

1 Thessalonians 1:1-10 - Introduction

I. Introduction

A. 1-2 Thessalonians were, after Galatians, the first canonical letters of Paul (written appr. 50 AD) and, therefore, are among the earliest books in the New Testament.

B. The setting for Paul's writing 1-2 Thessalonians:

1. During Paul's second missionary journey (49-50 AD) Paul founds the Thessalonian church (Acts 17:1-4) together with Silas and Timothy (Acts 17:14-15).

2. However, riots instigated by Jewish opponents forced Paul to leave prematurely (Acts 17:5-10) about a month or more ('three Sabbath days', Acts 17:2) and head to Athens.

3. Later on, Paul in Athens longs to know how the church is doing and sends Timothy back. Timothy eventually reunites with Paul in Corinth and gives a report (1 Thess 3:6, Acts) prompting Paul to write 1 Thessalonians in perhaps six months after his stay there.

a) Tim's report was mainly positive, but includes some rumors disparaging Paul's character, questions over the 2nd Coming of Christ, and notice that some members were lazy and unruly.

4. After delivering 1 Thess, Paul's courier returns with more news, prompting Paul to write 2 Thess in 50 AD from Corinth.

a) Again, the report was mainly positive, but they are still confused over the 2nd Coming and the problem of idleness has gotten worse.



II. 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10 – The Coming of the Gospel and Its Reception

*Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy,
the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:
Grace to you and peace.*

To

² We give thanks to God always for all of you, [when are thanks given?] constantly mentioning you in our prayers, ³ [why are thanks given?] remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. [why are thanks given (ultimately)?] ⁴ For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, ⁵ because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. ⁶ And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, 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 not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything. ⁹ For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you,

and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God,¹⁰ and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come. (1 Thess 1:1-10)

1. How does the short introductory formula of this letter ("X to Y, grace and peace") signify its early date as compared to, for example, Rom 1:1-7?

2. Do we have an adequate understanding that the church of which we are a part is "in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ"? What does this mean? How does this reality come out in the way Paul commends the church in vv. 2-3? Implications for us?

First, that believers, all and everyone, as members of Christ have communion with Him and share in all His treasures and gifts. Second, that everyone is duty-bound to use his gifts readily and cheerfully for the benefit and well-being of the other members. - Heidelberg Catechism (1563), Q. 55

"There is nothing that should tend more to excite our love to individuals, than when the Lord manifests himself in them by the gifts of his Spirit. This is the highest commendation of all among the pious—this the most sacred bond of connection, by which they are more especially bound to each other." - John Calvin, Thessalonians, 238.

3. What is the ultimate reason Paul gives thanks for the Thessalonians? What are the two reasons he gives for knowing this about them? Are these two things evident in your life?

4. Do you think Paul's calls for others to imitate him are arrogant claims? Do you think Paul wants other Christians to be examples or imitators? How do you feel about encouraging someone to follow your example?

"I urge you, then, be imitators of me." (1 Cor 4:16)

"Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ." (1 Cor 11:1)

"Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us." (Phil 3:17)

"And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit..." (1 Thess 1:6)

5. In light of question 4 (esp. 1 Cor 11:1), what does the following statement mean: "We resemble what we revere, either for ruin or restoration" (Greg Beale)?

"Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices¹⁰ and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator." (Col 3:9-10)

6. How does Paul's description of the conversions of the Thessalonian Gentiles indicate that the Christian life consist of "serving" and "waiting" (vv. 9-10)? How is *this* kind of "waiting" active rather than passive?

“Unless we are stirred up to the hope of eternal life, the world will quickly draw us to itself... Let every one, therefore, that would persevere in a course of holy life, apply his whole mind to an expectation of Christ’s coming.” - John Calvin, *Thessalonians*, 246.