

NT 615 EXEGETICAL PROCESS NOTEBOOK¹

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PASSAGE: 1Thessalonians

Instructions: Use this template for your research. Answer the questions thoroughly and give your reasons from the Scripture passages you are investigating. Include scriptural references for easy referral later when you begin to write your projects. There are no page limits for any of the steps. This “Exegetical Process Notebook” is the work product that you will use for your final project at the end of this course.

STEP 1. SURVEY THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT IN GENERAL

1.1 Read the entire document in English in one sitting: YES NO

1.1.1 AUTHOR. Paul the apostle

- a) What **do you observe** about the identity of the author and his circumstances from your reading of the biblical book you are investigating?

The apostle Paul after spending a few months in the city of Thessalonica where he had established a church was forced to leave the city. Paul was worried about the young believers and what had happened to them in the midst of the persecution which they were experiencing. Paul was concerned whether these young believers were able to withstand the trials. Paul sent Timothy who returned with the good news of the steadfastness of the believers. Despite persecution, the Thessalonians were examples to believers everywhere. They thought about Paul, who encouraged them to rejoice in the Lord and to give thanks in everything for God who has called them, is faithful.

- b) What more do you learn about the life of the author and his situation at the time of writing from the **secondary literature** (New Testament and Old Testament Introductions, Critical Commentaries, Critical Bible Dictionaries, etc.)?

On reading “The Letters to the Thessalonians” by Abraham J. Malherbe and The Message to 1&2 Thessalonians by John R.W. Stott, I learned that Paul travelled to Thessalonica from Philippi. When he arrived in Thessalonica it was already a city with a long history. Thessalonica had a large Jewish population, Paul preached there for three consecutive Sabbaths, at a synagogue that they had established.

According to Acts 21:39, 22:3, Paul was born and lived a Jew at Tarsus. He was loyal to the ancestral faith which remained a mark of pride for him. Paul according to Acts 22:3 was educated in Jerusalem “at

the feet of Gamaliel," his teacher, noted for his spirit of tolerance. Paul was a member of the Pharisaic Party (Phil 3:5). He learned a trade of tent making and other leather work (Acts 18:3) probably from his father; practice of this trade provided Paul with the means to support his missionary activities (1Thes 2:19, 1Cor. 9:6). Prior to his conversion, Paul persecuted the Christians, Acts reported that he "made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison" (Acts 8:3). Paul looked forward to the coming of the messiah. He had heard the message of the disciples and he had been impressed by their perseverance. Paul's conversion did not involve turning to a new God (1Thes. 1:9), before or after his conversion, Paul worshipped the God of the Old Testament. Paul's conversion involved two main elements: the revelation of the Son of God, and the commission to preach Christ to the Gentiles. He was engaged in missionary work in north Galatia establishing churches in Galatia, Philippi and Thessalonica (1Thes. 1:2-3:10). Paul devoted the balance of his life to the fulfillment of God's commission.

1.1.2. **RECIPIENTS:**

*Base your answers on what you see in the text itself. You should make educated guesses about the answers to these questions from your observations. Only **after you do your work** should you consult secondary literature.*

- a) What do **you observe** about the identity of the recipients?

The recipients were the young believers of the church of Thessalonica 1Thes. 1:1.

- b) What is the relationship between the author and the recipients?

The relationship between Paul and the Thessalonians was that of a father and his children, and also, as a gentle nurse who with tender care cherishes her children.

- c) Where do the recipients live?

The recipients live in the city of Thessalonica.

- d) What are their present circumstances?

The Thessalonians are experiencing persecution, and they are concerned about believers who have passed away before the Lord's return.

- e) What historical situation occasioned this writing?

1.1.3 **PURPOSE:**

- a) What is the author's purpose for writing (explicit and implied)?

Paul's purpose for writing was to encourage and strengthen the believers in the faith, and to remind them to live in anticipation of the Lord's return.

- b) . What is the overall theme or concern?

The overall theme is the return of the Lord.

- c) Does the argument or narrative have an easily discerned outline or storyline?

I believe the narrative has an easily discerned outline.