

**1192 Paul's first book and some situations of the Thessalonian church - 1 Thess.(1)1–(2)20
(by Whirlwind)**

First, let's discuss why the Book of 1 Thessalonians is Paul's first book and why the view that the Book of Galatians was written earlier is mistaken, which quotes a previous article. Second, we'll address the greetings to the Thessalonian church and related topics. Third, Paul praises the life of faith, hope, and love lived by the believers there. Fourth, we will discuss how Paul preached the gospel to the people of Thessalonica amidst much opposition. Fifth, we will examine Paul's attitude and methods of love in Christ. Sixth, we will mention the fact that the disciples endured persecution from the local people. Finally, we will see that they hoped to always find glory and joy in the disciples.

Please note that this article is an expansion of the topicwise Bible study held on Sunday (5/31/26). Unless otherwise specified, verses refer to those in NASB95. If this article refers previous articles, they can all be found on our website, '<https://a-christian-voice.com/>'; click on 'Understanding Spiritual Life'.

1. The Book of 1 Thessalonians is the first book Paul wrote

We must emphasize that we do not know the exact dates of composition for each book; we can only gather some information from the New Testament. For instance, the New Testament clearly states that this was the first book Paul wrote. As for the others, we must do our best to speculate on their order and possible reasons, but we must remember that the message is more important than the order. We will now begin about the message conveyed in Paul's epistles. Since we cannot cover every aspect of them like in other Books of the Bible, we'll do it at least roughly. Before that, let us first discuss, based on the New Testament, why we say that 1 Thessalonians is the first book Paul wrote.

Let us first review: following the call to Macedonia, Paul and Silas came "...to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia, a Roman colony; and we were staying in this city for some days."(Acts 16:12) Next, "Now when they had traveled through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews."(Acts 17:1) This is the first time for Paul's traveling to Thessalonica. Then it is recorded, "And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, along with a large number of the God-fearing Greeks and a number of the leading women."(Acts 17:4) Therefore, the church in Thessalonica was founded by Paul.

Then, because of the disturbance in Thessalonica, "The brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, ..." (Acts 17:10) "Then immediately the brethren sent Paul out to go as far as the sea; and Silas and Timothy remained there (in Berea.)" (Acts 17:14) So Timothy was with them at this time. We also see that Paul had absolutely no time to write letters while he was engaged in this missionary work, until "...he left Athens and went to Corinth."(Acts 18:1) "And he settled there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them."(Acts 18:11) It was only then that he had the opportunity to write his first epistle, which he wrote from Corinth to the church in Thessalonica.

As for the approximate time of writing, we can determine it by looking at Timothy's movements. When Paul went to Athens, "...Silas and Timothy remained there. Now those who escorted Paul brought him as far as Athens; and receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him as soon as possible, they left."(Acts 17:14-15) 中這改 15 。 。 。 。 So Timothy came to Athens, but "...when we could endure it no longer, we thought it best to be left behind at Athens alone, and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith."(1 Thessalonians 3:1-2) Then it says, "But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always think kindly of us, longing to see us just as we also long to see you."(1 Thessalonians 3:6) Let us now look at the opening greeting in the Book of 1 Thessalonians: "Paul and Silvanus and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace."(1 Thessalonians 1:1) Since Timothy is mentioned here, it follows that Paul wrote the Book of 1 Thessalonians after this. Therefore, we only know the approximate time frame, because the New Testament does not specify the exact time of Timothy's return. We can also see that the exact timing is not that important; as we said at the beginning, the message is more important.

Finally, some believe that the Book of Galatians was written earlier. Their key argument is that the Book of Galatians makes no mention whatsoever of the Jerusalem Council (cf. Acts 15). They argue that if the Council had already been held when Paul wrote the letter, he would certainly have cited its decisions to support his position; therefore, they conclude that the letter must have been written before the Council. But anyone who reads the Bible correctly will know that Paul was fully aware the council's decision did not come from the Holy Spirit—so why would he cite it? Regarding the claim that this decision did not come from the Holy Spirit, we previously discussed this issue in "1182 James's view, decision not by Holy Spirit, and Silas and Mark – Acts(15)13–41" under the section "2. The erroneous decision of the apostles, the elders, and the whole church." Essentially, this is because the will of the Holy Spirit would absolutely never contradict what Jesus said.

Looking at it from another angle, consider one of Paul's approaches to action: if something is right, he will certainly carry it out with zeal. We can see this in the following passage: "and recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, so that we might go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. They only asked us to remember the poor—the very thing I also was eager to do."(Galatians 2:9-10) Paul is saying, "Now while they were passing through the cities, they were delivering the decrees which had been decided upon by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem, for them to observe."(Acts 16:4) He knew that these were merely regulations, not the will of the Holy Spirit; why would he have mentioned the council's decision? Of course, he would not have mentioned it in the Book of Galatians; this, in fact, proves that the Book of Galatians was written after the Jerusalem Council.

2. Greetings to the church in Thessalonica and related topics

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

During Paul's second missionary journey, "...they had traveled through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews."(Acts 17:1) Timothy was with them at that time, and the text clearly states, "Then immediately the brethren sent Paul out to go as far as the sea; and Silas and Timothy remained there (in Berea)."(Acts 17:14) So it was three of them who offered the greeting together.

"Grace and peace to you" is a common greeting in Paul's epistles; here, "grace and peace" refers to that which comes from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. It is also clearly stated here that the church is in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. We see that even in the case of the church in Laodicea, as described in the Book of Revelation—which had shut Jesus out—He still desired them to repent; if they repented, He would dine with them and work among them (cf. Revelation 3:14-22), for God our Savior, "who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."(1 Timothy 2:4) God is a God of mercy and grace.

3. Praising the believers' lives of faith, hope, and love, and praying for them

"We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers; constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father, knowing, brethren beloved by God, His choice of you; for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. You also became imitators (G3492, followers) of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything. For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come."(1 Thessalonians 1:2-10)

We see that faith requires work, love involves labor, and when the things we hope for have not yet come to pass, we must wait patiently. Paul said, "But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love."(1 Corinthians 13:13) Christians are to live a life of faith, hope, and love, and it is clearly stated here that the church in Thessalonica lived this way.

He knew they were the elect, and the reason is made very clear. We have also seen that evangelism must be done in power and in the Holy Spirit, and with full conviction. From a human perspective, his conduct was blameless because that was his natural state—not specifically for their sake, yet it was indeed for their sake, serving as an example to them so they would know that it is indeed possible to act this way.

We see that even in the midst of great tribulation, they could experience the joy given by the Holy Spirit and receive the truth. This is also what Paul said: "Rejoice always; pray

without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. Do not quench the Spirit; do not despise prophetic utterances."(1 Thessalonians 5:16-20) Some might say, "I would never quench the Holy Spirit's promptings." Is that really the case? Especially when the Holy Spirit often speaks to us through the words of others, no one with ears to hear would ever quench the Holy Spirit's promptings. Was it merely a coincidence that the Book of Revelation tells all seven churches to have ears to hear? Jesus had life, yet the Jews of that time had no ear to hear and still crucified Him. Even so, we are called today to be conformed to the image of Christ (cf. Romans 8:29). Without an ear to hear, how can we possibly be conformed to His image?

Finally, the passage explains how their faith spread throughout Macedonia, Achaia, and beyond. It was these very people who testified to the example set by the church in Thessalonica. Setting an example is the best way to fulfill the Great Commission: "...make disciples of all the nations, ..." (Matthew 28:19). Please note that the term "imitate" may refer only to outward imitation, not necessarily inward. So this is not about imitating Paul as a person, but about following the Lord just as he followed the Lord.

4. How Paul preached the Gospel to the Thessalonians amid much opposition

"For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain, but after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, as you know, we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition. For our exhortation does not come from error or impurity or by way of deceit; but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who examines our hearts. For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed—God is witness—"(1 Thessalonians 2:1-5)

First, we like to mention that Paul's journey to Thessalonica was arranged by God. Did not God intervene to lead him through the call from Macedonia? (See Acts 16:6–10.) Although he was driven to Thessalonica, this fulfilled God's purpose, so God no longer intervened.

We see that his journey to Thessalonica was certainly not in vain; he established a church there. The humiliation he suffered in Philippi mentioned here refers to the incident involving the slave girl possessed by a spirit of divination (see Acts 16:16-24), and we also see how he preached the gospel to the people of Thessalonica amid much opposition. He specifically mentioned, "...not as pleasing men, but God who examines our hearts."(1 Thessalonians 2:4) "...God is witness..."(1 Thessalonians 2:5). Is this not what Peter and John said: "...Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge." (Acts 4:19)

5. Paul's attitude and manner of love in Christ

"nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority. But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children. Having so fond an affection for you, we

were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us. For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. You are witnesses, and so is God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers; just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children, so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory."(1 Thessalonians 2:6-12)

Paul did not seek his own glory; he knew "...that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not."(Romans 7:18) He also knew that "...there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death."(Romans 8:1-2) In Christ, he always maintained an attitude of love; even when speaking of the Israelites who persecuted him, he said, "...I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh."(Romans 9:3)

His manner was that of a parent: "For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God."(1 Thessalonians 2:9) He was a tentmaker (see Acts 18:2-3), and whenever possible, he supported himself primarily by making tents. As a father, he further said, "so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory."(1 Thessalonians 2:12)

His conduct was such that, "You are witnesses, and so is God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers."(1 Thessalonians 2:10) However, this is viewed from a human perspective, much like in the Book of Job, where it says, "There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job; and that man was blameless (perfect, H8535), upright (H3477), fearing God and turning away from evil."(Job 1:1) This is the human perspective; otherwise, there would have been no repentance on Job's part, as he said, "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear; But now my eye sees You; Therefore I retract, And I repent in dust and ashes."(Job 42:5-6) If we look at it from God's perspective, if Paul had been like this, he would not have needed to say in his old age, "Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."(Philippians 3:13-14)

6. The disciples endured persecution from the local people

"For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe. For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, for you also endured the same sufferings at the hands of your own countrymen, even as they did from the Jews, who both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out. They are not pleasing to God, but hostile to all men, hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved; with

the result that they always fill up the measure of their sins. But wrath has come upon them to the utmost."(1 Thessalonians 2:13-16)

The church in Thessalonica accepted what Paul preached, recognized it as the word of God, and believed in the Lord. They suffered persecution from the local people, just as the Jews persecuted churches in various places. The Scripture clearly explains the reason why God's wrath has come upon the Jews to the full; please read the passage for yourself.

7. They hope to always find glory and joy in the disciples

"But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short while—in person, not in spirit—were all the more eager with great desire to see your face. For we wanted to come to you—I, Paul, more than once—and yet Satan hindered us. For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? For you are our glory and joy."(1 Thessalonians 2:17-20)

He said that they were only temporarily separated from them in person, not in heart. For Paul, Satan had won a battle or two in the spiritual struggle, though he knew that, generally speaking, "Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil."(Ephesians 6:11) Yet, "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places."(Ephesians 6:12) Although we do not deserve to be attacked directly by Satan, it is common to be attacked by his servants, "...for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, ..." (2 Corinthians 11:14-15) We must discern. This is why we see the warning: "Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour."(1 Peter 5:8)

Satan does not fail every time; he and his servants often use the world to tempt people. A New Testament example is Demas, who was once Paul's fellow worker (see Philemon 1:24): "for Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica; .. "(2 Timothy 4:10) Christians are to "...do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."(Romans 12:2) Therefore, Christians are to come out from this world; Demas ultimately fell away.

We are to "...resist him (Satan), firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world."(1 Peter 5:9) But remember what Jesus said: "...In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."(John 16:33) And "No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it."(1 Corinthians 10:13)