

ELIM ABERYSTWYTH, SPRING 2024

STAND FIRM

Learning from the Letters to the
Church of the Thessalonians

1 Thessalonians 1



Video

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1 Thessalonians

What is the book of 1 Thessalonians about in the Bible? Watch as we explain its major themes and gain a deeper understanding of its place in the biblical story.

Context

- The letter is most likely the earliest example we have of The Apostle Paul's writing
- Paul had been (with Silas) to Thessalonica during his second missionary journey
- Thessalonica (now Thessaloniki) was a thriving port city in northern Greece



PAUL'S SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY

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MACEDONIA

PHILIPPI

TH

THESSALONICA

BEREA

ATHENS

CORINTH

AEGEAN SEA

CRETE

Thessaloniki

GREECE



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Context

- They were not on holiday!
- They arrived from Phillipi where they had been beaten, imprisoned and miraculously set free
- Within a few weeks they had established a group of Jesus followers which included 'some Jews... a large number of God-fearing Greeks and quite a few prominent women' (Acts 17)

Context

- Jealous members of the synagogue started a riot accusing the Christ followers of defying Caesar and his decrees
- The believers sent Paul and Silas to Berea under the cover of night
- The Word of God thrived in Berea and so some of those Jews from Thessalonica persecuted them again!

**PAUL KNEW AND LOVED
THIS GROUP OF NEW
BELIEVERS PERSONALLY**

**HE WROTE TO ENCOURAGE
AND CHALLENGE THEM TO:**

- © **STAND FIRM IN THE FACE
OF PERSECUTION,
CULTURAL ANTAGONISM
AND RELIGIOUS
JEALOUSY**
- © **CONTINUE SEEKING TO
LIVE WHOLLY HOLY LIVES**
- © **HOLD ON TO THE HOPE
OF CHRIST'S RETURN
AND FUTURE KINGDOM**

**THE REALITY OF THESE ARE
AS TRUE FOR US TODAY AS
THEY WERE IN THE FIRST
CENTURY ANO DOMINI**

**1 Paul, Silas and Timothy,
To the church of the
Thessalonians in God the
Father and the Lord
Jesus Christ: Grace and
peace to you. 2 We
always thank God for all
of you and continually
mention you in our
prayers. 3 We remember
before our God and
Father your work
produced by faith, your
labour prompted by
love, and your endurance
inspired by hope in our
Lord Jesus Christ.**

1 THESSALONIANS



Positive

Challenge

Positive

You've Been Framed!



You've Been Framed!

- Paul often framed letters with 'identity statements'
- He begins by affirming the believers as being 'in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ' and ends by praying that the 'grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you'
- We should always let our identity in The Lord have the first and the last word!

**FAMOUS
(FIRST AND)
LAST
WORDS!**

Passion means prayer

- We see the care and passion that Paul and his companions have the church - always thanking God for them and praying for them all
- We cannot overstate the importance of prayer - if we really care, and really believe then we will pray
- Who are you thanking God for and praying for?

Faith Works

- Paul celebrates the grace of God in three ways...
 - Work (action) produced by faith
 - Labour (toil) prompted by love
 - Endurance (patience) inspired by hope
- Produced, prompted and inspired are all the same Greek word here linking the results to the causes
- Faith, hope and love are not feelings - they are our spiritual realities in Jesus that lead us to action

4 For we know, brothers and sisters loved by God, that he has chosen you, 5 because our gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake. 6 You became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you welcomed the message in the midst of severe suffering with the joy given by the Holy Spirit.

1 THESSALONIANS

Spirit Empowered

- We cannot make people respond to the gospel
- It is the work of the Holy Spirit in and through us as we are led and empowered by Him and in the hearts of those who are being saved
- The only explain for such a response to the gospel in Thessalonica is the work of the Holy Spirit

"Some in Thessalonica, as in most places he [Paul] went, found that something happened to them when they listened to his message. A strange power gripped them - a power that, Paul would tell them, was the holy spirit at work"

NT WRIGHT, PAUL FOR EVERYONE: GALATIANS AND THESSALONIANS

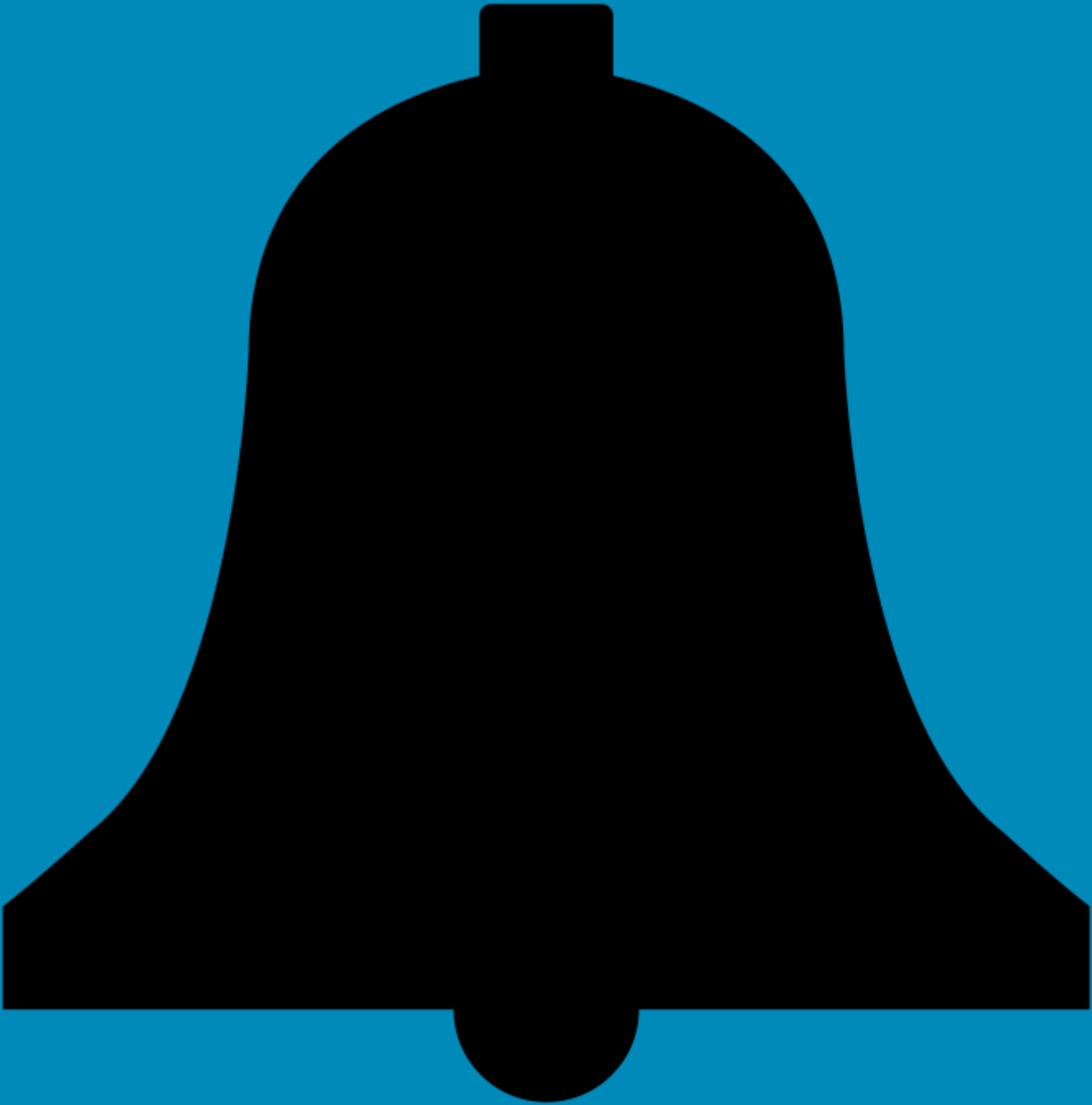
Spirit Empowered

- Perhaps we might be surprised by the power of the gospel if we can share it with the boldness and prayer of Paul's team
- The challenges we face today are significant and real, but no bigger than for these missionaries
- In the midst of severe suffering, they had the joy of the Spirit - do we?

**7 And so you became
a model to all the
believers in
Macedonia and
Achaia. 8 The Lord's
message rang out
from you not only in
Macedonia and
Achaia—your faith
in God has become
known everywhere.
Therefore we do not
need to say
anything about it,**

Ringling Out

- News of the faith of the church in Thessalonica had spread throughout the whole region
- There was no social media, no cars, no radio, no telephones, no television, no press, no carrier pigeons!
- Their faith, hope and love in the face of opposition rang true



**WHAT IS THE
MESSAGE THAT
RINGS OUT OF
YOUR LIFE?**

**WHAT IS THE
MESSAGE THAT
RINGS OUT
FROM ELIM
ABERYSTWYTH?**

9 for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God,
10 and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.

True God

- The missionaries and their message had been welcomed
 - “Jason has welcomed them into his house” (Acts 17:7)
- Would we welcome what God is saying and doing, even at the risk of our reputation or our safety?
- Do we fear God or man?

True God

- Turning to the true and living God was counter-cultural and risky
 - "They are all defying Caesar's decrees, saying that there is another king, one called Jesus."
(Acts 17:7)
- The Holy Spirit had revealed the truth to them and they had embraced the Messiah with great joy
- This is the nub of the issue - the true and living God

"At the heart of it... was the call to worship the true God rather than the idols.

That was simply unheard of in Paul's world. It would be like asking people in a modern city to give up using motor cars, computers or telephones. The gods of Greek and Roman paganism were everywhere"

NT WRIGHT, PAUL FOR EVERYONE: GALATIANS AND THESSALONIANS

**WE MAY NOT SEE
THE TEMPLES AND
THE IDOLS OF
THOSE DAYS, BUT
THE GODS BEHIND
THEM ARE VERY
MUCH AT WORK IN
THE GLUTTONOUS
MATERIALISM,
SEXUAL HEDONISM
AND THE CULT OF
SELF IN TODAY'S
WESTERN CULTURE**

Wait in Hope

- The will be judgement that comes on the earth for the rejection of God's grace and truth
- Jesus was raised from the dead, became our salvation and offers life in abundance - we wait in hope for Him
- This is as true for us today as for the faithful community of believers in Thessalonica circa AD50

**DO YOU NEED AN
INCREASE IN FAITH
LEADING TO ACTION?**

**DO YOU NEED FRESH
REVELATION OF HOW
LOVED YOU ARE TO
MOTIVATE YOU TO
SERVE THE LORD?**

**DO YOU HAVE THAT
CERTAIN HOPE IN
CHRIST INSPIRING
YOU TO ENDURE?**