

# 1 Thessalonians 1:1-5 | David Baumgartner

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[ 0 : 00 ] We welcome you to the media ministry of Bethel Community Church. Knowing Jesus, making Jesus known. The blessings just stack up today, don't they?

They do. I'd also like to give out a call to this great nation that we live in. And wish all of us a happy birthday.

Many of us have relatives who for a variety of reasons, live far away. Maybe it's another city, maybe it's another state, maybe it's another country.

And maybe, perhaps you go for several weeks, or maybe months without hearing from them. Here's a question for you. When something happens where they live, like if it's a flood, or maybe an earthquake in California, maybe a gas explosion in Florida, did you hear about that this morning? How about a fireworks mishap? And of all places, little Webster Groves. Let me ask you, what crosses your mind when you hear that? Your relatives are living there.

[ 1 : 11 ] Most likely, you're wondering, how are they doing? Are they doing okay? You have a great concern from them. The reason I bring this up is because we've been looking at how this church in Thessalonica began, as recorded in Acts 17.

We find that when Paul and Silas went to Thessalonica, they preached at a synagogue, and some of the members here, they heard the message, and they placed their faith in Jesus Christ.

And lo and behold, a church was planted. We also read, though, that others rejected the gospel message, so much so that they formed a mob, and the city authorities got involved, and eventually, Paul and Silas had to flee that city.

And on top of that, we saw that there's this type of restraining order that prevented Paul from ever returning there again. As you read on in Acts, we find that Paul and Silas continued their missionary journey.

They went on to Berea. They went on to Athens. But as we're going to see, they were deeply concerned about these brothers and sisters, these baby believers in the city of Thessalonica.

[ 2 : 30 ] And perhaps they're wondering, how are they doing? Did that mob attack them too? Are they standing firm in the faith? Or does a church even exist there at all?

Well, eventually, Paul decided to send Timothy back to Thessalonica. And about a year later, Timothy catches up with Paul, and he's in Corinth by now.

And Paul and Silas, I've got great news for you about the believers there in Thessalonica. In a word, they're blessed. They are.

And so, Timothy gave them the details, and Paul's so happy that he wrote this letter to them that we're going to look at today. Please turn with me to 1 Thessalonians.

We're going to look at just the first five verses of chapter 1. And this morning, my intention is just to introduce this book. But also, I think that we can see there are some truths there about the gospel message.

[ 3 : 34 ] It's the message of good news. The fact is, it's not just any message. It's from God himself. And it's good to be reminded of these truths.

So we'll be looking at the first five verses. But before that, let's go ahead and pray. Heavenly Father, we are so grateful and so happy to hear how your word goes forth throughout the world. And it's still changing lives. Thank you for this testimony that we heard from Daniel and Pastor Bong. We pray for those folks.

And Lord, we're so thankful, Lord. But we know that it's you that's doing the work. Father, we would ask that for us here that we would see our purpose in you.

that we would be able to, just with great strength and dependence and grace from you to go forth and to live in ways that are pleasing to you, revealing to others the wonderful news that you have

grace.

[ 4 : 38 ] You've extended your grace through Jesus. And that grace is here today, Lord. We thank you. May we be changed this morning. In Jesus' name. Amen. Let's go ahead and look at our text here.

Chapter 1. Starting in verse 1, it says, Paul and Silvanus, that's A.K.A. Silas, and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians, in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul says, grace to you and peace. So here we see an introduction that's rather common in Paul's letters. He says, who it's from, to whom it's written, and what do we see?

They're believers. They're in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. He also says, grace to you. Now, we see here, in fact, some people see that this is an ordinary common greeting found in the Greek-speaking world.

We see in Paul's 13 epistles, 10 of them say this, grace to you. But we also know that Paul chooses his words carefully. And so no doubt, there's this spiritual application.

[ 5 : 52 ] There's a deeper meaning for this word grace. And what might that be? It's the grace that we've been singing about today. The grace that we've been lifting up.

It's referring to God's love toward the undeserving. Yeah, it's unearned. Like who? Well, the people in Thessalonica.

And I think that we can say absolutely it applies to us today. Yeah, we are undeserving of anything from God. Would you agree with that?

Yeah. All of us are in great need of God's grace. Now, I tell you, that sounds really mean-spirited, doesn't it? Doesn't that sound kind of judgmental on my part to say that?

Yeah, I agree it does. But notice here, Paul adds something very precious. He adds, and peace.

This here, the peace is one of the results or the outcomes that flows from grace.

[ 6 : 58 ] The grace as we know it. Paul would write to the Christians in Rome, he says, therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Well, Paul goes on here, verse 2, we give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers. Here we see, I believe, how the well-being of these people was a constant matter of prayer for all three of these men.

And we're going to hear more about Paul's prayers in the coming weeks. But I want you to notice here that through their prayers, they're giving thanks to God.

Isn't that wonderful? And so, we may ask, well, why is he giving thanks? Well, I think there's three truths about the gospel that we can see in these opening passages here.

This is what I saw in this passage. I ask you to just follow along with me in your handout here. The first thing is this, truths about the gospel. Our gospel, one, is life changing.

[ 8 : 09 ] Look with me. He says, verse 3, constantly bearing in mind or constantly remembering your work of faith, your labor of love, and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father.

So he mentions here this faith, hope, and love. And we see these many times in scripture. We often think of them as virtues that believers possess.

But here, I think that Paul is highlighting the results of those virtues in the life of the believer. Look with me. It's the works that resulted from their faith.

It's the hard labor that comes from the love they have for one another. And thirdly, it's the endurance that sprang forth from their hope in Jesus.

Friends, this is real. These are tangible evidences of a changed life. And that's because of the fact that gospel is life changing.

[ 9 : 13 ] I'm speaking to my church family here this morning. I want to ask you, is your life different from what it was before you became a Christian? Think about it. I know it is.

I would say virtually everyone here would say wholeheartedly yes and amen to that. You know, I'd say that everyone here serves the Lord in some way.

You have some part. Here, let me ask you, does this next verse in Titus describe you? Look with me. Titus chapter 2. Does this describe you?

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires, and to live sensibly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Does that describe us? I hope it does. When others see this in us, they can't argue with it. Oh, they may argue about some of the doctrines that we may talk about, but they cannot argue with a changed life.

[10:33] They can't. The gospel is life-changing. Why is that? Well, the second point here. Because our gospel is powerful.

Look with me here. He says in verse 5. For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and with full conviction, just as you know what kind of men we prove to be among you for your sake.

Oh, there's a lot of stuff in there, friends. The point is, the gospel is not a self-help program. No, it's God's doing. When Paul and Silas first shared the gospel in that synagogue in Thessalonica, there were actually three things that were being communicated.

The first one is this. Notice, the gospel came to you in word. You might think of that. That's the logos. That's the content of what's being communicated.

The content. I'll read it to you. Acts 17, verses 2 and 3. He says, For three Sabbaths, Paul reasoned with them from the scriptures, and here's what he said, explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, This Jesus, whom I am proclaiming to you, is the Christ.

[12:04] Paul didn't reason with them about the latest opinion polls. He didn't talk about philosophical questions. He presented them with the truth that they needed to hear.

Man's need for grace and how God provides that grace through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Notice here, he describes how God, the Holy Spirit, was active during this.

He says, But not only in word, but he says that the gospel came in power and in the Holy Spirit.

What this tells me here is that it is God who enlightens mankind.

Paul would write in his second letter to the Corinthians, For God who said, he said, Light shall shine out of darkness is the one who has shown in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the surpassing greatness of the power may be of God, not from ourselves.

[13:16] There's a lot there, friends, but it's God's doing. For conversion to take place, the Holy Spirit must be operating. I gotta tell you, I have personally observed a brother or a sister sharing the clearest gospel message that you could hear.

Absolute clarity, nothing offensive at all, and yet, rejection. Why is that? Oh, there's no one truth. No, there's many things out there. Friends, it just proves that the Holy Spirit must be involved. So first, you have the Logos, and secondly, along with the Logos, you have, notice, he says, the gospel came with full conviction.

There's a word for that, pathos. This is talking about the passion and the fervor and the feeling that was present. In other words, those who brought the gospel were themselves fully persuaded in the truth.

Paul would write again in his second letter to the Corinthians, for out of much affliction and anguish of the heart, I wrote to you with many tears, not that you should be made sorrowful, but that you might know the love which I have, especially for you.

[14:45] Friends, that's pathos. Great love that he has. And then lastly, there's something called ethos. That's the character of the one who is speaking.

Look with me, he says, you know what kind of men we prove to be. How did they know? Because they observed them.

They were watching them. They were seeing, Paul, are you making things up? Are you a liar? The main point here is the way we conduct ourselves in life, it needs to match up with the words that we say.

Otherwise, we become known as what? Hypocrites. That's right. Look what Paul said to Titus, chapter 2, verses 7 and 8.

He says, show yourselves in all respects to be a model of good works and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, and sound speech that cannot be condemned so that an opportunity may, so that the opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us.

[15:57] I know several Bethel people went around the Webster Fairgrounds this past week, talking to people, doing a survey, handing out Bible tracts.

There were three things there, friends. Logos, pathos, and ethos were being presented. And it's something to remember here. Regardless of the immediate outcome, I will say this, I'm confident. I'm fully persuaded that God uses it. He does. Maybe some of you participated in it. Maybe some of you evangelize at work or maybe in your neighborhood, and maybe you don't feel like anything's accomplished.

Friends, I'll tell you what, that's not true. God uses it. Look at what Isaiah says about the Lord's word. He says, for as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there without water, watering the earth and making it bare and sprout and furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word which goes forth from my mouth and it shall not return empty to me without accomplishing what I desire and without it succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.

Friends, that's a truth. God is on the throne and he uses his word to accomplish his purposes. And that's the gospel too.

[17:32] Our gospel is life changing, it's powerful, and thirdly, our gospel is precious. It's precious. I hope if there's one thing that you hear today, that the gospel of Jesus Christ is precious.

Amen. Look what he says, verse four, knowing brethren, beloved by God, his choice of you. Wow. I think that this truth here, it perhaps may be the greatest source of comfort for Paul. And I'm talking here about the doctrine of election. Here we go.

This is an in-house debate, friends. It means that believers can debate this, and we can still love each other. It's an in-house debate. But what does election claim?

I'm going to give you some extremely simplified ways that I see it. First of all, many Bible verses seem to say that God in his sovereign grace has elected, he has chosen to rescue certain individuals from their fallen condition, and he does this.

[18:51] Some people may call that predestination. But here's why. It's because of the depths of mankind's fallenness. God has to do this, or else, no one would be saved.

You got that? Yeah. Now, other people reject the doctrine of election. And here's their claim. It's for a person to be held responsible or accountable for their sins.

He or she must be absolutely free from any constraints or influences from God in their decisions for or against God.

So, therefore, mankind, this is going on here, mankind is freely able to choose God's offer of salvation, or he can reject it without any interference or influence from God.

Now, those are two really simple definitions here, and there's many different nuances about this, and I'm not going to solve it today. Sorry to hear that.

[19:59] But personally, I will say that I believe in election, and I'll give you my main reasons, just three passages. They're on your handout.

Look with me. In John's gospel account, Jesus says, no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up on the last day.

Pretty clear. How about this one? Paul's, again, Paul's letter to the Corinthians. The natural man. This is the natural unsaved person.

Does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

Friends, that's pretty clear. To me, it is. Or how about Paul's letter to the Romans, the Christians in Rome? For the mind, again, this is the natural mind, that is set on the flesh, is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law.

[21:04] Indeed, then he adds this, it cannot. In our text, Paul says, we know that God has chosen you.

This is perfect tense here in the Greek. Paul and his associates here, they knew this of the Christians in Thessalonica. Isn't that amazing?

Isn't that? To ponder this verse that God chose you, how precious that is. That a person can know that he's actually saved.

I think there's a verse that says that in 1 John. So, how do we apply this text here? Well, Paul and the others were convinced of God's choice of these believers.

And that's because they saw the evidence of a new life in them. They were born again. And it showed and it revealed that the Holy Spirit was operating.

[ 22 : 05 ] How? Because God brought Paul and the others to Thessalonica. Right? He did. It's, there's that vision from God, the man from Macedonia.

That's a fact that God was involved in it. But even more specifically, for those of you in the church of Thessalonica, God opened your eyes and your ears to the gospel itself.

Just like in Philippi, when we read in Acts 16 of Lydia, God opened her heart. And so, what this tells me is that God was active in the hearts and the minds of these people.

And friends, he still is today. We just saw evidence of that. How God uses things. He brings things to mind about the wonderful grace that we have in Jesus.

There's another common belief today. It's called deism. Maybe you've heard of that. That's a vague notion that there's a God out there, but the belief that he's totally uninvolved with us.

[ 23 : 15 ] Friends, that is not so. And maybe you and I can show that to people. God's still on the throne, and he watches over us. The last point here about election is that some people may ask, well, if God chooses people, why should we even bother sharing the gospel?

Here's why. Probably the best reason is that you and I don't know who is elect and who isn't. But we have this promise, that this gospel of the kingdom, it shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all nations, and then the end shall come.

There you have it. The wonderful gospel we have. If I can invite the musicians to come up. All I wanted to do was just introduce this letter, but I wanted to especially lift up the gospel because they had it, and we do too.

everything starts with the gospel, and the parallels between the church in Thessalonica and what's going on at Bethel I think is really great.

They really do. Paul was able, he was not able to stay in Thessalonica very long, and apparently he had left before a lot of their questions could be answered.

[ 24 : 40 ] And so when Timothy came along, they passed these questions on to Timothy, and then Timothy conveys them to Paul. And so in this letter, we will get to see some exciting things.

You want just a sampling? Here, some of the members in Thessalonica died, and the living believers were unsure what would happen to those dead or deceased Christians when Jesus comes back.

Would they miss out on the second coming? There's also a question about the timing of the day of the Lord. Boy, what does that mean? There's believers in Thessalonica who were wondering why persecution continues, and why Paul hasn't come back to visit them.

There's another problem, that some of the Christians were apparently sponging off of the rich people there in their fellowship. Maybe those leading men and leading women that Acts 17 talks about, and then there's a problem of sexual holiness.

Does that apply to us today? Boy, it sure does. There's much to glean from this book. I'd encourage you, begin reading it now, and come prepared, and in that way, we can build on our knowledge of the gospel, and just how God has changed us.

[ 26 : 08 ] the gospel that Jesus purchased for us. Amen. Amen. Amen.