

THOMAS NELSON
LEGACY STANDARD BIBLE

the
MACARTHUR

STUDY BIBLE

SECOND EDITION



UNLEASHING GOD'S TRUTH ONE VERSE AT A TIME®

THOMAS NELSON
LEGACY STANDARD BIBLE

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AUTHOR AND GENERAL EDITOR

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Library of Congress Control Number: 2023943661

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Romans (Ro)	1472	1 Timothy (1Ti)	1623	2 John (2Jn)	1729
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PERSONAL NOTES

Why write a study Bible? The answer to that question comes in a conversation between Philip and an Ethiopian recorded in Acts 8:30-31:

Philip ran up and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?"

And he said, "Well, how could I, unless someone guides me?"

And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

As Philip did with the eunuch, I want to sit with you and explain the Scriptures. This Study Bible allows me that intimate opportunity.

Although I personally bear full responsibility for all the notes in The MacArthur Study Bible because they all have come from me and through me, a work of this magnitude with the responsibility to be accurate could only have been done with a team of supportive co-workers who committed themselves to assist me by arduous labor with loving devotion and commitment to excellence. Many friends have participated in the team—all of whom deserve to be commended and thanked.

My highest gratitude belongs to my friend and ministry partner, Dr. Richard Mayhue, Senior Vice President and Dean of The Master's Seminary. He has worked next to me through the whole project, laboring beyond anyone while serving as project manager, OT and NT researcher, editor, and counselor. His exceptional gift for management, along with his vast knowledge of Scripture and doctrine, coupled with our one-mindedness theologically, plus his writing skill, have made for a more effective partnership.

Gratitude in abundance must be given to the faculty of the Master's Seminary for their assistance in original research and carefully prepared first draft material for the study notes on the Old Testament. Using the foundation of that original research and material, I worked and re-worked the study notes into their final form.

Never have I been so challenged and blessed at the same time as during the two intense years of finalizing this work. Studying along in my private place, perusing every word of Scripture, plus being challenged to understand each phrase and verse has yielded richness to my life and ministry like nothing I have undertaken before.

I have always been committed to the Scriptures as inspired, inerrant, infallible, sufficient and eternal. I have always preached the Bible expositionally, verse by verse, book by book. After this enterprise, I feel even more strongly about the necessity of preaching every pure word of Scripture (Ps 12:6). I have been profoundly enriched in my own life, as never before, because of the sheer force of so much divine truth pouring through me daily. For many months I spent eight or more hours every day working in the word, not so much because I had to, but because I could not leave the text—its riches held me captive.

My thanks to you, the reader, for loving Scripture enough to be a serious student. This work is an additional way of fulfilling my calling as a pastor-teacher mandated "for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ" (Eph 4:12).

A special word of thanks is certainly in order for my beloved wife, Patricia, who supported me with her prayers and encouragement, and endured my times of isolation with understanding.

With gratitude most of all to our glorious God who gave us his precious word, do I pray that he will be honored by this effort to explain what his word means by what it says.

John MacArthur

THE FIRST LETTER OF
PAUL TO THE

THESSALONIANS

TITLE

In the Greek NT, 1 Thessalonians is listed literally as "To the Thessalonians." This represents the apostle Paul's first canonical correspondence to the church in the city of Thessalonica (cf. 1:1).

AUTHOR AND DATE

The apostle Paul identified himself twice as the author of this letter (1:1; 2:18). Silvanus (Silas) and Timothy (3:2, 6), Paul's traveling companions on the second missionary journey when the church was founded (Ac 17:1-9), were also mentioned in Paul's greeting (1:1). Though Paul was the single inspired author, most of the first person plural pronouns (we, us, our) refer to all 3. However, during Timothy's visit back to Thessalonica, they refer only to Paul and Silvanus (3:1-2, 6). Paul commonly used such editorial plurals because the letters came with the full support of his companions.

Paul's authorship has not been questioned until recently by radical critics. Their attempts to undermine Pauline authorship have failed in light of the combined weight of evidence favoring Paul such as: 1) the direct assertions of Paul's authorship (1:1; 2:18); 2) the letter's perfect correlation with Paul's travels in Ac 16-18; 3) the multitude of intimate details regarding Paul; and 4) the confirmation by multiple, early historical verifications starting with Marcion's canon in AD 140.

The first of Paul's two letters written from Corinth to the church at Thessalonica is dated ca. AD 51. This date has been archeologically verified by an inscription in the temple of Apollon at Delphi (near Corinth) which dates Gallio's service as proconsul in Achaia to AD 51-52 (Ac 18:12-17). Since Paul's letter to the churches of Galatia was probably written ca. AD 49-50, this was his second piece of canonical correspondence.

BACKGROUND AND SETTING

Thessalonica (modern Salonica) lies near the ancient site of Therma on the Thermaic Gulf at the northern reaches of the Aegean Sea. This city became the capital of Macedonia (ca. 168 BC) and enjoyed the status of a "free city" which was ruled by its own citizenry (Ac 17:6) under the Roman Empire. Because it was located on the main east-west highway, Via Egnatia, Thessalonica served as the hub of political and commercial activity in Macedonia, and became known as "the mother of all Macedonia." The population in Paul's day reached 200,000 people.

Paul had originally traveled 100 mi. from Philippi via Amphipolis and Apollonia to Thessalonica on his second missionary journey (AD 50; Ac 16:1-18:22). As his custom was upon arrival, he sought out the synagogue in which to teach the local Jews the gospel (Ac 17:1-2). On that occasion, he dialogued with them from the OT concerning Christ's death and resurrection in order to prove that Jesus of Nazareth was truly the promised Messiah (Ac 17:2-3). Some Jews believed and soon after, Hellenistic proselytes and some wealthy women of the community also were converted (Ac 17:4). Mentioned among these new believers were Jason (Ac 17:5), Gaius (Ac 19:29), Aristarchus (Ac 20:4), and Secundus (Ac 20:4).

Because of their effective ministry, the Jews had Paul's team evicted from the city (Ac 17:5-9), so they went south to evangelize Berea (Ac 17:10). There Paul had a similar experience to Thessalonica with conversions followed by hostility, so the believers sent Paul away. He headed for Athens, while Silvanus and Timothy remained in Berea (Ac 17:11-14). They rejoined Paul in Athens (cf. Ac 17:15-16 with 3:1), from which Timothy was later dispatched back to Thessalonica (3:2). Apparently, Silas afterwards traveled from Athens to Philippi while Paul journeyed on alone to Corinth (Ac 18:1). It was after Timothy and Silvanus rejoined Paul in Corinth (Ac 18:5) that he wrote 1 Thessalonians in response to Timothy's good report of the church.

Paul undoubtedly had multiple reasons for writing, all coming out of his supreme concern for the flock from which he had been separated. Some of Paul's purposes clearly included: 1) encouraging the church (1:2-10); 2) answering false allegations (2:1-12); 3) comforting the persecuted flock (2:13-16); 4) expressing his joy in their faith (2:17-3:13); 5) reminding them of the importance of moral purity (4:1-8); 6) condemning the sluggard lifestyle (4:9-12); 7) correcting a wrong understanding of prophetic events

(4:13–5:11); 8) defusing tensions within the flock (5:12–15); and 9) exhorting the flock in the basics of Christian living (5:16–22).

HISTORICAL AND THEOLOGICAL THEMES

Both letters to Thessalonica have been referred to as “the eschatological epistles.” However, in light of their more extensive focus upon the church, they would better be categorized as the Church Epistles. Five major themes are woven together in 1 Thessalonians: 1) an apologetic theme with the historical correlation between Acts and 1 Thessalonians; 2) an ecclesiastical theme with the portrayal of a healthy, growing church; 3) a pastoral theme with the example of shepherding activities and attitudes; 4) an eschatological theme with the focus on future events as the church’s hope; and 5) a missionary theme with the emphasis on gospel proclamation and church planting.

INTERPRETIVE CHALLENGES

Primarily, the challenges for understanding this epistle involve the sections that are eschatological in nature: 1) the coming wrath (1:10; 5:9); 2) Christ’s return (2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23); 3) the rapture of the church (4:13–18); and 4) the meaning and time of the Day of the Lord (5:1–11).

OUTLINE

I. Paul’s Greeting (1:1)

II. Paul’s Personal Thoughts (1:2–3:13)

- A. Thanksgiving for the Church (1:2–10)
- B. Reminders for the Church (2:1–16)
- C. Concerns for the Church (2:17–3:13)

III. Paul’s Practical Instructions (4:1–5:22)

- A. On Moral Purity (4:1–8)
- B. On Disciplined Living (4:9–12)
- C. On Death and the Rapture (4:13–18)
- D. On Holy Living and the Day of the Lord (5:1–11)
- E. On Church Relationships (5:12–15)
- F. On the Basics of Christian Living (5:16–22)

IV. Paul’s Benediction (5:23–24)

V. Paul’s Final Remarks (5:25–28)

THANKSGIVING

1 ^APaul and ^BSilvanus and ^CTimothy, To the ^Dchurch of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: ^EGrace to you and peace.

^{2A}We give thanks to God always for all of you, ^Bmaking mention of you in our prayers; ³remembering without ceasing your ^Awork of faith and labor of ^Blove and ^Csteadfastness of hope ^Bin our Lord Jesus Christ before ^Dour God and Father, ⁴knowing, ^Abrothers beloved by God, ^Byour election, ⁵for our ^Agospel did not come to you in word only, but also ^Bin power and in the Holy Spirit and with ^Cfull assurance; just as you know ^Bwhat kind of men we ^Dproved to be among you for your sake. ⁶You also became ^Aimitators of us and of the Lord, ^Bhaving received ^Cthe word in much affliction with the ^Djoy of the Holy Spirit, ⁷so

that you became a model to all the believers in ^AMacedonia and in ^BAchaia. ⁸For ^Athe word of the Lord has ^Bsounded forth from you, not only in ^CMacedonia and ^DAchaia, but also ^Ein every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything. ⁹For they themselves report about us what kind of an ^Aentrance we had ^Cwith you, and how you ^Bturned to God ^Cfrom ^Didols to serve ^CD a living and true God, ¹⁰and to ^Await for His Son from ^Cheaven, whom He ^Braised from the dead, Jesus, who ^Crescues us from ^Dthe wrath to come.

ENTRUSTED WITH THE GOSPEL

2 For you yourselves know, brothers, that our ^Aentrance to you ^Bwas not in vain, ²but after we had already suffered and been ^Amistreated in ^BPhilippi, as you know, we had the boldness in our

1:1 ^A2Th 1:1 ^B2Co 1:19 ^CAc 16:1 ^DAc 17:1 ^ERo 1:7 ^{1:2} ^ARo 1:8; 2Th 1:3 ^BRo 1:9 ^{1:3} ^AOr perseverance ^BLit of A Jn 6:29 ^C1Co 13:13 ^DRo 8:25; 15:4 ^EGa 1:4 ^{1:4} ^ARo 17:2Th 2:13 ^B2Pe 1:10 ^{1:5} ^AOr became ^B1Co 9:14 ^CRo 15:19 ^DLk 1:1; Col 2:2 ^E1Th 2:10 ^{1:6} ^A1Co 4:16; 11:11 ^BAc 17:5-10 ^C2Ti 4:2 ^DAc 13:52; 2Co 6:10; Ga 5:22 ^E17 Ro 15:26 ^BAc 18:12 ^{1:8} ^ACol 3:16; 2Th 3:1 ^BRo 10:18 ^CRo 15:26 ^DAc 18:12 ^ERo 1:8; 16:19; 2Co 2:14 ^{1:9} ^ALit to ^BOr the idols ^COr the A 1Th 2:1 ^DAc 14:15 ^E1Co 12:2 ^DMt 16:16 ^{1:10} ^ALit the heavens ^BMt 16:27f; 1Co 1:7 ^CAc 2:24 ^DRo 5:9 ^EMt 3:7; 1Th 2:16; 5:9 ^{2:1} ^A1Th 1:9 ^B2Th 1:10 ^{2:2} ^AAc 14:5; 16:19-24; Php 1:30 ^BAc 16:22-24

1:1 Paul. Biographical details for the former Saul of Tarsus (Ac 9:11) can be found in Ac 9:1-30; 11:19-28:31; see *note on Ro 1:1*. For autobiographical material, see 2Co 11:16-12:10; Ga 1:11-2:21; Php 3:4-6; and 1Ti 1:12-17. **Silvanus.** A companion of Paul on the second missionary journey (Ac 15-18), later a writer for Peter (1Pe 5:12), also called Silas. **Timothy.** Paul's most notable disciple (Php 2:17-23) who traveled on the second and third missionary journeys and stayed near Paul during his first Roman imprisonment (Php 1:1; Col 1:1; Phm 1). Later he served in Ephesus (1Ti 1:3) and spent some time in prison (Heb 13:23). Paul's first letter to Timothy, while he was ministering in the church at Ephesus, instructed him regarding life in the church (cf. 1Ti 3:15). In his second letter, Paul called Timothy to be strong (2Ti 2:1) and faithfully preach as he faced death and was about to turn his ministry over to Timothy (2Ti 4:1-8). **God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.** Since Paul's initial converts were Jewish, he made it unmistakably clear that this "church" was not a Jewish assembly, but rather one which gathered in the name of Jesus, the Son of God (Ac 17:2-3), who is both Lord God and Messiah. This emphasis on the equality between God and the Lord Jesus is a part of the introduction in all Paul's epistles (cf. 1Jn 2:23).

1:2 our prayers. Paul and his companions prayed frequently for the entire flock, and 3 of those prayers are offered in this letter (1:2-3; 3:11-13; 5:23-24).

1:3 work of faith. The 3-fold combination of faith, hope, and love is a Pauline favorite (5:8; 1Co 13:13; Col 1:4-5). Paul refers here to the fulfillment of ministry duties which resulted from these three spiritual attitudes (cf. vs. 9-10).

1:4 your election. The church is commonly called "the elect" (cf. Ro 8:33; Col 3:12; 2Ti 2:10; Tit 1:1). In salvation, the initiating will is God's, not man's (cf. Jn 1:13; Ac 13:46-48; Ro 9:15-16; 1Co 1:30; Col 1:13; 2Th 2:13; 1Pe 1:1-2; see *notes on Eph 1:4-5*). Man's will participates in response to God's promptings as Paul makes clear when he says the Thessalonians received the Word (v. 6) and they turned to God from idols (v. 9). These two responses describe

faith and repentance, which God repeatedly calls sinners to do throughout Scripture (e.g., Ac 20:21).

1:5 our gospel. Paul called his message "our gospel," because it was for him and all sinners to believe and especially for him to preach. He knew it did not originate with him, but was divinely authored; thus he also called it "the gospel of God" (2:2, 9; Ro 1:1). Because the person who made forgiveness possible is the Lord Jesus, he also referred to it as "the gospel of Christ" (3:2). **word only.** It had to come in word (cf. Ro 10:13-17), and not word only, but in Holy Spirit power (cf. 2Co 2:4-5) and in confidence (cf. 1s 55:11). **what kind of men.** The quality of the message was confirmed by the character of the lives of the preachers. Paul's exemplary life served as an open book for all men to read, establishing the credibility of the power and grace of God essential to making the message of redemption believable to sinners (see *note on 2Co 1:12*).

1:6 imitators. The Thessalonians had become third-generation mimics of Christ. Christ is the first; Paul is the second; and the Thessalonians are the third (1Co 4:16; 11:1). **joy of the Holy Spirit.** Cf. Ro 14:17. Joy in the midst of suffering evidenced the reality of their salvation, which included the indwelling Holy Spirit (1Co 3:16; 6:19).

1:7 model. The Greek word was used to describe a seal that marked wax or a stamp that minted coins. Paul commended the Thessalonians for being model believers leaving their mark on others. **in Macedonia and in Achaia.** The two Roman provinces which comprised Greece, Macedonia being to the north and Achaia to the south.

1:8 sounded forth. The idea is to reverberate. Wherever the Thessalonians went, the gospel given by the word of the Lord was heard. It resulted in a local outreach to Thessalonica, a national outreach to Macedonia and Achaia, and an international outreach to regions beyond. **we have no need to say anything.** Though it may appear that this church developed such a testimony in only 3 Sabbaths of preaching (cf. Ac 17:2) spanning as little as 15 days, it is better to understand

that Paul preached 3 Sabbaths in the synagogue before he had to relocate elsewhere in the city. In all likelihood, Paul spent months not weeks, which accounts for: 1) the two collections he received from Philippi (Php 4:16); 2) the time he worked night and day (2:9; 2Th 3:8); and 3) the depth of pastoral care evidenced in the letter (2:7-8, 11).

1:9 turned. This word describes what the Bible elsewhere calls repentance (Mt 3:1-2; 4:17; Ac 2:38; 3:19; 5:31; 20:21). Salvation involves a person's turning from sin and trusting in false gods to Christ. See *notes on 2Co 7:8-11*. **to serve a living and true God.** Those converted to Christ abandoned the worship of dead idols to become willing slaves to the living God.

1:10 to wait. This is a recurring theme in the Thessalonian letters (3:13; 4:15-17; 5:8; 23; 2Th 3:6-13; cf. Ac 1:11; 2Ti 4:8; Tit 2:11-13). These passages indicate the imminency of the deliverance; it was something Paul felt could happen in their lifetime. **rescues us from the wrath to come.** This can mean to evacuate out of a current distress (Ro 7:24; Col 1:13) or to exempt from entering into a distress (Jn 12:27; 2Co 1:10). The wrath can refer either to God's temporal wrath to come on the earth (Rev 6:16-17; 19:15) or to God's eternal wrath (Jn 3:36; Ro 5:9-10). First Thessalonians 5:9 develops the same idea (see *note there*). The emphasis in both passages on Christ's work of salvation from sin favors this being understood as the deliverance from the eternal wrath of God in hell because of salvation.

2:1 not in vain. Paul's ministry among the Thessalonians was so fruitful that not only were people saved and a vibrant, reproducing church planted, but the church also grew and flourished even after Paul left (cf. 1:5-8).

2:2 mistreated in Philippi. Paul and Silas had been brutalized in Philippi before coming to Thessalonica (cf. Ac 16:19-24, 37). They suffered physically when beaten (Ac 16:22-23) and incarcerated (Ac 16:24). They were arrogantly mistreated with false accusations (Ac 16:20-21) and illegally punished in spite of their Roman citizenship (Ac 16:37). **much struggle.** Like their treatment in Philippi, Paul's team was falsely accused of civil

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THE FIRST DISCIPLES

¹⁸Now as Jesus was walking by ^bthe Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, ^cSimon who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. ¹⁹And He ^{*}said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." ²⁰And immediately they left their nets and

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT
5 ^ANow when Jesus had finished these sayings, the disciples came and began to

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