

1 Thessalonians 1:1–5

An Introduction to the Thessalonian Church

Small Group Bible Study Series

Source: Dr. C Norman Sellers · SellersBibleInstitute.com

① The Text NKJV or NASB	② Devotional Heart prep · days before	③ Commentary Teacher preparation	④ Self-Study Guide Group meeting
Foundation	Personal prep	Leader / Teacher	Group together
Everyone	All group members	Teacher / Leader	Small group

THE BIBLICAL TEXT

1 Thessalonians 1:1–5 (NKJV)

- 1 Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 2 We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers,
- 3 remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father,
- 4 knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God.
- 5 For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake.

② DEVOTIONAL

Read this before the group meets · approximately 1 minute

“For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance.” — 1 Thessalonians 1:5

Paul gives thanks for three things he sees in the Thessalonians: their work of faith, their labor of love, their patience of hope. He is not grateful for their activity. He is grateful for the source of their activity. Everything they do flows from something real — a faith, a love, a hope that are all directed toward Jesus Christ. That is what makes a church great.

And underneath all of it is a word Paul speaks quietly: beloved. They are beloved by God. Chosen — not because of what they have done, but because of what God decided. That security, that belovedness, is the ground everything else grows from.

Before you meet with your group, sit with that. You are also loved and chosen. The same gospel that shook Thessalonica is the one you carry. Let that be enough to bring you to the table.

For Reflection:

- Paul gives thanks for faith that works, love that labors, and hope that endures — which of these three feels most alive in your life right now, and which feels thin?
- Verse 4 calls the Thessalonians ‘beloved’ — a word rooted in God’s unconditional love. How does walking in that belovedness change how you come into a group meeting?
- The gospel came in word, power, Spirit, and the visible character of those who brought it — which of those four would someone name in your life, and which might be missing?

Come to the group ready to listen, ready to share, and ready to go deeper.

③ COMMENTARY — Sermon Outline with Notes

Teacher preparation resource · Full text organized under outline headings

A church secured in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ overflows in a faith that works, a love that labors, and a hope that endures — evidence of an election grounded in God's choosing, not their own performance.

Introduction — Background of the Book

So what is so attractive about the Thessalonian church? We are not going to cover that section today — that is next Sunday — but here is what Paul says about them, in verse six of chapter one: you became followers of us and the Lord, having received the word in much affliction with joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became examples to all of Macedonia and Greece who believed. For from you, the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Greece, but also every place — your faith toward God has gone out so that we do not need to say anything.

Keep that in mind as we look at these first five verses. We are going to look at the background — the background in geography and the background in the text.

Geographical Background: Paul's Journey to Thessalonica

Paul's first contact with the city was right after he came out of Philippi, as Paul was planning the second missionary trip. There arose a problem between him and Barnabas — so large that they split up. Paul chose Silas; Barnabas took John Mark — different directions, still missionaries, but in different ways. While visiting the churches from the first journey in south Galatia, Paul heard about one of his own converts — and there is nothing better than going back to a place where you once ministered and finding someone you taught still going on, still growing. That was Timothy: well spoken of by the brethren in Lystra and Iconium — a young man, maybe even a teenager, late teens — and Paul said, I'll add you to the team, and Timothy went along.

Paul traveled west into Asia Minor — modern Turkey; no passport needed in those days. He was trying to minister somewhere in that region, someplace he had not been before, and the Holy Spirit kept redirecting him: don't go south, don't go north, just keep going west. He came to Troas. Standing there with the Aegean Sea in front of him, he had a dream: a man from Macedonia saying, Come over and help us. They took that as the Lord's direction and went to Philippi — one of the chief cities in Macedonia — and began to preach the gospel.

There was a demon-possessed girl who followed them around saying, These men are from the Most High God. Paul expelled the demon, and they hauled him into court and threw him into jail, kept in the stocks. While he was there, an earthquake came — they were singing praises to the Lord (someone suggested singing; another joked that somebody should pass out the hymnals — but no, they did not need hymnals, they knew the hymns, probably the Psalms, by heart, and they sang them). The jail doors flew open. The jailer was responsible for all those prisoners, and he assumed everyone was gone — then Paul called out: Do yourself no harm. We are all here. The jailer asked the defining question: What must I do to be saved? Remember what Paul wrote

in his first epistle to the Galatians: if anybody brings you any other doctrine, any other gospel than what we have delivered to you, let him be accursed. So what is Paul's gospel? Follow him around and find out what he actually says when someone asks how to be saved — here it is: Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household, if they believe. That is the gospel he preached when he went into Thessalonica.

He left there — it was better for him to go than to stay and become an ongoing problem for the young church — and passed through a couple of other places before he wound up in Thessalonica, traveling west on the Ignatian Way, the main highway between Rome and the East. As his custom was (Acts 17:2), he preached three Sabbaths in the synagogue. That is only three weeks, and for that reason some people say Paul was only in Thessalonica three weeks — but that is not right. Three weeks describes only how long he was in the synagogue; he was there longer than that. He taught both Jews and Gentiles, because Gentiles were present as proselytes in the synagogue. Scripture says in Acts 17:4 that some of them were persuaded, and a great multitude of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women, joined Paul and Silas — that is expansion, and growth can be a problem. Do you know what he taught them? Prophecy. People do not understand that — why should we have prophecy in Sunday school, what are you doing? But these were people who had just come to know the Lord, and Paul was telling them Jesus is coming — and it strengthened them; we will see that. So Paul had to exit again. The Jews of the synagogue became antagonistic. Meetings moved to Jason's house, right next door to the synagogue, and the trouble continued.

Paul, Silas, and Timothy went on to Berea. The Bereans were more noble than anywhere else because they searched the Scriptures to see if the things Paul said were true — and that is a great thing to do. I would like nothing better than for someone to come to me and say, what you said was this, I don't understand it, is that true, can you show me? I do not say anything up here that I cannot show you in the Bible; I would not do that. That is what the Bereans were doing with Paul — checking, and finding, yes, Paul, you are right, reading it straight from the Scriptures. But Paul had trouble there too, and so he went on alone; the Thessalonians who had come down to Berea escorted him to the coast to take ship, and he went on down to Athens, and from Athens to Corinth (Acts 17–18). Timothy and Silas joined him there. We do not know exactly how long, but he was in Corinth probably more than a year, and it was there that Paul wrote both epistles to the Thessalonians.

I. Paul and His Companions — 1:1a

Now we come to the text. The first thing we see is Paul and his companions. Notice: not 'Paul the Apostle,' not 'Paul, the one God sent to you' — just Paul. He writes Paul the Apostle when he writes to the Galatians — they have doctrinal errors. And to the Corinthians — they had personal errors in conduct. In both cases: Paul the Apostle, I am going to tell you what to do. Not here. Here, it is simply Paul — Paul, their friend, Paul, the one they loved.

A. Paul: The Friend, Not the Apostle

No assertion of rank was needed with this congregation. Paul's relationship with them was one of mutual love and trust. The absence of the title 'apostle' reflects the health of this church.

B. Silvanus (Silas): The Senior Member

Silvanus — Silas — was the senior member of the traveling group. His experience and credibility added weight to the team and to the mission.

C. Timothy: The Leader in Training

Timothy was very much a want-to-be-like person — a leader in training. Later he was dispatched by Paul to Philippi to help them, and then he served as pastor at Ephesus. Two pastoral letters — First and Second Timothy — were written to him there. But here in Thessalonica, he was still in formation. Paul saw in him what others had already seen: someone well spoken of, worth investing in.

II. Paul and the Congregation — 1:1b–2

In the rest of verse one and verse two, he begins with a proper and significant greeting.

A. The Church Defined: The Ecclesia

The church — that is a special term. It is actually a secular word, used even in the Old Testament for any assembly of people. In Acts 19:32, it referred to the worshipers of Diana of the Ephesians — those heathen worshipers got together, and it was called a church, an ecclesia. How did it become the word for the church? Jesus took it. In Matthew 16:18 he said: on this rock I will build my congregation — I will build my church. The church universal includes every believer from Pentecost to the Rapture. But in Matthew 18:17, he says if a person has a problem, take it to the church — meaning the local assembly. Here, it is the local church in Thessalonica.

B. The Church's Identity: In God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ

He describes this church as existing in God the Father — and that gives it security, love, and the strength of the Father. But it is also in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord: that is the term for Jehovah, the title of deity. Jesus: the Old Testament name Joshua, which means salvation, deliverer. Christ: Messiah, the anointed one, prophesied in the Old Testament to come to the Jewish people and to the world. He is God. He is man. He is the Messiah.

C. The Apostolic Greeting: Grace and Peace

Grace to you — it almost sounds like the tagline of a radio program. Grace: unearned, unmerited favor — or better, favor in spite of demerit. It is not just that we do not deserve his grace. It is that we deserve his fury, his judgment — and he gives us grace instead. Peace — the Greek word *eirēnē* (we get the name Irene from it; an Irene ought to be a very peaceful lady), the Hebrew *shalom*: wholeness, welfare, prosperity of spirit. So: grace to you, and peace to you.

III. The Prayer of Gratitude — 1:2–5

A. The Circumstance of the Prayer: Thanksgiving Joined to Intercession — 1:2

“We give thanks always for you all.”

The 'we' here likely includes all three men — Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy — but that does not make them co-authors; Paul wrote the letter. It is more like an editorial we, the way a newspaper says 'we decide,' 'we think this,' 'we plan this' — not everybody, just the one writing, the way a king says 'we are happy for you' and means himself. That is a royal we, meaning me. So when Paul says we, he is not saying they all wrote the letter with him. The thanksgiving is accompanied by prayer, and it ought to be — if I am thankful for you, I should be praying for you. That should be true of all of us, not just something we sing about, but something we do. The last thing we say when we part is, I will pray for you — and we ought to mean it. Paul says, in every prayer of ours, we pray for you all — not missing anybody; not everybody is easy to pray for, but we pray for everybody. Paul must have had a long prayer list, because he prayed for all of them, every individual, by name, on a regular basis, always — unless he simply had a great memory. I knew a fellow teacher at Miami Christian College who carried a good-sized piece of paper around with him, listing names, and he recommended it to his students: get people's names on a list, and pray for them. That is likely what Paul did too.

B. The Content of the Prayer: The Triad of Faith, Love, and Hope — 1:3

1. Work of Faith

Not busy work — work that results from faith. If they did not have the faith, they could not do the work. It was obvious to Paul that their activity was a result of seeking God's will and depending on his power. That is the work he is grateful for — work that brings results beyond any human expectation.

2. Labor of Love

Not just labor — labor that comes out of love. Someone has said the church needs love for the Lord Jesus Christ; obviously it also needs love for each other, but it also needs love for the lost. God so loved the world. If we are going to do God's work, we need that kind of love — the kind that reaches toward the world.

3. Patience (Endurance) of Hope

The endurance inspired by hope — specifically, endurance in tribulation. It comes from placing your hope in the Lord Jesus Christ. All three — faith, love, hope — have Christ as both their source and their object. Your faith in Jesus Christ, your love for Jesus Christ, your endurance looking for Jesus Christ. It was observed by God the Father and commended by him.

C. The Core of the Prayer: Election by God's Choosing — 1:4

“Knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God.”

Any preacher loves to get hold of this verse — every commentary runs on and on about election. Paul, in this very sentence about election, calls them brothers — a word he uses twenty-two times across First and Second Thessalonians, fifteen in the first letter and seven in the second. It would be illogical in this context for him to put himself above them — they are brothers, equal. And they are more than brothers — they are beloved by God. They did not become elect by their own work; they became elect by God's choosing.

Ryrie, in his study Bible, puts it this way: God's choosing is sovereign, God's choosing is for salvation — and then he adds something that sounds a little strange: and it is proved by works

that accompany salvation. I hesitated over that. Ryrie is my hero — he was president of the college I attended, and a year later he turned up at the seminary I went to as well; I was there three years, and he was there the whole time. So I trust him. But I said, wait a minute — proved to whom? Proved to yourself? No. My works do not prove my own salvation to me. My proof of election and my salvation is the Word of God — it tells me that when I believed, he gave me eternal life, and eternal means forever. My works do not prove to me that I am a believer or that I am elect. But there is another kind of proof, and it is necessary — proof to other people. You do not know anything about me except what you see. You might look at my life and say, well, maybe he's a believer — or you might say, yes, he clearly is, because you can see it in how he lives. James, in chapter two, verses 23 to 26, talks about two kinds of justification: justification by faith, before God, and justification by works, before men. Before God, justification is by belief alone. Before men, you look at the works, and you judge by that — but there is no such thing as salvation by faith and works together. That is why James can speak of Abraham being justified by works without contradicting how Abraham was declared righteous in the first place: God had already declared Abraham righteous thirty years earlier, in Genesis 15:6, when Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him for righteousness. James makes the same point using Hagar as well. In every case, the justification in view there is justification before other people — by my works — and that is what I believe Paul is pointing to here as well.

D. The Confidence of the Prayer: The Power of the Gospel — 1:5

“For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance...”

The gospel is always in word. There is no salvation by osmosis — the word must be heard or read. People are living and dying without hearing about Jesus Christ. That is why missions exist. But it came also in power. Romans 1:16: I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation to everyone who believes. The gospel has power. We do not just say the words — we allow them to sink in, we explain them, we show them in our lives.

1. The Holy Word

The word goes to the mind. The Holy Spirit takes the message to the heart — the spiritual center of the person — and gives spiritual life to someone who was already spiritually dead. Regeneration is a work of the Holy Spirit alone. We do not save people. We give people the gospel, and the Holy Spirit does the rest.

2. The Holy Spirit

As Paul said, he saw it with much assurance. Paul went downtown with one weapon, and with that weapon he could withstand the methods of Satan, the hardness of men's hearts, the blindness of their spiritual sight. The gospel is God's grace in action. The Holy Spirit is the one who makes it land.

3. The Holy Walk: Paul's Example — 1:5d

“...as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake.”

The gospel goes out backed up by the life of the messenger. A pure gospel must be served up by pure vessels — 2 Timothy 2: if anyone cleanses himself from sin, he will be a vessel for

honor, sanctified and useful for the master, prepared for every good work. Holy Word, through the Holy Spirit, backed up by a holy walk, produces holy people — saints of God.

The Church of Thessalonica was a great church. From what we see in Scripture, it is probably the finest work that Paul did — or that the Lord did through Paul. We need to see that, and we will see a great deal more of it, especially next Sunday — how they worked, what they did, just pagans coming to know the Lord and then opening up to become the church that stands out in the New Testament.

Lord, thank You.

④ SELF-STUDY GUIDE

For use during the group meeting · Focused on the commentary text

Greek Word Study

Grammar and parsing per Blue Letter Bible. Sources cited selectively — only where a source most clearly establishes the word's meaning and significance in this verse.

Verse	Greek Word (Lexical Form) / English Translation	Strong's # / Transliteration / Grammatical Form	Definition & Significance
v. 1	ἐκκλησία church	G1577 ekklēsia Dat. Sg. Fem.	STR: Called-out assembly — originally a secular Greek term for any public gathering. VINE: Used even of a pagan civic gathering (Acts 19:32) before Christ claimed it in Matthew 16:18 for both the universal body of believers and, in Matthew 18:17, the local congregation — cross-passage usage shows the word carries both senses depending on context. Significance: Here it designates the local church in Thessalonica specifically, not the universal church.
v. 1	χάρις grace	G5485 charis Nom. Sg. Fem.	STR: Grace, favor, loving-kindness. THAY: Thayer's nuance is decisive here: favor extended to those who deserve the opposite — not merely unmerited but contrary-to-merited. Significance: We do not merely fail to deserve God's grace — we deserve his fury, his judgment — and he gives us grace instead.
v. 1	εἰρήνη peace	G1515 eirēnē Nom. Sg. Fem.	STR: Peace, wholeness. LXX: The Greek OT consistently uses this word to render the Hebrew shalom — wholeness, welfare, and prosperity of spirit — carrying that fuller sense into the NT greeting rather than a mere absence of conflict. Significance: A positive flourishing that God alone gives, not simply an absence of hostility.
v. 2	εὐχαριστέω we give thanks	G2168 eucharistoumen Pres. Ind. Act. 1st Pl.	STR: To give thanks, be grateful — root of 'Eucharist.' ATR: The present tense marks a continuous, maintained posture of gratitude, not an isolated act of thanksgiving offered once. Significance: Genuine thanksgiving for a person always produces ongoing prayer for that person — the two are inseparable in Paul's practice.
v. 3	ἔργον	G2041	STR: Work, deed — purposeful activity.

	work	ergou Gen. Sg. Neut.	VINE: Used broadly across the NT for the outworking of an inward reality — cross-passage usage confirms this is fruit that flows from a source, not effort generated independently of it. Significance: Paul uses ergon for the general outworking of faith — not busyness, but Spirit-empowered fruitfulness that results from trust in God.
v. 3	κόπος labor	G2873 kopou Gen. Sg. Masc.	STR: Labor, toil — stronger than ergon. MRV: Classically implies exhausting, costly effort to the point of weariness, distinct from ordinary activity — Vincent's background note sharpens the sacrificial weight of the word. Significance: Paul uses kopos for the sacrificial toil driven specifically by love — labor that costs something.
v. 3	ύπομονή patience	G5281 hypomonēs Gen. Sg. Fem.	STR: Patient endurance, steadfastness. VINE: Used elsewhere of active perseverance under sustained pressure (cf. Heb. 12:1) — cross-passage usage confirms this is not passive waiting but disciplined endurance. Significance: Produced not by willpower but by hope fixed on Christ's return.
v. 4	έκλογή election	G1589 eklogēn Acc. Sg. Fem.	STR: Election, choosing. THAY: Thayer's nuance emphasizes the sovereignty of the act — God's selecting for salvation originating entirely in his own will, not in human merit or foreseen works. Significance: The Thessalonians did not become elect by their work; they became elect by God's choosing, and their works became evidence of it to others.
v. 4	άγαπητός beloved	G27 agapētoi Voc. Pl. Masc.	STR: Beloved — from agapē, God's highest, unconditional covenant love. VINE: Used consistently throughout the NT as a term of covenant affection rather than casual fondness — cross-passage usage confirms the weight of the term. Significance: The Thessalonians are not merely appreciated; they are the objects of God's own love, which grounds their election.
v. 5	εύαγγέλιον gospel	G2098 euangelion Nom. Sg. Neut.	STR: Gospel, good news — eu (good) + angelion (announcement). ATR: Grammatically a proclamation of accomplished fact rather than an offer or proposal — the noun form itself carries the sense of a message already true, not merely hoped for. Significance: A proclamation of what God has already done in Christ. No one is saved apart

			from this word.
v. 5	δύναμις power	G1411 dynamēi Dat. Sg. Fem.	STR: Power — root of 'dynamite.' VINE: Used elsewhere of the gospel's saving power (Rom. 1:16) — cross-passage usage confirms this is supernatural, regenerating energy, not rhetorical persuasiveness. Significance: The supernatural energy of God that accompanies proclamation and regenerates the spiritually dead — not human argument, but divine action.
v. 5	πληροφορία assurance	G4136 plērophoria Dat. Sg. Fem.	STR: Full assurance, complete conviction — from plērēs (full) + pherō (carry). THAY: Thayer's nuance: confidence so complete it leaves no room for doubt, describing the settled certainty of the messenger, not merely the content of the message. Significance: The quality of Paul's bold, Spirit-filled preaching — conviction that left no room for doubt.

Grammar Abbreviation Key

Category	Abbreviations
Cases (Nouns / Adjectives)	Nom. (Nominative) · Gen. (Genitive) · Dat. (Dative) · Acc. (Accusative) · Voc. (Vocative)
Number	Sg. (Singular) · Pl. (Plural)
Gender	Masc. (Masculine) · Fem. (Feminine) · Neut. (Neuter)
Verb Mood	Ind. (Indicative) · Imp. (Imperative) · Subj. (Subjunctive) · Opt. (Optative) · Inf. (Infinitive) · Ptc. (Participle)
Verb Tense	Pres. (Present) · Imperf. (Imperfect) · Fut. (Future) · Aor. (Aorist) · Perf. (Perfect) · Plpf. (Pluperfect)
Verb Voice	Act. (Active) · Mid. (Middle) · Pass. (Passive)
Verb Person / Number	1st Sg. / 1st Pl. · 2nd Sg. / 2nd Pl. · 3rd Sg. / 3rd Pl.

Study Questions

Part 1 — From the Commentary

Review the outline as a group before moving to the discussion questions.

Outline Point (Commentary)	Commentary Summary
I — Paul and His Companions (1:1a)	Paul writes without the title 'Apostle' — a mark of the church's health and their mutual love and trust.
II — Paul and the Congregation (1:1b–2)	

Part 2 — Study Questions

Leader answer boxes are drawn from the Commentary and Greek Word Study above.

1. Why does Paul NOT use the title 'Apostle' here, as he does in Galatians and 1 Corinthians?

Leader Answer:

In Galatians and 1 Corinthians, Paul's authority was being challenged or his churches were in error, so he asserted his apostolic title at once. The Thessalonians had no such problems. Paul writes simply as 'Paul' — their friend and brother. The absence of the title reflects the health of this congregation and the depth of their mutual love. He uses the plural 'brothers' 22 times across the two letters — he is standing with them, not over them.

2. What is the difference between 'ergon' (work) and 'kopos' (labor) in verse 3, and why does Paul use both?

Leader Answer:

Ergon denotes purposeful activity that results from an internal source — here, faith. Kopos is heavier: exhausting, costly toil. Paul uses ergon for the fruitfulness that flows naturally from genuine faith, and kopos for the sacrificial exertion that only love can sustain. Together they describe a church that is not merely active but sacrificially committed — and both words are needed to capture the full picture.

3. The sermon discusses two kinds of justification from James 2. What are they, and how do they help us understand 'election' in verse 4?

Leader Answer:

James 2 presents (1) justification before God — by faith alone; God declared Abraham righteous in Genesis 15:6 thirty years before the visible act of obedience. (2) Justification before men — the outward evidence others observe. Election (eklogē) is God's sovereign act; works do not cause it but provide public evidence of it to others. A believer's own assurance of election rests on the Word of God — not on self-assessment of their conduct.

4. How does 'dynamis' (power) differ from ordinary human persuasion, and what role does the Holy Spirit play?

Leader Answer:

Human persuasion works on the mind through argument and rhetoric. Dynamis is supernatural divine energy that accompanies the proclaimed word and actually regenerates the spiritually dead. The preacher carries the word to the mind; the Holy Spirit carries it from the mind to the heart and imparts life. No human method can produce new birth. We give people the gospel; the Holy Spirit does the saving.

5. The church is described in verse 1 as existing 'in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.' What does this prepositional phrase secure for the congregation, and why does it matter that their identity is stated before anything is asked of them?

Leader Answer:

Being 'in' the Father and the Son describes a settled position, not a performance to maintain — security, love, and strength that come from union with God, stated as fact before any instruction follows. Everything Paul goes on to commend (their faith, love, hope, election) grows out of a status already secured, not the other way around. Identity precedes activity throughout this passage.

Part 3 — Passage Summary

Review the table as a group to see the whole passage at a glance.

Verse	Key Truth	Key Greek Term(s)
1:1a	Paul writes as brother, not authority — no apostolic title needed	—
1:1b	The church is secured in God the Father and in Christ	Ekklēsia · Eirēnē
1:2	Unceasing thanksgiving and intercession for all of them	Eucharistoumen
1:3	Faith, love, and hope — all sourced in and directed toward Christ	Ergon · Kopos · Hypomonē
1:4	God's sovereign choosing grounds their identity as beloved	Eklogē · Agapētoi
1:5a–c	The gospel arrives in word, power, and the Holy Spirit	Euangelion · Dynamis
1:5d	The messenger's own life confirms the message he carries	Plērophoria

⑤ APPLICATION

These applications arise directly from the text and the sermon. Consider each one personally and as a member of your local church.

Application 1 — Examine the Source of Your Activity

Scripture Anchor: 1 Thessalonians 1:3 — “...remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Source: Commentary §III.B (The Content of the Prayer) and Greek Word Study — ἔργον, κόπος, ὑπομονή

The Thessalonians were remarkable not because they were busy but because their activity flowed from the right source — faith, love, and hope, all directed toward Christ. Paul is not praising activity; he is praising activity that results from a living relationship with God. Work from obligation looks like work from faith, until the pressure arrives.

Personal Reflection: Take an honest inventory of your current involvement at church. Ask: Why am I doing this? If the answer is guilt, habit, or reputation, ask God to root your service in genuine trust in him — the kind that depends on his power to do what you cannot.

Practical Step: Before any ministry activity this week, pause and pray: ‘Lord, I am doing this because I trust you, love you, and am looking for you.’ If you cannot pray that sincerely, examine whether the motivation needs to change before the activity continues.

Application 2 — Build and Maintain an Intercessory Prayer List

Scripture Anchor: 1 Thessalonians 1:2 — “We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers.”

Source: Commentary §III.A (The Circumstance of the Prayer) and Greek Word Study — εὐχαριστοῦμεν

Paul prayed for all of them — every individual — without ceasing. He almost certainly kept a written list. Gratitude and intercession are inseparable: genuine thanksgiving for a person always produces prayer for that person. The gap between saying ‘I will pray for you’ and actually praying is one of the most common failures in pastoral care.

Personal Reflection: When you say ‘I will pray for you,’ do you follow through? Paul’s model closes the gap entirely — thanksgiving and prayer are one continuous act, maintained without ceasing.

Practical Step: Write out a prayer list of people in your church by name. Commit to praying through that list at least three times this week. Notice what happens to your feelings toward those people as you intercede for them regularly.

Application 3 — Let Your Life Confirm the Message You Carry

Scripture Anchor: 1 Thessalonians 1:5d — “...as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake.”

Source: Commentary §III.D.3 (The Holy Walk: Paul’s Example)

The gospel came to Thessalonica not only in word and power but in the visible character of the messengers. A pure gospel must be served up by pure vessels. The formula is exact: Holy Word + Holy Spirit + holy walk = holy people. The messenger’s life is part of the message.

Personal Reflection: If people who hear you talk about Christ were to observe your private life this week — your speech, your habits, your integrity when no one is watching — would they find confirmation or contradiction of the message? Paul could point to his own life as evidence.

Practical Step: Identify one area where your conduct does not yet match your confession. Confess it, receive God's grace, and ask the Holy Spirit for power to change. Ask a trusted believer to hold you accountable in that specific area.

Application 4 — Ground Your Identity in Who You Are, Not What You Do

Scripture Anchor: 1 Thessalonians 1:1b, 4 — "...to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ... your election by God."

Source: Commentary §II.A–B (The Church Defined; The Church's Identity) and §III.C (The Core of the Prayer) and Greek Word Study — ἐκκλησία, ἐκλογή, ἀγαπητοί

The church exists 'in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.' These believers are 'beloved by God' and chosen by his election. Their security does not rest on the quality of their work, the steadiness of their love, or the strength of their hope — it rests on who God is and what he has decided. That foundation is what makes extraordinary fruitfulness possible.

Corporate Reflection: As a church, are we building our confidence on programs, attendance, or reputation? Or are we resting in the reality that we exist in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ — a security no circumstance can remove?

Practical Step: Memorize 1 Thessalonians 1:1b this week: 'to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.' Let that define your identity before any description of your activity or performance.

For further study on assurance grounded in God's sovereign choosing rather than the believer's performance, see Charles C. Ryrie, *So Great Salvation: What It Means to Believe in Jesus Christ* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1989) — FGR Category ③.

End of Study · 1 Thessalonians 1:1–5