

BIBLE BAPTIST CHURCH OF ERIE

James M. Duncan, Pastor

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“THE HOPE OF THE CHURCH”

Series on I Thessalonians 1

1 Thessalonians 1:1-4

No book published has more meaning for our lives, and more relevance to our problems, than the Bible. No wonder **William Lyon Phelps**, for years called "Yale's most inspiring professor," said: "*I believe a knowledge of the Bible without a college course is more valuable than a college course without a Bible.*"

Two of Paul's earliest letters are 1 and 2 Thessalonians. These two letters were written to real people who were experiencing real problems in a world that was not friendly to their Christian faith. You and I can easily identify with these people because we live in a similar world and face many of the same problems. Once you understand the **background**, the **burden**, and the **blessing** of these two letters, you will see how up-to-date and practical they are.

THE BACKGROUND

Thessalonica is an important industrial and commercial city in modern Greece and is second to Athens in population. Dr. Luke explained how Paul came to Thessalonica and how the church was founded (*Acts 17:1-15*).

THE BURDEN

Paul wrote to assure his friends of his love and concern. Then he wanted to ground them in the doctrines of the Christian faith, particularly with reference to Christ's return. And then lastly his burden was for them to live godly and Christ's glorifying lives. Also, he had a burden for these new Christians who were confused about the **return of Jesus Christ**.

THE BLESSING

Each New Testament letter has a special message, or blessing, that is uniquely its own. What is the special blessing in the message of 1 and 2 Thessalonians? *It is the message of the return of Jesus Christ and how this vital doctrine can affect our lives and churches and make us more spiritual.* Every chapter in 1 Thessalonians ends with reference to the coming of Jesus Christ, and each reference relates the doctrine to a practical aspect of Christian living.

I. THE PREACHERS OF THE CHURCH

Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians...

(1 Thessalonians 1:1) The opening verse names Paul, Silvanus (Silas) and Timotheus (Timothy) as the preachers who had been greatly involved in planting the Church at Thessalonica. All three men were included in the greeting because

all were closely associated with the Thessalonian church. This letter is the first New Testament epistle written to a particular church and was written from Corinth shortly after Paul left Thessalonica, about A.D. 51.

II. THE POSITION OF THE CHURCH

This letter is written **unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ.** *(1 Thessalonians 1:1)* Now notice the words, **in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ.** What blessed words these are—they speak volumes. Though the location of this particular local Church was the city of Thessalonica their actual position went far beyond the city limits. They were **in God the Father and in Christ.**

III. THE PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers. *(1 Thessalonians 1:2)* Paul's Pastoral heart really shows here. He was constantly praying. Notice that this is in the present tense, signifying continuous action.

IV. THE PERFORMANCE OF THE CHURCH

Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father. *(1 Thessalonians 1:3)* Joy filled Paul's heart as he prayed for the Thessalonians. The word **remembering** means "*having in mind or be mindful of.*" The phrase **without ceasing** means "*constant or continual.*" As Paul remembered these believers there were three great characteristics that stood out.

Their Ministry Was Real - their work of faith

Their Motives were Right - their work was a labour of love

Their Manner Was Resolute - they continued with a patience of hope

V. THE POSSESSION OF THE CHURCH

Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. *(1 Thessalonians 1:4)* The New Testament Church is for God's people. This is by God's own choosing. Election does not mean that God chose to save some while choosing others to Hell. God who says that He will save **whosoever will** did not choose a select few and arbitrarily foreordain and condemn the rest to Hell without a chance. Such is not the God of the Bible. God is a loving Saviour Who is ... **not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.** *(2 Peter 3:9)* The word **election** simply speaks of the fact that God made a sovereign choice to save the lost. God's foreknowledge is a twin doctrine to election.

A local church like Bible Baptist must be composed of elect people, those who have been saved by the grace of God. One problem today is the presence, in the church family, of unbelievers whose names may be on the church roll, but not written in the Lamb's Book of Life. Every church member should examine his heart to determine whether he has truly been born again and belongs to God's elect through faith in the Lord Jesus and Him alone.