



THESSALONIANS

FAITH IN UNCERTAIN TIMES

LIFE GROUP MATERIAL



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INTRODUCTION


In the first century A.D. the residents of Thessalonica resided in a huge city with estimates of 200,000 citizens. Immorality abounded as the norm in the pagan Greek religions there. And sitting in a prime spot of wealth and influence as the chief port of the Roman province of Macedonia, this city was one of the crown jewels of the Roman shipping and receiving centres. Roman citizens had many freedoms there because it had the status of a “free city.”

As Acts 17 tells us, Paul and Silas went to Thessalonica where there was a Jewish synagogue. Here *"Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that the Messiah had to suffer and rise from the dead. "This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Messiah," he said. Some of the Jews were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks and quite a few prominent women."*

How would you feel as a Jew living here? Would you join Paul and Silas?

But other Jews were jealous; so they rounded up some bad characters from the marketplace, formed a mob and started a riot in the city... shouting: "These men who have caused trouble all over the world have now come here... They are all defying Caesar's decrees, saying that there is another king, one called Jesus." When they heard this, the crowd and the city officials were thrown into turmoil. And Paul and Silas were sent away to Berea.

Ok. Are you still with Paul and Silas? A bit frightening. What if your business partner was one of these jealous Jews? Awkward! More and more anger and abuse is being directed toward you; a Jesus follower. At this time you would not have realised the strong bonds that were forged between Paul and your new brothers. Paul realised he had not had time to allow you to be solidly grounded in your new faith. And he was very concerned.



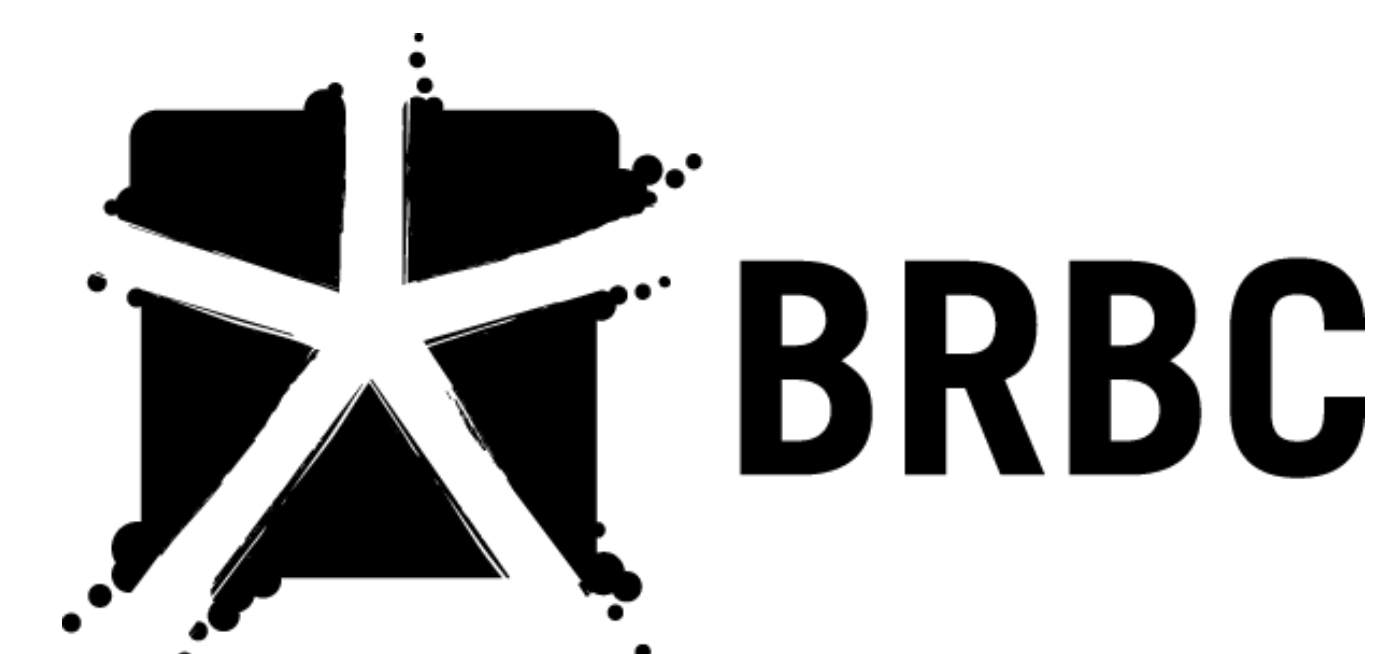
Despite repeated efforts to return, Paul was prevented from doing so. From Athens he told Timothy to go back to Thessalonica to see how the infant church was faring. Timothy returned, bringing the news Paul had been anxiously awaiting; that the Thessalonian church was prospering despite intense persecution from the factions.

Since Paul was still unable to visit his friends the Thessalonian letters were penned.

They were probably two of the earliest letters Paul had written; around A.D. 50. He wanted to encourage them in their persecutions and to strengthen their resolve for Jesus Christ and the gospel's sake. He wants the Thessalonians to understand that persecution was to be expected as part of the cost of their faith.

1 Thessalonians contains many pointers that will encourage and guide us too. It will help us build relationships in our Christian Community that will have an impact on those around us. It will also help us consider our personal commitment to godly living while we expectantly await the coming of the Lord.

Special thanks to Julie Pope for writing this material



1 THESSALONIANS 1

VERSE 1

Question 1.

A) In a spiritual sense where was the church at Thessalonica located?

B) What benefits do you think this position brought to all believers?

Question 2.

A) How might Paul's greeting have been of special significance to this suffering church?

B) Describe an occasion when you have drawn on God's grace and/or peace and found your needs met.

VERSES 2-3

Question 3.

A) What was the practical outcome of believers' faith, love and hope?

B) What work can we do today that is a result of our faith, love and hope?

VERSES 4-10

Question 4.

A) How was it possible for the Thessalonian believers to experience joy while going through severe suffering?

B) Have you ever experienced this?

Question 5.

A) To whom did the new believers become a model and what were the results of this?

B) Consider the kind of model you are. Are you happy for others to imitate you? What kind of model would you like to be?

Question 6.

How does the knowledge that Jesus will return affect the way you live each day? Are you simply waiting or are you waiting on the Lord? What do you think is the difference?

1 THESSALONIANS 2

VERSES 1-6a

Question 1.

A) How had Paul and Silas been insulted in Philippi? (Acts 16:16-24, 37-39)

B) From verse 2, what can we learn and apply to ourselves from Paul's focus on God?

Question 2.

A) From verse 3 to 6 list the charges Paul was refuting.

B) Why do you think it was important to the gospel and the fledgling church for the behaviour of Paul and his team to be above reproach?

Question 3.

From verse 4, what reason is given to encourage us to please God rather than men?

VERSES 6b-16

Question 4.

A) Who witnessed the kinds of lives the missionaries lived in Thessalonica? (verse 10)

B) Following Paul's example as shown in verse 12, in what ways can we specifically show active love in our local church and our community?

Question 5.

What evidence was there that the word of God was at work in the believers in Thessalonica? (verse 14)

VERSES 17-20

Question 6.

A) How did Paul feel about the fact that he was forced to leave the Thessalonians? He is why had they been unable to return?

B) Satan is real; always hostile to God, always opposed to the gospel and always cunningly working against God's people and purposes. Believers are to be alert but not alarmed.

List our defences against Satan according to these verses.

- James 4:7
- Ephesians 6:11-13
- Romans 8:38-39
- 1 John 3:8

1 THESSALONIANS 3

VERSES 1-5

Question 1.

A) Paul gave two instructions for Timothy to carry out in Thessalonica, followed closely by the concern that prompted the order. What were the instructions and concerns?

B) How can we be a “Timothy” to other believers experiencing trials?

Question 2.

A) What does Paul teach us about trials in this passage?

B) Few of us have experienced strong persecution for following Jesus, but there may have been an occasion when a caring believer has strengthened and encouraged you in your faith during a difficult time. Describe that event.

VERSES 6-10

Question 3.

A) Why was Paul now encouraged and rejoicing instead of being distressed by his own circumstances?

B) What does this show us about Paul's priorities? Who comes first in your world?

VERSES 11-13

Question 4.

A) What example does Paul give for the way he wanted Thessalonians to love others?

B) What attitudes and actions will be evident as we, with God's help, love both fellow believers and non-believers?

Question 5.

Paul writes about our Lord Jesus coming with 'all the holy ones'. Who do you think is included in the all?

See also:

- Mark 8:38
- 1 Thessalonians 4:14

Question 6.

Paul's desire for the Thessalonians was that God would strengthen their hearts so they would be holy and blameless before God when Jesus returns. Keeping chapter 3 in mind, how would a strengthened heart help you to be holy & blameless on the day Jesus returns?

1 THESSALONIANS 4

VERSES 1-2

When issues need to be addressed, Paul usually begins with encouragement prior to dealing with his concerns.

Question 1.

How can we tell that Paul was not completely satisfied with the outcome of his teaching?

VERSES 3-8

Question 2.

A) Why do you think Paul gave his instructions about sexual immorality in the authority of God and Jesus?

B) Our society says that it does not matter what you do sexually so long as it's between consenting adults. How might verse 6 contradict this idea?

Question 3.

A) How will God respond to Christians who commit immorality? (verse 6)

B) How do we interpret this in light of Romans 8:1-2?

VERSES 9-12

Question 4.

A) Read John 13:34-35. Why do you think Paul urged them to love more and more?

B) List three things that Paul asked the Thessalonians to have as ambitions. How do your ambitions compare with these?

VERSES 13-18

Question 5.

A) What concerns was Paul addressing in verse 13? What hope did he give them?

B) List what will happen at the coming of the Lord (verse 16 and 17)

Question 6.

A) What promise did Jesus make before his death and resurrection? (John 14:3)

B) In verse 18, Paul tells the Thessalonians (and us) to encourage one another with these words. What do you think this will achieve?

1 THESSALONIANS 5

VERSES 1-3

Question 1.

A) Why do you think Paul stated “you know very well” about the timing of the day of the Lord? (See also Mark 13:32)

B) How does verse 3 affect your motivation to share the gospel with your family and friends who are not trusting Jesus for their salvation?

VERSES 4-11

Question 2.

A) What are the characteristics of those who live in the light/day? (verse 6)

B) How do you think we are to follow the instructions in verse 8?

Question 3.

A) What is God’s will for us? (verse 10)

B) From 4:13 to 5:11 write down three truths you could use to encourage and strengthen the faith of your fellow believers.

VERSES 12-15

Question 4.

A) Read verse 12. Think about the people who do this for you. Do you acknowledge them and hold them in the highest regard?

B) In verse 14, Paul list different types of people who need attention. Who are they and how are we to help them?

VERSES 16-22

Question 5.

A) Read verse 16 to 18. How can these compulsory qualities be cultivated in our lives?

B) What does quenching the Spirit mean? Have you even seen this happen? What was the result?

VERSES 23-28

Question 6.

A) Paul prayed that believers would be sanctified (made holy) “through and through”. This implies an ongoing process. Read Philippians 2:12-13. What is God’s part? What is our part in our sanctification?

B) In our present day COVID-safe culture, how can we translate verse 26?



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