



# Finer Grounds Bible Study

## 1 & 2 Thessalonians

### Lesson 1: Introduction to 1 Thessalonians

I am thrilled that you are joining me today as we set out to learn what God has to say to us through Paul’s letters to the church in Thessalonica. 1 and 2 Thessalonians were among the very first letters Paul penned, and they give us beautiful insight into the relationship he had with the congregations he visited. Before we dive into the actual text of 1 Thessalonians, let’s take a step back and look at the relationship between this congregation and Paul.

#### Read Acts 17:1-4

**Where did Paul go to preach when he reached Thessalonica?**

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It was customary for Paul to go straight to the synagogue if there was one when he entered a city. This would grant him an audience with those already faithful to God who might be receptive to the gospel message. He would then continue preaching to the surrounding Gentiles. It was common practice in the synagogues to have readings from the Law and the Prophets and then allow time for comment from wise teachers (cf. Acts 13:13-15). Since he had been a high-ranking Pharisee, Paul likely would have had the perfect opportunity to comment on the scriptures and bring the gospel message into focus for those present.

Paul made it a point to seize every opportunity that was placed before him for the cause of Christ. Whether it be prison (cf. Philippians 1:12-14), trial (cf. Acts 24), or in this case, an opportunity to speak before the synagogue, Paul was always ready to win souls. He saw every event and hardship as a new and unique prospect.

**What are some examples in your own life or in others of hardships that ended up being opportunities used for Christ?**

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**What are some unique situations that you are blessed with that could allow you to teach others about Christ?**

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**According to Acts 17:4, was Paul successful in his attempts?**

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Paul did have some success among the Jews in Thessalonica, but it seems the majority of his converts were “God-fearing Greeks” or Gentiles. According to Acts 17:2, they were preaching for three Sabbaths, which meant that Paul and Silas were likely only in Thessalonica for three of four



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weeks. Upon their departure, the congregation is still very young, and this letter shows very clearly Paul's concern for these Christians.

## Read Acts 17:5-9

**What trouble occurred for Paul and Silas in this passage?**

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**Who else was involved in the situation?**

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While they were met with some success in Thessalonica, the overall situation was tempestuous. It was not just Paul and Silas who were persecuted, the Christians in town were as well. Some were apprehended and Jason, along with many of the others had to pay a bond to be released. This was certainly a rocky start to the congregation in Thessalonica.

## Read Acts 17:10-11

**What happened to Paul and Silas?**

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**Where did they go next?**

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**How were they received?**

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After only a brief time with these new Christians in Thessalonica, the trouble in town caused Paul and Silas to depart. Upon reaching Berea, they were met with more success. It is clear when you read through the pages of 1 and 2 Thessalonians that Paul was deeply concerned for this fledgling congregation he had left in such a delicate situation. Remaining faithful as a new convert is extremely difficult on its own; add to it the turmoil and persecution these young Christians were facing, and it is no wonder Paul had such concern for their wellbeing.

## Read 1 Thessalonians 3:1-8

**What did Paul do to check on the Christians in Thessalonica?**

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**What did he learn about them?**

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The language here is beautiful; you can see Paul's love for these people oozing off the page. Remember Paul could not simply pick up a phone and ask how they were doing and the text says he could "endure it no longer." He had to know how the Thessalonians were doing. Timothy reported back that the young Christians were doing well in the face of affliction and Paul was overjoyed.



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**Do you share the same kind of love and concern for the young Christians in your own community and all around the globe?**

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**What are some ways that we could better encourage them in their faith?**

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These accounts give us a little glimpse into the relationship that Paul had with the congregation in Thessalonica. As you read through these letters in the coming weeks, remember this context. These are not simply random verses for us to think about, they are letters from a concerned and loving Paul to a small congregation he loved very much, that was having to stand firm in the midst of persecution all around them.

As we study through these letters, I challenge you to read (or listen to) them in their entirety each week. It only takes about 12 minutes to read 1 Thessalonians and 7 minutes to read 2 Thessalonians. That's less than 20 minutes! Reading these letters as a whole will greatly enrich your study and allow you to make connections as we go along that you would not have otherwise seen if you just camped out in each verse.

There are several keywords Paul uses throughout this letter. Take some time to read through and mark each time these words (or their synonyms) are used. Try to read through the letter one time with each individual word in mind. This will help you see the various themes and how they fit into the book.

- Gospel/Word
- Tribulation/Suffering/Affliction
- Spirit
- Coming of Jesus
- Satan/Tempter
- Faith
- Hope
- Love

**What do we learn about each of these keywords from 1 Thessalonians?**

- **Gospel/Word**

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- **Tribulation/Suffering/Affliction**

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- **Spirit**

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- **Coming of Jesus**

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- **Satan/Tempter**

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- **Faith**

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- **Hope**

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- Love

After reading through this letter a few times, what do you feel is the overall theme and purpose of the letter?

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I cannot wait to dive into these love letters with you. As you are reading, do not lose sight that these letters addressed real people with real problems. Try to find as many parallels as you can between yourself and the Thessalonians. It is my prayer that once we complete these studies you will know these letters inside and out and be able to apply this portion of God's word to your life in a meaningful way.