



Troy Church of Christ

# Encourage One Another

## A Study of Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians

1 Paul, Silvanus, 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,

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.

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.

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.

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.

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### Introduction to the Letter of 1 Thessalonians

Paul wrote this letter very early in his ministry, during his first visit to Corinth, around 51-52 A.D. The church in Thessalonica was undergoing a period trial and persecution, and Paul writes to commend them in their steadfast faith, remind them of their hope in Christ, comforting them regarding their martyred brothers and sisters in Christ, and teach them regarding the coming Day of the Lord.

### Read 1 Thessalonians 1:1-7

1. A prayer of thanks for the letter's recipients was a common trait in Paul's writings, and is often revealing of Paul's impressions of their strengths and needs. For what strengths in the Thessalonian church does Paul give thanks? (vs. 3-6)
2. How does Paul say that he knows they were chosen by God (he lists three)?
  - What does it mean to be "chosen" by God?
  - What is the ultimate proof of conversion? (vs. 6-7)

### Read 1 Thessalonians 1:8-10

3. What two things make up Paul's description of their reception of the gospel? How do you resolve the seeming conflict between these two phrases? (see Acts 17:5-8)
4. What was the impact of this church's faith and life?
  - How does that encourage you as we also strive to have an impact on our community and beyond?
  - What specific things could we find here that are worthy of imitation that might help this group have the same kind of greater-than-expected impact?
5. What was another proof of the extent of their conversion, faith, and reception of the gospel? (vs. 9)
6. Paul does not speak of Christian hope without tying it back to the resurrection of Jesus, and he does so again in verse 10. Why is the resurrection an anchor of our hope?
7. What is "the wrath to come" and how were the Thessalonians delivered from it? How are we?

Thessalonica was a harbor city, making it an important trade and military city in Paul's day. It was the principle seaport of Macedonia then, and is still a major European seaport today.



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1 For you yourselves know, brothers, that our coming to you was not in vain.

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.

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

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

5 For we never came with words of flattery, as you know, nor with a 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.

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.

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.

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.

### Read 1 Thessalonians 2:1-6

1. Why is Paul able to say his missionary journey to Thessalonica had not been in vain?
2. What happened in Philippi? How was their boldness shown?
3. What are some ways you have been mistreated for the sake of Christ? How have you handled it? What do you learn from Paul and Silas' example that would help you in the future?
4. In verses 3-6, Paul says that their message was not one of error, etc, and that it did not originate as a message meant simply to please man. What is the tie he is making between their message's lack of error and the fact it's not man-centered? What is implied by this statement, and what might these implications teach us about our message, and the methods with which we spread the gospel?

### Read 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12

5. How did Paul treat the people at Thessalonica? What metaphor does he use? What does that tell us about Paul's personal investment in the work (emotionally, spiritually, etc.)?
6. To what does Paul say they were witnesses? Why was this example so important?
7. Paul switches metaphors in verse 11. What does this image add to our understanding of his love for the disciples there?
8. How were the disciples called to live? To what have they (and all disciples) been called?

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

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.

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. 14 For you, brothers, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea. For you suffered the same things from your own countrymen as they did from the Jews, 15 who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out, and displease God and oppose all mankind 16 by hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles that they might be saved—so as always to fill up the measure of their sins. But God's wrath has come upon them at last!

17 But since we were torn away from you, brothers, for a short time, in person not in heart, we endeavored the more eagerly and with great desire to see you face to face, 18 because we wanted to come to you—I, Paul, again and again—but Satan hindered us. 19 For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you? 20 For you are our glory and joy.

### Read I Thessalonians 2:10-17

1. When Paul shared the gospel with the Thessalonians, how does he say they responded?
2. In 1:6 Paul says, “you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit.” The Greek word translated *affliction* (θλιψις) means, “pressure from circumstances.” In 2:14 & 15 he also says early Christians had suffered persecution. Read Matthew 5:10-12, John 16:33, and II Timothy 3:12.
3. How were they able to find joy in the midst of pressure and persecution? What encouragement can we draw from their experiences? How would you express this encouragement to others who are going through pressing circumstances?
4. Warren Wiersbe, in his book *Be Ready* (a commentary on I & II Thessalonians), points out three attitudes the church in Thessalonica held which helped them get through:
  1. They \_\_\_\_\_ the Word.
  2. They \_\_\_\_\_ the Word.
  3. They \_\_\_\_\_ the Word.
5. How were they imitators of the early churches in Judea (think about what the churches in the first half of the book of Acts experienced, and how they responded)?

### Read I Thessalonians 2:18-20

6. In verse 17 Paul expresses his great desire to see his brothers and sisters face to face. How much difference does it make not only to encourage each other from a distance, but to actually meet and encourage one another face to face? What can happen when Satan successfully prevents this from happening, or when we simply are not diligent to do so?
7. Why are the Thessalonians Paul's joy and crown? Who will be your joy and crown when you stand before the Lord at the resurrection?



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1 Therefore when we could bear it no longer, we were willing to be left behind at Athens alone,

2 and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's coworker in the gospel of Christ, to establish and exhort you in your faith, 3 that no one be moved by these afflictions. For you yourselves know that we are destined for this.

4 For when we were with you, we kept telling you beforehand that we were to suffer affliction, just as it has come to pass, and just as you know.

5 For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent to learn about your faith, for fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you and our labor would be in vain.

6 But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us the good news of your faith and love and reported that you always remember us kindly and long to see us, as we long to see you—

7 for this reason, brothers, in all our distress and affliction we have been comforted about you through your faith.

8 For now we live, if you are standing fast in the Lord.

9 For what thanksgiving can we return to God for you, for all the joy that we feel for your sake before our God,

10 as we pray most earnestly night and day that we may see you face to face and supply what is lacking in your faith?

11 Now may our God and Father himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way to you,

12 and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you,

13 so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

### Read 1 Thessalonians 3:1-10

1. For what mission and purpose did Paul send Timothy to Thessalonica? What was Paul's fear?
2. Paul says in verses 3 and 4 that they "were destined" for the afflictions they were suffering. In what way does he mean this? Is every Christian "destined" for such trials? What does scripture say?
3. What is the difference between "destined" as Paul uses it here and the idea of "predetermined"? What are the implications for us?
4. When Timothy did report back to Paul about the church's spiritual condition, what was the news?
5. In verses 7-8, the encourager becomes the encouraged. Why is it so good to hear of the spiritual victories of others, especially those still new to the faith, when you are also going through difficulties?
6. What does Paul want to do when he sees them next? (vs. 10)

### Read 1 Thessalonians 3:11-13

7. Paul prays for three things to happen with the Thessalonians. What are they?
  1. \_\_\_\_\_
  2. \_\_\_\_\_
  3. \_\_\_\_\_
8. Discuss the importance of each of Paul's three prayer requests.
9. What future event does Paul point to as the culmination of their faith and living holy lives?



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1 Finally, then, brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to live and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more.

2 For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus.

3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality;

4 that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor,

5 not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God;

6 that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you.

7 For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness.

8 Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you.

9 Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another,

10 for that indeed is what you are doing to all the brothers throughout Macedonia. But we urge you, brothers, to do this more and more,

11 and to aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we instructed you,

12 so that you may live properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one.

### Read 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

1. What is the problem Paul addresses this part of the letter? What does he want them to remember as they face it?
2. Paul says in verse 3 that the will of God is our *sanctification*. What does *sanctification* mean? How does God accomplish this work in our lives? What is our role in our sanctification?
3. What is the tie between our bodily and spiritual purity and holiness? What does scripture say about the false notion that what we do with our bodies does not affect our spirits? What scriptures speak to this idea?
4. In verses 4-6 we learn that our holiness and honor can affect not only our relationship with God, but also our relationships with our brothers and sisters in Christ. How is sexual sin a sin against the body of Christ, and not just a "personal matter" as it is often made out to be in society at large? What has been the cost of this attitude to marriages, families, and society as a whole?
5. Is Paul's teaching on this matter his opinion, or God's? (see vs. 8, and regarding his mention of the Holy Spirit, see 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 6:15-20)

### Read 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12

*He commends them in verse 9 for their love for one another. It is another example of his love for this church, and his desire to encourage them, that even while needing to do some reminding/teaching/commanding on their struggles, he still acknowledges where they are strong.*

6. How do you think they had learned to love having "been taught by God?" How have we been taught by God to love?
7. They are told to love "more and more" and then are told *how* to do so. They were to live \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ with their \_\_\_\_\_. What was the reason he gave, and why is it so important as they live as Christ's ambassadors in their community?



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# Encourage One Another

## *A Study of Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians*

13 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope.

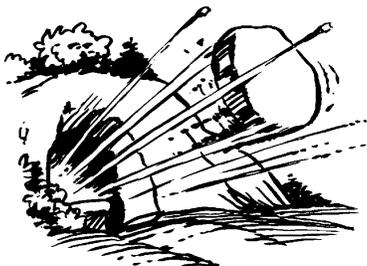
14 For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.

15 For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.

16 For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

17 Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.

18 Therefore encourage one another with these words.



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### **Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**

1. Paul says at the beginning of this passage that he doesn't want the Christians to "grieve as others do who have no hope." What is the hope we have? Have you experienced this difference, and if so, how did this hope shape your experience(s), and how did it differ from your experience(s) before you knew Christ?
2. What foundational tenet of our belief does Paul begin with in his explanation of our hope (see vs. 14)? Why is this the place to start when dealing with our views/reactions to death?
  - Read John 5:24-29
3. Why do you think Paul uses the phrase "fallen asleep" when talking about those who have died? Who else spoke of death in this way in the New Testament? *Hint: see John 11:11-13.*
4. Where is Paul getting this teaching (see vs. 15)? Why is it important to remember this when we are studying this letter (and others)?
5. Who will rise first at the resurrection? Where have they been (see vs. 14, and 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 5:8 & 9)?

Warren Wiersbe, in his commentary on this passage, shares this story: "I recall stating to a friend, 'I hear you lost your wife. I'm very sorry.' He replied, 'No, I didn't lose her. You can't lose something when you know where it is—and I know where she is!' On the authority of the Word of God, we also know what will happen: Jesus Christ will one day return and bring His people with Him."

6. How will those still alive know the day has arrived? What is the order of events?
7. How does it encourage you to be able to know exactly what's going to go down that day?
8. What are we to do with this knowledge?

*Homework: With whom will you share it this week? What are you waiting for?!*



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1 Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you.

2 For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.

3 While people are saying, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.

4 But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief.

5 For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness.

6 So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober.

7 For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night.

8 But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation.

9 For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,

10 who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him.

11 Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.

### **Read 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11**

1. Of what "times and the seasons" does Paul speak here? Why is it that he didn't need to write about this topic?
2. As we discussed in lesson 6, the "day of the Lord" is a day that is still yet to come. What is the day of the Lord? What does he say about it's arrival? Why is the comparison to labor pains a good analogy?
3. Considering we studied in 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4, what is the "sudden destruction" that will come upon people? Will everyone be destroyed (see chapter 4)? Is the destruction widespread?
4. 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 3 also speaks to the events of the day of the Lord. What does it add to our understanding of the questions above? What attitude does Peter say will be prevalent at the time, and how does that compare with the general attitude toward such truths now?
5. Paul uses a pretty common comparison in the scriptures of light v. darkness (children of God v. the unbelieving) to say that we should be alert and prepared for what is to come. How do we prepare ourselves?
6. What is the difference between the destiny of those who live in darkness and those of the light?
7. How does one "obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ?"
8. How will you take what Paul taught the Thessalonians in this part of his letter and use it to be a source of encouragement to others? Why would this knowledge be faith-building?