

Fuelled by **HOPE**

1 THESSALONIANS



Study 1: 1 Thessalonians 1-3

The book of 1 Thessalonians was written by the Apostle Paul to the Christian believers in Thessalonica, a capital city and influential urban centre in the region of Macedonia (now modern-day Greece). Paul, along with his companions, visited Thessalonica during his second missionary journey (in AD49-50) but faced significant opposition and persecution from some Jews. Due to the hostile environment, Paul and his companions' visit was cut short. They had to leave the city, leaving behind a vulnerable and newly formed community of Gentile believers under significant pressure to abandon their faith.

To catch up after the sermons during the school holidays, this study will be a fast-paced overview of the first section of the letter.

Read 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

1. What overall feeling does Paul seem to have towards the Christians in Thessalonica?
2. In just a few words, how would you summarise his description of the Thessalonian church? What are the key facts about them?
3. What evidence demonstrates God's work in them? List the main points.
4. When you look at yourself, and at other believers around you, what evidence do you see that God is at work?

Read 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

5. Paul is defending his legitimacy and his motives. What kind of “erroneous” or “impure” motives for preaching the gospel does he mention? What kind of techniques could be used by someone with wrong motives?

6. What were Paul’s actual motivations for preaching the Gospel to the Thessalonians?

7. How does Paul describe the way he treated the Thessalonians? What metaphors does he use? Which one do you find most striking?

8. What good or bad motivations tend to affect your service of God?

Read 1 Thessalonians 2:13-16

9. How did the Thessalonians respond to the message preached by Paul? What proved that their faith was genuine?

Read 1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:5

10. What emotions does Paul feel whilst he is separated from the Thessalonians? Why does he feel this way?

11. What was Paul’s concern for the Thessalonians? Why did he send Timothy?

Read 1 Thessalonians 3:6-13

12. Timothy has brought good news back to Paul. How would you summarise Paul’s feelings about this? Which phrase strikes you the most?

13. In his joy, Paul begins to pray for the Thessalonians. What does he pray for?

Reflect on all we’ve read today

14. How can opposition and trials sometimes lead to doubt and temptation in our own lives?

15. What steps can we take to strengthen our faith in these times?

16. How can we support and encourage fellow believers to endure difficult circumstances and remain steadfast in their faith?

Pray

- Based on 1 Thessalonians 3:12-13, pray for each other, that God will increase our love for one another and strengthen us to live holy lives that please him.

Notes & Prayer Points

Study 2: 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12

Warmer question:

1. If someone asked “What is God’s will for your life?” what would you say?

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:1-2

Paul has previously instructed the Christians in Thessalonica how to live to please God. Now he’s urging them to please God more and more.

2. As you make decisions, pursue life goals and do the ordinary tasks in your day, can you think of a time when you consciously did something to please God?
3. Why should Christians follow these when it’s merely the Apostle Paul writing them? (v2)

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8

4. “*Sanctified*” means “made holy”. Why would God’s will for you be focused on your holiness?

The culture around Thessalonica was filled with sexual immorality tied with the pagan religion of the Greco-Roman world. Similarly today, sexual beliefs and practice in our culture are vastly different to God’s intentions. That explains why Paul focuses on sexual behaviour as an example of living a holy life, and why these instructions are very relevant to us today.

Notes & Prayer Points

5. In today's world, for those in your age and stage, what might sexual immorality look like?

6. If you're willing to share, which of these things is most tempting for you?

7. For those in your age and stage, what might "controlling your own body in a way that is holy and honourable" (v. 4) look like?

8. The common view in today's world is that sexual behaviour is centred around ourselves and our pleasures. What contrasting view can be seen at the start of verse 6?

9. Biblical sexual standards are very different to our world's. What reasons are given in verses 6-8 to be holy with our sexuality?

10. Why are God's standards around sexuality often hard to accept today (as they were hard to accept back then)?

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12

11. Paul commends the Thessalonian church family for their love for one another. Why does he urge them to increase this love?

12. What might it look like for our All Saints church family to love one another more and more?

Study 3: 1 Thessalonians 4:13 - 5:11

Warmer question

1. Amongst people who don't follow Jesus, how is the problem of death handled? What different strategies do you see people using?

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14

2. What pastoral situation in Thessalonica is Paul responding to? What do Paul's readers seem to be worried about?
3. How is the death and resurrection of Jesus significant in this situation?
4. According to this passage, what is the place of grief in the Christian life? What might this look like in practice?

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18

5. Choose a few words to summarise how the return of Christ is pictured here.
6. How will Jesus' second coming compare to his first coming?

7. There are many details about Christ's return that are mentioned elsewhere in the New Testament but not here - for example the last judgement (Matt 25:32), the transformation of our bodies (1 Cor 15:53), and the renewal of creation (Rom 8:21, Rev 21.1). Consider the details he does mention. How are they relevant to the situation he's addressing in Thessalonica?
8. What is the main blessing of the age to come which is mentioned in this passage? Is this what you think of when you imagine God's coming kingdom?
9. Paul finishes by telling his readers to "encourage each other with these words".
 - a) How would the truths of these sections encourage his original readers, with the specific worries they had?
 - b) How can we encourage each other with these words today? What specific things can we do to remind each other that Jesus will return?
 - c) If we have confidence that death is not the end, and resurrection life with Jesus is our eternal future, what difference will it make to what we do as Christians day to day?

Prayer

- Give thanks for the solid hope which impacts even how we grieve
- Ask God to help us encourage each other with the truth that King Jesus will return
- Pray for this good news to have impact in all aspects of our lives.

Notes & Prayer Points

Study 4: 1 Thessalonians 5:12-28

1. Think about what it's like for you being part of a gathering of Christians. Which aspects make you most comfortable and most uncomfortable?

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:12-15

2. From verses 12-13, what can we learn about the structure of the early church?
3. Look at verses 12-15 and fill in the following table.
 - a) What underlying problems within the Thessalonian church can you see?
 - b) What marks of a healthy church are mentioned?
 - c) At All Saints, is there something in the right column you are thankful for, or something in the left column you can address by the way you act?

Problems	Marks of a healthy church

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

In this section Paul focusses on the specific behaviours that will enact the positive attitudes that he has spoken about in verses 12-15.

4. Paul tells his readers to “rejoice always” (v16) and to “give thanks in all circumstances”.
 - a) Considering the wide range of circumstances we experience, is this really possible? How/Why?
Philippians 4:4; Psalm 95:1 & 100:1.
 - b) How can we put this into practice in our individual lives and as a church community?
5. Paul tells his readers to “pray continually” (v17).
 - a) Is this really possible? What would it look like?
 - b) From the rest of this section, what topics for prayer might Paul be thinking of?
6. Paul says “Do not quench the Spirit” (v19). Look back at where Paul has mentioned the Holy Spirit so far (1:5, 1:6, 4:8). What activities of the Holy Spirit has he mentioned, which we should welcome and promote?

Verses 20-22 talk about prophecy. Prophecy in the Bible means delivering a message from God (not necessarily predicting the future), inspired by the Holy Spirit. The catch-phrase of the Old Testament prophets was “thus says the Lord” and their message would typically refer back to what the Lord had previously promised, warned, or commanded in the Law of Moses. In the New Testament context, 1 Corinthians 14:3 says “The one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation.”

7. What errors does Paul warn about on the topic of prophecy? What could this look like in practice?

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:23-28

8. In verse 23 Paul expresses his desire for God’s work in the Thessalonians. “Sanctify” means to make something holy - distinctively set apart for God. How would the things mentioned in all we’ve read today (verses 12-28) show that a church has been set apart for the “God of peace”?
9. According to Paul, what is the power-source for our sanctification?

Reflection and prayer

10. Amidst the wide variety of topics in today’s passage, is there one area in which you’d like to grow more? Share and pray for each other.

To close: Ask one member to send everyone out with the words of blessing in verses 23-24.

Notes and Prayer Points
