The Early Church, Our Church

A seven-week worship series



Thessalonica

- 90 miles west of Philippi
- Originally a Greek city turned Roman
- Today its the populated city Thessaloniki
- Idolatry for certain, imperial cult possible
- Had a Jewish community with a synagogue
- Paul preaches 3 weeks and is ran out of town
- His letter will reveal growth despite opposition

Paul's Short Visit

Acts 17:1-3 NIV

1 When Paul and his companions had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue. 2 As was his custom, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, 3 explaining and proving that the Messiah had to suffer and rise from the dead. "This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Messiah," he said.

Acts 17:4-6 NIV

- 4 Some of the Jews were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of Godfearing Greeks and quite a few prominent women.
- **5** But other Jews were jealous; so they rounded up some bad characters from the marketplace, formed a mob and started a riot in the city. They rushed to Jason's house in search of Paul and Silas in order to bring them out to the crowd.
- 6 But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some other believers before the city officials, shouting:

Acts 17:6-9 NIV

- 6 "These men who have <u>caused trouble</u> all over the world have now come here, 7 and Jason has welcomed them into his house. They are all <u>defying Caesar's decrees</u>, saying that <u>there is another king</u>, one called Jesus."
- 8 When they heard this, the crowd and the city officials were thrown into turmoil.
- **9** Then they made Jason and the others post bond and let them go.

"Paul's first visit to Macedonia was punctuated by expulsions from one city after another. No wonder when, a few weeks later, he arrived in Corinth, he could speak of coming 'in weakness and in much fear and trembling' (1 Cor 2:3). He possibly felt that his missionary work had been a failure. In fact it was an illustrious success. The Christianity which he planted in the cities of that province remains firmly rooted in the present day."

F.F. Bruce, In the Steps of the Apostle Paul

"For a seed to achieve its greatest expression, it must come completely undone. The shell cracks, its insides come out and everything changes. To someone who doesn't understand growth, it would look like complete destruction."



Letter to the Thessalonians

Paul, 1 Thessalonians 1:4-6 NIV

4 For we know, brothers and sisters loved by God, that he has chosen you, 5 because our gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake. 6 You became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you welcomed the message in the midst of severe suffering with the joy given by the Holy Spirit.

1 Thessalonians 1:7-10 NIV

7 And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. 8 The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it, 9 for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, 10 and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.

Divine Wrath: The Judgment Boomerang

- If God is love, what is the "wrath" of God?
- The Warfare Worldview best accounts for evil and suffering in the world—even in the universe
- God's "wrath" is reaping what is sown, experiencing the consequences of actions
- God desires to rescue all from the "wrath" that is built into the very fabric of the cosmos
- However, God's grace can be rejected (e.g. "God gave them over..." Rom 1:18,24)

God Disciplines His Children

Hebrews 12:7-9 NIV

7 Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? 8 If you are not disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all. 9 Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live!

Hebrews 12:10-13 NIV

- 10 They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness.
- 11 No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. 12 Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. 13 "Make level paths for your feet," so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed.

1 Thessalonians 2:17-20 NIV

17 But, brothers and sisters, when we were orphaned by being separated from you for a short time (in person, not in thought), out of our intense longing we made every effort to see you. 18 For we wanted to come to you—certainly I, Paul, did, again and again—but Satan blocked our way. 19 For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? 20 Indeed, you are our glory and joy.

1 Thessalonians 3:1-4 NIV

1 So when we could stand it no longer, we thought it best to be left by ourselves in Athens. 2 We sent Timothy, who is our brother and co-worker in God's service in spreading the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith, 3 so that no one would be <u>unsettled</u> by these trials. For you know quite well that we are destined for them. 4 In fact, when we were with you, we kept telling you that we would be persecuted. And it turned out that way, as you well know.

1 Thessalonians 5:1-4 NIV

1 Now, brothers and sisters, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, 2 for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. 3 While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. 4 But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief.

1 Thessalonians 5:9-11 NIV

9 For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.
10 He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him.
11 Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

"We, like the Thessalonians, need to remind one another of this as we face a world where sudden convulsions still occur, the world into which, one day, the final dawn will break... Here, emerging like a clear tune out of the complex symphony of the paragraph, is Paul's main message:

Hold fast in faith to the gospel message, and you will find in it all the comfort and strength you need."

N.T. Wright, Paul for Everyone

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