

# OpenTheo

## 1 Thessalonians 1 - 3



### 1 Thessalonians - Steve Gregg

In this study of 1 Thessalonians 1-3, Steve Gregg explores the teachings of Paul to the Thessalonians, a group of new converts who faced persecution and temptations. Gregg notes that Paul's instruction to this fledgling community goes beyond what might be expected for new converts, and explores the ways in which Paul encouraged them to maintain holiness and a focus on the hope of Christ's return. Despite facing persecution, the Thessalonians demonstrated strong faith, endurance, and love for one another, providing an example to others.

## Transcript

Today, and for the rest of this week, we'll be studying the Thessalonian correspondence, as I guess we could call it. The two letters that Paul wrote to the Church of Thessalonica. And as seems suitable, and we normally do this anyway before teaching about a book, it's good for us to get the historical background.

The fact is, these are among the earliest epistles Paul wrote, though they're not positioned very early in our New Testament. In fact, they come after some of the later epistles, like Colossians and Ephesians, and those that are given earlier in our Bible. The fact of the matter is, 1 and 2 Thessalonians are placed last in our Bible of Paul's epistles, with the exception of the pastoral.

And I'm not exactly sure why that is. I think maybe it has to do with their length. The epistles in the New Testament are positioned largely according to length, rather than chronological order.

But in fact, Thessalonians, 1 and 2, both, which were probably written within a few months of each other, were written before 1 and 2 Corinthians. They were written a long time before Ephesians, Colossians, or Philipians, and a long time before the pastoral epistles. With respect to the date of writing of Galatians and Romans, no one is really quite sure about the date of the writing of those books.

But it's possible that Thessalonians would have been written before them, before Galatians and Romans, or maybe about the same time. So we have some of the very

earliest writing of Paul in these epistles. And this is one case where we have some very good information from Acts, as to the background.

Because in Acts, chapters 17 and 18, we have the complete story behind these epistles. In Acts, chapter 17, Paul and some companions, apparently Timothy, Silvanus, also known as Silas, and Luke, traveled from Asia, across the Aegean Sea, and landed on the European shore of the Aegean Sea, where they first came to Philippi. And just last week, you studied Philippians.

And so you got some of this historic review, anyway. They came to Philippi in chapter 16 of Acts, and that was their first penetration into the European continent, or the European region. And after Philippi, they moved to Thessalonica.

And in Thessalonica, they began to preach in the synagogues. That was Paul's policy most of the time. He'd go into the synagogues first.

And according to Acts, chapter 17, he preached for three successive Sabbaths in the synagogues. One would get the impression, reading the book of Acts, that after those Sabbaths, he was run out of town. But it doesn't specifically say so.

And some have felt that Paul and his companions spent only three weeks in Thessalonica before they were run out. And that this epistle was written to a convert of very recent origin, who had only had three weeks of instruction from Paul. But if you look at Acts 17, it doesn't necessarily say that.

The story is told in verses 1 through 9. Now, when they had passed through Amphipolis in Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. Remember, there wasn't one in Philippi, but there was in Thessalonica. And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them and three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, opening and alleging that Christ must need to suffer and risen again from the dead, and that this Jesus whom I preach unto you is Christ.

And some of them believed and consorted with Paul in silence, and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few. But the Jews, which, believe not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city in an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, who was apparently the host of Paul's companions in that city, and sought to bring them out to the people. And when they had found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also, whom Jason hath received, and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying, There is another king, one Jesus.

And they troubled the people and the rulers of the city when they heard these things. And when they had taken security of Jason and of the other, they let him go. And then it

says in verse 10, And the brethren immediately sent Paul away in silence by night to Berea, and so forth.

Now, it mentions in verse 2 that they reasoned for three Sabbath days out of the scriptures in the synagogue. And then it talks about how Jason was drawn before the politarchs, as they were called, the rulers of the city, and Paul had to leave. So some have gotten the impression that Paul and his companions only spent three weeks in Thessalonica.

There is some problem with that view, however, because in the Thessalonian epistles, you get the impression that the converts had been saved. There had been some saved for quite a long time by the time he wrote these epistles. First of all, he makes reference to the teaching he had given them before about the coming of the man of sin, about the second coming.

And some of that teaching is not the first kind of things you would teach brand new converts. There are other things you would certainly teach them first, about repentance and faith and salvation and baptism and things like that. You might eventually get to these eschatological topics, but you would not expect they would be the first things that Paul would have taught in the first three weeks of the people's lives.

Yet, in 2 Thessalonians chapter 2, it indicates that he had taught about these things before, while he was with them, indicating that he had taught them some things far in advance of, I should say, far more deep, far beyond the point that you would expect to have taught a brand new convert. Also, you find that there are leaders, apparently elders, in the church. In 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, for example, 1 Thessalonians 5 says, And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you to esteem them very highly and love for their works' sake, and to be at peace among yourselves.

It speaks of some that were over the others in the Lord. Apparently, there were already positions of leadership in the church, which would seem amazing. If Paul had only been three weeks in the church, if there were already some brand new converts who were able to be leaders and overseers of the church.

Also, in chapter 4 of Thessalonians, verse 1, he makes reference to the fact that some of them have fallen asleep in the Lord. Some have died in Christ. And he writes words to comfort those who have lost Christian loved ones.

Now, his words could only be a comfort to those who had lost Christian loved ones. There would be no comfort to people who had lost non-Christian loved ones. So, the implication is that some Christians had died.

And Paul was writing to comfort those who had lost them. Now, of course, it's possible,

depending on the size of the church, that some people would have died, even within a few weeks' time. If there were thousands of people in the church, for instance, then people might be dying at any given time.

But, the church was not probably that large. And to say that some had even died by the time that he wrote these letters, would suggest that the church had been founded more than a few weeks earlier, possibly several months or more. So, there are some indicators in the books, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, that would give us the impression that the church was older than just three weeks old, when Paul left it, because Paul wrote these epistles shortly after he left the church.

Now, looking back at Acts chapter 17, for the background, notice, it says he reasoned on three Sabbath days out of the Scriptures. But, it doesn't say he left the city at the end of those three weeks. What it says is, after three weeks, he was kicked out of the synagogue.

But, there were a number of Gentiles and chief women of the city who resorted to him. And this may have gone on for months. He may have had meetings outside the synagogue for a lengthy period of time, before the Jews stirred up so much trouble that he had to leave.

It does not give us any indication of how long he was there. I believe he was probably there considerably longer than three weeks. But, the reference to the three Sabbath days in verse 2 of Acts 17, simply is saying that's as long as he was permitted to teach in the synagogue, before he was considered subversive, and they kicked him out, and they wouldn't let him do that anymore.

But, it may have taken them several months to raise a case against him, to get him kicked out of the city. Now, how they did that, let's just review that a moment here, in chapter 17 of Acts. It mentions that they brought accusations against Paul and his companions, that they had, first of all, turned the world upside down.

That's an interesting thing. And, these were Jews, by the way, that brought the accusation. It says in verse 5, But, the Jews, which believe not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort.

It's a King James expression. Obviously, people of low character. And, he gathered a company and set all the city in uproar.

They started sort of a riot. It sounds very similar to the riot in Ephesus, that Demetrius the silversmith started up, and got the whole city in uproar, so that the whole temple, or the whole Colosseum in that city, was full of 2,000 people, who were all chanting, Great is Diana, of the Ephesians. Though, it says in Acts, half the people didn't know what they were there for.

It was just kind of a mob scene. And, these people tried to get Paul to bring him before the Politarchs. The city of Thessalonica would have been ruled by five or six Politarchs, which was customary for a free Roman city, which Thessalonica was.

And, they tried to make a case against him, but they couldn't find him. They assaulted the house of Jason, where Paul was known to have been staying. But, apparently, Paul was out at the time, and they didn't find him there.

And so, rather than laying in wait for him, they just grabbed Jason himself, who was home, and took him before the court. And, said, this man has kept these people here. And, they said, these men have turned the world upside down.

Which means, of course, that these Jews were aware of some of Paul's activities in other parts of the world. Even though he'd only recently come to Europe, they must have heard of some of his activities in Asia, and in Jerusalem. So, perhaps there was an intelligence network among the unbelieving Jews that were spreading warnings throughout the unreached areas yet.

Areas where Paul had not yet gone. And, saying, look out for this guy. He causes trouble everywhere he goes.

In fact, that's exactly what the Roman Jews had heard about Paul when he finally got to Rome. They had already heard about the Gospel. They hadn't heard about Paul personally, apparently.

But, you might look at, for the moment, Acts 28. When Paul first got to Rome, he sent to have the Jews brought together. It says in verse 17, It came to pass that after three days Paul called the chief of the Jews together.

These would be unsaved Jews in Rome, who had never heard of him before. And, when they were come together, he said unto them, Men and brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people, the customs of our fathers, yet was I delivered a prisoner from Jerusalem unto the hands of the Romans. And, he goes on to give a little of his testimony.

But, they said, in verse 21, unto him, We neither receive letters out of Judea concerning thee, neither any of the brethren that came showed or spake any harm of thee, but we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest. For as concerning this sect, meaning Christianity, we know that everywhere it is spoken against. So, they were aware of Christianity.

Of course, there was a Christian church in Rome already that may have already been causing trouble from the days of Claudius earlier than this. But, they knew something about Christianity. They knew that the trouble that was spread about Christianity was widespread.

They said, everywhere this sect is spoken evil against. We don't know anything about you personally. So, the Jews who were spreading bad news about Paul hadn't made it to Rome before he did.

But, it's clear that the Jews in Thessalonica were aware of Paul's other activities. And, they said, these are the men that turned the world upside down and must be referring to the commotions that had been caused elsewhere. Anyway, the polytarchs who were judging the case didn't know anything about the situation really.

And, the hardest charge that could be brought against Paul before these Roman officials was that he spoke against Caesar. And, that they do things contrary to the decrees of Caesar, verse 7 says, saying there's another king, one Jesus. Now, if Paul had been permitted to speak for himself, but of course he wasn't there, he would have been able to explain that it is true that he does teach there is another king, one Jesus.

However, not a king such as would be in seeking Caesar's throne. Jesus was not to replace Caesar in the sense of overthrowing the Roman government and setting up a new one. But, since Paul wasn't there to explain himself, and since there could be many witnesses that would agree that Paul thought there was another king, one Jesus, because that is the gospel of the kingdom, the misunderstanding obviously would make Paul a dangerous character in the eyes of the Romans.

And so, what they end up doing, they just took security of Jason, verse 9, and as they bound him over by a bond, that he would be held responsible if Paul caused any more trouble. And, of course, that would mean, of course, if Paul preached any more in town, there would be continuing trouble, and Jason would get into trouble for it. He was kind of going surety for Paul.

And so, the only thing Paul and his friends could do is leave town. Because, if they caused any more trouble, it would get their friend Jason in trouble, and they couldn't do that. And so, they left.

After what short time they'd been there, they were forced to leave. And, of course, they left under persecution. When they left, the Jews were persecuting them.

And, for all they knew, the Jews might be persecuting the Christians there after their departure. So, Paul, as he left, he left reluctantly. He went down to Berea.

But, sure enough, the Jews from Thessalonica came down there and got him kicked out of Berea, also. Then, for his own safety, he and Timothy, apparently, he left Luke in Philippi. He must have left Silas in Berea, because Timothy and he came down to Athens.

Now, see if you have a map here. I don't know if you can see, any of you, from where you're sitting. But, OK, here's Macedonia.

That's upper Greece. And that's Philippi here. And then he came over to Thessalonica, which is another city of Macedonia.

Then down to Berea. He's moving westward here. And there he had trouble in Berea again, so he had to move down into Athens, which is way down here, at the bottom of Achaia, southern Greece.

And then, from there, he couldn't stand the suspense as to what was happening to the Christians in Thessalonica. Because when he'd seen them last, and when he'd been forced to leave, they were under fire from their enemies. And he was afraid, perhaps, such a young church might succumb to the persecution.

And after he'd invested so much there, he might lose that church. So, when he was in Athens, he sent Timothy back to Thessalonica. Timothy's arrival there would not cause as much of a stir as Paul's personal arrival would.

And before Timothy could get back to him, we know Paul preached in Athens, and then, without getting much success there, he moved on to Corinth. In chapter 18 of Acts, he moved on to Corinth. And it wasn't until he was in Corinth that Timothy returned to him, and Silas also.

We get this information not only from what we read in the book of Acts. Some of those details are not there. But in 1 Thessalonians chapter 3, he goes over some of this.

Let me just show you those verses for a moment. 1 Thessalonians 3, verse 1 says, Wherefore, when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone. I sent Timothy, our brother and minister of God and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you and to comfort you concerning the faith that no man should be moved by these afflictions.

For yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto forbearly when we were with you. We told you before that we should suffer tribulation, even as it came to pass, and ye know. For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you and our labor be in vain.

Now, when Timotheus came from you to us and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, he was designed greatly to see us, as we also to see you. Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith. Now, we don't need to read any further to make the point.

Paul here tells us that in Athens, he sent Timothy back. We know from the book of Acts, he then went alone to Corinth, and then Timothy and Silas rejoined him when he was in Corinth. Here he fills in information.

When he was in Athens, he had sent Timothy to confirm them, to strengthen them, to teach them, but also to get a view of what was happening to them so he could get word back to Paul, hopefully to encourage him that things were okay. And, sure enough, verse 6 here says he was encouraged. He did get good word back.

These Christians were hanging in there. They were growing. And as we read in 1 Thessalonians 1, they were not only growing, their growth was phenomenal, so much that around the world the church was speaking of the faith of this particular church.

So, Paul was really pleased to hear it. And he wrote this letter. Basically, it's a letter, a sigh of relief that they're doing well and also seeking to address some questions probably that Timothy brought back, notably about the second coming of Christ.

In chapter 4, he wanted to address the need for comforting those who had lost loved ones. And apparently, Timothy had brought back the news that some of them may have lost some loved ones and needed to be comforted. By the way, there were a few other troubles.

Apparently, that Timothy brought back news of. There was a problem of fornication in the church. Now, before we just decide this church must have been a horrible church because there was fornication in it, we need to appreciate where they're coming from.

Just before they heard the gospel, they were Greeks, pagans. They knew nothing of the law of Moses. This is a very different kind of culture than the culture of the Jews.

The Jews at least had the Ten Commandments. And they had some standard of moral purity that their God had given them thousands of years earlier. So that in the Jewish culture, certain sexual sins were considered to be evil.

But in the Greek culture, sexual sin was rampant. It was even part of their religion. They had temple prostitutes in the temples to their goddesses and their gods.

Part of the worship of their deities was through sexual intercourse with these prostitute priestesses. So obviously, the Greek religion didn't have any of the scruples about sexual misconduct that the Jewish and Christian religion did. So when Paul came to this Greek city, he would not have found people as he found, for instance, Jews who already accepted certain moral principles that were agreeable with Christianity.

He found people who were of a totally different upbringing. Where at least, for instance, in our society, we find fornication still exists in the church. There still are people in the church who fornicate even though we live in a society that's been affected by the Mosaic Law, that's been affected by the Judeo-Christian standard, so that even in our society, even among unbelievers until recently, fornication was considered a bad thing.

And adultery is still usually considered a bad thing even by unbelievers. But in



Thessalonica, there was no such conditioning. So you can appreciate the fact that if it's hard to keep fornication out of the church now, it would be even harder then just because people wouldn't have it conditioned in their mind that this was really that bad.

The Jews would have been more understanding of it, but the Greeks, you couldn't expect it. So Paul had to write to them about fornication. He does this in the first part of 1 Thessalonians 4 and urges them to keep their bodies holy and not to use their bodies for fornication.

So there was a problem with fornication. There was a problem with people concerned about the second coming of the Lord, whether their loved ones who died had missed it. So he had to tell them that their loved ones who died would rise again even before they were caught up to meet the Lord in the air.

And there was another problem, apparently, just beginning to develop in Thessalonica when the first epistle was written, and that was apparently a bit of laziness. We get a hint of this in chapter 4, verse 11, where he says, that you study to be quiet, to do your own business, and to work with your own hands as we commanded you. Now, he had to command them to work with their hands.

Apparently, there was a tendency towards laziness among them when he was there. Timothy must have brought back a report they need to be reminded of this. Apparently, there's still a bit of problem with laziness.

By the time he wrote the second epistle, which was probably a few months after the first one, they were really having troubles with it, so that Paul had to say, if anyone doesn't work, he shouldn't eat. And the laziness in the church became the principal subject of 2 Thessalonians, chapter 3. So, here's the scenario. Paul had left Thessalonica with a new body of Christians there under a time of persecution.

He heard no word from them when he went to Berea. And he got driven out of Berea also. He went to Athens.

He still had heard nothing from them. The suspense was killing him. So, he sent Timothy back with a dual mission.

Bring back word of how they're doing, but also comfort and strengthen them if you find a church there at all. And so, he tells us in this epistle that he did that. And when he went on to Corinth, Timothy returned with Silas also.

Apparently, Silas had been in Berea. And they told Paul everything. And Paul, out of his relief, wrote this letter.

And he expresses his joy and relief basically in the first three chapters. Almost the whole first three chapters is largely given over to just sharing how happy he is to hear they're

doing well. And then in chapters 4 and 5, he addresses some of the problems that were there, which apparently there were three.

Fornication, laziness, and questions or inadequate understanding of the second coming of Christ. You'll find by the time we get to 2 Thessalonians, there's no further reference to fornication in the second epistle, but there's still a need to adjust their thinking on the second coming of Christ and to give them a strong rebuke about laziness. So, this is the character of the Thessalonian correspondence.

There is a stress in these epistles on the second coming of Christ as in no other writings of Paul. The word *parousia*, which is translated coming of Christ. It's the Greek term that referred to a visit from an official or important person.

Paul used the word *parousia* exclusively for the... well, I shouldn't say exclusively, but it was a technical term for the second coming. In the whole New Testament, the word *parousia* is used 18 times of the second coming of Christ. In the whole New Testament, the word *parousia*, maybe I should spell it for you, it's p-a-r-o-u-s-i-a.

That word is used 18 times in the New Testament of the second coming of Christ. It is translated with our English word coming, the coming of our Lord. Seven of those 18 occurrences are in 1 Thessalonians.

So, obviously, since they're very short epistles, that is a disproportionately large number of occurrences in these epistles. It's very much stressed. You have lengthy passages in 1 Thessalonians about the Parousian.

In chapter 4, verse 13, Paul begins to talk about it, and that discussion continues all the way up through chapter 5 and we might say verse 8, but it could even seem to go further. So, the last part of chapter 4 and the first part of chapter 5 is one lengthy discussion about the second coming of Christ and the implications for us. In 2 Thessalonians, we have discussion of the second coming of Christ in both the first and second chapters.

And the second chapter, 2 Thessalonians, is given entirely to the subject, and a significant part of chapter 1 is given to it. So, you can see that one of the main thoughts in Paul's mind here is the second coming of Christ, and that may be because of the persecution the church was going through. The second coming of Christ is the hope that sustains persecuted Christians.

When we realize that we are powerless to resist persecution when it comes from the government, we are not permitted as Christians to take up arms to overthrow the government that is persecuting us. The Christians in the first century never dreamed of doing such a thing, to overthrow the emperor who was persecuting them, or to overthrow the governments that were persecuting them. Jesus had made it plain that is

not how they are to respond to persecution.

They are to love those that hate them. They are to bless those that curse them, and turn the other cheek, and respond kindly to those who hurt them. So, when a Christian is being persecuted by authorities, and realizes that he has no physical recourse to change the situation, that he is strictly in the Lord's hands, one of the things that really sustains him at that time, when it might seem to them that there will be no end to persecution, is the fact that there is ultimately an end in the second coming of Christ.

And that when he comes, that will be the end of all persecution for the church. And so, the church was being persecuted, as Paul acknowledges in these epistles, by the Jews within the church, and he stresses the second coming of Christ. And I would point out that each of the five chapters in 1 Thessalonians ends with a reference to the second coming of Christ.

Each of the five chapters in 1 Thessalonians ends with a reference to the second coming of Christ. In chapter 1, it's verse 10, that they were waiting for his son from heaven. That is, of course, the second coming of Christ.

That they had turned from their idols to serve the living and true God and to wait for his son from heaven. So, you can see there a reference to the second coming of Christ. In chapter 2, in verse 19, it says, For what is our hope for our joy, our crown of rejoicing, are not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming.

Parousia. His coming is mentioned again. Chapter 3, verse 13, ends with these words, At the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.

Chapter 4, as I pointed out, ends with the lengthy discussion of the second coming of Christ, which continues into chapter 5. And chapter 5 ends, essentially, at verse 23, with this prayer, And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly, and I pray God, your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless unto the coming, or parousia, of our Lord Jesus Christ. So, every chapter ends with a reference to his second coming. And there are some large segments of the material that talk about it also.

So, you can see the parousia, the second coming of Christ, is a major theme, a major emphasis of this epistle, and also, it turns out, to be of the next one also. I might just point out also that Paul gives us some indication of how he views his persecutors, and the persecutors of the church in this epistle. First of all, we saw in chapter 3, we read it a moment ago, that he sent Timothy to check on them to see how they were doing, because it says, verse 5, for this cause, it's chapter 3, verse 5, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labor be in vain.

The tempter would be the one who was persecuting them. They were being persecuted,

and the persecution of the church was seen to be the work of the devil. And, in fact, he was unable to return to them because of the devil.

Because the devil interfered with him doing it, we find later on. He makes reference to the fact that he wanted to go back, but he was unable to do it because of that. Now, the Jews are singled out, principally, as the persecutors, the agents of the devil, in this book.

And that's not surprising, because, first of all, remember, it was the Jews who stood up trouble for Paul and made him leave Thessalonica. It was the same Jews who went down to Berea and made him leave Berea. And even now, when he went into Corinth, where he was writing this letter from, he had already encountered problems with the Jews again.

So, he was getting a little upset with these Jews. Even though he was a Jew himself, this book, 1 Thessalonians 2, actually has what might be considered the most anti-Semitic statement in the Bible. And it's made by a Jewish man himself.

But he says of the Jews in 2 Thessalonians 15 and 16, who both killed the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, they have persecuted us, and they please not God. They are contrary to all men, forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved. They fill up their sins always, for the wrath has come upon them to the uttermost.

This he says about the Jews. And you can tell he's a bit angry with them. I mean, he goes on.

In fact, where he says at the end of verse 15, they are contrary to all men. Here he was picking up a common saying that the Gentiles always said about the Jews. There was a saying among the Gentiles, the Jews are contrary to all mankind.

And here Paul, a Jew himself, picks up that statement from the Gentiles and says the same thing about them. And he points out that that is true because the Jews not only don't want the gospel themselves, they won't let it be preached to the Gentiles. And that was exactly what was happening, of course, in Thessalonica.

Paul was preaching to the Gentiles, and the Jews got jealous and drove him out of town. So, we can see in this epistle there's a lot of the persecution that he had experienced and that his readers were experiencing kind of colors the epistle in a lot of ways. There's a lot of stress on the hope of the coming of Christ as a relief from that.

There's reference to the character of the persecutors being Jewish people who aren't pleasing God and who are... the wrath of God actually is upon them and that they were tools for the devil who was actually involved in keeping Paul from being able to go back and minister there. Now, we're going to try to take it... I'd like to take a number of chapters in this session. These are short chapters, which you'll notice.

Only ten verses in the first one. And since most of... most of the first three chapters do not cover doctrinal information unlike Paul's other epistles which usually start with doctrinal information and move from there into practical teaching. This epistle does not start with doctrinal information.

It starts out with personal information. Just basically retelling what has happened since he was there. In chapter one, if we wanted to break it down, in chapter one, Paul basically is just giving thanks for... or expressing his relief at what he has learned about them.

He says in verse two, We give thanks to God always for you. And then he says, Why? Because of the kind of testimony they have and what he's heard about their present state of things. In chapter two, he begins to explain his own actions.

Probably because those who were against Paul probably were trying to make him look pretty bad in the eyes of the converts. They would say things like, Well, here's this guy. He comes breathing in here from somewhere else.

Makes a few converts. Stirs up enough trouble that he gets run out of town and leaves them to take care of the... to inherit the trouble he caused. And Paul has to point out to them that he's not wrongly motivated and that he'd be there if he could be.

It's the devil and the Jews in town that are keeping him from being there. He explains his actions in chapter two. I'd say verses one through whatever, eleven I suppose.

And then he goes on to talk about what has happened since then. And that's through most of chapter three. In chapter three, verses eleven through thirteen, he actually records his prayer that he's praying that God will direct him to come back.

That God will open the doors for him to come back. So he's stressing that he does want to come back to them. It's not until chapter four that he starts talking about practical things like the need to have pure sexual conduct, the need to work, and then of course the information about the second coming of Christ.

So the first three chapters really don't contain a lot of doctrinal information though there's some very good things that we have to glean from them. Just Paul's the kind of guy that even when he's talking about things that aren't deep, incidentally mentions things that are deep. You know, he's just that kind of a deep kind of a character.

That even when he's talking in what would otherwise be a shallow subject, the wealth and the depth of his knowledge of spiritual things comes out simply in his choice of words and the way he expresses himself. And so we have much to gain from the study of these chapters. But realize that he doesn't really get into the meat of what he's writing for until chapter four.

Paul and Silvanus and Timotheus unto the church of the Thessalonians, which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ, grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, remembering without ceasing your work of faith, your labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. In the sight of God and our Father, knowing, brethren, beloved, your election of God.

For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Ghost, and with much assurance, as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. And you became followers of us, or imitators, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction and with joy of the Holy Ghost, so that ye were examples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God where it is spread abroad so that we need not speak anything.

For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come." We'll just take that chapter first. As I pointed out, it's almost entirely a chapter just of giving of thanks after his general opening where he wishes grace upon them and peace from the Lord after he's mentioned that they are themselves in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ. He wishes grace to come upon them in that position as they are in Christ.

But then he gets down to what he wants to say in this chapter in verse 2. We give thanks always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers. Now, the thought of you makes us grateful. And we always pray for you, he's saying.

And it's interesting that a lot of times when we pray for people, we pray for people who are not doing well. In fact, sometimes we don't pray for people until they're not doing well. When they start to backslide, then we really start praying for them.

Or when they start to have trials and things are going wrong and we're really worried about them, then we pray for them. Paul, in all of his epistles, it would seem, indicated that he prayed faithfully for people who were already doing well. People that he already had much to thank God for.

People that were not beginning to backslide, but when he heard good news about them, he got down and prayed for them. Rather than waiting to hear bad news and pray for that, his prayer life included apparently multitudes of people that he prayed for by name. He made mention of their names frequently in his prayers.

And he didn't wait for there to be some crisis. He just upheld some great number of people in his regular prayers even when he had reason to believe they were already

doing well. He knew that a person may be doing well today and some subtle trick of the enemy might stumble them and cause them to lose it tomorrow.

And so he never considered it because people were doing well at the moment. That was any reason to neglect praying for them. He gave thanks and made mention of them in his prayers.

Now, what was it that he thanked them for or was thankful to God for about them? Well, first of all, when he remembered what they were like when he was with them, and he mentions in verse 3, and then in verse 4, knowing that they were the elect made him thankful. It was good to know that God had some of his elect there in Thessalonica. Let me talk about each of those two points.

In verse 3, he apparently was remembering what they were like while he was even with them. The character of the believers was encouraging when he saw them and when he had left them that he never ceased to remember their work of faith, their labor of love, and their patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of God and our Father. Now, the three things he mentions are tremendous traits.

For one thing, we see faith, hope, and love, which elsewhere Paul says these are the real three eternal things. In 1 Corinthians 13 he says now there abide three things, faith, hope, and love, and the greatest is love. Here we see faith, hope, and love.

Each is not just sort of a philosophical concept, but has some practical impact on the life. Their faith produces work. He says, I remember without ceasing, your work of faith, that is work that is produced through faith.

And we know from other passages that Paul felt that was very important, that faith should produce work. He agreed wholeheartedly with James on that point. When James said, faith without work is dead, Paul said, in Galatians 5, 6, what matters to God is faith that works through love.

A faith that produces no work is a dead faith, and therefore it's not a saving faith. But in the Thessalonians he saw faith that produced work. He saw their works of faith.

That is, of course, works that sprang from their faith in Christ. And their labor of love. Now, labor and works might seem to be the same thing, except I think works is more of a general statement of actions in general.

Like James says, show me your faith by your works. I think we could paraphrase that by your actions. The actions of your life should show whether you really believe.

If you walk a certain way, if you put away your idols, if you put away your sins and walk a holy life, those actions themselves, it would indicate that you really do have faith. But labor of love is something else. Labor is a certain kind of action.

It's a kind of service. Now, see, their works of faith could refer to the fact that they put away their idols, as it says they did in verse 9, and that they were now, you know, living a holy life. But besides just putting away sins and such, they have developed a servant part so that they are constantly laboring out of love for the brethren.

They not only have a faith that causes them to mend their ways, but that they have a love that causes them to lay their lives down and to labor and serve one another. And that, of course, would be of tremendous encouragement to Paul. Again, we see labor of love suggests that love is not just something you feel in your heart any more than faith is.

Love and faith both produce corresponding action. Faith produces work. Love produces service or labor for one another.

And then finally, patience of hope. Patience really, in the Greek, means endurance. And what he's saying is that the hope they have of the second coming of Christ, the blessed hope, gives endurance.

And that, of course, is very clearly taught throughout the Scripture. That though we have trials that we cannot shake off, there's no way to escape tribulation. We are experiencing a tremendous amount right here, right now.

But once God brings persecution into our lives, He does it in a way that you can't just walk away from it without denying the Lord. And so, if you're committed to the Lord, you're stuck with the persecution until God withdraws it. But there's always one thing that can give you strength to endure, and that is the hope of the coming of the Lord, which he stresses so much in this book.

And these three things are present. Faith, hope, and love. He doesn't mention that, or he mentions faith, love, and hope.

And this he saw in them. And when he remembered that, it just made him give thanks that he'd sown such good fruit. But there's something more to his giving of thanks.

In verse 4, it's the fact that he knew that they were of the elect. Now, the concept of the elect is something we can't go into in detail here. It's come up from time to time in the past.

It clearly refers to the fact that God has chosen some people to make it. Now, when I say make it, I don't necessarily mean to get saved initially, because I believe God wants everyone to get saved. But God has definitely put his choice upon some to really be conformed to the image of his Son.

And we have never been able to be certain from any passage of Scripture what the basis of his choice is. I have postulated, and it is my theory, my belief, that God chooses on



the basis of his foreknowledge of our moral decisions. Others would say that that's not a basis for his choice.

At any rate, we know that whatever reasons God has, he does choose that some will make it. And some will endure to the end. And Paul says, I am convinced, I know, that you are of that group.

Now, remember 2 Peter 1 tells us that we need to be diligent to make our calling and our election sure. That is, to make sure we really are the elect. It takes a certain amount of diligence.

And he names some of the things that need to be added to our faith. 2 Peter 1, he says, add to your faith virtue, and to virtue, knowledge, and to knowledge, temperance, and temperance, patience. He goes on to say, if you do these things, you'll never fall.

You make your calling and election sure this way. Well, Paul was sure of these people's election. How did he know that they were of the elect? He said that he knew, and he tells how he knew in verse 5. For, or because, I know you're elect of God because of this.

Because our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Ghost. He sensed the Holy Ghost was convicting their hearts when he preached to them. And that is very possible because a lot of times it's evident that people don't feel conviction from the Holy Ghost when they hear the gospel preached.

But if someone does, you can, you know, you see them respond. He might be referring to other evidence of the presence of the Holy Ghost in their lives. He might be talking about the fruit of the Spirit or even the gifts of the Spirit that were seen.

When they were converted, they also received the benefits of the Holy Spirit. They not only received the word, but also the person of the Holy Spirit dwelling in them, which resulted in much assurance because the Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirits that we are the sons of God, it says in Romans 8. And Paul basically didn't have to assure these people they were saved. Once they received the gospel, they had that assurance.

The Holy Spirit bore witness. It says in 1 John 5, 10, he that believes on the Son of God has the witness in himself. And so it was not necessary for Paul to rally a whole bunch of proof texts that they were really saved now.

They knew because there was power in their lives to change. There was a Holy Ghost who came to reside in them. The assurance was there by the witness in their hearts.

Paul says, from these things I can know that you really are of the elect. Now he says, at the end of verse 5, you know what manner of men we were for your sakes, and you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction with joy of the Holy Ghost. Now here, he says you became followers of us.

He essentially says you're imitating us. You're having the same experience as we had. Later on in chapter 2, in verse 14, he says, for you brethren became followers of the churches of God which in Judea are in Christ Jesus.

Now when we hear someone being a follower of someone, we might think that they became a disciple of Paul or a disciple of the churches in Judea. But here what he means is you're following in the same experience they've had. And they were persecuted by their countrymen, he says in chapter 2, in verse 14.

And so you're being persecuted by your countrymen the same as they were. So you've become followers of the churches of God in Judea. That is you're experiencing what they've experienced.

In chapter 1, verse 6, using the same word, he says you became followers of us and of the Lord. That is to say, Jesus himself received persecution and so are we. And you are now too.

So you're following in our footsteps in a very real sense. It's sort of a thing that we all have in common. But what he says is they've received the word in much affliction and with joy in the Holy Ghost.

That is, in spite of the fact that there has been a cost, a price to pay for their becoming Christians, they still are glad they did. They still have the Holy Ghost producing the fruit of joy in their lives. Even though there's affliction.

And a lot of people suffer for their views, whether they're Christians or not. There's a lot of people who suffer for their views. But a person who's really got the Holy Ghost, when he's suffering for righteousness' sake, will be happy.

Many people suffer for their views and are not happy. And even some people suffer for having Christian views and are not happy. But one has to wonder, has there been a work of God in their lives? Jesus said, blessed, the word means happy.

Blessed are you when men shall persecute you for righteousness' sake. So Jesus indicated that his disciples will really get a blessing out of it. To be persecuted for righteousness' sake will give them a certain happiness.

It doesn't mean there'll be no pain. But there'll be a deep joy that they have in the Holy Ghost as they are afflicted for receiving the Gospel. And that's what Paul says these people were, so they showed they were supposed to be true disciples.

And then verse 7 says, so that you were examples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. Now Macedonia and Achaia were northern and southern Greece, the two parts of the Greek peninsula. And these believers happen to be up in Macedonia.

But he says that their testimony has become an example. Actually in the Greek the word is types. They have personally become types of Christian experience.

For all Christians throughout not only Macedonia, their own region, but regions beyond in southern Greece, in Achaia. And he goes on to develop that a little bit to show how he knows that. But notice this progression.

They followed the example of Paul and his companions. And they themselves became examples to others. In verse 5 he says, you know how we were and you became followers of us.

And now there's others who are followers of you or to whom you have become an example. So there's sort of a chain reaction. One person's good example can produce a domino effect so that others follow their good example and others follow the good example of their converts and others theirs.

And so that the influence of one person by again this sort of spiritual chain reaction can be very far reaching. You don't have any idea how your Christian life, how many people, maybe hundreds, thousands someday might be reached through the influence of your Christian life. Imagine for instance the person who led Billy Graham to the Lord.

That person may not have influenced as many people as Billy Graham but just think of the positive influence that came from their testimony. And then Billy Graham has led many people to the Lord who have become ministers themselves. At least I myself made a commitment to the Lord at a Billy Graham crusade although I think I knew the Lord before that.

I know that Billy Graham had a tremendous impact on me in my early life and how many hundreds or thousands of people that Billy Graham has converted have become ministers and such. Now that's of course you might say well I'm not a Billy Graham and I probably won't lead a Billy Graham to the Lord. You don't know that you won't but the idea here is that you influence more people than you'll ever meet because you influence those who are in your immediate circle and they have an immediate circle around them that it goes beyond your immediate circle and they influence the people in that and then those that they influence can influence others so that these people followed the example of Paul and his companions and became themselves examples to others.

And in verse 8 he gives an example of the kind of influence they've had and how he knows they've had a tremendous influence. In verse 8 he says For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia but also in every place your faith to God is spread abroad so that we need not to speak anything. It's almost as though they've already sent out missionaries or else at least the reports of their response to the gospel are newsworthy and reports are being carried to all parts of the area not only Macedonia and Achaia which he mentioned earlier but also other places he said in every

place where every place includes I don't know but it must mean even beyond Macedonia and Achaia since those two regions are mentioned separately.

And when he says we need not speak anything seems to be explained in the next verse For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had to you and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God and to wait for His Son from heaven. Now he's saying that when I come to a place I almost want to talk about you guys to these people and tell them how you received us and how you responded to the gospel and how you turned from your idols because I don't even have to make any mention because they've already heard it and they tell it to me. When I get there to tell them they've already heard it and they repeat it back to me.

They themselves show or mention of us what manner of entering in we had. So this was an exceptional response to the gospel and it has been blazed abroad so that even when Paul goes to new areas he already finds what people are talking about the Thessalonians and how Paul's influence there had started a revival. Now in the end of verse 9 where he says how you turn to God from idols to serve the living and true God this is of course the two sides of true repentance.

They turn from their idols and they turn to God to serve Him. There is a place where some people put away their bad habits whether they're Christians or not because they see the damaging effect that bad habits have on their lives and they turn from their bad habits but they never do anything constructive for the kingdom of God necessarily. There are many selfish reasons to turn from bad habits and many people who aren't even Christians give up some bad habits for that reason.

That is not repentance. Just giving up your bad habits is not repentance. That's only half repentance.

Repentance requires that you give up your bad habits but if that's all you do you haven't repented in the biblical sense because you replace those habits with service to God. You cease to serve the idols and you start to serve God and your life is made available to God and the time that you once spent doing things that are wrong you now yield to God to do the things that are promoting his kingdom and his servants. So that a person who simply turns from idols or turns from any sin has not necessarily repented just because they've done that.

Repentance is seen in the fact that in turning from those things they've taken on a new vocation of service to Jesus Christ and to have as their ultimate goal to wait for his son from heaven whom he raised from the dead even Jesus which delivered us from the wrath to come. In saying that Jesus delivered us from the wrath to come he means of course the wrath of God. They were experiencing the wrath of man and it was some comfort or intended to be some comfort to them for him to point out there is a wrath to come and that these persecutors they have to face a worse wrath than they are putting

up on you.

Their wrath is being vented against you and you're suffering as a result of it. But think of the wrath of God that they're going to have to face and that wrath you have been delivered from. You will not have to stand that judgment that punishment that they will face.

So it's supposed to be some comfort to those who are enduring wrath from man to remember that there is another greater wrath of God that they will not have to endure and which their persecutors will. Paul brings this up again in chapter 5 by the way. Chapter 5 and verse 9 he says, For God has not appointed us to wrath but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ who died for us.

So, we have been delivered from worse punishment so we should be able to endure these light afflictions from the wrath of individuals who hate the gospel. Now going on in chapter 2 he begins to remind them of what his ministry had been like just in case anyone happens to be accusing him of having had bad motives of having you know come and cause a lot of trouble and then left when it got too hot to stay around. So he begins to remind them of what it was like.

He does this in this chapter. Here's how I would break down this chapter. He first of all talks about the obvious purity of his motives in verses 1 through 6. He talks about their motives and the purity of their motives.

In verses 7 through 11 he talks about his gentleness of his manner and his method. He wasn't oppressive. He wasn't authoritarian.

He was gentle like a nurse cherishing her children he says in verse 7 or in verse 11 as a father does his children. So here it's as an adult takes care of children. He dealt with them in a delicate and tender and gentle way.

First discusses his motives then he discusses his manner. And then in verses 12 and 13 I would say he mentions the glory and the power of his message that he had given them. So that in combining recollection of his motives and his manner and his message he has basically defended himself against any kind of charges.

His message has been of the loftiest kind. It has been a call not to follow him personally. It has been a call not into a corrupt way of life but it's a call to God's kingdom and glory.

It's a tremendous message. It's a glorious message. And his manner of presenting it was in gentleness and meekness.

And his motives were clearly not for money and was not to please men as he explains in the first six verses. After that he talks about the character of his opponents in verses 14 through 16. Those who had driven him out of town.

I mean if there's people criticizing Paul consider the source. Look at our character he says at first and then he says look at their character. Look at them.

They're contrary to God. They're contrary to all men. They don't let the Gentiles hear the gospel.

And then in verse 17 he kind of starts the subject that's carried on in chapter 3 about his present circumstances and the causes for writing the letter. so in chapter 2 he essentially talks about his motives his manner and methods his message and then he talks about the character of his opponents by contrast and this obviously is to combat any kind of accusations that may have come against him in his absence as no doubt many had from the persecutors. For yourselves brethren know our entrance into you that it was not in vain.

But even after we had suffered before and were shamefully entreated as you know at Philippi Acts 16 tells how they had been beaten in Philippi and put in jail you know how we had been and that's when the Philippian jailer was saved. We were shamefully entreated as you know at Philippi we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention for our exhortation was not of deceit nor of uncleanness nor in guile but as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel even so we speak not as pleasing men but God which drives the heart for neither at any time used we flattering words as you know nor a cloak of covetousness God is witness nor of men sought we glory neither of you nor yet of others when we might have been burdensome as the apostles of Christ. Now here he mentions several things that indicate his motives were pure.

In early days of the Christian church there were many wandering philosophers and religionists who would go around and seek to live off people. They would try to peddle their philosophical wares and hopefully get some people who would support them to do it full time. There might have even been some tendency among some of the Thessalonians to do that so they had to tell them to go work with their hands and not live off of people but Paul himself set a good example.

He didn't he didn't use a cloak of covetousness he says God is witness in other words God if you don't remember it God at least knows that this is true in verse 5 he didn't take money he didn't seek glory I mean what motive would cause a man to come in and do what Paul did. He didn't get any money out of it he didn't seek glory out of it. He didn't he didn't deceive anybody he came without guile he didn't please men which is of course one of the things that a false preacher would want to do he'd want to win a popular audience by saying things that tickle people's ears he says we didn't please men.

Our whole ministry was characterized by a conscience toward God we walked in the fear of God because we know that God tries the hearts verse 4 and so we had to please God in the way we conduct ourselves rather than pleasing men and he points out in verse 5

God is a witness as to whether we use flattery to win people over or sought their money or sought glory from men he says we didn't. In verse 6 he makes it clear we could have been burdensome to you because we are apostles and we would have the right to be supported for what we did but we didn't and we know he didn't because in chapter 3 of 2 Thessalonians in 2 Thessalonians chapter 3 verse 6 he says now we command you brethren in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that you withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly and not after the tradition which you received of us for yourselves know how you ought to follow us again imitate us for we behave not ourselves disorderly among you neither did we eat any man's bread for not but we rot with labor and prevail night and day that we might not be chargeable to any of you not because we have not the right but to make ourselves an example unto you to follow us so he says when he was there in Thessalonica he and his companions didn't take money from the church not that they didn't have the right to be supported they did have the right to be supported a minister does have a right to be supported by the gospel by the church but because he wanted to set a good example for them as it turned out it's a good thing he did because he then was immune to charges that he'd come in for money because he didn't take any money from them and he prevailed night and day laboring so that he wouldn't charge them anything for the gospel that's what he said so he points out that when he was with them they couldn't accuse him of greed because he earned his own keep he didn't take money he didn't take glory he didn't say things to please men and what's more he says right at the beginning of this passage verse 2 even though we had just come from a situation where we'd been badly persecuted in Philippi we didn't come intimidated I mean a lot of times you might go out there and preach on the street one time until someone comes up a knife shift next time you'd be a little more meek you know next time you'd think twice before you open your mouth where someone might come up and beat you up you know after you've had one bad experience it might serve to kind of make you intimidated about future boldness but he says even though we received that kind of treatment in Philippi yet we came and preached the gospel with you and we were bold in our God not bold in their natural strength but in God to speak unto you the gospel of God so in other words we knew we were taking a risk we were not going to get anything out of this it was for your sakes we took the risk of being treated shamefully again and we actually were we were treated shamefully in Philippi and we knew that would happen again or at least it could happen again and yet we didn't hold back we still preached boldly the gospel for your sake we didn't get anything out of it and so of course these verses make it very clear his motives had to be pure there was no one could say he did it for this or that wrong motive because the whole way he conducted himself would belie that then in verses 7-11 moving from the discussion of his motives to the manner and methods by which he ministered he says but we were gentle among you even as a nurse cherished her children so being affectionately desirous of you we were willing to have imparted to you not the gospel of God only but also our own souls because you were dear to us for you remember brethren our labor and travail for laboring night and day because we would not be chargeable to you same

thing we just read in 2 Thessalonians 3 unto any of you we preached unto you the gospel of God you are witnesses and God also how wholly and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe as you know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you as a father doth his children now in verse 7 he compares his manner with that of a nursing mother cherishing her children or else just a nurse a nurse who was given the charge of someone else's children but does say her children which means if it was not the mother it would be a nurse the children were hers in the sense that they were her charges she was given charge of them at any rate the picture is of a kindly a nurse or a mother taking care of small children obviously that would be the picture of delicate treatment and genuine care and also in verse 11 he compares himself to a father who comforted and exhorted and charged here a father treats his kids a little more rough than a nursing mother does a nursing mother cuddles them and fondles them and keeps them safe but the father you know he gives the exhortations and he kind of straightens the son out you know but he says we played both roles we provided the protection and the love and the nurture that a mother does to her children but we also played the father role when you needed correction we weren't ashamed to do it we weren't weak we weren't sentimental we told you what you needed to hear just like a father corrects his children now in the midst of that he describes quite a bit about their ministry there and he said in verse 8 that they were willing not only to impart the gospel but their own souls because they were dear to them what does it mean to impart our own souls one might say well there's a place where a minister actually imparts something of his own heart something of his own character to a person but I don't think that's what he's referring to when he says our own souls I think he means his own life in the sense that they were willing to lay down their lives also to give their lives for the people and not just give them the message but that they were coming to deliver something and if they lost their lives in the process that was something they were clearly willing to do now that might be subject to other interpretations but from my personal consideration of how the word souls is used in the New Testament I think that that's probably what he meant he says for you remember brethren our labor and our travail now he reminds them of how that he wasn't chargeable and he preached for free again this is important to him because it proves that no one could say he was in it for the money and I wish I really wish that more ministers today could write these verses it would be really nice if there were more it would be nice in a sense if every minister could write verses 9 and 10 and could say to those who were examining their lives say you know how holy our lives are you know how just we have conducted ourselves and how you know how we didn't take your money unfortunately a lot of ministers could not write such words today because even if even if their motives are good I mean I'm not saying every minister who gets paid has bad motives it is a valid thing for a minister to be paid but how good for a minister to be able to say I haven't taken a penny from you people so you know my motives are pure in that sense when a person does get rich in a high salaried pastoral position or something else he may not be in it for the money but it's kind of hard to prove it to anyone else you know all this information about the salaries of



Jim Baker and Jimmy Swaggart and all these people that are coming out you know the news magazine has been playing it up and of course the fact these guys have made a lot of money off their ministries some of the money that's been made is outlandish nonetheless suppose Billy Graham or Jimmy Swaggart does make a salary that's bigger than the average person makes the real question is what does he do with his money is his heart in the money does he get a large salary and give it all the way to the poor I mean what does he do with it that's the issue how much money comes into his into his paychecks you know it doesn't it doesn't tell anywhere near as much as what he does with his money and so you can't really say just because this guy gets a lot of money he's in it for the money he might not be but the trouble is because he does get a lot of money he's open to criticism from people who who feel like they can say look at that this guy's in it for the money it's so obvious you know and Paul guarded very carefully against those kind of accusations that were sticking on him people might have blamed him for it or charged him with it but they had no grounds and he constantly was able to remind him I didn't take any money from you I worked I lived my life and my conduct was a picture of holiness and justice all my dealings I was fair with everyone I didn't cheat anyone I was just in all my dealings I lived a holy life you can't pin any moral scandals on me I mean what a tremendous thing for a minister to be able to say that and not it shouldn't be unusual that should be what every minister should be able to say in a sense at least about being just and being holy but that's not as common as we would hope as we would wish it was verses 12 and 13 he talks about the glory of the message that he brought them he says that you would walk worthy this is what he exhorted them and charged them to do that you would walk worthy of God who has called you into his kingdom and glory for this cause also thank we God without ceasing because when you receive the word of God which you heard of us you receive it not as the word of men but as it is in truth the word of God which is sexually work is also in you that believe now he says our message was essentially that you do the same thing we do that is walk a life that's worthy of the God who's called you and if you wonder what that kind of walk is like just remember what it is that God called you to he's called you to his kingdom and to glory now his kingdom of course is to be under his rule and it was this very word that got Paul into trouble when he preached in Thessalonians because there was he was accused of preaching there's another king one Jesus and in fact he did preach that he preached there was a kingdom and these people were called into that kingdom the kingdom of Jesus Christ with Jesus as king and it was a glorious call because they were called to share in his glory in the reign of Christ in the glory of Christ and to be transformed into Christ's image this is the call that he says you've heard now walk worthy of that call walk worthy of the God who has called you to do that and then he goes on to say for this cause we thank God because you did receive the word of God that way and he mentions that when you received our words you took it to be the word of God and not just the word of man that's good because of course the gospel is a message from God but it would have been very easy for them like their persecutors to just take Paul's message as another human message a message of human origin but these people because the Holy

Spirit worked in their hearts to have their eyes open saw this message was not just another message of human origin such as they probably heard dozens of them before from other people but this was something from God and they were able to discern this word from Paul was not just from a man this was from God and they recognized it for what it was and because they did receive it as the word of God he says that word of God effectually works also in you that believe that is the word of God is not just sounds of words the word of God is something alive and powerful and sharper than any two edged sword as it says in Hebrews 4.12 and that living powerful thing is working in you when you receive the word of God by faith you become one of those who believe and the word works effectually in those who believe it brings about results in your life unlike other messages or words that you might receive that are of human origin human words can only bring forth human results but God's words can bring forth God's results and the word of God once it is received and believed for what it is can bring effectually working in your life to change you to bring about divine results we could go into this more but I'm kind of racing against the clock some of these verses coming up actually almost all of them through chapter 3 we've already read and discussed but I'm not going to pass over them now let's look at them quickly here for you brethren became followers of the churches of God which in Judea are in Christ Jesus for ye also have suffered like things from your own countrymen even as they have from the Jews so he's saying what you're going through is just what the earlier Christians the first Christians were Jews the first churches were in Judea and they received persecution from their countrymen he says you're just following the same way that Christians have always had to go the early Christians in Judea suffered it from their countrymen you're receiving the same thing from your countrymen now when he mentions the Jews he goes on to talk about them and again there's a bit of bitterness in his voice about the Jews though he is a Jew he's not making a racial statement so much as he's making a statement about a certain class of unbelieving Jews that are always resisting God and you know his statements would hold true not only in the context of his own day but if you read the Old Testament the Old Testament history of the Jews would confirm this read the days of Moses the days of the judges or the days of the king and you'll find that what Paul says of the Jews of his own day is fairly characteristic of the Jews in the history they wrote about themselves in the Old Testament it says they killed the Lord Jesus so Paul lays it at their door because even though the Romans crucified Christ the Jews delivered him up to Pilate and Pilate was willing to let Jesus go but the Jews insisted on his crucifixion they had a vested interest Pilate didn't the Romans didn't the Romans were just carrying out an execution a ritual execution of a man condemned but the Jews are the ones who brought the false charges they're the ones who pushed and even almost blackmailed Pilate saying if you let him go we're going to tell Caesar about this and you'll be no friend of Caesar's and sort of blackmailed Pilate so really Paul lays the blame for the death of Jesus at the door of the Jewish people they killed the Lord Jesus and their own prophets as Jesus pointed out that their killing him was not going to be anything different than they'd always done they'd always killed their prophets and they were going to fill up the measure of their

iniquities by killing him and they persecuted us so they started out in history persecuting their prophets then the Messiah comes they kill him now the messengers of the Messiah are being persecuted by the same group not the same individuals because it's different generations each time but he's pointing out that the Jews have this is just their history this is the way Jews do that is those who are unbelievers there have always been a remnant of Israel like Paul himself who were believing Jews and this doesn't describe them but this describes those Jews that resist the truth which was apparently all except the believing remnant and he says they persecuted us and they pleased not God now see that's the irony the reason they persecute Paul the reason they do what they do is because they claim to be doing this out of loyalty to God but he says they're not pleasing God and they're contrary to all men so who are they pleasing just themselves they're contrary to all men and God that leaves no one to be pleased by them except themselves and he says they forbid us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved now why should the Jews care whether the Gentiles are saved or not it's just hostility against God he says against Christ here the Gentiles if the Jews don't want it they should at least let the Gentiles take it they're like the dog in the manger that won't let the cows eat the hay even though the dog doesn't want it he won't let the cows have it either and so they forbid us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved and they fill up their sins always now Jesus said that in crucifying him the Jews in a sense were going to fill up the iniquity of their fathers but Paul says they're still filling up more and more by continuing to persecute the church and it says for the wrath has come upon them to the uttermost this statement suggests that the Jews who do not believe the gospel are laboring under the burden of God's wrath and if we would cross reference this with Romans chapter 1 where it says the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness Paul in Romans 1 is usually considered to be talking about the Gentiles and there's some evidence in the passage that he could be but I feel there's good evidence that what he says in Romans 1 applies to the Jews who reject Christ also they suppress the truth they're the ones who don't let it be preached to the Gentiles in their unrighteousness they suppress the truth and Paul says the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against them for that reason well how does Romans 1 say the wrath of God is revealed God gave them up God gave them over God gave them over three times he says it he gave them up to their own passions he gave them over to a reprobate mind that is the manifest wrath of God upon the people and when Paul says the wrath of God has come upon the Jews to the uttermost he seems to be saying that God has basically given them over to do their own thing he used to deal with them as his chosen people but no longer they're now he's letting them take their own course and he's not interfering at the moment he will of course he might even be thinking in terms of the destruction of Jerusalem which would twenty years hence take place by the way this letter was written in 50 AD in case you wondered and so he might even be thinking that the wrath is going to be manifest ultimately in the destruction of their system in 70 AD but he definitely doesn't speak very highly of his own countrymen here and this passage by the way he does not lend

much support to those who say the Jews even in their unbelief are still God's chosen people and of course I brought up that my differences with that position before in other classes but to me this passage is one of the strongest arguments against that position to say as some say that the Jews are still God's chosen people even if they're in unbelief just because of the promises made to their fathers it doesn't seem they're jive with what Paul says Paul says the wrath has come upon them to the uttermost doesn't sound like they're any chosen people of God if they're rejecting and persecuting the gospel and persecuting Jesus Christ in another place Paul said in 1 Corinthians and he wasn't talking about the Jews particularly but it was certainly the same state would fall upon them in 1 Corinthians 16, 22 Paul says if any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ let him be anathema or cursed or damned anathema so if anyone doesn't love Jesus he says let him be anathema now this wouldn't mean people who have not heard the gospel and therefore don't love Jesus he means of course those who know of Jesus and have not chosen to serve or love him he says they're anathematized and that would certainly apply in his own mind to these Jews who certainly didn't love Jesus they killed Jesus and they're persecuting his servants they're anathema they're not blessed they're not chosen people now the rest of this chapter and all of chapter 3 which is a short one basically gives again some of his present circumstances and the reasons that he sent Timothy and the reason the letter came to be written and I'm going to read it without too much comment simply because I think it would be better to cover that material today than trying to add it to chapter 4 tomorrow so it says wherefore verse 18 no 17 excuse me but we brethren being taken from you for a short time in presence but not in heart endeavored the more abundantly to see you your face with great desire wherefore we would have come to you even I Paul once and again but Satan hindered us probably meaning because his friend Jason was bound over he was between a rock and a hard space if he came back into town Jason would get into trouble because Jason had gone surety for him so he saw the devil's hand in this this was a scheme of the devil to get the Jews to work this out so that he couldn't come back to town he wanted many times to come back he says I'm not really I'm not really I haven't abandoned you in heart I'm with you it's just that for the time being for a short time I'm absent in presence because the devil has arranged things so that I can't come back I've been hindered even though many times I want to come for what is our hope or our joy or our crown of rejoicing are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ that is coming for you are our glory and joy and what he means by this is don't think that we've forgotten you don't think that we've abandoned you in heart we're still with you we're forced by circumstances to be separated but in our hearts you are our joy and you are our crown when Jesus comes back and all of our labors are rewarded you are going to be among those things that we rejoice in the fact that you are fruit of our labors you are of great value to us you're like a crown of rejoicing to us and he says when the Lord comes we put a lot of stock in the fact that you are our converts and that there's some rejoicing in the fact that to be done over that at the coming of the Lord and some crown do us because of it chapter three continues wherefore when we could no longer forbear we thought it good to be left at

Athens alone and sent Timotheus our brother and minister of God and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ to establish you and comfort you concern your faith that no man should be moved by these afflictions for you yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto we are appointed to afflictions he says you know that because apparently he taught them that in Acts 14.22 we're told that Paul and Barnabas went to several churches confirming them and telling them that through much tribulation we enter the kingdom of God that's Acts 14.22 it's interesting that in verse 12 of chapter 2 here 1st Thessalonians 2.12 he said that God has called you to his kingdom and glory but here he says he's appointed you to afflictions it almost sounds contradictory are we called to kingdom and glory or are we called to afflictions and of course both statements are true it is through afflictions and trials that we enter the kingdom of God through much tribulation we enter the kingdom of God and the glory is wrought in us through the sufferings our light afflictions work for us an eternal and exceeding weight of glory we're told elsewhere so the afflictions are part of the Christian life it's not a strange thing verse 4 for verily when we were with you we told you before that you should suffer tribulation even as it came to pass and you know for this cause when I could no longer forbear I sent to know your faith lest by some means the tempter the same Satan in verse 18 of the previous chapter who kept Paul from coming back this one might have done some damage to the church too lest by any means the tempter have tempted you and our labor be in vain but now when Timotheus came from you to us and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity and that you have a good remembrance of us always desiring greatly to see us as we also to see you therefore brethren we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith for now we live if you stand fast in the Lord and it was we were dying to find out if you were surviving and when we heard that you're doing well standing fast in the Lord it was like a new lease on life just like we got our second wind now we were alive again we were we were dying to hear and now we now it's like we're revitalized for what thanks can we render to God again for you for all the joy we're with we joy for your sakes before our God what he means is we've received so much joy over you that we can hardly thank God enough for it what can we do to thank God enough for this night and day we pray exceedingly that we might see your face and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith so he's making it clear I do want to see you we're praying night and day that we'll be able to come again and see you it's not as though we want to be where we are and be separated like this for God himself and our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ direct our way unto you and the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another and toward all men even as we do toward you to the end he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God even our Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints of course we'll talk more about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints when we get to chapter 4 and verse 13 and following here his prayer is first that he might be able to come back to perfect their faith to mature them a bit but also in the meantime he's praying that God would cause their love to increase though we find that they already are notable for their labor of love in chapter 1 and verse 3 yet they need to

increase more more and more and that they might be established unblameable in holiness love and holiness are the two things he's most concerned about for them he's not praying for their health and prosperity as some people think is the most important thing but that their love toward one another and toward all men would abound and also that their hearts might be holy in the meantime until he can finally come and continue to disciple them further then in chapters 4 and 5 he gets more into the real meat of what he wanted to share and we'll save that for next time