

# Bible Reading Notes

## July 2020 – 1 Thessalonians

*These notes are easy to install on most phones or tablets.*

*Install the 'PrayerMate' App and you'll find it under  
'subscribe to online feeds' and 'Devotional'.*

*It's called St Philemon's Bible Notes.*

### How to use these Bible reading notes

These Bible reading notes are a resource to help you dig into God's word and allow it to change your life. 'A little and often' is a good motto. If you miss a day (or several!), don't feel guilty or try to catch up; just pick up wherever the notes have got to. Here's a guide to get the most out of these notes:

1. Find a time and place where you can be quiet but awake.
2. Ask God to help you understand.
3. Use the notes to help you think about the passage:
  - *'Read' sections get you thinking for yourself about the verses.*
  - *'Apply' sections suggest how they make a difference to you and how to pray in response.*
4. Pray about what you have read.
5. Look for an opportunity to share with someone what God has told you.

## **1<sup>st</sup> July**

This month we're looking at the letter of 1 Thessalonians. When this letter was written, the church in Thessalonica was a young church, and Paul wants to encourage them to push on in their faith, love and hope in the face of suffering. He wants us to push on, too!

### **You're the real deal!**

First, Paul needs to assure the Thessalonians that they're really Christians – so that they don't give up in suffering.

### **Read 1 Thessalonians 1:1-3**

- Who's writing this letter? Who are they writing to?
- What does Paul remember about the Thessalonians before God?
- How would this help assure the Thessalonians that they're really Christians?

### **Pray**

- Why not thank God for the work, labour and endurance of Christians you know?

**2<sup>nd</sup> July**

## **Chosen?**

Have you ever worried about if God's ever chosen you? Today, Paul is continuing to assure the Thessalonians that they really are Christians, so that they don't give up on the faith.

## **Read 1 Thessalonians 1:4-7**

- How does Paul know that God has chosen the Thessalonians (v.4-5)?
- How do we see the power of the gospel at work in verse 6?

## **Apply**

- If you are a follower of Jesus, what makes it difficult to believe that God has chosen you?
- How does the power of the gospel assure you that God really has chosen you?

**3<sup>rd</sup> July**

## **Famous faith**

Paul is writing to the church he started in Thessalonica to encourage them to push on as Christians, and not give up in the face of suffering.

## **Read 1 Thessalonians 1:8-10**

- What do we learn about the Thessalonians' faith (v.9-10)?
- How would this help to assure the Thessalonians their faith is real?

This is a good description of what happens when anyone becomes a Christian.

- What does it mean to 'turn to God from idols'?
- What does it mean to 'wait for God's Son'?

## **Apply**

Think to yourself: Has there been a time when you turned to God and started waiting for Jesus' return?

- If not, do you understand what that means? Is anything stopping you from turning to God?
- If so, you can feel assured (along with the Thessalonians) that your faith is real, and thank God!

**4<sup>th</sup> July**

## **Genuine?**

Christians sometimes wonder if we really need to listen to the apostle Paul. Paul is concerned the Thessalonians might be thinking that too.

## **Read 1 Thessalonians 2:1-3**

- How does Paul show us that his visit to them wasn't 'without results' (v.2)?
- What does Paul's perseverance through opposition tell us about how he views the gospel?
- How does Paul's willingness to endure opposition for the gospel show that he's a genuine gospel minister?

## **Apply**

- Why does it matter to us that Paul is the real deal as a gospel minister?
- How does Paul being authoritative affect how we listen to him?
- When might that be challenging?

**5<sup>th</sup> July**

## **Paul is the real deal**

Paul is reminding the Thessalonians that he is the real deal as a gospel minister, so that they view him as authoritative and keep listening to him.

## **Read 1 Thessalonians 2:3-7a**

- What evidence does Paul give that he is a genuine gospel minister?
- Why would it be a problem if Paul were trying to trick the Thessalonians with his message?
- How does Paul being 'God-approved' encourage the Thessalonians to listen to him and so persevere in the face of suffering?

## **Apply**

Primarily Paul is proving that we can and should reliably listen to him. However, secondarily we can learn lessons from Paul about how we speak about Jesus with others.

- Why might we be tempted to please people instead of God when speaking of the gospel?
- How does knowing that God tests heart encourage us to be genuine gospel ministers, like Paul?

## 6<sup>th</sup> July

### Longing

Most Sundays in July, we're going to look at some of Psalm 119 (the longest Psalm in the Bible), and see how the Psalmist views God's word.

### Read Psalm 119:81-88

- How does the Psalmist feel? (v.81-82)
- Why does he feel like that? (v.83-87)
- How does the Psalmist react to persecution? How does he view God's word?

### Apply

- Can you relate at all to how the Psalmist feels?
- How does this Psalm help us in the wait for our salvation?

**7<sup>th</sup> July**

## **Paul's care**

Paul is reminding the Thessalonians of his time with them, so that they remember him kindly and keep listening to him.

## **Read 1 Thessalonians 2:7-8**

- How does Paul describe his care for the Thessalonians?
- What words would you use to describe the care of a nursing mother?
- What did Paul's care look like in verse 8?
- Why was Paul willing to share the gospel and his own life?

## **Apply**

- What would it look like for us to share our lives with people, as well as the gospel?

## **Pray**

- Pray that you'd love people so much that you want to share your life and the gospel with them.
- Why not pray that about a specific individual?

**8<sup>th</sup> July**

## **Remember, remember**

Paul is reminding the Thessalonians that they know he genuinely cares for them.

## **Read 1 Thessalonians 2:9-12**

- What does Paul remind the Thessalonians of in these verses?
- How would this help the Thessalonians to keep listening to Paul through suffering?
- How was Paul like a father to the Thessalonians (v.11-12)?

## **Apply**

Paul says some hard truths in the Bible that our society finds controversial and we can find hard to swallow.

- How does considering Paul's character help us to keep listening to him?
- What would it look like for us to follow Paul's example and encourage, comfort and urge each other to live lives worthy of God?

**9<sup>th</sup> July**

## **God's word works!**

Paul has been reminding the Thessalonians why they should listen to him and his gospel, and so persevere as Christians.

### **Read 1 Thessalonians 2:13-16**

- Why does Paul thank God for the Thessalonians in verse 13?
- What does it mean to receive the word of God 'not as a human word' but as 'the word of God'?
- How do we see that God's word is at work in the Thessalonians (v.14)?
- How normal is it for people to suffer at the hands of the Jews? How would that encourage the Thessalonians?

### **Apply**

It's surprising to think of suffering as a sign that God's word is working; we tend to think the opposite!

- How does this passage challenge our view of suffering for being a Christian?

**10<sup>th</sup> July**

## **Background check**

Yesterday we heard that Paul was driven out of Thessalonica. Today we're going to find out what happened by looking at the history of the situation in the book of Acts.

## **Read Acts 17:1-10**

- What did Paul explain about Jesus?

Messiah means God's chosen King, whom God promised to send into the world.

- What was the result of Paul's reasoning (v.4-7)?
- Why did Paul have to leave Thessalonica?

## **Pray**

- Pray for persecuted Christians around the world, that they too would boldly proclaim that Jesus is God's King!

**11<sup>th</sup> July**

## **Longing**

We're looking at Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians. Paul has previously visited the Thessalonians and wants them to remember him kindly, so that they push on in their faith, love and hope in the face of suffering. He wants us to push on, too!

## **Read 1 Thessalonians 2:17-20**

- How does Paul feel about being separated from the Thessalonians (v.17-18)?
- Why does Paul want to see them so badly (v.19-20)?
- What does Paul mean that the Thessalonians are 'the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus'?
- Why does Paul tell the Thessalonians that he was longing to see them?

## **Apply**

- Do we care most that other believers have a happy and healthy life now, or that they're standing firm as Christians when the Lord Jesus returns?
- How might Paul's concerns help to shape ours?

**12<sup>th</sup> July**

## **In vain?**

Today we learn that Paul sent Timothy, his co-worker, to the Thessalonians...

## **Read 1 Thessalonians 3:1-5**

- Why did Paul send Timothy to the Thessalonians (v.1-3, 5)?
- What does Paul fear had happened? (v.5)
- Should the Thessalonians be surprised by Paul being persecuted? (v.4)
- Why do you think Paul tells them of his fears for them?

## **Pray**

Think about how Satan might tempt you from the faith; what lies might he try to get you to believe?

- Pray that Satan won't tempt you away from the faith – so that the labour of whoever told you the gospel isn't in vain.
- Why not pray that for some other people at your church, too?

**13<sup>th</sup> July**

## **Eternal word**

We're returning to Psalm 119, and seeing how the Psalmist views God's word.

## **Read Psalm 119:89-96**

- What do we learn about God's word and His faithfulness? (v.89-91)
- How does the Psalmist view God's word? (v.92-96)

## **Apply**

- Why is it a great thing that God's word stands the test of time?
- How does this Psalm remind you why the Bible is so precious?
- Praise God for His word!

**14<sup>th</sup> July**

## **Timothy's report**

Yesterday we saw how Paul sent Timothy to visit the Thessalonians for fear that his gospel work might have been in vain...

## **Read 1 Thessalonians 3:6-10**

- What did Timothy bring news of?
- Why's it important to Paul that the Thessalonians have 'pleasant memories' of them? (Think about why Paul has been reminding them of his visit.)
- Compare 1 Thessalonians 1:3 and 3:6. What's missing in chapter 3? (We'll see the significance of this in chapter 4!)
- Why was Paul encouraged and thankful? (v.7-8)

## **Apply**

Are there any Christian friends you've been out of touch with recently? Maybe someone who's been missing from church recently?

- Pray that you'd share Paul's concern for other believers standing in the faith
- Why not get try and get in touch with them!

**15th July**

## **Paul's prayer**

Having assured the Thessalonians that it's worth persevering in the faith, and that he is to be listened to, Paul prays for the Thessalonians – which gives us a clue of where he's heading in the letter too!

## **Read 1 Thessalonians 3:11-13**

- What are the three things that Paul prays for the Thessalonians?
- How in the letter so far have we seen Paul's love overflowing for the Thessalonians? What scale of love is Paul praying for?
- Why does Paul want God to strengthen the Thessalonians hearts?

## **Pray**

We can join with Paul, and pray for ourselves that the Lord would make our love increase for each other, and for the Lord to strengthen our hearts so that we'll be standing firm blameless before Him when Jesus returns.

**16<sup>th</sup> July**

## **Please God**

Having reminded the Thessalonians that he's worth listening to, Paul moves on to encouraging the Thessalonians to push on in their faith, hope and love.

## **Read 1 Thessalonians 4:1-2**

- Is the idea of pleasing God new to the Thessalonians (v.1)? Why?
- Are the Thessalonians allowed to get complacent about pleasing God? (v.1)
- Why does Paul urge them to please God more and more? (v.2)

## **Apply**

We don't please God *to* be saved but because we *have been* saved.

- How do you view pleasing God? Does anything suggest you might have got complacent in doing so?
- What might it look like for you to please God more and more, in the Lord Jesus?

**17<sup>th</sup> July**

## **God's will**

We often wonder what God's will for our life is. Here Paul tells us!

### **Read 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8**

- What is God's will for the Thessalonians? (v.3)
- (Sanctified means to be pure and free from sin)
- What does it look like to be 'sanctified' in verses 3-6?
- Why should we live such honourable lives? (v.6-7)
- In verses 6-8, how serious is it to reject this instruction?

### **Apply**

- What do you think about God's will for us to be pure and free from sin?
- How might that impact how much you value purity?
- What areas of your life do you neglect (or even resist) purity in?
- How might knowing what God's will is help you to fight for purity?

## 18<sup>th</sup> July

We're back in 1 Thessalonians. Paul is writing to encourage the church he visited in Thessalonica to push on in their faith, love and hope in the face of suffering. He wants us to push on, too!

### **Love, love, love**

Paul talks to the Thessalonians about their love...

### **Read 1 Thessalonians 4:9-10**

- How does Paul rate the Thessalonians' love?
- Why, then, is Paul writing to them about love (v.10)?

### **Apply**

Loving others 'more and more' is costly to us; it's also costly to God. 1 John 4:10 says:

'This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.'

- How does remembering God's love to us in Jesus' sacrificial death motivate 'more and more' love?
- In chapter 2, Paul loved the Thessalonians by sharing his life with them, as well as the gospel. How could we love other Christians 'more and more'?

**19th July**

## **Lazy? A busybody?**

Paul is writing to this young church to encourage them to persevere and to grow in their faith, love and hope.

### **Read 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12**

- What two things does Paul mean when he says the Thessalonians should 'lead a quiet life' in verse 11?
- What reasons does Paul give for this (v.12)?
- Why is it a loving thing not to be unnecessarily dependent (a burden) on anyone?

## **Apply**

Paul isn't belittling those who genuinely need to be dependent on others. But he is challenging those of us who aren't the exception.

- How are you challenged by not being a busybody or not being idle about work?
- How do Paul's reasons motivate you?
- If you're not working hard at the moment and could be, what next steps could you take towards 'working with your hands'?

**20<sup>th</sup> July**

## **Eternal word**

We're returning to Psalm 119, and seeing how the Psalmist views God's word.

## **Read Psalm 119:97-104**

- How does the Psalmist consider God's word?
- How does it impact the Psalmist?
- How do understanding and hating evil link together? (v.104)

## **Apply**

- What keeps us from loving God's word the way the Psalmist does?
- Pray that you would experience God's words as being sweeter than honey!

**21st July**

## **'Hope problem'**

Paul is encouraging the Thessalonians to press on as Christians. However, something standing in the way of this is their 'hope problem'...

### **Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14**

- What are the Thessalonians 'uninformed' about?  
The Thessalonians expected Jesus to return in their lifetime – but Jesus hasn't returned & people are dying...

- How could this cause the persecuted Thessalonians, to give up on their faith?
- Why don't we need to grieve for Christians who 'sleep in death' like those who have no hope (v.14)?
- How would this encourage the Thessalonians to keep going as Christians?

### **Apply**

- How does this hope impact how we grieve when a Christian we love dies?
- How does this give us confidence when people are persecuted for being Christians?

**22<sup>nd</sup> July**

## **Hope!**

Paul is clearing up the Thessalonians 'hope problem', so that they don't think being a Christian is pointless.

## **Read 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18**

- What's the sequence of events at Jesus' return?
- When Jesus returns, will there be any difference between people who have fallen asleep (died) and those still alive? Why?
- What difference does this make to people who face a real threat of death for being a Christian?
- Why does Paul want the Thessalonians to 'encourage each other with these words (v.18)?

## **Apply**

Death is a horrible thing, but for Christians there is hope!

- What makes this truth hard to believe?
- How does listening to Paul's words give us confidence when we think about our own deaths?
- If you wouldn't call yourself a Christian, what do you think about this hope beyond death?

**23rd July**

## **Jesus will return**

Having cleared up their 'hope problem', Paul reminds the Thessalonians about the 'day of the Lord'; about the day Jesus returns.

### **Read 1 Thessalonians 5:1-3**

- What will Jesus' return be like (v.2)?
- What does that mean?
- What will Jesus' return be like for those people who are not trusting in Jesus (v.3)?

### **Apply**

- Do you believe that Jesus could return at any moment?
- What in your life shows that you do/don't believe that Jesus could return at any time?
- How does verse 3 motivate you to want to speak to others about the fact Jesus will return?

**24<sup>th</sup> July**

## **Daytime**

Paul is helping the Thessalonians to push on as Christians by helping them to think about living in light of their future hope.

### **Read 1 Thessalonians 5:1-6**

- Should Jesus' return catch Christians off-guard? Why? (v.4-5)
- Does it matter if people aren't ready? (v.3)
- Given this truth, how should Christians live? (v.6)
- What does 'be awake' mean? (We'll think about 'being sober' on Monday).

## **Apply**

Think about why it matters that you're ready for Jesus' return. If it would help you to remember your reasons, you could write them down.

- How can you actively be more awake to Jesus' return? Try and think about 3 practical steps you could take.

## 25<sup>th</sup> July

When the letter of 1 Thessalonians was written, the church in Thessalonica was a young church, and Paul wants to encourage them to push on in their faith, love and hope in the face of suffering. He wants us to push on, too!

### **We belong to the day**

Paul is encouraging the Thessalonians to push on as Christians, by living in light of Jesus' return.

### **Read 1 Thessalonians 5:6-9**

- How should we behave, since we aren't asleep? (v.6)
- Why (v.7-8)?
- What does Paul mean 'we belong to the day'?
- What does it mean to be 'sober', in this context? (v.8)

### **Pray**

Part of being sober and awake is praying for Jesus to return. It's in the Lord's Prayer: 'Your kingdom come'!

- Why not spend some time praying for Jesus to return?

**26<sup>th</sup> July**

## **Living forever**

Paul is giving the Thessalonians (and us) another reason to be 'awake and sober'.

## **Read 1 Thessalonians 5:9-11**

- What reason does Paul give to be sober? (v.9-10)
- How does being ready for Jesus' return link with not suffering God's right anger (wrath)?
- Thinking back over the past few days, what truth does Paul want the Thessalonians to encourage one another with?
- How would such encouragement help the suffering Thessalonians to grow as Christians?

## **Apply**

- How does knowing that Jesus died so you can live with him encourage you to live a life that's pleasing to the Lord?

**27<sup>th</sup> July**

## **Eternal word**

We're returning to Psalm 119, and seeing how the Psalmist views God's word.

## **Read Psalm 119:105-112**

- How does the Psalmist view God's word?
- What does it mean that God's word 'is a lamp for my feet' (v.1)?
- Why is that such a good thing?

## **Pray**

- Praise God that His word lights up the way that shows us how to live!
- Pray that like the Psalmist you would set your heart on God's word until the very end.

**28<sup>th</sup> July**

## **Love for...**

We're approaching the end of this letter, in which Paul has been encouraging the Thessalonians to push on and grow as Christians in their faith, hope and love. Today Paul helps us know more about what this looks like.

## **Read 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13**

- Who is Paul talking about in these verses?
- How are the Thessalonians to treat their church leaders?
- Why might they be tempted to not acknowledge people who rebuke them (including Paul)?

## **Apply**

- When might we be ashamed to acknowledge our church leaders?
- What would it look like to hold our church leaders 'in the highest regard in love'?

**29<sup>th</sup> July**

## **Others**

Paul continues to help the Thessalonians know how to please God.

### **Read 1 Thessalonians 5:14-15**

- What are Paul's different instructions in these verses?
- What do Paul's instructions have in common?
- How hard does Paul want the Thessalonians to work at caring for others? (v.15)

## **Apply**

It can be tempting to think about pleasing God on an individualistic basis.

- How could you warn, encourage or help someone today?

**30<sup>th</sup> July**

## **God's will**

Paul helps us to know something else that's God's will...

## **Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-22**

- What are Paul's different instructions in these verses?
- Why are the Thessalonians to 'give thanks in all circumstances'? (v.18)
- Do you find that surprising given the Thessalonians suffering?
- What's the principle by which the Thessalonians should accept God's word (prophecy)? (v.19-22)

## **Apply**

- Are you ever tempted to treat parts of the Bible with contempt or disdain?
- How does this challenge you?
- When do you find it hard to be thankful?
- How does knowing that this is God's will help you to increasingly 'give thanks in all circumstances'?

## 31<sup>st</sup> July

### Closing words...

We've seen in 1 Thessalonians how Paul has encouraged this young, suffering church to grow more and more in their faith, hope and love. Today the letter comes to a close.

### Read 1 Thessalonians 5:23-28

- What are Paul's final prayers for the Thessalonians (v.23-24)?
- Why are they fitting prayers to close with, given the rest of the letter?
- How would verse 24 give the Thessalonians confidence to keep pressing on as Christians?

### Wrapping up

- How does knowing that God is faithful to present you standing firm before Jesus encouraging you to keep striving forward and growing as a Christian in your faith, hope and love?

Why not write down something you want to take away and keep praying about from this letter.