

What's the Point....of 1 Thessalonians?

Mark Garner

In 1 Thessalonians, we see some of the ways that God shows us his faithfulness, his compassion, and his desire for us to be with him forever. The epistle will also tell us about the joy and hope that knowing Jesus can give us, the love that God has for us, and the numerous spiritual blessings our Heavenly Father wants to give us.

Background To 1 Thessalonians

When Paul, Silas, and other believers came to Thessalonica (today called Thessaloniki), a seaport on the Thermaic Gulf, they were forced to leave the city not long afterwards. Yet God used their brief time there to start a new congregation of believers in Jesus. Paul wanted to teach them more about Jesus, so in about AD 51 or 52 he wrote the letter we know as 1 Thessalonians, the first of his New Testament epistles, teaching them and us about God's care and understanding.

The new believers in Thessalonica were characterized not only by their faith, but also by their eagerness to help others and their willingness to endure difficulties. Although these new Christians still needed to learn many things, we can see throughout the epistle the joy their faithfulness brings to Paul and to God. Throughout the letter, we see how Paul's own faith in Jesus' grace is expressed; and we shall see how he and God rejoice in seeing the Thessalonians simply by walking by faith in Jesus.

He Who Calls Us Is Faithful - Overview Of 1 Thessalonians

The epistle opens focusing on faith, love, and hope, and the ways God guides us and comforts us (1 Thessalonians 1:1-3). Then the apostle reassures these new believers that God loves them and that he has chosen them (1 Thessalonians 1:4-10). Paul also reminds them that the good news of Jesus comes from God, and it comes with our Heavenly Father's full understanding and care.

In the next section, Paul details some of the many blessings that come from knowing God - truth and compassion (1 Thessalonians 2:1-9), then hope and joy (1 Thessalonians 2:10-20), and finally encouragement (1 Thessalonians 3:1-13). It is human nature to look for these in places other than God, yet these alternatives are meager substitutes compared to what God can give us. The apostle also tells them of the relief it gave him when he heard that they were walking in God's truths.

Next, Paul tells us about God's call to holiness (1 Thessalonians 4:1-9). We are unable to make ourselves holy; yet Jesus makes us holy when we follow him humbly. He then reassures the Thessalonians, and us, that we will be with the Lord forever (1 Thessalonians 4:10-18), giving us an eternal hope. Then he reminds us that God has made us his children of the light (1 Thessalonians 5:1-11), so he encourages us to be alert and sober-minded.

He also encourages us to be helpful and patient with one another, and to give thanks in all circumstances (1 Thessalonians 5:12-18). He also encourages us to rejoice in being with God, and to pray continually, so that we may walk even more closely with God. As the epistle closes, the apostle prays for our Father in heaven to sanctify each of us through and through (1 Thessalonians 5:19-28). And the living God who calls us is faithful.

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Caleb Dillinger

1 Thessalonians is a letter to the church in Thessalonica, the first of two which we have recorded. Likely, Paul wrote more than these two, and he likely wrote one before this one. But this is what we have. And there is much to be gleaned from reading this five chapter letter.

Thanksgiving is a key theme for Paul, praising the Lord Jesus and the Thessalonian church throughout the letter, but especially the first and third chapter. When you're wondering about the point of church and Christian relationships, this short letter is well worth reading, for it reminds us that we benefit from each other and we please the Lord Jesus by our positive interactions with one another. The second chapter of the letter focuses on Paul's relationship with the church, reminding us of why having a spiritual leader or minister is so helpful for the growth of our faith.

1 Thessalonians is also worth reading for the reminder of integrity as a Christian. Particularly relevant for Christian leaders, but for anyone wanting to witness to others, to shine their light as Jesus teaches, integrity is vital. Paul knows if he had been impure or used verbal manipulation to convert people, the church would not have survived. He reminds them that he himself worked hard, held his integrity, and lived a life different from the way of the world. This difference is part of the Christian walk.

This difference of being a Christian is a key theme of chapter four, as he teaches about what believers should and shouldn't do in their faith based relationships (though it certainly extends to all relationships). Self control is a major theme, but everything Paul teaches is built on the foundation of love, just as the Lord Jesus teaches. Even that phrasing, the Lord, or Lord Jesus, is the way Paul reflects and writes about his relationship with Jesus.

Finally, Paul teaches about believers who have died and what the day of the Lord's return will look like. While it is not a perfect picture, it is very much like impressionist paintings, where we glimpse images and themes like joy and salvation as well as hardship and the need for encouragement.

When you read your Bible, and wonder what the point of this little letter is, I hope this reminds you that by reading 1 Thessalonians you can deepen your thanksgiving for God and others, have a greater respect for the Lord Jesus, and live your life worthy of the calling leading to eternal life.