

NT 615 EXEGETICAL PROCESS NOTEBOOK

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PASSAGE: 1 Thessalonians

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.

- 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 was a man of God who was redeemed from his sin after having a life-transforming experience with the risen Christ. In his burning desire to preach the Gospel, Paul and Silas preached Christ crucified as we see in Acts 17:2-9. This is how the Thessalonian church was planted. But Paul and Silas, unfortunately, had to leave quickly due to their lives being threatened by certain Jews that got jealous. Yet, at the first opportunity that Paul had, he sent Timothy back to Thessalonica to get an update on how the believers were doing. For he was fearing that his labor was in vain. This reveals to me that Paul was an apostle who truly cared for the lives of those he won for the Lord. He didn't just lead them to Jesus and leave them to figure things out for themselves.

- a. 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.)?**

What I learned was that Paul didn't have enough time to teach the new converts of Thessaloniki the details of Christian doctrine and to model to them what a Christian is like. Paul, therefore, sends Timothy to get an update on the Thessalonian church (Comfort, 2182).

1.1.2. RECIPIENTS:

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

What I observed about the identity of the recipients is that they are obviously gentiles in their great majority due to the presence of Jews in the city. Therefore, most

didn't know the Scriptures. The Thessalonian church, in their majority, were pagan worshippers before knowing Christ.

b. What is the relationship between the author and the recipients?

Paul had preached to the Thessalonians and had won people for the Lord yet had to abruptly leave due to the persecution that was rising in the city because of the Gospel. Paul is their apostle, their spiritual mentor, and their pastor.

c. Where do the recipients live?

The recipients live in Thessaloniki. Thessaloniki was the capital of the Roman Province of Macedonia and was also its largest city with a population of about two hundred thousand (Barton, 2189). This city was founded in 316 B.C.E by Cassander, whom Alexander the Great had left in charge of Macedonia. Cassander named the city in honor of his wife, Thessaloniki, who was a stepsister of Alexander the Great (ABD,1). Thessaloniki was also a successful seaport. The roman road that connected major cities called the Ignatian Way was the main road through Thessaloniki.

d. What are their present circumstances?

The Thessalonian church was founded under an atmosphere of persecution. Thessalonian Christians would face persecution from both residing Jews and city officials who could be manipulated by the Jews (Comfort, 2184).

e. What historical situation occasioned this writing?

As previously mentioned, Paul had planted this church with Silas according to Acts 17:2-9 but in verse ten we see the persecution against Christians had grown to such a point that Paul and Silas had to leave by night and go to Berea. Paul didn't get a sufficient amount of time in order to teach the believers the doctrine of the Christian faith and successfully disciple them. Paul had therefore sent Timothy at a later time to get an update on what had been happening with the church, fearing that his labor would be in vain. Timothy would later return to Paul with questions that the Thessalonian believers had. Therefore, this letter of 1 Thessalonians serves to encourage and instruct believers (Comfort, 2181).

1.1.3 PURPOSE:

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

The main purpose of Paul writing this letter is to strengthen the faith of the Christians in Thessaloniki. As previously stated, Paul had sent Timothy to Thessaloniki to get a report on how the believers there were doing. And thank God that Timothy had returned to Paul with an encouraging report on the Thessalonian believers. The

believers of this city had gone through severe testing and they had withstood the persecution of being followers of Christ. The Thessalonians had believed and received Paul's Gospel message and were waiting with angst for the return of the Lord Jesus. Clearly, the Holy Spirit of the Lord was working in the hearts of believers in Thessaloniki. Therefore, Paul congratulates them and answers their questions about the Christian life (Comfort, 2185).

b. What is the overall theme or concern?

The overall theme or concern of this book is persevering in the faith and remaining faithful to the Lord knowing that His return draws near.

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

The book of 1 Thessalonians does have an easily identifiable outline. Paul does seem to go from one topic to another in a way that is not confusing.

● **Who was the author, and what was his background? (If there are different views, which is the stronger position and why?)**

The author was the apostle Paul. Paul was an apostle, a missionary, a church planter, and a gifted teacher (Comfort, 2181).

● **When did he write, and what was happening at the time the book was written? (Often there are different views. Consider all the different views and ask yourself, how does my answer affect the interpretation?)**

Paul wrote this letter from the city of Corinth around the year 51 A.D. (Comfort, 2182).

● **What was the nature of his ministry?**

The nature of his ministry was to preach the Gospel with the demonstration of the power of the Holy Spirit.

● **Who was the biblical audience who heard this text, and what were their circumstances?**

The biblical audience was the church in Thessaloniki. This church had been going through severe persecution since the very beginning yet they had persevered in their faith.

● **What kind of relationship did the author have with the audience?**

Paul and his team were the ones who preached the Gospel in Thessaloniki and planted a church there.

- **Why was he writing?**

Paul was writing to congratulate the Thessalonian Christians for their enduring faith in the Lord and to answer their questions about the faith.

- **What kind of relationship did the biblical audience have with God? With each other?**

The Biblical audience was a church in Thessaloniki which means they were God's children through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

- **Are there any other historical-cultural factors that might shed light on the book?**

We see in Acts 27:1-10 that Paul and his companions plant the church in Thessalonica but quickly leave due to death threats. And the believers in this city were being persecuted also because they proclaim that Jesus is King and the unbelievers, Jews to be exact, accused that of being a threat to Caesar. When you have that in mind, it makes it clear why Paul says that the church received God's Word with joy from the Holy Spirit in midst of affliction.

STEP 2. CONFIRM THE LIMITS OF YOUR PASSAGE.

2.1. Decide where your self-contained passage begins and ends. Compare the paragraphing of seven modern translations (e.g., NRSV, NIV, NET, ASV, NASB, NKJV, etc. See Duvall and Hayes, *Grasping God's Word*, p. 17).

a. Where do the translation differ?

The translations differ in the very first verse with the ESV saying, "*Finally, then, brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more.*" While the NIV says, "*As for other matters, brothers and sisters, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more.*" See how the ESV mentions that Paul and his team urged the Thessalonians to live a life pleasing to God while the NIV just says that they instructed the church.

b. Decide for yourself what the basic unit is. Provide clear reasons based on your observations. *The final decision will be part of the whole exegetical process.*

c. **"I intend to focus on the following passage from Jonah OR 1 Thessalonians: 4:1-8."**

I intend to focus on 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8.

STEP 3. BECOME THOROUGHLY ACQUAINTED WITH YOUR PARAGRAPH.

- a. Copy these translations and mark well the differences among these translations (I like using colored highlighters).
- b. Make a list (or chart) of the differences.

	NKJV	ESV	NIV	NET	MSG
Verse 1	Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God;	Finally, then, brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more.	As for other matters, brothers and sisters, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more.	Finally then, brothers and sisters, we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received instruction from us about how you must live and please God (as you are in fact living) that you do so more and more.	1-3 One final word, friends. We ask you — <i>urge</i> is more like it— that you keep on doing what we told you to do to please God, not in a dogged religious plod, but in a living, spirited dance. You know the guidelines we laid out for you from the Master Jesus. God wants you to live a pure life.
Verse 2	for you know what commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus.	For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus.	For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus.	For you know what commands we gave you through the Lord Jesus.	
Verse 3	For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you	For this is the will of God, your sanctification: ^[b] that you	It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you	For this is God's will: that you become holy, that	

	should abstain from sexual immorality;	abstain from sexual immorality;	should avoid sexual immorality;	you keep away from sexual immorality,	
Verse 4					
Verse 5					
Verse 6					
Verse 7					
Verse 8					

Bibliography:

- Barton, Bruce B. *Life Application New Testament Commentary* . Tyndale House Publishers, 2016.
- Freedman, David Noel, et al. *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*. Yale University Press, 2008.