

I THESSALONIANS

The evangelist has come to town - and gone! In fact, vehement criticism of him and his team and harassment of local believers made it imperative that he escape quickly. What happens to the new converts? Does the man merely turn to other ventures and forget those folks he taught and lived among? Paul's letter to the Thessalonians gives insights into the progress and problems of the new believers he left after sharing his life and the gospel with them. His time with them was short but his love and concern was long-lasting, as we'll see.

Reading other people's mail is not usually a good idea, but reading Paul's letter to the believers in Thessalonica is a very good idea. Paul is writing to encourage the church at Thessalonica, to help them know how to live in difficult and tempting situations and to help them understand how to appropriately anticipate the return of the Lord Jesus. And God planned for us to use these true principles in *our* circumstances, too. Therefore, I Thessalonians is an open letter to believers of all generations. Begin your look into this book by asking God to help your life change and grow as you apply what you learn. Ask Him to increase your faith, hope and love. That's a prayer He'll delight to answer.

STARTING OUT

1. Read I Thessalonians all the way through at one sitting. It will take about 10 minutes, and don't you usually read letters all the way through at one time?
2. When you read a letter, you better understand the information it gives if you know something about those who sent it and those to whom it goes. To get this background, read Acts 15:22-17:15 finding out what you can about the following:
 - a. Paul (See also Acts 7:55-8:3 and Acts 9:1-20. Saul, in these passages, is Paul.)
 - b. Silas (This is a shortened name for Silvanus.)
 - c. Timothy

