



1 THESSALONIANS

Read 1 Thessalonians 1

This is most likely the first of Paul's canonical letters, written from Corinth in AD 50. Paul sends greetings from his team members Silvanus and Timothy and extols the hospitality and response of the Thessalonian community to his teachings. The reputation of the Thessalonians has spread far and wide, much to Paul's delight.

Reflect: Teachers instill in their students the desire to imitate the master. Reflect on how the power of our example influences all whom we meet.

Pray: Conscious of the patterns of our behavior, we humbly seek guidance in how best to respond to the teachings of Jesus in our everyday life.

Act: Examine how the teachings of Jesus inform the quality of your life. Share the joy that comes from living a life that affirms God's love.

Salutation

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.

The Thessalonians' Faith and Example

2 We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers, constantly **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 and sisters^a beloved by God, that he has chosen you, **5** because our message of the gospel came to you not in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of persons we proved to be among you for your sake. **6** And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for in spite of persecution you received the word with joy inspired by the Holy Spirit, **7** so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. **8** For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place your faith in God has become known, so that we have no need to speak about it. **9** For the people of those regions^b report about us what kind of welcome we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true

^a Gk *brothers*

^b Gk *for they*

God,¹⁰ and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath that is coming.

Read 1 Thessalonians 2

As a loving father figure, Paul treated members of the Thessalonian community with gentleness and kindness, reflecting his awareness of God's benevolence. Despite opposition from religious nativists, Paul opened the gospel of God's love, extending it beyond the limits of geography and ideology.

Reflect: Nativists are people who fear that in allowing others access to the benefits of membership they will lose what they feel a need to control. Religion should never reflect a desire to restrict God's love and mercy.

Pray: Let yourself feel the freedom that gives us access to the realm of God's love. Share that freedom with all who seek God's mercy and affirming love.

Act: Filter out any sense that you control access to God. Let God be God in ways beyond your understanding.

Paul's Ministry in Thessalonica

2 You yourselves know, brothers and sisters,^a that our coming to you was not in vain,² but though we had already suffered and been shamefully mistreated at Philippi, as you know, we had courage in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in spite of great opposition.³ For our appeal does not spring from deceit or impure motives or trickery,⁴ but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the message of the gospel, even so we speak, not to please mortals, but to please God who tests our hearts.⁵ As you know and as God is our witness, we never came with words of flattery or with a pretext for greed;⁶ nor did we seek praise from mortals, whether from you or from others,⁷ though we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. But we were gentle^b among you, like a nurse tenderly caring for her own children.⁸ So deeply do we care for you that we are determined to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you have become very dear to us.

9 You remember our labor and toil, brothers and sisters;^a we worked night and day, so that we might not burden any of you while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.¹⁰ You are witnesses, and God also, how pure, upright, and blameless our conduct was toward you believers.¹¹ As you know, we dealt with each one of you like a father with his children,¹² urging and encouraging you and pleading that you lead a life worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.

13 We also constantly give thanks to God for this, that when you received the word of God that you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word but as what it really is, God's word, which is also at work in you believers.¹⁴ For you, brothers and sisters,^a became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, for you suffered the same things from your own compatriots as they did from the Jews,¹⁵ who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets,^c and drove us out; they displease God and oppose everyone¹⁶ by hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved. Thus they have constantly been filling up the measure of their sins; but God's wrath has overtaken them at last.^d

Paul's Desire to Visit the Thessalonians Again

17 As for us, brothers and sisters,^a when, for a short

^a Gk *brothers*

^b Other ancient authorities read *infants*

^c Other ancient authorities read *their own prophets*

^d Or *completely or forever*

time, we were made orphans by being separated from you—in person, not in heart—we longed with great eagerness to see you face to face. ¹⁸ For we wanted to come to you—certainly I, Paul, wanted to again and

again—but Satan blocked our way. ¹⁹ For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you? ²⁰ Yes, you are our glory and joy!

Read 1 Thessalonians 3

Seeking to affirm the faith and love within the Thessalonian community, Paul sends Timothy to strengthen and encourage the community. Having been successful, Paul now looks to the community as enduring despite any tribulation, much to Paul's joy.

Reflect: No individual or group can expect to avoid tribulations in pursuing holiness of life. We encourage one another with continual renewal in shared commitment and generosity of spirit.

Pray: Living the faith means sharing our lives with God and others. Allow God entry into your life and seek awareness of the goodness of others.

Act: Instead of criticizing the failures of others, try to appreciate the struggles they endure and the goodness they exhibit.

3 Therefore when we could bear it no longer, we decided to be left alone in Athens; ² and we sent Timothy, our brother and co-worker for God in proclaiming^a the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you for the sake of your faith, ³ so that no one would be shaken by these persecutions. Indeed, you yourselves know that this is what we are destined for. ⁴ In fact, when we were with you, we told you beforehand that we were to suffer persecution; so it turned out, as you know. ⁵ For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent to find out about your faith; I was afraid that somehow the tempter had tempted you and that our labor had been in vain.

Timothy's Encouraging Report

6 But Timothy has just now come to us from you, and has brought us the good news of your faith and love. He has told us also that you always remember us kindly and long to see us—just as we long to see you. ⁷ For this reason, brothers and sisters,^b during all our distress and persecution we have been encouraged about you through your faith. ⁸ For we now live, if you continue to stand firm in the Lord. ⁹ How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy that we feel before our God because of you? ¹⁰ Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you face to face and restore whatever 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, just as we abound in love for you. ¹³ And may he so strengthen your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

A Life Pleasing to God

4 Finally, brothers and sisters,^b we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus that, as you learned from us how you ought to live and to please God (as, in fact, you are doing), you should 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 fornication; ⁴ that each one of you know how to control your own body^c in holiness and

^a Gk lacks *proclaiming*

^b Gk *brothers*

^c Or *how to take a wife for himself*

Read 1 Thessalonians 4

Seek what is noble in all that you do. Control lust, love your neighbor, foster peace, abide with the hope that in God's time we shall all be united together with God.

Reflect: God's calling us to holiness means that we pursue the higher road as much as possible. Confidence in God's life-affirming grace helps to carry us through the challenges we face.

Pray: Without knowing God's grace in our lives we are likely to lose confidence and a strong sense of commitment. We need to seek awareness of that grace through prayer and meditation.

Act: Reject the inclination to discouragement or a sense of failure. Each day we face challenges, but renewed realistic commitment is what our God seeks from us.

honor, ⁵ not with lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; ⁶ that no one wrong or exploit a brother or sister^a in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, just as we have already told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. ⁷ For God did not call us to impurity but in holiness. ⁸ Therefore whoever rejects this rejects not human authority but God, who also gives his Holy Spirit to you.

⁹ Now concerning love of the brothers and sisters,^b you do not need to have anyone write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another; ¹⁰ and indeed you do love all the brothers and sisters^b throughout Macedonia. But we urge you, beloved,^b to do so more and more, ¹¹ to aspire to live quietly, to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we directed you, ¹² so that you may behave properly toward outsiders and be dependent on no one.

The Coming of the Lord

¹³ But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters,^b about those who have died,^c so 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 died.^c ¹⁵ For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will by no means precede those who have died.^c ¹⁶ For the Lord himself, with a cry of command, with the archangel's call and with the sound of God's trumpet, will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the air; and so we will be with the Lord forever. ¹⁸ Therefore encourage one another with these words.

5 Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers and sisters,^b you do not need to have anything written to you. ² For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. ³ When they say, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them, as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and there will be no escape! ⁴ But you, beloved,^b are not in darkness, for that day to surprise you like a thief; ⁵ for you are all children of light and children of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness. ⁶ So then let us not fall asleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober; ⁷ for those who sleep sleep at night, and those who are drunk get drunk at night. ⁸ But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and

^a Gk brother

^b Gk brothers

^c Gk fallen asleep

Read 1 Thessalonians 5

Before sending the kiss of peace to his beloved Thessalonians, Paul admonishes them to be confident in their calling, alert to its challenges, respectful toward one another, encouraging to the discouraged, and supportive of their leaders.

Reflect: Functioning as a community means that all help each other, just like the members of Alcoholics Anonymous commit themselves to be available to one another in times of need.

Pray: Sensitivity to others requires a continual rising above oneself. Prayer and reflection help us to transcend our own needs and seek special help for others.

Act: Don't be the last to become aware of the needs of people around you. Be the first to be aware and reach out to them.

for a helmet the hope of salvation. ⁹ For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁰ who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him. ¹¹ Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.

Final Exhortations, Greetings, and Benediction

12 But we appeal to you, brothers and sisters,^a to respect those who labor among you, and have charge of you in the Lord and admonish you; ¹³ esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves. ¹⁴ And we urge you, beloved,^a to admonish the idlers, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with all of them. ¹⁵ See that none of you repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to all. ¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray without ceasing, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. ¹⁹ Do not quench the Spirit. ²⁰ Do not despise the words of prophets,^b ²¹ but test everything; hold fast to what is good; ²² abstain from every form of evil.

23 May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound^c and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.

25 Beloved,^d pray for us.

26 Greet all the brothers and sisters^a with a holy kiss. ²⁷ I solemnly command you by the Lord that this letter be read to all of them.^e

28 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.^f

^a Gk *brothers*

^b Gk *despise prophecies*

^c Or *complete*

^d Gk *Brothers*

^e Gk *to all the brothers*

^f Other ancient authorities add *Amen*



2 THESSALONIANS

Read 2 Thessalonians 1

The sufferings of those who follow Jesus must be configured with those of Jesus, who was glorified and affirmed by God. Paul prays that God will make the Thessalonians worthy of their calling and bring fulfillment to their faith.

Reflect: Suffering is real, whether imposed by others or as a normal aspect of life. Enduring suffering requires a special faith, which is affirmed to perfection in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

Pray: Align yourself in prayer with the love of God, who raised Jesus from death and invites us to participate in his risen life.

Act: Confront the reality of suffering in people's lives. Use the gift of your presence and the moral support that comes from trusting in God's enduring love to encourage those who suffer.

Salutation

1 Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy,
To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

2 Grace to you and peace from God our^a Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thanksgiving

3 We must always give thanks to God for you, brothers and sisters,^b as is right, because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing. ⁴ Therefore we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your steadfastness and faith during all your persecutions and the afflictions that you are enduring.

The Judgment at Christ's Coming

5 This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, and is intended to make you worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering. ⁶ For it is indeed just of God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, ⁷ and to give relief to the afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels ⁸ in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. ⁹ These will suffer the

^a Other ancient authorities read *the*

^b Gk *brothers*

Read 2 Thessalonians 2

Don't be deceived into thinking that the end is near. We can't escape evil by believing that God will intervene to end it swiftly. Instead, stand fast on the teachings you have received and be encouraged by the hope we have in the resurrection of Jesus.

Reflect: Unrealistic expectations serve only to discourage rather than to relieve suffering. Seeking ways to remedy suffering as well as ways to endure it without being overwhelmed by it are to be preferred to thinking that God will provide an escape mechanism.

Pray: Accept the challenge we face in life to be present to those who suffer. Seek God's guidance in becoming instruments of God's peace.

Act: Find ways to console those who suffer by demonstrating your loving concern and willingness to be there when most needed.

punishment of eternal destruction, separated from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, ¹⁰ when he comes to be glorified by his saints and to be marveled at on that day among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed. ¹¹ To this end we always pray for you, asking that our God will make you worthy of his call and will fulfill by his power every good resolve and work of faith, ¹² so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Man of Lawlessness

2 As to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we beg you, brothers and sisters,^a ² not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as though from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord is already here. ³ Let no one deceive you in any way; for that day will not come unless the rebellion comes first and the lawless one^b is revealed, the one destined for destruction.^c ⁴ He opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, declaring himself to be God. ⁵ Do you not remember that I told you these things when I was still with you? ⁶ And you know what is now restraining him, so that he may be revealed when his time comes. ⁷ For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work, but only until the one who now restrains it is removed. ⁸ And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus^d will destroy^e with the breath of his mouth, annihilating him by the manifestation of his coming. ⁹ The coming of the lawless one is apparent in the working of Satan, who uses all power, signs, lying wonders, ¹⁰ and every kind of wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. ¹¹ For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion, leading them to believe what is false, ¹² so that all who have not believed the truth but took pleasure in unrighteousness will be condemned.

Chosen for Salvation

13 But we must always give thanks to God for you, brothers and sisters^a beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the first fruits^f for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and through belief in the truth. ¹⁴ For this purpose he called you through our proclamation of the good news,^g so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹⁵ So then, brothers and sisters,^a stand firm and hold fast to the

^a Gk *brothers*

^b Gk *the man of lawlessness*; other ancient authorities read *the man of sin*

^c Gk *the son of destruction*

^d Other ancient authorities lack *Jesus*

^e Other ancient authorities read *consume*

^f Other ancient authorities read *from the beginning*

^g Or *through our gospel*

traditions that you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by our letter.

16 Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us

and through grace gave us eternal comfort and good hope, ¹⁷ comfort your hearts and strengthen them in every good work and word.

Read 2 Thessalonians 3

Paul admonishes members of the community to apply themselves and not become dependent on others to stand in for them. Diligence in service is required of all, since the need is great. Chastise those who fail in service, not as enemies but as brothers, always seeking peace.

Reflect: Peacemakers serve as models both by their dedication to others and by their transparency in speech. Hiding resentment does not advance peace but undermines it.

Pray: We all need to be instructed in the ways of pursuing peace. This comes from listening, seeking to learn more, and being willing to put ourselves out for one another.

Act: Honest discussion with one who offends can become an act of kindness. Seek out someone whom you resent and explore ways to be honest in dialogue while humble in attitude. Bless that person with sincerity and understanding.

Request for Prayer

3 Finally, brothers and sisters,^a pray for us, so that the word of the Lord may spread rapidly and be glorified everywhere, just as it is among you, ² and that we may be rescued from wicked and evil people; for not all have faith. ³ But the Lord is faithful; he will strengthen you and guard you from the evil one.^b ⁴ And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, that you are doing and will go on doing the things that we command. ⁵ May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ.

Warning against Idleness

6 Now we command you, beloved,^a in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to keep away from believers who are^c living in idleness and not according to the tradition that they^d received from us. ⁷ For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us; we were not idle when we were with you, ⁸ and we did not eat anyone's bread without paying for it; but with toil and labor we worked night and day, so that we might not burden any of you. ⁹ This was not because we do not have that right, but in order to give you an example to imitate. ¹⁰ For even when we were with you, we gave you this command: Anyone unwilling to work should not eat. ¹¹ For we hear that some of you are living in idleness, mere busybodies, not doing any work. ¹² Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living. ¹³ Brothers and sisters,^e do not be weary in doing what is right.

14 Take note of those who do not obey what we say in this letter; have nothing to do with them, so that they may be ashamed. ¹⁵ Do not regard them as enemies, but warn them as believers.^f

Final Greetings and Benediction

16 Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in all ways. The Lord be with all of you.

17 I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. This is the mark in every letter of mine; it is the way I write. ¹⁸ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with all of you.^g

^a Gk *brothers*

^b Or *from evil*

^c Gk *from every brother who is*

^d Other ancient authorities read *you*

^e Gk *Brothers*

^f Gk *a brother*

^g Other ancient authorities add *Amen*