

1 Thessalonians 1
Outline
A Continuation of the Study of the Formation
Of the Church

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We finished a study of the book of Acts written by Luke and now we are hopefully going to study books written by Paul during his missionary trips he made under the direction of our Lord Jesus Christ in the establishment of His church. My notes on ACTS are available at <http://livingtheology.com/Acts.htm> and I hope that you will read them. We will now follow the time lines for the letters Paul wrote during his work for the Lord:

Approximate time lines for Bible books involving Paul.

50 A.D. – 53 A.D. 1 Thessalonians and 2 Thessalonians written from Corinth
53 A.D. – 57 A.D. Galatians from Antioch
55 A.D. – 57 A.D. 1 Corinthians written in Ephesus
~57 A.D. Paul wrote Romans
56 A.D. – 58 A.D. 2 Corinthians from Macedonia (perhaps while in Philippi)
61 A.D. – 62 A.D. Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon written from Roman prison
62 A.D. – 63 A.D. Acts finished by Luke
62 A.D. – 63 A.D. Paul set free from prison the first time
Titus, 1 Timothy, and 2 Timothy written during his freedom of about two years.
64 A.D. Paul returned to Rome after the great fire of Rome
66 A.D. Paul beheaded at Rome

We have already studied Romans and my notes for that study can be found at <http://livingtheology.com/Romans.htm>. We have also already studied Ephesians and my notes for that study can be found at <http://livingtheology.com/Ephesians.htm>. So, if the Lord approves, during the next few years we will be studying 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, Galatians, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, Titus, 1 Timothy, and 2 Timothy in that order. At the conclusion of this study we should have a good understanding of God's work in the establishment of the church and the men He used in that work.

Background

1 Thessalonians was written by Paul while he was in Corinth probably in the spring of A.D. 50 when he was on his second missionary journey. On his first missionary journey he, Barnabas, and John Mark begin the trip but John Mark leaves them at Perga and returns to Jerusalem. Paul and Barnabas go to Antioch in Pisidia and then to Iconium, Lystra and Derbe. They then retrace their steps back to Perga during which they strengthen and further teach the converts in those cities. Paul's concern was never just

for evangelism but also for the discipleship of the people chosen by God. The thrust of discipleship is indeed in line with the “great commission” of our Lord:

Matt 28:18 “And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

Matt 28:19 “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,

Matt 28:20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. “”

We must always remember that God chooses His children and it is our task to disciple them according to the Word of God. It is very clear from our study of the book of Acts that such was Paul’s thrust throughout his ministry and it will be even clearer as we study the epistles that he wrote to the churches that he had either established or visited.

Paul and Barnabas then stay and teach at Antioch for about three years. They then go to Jerusalem for the important “Jerusalem Conference” concerning the importance of the Law in the life of the Christian. He had to continually work to overcome the desire of the Jewish converts to continue to practice as a Jew. In Jerusalem Paul and Barnabas also privately meet with James, Peter, and John about the circumcision question.

Paul and Silas start the second missionary journey in Tarsus and then travel to Derbe and Lystra where Paul meets Timothy who would become an important companion. The three of them then travel to Iconium, Antioch in Pisidia and then to Troas where Paul has the important vision of the man in Macedonia that we discussed in our study of Acts. They then travel to Philippi where Paul and Silas are beaten and put into prison. In the prison we studied the miracles of the earthquake and the removing of the bonds as they are freed. They then travel to Thessalonica where Paul teaches for three Sabbaths in a synagogue. Many there believe but many are jealous and form a mob and start a riot. The mob goes to the house of Jason but they did not find Paul and Silas so they dragged Jason and others to the magistrate and accused them of wrongdoing. Jason and the others are found not guilty and Paul and Silas leave for Berea where the people are more willing to listen to Paul than the people at Thessalonica. But some of the jealous Jews from Thessalonica come to Berea to give Paul considerable trouble. Paul then leaves for Athens where he preaches his famous Mars Hill sermon.

In the summer of A.D. 50 Paul leaves Athens and travels to Corinth where he stays and preaches for about 1.5 years (Acts 18:11). It is from Corinth that Paul writes his letter to the Thessalonica Christians. Since he did not stay there long and the writing of Luke indicates that he had little success, it is indeed a miracle that God established a church there. We know that Paul sent Timothy to Thessalonica from Athens so God worked through Timothy to establish the church there (1 Thes 3:2)

We must never forget that it is God that chooses His people and establishes His churches even when we might think that we have failed. Often in my Christian walk I see that God makes considerable success out of what I would judge to be failure on my part. Even

though the people at Thessalonica must have thought highly of Paul there were also many people wanting to discredit Paul and break up the church. Timothy was instrumental in helping the churches become established and he then reported back to Paul and it is based upon this report that Paul wrote to the Christians in Thessalonica.

Paul seems to have had three reasons for writing this letter.

- 1.) He wanted to praise the people and the Lord for the spiritual condition of the church there (1Thes 1:2-10).
- 2.) He wanted to defend his reputation of himself and his associates (1Thes 2:1-3:13).
- 3.) He wanted to express some ways in which the Christians there could further develop their Christian walk (1Thes 4:1-5:24).

References

- 1.) John McArthur, "1 & 2 Thessalonians", Moody Press, 2002.
- 2.) Edited by Frank E. Gaebelin, "The Expositor's Bible Commentary Volume 11", 1978.