

1 Thessalonians

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Preacher: Joshua Winters

[0 : 00] Well, this morning I want you to imagine that you are a member of a church in the city of Thessalonica. If you live there today, you would say that you live in Greece.

But back then the territory of Greece was part of the Roman Empire, divided up into several provinces. The southern tip of Greece back then was the Roman province of Achaia, where the city of Athens and Corinth were.

However, the northern part of Greece back then was the Roman province of Macedonia. And so imagine that you are a member of a church in the capital city of Macedonia, the city of Thessalonica.

You live in a proud city with a population of over 100,000 people. It's also a port city with a natural harbor opening up into the Aegean Sea.

Your city is a key stop on the Ignatian Way, which is a land-based trading route running from east to west. And Thessalonica is a flourishing center of trade and commerce.

[1 : 09] A free city governed by the local polyarchs. When it comes to religion, most of the people in Thessalonica worship the gods of the Greeks and Romans.

But there's a sizable population of Jews who live here as well. The year is 50 AD. The amazing and wonderful events of Jesus' death and resurrection happened just 17 years ago.

But as for the story of our little church here in Thessalonica, this is all quite new for us. Within just the past year, Paul, Silas, and Timothy came through our city on Paul's second missionary journey. Before coming to our city, they were on the other side of the Aegean Sea in the province of Asia, when one night, Paul had a vision of a man from our province of Macedonia, urging him to come over here and help us.

Before coming here to Thessalonica, Paul and Silas went, after sailing across the sea, to Philippi, where they got into some trouble. They actually ended up in jail there for a night.

[2 : 22] And thankfully, they were released the next morning. But not until after God had done a miracle in the middle of the night, through which the jailer and his family came to believe in Jesus.

Well, after Philippi, Paul, Silas, and Timothy passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia. And then they came here to Thessalonica. They were here for only three weeks.

And our lives were turned upside down. Three weeks in a row, on the Sabbath day, Paul came to the local synagogue and was proclaiming Jesus the Christ and saying that Jesus was the one that the Scriptures pointed to.

And some of the Jews were persuaded, and a great many of us Greeks believed, and even some of the leading women of the city believed in Jesus.

But as more of us Gentiles were believing in Jesus, suddenly the Jews became jealous, and they rounded up some really bad characters, formed a mob, and set the whole city in an uproar.

[3 : 37] They came and stormed the house of Jason, one of our own church members, looking for Paul and Silas. But when they couldn't find him, they grabbed Jason, and some of us other church members here, and dragged us off to the city authorities, shouting, These men, Paul and his companions, they've been causing trouble all over the world, and now they have come here.

And Jason has welcomed them into his house. They are all defying Caesar's decrees, saying that there's another king, one called Jesus.

And the whole crowd that was gathered, and the city officials, were thrown into a frenzy after hearing this. Amazingly, they let us go that same day, after making us post-bond.

And later that night, we secretly sent Paul and Silas and Timothy out of the city, down to Berea. But I tell you, our lives were turned upside down.

So fierce has been the opposition of the Jews. As soon as they found out that Paul and Silas had gone down to Berea, some of them even went down there and began agitating the crowds and stirring people up against them.

[5 : 01] That was a number of months ago now. But now wait. What? A letter written by Paul has just arrived to be read to everyone.

All right. Let's gather around. Let's open it up. Let's see what Paul has to say to us. Everybody listen. Paul, Silas, and Timothy.

To the church of the Thessalonians, in God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace and peace to you. We always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers.

We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

For we know, brothers and sisters, loved by God, that he has chosen you because our gospel came to you, not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction.

[6 : 23] You know how we lived among you for your sake. You became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you welcomed the message in the midst of severe suffering with the joy given by the Holy Spirit.

And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. The Lord's message rang out from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, your faith in God has become known everywhere.

Therefore, we do not need to say anything about it, for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turn to God from idols to serve the living and true God and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.

You know, brothers and sisters, that our visit to you was not without results. We had previously suffered and been treated outrageously in Philippi, as you know, but with the help of our God, we dared to tell you his gospel in the face of strong opposition.

For the appeal we make does not spring from error or impure motives, nor are we trying to trick you. On the contrary, we speak as those approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel.

[7 : 58] We're not trying to please people, but God, who tests our hearts. You know, we never used flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed.

God is our witness. We were not looking for praise from people, not from you or anyone else, even though as apostles of Christ, we could have asserted our authority.

Instead, we were like young children among you. Just as a nursing mother cares for her children, so we cared for you.

Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God, but our lives as well. Surely you remember, brothers and sisters, our toil and hardship.

We work night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preach the gospel of God to you. You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous, and blameless we were among you who believed.

[9 : 10] For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting, and urging you to live lives worthy of God who calls you into his kingdom and glory.

And we also thank God continually because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is indeed at work in you who believe.

For you, brothers and sisters, became imitators of God's churches in Judea, which are in Christ Jesus. You suffered from your own people the same things those churches suffered from the Jews who killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets and also drove us out.

They displease God and are hostile to everyone in their effort to keep us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved. In this way, they always heap up their sins to the limit. the wrath of God has come upon them at last. But brothers and sisters, when we were orphaned by being separated from you for a short time in person, not in thought, out of our intense longing, we made every effort to see you for we wanted to come to you.

[10 : 48] Certainly I, Paul, did again and again, but Satan blocked our way. For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes?

Is it not you? Indeed, you are our glory and joy. So when we could stand it no longer, we thought it best to be left by ourselves in Athens.

We sent Timothy, who is our brother and co-worker in God's service in spreading the gospel of Christ to strengthen and encourage you in your faith so that no one would be unsettled by these trials.

For you know quite well that we are destined for them. In fact, when we were with you, we kept telling you that we would be persecuted and it turned out that way as you well know.

For this reason, when I could stand it no longer, I sent to find out about your faith. I was afraid that in some way the tempter had tempted you and that our labors might have been in vain.

[11 : 57] But Timothy has just now come to us from you and has brought good news about your faith and love. He has told us that you always have pleasant memories of us and that you long to see us just as we also long to see you.

Therefore, brothers and sisters, in all our distress and persecution, we were encouraged about you because of your faith. For now, we really live since you are standing firm in the Lord.

How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy that we have in the presence of our God because of you? Night and day, we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith.

faith. Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus clear the way for us to come to you. May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else just as ours does for you.

May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.

[13 : 23] As for other matters, brothers and sisters, we instructed you how to live in order to please God as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and we urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more for you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus.

It is God's will that you should be sanctified, that you should avoid sexual immorality, that each of you should learn to control your own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the pagans who do not know God, and that in this matter no one should wrong or take advantage of a brother or sister.

The Lord will punish all those who commit such sins as we told you and warned you before. For God did not call us to be impure but to live a holy life.

Therefore, anyone who rejects this instruction does not reject a human being but God, the very God who gives you his Holy Spirit.

Now about your love for one another, we do not need to write to you for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other and in fact, you do love all of God's family throughout Macedonia yet we urge you brothers and sisters to do so more and more and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life.

[14 : 59] You should mind your own business and work with your hands just as we told you so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.

Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind who have no hope for we believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord's word we tell you that we who are still alive who are left until the coming of the Lord will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep for the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a loud command with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God and the dead in Christ will rise first.

After that we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and so we will be with the Lord forever.

Therefore encourage one another with these words. Now brothers and sisters about times and dates we do not need to write to you for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night while people are saying peace and safety destruction will come on them suddenly as labor pains on a pregnant woman and they will not escape.

[16 : 55] but you brothers and sisters are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all children of the light and children of the day.

We do not belong to the night or to the darkness so then let us not be like others who are asleep but let us be awake and sober for those who sleep sleep at night and those who get drunk get drunk at night but since we belong to the day let us be sober putting on faith and love as a breastplate and the hope of salvation as a helmet for God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

he died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live together with him therefore encourage one another and build each other up just as in fact you are doing.

now we ask you brothers and sisters to acknowledge those who work hard among you who care for you in the Lord and who admonish you hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work live in peace with each other and we urge you brothers and sisters warn those who are idle and disruptive encourage the disheartened help the weak be patient with everyone make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong but always strive to do what is good for each other and for everyone else rejoice always pray continually give thanks in all circumstances for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus do not quench the spirit do not treat prophecies with contempt but test them all hold on to what is good reject every kind of evil may God himself the God of peace sanctify you through and through may your whole spirit soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ the one who calls you is faithful and he will do it brothers and sisters pray for us greet all God's people with a holy kiss I charge you before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers and sisters the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you well we've got a couple minutes now and I want to open it up a little bit for discussion maybe I'll move down here so it feels less sermony what did you hear in these words that encouraged you or challenged you or made you wonder don't be shy 416 for the

[20 : 50] Lord himself will come down from heaven with the loud command with the voice of the archangel with the trumpet of call of God and the dead in Christ will arise first after that we who are still alive and left will be caught up with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and so we will be with the Lord forever so that's the encouragement that before that's the rapture that's described in the gospel yeah depending on your interpretation of those things rapture or second coming of Jesus but that is our hope yeah yeah I like in chapter 5 9 for God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord

Jesus Christ makes me think of a true true rapture God wants what he's doing for us that he loves us and doesn't want us to go through the wrath yeah yeah that's the glorious good news of Jesus that he died so that our punishment would be taken away and one day that punishment is coming the word of God tells us on our world and so that is our promise that we have not been appointed to suffer that wrath but to receive salvation through

Jesus our Lord yeah I'd say 516 to 18 rejoice always pray without ceasing give thanks in all circumstances for this is the will of God Christ Jesus for you and just looking at that and asking do we rejoice always even Paul in the beginning of this letter talks about their ministry and at times they're longing to come and their struggle and the things they endured and yet they rejoice whether they were in prison or free running around they still rejoice in the Lord yeah it's a powerful word especially when you take into consideration the circumstances of how

Paul met these people and shared the gospel with them and then was chased out of town like pretty much right after it happened there was and then they were asking about what about the people who believed among us who are dead you know like maybe persecuted and killed for their faith and and yet even in the midst of that he says rejoice always we always have something in the Lord to rejoice about a hope that endures and that can't be taken away from us yeah yeah encourage the disheartened help the weak thanks

Yeah. Yeah.

[26 : 03] Yeah.

Yeah, there's quite a lot in this letter about love. Love for one another, but much of it is commendation. I love how he says that God taught you guys how to love each other.

The sense that the Holy Spirit in them just produced that fruit, and they were doing it, and Paul was kind of torn away from them and didn't have the chance to explain, well, how do we do this as a church?

And yet here they were doing it all these months later when the letter finally came. Yeah. Yeah.

Yeah. yeah yeah there's a sense in which all over the world can only be so far in these few months since his visit but there's a real sense in which these shoe boxes are going all over the world all

over the globe and reaching kids with the good news so yeah that is a great way that we can participate yeah let's uh let's pray father in heaven we thank you for these words which were not only for the Thessalonians but for us too and uh each one of us maybe heard something a little bit different but we thank you for these words and we ask that you would guard them and keep them and that you would cause them to sink down deep into our hearts and that we would find opportunity to live them this week for your glory for your honor for your pleasure we want to be holy and blameless as you have told us to in this letter but we also at the same time thank you that you have promised to do that for us and to work that in us we love you and we pray this in Jesus name amen you