

# *1 Thessalonians*

**Purpose:** “To encourage new converts, to give instruction, and to give assurance.” (edited from NIV Study Bible).

**Outline:** 1:1-2:16 – Paul’s presence in planting the Church  
2:17-3:13 – Paul’s absence from the Church  
4:1-5:28 – Paul makes up the lack by writing this letter

**Author:** Paul

**Date:** 51 AD while in Corinth during his second missionary journey (cf. Acts 17:1-9)

## **Highlights:**

While the Galatians were living as though the “already” were “not yet” the Thessalonians were living as though the “not yet” made the “already” irrelevant. Their “over-realized” view of Christ’s return caused them to disregard the present world in anticipation of the world to come.

This over-realized view is seen in idleness and un-holiness (Christ is coming anyway, so live it up while you wait – kind of attitude) – two topics that Paul hits a number of times.

The flow of the letter is 1) Paul rejoicing in their faith, 2) his longing to return to them, 3) giving them some teaching via letter, while they wait for his return.

Note that the letter is coming from Paul, Silas, and Timothy (all three were known to the Thessalonians). Timothy was actually traveling from Thessalonica when Paul began writing the letter, and Silas may have been with Timothy, or in Philippi; so it was just Paul who was actually writing the letter.

The triad of faith, hope, and love (as seen in 1:3) is found often in the New Testament – especially in Paul’s writings.

Paul commends the Thessalonians for their faith, and encourages them to continue as they WAIT for Jesus to return.

While in Thessalonica, Paul and the gang worked in order to earn wages, rather than just asking for an offering. Paul was a tentmaker and used this skill as a means not to be a burden on to anyone while he preached the gospel.

In the midst of Paul telling the Thessalonians how much he wanted to see them, Timothy arrives from being with them.

Paul listens to Timothy and then begins the teaching portion of the letter. The emphasis is on holy living, especially in an unholy community. The other emphasis is on the coming of the Lord. Paul assures them that Jesus has not already returned, and when he does all who have believed and already “fallen asleep” (i.e. died) will be raised at that time.

Verse 17 is the only place where the word “rapture” (taken from the Latin Vulgate rendering of “caught up”) is used. However, the teaching here is not that all believers will be raptured while unbelievers remain behind. The teaching is that we need not fear that those who die before Christ returns won’t receive eternal life; rather, believer’s who have died will join believer’s who are alive in rising to eternal life when Christ returns.

Paul goes on to say that the time and date is unknown, so that they should not be like those in the dark. Instead they should continue growing in the faith, and keep from being idle.

Paul does not distinguish between the Day of Christ (a.k.a. “Parousia) in 1 Thess. 4:13-18 and the Day of the Lord in 1 Thess. 5:1-11. The latter paragraph simply takes up the question as to the date and circumstances surrounding the events of the former paragraph.

Note the triad again in verse 23: “spirit, soul, and body.”

## 2 Thessalonians

**Purpose:** “To encourage persecuted believers, to exhort the Thessalonians to be steadfast and to work for a living, and to correct a misunderstanding concerning the Lord’s return.” (edited from NIV Study Bible).

**Outline:** 1:1-12 – Introduction  
2:1-2:17 – Instruction  
3:1-18 – Intercession

**Author:** Paul

**Date:** 51/52 AD while in Corinth during his second missionary journey (about 6 months after first letter)

### Highlights:

The purpose of this letter is virtually the same as the last. Although, a misunderstanding about the Lord’s return seems to be what prompted the writing of this letter. See, even back then, they had a hard time understanding the Scriptures – especially regarding the second coming of Christ.

Chapter one serves as introduction. It is a glowing thankfulness to God for the faith of the church in Thessalonica. He also encourages them in the midst of persecution and trials. All of this leads to Paul’s prayer that God would consider them worthy of his calling; and that by his power he may fulfill all of their good purpose, and that every act would be prompted by faith. These are beautifully worded phrases pointing to the truth that our good works are produced by the power of faith that God works in us.

Chapter two turns to the important task of clarifying the coming of Jesus. Paul begins by correcting an unsettling error – the belief that the day of the Lord has already come. Rather, we will know the Jesus is coming after many fall away from the faith and the “man of lawlessness” is revealed.

Man of Lawlessness –

Perhaps a political figure

Perhaps a parody of the incarnation

2 Th. 2:3 – “to be revealed”; 2 Th. 2:4 – proclaims himself to be divine; 2 Th. 2:9 – has his own appearance with signs, powers, and wonders; 2 Th. 2:6 – “in his own time”

Perhaps not a person, but something else

A government; Angelic Figure (Antichrist)

Chapter 3 applies the teaching of chapter 3. We must not be idle, but continue in faith.