)

Comment: Warn those who are idle could mean those who are capable of working to supply needs for themselves but are not doing so. It could also mean not doing what God desires for all His servants to do; e.g., proclaim the gospel.

“Do not put out the Spirit's fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil.”

For a study on “Where does the Body, Soul and Spirit Go When you die?”
thebiblewayonline.com/BodySoulSpirit.html

Key Points of 1 Thessalonians

- Love of fellow workers continues to grow even when separated.
- Expressing one's love is of great encouragement.
- When possible relieve concerns and anxiety of others

Question – What should a Christian strive for – their life's ambition?

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