

# **1 Thessalonians**

## **Chapter 1**

### **God's Elevator Pitch**

**T**hessalonica in northern Greece was the capital of Macedonia, one of two Greek provinces in Rome's empire. This bustling Aegean seaport lay on the main drag to the Orient.

Of the 13 New Testament letters penned by Paul, the two to Thessalonian believers were the first, written 20 years after Jesus Christ returned to heaven. Paul, Silas and Timothy arrive here about 50 A.D., having hoofed it 100 miles from Philippi where they were tormented and jailed for their faith. They head for the synagogue where they prove from the Torah that Jesus is Israel's promised Messiah. Some Jews and mostly Gentiles accept this news.

But vindictive Jews accuse Paul of treason for asserting that Jesus is sovereign over all, even Caesar. They recruit a mob, forcing Paul and Silas to flee 45 miles west to a warm welcome in Berea. Let's read Dr. Luke's account in Acts 17:1-11.

**DISCUSS:** Why would Paul risk going back to prison so often?

### ***They're All Greeks To Me***

Let's read 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10.

Paul applauds these new believers, crowing about how they are:

- Walking their talk
- Trusting God's promises
- Loving and serving others and telling them about Christ
- Enduring persecution for their fearless faith in the Gospel
- Abandoning their pagan idols to serve the one, true God
- Confident that Christ will come take them to be with Him

**DISCUSS:** What slows us from living this way?

### ***There's A New Gospel in Town***

What we'll now unpack opened the Bible for me and set me free.

- What riled the Jewish establishment to the point of terrorizing, arresting, even killing the fans of this carpenter, Jesus? Stephen's plight illustrates this (Acts 6:8-15, 7:54-8:1).
- Saul was a Jew and Roman citizen who fastidiously lived by the Torah as a star of the pretentious Pharisee sect. He sat on the Sanhedrin, highest court in the land. With misguided spiritual zeal Saul unleashed a reign of terror against Jesus' people until the risen Christ blinded him and gave him a new vision that benefits you and me today (Acts 8:3; 9:1-6, 15,16).
- Bringing Paul (Saul's new name) to heaven, Jesus discloses a *new* way to be "*saved*" – not by keeping kosher rules and rituals (1 Corinthians 1:18-25; 2 Corinthians 12:1-4; Romans 3:21-26; 4:3-8). Instead of our efforts to be holy, we must simply "*believe*" (have faith in) what Christ did for us on the cross.
- Paul calls this breakthrough "the secret" and "the mystery" (Ephesians 3:1-9; Colossians 1:25-27).
- The secret unveils "the Body of Christ" (Ephesians **4:11-16**).
- Its theme is "Christ in you," i.e., God's Spirit inhabits, not just visits the believer (Romans 8:9-11).
- Jesus will return (aka Rapture) "*in the clouds*" at the close of our current "Age of Grace" **to** take Church Age believers, both alive and dead, to be with Him always (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).
- When Christ was crucified, God drained onto His Son all of His wrath for every one of our sins, pardoning them ALL – past, present and future! Temporary animal sacrifices were no longer needed (2 Corinthians 5:17-18)!
- It's pointless to clean up your sin nature ("the old man") since God sees only your "new man" who is "IN CHRIST" -- perfect, forgiven, eternally welcome in God's presence (Colossians 2:13-14; Romans 6:1-2)!
- Best of all, God will never condemn His believers for their sin (Romans 8:1-2, 31-39; **Galatians 5:1**).

Graham Cooke says, "God is not dealing with our sin now. He is establishing our righteousness. ... He gave the Holy Spirit to empower us in being made into His image. ... He has no bad thoughts toward us, only His desire to (have us) see ourselves as He does, then to take on that identity" (Romans 8:28-29)!

DISCUSS: How could knowing this *secret* change your life?

Paul endured many hardships to teach us that we don't earn God's forgiveness; it's a "gift" to all who trust Him. Have you accepted it?

His Deal

[www.HisDeal.org](http://www.HisDeal.org)

[george@HisDeal.org](mailto:george@HisDeal.org)

Copyright © 2022. George Toles. All Rights Reserved.