

## **1 Thessalonians Part 1**

Note:

In this teaching, the following terms are used: “new creation”, “new man” or “new self”, “Christ in You”, “holy spirit” and “gift of holy spirit”. All these terms refer to that which is received and born in a person when he or she becomes born again.

This epistle is written by revelation which was given to the apostle Paul. It exists as part of his fulfillment of his ministry and work within the church, the body of Christ. I taught about Paul's calling in the teaching on Ephesians, part 1 and you are welcome to go back and review that teaching.

1 Thessalonians is said to be Paul's first epistle, written in 52 or 53 AD while he was working in Corinth.

Thessalonica was one of the major cities in Macedonia. Paul visited Thessalonica for the first time around 52 AD.

Turn to Acts 16

Just preceding the section we will read, Paul and Silas had finished revisiting the brothers in the cities where Paul had proclaimed the word of the Lord on his first journey. During this second journey, Timothy joined them in the work.

Acts 16:6

**6** And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia.

This is most remarkable! On his first journey, he had spoken the word in Asia with a great impact. When he had first been called, years before, Paul had been told by Ananias “...for you will be a witness for him to everyone of what you have seen and heard...” (Acts 22:15). Now the revelation is that he should remain quiet and move on. Paul and those with him are walking by the spirit, obeying the spiritual wisdom revealed to them.

Acts 16:7

**7** And when they had come up to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them.

**8** So, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas.

They are continuing to walk by the spirit, believing the spiritual wisdom revealed to them.

Acts 16:9

**9** And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.”

**10** And when Paul had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

**11** So, setting sail from Troas, we made a direct voyage to Samothrace, and the following day to Neapolis,

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**12** and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. We remained in this city some days.

Turn to Acts 17

Now Paul, Silas, Timothy and Luke are there in Macedonia, ready to go to work. After some time in Philippi, They are attacked both spiritually and physically. The local authorities have Paul and Silas beaten with rods and imprisoned, contrary to the law. They had violated the rights of Paul and Silas who were Roman citizens. Immediately after their release from prison, they encouraged the believers and departed. Paul did not quit. In spite of being severely beaten and injured, he continued with his work, proclaiming the word of the Lord.

Acts 17:1

**1** Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews.

**2** And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures,

**3** explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ."

The scripture here does not reveal how long it took them to travel from Philippi to Thessalonica. Nor does it indicate if the three Sabbath days were consecutive Sabbath days, or if these were three Sabbath days over a period of time. Of course the written scriptures he used were what we know as the old testament.

Acts 17:4

**4** And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women.

**5** But the Jews were jealous, and taking some wicked men of the rabble, they formed a mob, set the city in an uproar, and attacked the house of Jason, seeking to bring them out to the crowd.

Paul was effective in proclaiming that Jesus is the Christ. Some of the Jews and Gentiles who heard his teachings joined Paul and Silas. The word of the Lord made such an impact that the religious Jews moved against the Lord with devil spirit power. Devil spirits of emulation whipped up the envy, iniquity provided the planning, perverse spirits went into operation with the bribes paid to the wicked men of the rabble. The envy, planning, and bribes were all done in secret, under cover of spiritual darkness. The residents of Thessalonica saw a mob suddenly form without warning. Observing these events by the senses would never uncover the cause of these events. Spiritual perception, which is a benefit of the manifestation of holy spirit, can clearly reveal the cause of these events.

Acts 17:6

**6** And when they (*the mob*) could not find them (*Paul and Silas*), they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city authorities,

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shouting, "These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also,

**7** and Jason has received them, and they are all acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus."

Acts 17:8

**8** And the people and the city authorities were disturbed when they heard these things.

The mob could not find Paul, Silas, or Timothy, but they did find some of the local believers. The mob forcefully laid hands on the believers and dragged them to the city authorities. Deceiving spirits, acting through people in the mob, delivered the false accusations to the authorities. These serious accusations were very disturbing to those who heard them. It was the devil spirits, working through the religious leaders who were troubling the citizens of the town.

Acts 17:9

**9** And when they had taken money as security from Jason and the rest, they let them go.

**10** The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived they went into the Jewish synagogue.

The civil authorities held Jason and the other believers until they posted a bond. There were legal charges pending against them, and the believers had to appear at a later date to answer these charges.

The brothers sent Paul and Silas away so they would not be subject to attack. Paul and Silas continued to do their work in Berea. Timothy was sent back to Thessalonica.

Turn to Philippians 4

Given the "three Sabbath days" mentioned in this record, it would seem that the apostle spent little more than three weeks here in Thessalonica. Yet, there is more information in Philippians 4.

Philippians 4:14

**14** Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble.

**15** And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only.

**16** Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again.

Turn to 1 Thessalonians 1

The believers in Philippi continued to communicate with Paul after he left them. It took time for messages to go back and forth. The believers in Philippi sent financial support to Paul twice while he was in Thessalonica. It took time to collect the finances in Philippi and to send them to Thessalonica. It is certain that Paul worked in Thessalonica more than three weeks.

1 Thessalonians 1:1

## **1 Thessalonians Part 1**

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

**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,

1Thessalonians 1:5

**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.

The believers in Thessalonica made quite an impression on Paul. He mentions them in his prayers of thanksgiving to God. Paul rehearses in God's ears their work of spiritual believing, their labor of love and steadfastness of hope.

As we will see, Paul made quite an impression on the believers in Thessalonica. Remember that the Gentiles were considered by the Jews to be nothing but dogs, animals, spiritually impure and polluted. Although the Gentiles were tolerated in the Synagogs, if they wanted to hear the law, no one in proper Jewish society would have any dealings with them.

One day, a few men from out of town show up – Paul, Silas, and Timothy. They are proclaiming and teaching the good news of the Grace of God, the Gospel of Christ. The Gentiles hear, for the first time, of God's great love for them. These four men live what they are teaching, and love the Gentiles as God would have them to be loved. The believers show them the love of God by their example. This is the **FIRST TIME** that the Gentiles have been accepted, loved, cleansed, made whole and saved by a loving heavenly Father.

Their salvation and acceptance by God was made clear to all as they manifested the power of God in their lives for the first time. The word of God taught by Paul and the others were not empty words, but words which resulted in the power of God in operation in the lives of these new believers, both Jew and Gentile.

1 Thessalonians 1:6

**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.

Paul and the others working with him were walking by the spirit – they were in Macedonia by revelation. They taught the new believers how to walk by the spirit, so they could produce the fruit of the spirit and have JOY for the first time in their lives.

These new believers became an example of walking by the spirit to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. It was the operation of the power of God and

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the spiritual fruit in the Thessalonian believers which riveted the attention of the people in Macedonia and Achaia.

In spite of the persecution of the religious Jews and others in their society, the new believers received the word of the Lord and responded to it with all their being. Salvation was the beginning of a new life in fellowship with God through the Lord Jesus Christ. It was the beginning of a new life which was more than abundant.

1 Thessalonians 1:8

**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.

1 Thessalonians 1:9

**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.

You can't see salvation in a man or a woman, by way of the five senses. What you can see is the manifestation of holy spirit and the spiritual fruit that is cultivated by the operation of holy spirit.

The "...word of the Lord sounded forth from you..." not because the believers in Thessalonica sent missionaries out, but because people in their society began talking about the new lives of these believers, the operation of holy spirit, and the spiritual fruit that was evident. All this happened because they turned from dead idols to serve the living and true God.

In Acts 17:24, 25, Paul boldly declares that:

**24** The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples (*church buildings or organizations*) made by man, **25 nor is he served by human hands**, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.

You cannot serve God by works of the flesh, by getting water baptized, by regularly attending a special building called a "church" or by giving to charitable causes.

The new believers in Thessalonica served God by walking in newness of life, walking in the new self of the spirit, operating the power of the living and true God. This is what captured peoples attention and got them talking. This is what moved the word of the Lord.

This is a record of the impact of the believers serving the living God together by imitating Paul and walking by the spirit. This is not a recipe of how to obtain the same results in our day and time.

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1 Thessalonians 2:1

**1** For you yourselves know, brothers, that our coming to you was not in vain (*purposeless, fruitless*).

**2** But though we had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we had boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the midst of much conflict.

The apostle and his fellow workers could have been intimidated by the attacks and vicious treatment they received at the hands of the authorities in Philippi. However, they did not hold back, but continued to boldly declare the good news of the grace of God. In Thessalonica, attacks and pressures continued - there was much conflict caused by the god of this world who worked through the religious people in the area.

The decision to continue to move with spiritual boldness brought much deliverance to the people of Thessalonica.

1 Thessalonians 2:3

**3** For our appeal does not spring from error or impurity or any attempt to deceive,

Paul and the others were not operating devil spirits of error, unclean spirits or deceiving spirits. Their power did not come from the god of this world. They were not attempting to make merchandise of the people in Thessalonica or to feed off of them.

1 Thessalonians 2:4

**4** but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted (*committed*) with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests (*searches*) our hearts.

The gospel of the grace of God was committed to the apostle Paul and his fellow workers. This gospel is NOT the four gospels written in the new testament of the Bible. The four gospels had not been written yet!

The gospel of the grace of God was spoken according to God's will, regardless of whether people received it positively or negatively. God's will was the standard of their speaking; it is HE who they worked to please.

As we read before in Acts, when they started on this journey, Paul did not know exactly where they were to go. He did know that he was not to speak the word of the Lord in the region of Galatia. How did he know this? He knew it by the operation of holy spirit. That is how he knew God's will for him to speak in Thessalonica. As Paul obeyed the revelation, he spoke with spiritual believing, invoking the power of God.

1 Thessalonians 2:5

**5** For we never came with words of flattery, as you know, nor with a (*hidden*) pretext for greed—God is witness.

**6** Nor did we seek glory from people, whether from you or from others, though we could have made demands as apostles of Christ.

The apostle Paul was working to please God; he had no other hidden agenda. He

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was not working to prove his leadership abilities or gain financial support. Paul did not seek glory or service from the people he ministered to – his aim was to minister the grace of God to them so that they could glorify and serve the living and true God.

Paul continues to remind the believers how he manifested God's love for them.

1 Thessalonians 2:7

**7** But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children.

**8** So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.

The acceptance and love Paul had for these Gentiles was a far cry from how they had been treated by the religious people. This was a love that they had never experienced before. The Gentiles were considered to be unlovable and unacceptable. However, Paul showed them with the power of God and the word of God that God does accept and love them!

Ponder the example of a “nursing mother”. This is a relationship that is easy to describe but is incredibly difficult to genuinely duplicate. The relationship of a nursing mother taking care of her own children is only accomplished by the spirit of God in us as we endeavor to love the believers as He would have them loved. It is God that enables us to love in this manner. This is genuine love, not a leadership technique or a motivational method.

Turn to Romans 6

The love of God that Paul and his fellow workers manifested to the Gentiles has been twisted in our day. It is held forth and taught in some religious circles that God accepts you for who and what you are – in other words, that God accepts and loves your flesh. That kind of love would be absolutely worthless because the flesh is dead. Through the accomplishments of Jesus Christ, God works in a man or woman to bring them from death to life! Salvation and deliverance brings about change.

The love of God is NOT an acceptance or tolerance of evil or the sin nature of the flesh. The love of God brings deliverance and a change from death to life. The love of God is an expectation of growth and change; we are enabled to grow and change.

Romans 6:1

**1** What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?

**2** By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?

**3** Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized (*not water*) into his death?

**4** We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, **we too**

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might (*are enabled to*) walk in newness of life.

**5** For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

We have been brought from death to life. We are to walk in newness of life, leaving the old way of life behind and embracing the newness of life that God through Christ has provided for us.

We don't attempt to reform the flesh, we drop off the old self of the flesh and leave it behind. Just as Christ walks in newness of life, so we too walk in newness of life.

Romans 6:6

**6** **We know** that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.

How do WE KNOW that our old self (of the flesh) was crucified with him? By the operation of holy spirit, specifically by speaking in tongues. This is the evidence, this is how we know, that our old self was crucified with him.

We leave that old self behind us at the cross as we move forward by way of the new spiritual self, walking in newness of life!

Romans 6:7

**7** For one who has died has been set free from sin.

Our flesh was enslaved to sin, we were slaves. God moved in Christ Jesus so that we could be released from slavery. That is the love of God!

Romans 6:8

**8** Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.

**9** We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion (*rulership*) over him.

Romans 6:10

**10** For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God.

**11** So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

**12** Let not sin therefore reign (*rule, dominate, prevail*) in your mortal body, to make (*force*) you obey its passions.

**13** Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.

**14** For sin will have no dominion (*rulership*) over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

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Turn to 1 Thessalonians 2

This is the love of God. Yes, he loved us and called us when we were dead and enslaved to sin. His love was not an acceptance of our dead flesh and our captivity. God loved us into deliverance and freedom so that we can live our lives to God.

This is the love of God and the Power of God that Paul and his fellow workers manifested in Thessalonica.

1 Thessalonians 2:9

**9** For you remember, brothers, our labor and toil: we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.

**10** You are witnesses, and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct toward you believers.

Paul, Silas, and Timothy worked to earn a living while they ministered in Thessalonica. They did this out of love, so as not to burden the new believers.

1 Thessalonians 2:11

**11** For you know how, like a father with his children,

**12** we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.

Paul was like a father to the new believers. He was not like a lawyer, judge, or ruler, attempting to force them into submission.

As a father, he taught the believers how to walk in manner worthy of God. The flesh is not adequate or strong enough to do this. Walking in a manner worthy of God has nothing to do with reforming the flesh. It has everything to do with walking in newness of life by way of the new spiritual self. Remember, they were imitating Paul, who was walking by the spirit.

1 Thessalonians 2:13

**13** And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.

Paul did not have scrolls or books of written scriptures to teach from. The gospel of the grace of God had not yet been written. If you were observing Paul ministering and teaching, you would see a man speaking and teaching just as any other man would speak and teach. He was speaking words which God had revealed to him by way of the operation of holy spirit.

The people in Thessalonica could choose to respond to Paul as if he were teaching the untrustworthy words of men. They could choose to respond to Paul as if he were delivering to them the genuine word of God - it was their choice.

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Some accepted what Paul taught as the genuine word of God, and became sons of God. This word of God continued to work in the new believers.

Throughout this section of Thessalonians, Paul, Silas, Timothy, the new believers, God, and the word of God all worked together. For the first time, people in Thessalonica see the power of God and the love of God in operation for their benefit. As new believers they begin to walk with the same power and love which Paul manifested in his life. As a result, the word of the Lord moved through and beyond the regions of Macedonia and Achaia.

This same word of the Lord, the power of God and the love of God is at work in the body of Christ today - it has not changed. We can imitate Paul's example as the Thessalonians did, manifesting the power of God and loving the unlovable, living our lives to please God.