

Men's and Women's Fellowship 2014:

1 Thessalonians 1 Study Guide

Study by Pastor John Brackbill at The Bible Church of Port Washington

Preparatory Reading for this study:

- Acts 17:1-9(the founding of the church at Thessalonica)
- 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10 (The focus of this study)

Background to 1 Thessalonians:

- Who was with Paul on his second missionary journey when the church at Thessalonica was founded?
_____ (see Acts 15:36-41, 16:1-2, 17:1)

What was Thessalonica like?

Location: Northern Macedonia (today Greece), at the head of the Thermaic Gulf off of the Aegean Sea. The Via Egnatia (Egnatian Way) which was the main east-west road in the Roman Empire went through Thessalonica making Thessalonica (the leading city of Macedonia) not only a significant sea port but also a strategic place for land commerce.

Population: As the most populous city of Macedonia, the estimates range up to 250,000 with the majority being native Greeks, but with a significantly influential Jewish population.

- Acts 17:2 says Paul reasoned in the synagogues for 3 Sabbaths. Read the following passages and try to determine if Acts 17:2 is saying Paul was only in Thessalonica 3 Sabbaths or whether that refers to his initial Jewish ministry before he ministered to the gentiles (1 Thess. 2:9, 2 Thess. 3:8, Philippians 4:15-16): Was his stay 3 Sabbaths or longer?

- What was the primary opposition that Paul faced in Thessalonica based on Acts 17:5-13?

- Look at Acts 18:1-5 and 1 Thessalonians 3:6-7 and try to determine where Paul was when he wrote to the church at Thessalonica: _____

- Again, considering Acts 18:1-5 and 1 Thessalonians 3:6-7 what was a main reason Paul wrote to the church at Thessalonica?

- Read the following passages and in one word or short phrase describe Paul's spirit toward the Thessalonians (1:2, 2:13, 2:19, 3:9, 4:9-10, 5:11):

- What does 1 Thessalonians 1:3-10 record about Paul toward the Thessalonians? His _____

- Who is Paul's thankfulness directed toward and for how many of the believers at Thessalonica (v. 2)?

- Do you think there were some believers in Thessalonica that were immature and maybe even personally annoying to the Apostle Paul while he was there? If so, how could he still be thankful for all of them?

- Who does this "we" refer to in 1:2?

- Though Paul is telling the Thessalonians of his thanksgiving for them, how does he typically express this thanksgiving according to verse 2? _____

- Verses 3-10 give 3 major reasons for Paul's thanksgiving to God for the believers at Thessalonica. In verse 3 his reason for thanksgiving to God is their Christ-centered character. What are the three evidences of that Christ-centered character and try to put into words what they mean

- According to verse three what was the object of the faith, hope, and love of the believers? _____

- Considering both the object and what their faith, hope, and love produced, how can you grow into more of this same kind of work, labor and steadfastness?

- Verse 4 records Paul's second reason for giving thanks, what is it?

- If verse 4 gives the second reason for Paul's thankfulness, how do you think verses 5-10 function in support of that reason?

How does verse 5 function in verses 4-10?

Verse 5 is focused not so much on how the Thessalonians received the gospel, but on the apostle's experience of preaching the gospel to them. Therefore, verse 5 functions as background to the evidence of their election. In fact, without the apostolic preaching, the Thessalonians would not have evidenced their election because "faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17).

- When Paul says the gospel did not come to you in word only, is he downplaying the importance of the gospel message being spoken? _____
- Verse 5 implies that it is possible for the gospel to be communicated without God's power at work by the Holy Spirit which produces full conviction in the communicator of the gospel that God is at work. Given this reality, what does this mean we need to do before and during each gospel opportunity gathered or scattered as a church? _____
- Verse 6 gives the first evidence of their election. You might call it their Christ-centered what? _____
- Their imitation of Paul, Silas, and Timothy as well as the Lord is somehow connected to the last part of verse 6. Here are four ways that the connection could be understood. Which do you think makes the most sense biblically in this and the larger context of God's Word?
Option #1: You became imitators of us and of the Lord by receiving the word in much tribulation
Option #2: You became imitators of us and of the Lord with the result that you received the word in much tribulation
Option #3: You became imitators of us and of the Lord when or after you received the word in much tribulation
Option #4: You became imitators of us and of the Lord and you received the word in much tribulation

- If the result of the Thessalonian's imitation of the apostolic company and of the Lord was tribulation, what does that tell us about the nature of discipleship even today?
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- What is the only way that someone could have true joy in the middle of tribulation based on verse 6?
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- If verse 6 gives the evidence of the Thessalonians election in terms of their Christ-centered imitation, then verse 7 gives evidence in terms of their Christ-centered what?
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- Based on verses 6-7 what happens when you increasingly imitate the Lord?
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- Paul gives thanks to God for the Thessalonians because of their Christ-centered character (v. 3), their election (v. 4-7) and their what, based on verses 8-10?
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- Paul was probably only away from Thessalonians a few months before he started receiving the report from others about the church at Thessalonica. What does that tell you about them?
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- What do you think "so that we have no need to say anything" refers to in verse 8?
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- According to verses 9-10 what was being reported that happen among the Thessalonians?
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Paul was thankful to God for the Thessalonians for three major reasons.

- First, Paul was thankful to God that they had a Christ-centered character that was growing in faith, love, and hope in Jesus Christ. Take some time to examine if you are growing in such faith that produces godly works for God and others, such love for Jesus that produces strenuous labor for the Lord and the mission of the gospel, and such hope that produces a life of steadfastness or perseverance in the Christian walk.
- Second, Paul was thankful to God that they were chosen by God. Their election was evidenced by their Christ-centered imitation and Christ-centered example. Take some time to examine if you are flourishing in such evidences of your election unto salvation. Are you imitating the priorities and conduct of the apostles? Are you increasingly growing in Christ-likeness?
- Third, Paul was thankful to God for their known and reported on testimony. Take some time to examine whether God's work is increasingly flourishing in your life such that others would be pointed to Christ through your testimony.