

## **Conclusion**

Be encouraged by God's grace to the Thessalonians:

"We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers... For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance." (1 Thess 1:2, 5)

Be challenged by Paul's example and exhortations:

"For you remember, brethren, our labour and toil; for labouring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God." (1 Thess 2:9)

"For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality." (1 Thess 4:3)

"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." (1 Thess 5:16-18)

And use his prayers as a model for your own.

"Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it." (1 Thess 5:23-24)

# **Sermon Series on 1 Thessalonians**

**Zetland Evangelical Church  
(March - June 2011)**

Paul and his companions give thanks to God for his grace to the Thessalonians, which is being displayed in their faith, hope and love. They also encourage the Thessalonians to serve God more and more.

### **Background**

The church in Thessalonica was established during Paul's second missionary journey (Acts 17). Paul was torn away from it after a short time and prevented from returning. Concerned for their welfare, he had sent Timothy to establish them in the faith. This letter was probably written shortly after Timothy's reunion with Paul, during his eighteen month stay in Corinth (Acts 18). It was therefore probably written in AD50 or AD51, making this one of the earliest New Testament documents.

Thessalonica itself was the leading city in Macedonia, the capital of the Roman province, a prosperous port of the Aegean and strategically located on an important east-west trade route. It became a free city of the Roman Empire after its support of Octavian in 31BC. This much valued privilege enabled it to form its own government and to be free from having a Roman garrison within its city walls.

So, for the Thessalonians, continued loyalty to Rome, and to Caesar in particular, was important. The imperial cult also seems to have been well-established in the city, along with the worship of many other gods, including Aphrodite and Isis.

### 5:12-15 Living as Part of the Christian Community

After urging the Thessalonians to live soberly and to build one another up, Paul gives specific instructions about how the Thessalonians should relate to one another: respect your leaders; warn the unruly; comfort the fainthearted; and uphold the weak.

### 5:16-22 God's Will for Our Lives (Part 2)

What is God's will for our lives and how can we obey that will? Combining this passage with chapter 4 verse 3, we see that God wants us to be joyfully holy, through faith in Jesus Christ, with the help of the Holy Spirit.

### 5:23-28 Grace and peace

By God's grace, Paul and his companions had taken the gospel to Thessalonica. By God's grace, many had responded with faith. By God's grace, the believers persevered in their faith despite persecution. And by God's grace, they will be found blameless at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and they will enter into the fullness of his peace.

4:9-12 Growing in Love for One Another

Paul commends the Thessalonians for their love and urges them to love each other more and more. Their love was expressed in practical ways, as we see in 2 Corinthians 8. Like them, we should be increasingly diligent so that we can be increasingly generous.

4:13-18 Life After Death

Paul reassures those who are mourning for deceased believers. If we have faith in Jesus Christ, whether we are alive or dead when he returns, we will hear his voice, we will rise to meet him, and then we will be with him forever. We should comfort one another with these words.

5:1-11 Sons of Light

When will Christ return? Paul does not give the Thessalonian believers a timetable. Instead he tells them a truth about themselves that should encourage them, and all other believers, until the coming of the Lord. If we have faith in Jesus Christ, we are sons of the light. So we should live as sons of the light, being alert and self-controlled.

**Outline**

After the opening in chapter 1, the first major section of the letter reflects on Paul's visit to Thessalonica and Timothy's subsequent visit and return. The purpose of this section is not to defend Paul's ministry against external or internal opposition, but rather to express gratitude to God.

In the second major section, which begins at the start of chapter 4, Paul gives the Thessalonians further practical instructions, confirming them in some matters and correcting them in others. The letter is then closed with a prayer, final instructions and a benediction in chapter 5, verses 23 to 28.

1:1-10 Letter Opening

- 1:1 Opening greeting
- 1:2-10 Prayer of thanksgiving

2:1-5:22 Letter Body

- 2:1-3:13 Paul's gratitude to God
  - 2:1-16 Paul's visit to Thessalonica
  - 2:17-3:5 Paul's yearning to visit again and Timothy's mission
  - 3:6-13 Paul's thanksgiving on account of Timothy's report
- 4:1-5:22 Paul's exhortation to the Thessalonians
  - 4:1-2 Introduction
  - 4:3-8 The importance of holiness
  - 4:9-5:11 Responses to questions
  - 5:12-22 Life in the community

5:23-28 Letter Closing

- 5:23-24 Prayer for sanctification
- 5:26-27 Closing instructions
- 5:28 Benediction

## Sermons

### 1:1-10 Give Thanks to the God of Grace

What happened in Thessalonica was a work of God's grace; through the preaching of the gospel and the power of the Holy Spirit many were saved. Give thanks to the God of grace. Give thanks for the gospel of grace. Pray for more of God's grace.

### 2:1-4 Approved by God to Proclaim the Gospel

Why were Paul, Silas and Timothy able to speak with boldness? Why was it that their ministry in Thessalonica was not in vain? They were approved by God to proclaim the gospel of God by the power of God. If we similarly dedicate ourselves to the service of God, we also can be confident that our labour will not be in vain.

### 2:5-12 Serving Others Like Mothers and Fathers

Paul, Silas and Timothy were not self-serving; they were self-giving, like a mother; they did not impose on the Thessalonians; they instructed them like a father. Are we prepared to be like mothers and fathers to those around us - not lording it over others but sharing our lives with them for the sake of the gospel?

### 2:13-16 The Grace and the Wrath of God

Paul again gives thanks to the God of grace; he also warns about God's wrath. We must remember both God's love and his holiness, both his grace and his wrath. Thank God for his grace. Warn all around to flee from his wrath. Remember that God's love is a holy love.

### 2:17-3:8 Love for Christ and Love for Others

Paul and his companions proved their love for the Thessalonians, even though they were forced to leave Thessalonica. The Thessalonians persevered in their love for Christ, even though they were tempted and persecuted. Is our love for Christ genuine? Is our love for others genuine?

### 3:9-13 The Secret of Prayerfulness

Paul loved the Thessalonians so much that he prayed for them night and day. Paul prayed that the Thessalonians would abound more and more in love for one another. The secret of prayerfulness is love. The secret of lovefulness is prayer.

### 4:1-8 God's Will for Our Lives (Part 1)

Paul exhorts the Thessalonians to be holy so that they can serve God more and more. God wants us to be holy. God calls us to be holy. God has given us the precious and powerful gift of the Holy Spirit. So we must be holy!