

FIRST EPISTLE OF PAUL TO THE THESSALONICANS

Author & Audience:

the Apostle Paul, writing a relatively young assembly of Believers

Date:

50-52 C.E.

Purpose:

1 Thessalonians is one of the Apostle Paul's earliest letters. Unlike some of his other epistles, the Thessalonian correspondence is largely devoid of issues concerning Torah or circumcision. Instead, themes of the end-times and the return of Yeshua are the focus of the difficulties faced by these Believers. Many were of the mistaken impression that the Messiah could come at any moment.

1

Salutation

¹ Paul and Silvanus and Timothy to the assembly of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Yeshua the Messiah: Grace to you and peace.

The Thessalonians' Faith and Example

² We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention *of you* in our prayers;

³ remembering your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Yeshua the Messiah, before our God and Father,

⁴ knowing, brothers and sisters beloved of God, *His* choice of you;

⁵ for our good news did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of persons we proved to be among you for your sake.

⁶ And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with joy of the Holy Spirit,

⁷ so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.

⁸ For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything.

⁹ For they themselves report concerning us what kind of welcome we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God,

¹⁰ and to wait for His Son from Heaven, whom He raised from the dead, *that is* Yeshua, who delivers us from the wrath to come.

2

Paul's Ministry in Thessalonica

¹ For you yourselves, brothers and sisters, know that our visit to you was not in vain,

² but having already suffered and having been mistreated, as you know, in Philippi, we had boldness in our God to speak to you the good news of God in much conflict.

³ For our exhortation *does not come* from error, nor *is it* of uncleanness, nor guile;

⁴ but just as we have been approved of God to be entrusted with the good news, so we speak, not as pleasing mortals, but God who examines our hearts.

⁵ For we never came using words of flattery, as you know, nor a pretense for covetousness—God is witness—

⁶ nor seeking glory from mortals, either from you or from others, when we might have been burdensome as apostles of Messiah.

⁷ But we were gentle^a among you, as a nursing *mother* cherishes her own children.

⁸ Even so, being affectionately desirous of you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the good news of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us.

⁹ For you remember, brothers and sisters, our labor and travail, working night and day, that we might not burden any of you, we proclaimed to you the good news of God.

¹⁰ You are witnesses, and God *also*, how devoutly and righteously and blamelessly we behaved ourselves toward you believers;

¹¹ just as you know how we *dealt with* each one of you, as a father with his own children, exhorting you, and encouraging you, and testifying

¹² for you to walk worthy of the God who calls you into His own Kingdom and glory.

¹³ And for this reason we also thank God constantly, that when you received from us the word of God's message, you accepted *it*

not *as* the word of mortals, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which also works in you believers.

¹⁴ For you, brothers and sisters, became imitators of the assemblies of God in Messiah Yeshua that are in Judea, for you also suffered the same things from your own compatriots, even as they did from the Jews

¹⁵ who both killed the Lord Yeshua and the prophets^b, and drove out us, and displeased God, and are hostile to all people,

¹⁶ forbidding us to speak to the nations that they may be saved—with the result that they always fill up the measure of their sins. But wrath has come upon them to the utmost.

Paul's Desire to Visit the Assembly Again

¹⁷ But we, brothers and sisters, having been orphaned from you for a short season—in presence, not in heart—were more abundantly eager, with great desire, to see your face;

¹⁸ because we wanted to come to you—I, Paul, more than once—and Satan hindered us.

¹⁹ For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting? Is it not even you, before our Lord Yeshua at His coming?

²⁰ For you are our glory and joy.

3

¹ Therefore when we could bear *it* no longer, we thought it best to be left behind at Athens alone;

² and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's fellow worker in the good news of Messiah, to establish you and to encourage you as to your faith,

^a There is a textual variant present in 2:7, as to whether *ēpioi*, "gentle," or *nēpioi*, "infants," is the correct textual reading (Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, pp 629-630). The difference between the two terms is that the latter has added the Greek letter *nu*, so the possibility of there being some minor transcriptional error in ancient times is present. Expositors of 1&2 Thessalonians are not entirely agreed on which is the better rendering, with some favoring "gentle" (I. Howard Marshall, *New Century Bible Commentary: 1 and 2 Thessalonians* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983], 70; F.F. Bruce, *Word Biblical Commentary: 1&2 Thessalonians*, Vol 45 [Waco TX: Word Books, 1982], 31) and others favoring "infants" (Leon Morris, *New International Commentary on the New Testament: The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959], 77; Gene L. Green, *Pillar New Testament Commentary: The Letters to the Thessalonians* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002], pp 126-128; Gordon D. Fee, *New International Commentary on the New Testament: The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009], pp 65-72).

No major doctrines of the faith are obviously challenged, if an interpreter prefers the reading of *nēpioi* or "infants" for v. 7 over *ēpioi* or "gentle," although it can be a difficult reading unless "infants" is somehow viewed in reference to the presumed innocence of newborn babies. The reading of *ēpioi* or "gentle" offers fewer issues in terms of understanding the vantage point of Paul and his audience.

Cf. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary*, pp 629-630 which favors *ēpioi*; Comfort, *New Testament Text and Commentary*, pp 642-643 which favors *nēpioi*.

^b The issue of how to handle *hupo tōn loudaiōn, tōn kai ton Kurion apokteinantōn Iēsoun kai tous prophētas* in 2:14-15 is a complicated one, both textually and theologically. An English version like the NASU includes a restrictive comma, "the Jews, who both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets," whereas an English version like the HCSB does not include a restrictive comma, "the Jews who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets." One rendering would seemingly imply that the Jewish race as a whole is responsible for the Messiah's death, and another that only a specific sector of Jews were responsible. Still, others favor *tōn loudaiōn* being rendered as "the Judeans," emphasizing their location. The rendering offered here for 2:14-15 favors the view that "the Jews" in view are only those specifically responsible for the death of the Messiah, to be associated with the Jewish religious leaders with whom Paul had difficulty during his visit to Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-15).

³ so that no one would be disturbed by these tribulations; for you yourselves know that we have been appointed for this.

⁴ For indeed when we were with you, we told you beforehand that we are to suffer tribulation; just as it came to pass, as you know.

⁵ For this reason, when I could no longer bear *it*, I also sent that I might know about your faith, lest by any means the Tempter had tempted you, and our labor would be in vain.

⁶ But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always have good remembrance of us, longing to see us just as we also *long to see you*,

⁷ for this reason, brothers and sisters, we have been comforted about you, in all our distress and tribulation, through your faith;

⁸ for now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord.

⁹ For what thanksgiving can we render to God for you, for all the joy with which we rejoice for your sake before our God,

¹⁰ night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face, and may complete what is lacking in your faith?

¹¹ Now may our God and Father Himself, and our Lord Yeshua, direct our way to you;

¹² and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another, and to all people, just as we also *do to you*;

¹³ so that He may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Yeshua with all His holy ones.

4

A Life Pleasing to God

¹ Finally then, brothers and sisters, we beseech and exhort you in the Lord Yeshua, that, as you received from us *instruction* as to how you ought to walk and to please God (just as you do walk), that you abound more.

² For you know what orders we gave you through the Lord Yeshua.

³ For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from fornication;

⁴ that each one of you know how to control his own vessel in sanctification and honor,

⁵ not in the passion of lust, like the nations who know not God;

⁶ *and* that no one transgress and wrong his brother or sister in the matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned.

⁷ For God has called us not for uncleanness, but in sanctification.

⁸ Therefore he who rejects *this* is not rejecting human *authority*, but God, who gives His Holy Spirit to you.

⁹ Now concerning love of the brothers and sisters you have no need that one write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another;

¹⁰ for indeed you do practice it toward all the brothers and sisters who are in all Macedonia. But we exhort you, brothers and sisters, that you abound more,

¹¹ and that you aspire to live a quiet life, and attend to your own business, and to work with your hands, even as we ordered you;

¹² so that you may walk properly before outsiders, and may have need of nothing.

The Lord's Coming

¹³ But we would not have you ignorant, brothers and sisters, concerning those who are asleep, that you may not grieve, as do the rest who have no hope.

¹⁴ For if we believe that Yeshua died and rose again, even so, through Yeshua, God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep.

¹⁵ For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.

¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Messiah will rise first.

¹⁷ Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so we shall always be with the Lord.

¹⁸ Therefore comfort one another with these words.

5

¹ Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers and sisters, you have no need that anything be written to you.

² For yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord comes like a thief in the night.

³ When they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction will come upon them, as labor pains upon a woman with child; and they will not escape.

⁴ But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief;

⁵ for you are all children of light and children of the day. We are not of the night, nor of darkness;

⁶ so then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober.

⁷ For those who sleep, sleep in the night, and those who get drunk, get drunk in the night.

⁸ But let us, since we are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet, the hope of salvation.

⁹ For God has not appointed us to wrath, but to the obtaining of salvation through our Lord Yeshua the Messiah,

¹⁰ who died for us, that whether we are awake or sleep, we may live together with Him.

¹¹ Therefore encourage one another, and build up one another, just as you also are doing.

Final Exhortations and Greetings

¹² But we beseech you, brothers and sisters, to recognize those who labor among you, and have charge of you in the Lord, and admonish you,

¹³ and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves.

¹⁴ And we exhort you, brothers and sisters, admonish the idlers, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be longsuffering toward all.

¹⁵ See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all.

¹⁶ Rejoice always;

¹⁷ pray without ceasing;

¹⁸ in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Messiah Yeshua for you.

¹⁹ Do not quench the Spirit;

²⁰ do not despise prophetic utterances;

²¹ But test all things; hold fast that which is good;

²² abstain from every form of evil.

²³ Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah.

²⁴ Faithful is He who calls you, who will also do it.

²⁵ Brothers and sisters, pray for us.

²⁶ Greet all the brothers and sisters with a holy kiss.

²⁷ I adjure you by the Lord that this letter be read to all the brothers and sisters.

²⁸ The grace of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah be with you.