



Sermon Questions

September 8, 2024 | Scripture: Acts 17:1-9; 1 Thess 1:1-3 (Identity)

Pre-study: 3 things from the sermon. *Note down 3 ideas, illustrations, quotes, or points that made an impression in the sermon.*

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

WORSHIP THROUGHOUT THE WEEK

Reflect on these Scriptures:

Genesis 12:1-3
Deuteronomy 4:9-13
Psalm 22
Jeremiah 31
Matthew 18:15-20 (nb 17)
Hebrews 12:18-29

Serve: Reach out to holly@mcleanpres.org about serving in the nursery with the youngest members of our congregation.

Pray: Pray for newcomers to our church to feel welcome.. and say hi! Look out for new faces as the Fall kicks off.

Core Questions

1. How would you describe Paul’s basic posture towards the Thessalonians?
2. Look at the three things Paul remembers in verse 3. Assuming that these are not just synonyms repeated for effect, what kind of things might he be referring to in each category?
3. 3:6ff will tell us more about the encouragement that these faithful Christians are to Paul in his suffering. Using his attitude as a model, share stories with one another of Christians who have modeled these encouraging behaviors to you in the past.

Inward Grace in Action

4. In verse 1, Paul reminds us that the joyous identity and powerful strategy of the Thessalonian church is rooted in the authority of Christ over it. Has your heart drifted to trying to work, labor, and hope from your own strength? Where do you need to lay down your pride or fear and ask him to work in your life?

Outward Grace in Action

5. When you speak about your faith and our church, what do you tell people? Does the story start with who we are, or who God is? Do we emphasize our difference from other Christians, or the truth, beauty and goodness of Christ? Meditate and pray about patterns you notice.

Additional Resources:

Video: The Bible Project has produced helpful overview videos for books of the Bible. [See their introduction to 1 Thessalonians here](#) (7 mins).

Article: [This introduction to 1 & 2 Thessalonians](#) gives a helpful introduction to the themes and significance of the books.

Theological Nerdery: For a quick, technical dive into how the church can be called the people of God – wasn’t that Israel? – read through the extract from a commentary on the back of this sheet.

Theological Bonus

How can we talk about the church, not just Old Testament Israel, as the people of God?

[T]he identification of the recipients with the term “church” (ἐκκλησία, *ekklēsia*), a term used in the LXX [*Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible used in Jesus’ time*] to refer to Israel as **God’s covenant people**, reflects Paul’s understanding of the predominantly *Gentile* church of Thessalonica as the new people of God.¹

[...]

To the modern hearer, the word “church” evokes images of ornate buildings or complex denominational structures—images that all too easily cause one to miss the significance of this term. For Paul’s identification of the recipients of his letter with the designation “church” reveals an important theological truth about the way in which the apostle views his converts, particularly their continuity with ancient Israel as the people of God.

Although the noun *ekklēsia* (church) in secular Greek refers to an officially summoned assembly of citizens (see Acts 19:32, 39, 41), in the LXX [*Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible used in Jesus’ time*] it (or its verbal cognate) describes the people of God, whether they are assembled for worship or not (see, e.g., Deut. 9:10; 18:6; 23:2–4; 31:30; Judg. 20:2; 1 Sam. 17:47; 1 Chron. 28:8; Neh. 13:1).

In light of the Jewish heritage of Paul, as well as his references to the “church(es) of God,” both later in this letter (1 Thess. 2:14) and elsewhere (e.g., 1 Cor. 1:2; 10:32; 11:16; 15:9; 2 Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:13), “it seems unreasonable to doubt that in 1 Thess. 1:1 Paul is thinking of the Christians of Thessalonica as members of the ‘Church of God,’ and that he is fully aware of the biblical background and theological implications of his use of the term” (Deidun 1981: 11; also Malherbe 2000: 99).

That the term *ekklēsia* reflects Paul’s understanding of the predominantly *Gentile* church of Thessalonica as the new people of God is confirmed by his reference to them a mere three verses later as those who are “loved by God” and who know their “election” (1:4), terms similarly used in the OT to refer to Israel but now applied to NT believers.²

¹ Jeffrey A. D. Weima, [*Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: 1–2 Thessalonians*](#), ed. Robert W. Yarbrough and Robert H. Stein (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014), 63.

² *Ibid*, 68.