

## 1 Thessalonians

- 1. Who was the writer? When was this book written?** This letter was written by the apostle Paul, with the agreement of Silvanus (Silas) and Timothy. 1 Thessalonians was written around A.D. 51 (there is an inscription in Delphi, Greece recording that Gallio was proconsul of Achaia in A.D. 51/52). From Acts 18, we know that Paul was at Corinth while Gallio was proconsul. This was shortly after Paul's time in Thessalonica on his second missionary journey. Paul went from Thessalonica to Berea, and then was escorted to Athens. Silas and Timothy were separated from Paul at Berea and then met up with Paul first at Athens (at least Timothy did) and then again at Corinth -- see Acts 17:10-15, 1 Thessalonians 3:1-3, Acts 18:5. From Athens, Timothy was sent to Thessalonica to check up on the brethren there (1 Thess. 3:1-3), and then brought back a positive report to Paul at Corinth (Acts 18:5, 1 Thess. 3:6). It appears then that this letter was written from Corinth about A.D. 51.
- 2. Who were the original recipients?** The original recipients of this letter were Thessalonian Christians -- vs 1. It is addressed to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 3. What connection or history did the writer and recipients have?** Some of this was mentioned under question 1 above. The first interaction of Paul, Silas, and Timothy with the Thessalonians is mentioned in Acts 17:1-10. There was tremendous Jewish opposition to the gospel in Thessalonica. Most people within Thessalonica weren't even willing to listen to the words spoken by Paul -- contrast those of Berea with those of Thessalonica -- Acts 17:11. Therefore it is apparent that those in Thessalonica who were obedient to the gospel had great conviction -- 1 Thess. 1:6, 2:2. Great faith is required to receive God's Word in the midst of persecution! It is no surprise that such great things came out of this faithful minority in Thessalonica -- 1 Thess. 1:6-9.
- 4. What coming event is mentioned in every single chapter of 1 Thessalonians?** The return of Christ is spoken of in every chapter. 1:10 says that we "wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come." 2:19 briefly mentions "the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming." 3:13 speaks of the "coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints." 4:13-18 is a comforting section confirming the return of Jesus with those who have died in Christ. Verse 15 specifically mentions "the coming of the Lord." 5:2 says "that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night." Verse 23 of the same chapter also uses the words "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." It is apparent that the second coming of Christ is a major theme within this book. Christ's sure return motivates us to be holy and to prepare our inner man to be worthy of the body of glory that we will receive.
- 5. What are some areas where the Thessalonians were exhorted to "excel still more"?** The terminology "excel still more" is used twice in 1 Thessalonians, both times in chapter 4. The first time is in reference to pleasing God in our walk. Of course that includes all of our behavior. The specific point is in relation to sexual purity -- keeping our vessel in

sanctification and honor. One of the major flaws of our current society and most societies throughout history is the breakdown of the family unit due to infidelity within the covenant of marriage. This begins with fornication and continues with adultery. This immoral lifestyle is painted as normal by the world and is promoted (given hearty approval to) by all forms of media. When inundated with the allures of the world, it is easy to be desensitized. Of course we know that Jesus wants us to keep our minds and hearts pure -- the real battle is in the mind. Men must work hard to keep their thoughts pure and not fall prey to the visual stimulation that is pushed everywhere, including the clothing (or lack thereof) of most women. Women must guard against cheaply giving themselves in hope of gaining some temporary emotional fulfillment from smooth-talking men. (By the way, young people must set their minds to stay pure for the purpose of pleasing God). Christian husbands and wives should both willingly give in order to meet the needs of their spouse, and both must ultimately get their fulfillment from the Lord. The Christians at Thessalonica were doing a good job in this regard, but were encouraged to do even better at displaying God's character in reference to the marriage relationship.

The second time that the phrase "excel still more" is used is in reference to "love of the brethren." Clearly the church of the Thessalonians was practicing this, but the Holy Spirit encouraged them to do even better. Notice that love of the brethren includes working hard so that our behavior can be right toward outsiders, and so that we won't be in any need. Sometimes love is giving to those in need; sometimes it is more than that. You have heard that if you give someone a fish, you feed them for a day, but if you teach them how to fish, you feed them for a lifetime. Let's work hard so that we can share; and let's work hard to teach others to work hard so they can share.

- 6. What should the attitude of the brethren be toward those who are in charge and give instruction?** First of all, the Scriptures exhort us to appreciate those who diligently labor among us. There is no doubt that working with people is some of the most difficult labor there is. Any project can be frustrating when things don't go according to plan, but people are really tough to work with because you have to deal with many extra factors, such as the human will. Those who care enough about us to patiently form Christ within us should be appreciated for that labor of love. A simple "thank you" or "I appreciate you" or some other expression of thanksgiving goes a long way. True church leadership works hard not for a paycheck but because of a love for souls. It is really nice to know that people are working with you and want the same end result.

Secondly, the Scriptures tell us to esteem those who have charge over us and bring us instruction. There is a certain respect that should be shown to those in authority over us. All of us who have any sort of authority know that with authority comes responsibility. Church leadership must give an account to the Lord for those entrusted to their charge -- see Hebrews 13:17. Think about the work required to keep a family going on the right course -- the husband and father ultimately is accountable to God for that family. The leader of a family needs to be a couple of steps ahead in order to guide that family where they need to go. In the same way, church leadership needs to be thinking ahead and planning and working in order to guide the local family of God to where it needs to go. The foresight of what should be taught and the work to communicate it in an

understandable manner are both difficult to carry out. Just as a wife and children should be respectful to the man of the house for his leadership, so the members of the congregation should communicate respect for the work of those who lead within the Lord's church.

**7. What is the bullet list of chapter 5 that is applicable to all Christians?**

- Admonish the unruly – vs 14
- Encourage the fainthearted – vs 14
- Help the weak – vs 14
- Be patient with all men – vs 14
- Don't repay evil with evil – vs 15
- Seek after that which is good – vs 15
- Rejoice always – vs 16
- Pray without ceasing – vs 17
- In everything give thanks – vs 18
- Don't quench the Spirit – vs 19
- Don't despise prophetic utterances – vs 20
- Examine everything carefully – vs 21
- Hold fast to that which is good – vs 21
- Abstain from every form of evil – vs 22

**8. What other points stood out?**

- The gospel came in power and in the Holy Spirit and in full conviction because of the example of the men who brought it -- 1:5, 2:3-12
- The Thessalonian Christians were great disciples – they imitated those who walked righteously before them – 1:6, 2:14.
- The word of God performs its work in you who believe -- 2:13
- Our converts are our hope, glory, joy, and crown -- 1:19-20, 3:5-10
- We should grow in love for one another and for all people -- 3:12, 4:9-10
- Our hearts will be without blame in holiness before our God and Father at the return of Christ -- 3:13
- Our spirit, soul, and body will be preserved without blame at the coming of Christ -- 5:23
- God is faithful, and He will do all that He has promised -- 5:24
- We need to pray for each other -- 5:25