



## Growing in Our Faith unto the Glory of Our Lord Jesus Christ

1. Giving thanks to God
2. Embracing an \*eschatological view of the righteous judgment of God (\*refers to last things, the end of the age, the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Christ)
3. We have a high calling from God: pray accordingly!

### Excursus: Some Highlights of 1 & 2 Thessalonians

Thessalonica was the largest city in Macedonia and it's capital (between Jerusalem & Rome). This was a religiously pluralistic Greek city, and its religion was directly tied to politics. Thessalonica embraced loyalty to the imperial cult to stay on good terms with the Roman Empire. “Loyal to the Romans, the city enjoyed the benefits of the imperial government without the burden of its presence . . . On the political as well as the economic and commercial fronts, the city influenced the whole province. The implications of this position for the church in the city and its mission are deep and wide” (Green, 20). Therefore, Christianity's exclusive claims (Christ as Lord overall) were a direct threat to the culture and made allegiance to the gospel a costly way of life. So Paul & the Thessalonian believers were under threat by both the religious opposition of the Jews and the political opposition of the Greeks.

The church in Thessalonica was started by Paul and Silvanus on Paul's 2<sup>nd</sup> Missionary Journey (see Ac 17:1ff). As was his normal custom, Paul began preaching in the synagogue when he arrived in Thessalonica. Some Jews were converted, along with many God-fearing Greeks, and prominent women. Others Jews however grew jealous and threatened, and stirred up persecution against them. “In Acts 17:5-9, Luke tells his readers that shortly after the arrival of the gospel in Thessalonica the apostles and the newly formed Christian community were drawn into conflict with the governing authorities in the city” (Green, 20). Paul & Silas were forced to leave. Part of Paul's purpose for writing to the Thessalonians is to explain this and reassure them of his love, while also encouraging them in the faith and emphasizing God's sovereign reign and protection, and His purpose for them in Christ. This was a fellowship of new believers (with Jews and a majority of Gentiles) who had been given little teaching regarding the Gospel (although some would have been grounded in the Old Testament Scriptures). Paul writes 1 & 2 Thessalonians not long after starting the church (c.50-52 A.D.).

The overarching theme in both letters is the second coming of Christ. 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians are considered the \*eschatological letters of Paul (\*refers to last things, the end of the age, the return of Christ, etc.). Every chapter in 1 Thessalonians ends with a reference to Christ's second coming. In 2 Thessalonians, 18/47 verses (38% of the letter) concern this theme (NIV Study Bible). “Note that the goal of this information is not comprehensive knowledge of the future but hope and encouragement in the present. Paul wants to bring about edification, not speculation” (Yarbrough).

---

Sources: “Introduction” to 1 & 2 Thessalonians (ESV Study Bible, NIV Zondervan Study Bible; NIV Study Bible); *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, by Gene L. Green (PNTC); *1 & 2 Thessalonians* by Michael Holmes (NIVAC); *The Message of 1 & 2 Thessalonians*, by John R. W. Stott (BST); and “1 & 2 Thessalonians” (lecture notes) by Robert Yarbrough (Trinity Evangelical Divinity School).