



# 1<sup>st</sup>

# Thessalonians

DR. SAMUEL U. BULGIN

PASTOR'S

# BIBLE

CLASS

HOLINESS • LOVE • FUTURE HOPE

Atlanta Belvedere SDA Church **STUDY GUIDE**

## INTRODUCTION

Paul planted the church in Thessalonica on his second missionary journey (Acts 17:1-9). Thessalonica was a key port city where people interacted and engaged in commerce. Paul was harassed and run out of the city by the Jews shortly after he started the church. Paul took occasion to write 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians shortly after leaving to equip the infant believers in the basics of Christian living.

It is Paul's most affectionate letter. He is not doing battle for truth as in Galatians or as a lawyer arguing a case as in Romans or a fireman rushing to extinguish a destructive fire as in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians. Here Paul is the tender, gentle shepherd of the newborn lambs. He is pastoral. He lovingly feeds, protects, and encourages the youthful church. Paul is a pediatric nurse caring for children (2:7); a gentle father encouraging his little ones (2:11).

Paul's gentleness is revealed in the endearing term "**brothers**" (1:4; 2:1, 9, 14, 17; 3:7; 4:1, 9-10, 13; 5:1, 4, 12, 14). Paul reveals his delight in the Thessalonians in the words "**for you are our glory and joy**" (2:20). Paul is emotionally connected to the Thessalonians as seen in 3:7, 8. "*Therefore, brethren, in all our affliction and distress we were comforted concerning you by your faith. For now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord.*"

## PURPOSE

- I. To establish that the Old Testament predicts the coming of a suffering Messiah and that Jesus fulfills the predictions.
- II. To Provide the Thessalonian Christians with a fuller understanding of the Christian life through solutions to their problems.

- a. Persecutions by fellow townsmen (Acts 17:5; 1 Thess. 2:14-16; 3:3-4).
- b. Doubts about the integrity of the missionaries probably spread by hostile Jews (1 Thess. 2).
- c. Confusion about the validity of their new faith and experience in light of the Jewish attacks (1:4-10) about the Christian view of the future (the fate of Christians who have died before the coming of Christ; the time of Christ's coming and Christian activity meanwhile) (4:13-5:11); and about the place of suffering in the life of the Christians (3:3-4).
- d. Sexual irregularities (4:3-8), idleness and troublemaking (4:11-12), carelessness (5:1-11), and quarreling (5:13).

Notes:

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## MESSAGE

The Thessalonians are to “***stand fast***” in their newly found faith in spite of opposition and press on to Christian maturity.

Paul begins his letter with thanksgiving for the secure place they have in the redemptive purpose of God. They are converted and they show it in their manner of life.

The missionaries and the Thessalonians were moved by the Holy Spirit. The missionaries demonstrated this by their persuasive

preaching of the gospel and the Thessalonians by their joyful reception of the message.

The Thessalonians became imitators of the missionaries and of Christ. They lived out their faith (1:3). They turned away from idolatry to the worship of the true and living God and to the hope of the coming of Christ with final salvation.

The defense of Paul's conduct and ministry as courageous (2:2), doctrinally sound (2:3-4), uncompromising (2:4-5), selfless (2:6-8), self-supporting (2:9), blameless (2:10), and patient (2:11). He did not leave because he did not care but rather in response to illness, hostile magistrates, or Jewish opposition. Whatever it was, it was beyond his control.

The Thessalonians must face their problems and come to maturity in Christ which he refers to as "**holiness**" or "**sanctification**" (3:13; 4:3, 7; 5:23). By association with God, they become like God. Holiness (sanctification) is God's gift (5:23-24). For Paul sanctification is both an accomplished fact (1 Cor. 6:11) and something yet to be completed (2 Cor. 7:1; 1 Thess. 4:3). Christians are to go on becoming by God's gracious help, what they already are in principle. One does not progress to holiness, but in holiness.

The Christian life is the separated life. Separated from the common and the unclean by God's gracious act in Christ (1 Cor. 1:30; 6:11) and filled by God's Spirit (1 Thess. 1:6; 4:8). It has certain characteristics:

Characteristics of the Christian Life		
a)	Sexual purity	4:3-8
b)	Brotherly love	4:9-10
c)	Attention to one's own business	4:11
d)	Industriousness	4:11-12
e)	Mature understanding of Christian and emotional stability	4:13-18
f)	Spiritual alertness	5:9-11
g)	Respect for Leaders	5:12-13
h)	Patient help of others	5:14-15

i)	Thankfulness and prayerfulness	5:16-18
j)	Moral discrimination	5:19-22

### Notes:

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## AUTHORSHIP

The vocabulary, style, and overall theology is genuinely Paul's. It was written about AD 54. Paul's intense love for his converts, his anxiety about their spiritual welfare, his joy when he receives a favorable account of their faith, his noble independence of spirit are all seen in the epistle.

## OUTLINE

**THEME:** *Your new Christian faith and experience are valid; go on to maturity of life in Christ.*

- I. **INTRODUCTION** (1:1-3)
  - a. Greetings (1:1)
  - b. Thanksgiving (1:2-3)
  
- II. **BODY** (1:4-5:24)
  - a. The remarkable conversion of the Thessalonians as evidence of the validity of their new faith and experience (1:4-10).

- b. Paul and his associates' blameless conduct at Thessalonica and afterward as proof of the integrity of the missionaries and the validity of the Thessalonians' faith and experience (2:1-3:13)

### At Thessalonica (2:1-16)

1.	We were like a gentle, nurturing mother to you (v. 7).
2.	We shared not only the good news but also our very lives (v. 8).
3.	We worked hard not to be a burden to you (v. 9).
4.	We were an example to you (v. 10).
5.	We dealt with you as a father to his children (v. 11).
6.	We encouraged you to live up to your potential as God's children (v. 12).

### After Leaving (2:17-3:13)

Paul found it difficult to send Timothy to Thessalonica, he would have preferred to go himself. However, Timothy did just what Paul would have done if he were present:

1.	Provided strength and encouragement (v. 2).
2.	Protected those who might have fallen away (v. 3).
3.	Preserved the work they had done (v. 4, 5).
4.	Promoted the need to grow (v. 7, 7).
5.	Reported to Paul how their faith had flourished (v. 6-8).
6.	Prayed for what they had still lacked (v. 9, 10).

- c. The Thessalonians' need for maturity of life in Christ (4:1-5:24).
- i. The call to maturity (4:1-2).
  - ii. Sexual purity (4:3-8).
  - iii. Brotherly love and personal industry (4:9-12).
  - iv. Growth in theological understanding (4:13-5:11).
    1. Concerning the fate of the Christian dead (4:13-18).
    2. Concerning the coming of the day of the Lord (5:1-11).



**Atlanta Belvedere SDA Church**  
3567 Covington Highway, Decatur, GA 30032  
404-299-1359  
[belvederesdachurch.org](http://belvederesdachurch.org)  
[belvederesda@gccsda.com](mailto:belvederesda@gccsda.com)