



PAUL'S LETTERS TO THE  
THESSALONIANS

Lesson 1 • Introduction

September 5, 2021



The graphic features a light purple banner on the left with the text "LESSON PLAN" and a small diamond symbol. To the right is a table with three columns: Lesson, Date, and Passage. The table contains 13 rows of lesson information.

Lesson	Date	Passage
1	9/5/2021	Introduction
2	9/12/2021	1 Thessalonians 1:1-10
3	9/19/2021	1 Thessalonians 2:1-16
4	9/26/2021	1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:13
5	10/3/2021	1 Thessalonians 4:1-12
6	10/10/2021	1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11
7	10/17/2021	1 Thessalonians 5:12-28
8	10/24/2021	2 Thessalonians 1:1-12
9	10/31/2021	2 Thessalonians 2:1-12
10	11/7/2021	2 Thessalonians 2:13-3:5
11	11/14/2021	2 Thessalonians 3:6-18
12	11/21/2021	Review
13	11/28/2021	Reading and Reflection

3 minutes – 11:10 to 11:13

6 lessons on 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians  
 4 lessons on 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians

My goal is to take the time we need to cover the content of each lesson. I don't want to be a slave to the schedule. But I do want to make sure we complete our study on both books. So I will try to find a balance between staying on track and completing each lesson. So that means we may get off a bit and not always start a new lesson each week. I would also encourage you to be reading through the letters to the Thessalonians. It is especially helpful if you read the passage we are studying during the week ahead of each lesson. Like most things in life, you will get out of this class what you put in to it. The more prepared you are, the more engaged you will be. And the more the Spirit can convey to you as we study through each text.

## Getting Started

Who is the author?

When was it written?

What is the setting?

Who was it written to?

Why was it written?

What are the primary themes?



2 minutes – 11:13 to 11:15

## Who Is The Author?

- The Apostle Paul
- Identified in the greeting of each letter
- Traditional position of the early church
- The two letters are similar
- There are similarities in wording and style that fit Paul's other letters



5 minutes – 11:15 to 11:18

- Since ancient times few have questioned that 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians are authentic letters of the apostle Paul. How do we know that?
- Paul's name appears in the greeting, alongside that of his companions Silvanus and Timothy in each letter.
- No modern scholars of any repute doubt the authentic Pauline character of the letter.
- The evidence and position of the early church is unanimous in favor of Pauline authorship.
- We have two letters and they are of similar in structure.
- The words and style are similar to other letters written by the apostle Paul.

## When Was It Written?

- Based on Acts 17 & 18
  - Paul visited Thessalonica prior to visiting Corinth
  - In Corinth, Paul was brought before Gallio
  - Historical data places Gallio as proconsul of Achaia around 51 AD
- Leads to a timeframe of 51 to 52 AD (about 20 years after Jesus' death & resurrection)
- These letters would have been written just after Paul's letters to the Galatians in 48 AD (his earliest letter)



5 minutes – 11:18 to 11:20

- The date for the writing of Paul's letters to Thessalonians is one of the more certain timeframes we have involving Paul's letters.
- It is recorded in Acts 18, that while Paul was in Corinth he was brought before Gallio, who was the proconsul of Achaia. Through historical records, this places Paul in Corinth somewhere between 50 to 52 AD.
- This would place the authorship of the book around 51 to 52AD, just 20 years after Jesus' death and resurrection.

## What is the Setting?

- Acts 17:1-15
  - Jealous Jewish leaders incite a mob to look for Paul
  - Jason and other Christians are dragged before the city authorities
  - Paul and his companions are sent to Berea
  - The Jews from Thessalonica come to Berea and create more trouble
  - Paul and his companions are then sent by sea to Athens
- Paul leaves a young church at a critical time
- Paul sends Timothy to find out how they are doing



5 minutes – 11:20 to 11:30

- The circumstances that led to Paul's writing of these letters are interesting.
- Have someone read Acts 17:1-15
- We know from this passage in Acts that Paul was forced to leave the new Thessalonian believers because the Jews had incited wicked men (rabble) in the city to riot at Jason's house in a search for Paul and his companions.
- Jason and other Christian leaders are dragged before the city authorities and were forced to put up a security bond to assure peace.
- Paul goes to Berea with Timothy and Silas.
- At first, all seems to go well and the reception of the Jews at Berea is positive. However, the Jews from Thessalonica come down to Berea and start causing trouble again.
- Paul had to leave again and goes by sea to Athens.
- Paul is forced to leave this new church at Thessalonica at a critical time. They were new in their faith and were facing the persecution and agitation of Jewish leaders. We can understand Paul's concern for these new believers. He is worried about what might happen to them and if they will be able to stand against the persecution they are facing.

- Paul dispatches Timothy to visit them and get a report on how they are doing

## Who Was It Written To?

- The city of Thessalonica
- The church in Thessalonica



5 minutes – 11:30 to 11:35

- The ancient city of Thessalonica was strategically located at the intersection of two major Roman roads, one leading to what is now Italy westward and the other eastward to the Aegean. Its location on the coast also gave it use as a port. These characteristics made it a prominent commercial city. It became the capital of the Roman province of Macedonia in 146 BC. During the time of Paul's visit, it likely had a population of nearly 200,000.
- Paul's ministry in Thessalonica followed his usual pattern of going first to the Jews. Paul preached in the synagogue proclaiming Jesus the Messiah.
- But we also know that Paul witnessed to the Gentiles in the city. As a result, some Jews and many Gentiles believed in Jesus as their Savior and Lord.
- It's also important to understand that when Paul, Silas, and Timothy arrived in Thessalonica to preach the gospel, they did not enter a city with a religious vacuum. The Thessalonians were devout worshipers of any of a large number of deities. Paul's gospel proclamation to the Gentiles was a call to abandon their worship of pagan images. This worship of other Gods played into the culture and opposition he faced in Thessalonica.
- The church in Thessalonica was made up of both Jews and Gentiles.



- The number of people leaving the synagogue as believers in Christ was beginning to concern the Jewish leaders. They became jealous and angry with Paul at what they saw as disruption to their traditions and teaching. They likely viewed Paul as a threat and were determined to have him arrested or removed.
- The church in Thessalonica was made up of new believers. Probably only believers for 6 to 18 months. What would they have been like? What are we often like as new believers?
  - Zealous
  - Immature and unsure
  - Open to error and false teaching
  - Spiritually weak
- What were they facing that we do not?
  - Religious persecution by both Jews
  - Social isolation by Gentiles (potentially loss of income and connections)
  - Hatred and scorn

## Why Was It Written?

- To share Paul's joy and thanksgiving to God for the Thessalonians, especially amidst persecution
- To answer criticism which had been brought against him
- To encourage and provide instructions on how to live as believers
- To address doubts and error regarding the return of the Lord
- To request prayer



5 minutes – 11:35 to 11:40

We want to first look at these letters in the context of why did Paul write them to the church at Thessalonica. From there we can take to the church as a whole and to us here in Springboro in 2021.

## What Are the Primary Themes?

- Paul's example of faithfulness in ministry
- Examples of how to pray
- Thanksgiving and joy in fellow believers
- Encouragement to live for Christ
- The coming of the Lord



5 minutes – 11:40 to 11:45

- Paul's example of faithfulness in ministry
  - Love for the lost
  - Joy in fellowship
  - Love and concern for others
  - An example of encouragement
  - An example of enduring suffering for the sake of the Gospel
  - Sending out of Timothy
- Examples of how to pray
- Thanksgiving and joy in fellow believers
  - Believers are to have a special relationship with one another
  - In affection
  - In prayer
  - Longing to be with them (COVID example; attending less or at all)
- Encouragement to live for Christ
  - To live to please God
  - To imitate those more mature in Christ
  - To hold firm to sound teaching

- The coming of the Lord
  - It's timing
  - The error of those who said it had already taken place

## Structure of the Letters

### 1 Thessalonians

- Opening
  - Greeting (1:1)
  - Thanksgiving (1:2-3)
  - Encouragement (1:4-10)
- Body
  - Fellowship in the Gospel (2:1-3:13)
  - Important Instructions (4:1-5:22)
- Closing (5:23-28)

### 2 Thessalonians

- Opening
  - Greeting (1:1-2)
  - Thanksgiving (1:3-4)
  - Encouragement (1:5-12)
- Body
  - Hold Fast to Truth (2:1-17)
  - Important Instructions (3:1-15)
- Closing (3:16-18)



5 minutes – 11:45 to 11:50

Note the parallel structure.



5 minutes – 11:50 to 12:00

- I will make the remaining classes more interactive.
- What are somethings you hope to get out of this class?