

I Thessalonians Lesson 01

I Thessalonians Chapter 1

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Memory verses for this week: *Prov 3:5 Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.*

Introduction: We begin a new study this week on I Thessalonians. Thessalonica was the capital of the Roman province of Macedonia. Situated on a major road, the Egnatian Way, stretching from Rome to the eastern provinces, it was an important military town—the most populous city of Macedonia. As a center of trade and commerce, it was ideally suited to the apostle’s missionary strategy of concentrating on centers of influence which could be responsible for the evangelization of the territories around them.

The 2 books of Thessalonians are included in the first group of letters written by Paul to the early churches. We believe these letters were written by Paul while in Corinth in the fall of 52 A.D. This was about the time when Timothy and Silas rejoiced Paul. (Acts 18:5 and 1 Thess. 2:17) These 2 letters main focus is in what is called Eschatology – the doctrine of last things. Eschatology means: a doctrine concerning the ultimate or final things, such as death, the destiny of humanity, the Second Coming, or the Last Judgment.

These writings are grouped around the doctrine of the second coming of Christ, a description of the Anti-Christ and his reign, and about Christian morals. The first book of Thessalonians is about thanksgiving. It speaks of church fellowship, and we find the word ‘brethren’ mentioned fifteen times. Every major doctrine of the new testament church is taught in this book.

I. The Salutation

1 Th 1:1 Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Th 1:2 We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers;

We see the missionary Paul and his co-workers saluting the church there in Thessalonica. That is one common thing in all of Paul’s letters. He saluted the brethren in the name of the Father and Son almost every time. We see that he shows the position of the church when he says “Which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ.” The church is very dear to God, and Christ shed his precious blood for the church.

Revelation 1:12-20 And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; 13 And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. 14 His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; 15 And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. 16 And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. 17 And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: 18 I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death. 19 Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter; 20 The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.

Acts 20:28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

Eph 3:21 Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

Paul mentions grace and peace, and those truly do come down from heaven from the Godhead. In verse 2, Paul says that he is thankful for those there in the church and that they prayed for them continually. You and I should pray for the people in our church, and for the missionaries that are spreading God's Word. A word of encouragement means so much to those who labor in God's vineyard. We should thank God for all of those who truly know Christ and serve him in the local new testament church.

II. The Work of Faith

*1 Th 1:3 Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father;
1 Th 1:4 Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.*

When Paul prayed for the church, he remembered how these people did not cease in their work of faith. They labored in love due to the hope they had in Jesus Christ. God wants us to have this kind of faith and have the blessed hope of the Lord Jesus Christ. Verse 10 of this chapter tells us what we are to be hoping and waiting for:

1 Th 1:10 And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.

We should be thankful that God has made us one of the elect.. those chosen to be saved by the blood of Jesus Christ. Election is a doctrine for the “elect” of God. Election reminds us that salvation is a work of God; it is the assurance of the providence of God; election is bound up in the foreknowledge of God.

1 Peter 1:2 Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.

Ephesians 1:4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: 5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, 6 To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

J. Vernon McGee had some good thoughts about the faith, love, and hope in regards to being a trinity.

“Remembering without ceasing [1] your work of faith, [2] and labour of love, [3] and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.”

This is a very important verse of Scripture and contains a wealth of meaning. Paul associates the three Christian graces: faith and love and hope. In 1 Corinthians he also brought these three graces together. “And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love” (1 Cor. 13:13).

In New Jersey several years ago I had lunch with the scientist who had designed the heat shield that was on the space capsules to protect them when they go out into space and then reenter our atmosphere. He remarked to me, “Have you ever noticed that the universe is divided into a trinity?”

“No, what do you mean by that?”

“You and I live in a physical universe that is divided into time, space, and matter. Can you think of a fourth?”

I couldn’t think of any, so he continued, “Time is divided into three parts: past, present, and future. Can you think of a fourth?”

Again I couldn’t, so he went on. “Space is divided into length and breadth and height. They speak of a ‘fourth dimension,’ but it doesn’t happen to be in this material universe.”

You can see that this universe in which you and I live bears the mark of the Trinity. The interesting thing is that the Word of God does the same thing. Paul speaks of man as a trinity. We will discuss this specifically when we get into the fifth chapter, verse 23: “... and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” This tells us that man is a trinity.

There are some other interesting examples of the significance of the number three. For example, have you noticed that in Genesis only three sons of Adam are named? I am sure that Adam and Eve had more than three sons; they probably had one hundred or more—they started the human race—but only three of the sons are named: Cain, Abel, and Seth.

In this verse Paul actually gives three graces of the Christian life. The past is the work of

faith. The present is a labor of love. The future is the patience of hope. That is the biography of the Christian and the abiding, permanent, and eternal features of the Christian life.

1 Th 1:5 For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.

1 Th 1:6 And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost:

We know that when the gospel is preached correctly and in a pure and clear fashion, it comes not only in word, but in power of the Holy Ghost. Paul and his companions preached the Word, and they were known as men who taught with simplicity and accuracy. We are to follow those who follow the Lord. If someone begins to teach things not in God's Word, you need to no longer trust that man's teaching. God's Word is perfect and in total harmony. And the Holy Spirit does not direct us to do things contrary to the written word of Scripture. Even though Paul had received the word in much affliction, there was great joy and comfort from the Holy Spirit.

1 Pet 3:14 But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled;

1 Pet 3:15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:

1 Pet 3:16 Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.

1 Pet 3:17 For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing.

1 Th 1:7 So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.

1 Th 1:8 For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing.

Paul tells those there in the church of Thessalonica that they were examples known all through Macedonia and Achaia. Because they had faith and preached the truth, they encouraged others to speak the same words of truth in other places. They obeyed God's commands to put forth missions, and this resulted in much fruit to their account.

Acts 1:8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

In the King James Study Bible, they commented on the Greek word from which ‘sounded out’ was translated.

For from you sounded out the word of the Lord. It should be observed here that the word sounded out (Gr $\epsilon\chi\omicron\upsilon\sigma\alpha\iota$) means to “bounce off” and is the word from which we get the English “echo.” The Thessalonians became a sounding-board from which the gospel would echo across the world. Paul states hyperbolically that he hardly needed to preach where people had heard of the faith of the Thessalonians; he had only to ask, “Have you heard what happened?” The fantastic story of the conversion from idols to God was known everywhere.

*1 Th 1:9 For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God;
1 Th 1:10 And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.*

We see these involved in idol worship had turned from it (Repented) and had turned to the true and living God. They were waiting for the Lord’s second return and embracing the resurrection of Jesus Christ. These believed that Jesus would come again and when he did, he would deliver us from the wrath to come. This is an excellent verse to defend the position that Christ will return prior to the seven years of tribulation. (Pre-Trib Rapture.) I believe this is the accurate position on when the rapture will come.

Paul was familiar with many who worshipped idols and contended with those in Athens about their worship of false gods.

Acts 17:20 For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean.

Acts 17:21 (For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing.)

Acts 17:22 Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious.

Acts 17:23 For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.

Acts 17:24 God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands;

Acts 17:25 Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;

Acts 17:26 And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation;

Acts 17:27 That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us:

Acts 17:28 For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain

*also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.
Acts 17:29 Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device.
Acts 17:30 And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:
Acts 17:31 Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.*

When we have an opportunity, we should not be hesitant to stand up for the Cross and the Gospel. Paul was always ready to give an account of the hope that lay within him.

III. Conclusion

When we see Christ's Churches accurately, we will find that they have four unique things about them.

1. They are a purchased possession.

Acts 20:28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

2. They are an organized possession of God.

Luke 6:12 And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. 13 And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles;

1 Corinthians 12:28 And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.

3. The church is commissioned.

Matthew 28:12 And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, 13 Saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. 14 And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. 15 So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.

16 Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus

had appointed them. 17 And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted. 18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. 19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

4. The church is a perpetual possession.

Ephesians 3:21 Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

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Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

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Practice Random Acts of Kindness. Each act spreads, and many will be blessed.