

*The Gospel Shows Up*  
Acts 17.1-9; 1 Thessalonians 1.1-3

Welcome to the first Life Group season of 2026! This season will lead us right up to Easter and consist mostly of a study of Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians. I'm really excited about this tour of 1 Thessalonians, but as is always the case, it's best to gather all the background information that we can. Fortunately for us, we have some of that in Acts 17 as well as in Paul's letters themselves. But as I always say, tackle the questions you can. Don't worry about it if you can't get into each one.

Blessings as you dig into God's word!

Pastor Eric

**Setting the Scene: The Fragility of the Thessalonian Church**

After reading Acts 17.1–10, what stands out to you about how quickly opposition arose in Thessalonica? How might knowing this background change the way you hear Paul's words in 1 Thessalonians?

Paul was forced to leave behind an "infant" church. How does that reality heighten the emotional weight of this letter? What kinds of pressures do you imagine the Thessalonian believers faced after Paul left?

**Paul's Heart: Spiritual Parenthood and Anxiety**

Paul openly admits his fear and anxiety about the Thessalonians' faith in 1 Thessalonians 3:5. What do you make of the fact that even Paul struggled with worry for the churches?

Why do you think Paul's inability to return personally made Timothy's report so significant?

**Good News: Faith That Took Root**

The trio of **faith, love, and hope** appears repeatedly in the New Testament. Why do you think these three form such a strong picture of the authentic Christian life?

**Faith That Works, Love That Labors, Hope That Endures**

Paul speaks of the Thessalonians' work that springs from faith. What is the difference between working *for* faith and working *from* faith?

If someone were observing your life over the past year, what kinds of work might point them toward your faith in Christ?

Paul doesn't just describe love as affection, but as **labor**—work that can be exhausting. Why do you think loving others often requires this kind of effort? Looking back over the past year, where have you experienced loving others to the point of weariness? Where have you found it hardest to keep loving?

The Thessalonians endured pressure because of their hope in Christ's return. How does hope differ from mere optimism when life gets difficult? What does it look like, practically, to "remain under" the pressure rather than escaping or hiding your faith.

**Looking Back and Looking Forward**

As you reflect on the past year, which of the three—**faith, love, or hope**—feels strongest in your life right now? Which feels weakest?

Paul reminds us that when the gospel truly takes root, it always bears fruit. Where do you sense God inviting you to cultivate better soil in your life this year?

God keeps sowing seed! How does that truth encourage you as you look ahead into the new year?