

I THESSALONIANS, CHAPTER ONE

Chapter Topic:

Paul's Thanks for the Thessalonians



"We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers." I Thess. 1:2

THINKING THROUGH THESSALONIANS

I THESSALONIANS, CHAPTER ONE

(Use your King James Bible to fill out these questions.)

1. What three men joined in sending the first epistle to the Thessalonians? 1:1
_____ ; _____ ; _____
2. The church of the Thessalonians is said to be "in" two people. Who are they? 1:1
_____ ; _____
3. What two things does Paul request to "be unto" the Thessalonians? 1:1
_____ ; _____
4. How often did Paul give thanks for the Thessalonians? 1:2

5. In what did Paul make mention of the Thessalonians? 1:2

6. What three things did Paul remember about the Thessalonians? 1:3
_____ ; _____
_____ ; _____
7. In whose sight did the Thessalonians work and labor? 1:3

8. By what title did Paul address the Thessalonians? 1:4 _____

9. What did Paul know about the Thessalonians? 1:4 _____

10. What had come unto the Thessalonians? 1:5 _____

11. In what four ways had the gospel come unto the Thessalonians? 1:5 _____ ; _____ ; _____
_____ ; _____
12. The Thessalonians knew that the gospel had come to them in much assurance, because they knew "what _____ of _____" Paul and his helpers had been while they were among them." 1:5.

13. For whose sake had Paul behaved as he did among the Thessalonians? 1:5 _____.
14. Paul said that the Thessalonians had become "followers of _____ and of the _____." 1:6
15. In what had the Thessalonians received the word? 1:6 _____.
16. Do you think that the afflictions experienced by the Thessalonian Christians were an exceptional experience for Christians? (Compare Acts 14:22). Yes or No. (Circle which).
17. What brought joy to the Thessalonians? 1:6 _____.
18. What had the Thessalonians been to other believers? 1:7 _____.
19. In what two places had the Thessalonians become ensamples? 1:7 _____; _____.
20. What had sounded forth from the Thessalonians? 1:8 _____.
21. Not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in _____, the faith of the Thessalonians had been spread abroad. 1:8
22. Because the Thessalonians had spread abroad their faith, what did Paul not need to do? 1:8 _____.
23. How did Paul feel about the Thessalonians spreading abroad their faith so greatly? 1:8,2-3. _____.
24. Fill in these blanks from 1:9: "For they (the people) shew (or report) of us _____ of _____ we had unto you."
25. To whom did the Thessalonians turn? 1:9. _____.
26. From what did the Thessalonians turn? 1:10. _____.
27. How did Paul describe God? 1:9. _____.
28. What two things did the Thessalonians turn to God to do? _____.
_____. 1:9 _____.
_____. 1:10
29. Did the Thessalonians expect Christ to come again? 1:10. Yes or No. (Circle which)
30. Who is the Son, for whom the Thessalonians were waiting? 1:10. _____.
31. What has God done for the Son? 1:10. _____.
32. What is coming on the world? 1:10. _____.
33. Who delivers us from this? 1:10. _____.
34. Memorize I Thess. 1:9-10.

I THESSALONIANS, CHAPTER ONE

Chapter Topic, "Paul's Thanks for the Thessalonians"

Outline

Greeting; 1:1

1. From Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy.
2. Grace and peace to them.

A. When Paul expressed thanks; 1:2-3

1. Always; 1:2a
2. In prayer; 1:2b-3
 - a. Remembering their work of faith.
 - b. Remembering their labor of love.
 - c. Remembering their patience of hope.

B. Things for which Paul expressed thanks; 1:4-10

1. *Their election*; 1:4-6

- a. Their election known by Paul; 1:4
- b. How their election was known by Paul; 1:5-6
 - (1) By the way the gospel came to them; 1:5
 - (a) Not in word only.
 - (b) In power.
 - (c) In the Holy Ghost.
 - (d) In much assurance—This demonstrated by Paul's manner among them.
 - (2) By the way they received the gospel; 1:6
 - (a) They became followers of Paul and the Lord.
 - (b) In much affliction.
 - (c) With joy of the Holy Ghost.

2. *Their ensample*; 1:7-10

- a. They became ensamples to all believers; 1:7
- b. They sounded forth the word; 1:8-10
 - (1) Where? Macedonia, Achaia, and every place. 1:8
 - (2) Result—Paul needed not to speak anything;
- c. What others reported about the Thessalonians; 1:9-10
 - (1) What manner of entering in Paul had among them; 1:9
 - (2) How they turned from idols; 1:9-10
 - (a) To serve God; 1:9
 - (b) To wait for Jesus from heaven; 1:10

THOUGHTS FROM THE OUTLINE

Of I Thessalonians, chapter one

There were two things in the Christian experience of the Thessalonians that made Paul thankful—their election and their ensample. These same two things in every Christian's experience ought to cause every gospel preacher to give thanks.

But sad to say, these words mean very little to the average church member.

"Election" means "choice." So the *election* of the Thessalonians was the way God chose them to be His children. Or, to express it in another way, it was the way they became Christians and were saved.

Any time a person is saved, he will have a thrilling story to tell. Many half-converted church members of modern times cannot give a thrilling testimony of their election, because they are not "elect."

"*Ensample*" means "example" or "pattern." Not only should our conversion (or election) be a thrilling story, but our service for Christ after conversion should also be an inspiration and a challenge to all who know about it. It was such in the case of the Thessalonians.

Text (1:1)

I Paul, and Silvanus, and Timothy, unto the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ; Grace to you and peace.

Translation and Paraphrase

1. Paul, and Silvanus (who is also called Silas), and Timothy (send greetings) to the congregation of Thessalonians (who are) in God (our) Father, (in his family, favor, and fellowship,) and (in) the Lord Jesus, the anointed one. (May the favor (of God) and peace (come) to you.

Notes (1:1)

1. While three men, Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, sent this epistle (or letter), it is plain that Paul is the main writer. This is evident by such verses as I Thess. 3:1, 5, 6.
2. The very names of Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy stir up mental pictures of heroic courage and hard service. These men had the faith, the determination, and the vision of victory that we need. They did the Lord's will, not fearing the consequences, even as we must do it in our generation.

3. Paul does not assert his apostleship at the beginning of this letter, as he does in some of his later ones. See Rom. 1:1; Gal. 1:1; I Cor. 1:1; etc. The Thessalonians had no question about the genuineness of Paul's apostleship, and the false brethren who tried to force the Gentiles to keep the law of Moses had not, at that time, done so much to undermine Paul's authority as they later did.
4. All three of these men (Paul, Silvanus, Timothy) had been in Thessalonica together, and were well known there. It is worthy of note that although Paul had greater gifts and knowledge than Silvanus or Timothy, he had no feelings of superiority and assumes no titles of preeminence. He places their names on an equal with his own at the beginning of this letter.
5. Silvanus is the man who is uniformly called Silas in the book of Acts. In the epistles he is always called Silvanus. He was a Jew by race. Acts 16:20. He was a Roman citizen. Acts 16:37. He was a prophet. Acts 15:32. Silas and Judas bore the letter from the conference in Jerusalem to the churches in Syria and Cilicia. Acts 15:22-23, 27. Paul chose Silas as his helper on his second missionary trip after the dispute with Barnabas. Acts 15:37-40. References to Silas during Paul's second missionary trip are Acts 16:19, 25, 29; 17:4, 10, 14, 15. Silas was with Paul in Corinth at the time when Paul sent this first letter to the Thessalonians. Acts 18:5. He was also with Paul there when Paul sent the second Thessalonian letter a few months later. II Thess. 1:1. Most interpreters think that the Silvanus mentioned in I Peter 5:12 is the same Silvanus who was with Paul on his second missionary trip.
6. Timotheus is the same man who is usually called Timothy. Timotheus is just the Latin spelling of his name. Timothy grew up in Lystra. He joined Paul and Silas there during the early part of Paul's second missionary trip. Acts 16:1-4. He continued with Paul during his third trip, and in Rome, and afterwards. He was a loyal constant, beloved, and effective helper to Paul.
7. The long title, "church of the Thessalonians *which is* in God the Father and *in* the Lord Jesus Christ," is not a name for the church, but rather a description of it. The term *church* (Gr., *ekklesia*) simply means "a called-out assembly," and the Thessalonians were familiar with the term. (See Introductory Section Vi, paragraph 6.) But the "assembly" to which Paul was writing was not a civil or political or earthly assembly, but the assembly which was "in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." The fact that they were in God the Father made them

separate from the idolatrous Gentiles. The fact that they were in the Lord Jesus Christ separated them from the unbelieving Jews.

8. The words in *italics* in the Bible text throughout the Bible in the King James and American Standard versions do NOT indicate that these words are to be specially emphasized. Rather, the italics indicate that these words are not in the Greek New Testament (and you know that the New Testament was written in Greek), but have been supplied into the English translation to make it smoother and more readable. Sometimes these words in italics are helpful, and sometimes they are not. This verse would be just as clear without them.
9. The Thessalonian church was "in God—and in the Lord Jesus Christ." This description of the church in Thessalonica emphasizes the new relationships of the Thessalonian disciples. A similar description is given of the churches in Judea. Gal. 1:22.

The fact that Paul speaks about God being *our Father* in this verse shows the kinship which Paul felt with the Thessalonian Christians. We are all brothers in Christ, because God is our common father.

10. The phrase "in the Lord Jesus Christ," used in this verse, is a favorite of Paul. The phrase "in Christ," and similar ones, often is found in his writings. Note II Cor. 5:17: If any man be *in Christ*, he is a new creature." See also Rom. 16:7, and others. To be "in Christ," is to be in his church, in his favor, in his fellowship, and actually in his very person. See Ephesians 5:30.

Note—The term "LORD" from Acts 2:36 onward refers to Jesus. God is the Father. Jesus is Lord. Acts 10:36.

11. The word "Christ" means "the anointed one." We have rendered it that way in our translation. The Greek word *Christ* means the same as the Hebrew word *Messiah*, and in English, both mean "the anointed one." In the Old Testament times kings, priests, etc., were installed into their offices by "anointing," that is, by pouring sweet oil upon their heads. See I Sam. 16:13. Jesus, our anointed one (or Christ), was anointed with the Holy Spirit. See Acts 10:38; Heb. 1:9; Matt. 3:16.
12. This letter, like every one of Paul's epistles except Hebrews, begins with a request for "grace" to be with them. See Rom. 1:7; I Cor. 1:3; etc. "Grace" means "favor," especially "unmerited favor." Christians are saved by grace. Ephesians 2:8. They need God's grace to sustain them after they are saved. Hebrews 4:16.

1:1,2 THINKING THROUGH THESSALONIANS

The word "Grace" was often used by the Greeks as a form of greeting. But they could not use it with the rich connotation of God's favor that Christians do.

13. Paul's request that they might have "Peace" is a Hebrew greeting. ("Shalom!") See Luke 10:5. This was a meaningful request to these brethren who were suffering persecutions. I Thess. 1:6; II Thess. 1:4-6.
14. The words "from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ" are omitted by the American Stan. Version, Nestle's Gr. N.T., Westcott and Hort's Gr. N.T., the Latin version, and others. They are found in the Sinaitic and Alexandrian manuscripts of the N.T. and some later ones. But it is probably correct to omit them, and we have done so in our translation.

Text (1:2)

2 We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers;

Translation and Paraphrase

2. We are giving thanks unto God always for all of you (Thessalonians), making mention (of you) in our prayers (for you are that dear unto us).

Notes (1:2)

1. Here in I Thessalonians, as in almost all his letters, Paul begins with a giving of thanks. Compare Romans 1:8; I Cor. 1:4; etc. Even when he had to scold people in his epistles, Paul usually began with an expression of thanks. We ought to imitate this way of thinking and speaking when we deal with our brethren. We so often scold publicly, but seldom praise publicly. What other institution so greatly deserves public thanks as the church?
2. Paul says, "We give thanks," because Silas and Timothy joined with him in the greeting. But, of course, Paul was the main author of the epistle.
3. "Give thanks" is in the present tense, which indicates continuous action. Therefore we have rendered it "giving thanks" in our translation. Paul considered giving thanks a privilege and duty that needed to be repeated often.

4. The word "mention" (Gr. *mneia*) can also mean "remembrance" or "memory." Like Paul, we should not forget our brethren when we go away from them. God hears our prayers for them at a distance, as well as near. Paul prayed for them, mentioning them by name before God.
5. Paul often spoke about bearing people up in prayer. He was busy teaching and writing. But he devoted much time to prayer, praying for people by name. See Romans 1:9; Phil. 1:3-4; etc. This was essential for Paul. It is also essential for us. Paul even prayed for the Colossians and Laodiceans whom he had never seen face to face. Col. 2:1.

Text (1:3)

3 remembering without ceasing your work of faith and labor of love and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, before our God and Father;

Translation and Paraphrase

3. (In our prayers it is our practice to be) recalling unceasingly the work (that you have done because) of (your) faith, and the toil (that is a fruit) of (your) love, and the steadfastness of the hope (that you have held) in our Lord Jesus Christ (that He will save us, establish us, and return for us. These things you have done, being conscious of the fact that even here in this life we are) in the presence of God (who is) even our Father.

Notes (1:3)

1. Faith, hope, and love are the three great virtues that abide with us always. I Cor. 13:13. But these virtues, to be genuine, must be backed up by works. The thing that made Paul so thankful about the Thessalonians was that their faith, hope, and love had indeed been put to work.

J. B. Phillips translation of this verse is very much to the point: "Your faith has meant solid achievement, your love has meant hard work, and the hope that you have in the Lord Jesus Christ means sheer dogged endurance in the life that you live—"

The man of faith, hope, and love is not a sentimentalist who lounges about, but one who works and labors for what he believes in, hopes for, and loves. Our faith must work. Faith without works is dead. James 2:26. Faith worketh by love. Gal. 5:6.

1:3,4 THINKING THROUGH THESSALONIANS

2. The word "labour" (Gr., *kopos*) means fatiguing toil, intense labor united with trouble. It is a very strong word. Only love could lead us to labor willingly in such a manner. Love leads us to attempt labor from which we would ordinarily shrink in dismay. Love leads us to do good without having any feeling of superiority because we have done it, or resentment because it has been imposed upon us.
3. The word "patience" in the New Testament usually means "steadfastness," or "endurance," or "constancy." Thus "patience of hope," means hope which is held steadfastly. The person who clings to his hope in the Lord when storm after storm and battle after battle sweeps over him, leaving him empty-handed and hurt, has shown "patience of hope."

As Christians we need such "patience of hope." For often by our standards of counting time, God seems to be in no hurry, and we can become impatient when our hope is delayed in coming. James 5:7. God promised Abraham a son, but it was twenty-five years before a son was born. God promised Abraham a homeland. But Abraham's life on earth ended before he received his home. Hebrews 11:8-10. Let us have the same patience of hope that Abraham had.

4. The hope of the Thessalonians was primarily a hope in the return of Christ. They had been taught to await the return of Christ, and we also should have the same glorious hope. I Thess. 1:10. It is utter foolishness to set our hopes upon making this world a perfect place, and a place where we can have satisfaction. We are to set our hope perfectly upon the grace that is to be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ. I Peter 1:13. Our hope extends beyond death, and the end of the world. Our hearts should not be gloomy with regret and disillusionment, but eager with the expectation of the coming Christ. Do you share that hope?

Text (1:4)

4 knowing, brethren beloved of God, your election,

Translation and Paraphrase

4. (Furthermore, our thankfulness comes in) knowing, my brethren beloved by God, that God has chosen you (as His very own because you have received His Son Jesus).

Notes (1:4)

1. Paul was thankful for the *election* of the Thessalonians. What does *election* mean? It means a *choosing* or a *choice*. It means that God had chosen them as His people.
2. How did God make this choice? Upon what basis did He make it? Did He make it by whim, or partiality, or "sovereign grace"? To ask that question is almost to answer it. Of course not. God does not desire that any person should perish. I Tim. 2:4; II Pet. 3:9. Therefore God certainly does not arbitrarily select some to be saved and some to be damned.
3. God has chosen us *in Christ*. Ephesians 1:4. God has now chosen Christians as His people, because they have chosen Christ, God's Son. The grounds of the choice lie in Christ and His merits, and not in our own merits or God's partiality. All Christians are "elect." I Pet. 2:9: "Ye are a chosen nation." The American Standard Version renders this: "Ye are an *elect* race."
4. Paul asserts that he KNEW that the Thessalonians were chosen of God. How could Paul have known that they were elect, if "election" were the result of some arbitrary choice in the mind of God? He could not have done so, for no man can read God's mind. But since election does not rest upon an arbitrary choice by God, Paul could know that they were elect, and he tells in verses 5 and 6 how he knew it.

He knew their election because of these two reasons: (1) The way the gospel came to them; (2) The way they received the gospel. (Review the outline of chapter 1 for more details.)

5. The Thessalonians became Christians and were chosen (or elected) by God in the same way that you and I are saved and become Christians. These are the steps that they followed, and which we must also follow:
 - (1) They *believed* on the Lord Jesus. Acts 16:31.
 - (2) They *repented*. Acts 17:30. To repent means to change the mind, and decide to serve Christ, instead of doing as we ourselves prefer.
 - (3) They made a *confession*. We must confess with our mouths that we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Romans 10:9-10; Acts 8:36-37.
 - (4) They were *baptized*. Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16. We are baptized in water. Acts 10:47. We are buried with Christ in baptism. Romans 6:4. This is pictured in the act, as we are completely covered, buried, immersed, in the water.

By doing these things we take Jesus as our Lord and savior. We become God's elect (chosen), even as the Thessalonians became the elect of God.

6. God's election (or choosing) is never independent of man's response. In olden times the nation of Israel was chosen. But it was later cast off for unbelief. Matthew 8:11-12; Rom. 11:20. Of course, those who believed were not cast off.

Even so, we who have been chosen by God are urged to give diligence to make our calling and election sure. II Peter 1:10. Without faith, we shall be cut off like unbelieving Israel. Rom. 11:21.

7. Paul addressed the Thessalonians as "brethren." We should use this word when speaking to, or about, our fellow Christians.
8. In the Greek New Testament, the phrase, "of God," follows "brethren beloved," and not "election." So the correct translation of this verse would be, "Knowing, brethren beloved of God, your election." This is the rendering given in the American Standard version and in our translation. The title, "brethren beloved of the Lord," is also found in II Thess. 2:13.

Text (1:5)

5 how that our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance; even as ye know what manner of men we showed ourselves toward you for your sake.

Translation and Paraphrase

5. (We have assurance of your election) because our gospel (the good news which we preached) came not unto you as a spoken message only, but also with (miracle-working) power, and with the (evident presence of the) Holy Spirit, and with much full assurance (such as can exist only when men know they speak a true and powerful message. We preached unto you with assurance like that,) even as ye know what sort of men we were (while we were) among you (laboring as we did) for your sakes.

Notes (1:5)

1. Paul declares that the gospel which he preached came to the Thessalonians in four different ways:
 - (1) In word, but not in word only.
 - (2) In power.
 - (3) In the Holy Spirit.
 - (4) In much assurance.
2. The way the gospel had come to the Thessalonians, and the

way they received it, are set forth by Paul as proofs of their election. Sometimes people wonder if they are truly saved and accepted by God. If they have heard the gospel proclaimed truly, and have received it, they can know that their "election" is a reality.

3. The word "gospel" means "good news." Rotherham renders the phrase, "our gospel," as "our glad-message."

The gospel concerns the facts of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, with all the blessings brought by these events. I Cor. 15:1-4. You should by all means remember that the gospel concerns these three things.

The gospel has commands that must be obeyed. This is indicated by the fact that men must "obey" the gospel. II Thess. 1:8.

4. While Paul calls his message "our gospel," it is the same message as is elsewhere called "the gospel of God" (I Thess. 2:2), and "the gospel of Christ" (I Thess. 3:2). Paul calls it "our gospel" because he believed it, was saved by it, and preached it. But it did not originate in his mind. It was revealed to him by God. Gal. 1:11-12.
5. The gospel which Paul preached is the ONLY gospel that can save us from our sins. We must strive for THE faith of the gospel. (Phil. 1:27). For there is only one faith. (Eph. 4:5). We preach not "a" faith, but *the* faith. The gospel is by its very nature intolerant. It is kind, but intolerant. We must recognize it as THE truth of God, and preach it with full assurance, as Paul did. We cannot yield an inch when it comes to standing for the gospel.
6. Paul's preaching in Thessalonica went forth to them "in word," that is, as a spoken message. Paul in Thessalonica, reasoned with the Jews out of the Scriptures. He opened the Scriptures and alleged from them that the Christ had to suffer and rise again, and that Jesus was the Christ. Acts 17:2-3.

In our generation we cannot deliver God's message without using God's words. Modern attempts to deny that the message of God can be communicated in words are foolishness. If every man has to discover for himself what the will of God for him is, then we shall all live and die in uncertainty.

7. The gospel also came to the Thessalonians in "power." This probably refers to miracles which Paul worked in Thessalonica. Compare Hebrews 2:4. It is true that the account in Acts 17:1-9 of Paul's work in Thessalonica does not mention him doing any miracles. However, Romans 15:19 says, "Through

1:5,6 THINKING THROUGH THESSALONIANS

many signs and wonders, by the *power* of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ." See also I Cor. 2:4. It is very probable that Paul demonstrated "power" by doing miracles in Thessalonica as he did elsewhere.

8. Also the gospel came to them "in the Holy Spirit." This probably refers to the fact that Paul had supernatural guidance by the Holy Spirit in his preaching in Thessalonica.

Can we claim to preach "in the Holy Spirit"? We certainly do not claim direct guidance by the Holy Spirit as Paul experienced it. Nonetheless, what gospel preacher even today has not at times digressed from his prepared messages, and made extemporaneous remarks that he had not planned to make, and found afterwards that the unplanned remarks were exactly what some person present needed to hear? Surely the Holy Spirit must have guided the preacher to say these words, and brought them to his remembrance at the proper time.

Also we could stand up and say religious words to people forever without bringing conviction to them. Only as the Holy Spirit takes the words which we preach and uses them to bring conviction to people's hearts, will we be able to win them. See John 17:8. So in a very real manner we still preach "in the Holy Spirit."

9. Finally, Paul preached "in much assurance." May God help us to have the same assurance. The assurance we have inwardly will be exhibited outwardly by every word we say and every deed we do. Weak convictions produce weak actions. Assurance produces ardent actions.

On the other hand, we might have inward assurance, but because we were too reserved or formal or naturally hesitant, we might speak in a very conversational, and apparently unconcerned manner, which would give people the impression that we did not have real assurance. God help us to preach fervently, and to lift up our voice with strength, and cry aloud. Paul says that his manner of life proved that his gospel had come to the Thessalonians "with much assurance." Let us have the same urgency in our speech and actions that Paul had, so that men will know we preach the gospel "with much assurance."

Text (1:6)

6 And ye became imitators of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit;

Translation and Paraphrase

6. And you (having become the chosen people of God because you received the word,) became imitators of us (who preached unto you) and of the Lord (Jesus himself. For even as we, and the Lord himself, have suffered joyfully because of the word which was given to us to deliver, you also) having received the word with much affliction (from the Jews, and yet) with (the) joy that comes from the Holy Spirit (have shared our experiences.):

Notes (1:6)

1. The Thessalonians had become "imitators" of Paul and of the Lord. "Imitators" is a better translation than "followers" in this verse.
2. The Lord Jesus, Paul, and the Thessalonians had all shared these three experiences:
 - (1) Each received the word of God.
 - (2) Each experienced much affliction.
 - (3) Each had joy in their affliction.
3. The Lord Jesus received the *word* from his Father to deliver to the world. John 7:16; 8:28. For doing this he endured *affliction*. And yet for the *joy* set before him, he endured the cross despising the shame. Heb. 12:2.
4. Likewise Paul the apostle received the *gospel* by revelation from Jesus Christ. Gal. 1:11-12. When Paul declared this message, he encountered *suffering* in every place. Yet he *rejoiced* in his sufferings. Col. 1:24.
5. Thus also the Thessalonians received the *word* from Paul. They soon found themselves in much *affliction*. But they endured with *joy*. Thus they became imitators of Paul and of the Lord himself. Some of the afflictions of the Thessalonians are described in Acts 17:5-9.
6. The word *affliction* (Gr., *thlipsis*) means "a pressing, a pressing together, pressure, oppression, affliction, distress, straits." (Thayer)
7. "Joy of the Holy Spirit," I take (as an ablative of source) to mean "joy that comes from the Holy Spirit." See Gal. 5:22; Acts 13:52; Acts 8:8, 39. All Christians have experienced this joy when they were first saved. Alas, some have permitted the joy to fade away afterwards.
8. There was a quality in Paul's life which inspired people to follow and imitate him. Paul could boldly say, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." I Cor. 11:1. People just

1:6,7,8 THINKING THROUGH THESSALONIANS

could not ignore him. They were either warmly for him, or violently against him. We should pray that we shall be people like Paul, who will inspire others to imitate us in their struggle for perfection.

Text (1:7)

7 so that ye became an ensample to all that believe in Macedonia and in Achaia.

Translation and Paraphrase

7. (But your sufferings with joy have resulted in much good, so much so) that you have become an example to all (of those) who believe (both) in Macedonia (northern Greece) and in Achaia (southern Greece).

Notes (1:7)

1. Much good resulted from the troubles of the Thessalonians. Soon Christians from all over Greece were looking to the Thessalonians as an example.
2. The word "ensample" is an obsolete word in modern English. It means practically the same thing as "example." This is well indicated by the fact that there are two Greek words that are translated "ensample" (*tupos* and *hupodeigma*), but that these same words are also translated "example" in other references. The word used here is *tupos*. (We get our word "type" from this word.) Technically, it means a pattern in conformity to which a thing must be made. The image left on a coin by stamping it is called a "type." Children are said to be "types" of their parents. So these Thessalonians were clearly stamped and typed as children of God.
3. For information as to the location of Macedonia, see the map inside the cover, and Introductory Section VI, par. 2.
4. Achaia was the great Roman province in southern Greece, of which Corinth was capital. Athens was also in Achaia.
5. Probably travellers going in and out of Corinth (where Paul was) from Macedonia reported to Paul how they had heard about the Thessalonian Christians.

Text (1:8)

8 For from you hath sounded forth the word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place your faith to God-ward is gone forth; so that we need not to speak anything.

Translation and Paraphrase

8. (You have become an example,) for from you has sounded forth the message of the Lord, not just in Macedonia and Achaia, but into every place (where we have come, the report of) your faith has (already) gone out, so that we have no need to tell (people) anything (about it. They tell us what they have heard from you).

Notes (1:8)

1. Here was a preacher's dream come true! His converts had picked up the work where he had to leave it, and had spread abroad the word of the Lord so effectively that he had no need to say anything more in that area.

However, we must note in all frankness that these zealous converts were not perfect in their understanding or manner of life. I Thess. 3:10. But they had done an outstanding job. They are an ensample to us.

2. The Thessalonians were like the Romans, of whom Paul said, "Your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world." Rom. 1:8. The reputation of any church, however big or small, good or bad, soon becomes known far and wide. People will know us for what we are and do. How wonderful it is for a church to be known for its faith, evangelistic zeal, and missionary efforts!
3. Paul says that the faith of the Thessalonians had been spread abroad in "every place." Probably we need to understand this as referring to the provinces and countries near to Macedonia.
4. The Thessalonian church—A Church to Be Thankful For.
- (1) Thankful for their conversion experience; 1:4, 6.
 - (2) Thankful for their steadfastness; 1:3.
 - (3) Thankful for their work; 1:3.
 - (4) Thankful for their testimony; 1:8-9.
 - (5) Thankful for their hope; 1:10.

Text (1:9)

9 For they themselves report concerning us what manner of entering in we had unto you; and how ye turned unto God from idols, to serve a living and true God,

Translation and Paraphrase

9. For they themselves (the people in every place) report (to us when we talk to them,) concerning us (telling us about) what (a wonderful) sort of entering in we had unto you (when we came to Thessalonica to preach), and how that you (so completely) turned to God from idols, (determined) to serve (yes, even be slaves of) a living and true God.

Notes (1:9)

1. News about a genuine conversion is quickly known far and wide. Paul found himself hearing reports from many people about how the Thessalonians had turned to God. As travellers came into Corinth from various places, many of them told how they had heard about the Thessalonians, and how Paul had had such a successful entry into Thessalonica, and how that so many of them had turned from idols to the true and living God. The Thessalonians had really placed their light on a candlestick for all to see. Matthew 5:51. They were a church to be thankful for.
2. The discussion of the manner of Paul's entering in unto the Thessalonians is taken up in detail beginning at 2:1. The word translated *entrance* in 2:1 (*eisodos*) is the same word translated here as "entering in."
3. Acts 14:15 gives an example of how Paul urged the Gentiles to turn from idols: "We . . . preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God." It will not do to put up a picture of Christ on an idol shelf along with the statue of Buddha. People must turn FROM idols to serve God acceptably.
4. The verb "turned" is in the aorist tense, indicating completed, punctiliar, point action. They did not half turn. They turned once for all from idols.
5. They turned from idols "to serve" the living God. The verb translated "serve" (*douleuo*) means "to be slaves (or bondservants) of." Paul frequently referred to himself as the "servant" or "slave" of Christ. See Romans 1:1. The unavoidable truth is that ALL people are going to be bondservants of someone, either of sin, or of the Lord. Romans 6:16; John 8:34. However, sin is so deceptive that men can be slaves to it, and think they are completely free and emancipated. This is the devil's method of enslaving people.
6. The expression, "living and true God," is a Hebrew way of describing God, and is gloriously correct. Jesus himself spoke of His Father in a similar manner when He said, "That they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou has sent." John 17:3.
7. The fact that the Thessalonians had so generally turned from idols shows that it was predominantly a Gentile church, as Acts 17:4 also indicates.

8. It is a fact that a person becomes like what he worships. The idol worshippers reflect on their faces the likeness (often the sadness) of their gods. The worshippers of the living God show by radiant joy that their God is REAL. "They looked unto him, and were radiant; and their faces shall never be con-founded." Ps. 34:5; American Standard Ver.

Text (1:10)

10 and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, who delivereth us from the wrath to come.

Translation and Paraphrase

10. And (how you turned from idols with a new hope, that has caused you) to look confidently for his (God's) son (to come) from heaven, (the very son) whom He raised up from the dead, (even) Jesus, who is delivering us from the wrath (of God's judgment) that is coming (upon this whole world).

Notes (1:10)

- The Thessalonians turned to God to do two things:
 - To serve the living and true God; 1:9.
 - To wait for Jesus to come from heaven; 1:10.
- The verb "wait" indeed means "to wait," but has the added sense of patience and trust. We should thus be waiting for the return of our Lord Jesus. Our Lord has promised most definitely that He will return. He cautioned us to be watching always. The apostles always taught their converts to watch for His return. Matthew 24:44; Titus 2:13. "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ."
- Some interpreters have said that Paul taught the people of his generation to expect the Lord to come within their lifetime. Then in the course of time, as the Lord delayed His coming, Paul changed his doctrine. If that were true, it would prove that Paul was NOT giving inspired teachings when he first told the people to wait for the Lord's return. We reject any such interpretation of Paul's teachings. Paul himself has given us abundant proof that he spoke by revelation of Jesus Christ, and not from men. See Paul's defense of his ministry in Galatians 1:11-2:9. We believe that when correctly understood Paul's teachings about the Lord's return (and any other matter) are true and beyond challenge.

4. Even while Paul was with the Thessalonians, he told them that some things would have to happen first before the Lord's coming. See II Thess. 2:5. Paul taught the same thing that Jesus himself taught, namely that the Lord MIGHT come at any time. Paul never said that Christ would definitely come within anyone's lifetime, including his own. We challenge anyone to produce a verse from Paul's writings that indicates that Paul said that Christ was going to come within his lifetime. Even today the teaching that Christ will surely come some time, and may come any time, is the true teaching. We must be watching always for the Lord's coming. The Lord says that He will come just when we think He is not coming. Matthew 24:44.
5. We are sometimes told that waiting on the second coming tends to throttle Christian service. Supposedly, people become dreamers. But just the opposite is true. Those who believe the Lord is coming, and maybe very soon, are out winning souls, going to new foreign mission fields, translating the Scriptures into new languages that have never had the word of God, and broadcasting on the radio. They may not be in Washington, D.C., lobbying for a socialistic system of government and economics, but they will be doing what the Lord told them to do—preaching, baptizing, teaching. The socialistic schemers are not doing anything but running the country into bankruptcy and making its money worthless, even when they are doing it in the name of religion. Those who believe the Lord is coming again will be working to turn men to righteousness.
6. The fact that God raised Jesus from the dead guarantees that Christ will return, and that there will be a judgment. Acts 17:31; I Cor. 15:12; I Thess. 4:14.
7. The word "delivered" is actually a present tense, indicating continuous action (and we have indicated this in our translation). Jesus *is delivering* us. Some interpreters feel that this present tense form is timeless, and refers to a single act of deliverance which Jesus will do for us at a given time in the future. We prefer to think of our deliverance as continual. For Jesus delivers us from evil every day. Matt. 6:13. What we are now doing determines whether or not we shall escape in the day of God's wrath. I am thankful that Jesus is now delivering us from the sins that would cause God's wrath to fall upon us in the day of wrath. Romans 5:9: "Much more, then, being now

justified by his blood, we shall be saved from *wrath* through him." We are being delivered now from the future wrath that would come upon us for our present sins.

8. The *wrath to come* is not a popular subject, but it is coming, regardless of men's unwillingness to face it. John the baptist said, "Who hath warned you to flee from the *wrath to come*?" Matt. 3:7. Rev. 6:17 tells you of a fearful time when even kings will try to hide themselves, "For the great day of his *wrath* is come, and who shall be able to stand?" God's wrath is described as a winepress, with the earth cast into it, and the earth, like grapes in a winepress, was stomped down, and blood came out of the winepress. Rev. 14:19-20. God has seven great vials (or bowls) of wrath to pour out on the earth. Rev. 15:7. Compare Rom. 2:5.

Some people speculate that the wrath of God will be poured out during a period of tribulation after Christ has once come and taken the Christians out of the earth, leaving the sinners behind. It seems more probable to us that the wrath of God is to be poured out upon the nations in a series of wars and disasters before Christ comes, and then the terrors of the judgment and hell will consummate His righteous wrath against those who have flouted His laws and despised His mercy. (See Special Study II on page 242, "A Secret Rapture Considered.") But however the wrath may come, the sure thing is that it IS coming, and that Jesus is delivering the saints from it.

9. The wrath to come. (I Thess. 1:10).
- (1) A sure thing. John 3:36; Rom. 1:18; Eph. 5:6.
 - (2) A sure thing. Rom. 2:5-6; 9:22; I Thess. 2:16; II Thess. 2:10, 12.
 - (3) A terrible thing. Rev. 14:10, 11, 19, 20.
 - (4) An escapable thing. I Thess. 1:10; 5-9; Rom. 5:9.

DID YOU LEARN?

(Questions over I Thessalonians, chapter one)

(These questions are over the outline and the notes on chapter one. The Scripture references direct you to the notes on particular verses where the answer to each question is given. Try to answer these questions without consulting your Bible or the notes.)

1. What is the topic of chapter one?
2. For what two things in the experience of the Thessalonians was Paul thankful? (See outline)

THINKING THROUGH THESSALONIANS

3. What three men joined in sending I Thessalonians? (1:1)
4. Who was the main writer of I Thessalonians? (1:1)
5. What is Silvanus called in the book of Acts? (1:1)
6. Why does Paul not assert his apostleship at the start of I Thessalonians as he does in other letters? (1:1)
7. What does the word "church" mean? (1:1)
8. The Thessalonian church was "in" what two people? (1:1)
9. Why are some words in your Bible printed in italics? (1:1)
10. What does Paul request for his readers at the beginning of all his epistles (except one)? (1:1)
11. What does the word "Christ" mean? (1:1)
12. With what does Paul begin most of his letters, including I Thessalonians? (1:2)
13. What three things did Paul remember in prayer about the Thessalonians? (1:3)
14. What does "patience" mean in the phrase "patience of hope"? (1:3)
15. In what did the Thessalonians primarily hope? (1:3, 10)
16. What does "election" mean? (1:4)
17. By what two means did Paul know their election had actually taken place? (1:4-5)
18. What are the four things we must do to be saved (and "elected")? (1:4)
19. Whom has God now chosen as His people? (1:4)
20. Why does Paul call the gospel "our gospel"? (1:5)
21. Did the gospel come to the Thessalonians in word only? (1:5)
22. What did Paul mean when he said that his gospel came to the Thessalonians in "power"? (1:5)
23. How did Paul's gospel come "in the Holy Spirit"? (1:5)
24. What was it that proved that the gospel came to the Thessalonians "in much assurance"? (1:5)
25. What is a better translation of the word "followers"? (1:6)
26. Of what two people had the Thessalonians become followers? (1:6)
27. What three experiences had the Thessalonians shared with those of whom they were followers? (1:6)
28. What does the phrase "joy of the Holy Ghost" mean? (1:6)
29. What does "ensample" mean? (1:7)
30. To whom were the Thessalonians ensamples? (1:7)
31. Where was Macedonia? (Introductory Section IV)
32. Where was Achaia? (1:7)

CHAPTER ONE

33. In what three places (or areas) had the word of the Lord sounded forth from the Thessalonians? (1:8)
34. What effect had the words spoken by the Thessalonians had on what Paul needed to do? (1:8)
35. Concerning what did Paul get reports from people in every place? (1:9)
36. Where does Paul take up in detail the discussion of his "entering in" unto the Thessalonians? (1:9)
37. Was the Thessalonian church primarily Jewish or Gentile? Give a reason for your answer. (1:9)
38. What does "serve" mean in the phrase "to serve the living and true God"? (1:9)
39. What two things had the Thessalonians turned to God to do? (1:10)
40. What is the correct tense and form of the word "delivered"? (1:10)
41. From what does Jesus deliver us? (1:10)
42. Write out from memory I Thess. 1:9-10. Verse 9 begins, "For they themselves shew . . ."