

Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians – Part 1 (50–51)**1 Thessalonians 1:1–2:12****Opening Greeting**

1:1 Paul and Silvanus and Timothy,

To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace.

Thanksgiving for the Conversion and Zeal of the Thessalonians

2 We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention *of you* in our prayers;

3 constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father,

4 knowing, brethren beloved by God, *His* choice of you;

5 for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.

6 You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit,

7 so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.

8 For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything.

9 For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God,

10 and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, *that is* Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.

Review and Defense of Paul's Ministry in Thessalonica

2:1 For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain,

2 but after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, as you know, we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition.

3 For our exhortation does not *come* from error or impurity or by way of deceit;

4 but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who examines our hearts.

5 For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed—God is witness—

6 nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority.

7 But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing *mother* tenderly cares for her own children.

8 Having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us.

9 For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, *how* working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.

10 You are witnesses, and *so is* God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers;

11 just as you know how we *were* exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father *would* his own children,

12 so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

Chronological Notes

1) Date.

A) Paul had sent Timothy from Athens back to Thessalonica to check on the believers and encourage them in their faith (1 Thess 3:1–2, 5). Timothy returned to Paul at Corinth (Acts 18:5), bringing good news of their faith and love (1 Thess 3:6–8). In response to Timothy’s good news, Paul penned 1 Thessalonians. We can assign a fairly firm date to this letter due to the fact that Paul had been in Corinth for a year and six months before he was dragged to the judgment seat of Gallio, the proconsul of Achaia. This occurred in the early summer of 51, and we can therefore date 1 and 2 Thessalonians to AD 50–51.

2) Order of the Letters.¹

A) A few scholars have suggested that Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians before he wrote 1 Thessalonians.² According to this theory 1 Thessalonians responds to issues alluded to in 2 Thessalonians. This is not as improbable as may appear at first since the traditional sequence of Pauline letters to churches rests on length rather than date. Nonetheless this theory has not convinced most scholars.³

¹ Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on 1 Thessalonians,” Online: <http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/1thessalonians.pdf>.

² E.g., T. W. Manson, “St. Paul in Greece: The Letters to the Thessalonians,” *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 35 (1952–53): 438–46; *ibid.*, *Studies in the Gospels and Epistles*; and Charles A. Wanamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians*, pp. 37–45.

³ E.g., E. A. Best, *A Commentary on the First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians* (1977 ed.), pp. 43–44; I. Howard Marshall, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, p. 26; R. Jewett, *The Thessalonian Correspondence: Pauline Rhetoric and Millenarian Piety*, pp. 24–25; Morris, pp. 27–30; and most others. See F. F. Bruce, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, pp. xxxix–xliv; or Donald A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, pp. 543–44 for good discussions of the issue.