

## 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians

This may be the first letter the apostle Paul wrote. It was written around **50 A.D.** to a quite young, but seemingly well established church.



Many places where Paul preached have long since been reduced to ruin, but Thessalonica is still a thriving community of around **300,000** people. In Paul's day it was the capital of Macedonia, but it is now called Salonika in Greece proper.

The account of the founding of this church can be found in **Acts 17:1-10**. Take time to read it now...

From the account in **Acts**, how long did Paul preach there?

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Where did he preach and what did he use for his foundation?

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What, if any "fruit" did Paul see from his efforts?

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What opposition did Paul face?

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Who was arrested\_ and why?

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What accusation was made against Paul and Silas?

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How did the church respond to the persecution?

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**1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 3:1** tells us that while Paul was in Athens, he sent Timothy back to Thessalonica to see how the new converts were doing. He apparently was concerned that the things they were facing might destroy their faith.

Eventually, Timothy met up with him in Corinth (**Acts 18:5**) with a report on how the Thessalonians were doing and the problems they were encountering. We'll find in Paul's letter to them that things haven't changed as much as we might think over nearly **2000** years.

The Christians of Thessalonica had to deal with both legalism and liberalism. Some Jewish teachers tried to impose laws upon them that they were not bound to obey. Others insisted in interpretations of Jesus' teachings that contradicted what they'd been previously taught and believed.

Their culture was full of promiscuity and perversion. Sexual liberty was regarded as "a right" and anyone who would choose to live a life of purity was considered weird and weak.

In addition to all this, non-believing civil authorities persecuted them with a passion. They seized their property and threatened them with imprisonment and bodily harm.

Yet, the church there was strong, and served as a model for others then and, it still does to this day.

### *Points to Ponder*

*What does it mean to be a "model"?*

*Why was Paul so quick to leave these new Christians alone?*

*Can you relate to the culture surrounding this early church?*