

## Lesson 4- The First Letter to the Thessalonians, Chapters 1-3

### Faith and Thanksgiving, Paul's Ministry and Travel Plans

This letter is *the oldest surviving Christian document*. It is believed to have been written around the year 50 AD. Paul's early letters suggest that Paul believed the end times and "Second Coming" of Jesus would happen during Paul's lifetime. In 1 Thes 4:13-18, Paul wrote that he expected to be a witness to Jesus' return. In fact, Paul mentions the Parousia six times in this letter. As you read this letter, be aware of references made about the return of Jesus. Paul also writes about how the Holy Spirit was transforming the community and inspiring the people to prophesy. This letter gives us insight into how this "new religion" was established in Gentile territories.

1. Read the introduction to 1 Thessalonians in your Bible and share any interesting information with your group.
2. Read 1 Thessalonians 1-10 and footnotes. Share any helpful footnotes with your group.
3. Who is with Paul as he writes this letter to the community of faithful in Thessalonica?
4. Read Acts of the Apostles 17:1-11, then answer the questions below.

**Acts 17:1-11.** <sup>1</sup>When they took the road through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they reached Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. <sup>2</sup>Following his usual custom, Paul joined them, and for three sabbaths he entered into discussions with them from the scriptures, <sup>3</sup>expounding and demonstrating that the Messiah had to suffer and rise from the dead, and that "This is the Messiah, Jesus, whom I proclaim to you." <sup>4</sup>Some of them were convinced and joined Paul and Silas; so, too, a great number of Greeks who were worshipers, and not a few of the prominent women. <sup>5</sup>But the Jews became jealous and recruited some worthless men loitering in the public square, formed a mob, and set the city in turmoil. They marched on the house of Jason, intending to bring them before the people's assembly. <sup>6</sup>When they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city magistrates, shouting, "These people who have been creating a disturbance all over the world have now come here, <sup>7</sup>and Jason has welcomed them. They all act in opposition to the decrees of Caesar and claim instead that there is another king, Jesus." <sup>8</sup>They stirred up the crowd and the city magistrates who, upon hearing these charges, <sup>9</sup>took a surety payment from Jason and the others before releasing them.<sup>10</sup>The brothers immediately sent **Paul and Silas** to Berea during the night. Upon arrival they went to the synagogue of the Jews. <sup>11</sup>These Jews were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with all willingness and examined the scriptures daily to determine whether these things were so. <sup>12</sup>Many of them became believers, as did not a few of the influential Greek women and men. <sup>13</sup>But when the Jews of Thessalonica learned that the word of God had now been proclaimed by Paul in Berea also, they came there too to cause a commotion and stir up the crowds. <sup>14</sup>So the brothers at once sent Paul on his way to the seacoast, while **Silas and Timothy** remained behind. <sup>15</sup>After Paul's escorts had taken him to Athens, they came away with instructions for Silas and Timothy to join him as soon as possible.

- a. How much time did Paul spend in Thessalonica?
- b. How did the Jews from the synagogue treat him according to Acts?

Looking at both Acts and 1 Thessalonians 1:6-10, who are the faithful followers to whom this letter is addressed?

5. Read 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12 and footnotes. Read also Acts 16:19-24 then answer the questions that follow.

**Acts 16: 19-24** When her owners saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them to the public square before the local authorities. <sup>20</sup>They brought them before the magistrates<sup>[a]</sup> and said, "These people are Jews and are disturbing our city <sup>21</sup>and are advocating customs that are not lawful for us Romans to adopt or practice." <sup>22</sup>The crowd joined in the attack on them, and the magistrates had them stripped and ordered them to be beaten with rods. <sup>23</sup>After inflicting many blows on them, they threw them into prison and instructed the jailer to guard them securely. <sup>24</sup>When he received these instructions, he put them in the innermost cell and secured their feet to a stake.

- a. What hardships had Paul and Silas endured in Philippi? (Acts)
  - b. How does Paul defend his motivation and method of teaching the gospel? Cite verses used.
  - c. Who is Paul trying to please?
  - d. How does Paul describe his behavior toward and his relationship with the Thessalonians? (2:8-12)
6. Read 1 Thessalonians 2:13-16 and footnotes. Share any footnotes with your group.
- a. Paul adds prayers of thanksgiving for what reasons here?
  - b. Why does Paul say that these people will suffer because of their faith? (2:14-16)
7. Read 1 Thessalonians 2:17-20. Why had Paul not returned, in person, to revisit the Thessalonians?
8. Read 1 Thessalonians 3: 1-13 and footnotes.
- a. Who does Paul send to encourage and instruct the Church in Thessalonica in his absence?
  - b. What news did Timothy take to Paul regarding the Church in Thessalonica?
  - c. What does Paul pray for in 1Thessalonians 3: 9-13?

