

1 THESSALONIANS

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1 Thessalonians 1:1–4

1:1 *From Paul, Silas, and Timothy. To the church at Thessalonica united with God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Good will and peace are yours!*

Paul wrote this letter with Silas and Timothy, his coworkers, to the young church in Thessalonica. These three men had founded the church in Thessalonica, became friends to many, and took a vested interest in the members' spiritual well-being.

Earlier, Paul had barely escaped the clutches of Jewish opponents to the Gospel in Thessalonica (Acts 17:10). Some time later, Timothy had been dispatched to see how they were doing and to report his findings to Paul. Timothy returned to Paul in Corinth and reported all of the news about the believers in this thriving Roman city. Paul responded with this letter of encouragement and instruction.

As Paul began his letter, he greeted them in the unity they possessed because of their Christian faith. God's grace and peace are the inherited promise God gives to all believers when they are saved. Therefore, Paul encouraged the Thessalonians with these words,

reminding them that they already possessed these blessings. Good will, kindness, and grace are given to human beings by God not because humanity deserves them but because God chooses to do so based solely on the work of His Son completed on Calvary's Cross. The work of redemption satisfies Almighty God's justice, removing the penalty of man's rebellion and showering believers with His grace, mercy, kindness, and good will (*John 1:17*).

1:2 We always thank God for all of you as we remember you in our prayers.

As Paul went about his daily tasks, he often thought about their Christian brothers and sisters in Thessalonica. Paul's concern for their spiritual well-being was not some momentary thought but an ongoing moment-by-moment prayer on their behalf. They rejoiced as they remembered their times together. The Good News received through Timothy's visit reported a blessed answer to their prayers. To see the fruit of their labor give birth to such genuine growth in the faith of these dear friends gave cause for rejoicing. Although the Holy Spirit was the One Who actually brought them to Christ and engendered their growth in the faith, Paul was happy to see how God had used them in the process.

1:3 In the presence of our God and Father, we never forget that your faith is active, your love is working hard, and your confidence in our Lord Jesus Christ is enduring.

Paul asserted that he and his coworkers lived, worked, and prayed in the presence of God, the Father. How is this possible? Many assume that they enter God's holy presence when they die and enter the heavenly gates. However, that would leave believers in a woeful condition of despair. This is not what Jesus promised. One of Jesus' most powerful assertions was His promise that He gives His children an abundant life that overflows with His vitality and joy (*John 4:12-14*). When individuals are born again, they are brought by the Holy Spirit into the presence

of God, reconciled by the blood of His Son, Jesus. During moments of quiet prayer, believers can acknowledge their position in Christ and bow before the throne of the One Who created them, redeemed them, and provided the pathway for their reconciliation. While it is true that all people exist within the presence of the omniscient, all-powerful God, those who have been redeemed live within the scope of His love and forgiveness.

As Paul remembered the Thessalonian believers in his prayers, he acknowledged three aspects of their Christian experience. First, their faith was active. They did not rely on purely theological debate, but their faith resulted in acts of kindness to others (*John 6:27*). Second, their love was hard-working. Their love for the Lord motivated them to do those things that supported the faithful, helped the weak, and restored the lost. They selflessly served the needs and concerns of others (*1 Corinthians 13:4–7*). Third, they had an enduring confidence in the Lord Jesus Christ. Even though these believers were often challenged by opponents of the faith, their confidence in the Lord who had saved them was unshakeable. Because they had been redeemed by the only eternal, living God through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, they knew that their lives were secure. This was true no matter what happened in this life because they were inextricably connected to the One Who had given them eternal life.

1:4 Brothers and sisters, we never forget this because we know that God loves you and has chosen you.

Paul addressed the Thessalonian believers as his brothers and sisters. Location made no difference to Paul—Athens or two hundred miles away. They were still children of the Lord Who had expressed His love for them by choosing them to be His own. As children of the saving Lord, all believers in Christ Jesus are brothers and sisters regardless of culture, nationality, or heritage. No matter where believers are around the world, they are related to each other because of their common faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ completed by His death on a Roman cross.

Notes/Applications

Paul, Silas and Timothy serve as wonderful Christian examples. They recognized that all believers live within the scope of God's redeeming presence. This became particularly evident as they prayed for each other. When they prayed, they recognized the wonderful way in which the Lord had blessed their lives. They already possessed the grace and mercy of their redemption, and this realization gave them God's peace regardless of their circumstances.

In submission to the will of God in Christ Jesus, believers who follow these examples of the faith will experience a similar Spirit-inspired vitality. Life in Jesus Christ results in lives lived to the fullest. Genuine believers do not become satisfied with a simple sermon on Sunday mornings. The true experience of Christ's love compels them to move into the world, bringing the Good News to the lost and instruction to those who share their faith in Christ.