

# Abounding Grace Christian Church

## The Second Coming Letters of Paul – Part 1

**I. Introduction:** Today we begin a new study through what are sometimes referred to as *“The Second Coming Letters of Paul.”* This refers to the two letters written to the Christians at Thessalonica. We begin with the first letter which is commonly referred to as First Thessalonians. This letter is believed to have been written from Corinth around A.D. 51 and is one of the earliest letters, if not the earliest, Paul wrote. It is addressed to the church in the city of Thessalonica which Paul and Silas had only planted months before writing this letter. According to **Acts 17:1-9**, this church was established during Paul’s second missionary journey. Paul preached the Gospel to the Jews for three Sabbaths (**Acts 17:2**), but then was forced to escape to Berea.

### II. The City of Thessalonica

- A. Founded in BC 315.
- B. The city was about 100 miles west of Philippi. Under the Romans, it has a population of about 200,000.
- C. It was a wealthy city, its population being Greek, and many well-to-do Romans and also Jewish merchants were attracted by the commercial advantages.
- D. It was the capital, political and commercial city of Northern Greece or Macedonia.
- E. The religion of the city was paganism, idolatry.
- F. In the city was a Synagogue of the Jews, having the Old Testament Scriptures and Gentile prostyles there also.

### III. Purpose of the Letter.

- A. To encourage them for their continued faithfulness in the midst of persecution.
- B. To exhort them to increase more in their holy walk with the Lord.
- C. To answer questions they had about the coming of the Lord and what happens to believers who had died before the Lord’s return.

### IV. Basic Outline of First Thessalonians.

- A. Greeting – **1:1**
- B. Paul recalls his Ministry to them – **1:2 – 3:13**
- C. God’s call to Sanctification – **4:1-8**
- D. Jesus Christ’s Return – **4:9 - 5:11**
- E. Closing – **5:12-28**

### V. Exposition of Chapter One.

A. **Verse 1 – “Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”**

1. **“Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy...”** – Here we see that Paul didn’t work alone. These two men were an important part of his team. Paul is the actual author of the letter though Silvanus and Timothy may have contributed ideas. The most important thing to know is that the Holy Spirit is the Divine Author.
  - a. **“Silvanus” (also known as Silas)** was a long and experienced companion of Paul. He traveled with Paul on his second missionary journey and was imprisoned and set free with Paul in the Philippian jail (**Acts 16:19-30**). He was also referred to as a prophet in **Acts 15:32**. When Paul first came to Thessalonica, Silas came with him (**Acts 17:1-9**). Therefore, the Thessalonians knew Silvanus.
  - b. **“Timothy”** was a resident of Lystra, a city in the province of Galatia (**Acts 16:1-3**). He was the son of a Greek father (**Acts 16:1**) and a Jewish mother named Eunice (**II Timothy 1:5**). As a child he had learned the Scriptures from his mother and grandmother (**II Timothy 1:5; 3:15**). Timothy was a trusted companion and associate of Paul, and he accompanied Paul on many of his missionary journeys. Paul referred to him as a **“son in the faith” (I Timothy 1:2)**. Paul had sent Timothy to the Thessalonians on a previous occasion (**I Thessalonians 3:2**).

2. **“...To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ...”** – The word

**“church”** referred to an assembly of people whether it was civil or religious. It literally means; **“those called out to assemble.”** Paul specifies here that the **“assembly”** he’s referring to are those **“...in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ...”** In other words, those who are identified as being in relationship with God the Father through the Lord Jesus Christ. There are many Scriptures regarding who we are and what we have **“in Christ.”**

3. **“...Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”** – This is typical of Paul’s greetings to the churches he wrote to. Regarding this Dr. Thomas Constable writes:

**“The shortened greeting customary in the Pauline Epistles appears here. Grace was the common Greek salutation meaning ‘greetings’ or ‘rejoice.’ In Greek peace is equivalent to the Hebrew *šālôm* meaning ‘favor,’ ‘prosperity,’ and ‘well-being.’ It is interesting that those two words of salutation always occur in this order in the New Testament.**

**Theologically God’s grace is the basis for and leads to man’s peace”<sup>1</sup>**

- a. Peace WITH God – **Romans 5:1**
- b. Peace OF God – **Philippians 4:6-9**
- c. Peace with OTHERS – **Romans 12:18**

**B. Verse 2 – “We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers,”** – These were men of prayer, they prayed for the Churches they established, or helped Paul establish (**Romans 1:9, Ephesians 1:16, 3:14, Philippians 1:4, Colossians 1:3, 4:12**).

**C. Verses 3-4 – “...remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father, knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God.”**

- 1. **“...work of faith...”** – True faith has corresponding works. There will always be evidence of genuine faith by the actions that are produced. **“Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.”** – **James 2:17**
- 2. **“...labor of love...”** – The God kind of love does something. Jesus, out of love was **“moved with compassion”** and healed the sick (**Matthew 14:14**), and taught people the Word (**Mark 6:34**). God, the Father, so loved us that He GAVE His only begotten Son (**John 3:16**).
- 3. **“...patience of hope...”** – The word **“patience”** means; **“endurance”**. The word **“hope”** in this context means; **“a joyful and confident expectation”**. The Thessalonian believers had a joyful and confident expectation of God’s goodness toward them and in the **“blessed hope”** (**Titus 2:13**) of the return of Jesus Christ! This hope gave them the strength they needed to endure all opposition.

**“Three characteristics of these believers stood out in Paul’s mind. First, they had performed an important work produced by (lit., “of”) faith in Christ. Verse 9 mentions that they had turned to the true God from idols. Faith in Christ had produced true repentance. Second, they performed labor (*kopou*, “toil”) prompted by (lit., “of”) love for Christ. This consisted in their serving the living and true God (v. 9) in the midst of persecution (v. 6). Third, they had endurance (*hypomonēs*, lit., “a bearing up patiently under a heavy load”; cf. 2 Thes. 1:4) inspired by (lit., “of”) hope in Christ. Specifically they were waiting for God’s Son from heaven (1 Thes. 1:10). These three cardinal virtues that should mark every Christian—faith, love, and hope—stood out in the Thessalonian believers’ lives (cf. 1 Cor. 13:13) ....The Thessalonians had exercised saving faith in Christ in the past when they had believed the gospel, they were loving Christ in the present, and they were hoping for His return in the future.”<sup>2</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas L. Constable, “1 Thessalonians,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 690.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. 691.