

# Greetings to the Church in Thessalonica #1

## I Thessalonians 1: 1-4

In the book of Acts we discover Paul receiving the Macedonian call, [Acts 16: 8-10](#). This led Paul initially to Philippi and then on to Thessalonica.

In that day Thessalonica was the prominent seaport and capital city of the Roman province of Macedonia. It was located on the “Via Egnatia”, the main road from Rome to the east. Thessalonica’s location enabled the city to become a prosperous commercial center that boasted an estimated population of 200,000.

There was a prominent Jewish population there, as well as many Greeks who had grown weary of the Greek paganism that promoted immorality and indulgence. Thessalonica was ripe for the gospel, but that didn’t prevent opposition from Jewish legalists, [Acts 17: 1-6](#).

Paul’s presence was limited there because of opposition, but that didn’t deter his love and devotion for the church in Thessalonica. He commended them for their faith, love, and hope. This letter was written from Corinth.

It is evident that the church there had a profound impact on those around them and for the cause of

Christ. The church in Thessalonica stands as a testimony and challenge for the modern church. As we begin our study, I want to examine the **aspects** of the church as we consider: **Greetings to the Church in Thessalonica.**

**I. Paul Speaks of a Relationship** (1) – Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. Consider the many relations he speaks of.

**A. The Brethren** – This letter was written by Paul, but he also sends regards from Silas and Timothy was well. The church knew these men. They too had labored alongside Paul, establishing the church. Paul was thankful for their support and fellowship and he knew the church would be as well.

- There is something special about those with whom we labor. Serving the Lord together, particularly in times of adversity, creates a bond between those who work together. We ought to rejoice for our brethren in the faith and thank the Lord for them. It would be a lonely and difficult task without those whom the Lord has placed alongside us! \*\*\*\*\*

**B. The Beloved** – Paul was certainly thankful for Silas and Timothy, but he was also thankful for the beloved, the church. Without them, there would be no ministry, no labor for them to work together in. In this greeting, Paul reminds them of the nature of their relationship with him and with God.

**1. Their Position** – They are reminded of the position they hold. This is simple and yet profound. Paul speaks of a physical location as well as a spiritual location.

- First he reminds them of where they are. They are the [church of the Thessalonians](#), called to minister in that great city. This is in reference to the opportunities and the obligations associated with Thessalonica.
- Next he reminds them who they are. They are set apart, servants of the living God. They are [in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ](#). This reminds them of their obligation to serve the Lord and the great power and potential that they possess in Him.
- We too need to be reminded of our physical and spiritual location. We are positioned where we are with purpose and obligation!

**2. Their Provision**

## **B. The Beloved**

### **1. Their Position**

**2. Their Provision** – Paul offers a prayer of blessing for grace and peace unto them. He desired the Lord's grace in their lives. This speaks of "*that which affords joy, pleasure, delight, and charm. It deals with God's unmerited favor; the extension of His holy influence upon their lives.*"

- He also desired peace for them. This was essential considering the opposition they faced. Paul wanted them to enjoy "*harmony, security, prosperity, and an absolute assurance of their faith.*"
- These elements are essential if we are to lead productive, spiritual lives. We will accomplish little for the Lord if we lack grace and peace. God's grace sustains us while His peace secures us.

**3. Their Provider** – If they were to enjoy real grace and peace, they needed to be assured of where it would come. They are reminded that they belong to Lord and He would provide. They could rest assured in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ.

- I know that we are aware that Christ stands as our Mediator and Intercessor. We know that He has the ability to provide for our needs, but sometimes we just need to be reminded that we belong to Him. The saved have been placed within the family of God and we are under His care!

## **I. Paul Speaks of a Relationship (1)**

**II. Paul Speaks of a Request (2)** – *We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers*; Paul encourages them with the fact that he is praying for them. (Isn't it encouraging when a known prayer warrior lets you know that they are praying for you?) So, let's consider the particulars of Paul's request. Notice:

**A. The Premise** – He reveals that he gives thanks unto God for them. He is actually praying for the believers at Thessalonica and the work that they are engaged in. They were the focus, the heart of his prayer. He knew they needed the help of God and he sought the Lord on their behalf.

- Wouldn't you agree that we need to be reminded of this urgent need? Surely you would agree that we all

need the Lord's help as we seek to serve Him. We ought to make an effort to pray more earnestly for the church and each one who makes it up. We need to pray for one another! Maybe we ought to pray less about our petty desires and more for the church as a whole. We ought to thank the Lord for those with whom we serve!

## **II. Paul Speaks of a Request (2)**

### **A. The Premise**

**B. The Petition (2)** – We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; Paul literally made mention of them when he prayed. This was not just a generic, casual prayer, but a genuine plea for specific needs in the lives of individuals. He knew them personally and he knew the struggles and needs they faced individually.

- I know that we can't be aware of every need that everyone within our church has, but I am convinced that we could do better about praying for specific needs. When someone within the church asks for prayer, they are genuinely desiring us to make mention of that need when we pray.

### **C. The Persistence**

**C. The Persistence** – There is a little word within the text that has great significance. A quick reading may overlook it, but it reveals much about the request that Paul made. He gave thanks and mention of them **always**. That literally means what it says. It means “*at all times, always.*” Paul wasn’t occasionally thankful for them. He was occasionally mindful of their labor and the needs of the church. Paul always prayed for them. He literally mentioned them every time he prayed.

▪ I think if we would be honest, many of us do not always pray, much less make mention of others each time we do. Prayer is the most effective and powerful tool that a Christian possesses and yet I fear that it is often the least used. May we develop a sense of urgency and a commitment to pray, and when we pray, make it a priority to mention of the needs of others? Let us make it a part of our daily lives.

**I. Paul Speaks of a Relationship** (1)

**II. Paul Speaks of a Request** (2)

**III. Paul Speaks of Remembrance** (3-4) – In the remaining verses Paul calls to remembrance the faithful and enduring attributes of the church at Thessalonica. First he was reminded of:

### III. Paul Speaks of Remembrance (3-4)

**A. Their Labor (3)** – Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father; Paul speaks of their unfailing work of faith. This deals with their consistent labor for their faith in Christ. They had embraced the Lord as Messiah and were unshaken in their commitment to Him and to those who needed to trust Christ as their Savior as well. The enemy continued to bring about opposition, but the church refused to abandon the work of the Lord.

- As I studied these verses I wondered if the same could be said of us. If someone who knew Fellowship well took the time to ponder what they remembered of us, what would they have to say? Could it be said that we too were committed to the work of faith? Are the Lord and His work the priority? Are we determined to reach the world by sharing the good news?

**B. Their Love (3)** – Paul also remembered their labour of love. That is an interesting concept isn't it? Typically one doesn't view love as being laborious or burdensome, but there are occasions when it certainly

is. The church at Thessalonica was not deterred by the opposition of others. They determined to love them unconditionally. Their love was not based solely upon what they received. They extended love even when it wasn't earned, deserved, or returned. That is loving as God loves!

- Also I believe it could be said that they were so moved by the love that they had received of Christ, that they were compelled to labor for Him whatever the cost or circumstance. When one's heart is filled with love, labor is not a burden, but a joy!

### **III. Paul Speaks of Remembrance (3-4)**

#### **A. Their Labor (3)**

#### **B. Their Love (3)**

**C. Their Longsuffering (3)** – Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father; He also remembered their **patience of hope**. The hope that Paul spoke of was that blessed hope that the believer has in Christ, the hope and assurance of eternal life. They were not inconsistent with that hope. They were patient, “*steadfastness, endurance, loyalty, and perseverance.*” Even in the face

of adversity and the continual presence of false doctrine and temptation, they remained steadfast in their faith. They would not be moved from the foundation of their faith!

### **III. Paul Speaks of Remembrance (3-4)**

**A. Their Labor (3)**

**B. Their Love (3)**

**C. Their Longsuffering (3)**

**D. Their Lordship (3)** – Paul offers an encouraging reminder once again that their hope is not in vain. Their faith, love, and hope are settled in Christ the Lord and God the Father. They are held and secured in His mighty hand. Storms would come and opposition would remain, but they were being led by the Master's hand.

**E. Their Longevity (4)** – Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. Paul well understood the adversity that the church in Thessalonica faced, but he was not concerned about their demise. Paul knew that they would remain, even though difficulty abounded on every hand.

- This was not just an ordinary group of people. This was a group of beloved brethren, the elect of God. I know that election makes a lot of Baptists nervous, but really it shouldn't. The word **election** means "*the act of picking out, to choose.*" Now we can carry that to extremes if we wish, but it simply means that God chose to save us by His divine grace. God chose to provide a means of our salvation and then He drew us unto Himself so that we might be saved.

- Paul knew that God was able to save and that He was able to preserve. Paul was confident that their faith would endure because God had chosen them according to His divine will.

- The saved will endure even though adversity continues to come against us. Our lives are not dictated by outward circumstances, but by an inward presence!

I have certainly been challenged by the testimony of the Thessalonian church. I have been encouraged by the promises and blessing of my Lord. Does this local body of believers resemble the church there? If not it should.