

## WHO ARE THE THESSALONIANS?

### PAUL'S ARRIVAL AND METHOD (ACTS 17:1–3)

- Paul entered the synagogue in Thessalonica during his second missionary journey.
- His audience was primarily Jews and Gentile proselytes.
- He reasoned with them out of the Old Testament Scriptures.
- Paul proclaimed that Jesus is the Christ—the promised Messiah of Israel.
- This was not the full revelation of the mystery or the gospel of grace to the uncircumcised.

### RESPONSE TO THE MESSAGE (ACTS 17:4)

- “Some of them” (Jews of the synagogue) believed.
- A great multitude of “devout Greeks” also believed—Gentiles already aligned with Jewish worship.
- “Not a few of the chief women” believed—likely women associated with the synagogue, though their ethnicity is unspecified.

### OPPOSITION AND DEPARTURE (ACTS 17:5–10)

- Hostility forced Paul and Silas to leave the city.
- Jason received them into his house—possibly where the assembly began meeting.
- Paul later returned to the region.
- Aristarchus of Thessalonica accompanied Paul to Jerusalem (Acts 20:4) and later to Rome (Acts 27:2).

### SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS

- The church in Thessalonica was composed of Jews and Jewish converts.
- There is no evidence of pagan Gentile converts in the early Thessalonian church, though some of the “devout Greeks” may have previously come from a pagan background before converting to Judaism.
- Therefore, the recipients were most likely Jews, devout Greeks, and synagogue-aligned women.

## WHEN WAS THE LETTER WRITTEN?

### CHRONOLOGICAL RECONSTRUCTION

- **Acts 17:1–9** – Paul preaches in the synagogue at Thessalonica; many believe; persecution forces him to flee.
- **Acts 17:10–15** – Paul travels to Berea, then to Athens; Silas and Timothy remain behind.
- **1 Thessalonians 3:1–2** – While in Athens, Paul sends Timothy back to Thessalonica.
- **Acts 18:1** – Paul leaves Athens and arrives in Corinth.
- **Acts 18:5** – Silas and Timothy rejoin Paul in Corinth.
- **1 Thessalonians 3:6** – Timothy’s report of their faith and love prompts Paul to write the letter.

### DATING THE EPISTLE




- Gallio’s proconsulship in Corinth is dated to A.D. 51–52 (Acts 18:12).
- Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians before this, during his initial 18-month stay in Corinth (Acts 18:11).
- Conclusion: **1 Thessalonians was written from Corinth around A.D. 50–51.**
- It is likely Paul’s earliest epistle and possibly the earliest book in the New Testament.

## A NOTE ABOUT THE “COLOR-CODED” EDITION

### PURPOSE OF THE SYSTEM

- Based on 2 Timothy 2:15—rightly dividing the word of truth.
- Emphasizes the distinction between Israel’s prophetic program and the Body of Christ’s mystery program.

### CATEGORIES OF TEXT

-  **Black Text** –
  - Not applicable today.
  - Specific to a time, person, or Israel’s prophetic program.
-  **Green Text** –
  - Not written to us but generally safe in application.
  - Useful for wisdom or encouragement, not doctrine.
-  **Blue Text** –
  - Pauline in nature.
  - Directly applicable to the Body of Christ.
  - Used for doctrine and instruction in this dispensation.

### PURPOSE AND CAUTION

- The system helps avoid doctrinal confusion and supports clarity in Bible study.
- It is a tool to aid right division—not an infallible authority.
- All Scripture is profitable (2 Timothy 3:16), but not all Scripture is written to us for direct obedience.

## 1 THESSALONIANS 1:1–4

### 1 THESSALONIANS 1:1 – BLACK

#### A. THE AUTHORS IDENTIFIED

- Paul, Silvanus (Silas), and Timotheus (Timothy) are named as the authors.
- All three were known to the Thessalonian assembly and are familiar figures in the New Testament.

#### B. A UNIQUE GREETING FORMULA

- Paul uniquely uses the phrase “**in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ**”—a formula found only in 1 and 2 Thessalonians.
- This likely reflects:
  - The Jewish composition of the audience.
  - Their belief that Jesus is the Messiah.
- The phrase affirms their identity as **Jewish believers in Jesus**.

#### C. STANDARD PAULINE GREETING: GRACE AND PEACE

- “Grace be unto you, and peace” appears in all of Paul’s letters to churches.
- In contrast, his letters to individuals (e.g., Timothy, Titus) add “mercy.”

#### D. DIVINE SOURCE OF THE GREETING

- The phrase “**from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ**” is standard in Paul’s letters.
- It emphasizes that grace and peace originate from both Father and Son.

## 1 THESSALONIANS 1:2–4 – BLACK

### A. ONGOING THANKSGIVING (V. 2)

- Paul and his companions continually thank God for the Thessalonian believers.
- Their prayers are specific and heartfelt, reflecting deep spiritual investment.

### B. THREE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BELIEVERS (V. 3)

#### 1. WORK OF FAITH

- Defined as labor conducted **in the sphere of faith**—not as faith producing works, but activity performed by believing men and women.

#### 2. LABOR OF LOVE

- Service motivated by genuine affection, not obligation.

#### 3. PATIENCE OF HOPE

- Steadfast endurance fueled by confident expectation in God's promises.

#### 4. SPIRITUAL ANCHORING

- These three qualities are rooted **in our Lord Jesus Christ** and done **in the sight of God and our Father**.
- Note: Paul reverses the earlier order of names (Jesus before God), a shift possibly rhetorical rather than doctrinal.

### C. STATEMENT ON ELECTION (V. 4)

#### 1. COMMON MISINTERPRETATION

- Often wrongly used as a proof text for **individual election unto salvation**.
- Example: GOT QUESTIONS MINISTRIES interprets it as God's personal selection of Thessalonian Christians to belong to Him—an example of **eisegesis**.

#### 2. PROPER CONTEXT: JEWISH IDENTITY

- The Thessalonian believers were **Jews and Jewish proselytes**, already part of the **elect nation of Israel**.
- Their “election” is rooted in **national covenantal election**, not individual predestination.
- Their belief in Jesus as Messiah confirms faith **within** their elect status—it does not create it.

#### 3. SCRIPTURAL SUPPORT

- Paul affirms national election in **Romans 9:4–5**, citing the covenants, adoption, promises, and service of God—all given to Israel.