

1st Thessalonians

Introduction to the Book

- The Region of Macedonia
 - History
 - Macedonia was an ancient kingdom in the Balkan peninsula, to the north of the Greek states.
 - By the 4th century B.C. Macedonia was for most practical purposes part of the Greek world.
 - Alexander the Great made this united Graeco-Macedonian dominion the base for his conquest of Western Asia and Egypt.
 - With the division of Alexander's empire after his death (323 B.C.), Macedonia soon became a separate kingdom once again.
 - Beginning in the 3rd century B.C., the Macedonian kingdom had clashes with the Roman Empire.
 - After a Roman conquest in 168 B.C., Macedonia was divided into four republics.
 - In 148 B.C., these four republics of Macedonia were annexed by the Romans as a province.
 - To consolidate their hold on this new province, the Romans built a military highway, the Via Egnatia, to the city of Thessalonica.
 - Eventually, it was extended farther east to Philippi and its port Neapolis, and later still to Byzantium.



- Macedonia thus became a base for the further extension of Roman power.
- Caesar Augustus made Macedonia a senatorial province in 27 B.C.
- Roman senatorial provinces were overseen by the Roman Senate who could appoint a governor (proconsul) who had only civil powers.
- These provinces were remote and free from the likelihood of rebellion, and so had few, if any, legions stationed in them.
- In 15 A.D. Macedonia was combined with Achaia and Moesia to form one imperial province, but it was handed back to the senate in 44 A.D., with Thessalonica as the seat of administration.
- The Gospel in Macedonia
 - The Apostle Paul first preached the gospel in Thessalonica during his 2nd missionary journey.
 - Prior to visiting Thessalonica, Paul and his companions (Silas and Timothy) had spent time preaching the gospel in Philippi.
 - Paul had been led to travel to Macedonia through a vision [Acts 16:9-12].
- The City of Thessalonica
 - A City of Many Names
 - Historically, this city was called Emathia and Halia.
 - It was later known as Therma, so named because of the nearby hot springs.
 - Cassander, King of Macedonia, renamed Therma dubbing it Thessalonica after the name of his wife, the half-sister of Alexandra the Great.
 - An Ideal Location
 - It was situated on the banks of a harbor in the Thermaic Gulf in the northwest corner of the Aegean Sea.
 - Because of this, the city was a great shipping center – a chief seaport of the Roman province of Macedonia.
 - It also benefitted from the fact that the Egnatian Way – the main Roman road to the Orient (via Byzantium) – passed through the city.
 - This put the city in direct contact with many important cities of the time both by land and sea.
 - As a result, Thessalonica was a strategic location commercially, governmentally and militarily.
 - Population
 - In the N.T. times the population of Thessalonica was roughly 200,000.
 - Most of the residents were native Greeks, but many Romans also inhabited the city.
 - Quite a few Jews lived in Thessalonica and Jewish businessmen served a prominent role in the city's vibrant economy.
 - Evangelization
 - When Paul came to Thessalonica, he started by visiting the synagogue and was allowed to speak since he was a well-trained teacher [Acts 17:1-2].

- He explained from the Old Testament that Jesus was the Messiah [Acts 17:3].
- While in Thessalonica, he also taught about Jesus returning to the earth as King [Acts 17:7b].
- Paul's preaching in Thessalonica led quite a few people to believe in Jesus Christ, including some Jews, many God-fearing Greeks, and some prominent Thessalonian women [Acts 17:4].
- This indicates that, as he was given to do, Paul continued preaching in Thessalonica for some time after he had finished teaching in the synagogue.
- The Letter to the Thessalonians
 - Authorship
 - The letter itself attributes the authorship to the Apostle Paul [1 Thess 1:1; 2:18].
 - As stated in 1 Thess 1:1, Silvanus and Timothy contributed to the content of this letter as well.
 - However, 1 Thess 2:18 clearly indicates that Paul was the primary author of this letter.
 - In the 2nd and 3rd centuries, 1st Thessalonians was attributed to Paul by Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria and Tertullian.
 - Only the extreme, higher critics of the 19th century questioned this epistle as Pauline.
 - Conclusion: The Apostle Paul wrote this letter to the Thessalonians.
 - Place and Date of Writing
 - References in Acts 17/18 as well as the letter itself indicate that Paul wrote this letter from Corinth.
 - After departing from Thessalonica, Paul went to Berea, next to Athens and then on to Corinth.
 - Timothy then joined Paul in Corinth, bringing a report of the spiritual state of the church at Thessalonica [1 Thess 3:1-2].
 - Thus, this letter was likely written shortly after Paul's arrival in Corinth [Acts 18:1] when Timothy joined him there.
 - Gallio is mentioned as the proconsul of Achaia [Acts 18:12] which was the case in 52 A.D.
 - That puts the date of writing at 52-53 A.D.
 - Occasion and Purpose
 - As we have seen, Paul's stay in Thessalonica was cut short.
 - As a result, Paul had concerns about the doctrinal stability of the church.
 - While in Athens, on his way to Corinth, Paul sent Timothy back to Thessalonica to check on the welfare of the believers there.
 - Timothy brought Paul encouraging news, but some issues remained that needed to be addressed.
 - In particular, the Thessalonians had not completely detached themselves from their heathen practices.

- In addition, the believers in Thessalonica had Timothy relay some questions to Paul.
- All of this prompted Paul to write this letter.
- Paul addressed these issues in this letter...
 - Paul sought to strengthen these young believers in the basics of the faith.
 - Paul encouraged them in holy living.
 - Paul comforted them regarding the coming of Christ.
 - Paul corrected false doctrines that had crept in.
 - Paul urged them to respect their leadership.
 - Paul attempted to remove suspicions that might undermine their faith.
 - Paul encouraged them in dealing with persecution.
 - Paul gave them instruction regarding life in the church.
- Outline
 - Salutation and Greeting [1:1]
 - Commendations and Explanations [1:2-3:13]
 - Thanksgiving [1:2-10]
 - Reminders [2:1-16]
 - How the Gospel was Delivered [2:1-12]
 - How the Gospel was Received [2:13-16]
 - Concerns [2:17-3:13]
 - Paul's Plans [2:17-20]
 - Timothy's Visit [3:1-5]
 - Timothy's Report [3:6-10]
 - Paul's Petition [3:11-13]
 - Instructions and Exhortations [4:1-5:24]
 - Christian Living [4:1-12]
 - General Conduct [4:1-2]
 - Sexual Purity [4:3-8]
 - Brotherly Love [4:9-12]
 - The Blessed Hope [4:13-18]
 - The Day of the Lord [5:1-11]
 - Coming Suddenly [5:1-3]
 - The Hope of Salvation [5:4-11]
 - Conduct in the Church [5:12-15]
 - Conduct Toward Leaders [5:12-13]
 - Conduct Toward Others [5:14-15]
 - Holy Living [5:16-24]
 - Personal Living [5:16-22]
 - Divine Enablement [5:23-24]
 - Conclusion [5:25-28]
 - Personal Appeals [5:25-27]
 - Benediction [5:28]