

given the right to this financial support. So, Paul even denied his right for compensation due to his care for them (1 Corinthians 9:14-15). Perhaps he did this so his enemies could not accuse him and his companions of preaching for selfish gain. Then, this deep care resulted in them sharing both the gospel and their own lives with the Thessalonians (2 Corinthians 12:15). As an example of their sacrifice, the Thessalonians should have remembered their labor and hardship, as they experienced persecution and worked diligently to provide for themselves so they would not be a burden on the Thessalonians (Acts 18:3). So, between their secular work and their preaching, they worked night and day to preach without being a burden on them. This was all further evidence that their motives in preaching in Thessalonica were pure!

**As a father with his children (2:10-12).** Both the Thessalonians and God could provide witness testimony concerning the way Paul and his companions conducted themselves in Thessalonica. Their stay was not as their opponents were accusing. Rather, the Thessalonians and God could attest to their conduct as being devout/holy (devoted to God), righteous (devoted to God's standard of righteousness), and blameless (without any just reason to be accused of doing wrong). While living this kind of godly life will not keep you from experiencing false accusations, it does provide peace to the one being accused in knowing such are completely fabricated (Matthew 5:11-12; Titus 2:8)!

Paul and his companions conducted themselves in Thessalonica like a father should conduct himself with his children – trying to guide them to God by encouraging (exhorting), comforting (encouraging and consoling), and imploring (requesting and charging) them. Particularly, Paul's concern for each of the Thessalonians was that they should walk (live) worthy of God, who had called them to share in His kingdom and glory – just as He does with us.

### Conclusion

We have explored Paul's introduction to this letter, the faithfulness demonstrated by the Thessalonian Christians, and the conduct Paul and his companions displayed in Thessalonica. In the next lesson, we will study 1 Thessalonians 2:13-3:13.



# Walk Worthy Of God

## 1 Thessalonians 1:1-2:12

Paul had not gotten to spend much time with the Thessalonians when he traveled and preached there. The Jews caused quite a stir and Paul and Silas had to be sent out of the city. But, they had already spread the gospel and some were converted there so that a church was established.

The purpose of this lesson is to learn from Paul's introduction, the Thessalonians' faithfulness, and Paul's conduct in Thessalonica in a study of 1 Thessalonians 1:1-2:12.

### Paul's Introduction (1:1)

**Author (1:1a).** Paul is the author of this letter and it is clearly written from his perspective. But, the message was really God's message (2:13). Silvanus (Silas) and Timothy were with Paul when he was writing and had been with Paul during his visit in Thessalonica.

**Recipients (1:1b).** The letter is addressed to a local church composed of Thessalonians who were in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. That is, they had a right relationship with the Father and the Lord Jesus through obeying the gospel. These had obeyed the gospel initially and were now continuing to live in the Lord's favor.

**Greeting (1:1c).** Paul extends grace and peace to the Thessalonian Christians. For Christians, this grace of God is crucial to everything that matters. And, peace is the result of experiencing God's grace (peace with God, others, and self).

### The Thessalonians' Faithfulness (1:2-10)

**Paul and his companions gave thanks for them (1:2-3).** Paul and his companions always extended thanks to God on behalf of the

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Thessalonians, constantly mentioning them in their prayers (compare 3 John 1:3-4). Particularly, Paul recalled the following in the presence of God when he prayed. First, their work produced by faith, as their trust in God resulted in actions that pleased God (Jams 2:14-26; Matthew 7:24-27). Second, their labor motivated by love, as their love for God and others resulted in labor in the Lord's service (1 John 5:3; 1 John 3:16-18). Third, their endurance inspired by hope, as their hope for salvation in Jesus served as an anchor that helped them endure the challenges of life (Hebrews 6:19). In this, we see that faith, hope, and love are cornerstones of Christian living (5:8; 1 Corinthians 13:13; Colossians 1:3-5; 1 Peter 1:21-22). And, they all have powerful effects in the life that pleases God!

**They received the gospel (1:4-6).** Paul expressed his thankfulness and confidence that God loved and had chosen the Thessalonians. Although God loves all people, there is a special sense in which Christians are actively experiencing the love of God. They had been chosen by God through a combination of God making salvation available to them and their choice to obey the gospel. For, God has chosen that those in Christ will be saved (Ephesians 1:4) and gives people the free will as to whether they will believe and obey the gospel (2 Thessalonians 2:13-15).

Paul remembered how the gospel they preached did not come to the Thessalonians as empty words. Rather, the gospel was powerful in their lives through the working of the Holy Spirit (who inspired its message, likely in connection with miracles and signs through the Holy Spirit). They were fully convinced and convicted of the message. But, they did not just respond in an intellectual way. They knew the way Paul and his companions lived among them and became imitators of them. Namely, they welcomed the message of the gospel with joy despite the severe persecution Paul and the others were experiencing (Acts 17:1-9)!

**They became an example for other believers (1:7-10).** The Thessalonians became an example to all believers in the provinces of Macedonia and Achaia, providing a model for other Christians. They also demonstrated how God's people should be committed to ringing out God's word for others to hear – not only in their own region of Macedonia, but also in Achaia and beyond! They continue to be a good example for Christians and churches today also.

Paul and his companions were hearing the report of the Thessalonians' faith from others, including the kind of reception they had among the Thessalonians. This included how they had turned to serve the one living and true God and away from idols, thus demonstrating the power of the gospel to transform lives! Then, they were now waiting for

Jesus to return from Heaven – this Jesus God raised from the dead and will rescue the saved from the wrath that will come on the disobedient when He returns (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). Notice the connection between verses 9 and 10 and verse 3: They worked to turn their lives to God, they labored in serving the Lord, and they endured hardships as they waited for Jesus's return.

### **Paul's Conduct In Thessalonica (2:1-12)**

**Emboldened to preach (2:1-2).** Paul now begins a defense of their conduct in Thessalonica. Perhaps there were accusations that had been made against him (i.e. that he preached for monetary gain). The Thessalonian Christians knew what had really happened and that their visit was not in vain. Paul and his companions were clearly not preaching out of selfish motivation. For, they previously suffered and were treated outrageously while they were in Philippi (Acts 16). This included them being flogged and their feet put into the stocks in prison. Yet, they were emboldened by God to speak God's gospel in Thessalonica despite opposition. In the same way, how others treat us and how they respond to the gospel should never determine how we will serve God. Rather, we should be emboldened by God to labor diligently in His service, regardless of our circumstances!

**Spoke to please God (2:3-6).** Their motivation in preaching (exhortation, appeal) did not come from error, impurity, or an intent to deceive so as to trick or manipulate those who heard their message. Rather, they had been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. As such, their preaching was to please God rather than people, as He is the one who examines hearts and knows everyone's motivations and will judge us all (contrast with Romans 16:17-18; Galatians 1:6-10). So, they never used flattering speech or had any kind of greedy motivation in their preaching. God was their witness of their pure hearts and motives. Yet, although Paul assures that their motives were pure and their actions were right, this did not evidently stop some from falsely accusing them of not having the right motives so as to deceive the Thessalonians. Paul is urging the Thessalonians to recognize their pure motives by recognizing the personal sacrifices they made for the sake of the gospel.

**Worked so as not to be a burden (2:7-9).** Although Paul could have exercised authority as an apostle and made burdensome demands (i.e. financial support), he and his companions were gentle as a mother cherishes and cares for her own children. Paul knew that while the work of spreading the gospel should never be a self-centered endeavor, God has