



# BLOOD, SWEAT & TEARS

1 THESSALONIANS

## 1 Thessalonians • May - July 2022

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### Overview

This book is a celebration of a church that against all odds is standing up for Jesus and growing in maturity. Paul had to flee and didn't return. They didn't get the input he would have wanted them to have. They were experiencing severe persecution and yet Paul finds them standing firm. So what does it take to be a church of robust Jesus followers that press ahead in the midst of change and hardship? The answer is a gritty approach where we dare to share Jesus, where we live imitable lives and where we agonise in prayer, determined to see others mature. It's a church more at home in a boxing ring than an armchair. It's a church that's giving everything to help as many people as possible follow Jesus. It's a church of blood, sweat and tears.

### Outline

1. 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10 (22 May)
2. 1 Thessalonians 2:1-16 (29 May)
3. 1 Thessalonians 2:17 - 3:13 (5 June)
4. 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12 (12 June)
5. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 (19 June)
6. 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 (26 June)
7. 1 Thessalonians 5:12-28 (3 July)

# Key Facts

## Author

Paul introduces himself as the author.

## Date

Very early - AD50 or 51 while spending 18 months in Corinth - see Acts 18.

## Audience

The church in Thessalonica as seen in Acts 17. Paul spent a short time there (although probably longer than the three sabbath days that Paul went to the synagogue). A riot is stirred up and Paul has to sneak away in the middle of the night. Paul cares so much about their spiritual warfare but probably knew he couldn't show his face there himself. So he sends Timothy who comes back with a good report (3:1-6). However, there is the potential that the call to holiness and a right thinking about future events were areas of growth reported by Timothy.

# Key Themes

## Persecution and Trials

The church was birthed in persecution and it continues to be a theme in both the lives of the apostles (2:2; 3:7) and the fledgling church (1:6; 2:14;). Paul actually made the inevitability of trials and persecutions a part of what he taught the church (3:3-4).

## The life of a disciple maker

We see what it really looks like to minister to one another and help others grow in the faith. Notice the care and urging people to grow (2:12; 4:3). Also the consistent theme of imitation and living lives among the people that were worthy of imitation (1:5-6, 10, 14; 2:5). Paul was desperate to hear about their progress (3:1), feared they might have fallen away (3:5) and prayed earnestly for them night and day (3:10). Paul also spent time praying and working out what growth steps were needed for them (3:11-13). Finally,



notice how much Paul's hope and joy is wrapped up in their progress (2:19-20).

Helping one another grow up in the faith and playing our part in the lives of new believers is hard work. But also, what a joy and celebration as people grow.

## Hope

Perhaps tied to the end times theme, Paul frequently refers to hope. This is an important concept for us with Covid, economic hardship, natural disasters, and international conflict. The secular world has no lasting hope which was the same in the first century (4:13) but our hope in the Lord Jesus enables us to endure.

## End Times

This is a theme throughout the book. There are two key passages on the rapture (4:13-18) and day of the Lord (5:1-11) but Paul also slides end times phrases throughout (See 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 5:23). It was clearly something he wanted them to hear and something that he had already taught them about.



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### Week 1 • 22 May 2022 • 1 Thessalonians 1:1-11

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1. Describe a time you actively chose to go through something that required extreme endurance.
2. In verse 6 Paul notes the Thessalonians' faith arose within "severe suffering." What do you notice in this chapter about the:
  - a. evidence of faith;
  - b. fruit of faith; or
  - c. basis of the believers' faith.
3. The Thessalonians were praised as "a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia." Jesus, in John 15:18-20, indicates that we should expect hatred from the world in our devotion to him. What is it about disciples of Jesus that might stir up this hatred through which we are encouraged to persevere?
4. In verses 2 to 10, Paul is speaking spiritual truth over the lives of the Thessalonian believers. Take a moment to listen to what the Lord



would say to you. Get one member of your group to read the text slowly. Listen with your eyes shut.

- a. What specific area of faith is God encouraging you with at the moment?
  - b. If appropriate, share and pray for one another, and then follow up, encouragingly, over the coming weeks.
5. In persecution, the church has grown.
- a. Why not encourage each other with stories of persistence in sharing the gospel, both what you have seen in others and in your own life.
  - b. Spend some time giving thanks, like Paul, for those, like the Thessalonian Church, whose faith has revealed Christ's coming kingdom.

One of the ways to help this book really sink in is to take a verse each week that you'll seek to memorise or ponder every day.

6. My Memory verse / Scripture for Meditation this week is:

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## 1 THESSALONIANS

### Week 2 • 29 May 2022 • 1 Thessalonians 2:1-16

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1. What is it that you do to show the depth of your care for something or someone? How do you identify other people's depth of compassion towards you?
  
2. Acts 17:1-9 gives more context about the events Paul is mentioning. How does Paul reveal his motives / heart's desires for the Thessalonians to come to know the gospel for themselves?
  
3. Here Paul uses imagery around working with each other as family (in Christ Jesus).
  - a. What is the difference between God's family and a contemporary NZ family?
  
  - b. From this passage, what part(s) of being in God's family do you find encouraging?



4. Often when faced with conflict around sharing our faith we withdraw or hide our relationship with Jesus. What are things in this passage that encourage you to boldly persevere in your witness?
  
5. Jesus said “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few” (Matt 9:37).
  - a. Spend time encouraging one another, like Paul, to grow in how you might witness to the gospel.
  
  - b. Pray for people you care for who do not yet follow Jesus.
  
6. My Memory verse / Scripture for Meditation this week is:

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Week 3 • 5 June 2022 • 1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:13

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1. Share a time you shed blood, sweat or tears, but it was worth it!
2. Paul was blocked by Satan from returning to the Thessalonians (2:18). He encouraged them, not just with warning, but by sending Timothy. Paul's anguish for the Thessalonian believers is clear.

What do these verses tell us about the spiritual battle:

- a. 1 Peter 5:8-9
  - b. Ephesians 6:11-17
  - c. John 10:10 & 16:33
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3. Theodore Roosevelt said: *"People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care"*. How does this fit in with Thessalonians and the gospel?



4. In the midst of the spiritual battle, Paul prays an incredible prayer over the church (v11-13).
  - a. What would people notice about you if God answered that prayer in your life?
  - b. Why not take some time to use those verses as a theme to pray over one another, your group and our church.
  
5. My Memory verse / Scripture for Meditation this week is:

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1 THESSALONIANS

Week 4 • 12 June 2022 • 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12

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1. What has been the most helpful point for you so far in this series?
  
2. In verse 1, Paul urges the believers to live to please the Lord more and more.
  - a. What do you think the overall message of this passage is?
  
  - b. Can you say it in a sentence?
  
3. In pursuit of holiness and living to please God will inevitably mean we stand out.
  - a. Where do you think this is most noticeable or most different from our culture?
  
  - b. What are some ways we probably fit in too easily?

4. As you think about living to please the Lord making you stand out, where does this or could this present the biggest challenge for you. For example, maybe it will challenge friendships or you work responsibilities.
  
5. Discuss practical ways you can encourage and build one another up in holy living without making one another feel condemned.?
  
6. My Memory verse / Scripture for Meditation this week is:

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Week 5 • 19 June 2022 • 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

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1. What is your favourite song for worship? Why?
2. As you read this passage, how do you feel about it? What parts excite you? Are there any you find challenging or difficult to believe?
3. There has been a lot of discussion about when and how Jesus will return. Have a look at the following verses and identify those things that we can be absolutely certain of:
  - a. John 14:1-3
  - b. Acts 1:11
  - c. 1 Thess 4:16-17
  - d. Revelation 1:7
4. The secular / humanist world views death as the end. Other religions / world views have equally uncertain outcomes for eternity and life after death.
  - a. What are some perspectives that the people around you have?
  - b. What are some considerations as you seek to talk about this graciously with them?



5. Paul's main reason for writing this section is encouragement. What is encouraging about this passage for you?
  
6. As followers of Jesus, our ultimate hope is of future physical resurrection in the new heavens and new earth. Spend some time thanking God for this together. You might want to use Revelation 21:1-5 as a theme of celebration.
  
7. My Memory verse / Scripture for Meditation this week is:

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1 THESSALONIANS

Week 6 • 26 June 2022 • 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

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1. What do you do when someone comes and talks to you as if you should already know about something?
  
2. 2 Peter 3:3-13 also addresses the 'day of the Lord'. What key points are made in both passages?
  
3. The last few verses say this 'tribulation' should be encouraging:
  - a. What is encouraging in this for a believer?
  
  - b. How is this different for an unbeliever? but only for the believer?
  
4. The day of the Lord is about God's wrath and justice.
  - a. Why is this unpalatable to many people in the western world today?



- b. Why is God's justice important for our faith? Why might it be an encouragement?
  
5. We don't have all the details about end times that we might want but Scripture is a sufficient foundation for faith and hope. What is most encouraging for you about what we do know? Spend time praising God together for the promises about Jesus' coming return.
  
6. My Memory verse / Scripture for Meditation this week is:

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Week 7 • 3 July 2022 • 1 Thessalonians 5:12-28

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1. What's your top tip for building up stamina or resilience?
2. This passage is a list of ways Paul wants them to apply what he's teaching them. What are some themes we have seen coming up in this book?
3. V12-15 are particularly focused on life as a church in unity and hope.
  - a. What is a phrase in those verses that stands out to you the most?
  - b. Why does it stand out?
  - c. What do you think God might want you to do to put it into practice?
4. These instructions take blood, sweat and tears to fulfill, practice and persist. What might need to change in your life group (or in the wider church) for you to help each other grow more and more in these characteristics?





5. Pray together over what has come out of your discussion. What are the good things that you need to hold onto?
  
6. My Memory verse / Scripture for Meditation this week is: