

## Theme: Walk Worthy Of God

**Key verses.** Consider some verses that reflect this theme in 1 Thessalonians (2:11-12; 4:1). Then, consider some verses that reflect this theme in 2 Thessalonians (1:5, 11-12).

**What it means to walk worthy of God.** The word “walk” refers to how one conducts his/her life. To walk worthy of God, then, is to conduct oneself in a way that is pleasing to God. Walking worthy of one’s calling is to live according to the standard of the gospel, which calls us (2 Thessalonians 2:14). And, to be counted worthy of God’s kingdom is to live in the way that pleases God so as to inherit the eternal kingdom God has prepared for the faithful in Heaven. Paul was urging the Thessalonian Christians to live to please God despite the challenges they were facing since he left them.

**Obstacles to walking worthy of God.** All Christians face obstacles to walk worthy of God. Consider some mentioned in these two letters that the Thessalonians faced. First, they had received the gospel in persecution and continued experiencing such (1 Thessalonians 1:6; 2:14-16; 2 Thessalonians 1:4-8). Second, they had fleshly desires that worked to distract them from their mission and entice them to sin (1 Thessalonians 4:3-8). Third, they had a misunderstanding about the coming of Christ that worked to discourage them (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). Fourth, there were some who were evidently troubling them with false teaching (2 Thessalonians 2:1-3). Fifth, there were negative influences working as busybodies (2 Thessalonians 3:6). Sixth, as they were being challenged, it could be tempting to give up (1 Thessalonians 3:2-5; 2 Thessalonians 3:13). Yet, they and all Christians today have the choice as to how they live so as to walk worthy of God!

## Conclusion

We have explored some background information and surveyed some aspects of Paul’s two letters to the church in Thessalonica for the purpose of preparing our minds for a deeper study of them. In the next lesson, we will study 1 Thessalonians 1:1-2:12.



# Walk Worthy Of God

## Introduction

1 Thessalonians 2:11-12 summarizes the importance and purpose of the two letters written by Paul to the Thessalonian Christians. Paul had encouraged, comforted, and implored them to walk worthy of God while he was with them and was continuing to do that through these two letters.

The purpose of this lesson is to learn some background information about Paul’s letters to the church of the Thessalonians.

## Background Of The Church In Thessalonica

**The city of Thessalonica.** The city of Thessalonica benefited from a strategic location. It was located on the Balkan peninsula, north of Greece, along the northwestern corner of the Aegean Sea (known as the Thermaic Gulf), at the intersection of major trade routes. The city found itself situated along the Egnatian Way, a road constructed by the Romans to connect the region east of Rome (nearly 700 miles long, from the Adriatic Sea to Byzantium). During the time of 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Thessalonica was the capital of the Roman province of Macedonia and the most populous city of the province. Although the city consisted primarily of Gentiles, there was a large enough Jewish population to have a synagogue there (Acts 17:1).

**Establishment of the church in Thessalonica.** During Paul’s “second missionary journey,” while Paul was in Troas, he had a vision in the night that urged him to go and preach the gospel in Macedonia (Acts 16:9-10). So, Paul traveled to Philippi (a leading city of the district of Macedonia). Then, he likely followed the Egnatian way from Philippi, through Amphipolis and Apollonia, to Thessalonica (Acts 17:1). He stayed at least three Sabbath days in Thessalonica (Acts 17:2). Silas and Timothy appear to be with him (Acts 17:4, 10, 14).

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Paul's work in Thessalonica is summarized in Acts 17:1-4. As the gospel was finding those willing to turn to Jesus in Thessalonica, Paul and his companions experienced trouble at the hands of the Jews, who formed a mob (Acts 17:5-10). When night fell, the Christians in Thessalonica sent Paul and Silas away to Berea (v. 10), where the agitators from Thessalonica followed and caused more trouble (vv. 13-14).

**Facts about the Thessalonian church.** First, the members of the church had welcomed God's word despite opposition and persecution (1 Thessalonians 1:6; 2:13). Second, the Christians became imitators of Paul and his companions and of the Lord (1 Thessalonians 1:6). Third, the Christians faced persecution (1 Thessalonians 1:3, 6; 2:14-16; 2 Thessalonians 1:4). Fourth, the Christians were diligent in living for Christ and in spreading the gospel (1 Thessalonians 1:3, 6-8). Fifth, the Christians were providing a good example for believers in other areas (1 Thessalonians 1:7). Sixth, the Christians had made significant changes to follow the Lord (1 Thessalonians 1:9). Seventh, the faith of these Christians was flourishing and their love was increasing (2 Thessalonians 1:3).

### **Background Of 1 Thessalonians**

**Recipients.** The letter is addressed to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (1:1). First, these were Christians who belonged to Jesus and had left their prior life of sin to serve Jesus (1:9). Second, these Christians were located in Thessalonica and had joined themselves together as a local congregation of the Lord's people.

**Author.** The author identifies himself as Paul (1:1). Silvanus (Silas) and Timothy are with him at this writing. Though they are with him, the contents of the letter are clearly written from Paul's perspective (3:1). Also, it is important to note that Paul claims the message he preached was really from God (2:13; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 1 Corinthians 14:37)! Also, Paul had deep concerns for the Thessalonians, like a father toward his own children (2:11-12, 19-20).

**Date and place of writing.** Paul gives several details about his travels in the letter that help reach a conclusion about the circumstances of the writing. After Paul and his companions were forced to leave Thessalonica (2:17), Paul was left alone in Athens (3:1; Acts 17:15-16). By the time this letter was written, Timothy had returned to join Paul (3:6). The record of Acts says that Paul went from Athens to Corinth (Acts 18:1) and was joined by Silas and Timothy, who had come from Macedonia (Acts 18:5). Paul stayed in Corinth for a year and a half (Acts 18:11). And, Luke

records Gallio was proconsul of Achaia when Paul was in Corinth (helping us affix a date to this, Acts 18:12). These factors lead to the conclusion that Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians from the city of Corinth, around 51 A.D. (making it one of the earliest New Testament letters).

**Purpose of writing.** The purpose of this letter is tied to the circumstances in which Paul had to abruptly leave them (2:17-18). Paul was deeply concerned about them, fearing the tempter had succeeded in his efforts and Paul's work among them had been for nothing (3:5). After Timothy visited them, though, he brought good news about their faith (3:6-10). This letter is then written to express the joy and encouragement Paul experienced because of the Thessalonians and to encourage them to live and please God even more (4:1).

### **Background of 2 Thessalonians**

**Recipients.** This letter is addressed to the same congregation of Christians in Thessalonica (1:1). They had been standing strong in service to the Lord, despite persecutions and various obstacles. However, some problems had emerged.

**Author.** Paul again identifies himself as the author (1:1) and as having Silvanus (Silas) and Timothy with him. Paul authenticated the letter in the final greeting he wrote (3:17). Perhaps he used a scribe (maybe Silas and/or Timothy) to write the rest. This authentication was important because of some who were evidently writing letters that claimed to be from Paul (2:2).

**Date and place of writing.** There is less circumstantial evidence concerning the date and time of writing for this letter than the first. We can know Paul, Silas, and Timothy were all together (1:1). It is commonly believed they were not together for long after this. In fact, Acts 18:5 is the last mention of Silas in Acts. This has contributed to the conclusion that the letter was written shortly after the first letter, from Corinth. Perhaps around 52 A.D.

**Purpose of writing.** This letter appears to have been written in response to some problems that had been brought to Paul's attention (3:11). For one, some were troubling the Thessalonians by teaching the Day of the Lord had already come (2:2). Then, others were being idle and not working as they should have been (3:6). So, Paul encouraged them to stand firm and hold to the traditions they had taught the Thessalonians (2:15). Paul wanted them to find the encouragement and strength in God and in the Lord Jesus Christ so they might continue to serve Him faithfully (2:16-17; 3:3-5).