

A stylized mountain range graphic in white and light blue. The word 'ENCOURAGEMENT' is written in a bold, blocky font across the top of the mountain. Below it, the word 'HOPE' is written in a similar font, with the 'H' and 'O' of the second line overlapping the 'H' and 'O' of the first line. The entire graphic is set against a dark blue background with a subtle pattern of diagonal lines.

ENCOURAGEMENT  
HOPE

A study from the books of Thessalonians



The city was founded around 315 BC by King Cassander of Macedon, near the ancient town of Therma. He named it after his wife Thessalonike, a half-sister of Alexander the Great and princess of Macedonia as daughter of Philip II. Under the kingdom of Macedonia, the city retained its own autonomy and parliament and evolved to become the most important city in Macedonia.

- After the fall of the Kingdom of Macedonia in 168 BC, in 148 BC Thessalonica was made the capital of the Roman province of Macedonia. Thessalonica became a free city of the Roman Republic under Mark Antony in 41 BC. It grew to be an important trade hub located on the Via Egnatia, the road connecting Dyrrhachium with Byzantium, which facilitated trade between Thessaloniki and great centers of commerce such as Rome and Byzantium.
- Thessaloniki lays at the southern end of the main north–south route through the Balkans along the valleys of the Morava and Axios river valleys, thereby linking the Balkans with the rest of Greece. The city became the capital of one of the four Roman districts of Macedonia.
- At the time of the Roman Empire, about 50 AD, Thessaloniki was also one of the early centers of Christianity; while on his second missionary journey, Paul the Apostle visited this city's chief synagogue and sowed the seeds for Thessaloniki's first Christian church.





The journey from Philippi to Thessalonica was about 100 miles with Amphipolis and Apollonia at approximately 30-mile intervals on the **Via Egnatia**. - Bible Knowledge Commentary

# 1 Thessalonians Chapter 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.

1 Thessalonians 1:1



We give thanks to God always for all of you,  
making mention of you in our prayers;  
constantly bearing in mind your work of faith  
and labor of love and steadfastness  
[endurance] of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ  
in the presence of our God and Father,  
1 Thessalonians 1:2-3



# 1 Thessalonians chapter 2





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

1 Thessalonians 2:3-4



But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children. 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 [*ψυχή psuche*, souls], because you had become very dear to us.

1 Thessalonians 2:7-8



But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short while—in person, not in spirit—were all the more eager with great desire to see your face. For we wanted to come to you—I, Paul, more than once—and yet Satan hindered us. For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? For you are our glory and joy. 1 Thessalonians 2:17-20



# 1 Thessalonians chapter 3

This letter was written in approximately 50 AD.

Chapter divisions were added to the scriptures in 1228 AD.

Verse divisions were added to the New Testament in 1551 AD.





Therefore when we could endure it [being separated from the church in Thessalonica] no longer, we thought it best to be left behind at Athens alone [without Timothy], 1 Thessalonians 3:1

Circumstances prohibited Paul from returning to Thessalonica personally, so he and Silas decided to send Timothy back to encourage the saints. Evidently Paul traveled from Berea to Athens without the companionship of Timothy and Silas. When he reached Athens he sent word back to Berea (by the Berean Christians who had accompanied him) for Timothy and Silas to join him in Athens as soon as possible (Acts 17:15). Apparently Timothy and Silas did so. Their mutual concern for the Thessalonian church led Paul and Silas to dispatch Timothy to Thessalonica (1 Thess. 3:1–2). Silas also returned to Macedonia shortly after Timothy's departure, probably to check on the Philippian church. Silas and Timothy both returned to Macedonia to rejoin Paul in Corinth, Paul's next port of call after Athens (Acts 18:1, 5). -Bible Knowledge Commentary





Now those who escorted Paul brought him as far as Athens; and receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him as soon as possible, they left.  
Acts 17:15

and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith, 1 Thessalonians 3:2

Paul's description of Timothy seems to imply that the young man needed more than Paul's normal endorsement. Perhaps because of his youth Timothy was not as readily recognized and respected as his older fellow missionaries. Paul called Timothy our brother, suggesting equality in the Lord's work with Paul and Silas. In relation to the Lord, Timothy was a hardworking servant, suggestive of his zeal and humility. He was a brother-servant in spreading the gospel of Christ. Timothy's mission was to have been a positive blessing and help to the Thessalonian Christians. He was to strengthen (*stērizai*) them, to make them firm and solid in the faith. He was also sent to encourage (*parakalesai*) them by providing what they needed to fight the good fight of faith, individually and collectively. Much of the ministry of the apostles was devoted to grounding new converts in the faith, a ministry as necessary today as it was in the first century. – Bible Knowledge Commentary



so that no one would be disturbed by these afflictions [θλῖψις *thlipsis*]; for you yourselves know that we have been destined for this.

## 1 Thessalonians 3:3

Another purpose of Timothy's visit was that the Christians would not lose their spiritual balance and stability as a result of the trials they were experiencing. Paul added his own stabilizing reminder that trials are not necessarily a sign of God's disfavor, but are part of every Christian's legacy. When trouble comes, Christians often react by doubting that they are where God wants them to be; they often think that they have done something wrong and that God must be displeased with them. Storms often come to believers to make them able to stand firm, rather than to blow them away (2 Cor. 4:15–16). -Bible Knowledge Commentary





“...we have been destined for this”

1 Thessalonians 3:3

Jesus said, “These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation [θλῖψις *thlipsis*], but take courage; I have overcome the world.”

John 16:33



Jesus said, "See to it that no one misleads you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many. You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes. But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs. Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name. At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another. Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many. Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved. This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come." Matthew 24:4-14



For indeed when we were with you, we kept telling you in advance that we were going to suffer affliction [θλῖψις *thlipsis*]; and so it came to pass, as you know. 1 Thessalonians 3:4

Paul reminded his readers that when he was with them he kept telling them to expect persecution. And circumstances had turned out just as he had predicted. This reminder would have helped calm them down. - Bible Knowledge Commentary



For this reason, when I could endure it no longer, I also sent to find out about your faith, for fear that the tempter [πειράζω *peirazo*... Satan] might have tempted [πειράζω *peirazo*] you, and our labor would be in vain [because the church's spiritual growth had been hindered].

1 Thessalonians 3:5

\*Do we check up on our fellow believers?





“that the tempter might have tempted you” 1 Thessalonians 3:5

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted [πειράζω *peirazo*] by the devil. And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry. And the tempter [πειράζω *peirazo*] came and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.” But He answered and said, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.’ ” Matthew 4:1-4



Then the devil took Him into the holy city and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down; for it is written, ‘He will command His angels concerning You’; and ‘On their hands they will bear You up, so that You will not strike Your foot against a stone.’ ” Jesus said to him, “On the other hand, it is written, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’ ” Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory; and he said to Him, “All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me.” Then Jesus said to him, “Go, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.’ ” Then the devil left Him; and behold, angels came and began to minister to Him. Matthew 4:5-11



“that the tempter might have tempted you”

1 Thessalonians 3:5

For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted [πειράζω *peirazo*] in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Hebrews 4:15-16



Returning to his original thought (v. 2) Paul explained that he had sent Timothy back to Thessalonica because he was genuinely concerned for their spiritual welfare. The condition of the believers' faith burdened Paul's heart. Were they still trusting in God or had they abandoned Him and returned to paganism? Paul was not concerned that they had lost their salvation; this they could never do. They could, however, have ceased to walk by faith, not trusting God in all circumstances of life. Paul's concern was that his labor might have been in vain, not that their faith had been in vain. Paul saw Satan as using the persecution the Thessalonians were undergoing in order to lure them away from what they knew to be God's will, namely, perseverance in the midst of trials. He was concerned that Satan might snatch away the seed Paul had sown before it had a chance to put down stabilizing roots.

But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us good news [εὐαγγελίζω *euaggelizo*] of your faith [πίστις *pistis*] and love [ἀγάπη *agape*], and that you always think kindly of us, longing to see us just as we also long to see you, 1 Thessalonians 3:6

\*Rather than bringing bad news that the Thessalonians' faith had wavered, Timothy had brought good news that their faith was bearing fruit in love. - Bible Knowledge Commentary



for this reason, brethren, in all our distress and affliction we were comforted about you through your faith; for now we really live, if you stand firm in the Lord. 1 Thessalonians 3:7-8

\* Spiritual mentors feel encouraged when new believers are growing spiritually. This growth motivates the mentors to keep praying for their spiritual children to stand firm in the faith.





For what thanks can we render to God for you in return for all the joy with which we rejoice before our God on your account, as we night and day keep praying most earnestly that we may see your face, and may complete what is lacking in your faith? 1 Thessalonians 3:9-10

\* The Thessalonians were like tender young plants; their tender roots held them firm against the present storm, but they still needed to grow and mature. This is the first explicit reference to deficiencies in their spiritual condition—deficiencies due more to immaturity than to waywardness. Up till now Paul described them as having the characteristics of new Christians. Now he said they were deficient in certain respects, as a child is deficient in comparison with an adult. In chapters 4 and 5 Paul ministered to some of these deficiencies. – Bible Knowledge Commentary



“we night and day keep praying” 1 Thessalonians 3:10

Paul’s advice is to pray regularly, and he follows his own advice. His frame of reference seems to be the synagogue, with its evening and morning prayers (Maariv and Shacharit respectively). He mentions night first because Jewish days start at sunset.

- Jewish New Testament Commentary



Now may our God and Father Himself and Jesus  
our Lord direct our way [clear the way] to you;  
1 Thessalonians 3:11

\*From telling his readers about his prayers, Paul turns to actually praying. Instead of addressing God directly in the second person, e.g. 'O God, clear the way for us to come to Thessalonica', Paul expresses his prayer in the third person, 'May God clear the way for us to come to you' (cf. Num. 6:24–26; Ps. 20:1–5). The prayer links God as Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. 1:1, and, in reverse order, 2 Thess. 2:16). – New Bible Commentary





# Macedonia and Achaia

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Paul goes first to Athens, then to Corinth, where he enjoys a successful 18-month ministry. During this time, Timothy visits Thessalonica and reports back to Paul good news about the church as well as its problems.

1 Thessalonians was probably written from Corinth in 50 AD, and 2 Thessalonians a few months later.

1 Thessalonians is written shortly after receiving a report from Timothy after a recent visit.

2 Thessalonians may have been prompted by a letter from the church.

and may the Lord cause you to increase [*πλεονάζω pleonazo*] and abound [overflow, *περισσεύω perisseuo*] in love [*ἀγάπη agape*] for one another, and for all people, just as we also do for you;

1 Thessalonians 3:12

Jesus was asked, “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” And He said to him, “ ‘You shall love [*ἀγάπη agape*] the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, ‘You shall love [*ἀγάπη agape*] your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.” Matthew 22:36-40





so that He may establish your hearts without blame in holiness before our God and Father at the coming [παρουσία *parousia*] of our Lord Jesus with all His saints. 1 Thessalonians 3:13

Paul did not pray that they would be sinless; that was impossible. He prayed that they would be blameless, that is, that after they sinned they would deal with it as God requires and so be free from any reasonable charge by their fellowmen. Before God they should be holy, separated to God in their hearts and habits. Paul longed that when Jesus Christ would return He would find them blameless before men and holy before God.



**Next week...**

**1 Thessalonians chapter 4**



# Lessons for Us... 1 Thessalonians Chapter 3

- Believers will face difficult circumstances even while they faithfully walk with God
- God's grace and power are greater than our tribulations
- Constant prayer is a key to surviving spiritual trials
- We can be encouraged and strengthened by others spiritually
- We can encourage and strengthen others spiritually
- Spiritual warfare is real and constant
- Believers are called to increase and abound in *agape* love for one another
- We are to live in expectation of Jesus' coming



As followers of Jesus, we can  
and will face tribulations even  
while we walk by faith.





Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Hebrews 12:1-2

