

## 1 Thessalonians 1:1-5a Answers Signs of Election

\*\*\*\***From whom and to whom was this letter written (1:1)?** *Compare 2:18, 5:27.* Paul was the actual author, though he wrote on behalf of both Silvanus and Timothy. Paul wrote to the church in the city of Thessalonica. Either this or Galatians is the first inspired letter penned by the apostle Paul (around A.D. 50).

**Who were Paul, Silvanus and Timothy (1:1)?** They were apostles (missionaries). Paul had seen the resurrected Lord Jesus and has commissioned in person by Jesus to be an apostle. As such, he represented Jesus in a way and with an authority that Silvanus and Timothy never could. Perhaps we could designate Paul as a capital A Apostle. Conversely, Silvanus and Timothy had not been commissioned by Jesus. They had been sent out by the Holy Spirit and by a local church. Perhaps we could designate them as small a apostles. This distinction between the two types of apostles is why the church of history has reserved the title apostle for the Twelve and refers to all others simply as missionaries.

**1. What history did these three men have with the church in Thessalonica (1:1)?** *See Acts 15:40-16:5, 17:1-15.* God had used these men to start the church in Thessalonica (on Paul's second missionary journey). There was a large Jewish population there so the three missionaries spent three Sabbaths in the synagogue preaching the Gospel. As a result, a number of Jews and God-fearing Gentiles believed (Acts 17:4). Sadly, the unbelieving Jews stirred up a riot, forcing the missionaries to leave prematurely. Naturally Paul was concerned about the fledgling church so he sent Timothy back to encourage them and then later wrote this letter.

**Where is/was the city of Thessalonica (1:1)?** It is on the coast of the Aegean Sea in modern Greece. Its really ancient name was Therma, so called because of hot springs in the area. In 316 B.C. it was renamed in memory of Alexander the Great's half sister Thessalonika. It was the capital of the Roman province of Macedonia. Unlike many of the cities that Paul visited on his travels, it still exists today. Its modern name has been shortened to Salonica. It is the second largest city in modern Greece.

**2. Where was Paul when he wrote this letter (1:1)?** *Compare 3:1-2, 6, Acts 17:10, 14-15, 18:1, 5.* It was written from Corinth, Greece, while on his second missionary journey. Corinth is about 180 miles south of Thessalonica.

**3. What does the word church mean (1:1)?** Church is from *ekklesia* and in common usage referred to a meeting of people who had been called out of their homes into the public place of deliberation in order to make decisions. It was a political term throughout the Greek and Hellenistic areas and referred to the meetings of the Greek city-states. It can also refer to the set of people who attend the meetings. Jesus used the word to refer to the meetings of his followers. One thing it never refers to is a building.

**Paul described this church as being “in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (1:1). How might a person erroneously conclude from this that Jesus is not God?** To an uninformed reader it might appear that only the Father is God and that Jesus is a separate being of lesser rank, such as a prophet or an angel incarnate. However, it is clear from the entirety of the New Testament and the testimony of the historical church that Jesus is indeed God in human flesh. The word Lord (1:1) is from *kurios*, used over 3000 times in the LXX to translate Jehovah (Yahweh). Jesus is the Jehovah incarnate. The mystery of the Godhead is that there is one God who exists simultaneously in three Persons: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit (1:5-6, 4:8, 5:1). Each divine Person is co-equal and co-eternal with the others: “God in three Persons, blessed Trinity”.

**What greeting or blessing did Paul offer the church (1:1)?** Paul greeted them with grace and peace. Theologically, peace with God always follows God’s grace.

**4. Why would Paul wish grace and peace to people who had already experienced grace and peace (1:1)?** This church was made up of both Jews and Gentiles. Grace was a common Greek term of greeting and peace was the Hebrew greeting (Thru The Bible Radio, *1 Thessalonians*, p. 174). Grace and peace are blessings one cannot have enough of! They are needed not only for salvation but for living in obedience to God.

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**What convicted Paul that the Thessalonians had been chosen by God (1:2-10)?** They knew the Thessalonians were chosen because the word of the Gospel impacted them in power and with the full conviction of the Spirit, (1:5). Further, they received it with joy despite much affliction (1:6) and they became bold witnesses, sounding forth the word of the Lord throughout the area (1:7-10).

**5. According to 1:2-3, why were the missionaries thankful for the Thessalonians?** They were thankful to God because of their faith, hope and love. There are three essential marks of true conversion; it is somewhat of a package deal!

**6. Based on 1:2-3, what visible results do faith, hope and love produce?** See *James 2:17*, *Romans 1:5*. Faith produces work, love produces labor and hope produces steadfastness (you keep on keeping on). The ancient evangelists (Paul, Silvanus and Timothy) were excited (“thanks to God always”) about life change, not just decisions.

We are saved by faith alone, but a faith that saves is never alone: it always produces good works.

ESV **James 2:17** . . . faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

**Romans 1:5** speaks of the “obedience of faith”.

**Application: How are you doing in these three areas? Does your faith produce works? Does you love produce labor? Does your hope make you steadfast?**

**Very important: Based on 1:3, what was the object of their faith, hope and love?** It was not blind faith, or faith in faith, wishing thinking, positive thinking or groundless optimism. It was specifically faith "in the Lord Jesus Christ."

**7. Based on 1:4, the apostles knew that these brothers were both loved by God and chosen by God. What is the relationship between being loved by God and chosen by God?** *Compare Romans 1:7, Ephesians 1:4-5.* The two go together. Those God loves He has chosen to be His people. Those God loves He has predestined to be saved. The evidence that God loves you is that you come to faith in Jesus.

ESV **Ephesians 1:4-5** . . . he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will . . .

ESV **Romans 1:7** To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints . . .

**8. What is the purpose of God's choosing (1:4)?** *See 2 Thessalonians 2:13.* God chose (elected) people for eternal life.

ESV **2 Thessalonians 2:13** But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the first fruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.

**Summary:** God's choice is not based on His having looked down the tunnel of time to see who would one day believe. Rather, it is based on God's love, mercy and grace. For God to foreknow someone means He fore loved him, that he purposed in eternity past to have a saving, covenant relationship with him. His love and choosing are unconditional ~ we did nothing to qualify for it.

**Example:** Jacob and Esau.

ESV **Romans 9:10** . . . when Rebecca had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad - in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of his call - she was told, "The older will serve the younger." As it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."

ESV **John 15:16** You did not choose me, but I chose you . . .

ESV **1 John 4:19** We love because he first loved us.

ESV **Romans 9:15-18** . . . he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy . . . he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.

Paul was an evangelist. His belief in divine election motivated him to endure all hardships and keep on evangelizing:

ESV **2 Timothy 2:10** . . . I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

**9. According to 1:5, in what three ways did the Gospel come to the elect in Thessalonica?** It came **1)** in word, **2)** in power and **3)** in the Holy Spirit with full conviction. It did not come that way for the non-elect who heard the same message those three Sabbaths in the synagogue (Acts 17).

**10. What does gospel mean and what is the gospel message (1:5)?** See 1:10, 5:9-10, 1 Corinthians 15:1-8. Gospel is from *euaggelion*; *eu* means good and *aggelion* means news or message. The Gospel is the good news that Jesus, the God-man, died on the cross in our place to deliver us from God's wrath and then rose from the dead, conquering death.

**1)** The word of the Gospel: The Gospel has to be communicated. We have to open our mouths (or at least had out a tract!).

ESV **Romans 10:13-15** . . . "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." But how are they to call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"

**2)** The power of the Gospel: The Gospel has the power to knock enmity out of an unbeliever's heart and cause him to be saved.

ESV **Romans 1:16** . . . I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

**3)** The conviction by the Holy Spirit:

ESV **John 16:8-9** . . . when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment . . .

### So What?

**11. What is the evidence that a person is one of God's chosen people?**

\*\*\*\* = ask this question before reading the text aloud. This is put people's minds in gear and them something to look for as the text is read. It causes focus.

- These lessons are designed for a 45 minute session and are based on the ESV.

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12/08/13