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## The Faith, Love & Hope of a Christ-centered Church

### 1. Paul’s letter to the Church of the Thessalonians

(an introduction to 1 Thessalonians)

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. So 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.).

Thessalonica: was the largest city in and the capital of Macedonia (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. Therefore, Christianity’s exclusive claims (Christ as Lord over all) 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.

### 3. Embracing the Focus & Joy of a Christ-centered Church:

- our work of faith
  
- our labor of love
  
- our steadfastness of hope