

Further up, Further in

Resources for Continued Study



LOOKOUT
MOUNTAIN
Presbyterian Church

“THE GOSPEL-SHAPED CHURCH”

For individual study or group discussion

Thessalonica, now called Thessaloniki, is Greece's second-largest city and was a major regional capital in the Roman province of Macedonia during Paul's time. Founded around 300–400 B.C., its strategic location between important Roman crossroads and a bustling harbor made it a key center for trade and travel. Paul visited Thessalonica during his second missionary journey with Silas and Timothy. In Acts 17:1–9, Luke records a brief account of the Thessalonian church where some Jews, a larger number of Greeks, and a few prominent women were converted under Paul's ministry. Today, Paul's letter to the church at Thessalonica instructs us on how to be a Gospel-shaped church; one that remains steadfast, living with hope in a hostile world.

The Fuel for a Gospel-Shaped Church (vv. 1–2, 4–5)

The fuel for a Gospel-shaped church is the constancy of prayer (v. 2), the assurance of sovereign love (v. 1, 4), and the work of Word and Spirit (v. 5). Paul does not just occasionally pray for the church at Thessalonica, he does so constantly. With intentionality, Paul lifts up the church before the Lord on a regular basis. He wants the church at Thessalonica to be assured that they are loved, chosen by God in Christ, and that their identity is established in the Word and work of the Holy Spirit.

- Paul describes the church as being located both *in Thessalonica* and “*in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*” (cf. John 15:1–11, 1 Corinthians 12:12–13, and Colossians 3:3). What is the significance of this dual identity? How can understanding that the church belongs to both a physical place and a spiritual reality encourage you personally?
- According to verse 4, Paul says that God chose the Thessalonians. What reasons does Paul give for this confidence? On what two evidences do he and his companions base their certainty of God's choosing?
- How did Paul and his companions share the gospel with the Thessalonians, and what made their message so impactful (v. 5)?

The Fruit of a Gospel-Shaped Church (v. 3)

In verse 3, Paul recalls the Thessalonians' faithful response to God's grace. Their “*work of faith*” was an active trust in Christ that produced obedience and visible transformation. Their love was marked by sacrificial service to one another. And their hope in Jesus Christ endured through suffering and persecution, anchored in the certainty of his return. These three graces—faith, love, and hope—are not abstract concepts but practical evidences of a church shaped by the Gospel. They flow directly from a heart changed by grace and sustained by the Spirit.

- Read Ephesians 4:1–5, Colossians 1:1–6, and Romans 5:1–5. Discuss how faith, hope, and love are evidences of salvation.
- Paul highlights the ‘*work of faith, and labor of love, and steadfastness of hope*’ of the Thessalonians (v. 3). John Calvin calls this verse ‘*a brief definition of true Christianity*.’¹ What do you think led him to that conclusion? How would you explain the connection between these three qualities and authentic Christian living?
- English theologian J.B. Lightfoot describes the three graces of faith, hope, and love as “*Faith rests on the past; love works in the present; hope looks to the future*.”² Read Psalm 77:11 (faith), Micah 6:8 (love), and Job 19:25–27 (hope). Discuss how these passages highlight Paul's message of encouragement to the church at Thessalonica found in verse 3.
- Where does the doctrine of the Trinity appear in 1 Thessalonians 1:1–5? How does Paul present each role of the Godhead concerning salvation?

DATE: August 8, 2025

SPEAKER: Chad/Brian

SERIES: 1 Thessalonians

PASSAGE: 1 Thessalonians 1:1–5

Family Dinner Table

Faith, Love, and Hope

“Your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ”
1 Thessalonians 1:3

When a church is fueled by constant prayer, rooted in God's sovereign love, and empowered by the Holy Spirit through the faithful preaching of the Word, the result will be a community marked by active faith, selfless love, and steadfast hope.

Discuss the triad of faith, love, and hope using theologian J.B. Lightfoot's definition: “*Faith rests on the past; love works in the present; hope looks to the future.*”²

Faith Rests on the Past

- Read Genesis 15:6. “*And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness.*” Can you think of something God has already done for you that helps you trust him today?

Love Works in the Present

- Read 1 John 3:18. “*Let us love...in deed and truth.*” What is one loving thing you can do for someone today?

Hope Looks to the Future

- Read Titus 2:13. “*Waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.*” What good things has God promised us in the future? How does that make you feel?

PRAY FOR HOME MISSIONS

Church of the Firstborn
strategic partner ministry

PRAY FOR WORLD MISSIONS

Friends of the Good Samaritans
world missions partners

¹ Calvin, John. *Calvin's Commentaries on the Bible*. 1979, Grand Rapids. Baker Books. 239

² Lightfoot, J.B. *St Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*. 1884, London. MacMillan & Co. 134