

Handout: 1 Thessalonians Lesson 1

**Summary Outline of St. Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians**

Biblical Period	#12 The Kingdom of the Church			
Covenant	The New Covenant in Christ Jesus			
Focus	Paul's greeting and review of the past relationship		Paul's instructions for future growth	
Scripture	1:1-----2:1-----4:1-----5:12-----5:28			
Division	Paul's greeting and thanksgiving for the community	Paul's ministry among them	Specific exhortations	Final greeting and conclusion
Topic	Encouragement in a time of affliction		The "Day of the Lord"	
	Looking back		Looking forward	
Location	Probably from Corinth			
Time	Circa 50/51 AD			
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Principal divisions of the Letter:

1. Greeting and thanksgiving (1:1-10)
2. Previous relationship (2:1-3:13)
3. Specific Exhortations for the Community (4:1-5:25)
4. Final Greeting/Conclusion (5:26-28)

The theme of the letter is the need to be constantly ready for Christ's return, while in the meantime continuing to live out the Gospel in doing God's work on earth.

The three basic elements of Paul's greeting:

1. Paul's name (along with any co-senders)
2. The name or identity of the addressee
3. The personal greeting and blessing in the name of the Lord

Paul's co-senders are Silvanus and Timothy. Silvanus is the Latin version of the Aramaic name Silas. Paul calls him Silvanus in several letters, and Peter also refers to him by his Latin name:

- He was a Jewish Christian and a leading member of the church in Jerusalem.
- He was blessed with prophetic gifts.
- The Apostles sent him with Judas to the church at Antioch with their letter welcoming all Gentile converts after the Council of Jerusalem.
- He joined Paul on the second missionary journey.

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- He was imprisoned and beaten with Paul at Philippi.
- He was, like Paul, a Roman citizen.
- He traveled with Paul and Timothy to Thessalonica.
- He stayed at Beroea after Paul left. He rejoined Paul at Athens and traveled with him to Corinth.
- He is the co-sender in both of Paul's letters to the Thessalonians.
- He served as St. Peter's secretary, writing down Peter's words in the First Letter of St. Peter to the universal Church.

Timothy is a Greek name:

- He was a trusted companion of St. Paul, born at Lystra in Asia Minor and the son of a Jewish woman and Greek father.
- He was a member of Paul's second missionary journey who helped found Christian communities in Macedonia and Greece.
- He was also a companion on Paul's third missionary team.
- He was the co-sender for six of Paul's letters, including letters to the Christian communities at Thessalonica (2 letters), Corinth, Philippi, Colossae, and the personal letter to Philemon.
- Paul sent him as his representative to deliver letters to communities and to help settle disputes.
- Paul described him as timid in personality and intensely loyal.
- Paul wrote two pastoral letters to Timothy when he was serving as the pastor at Ephesus.

*1:3 calling to mind your work of faith and labor of love and endurance in hope of our Lord Jesus Christ...* Verse 3 is the earliest mention of the three "theological virtues of faith, hope, and love/charity in Christian writings. Paul's order of faith, love, and hope stresses the eschatological hope associated with Christ's Second Coming which is the focus of his letter. The Thessalonians have already demonstrated these virtues:

1. In faith, they abandoned their false idols and embraced with conviction Jesus' gift of eternal salvation.
2. In hope for what Jesus promised in a final resurrection and eternal salvation, they endured persecution and suffering.
3. In love they serve Christ and one another, offering righteous deeds as a sign of their love.

*1:10 and to await his Son from heaven, whom he raised from [the] dead, Jesus, who delivers us from the coming wrath.* Verse 10 is the first of five references to the Parousia or Second Coming of Christ (also see 2:19; 3:13; 4:16; 5:23). The Gospel of Jesus Christ that Paul preaches revolves around two central doctrines:

1. Monotheism: Jesus is God who came to deliver humanity from sin and eternal death (also see 1 Cor 8:4-6; 10:7, 14; Gal 4:8-9).
2. Divine judgment: Jesus is the risen Lord who will return at the end of time as humanity's divine judge (also see 2 Thess 2:1; 1 Cor 1:7; 15:23-25). "The coming wrath" refers to the Last Judgment and the full force of God's power released on sin and evil.