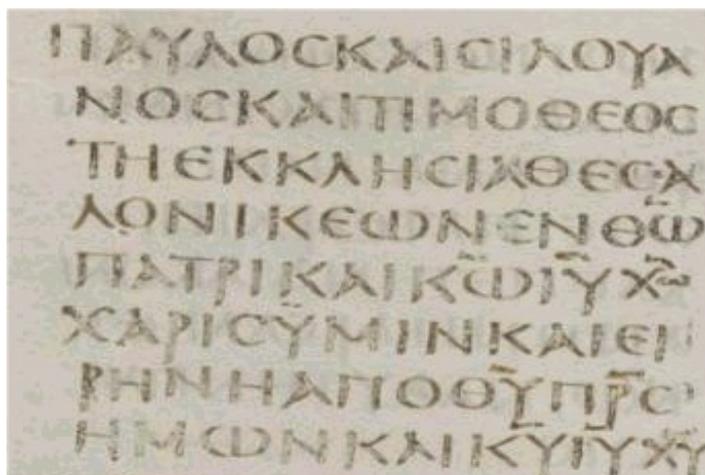


## Paul's 1<sup>st</sup> Epistle to the Thessalonians



1 Thessalonians 1:1 in the Codex Sinaiticus with the added words *'from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*

### Introduction

#### Historical Evidence

The most ancient documents containing this Epistle are the papyri **p**<sup>46</sup> - c 200, which has 2 chapters of our Epistle; **p**<sup>30</sup> - c. 250 having chapters 4 & 5 and **p**<sup>65</sup> with chapters 1 & 2 then come the major Codices – the earliest being the Codex Sinaiticus – c 350 and illustrated above.

Earlier than these are the quotes from the Epistle by Ignatius (55-117) and Polycarp (69 – 155), furthermore, Irenaeus (120 – 200) quotes exactly 1 Thessalonians 5:23 - <sup>23</sup> Αὐτὸς δὲ ὁ θεὸς τῆς εἰρήνης ἀγιάσαι ὑμᾶς ὅλοτελεῖς, καὶ ὀλόκληρον ὑμῶν τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ ἡ ψυχὴ καὶ τὸ σῶμα ἀμέμπτως ἐν τῇ παρουσίᾳ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τηρηθεῖη.

Thessalonians I was included in the Marcion catalogue (c 140) and the Muratorian canon (late 2<sup>nd</sup> century). Later Tertullian (c 160 – 220) was to quote extensively from I Thessalonians and also Clement of Alexandria (d. c. 215). The authenticity of this Epistle was never contested in antiquity as were Hebrews, James and Revelation, and these being on the grounds of so call 'Textual Criticism' – the ancients of the Church were highly intelligent and the various inconsistencies in the textual compositions had not gone unnoticed by them.

#### Reason For Writing

It is possible that Paul had received a letter from the church and was answering various points raised in it, but he had had a series of setbacks in Europe both in Athens and had been imprisoned and shamefully treated in Philippi, then the church in Corinth had its problems. It would appear that Paul, during his long stay in Corinth, had become severely depressed and possibly physically ill. He desperately wanted some good news from the Thessalonian church and Timothy's report was encouraging. However, all was not right; the Jewish minority had accused Paul of trying to profit from the church; the Gentile majority, originally pagan, had not completely abandoned their pagan ways and the non-converted pagans had taken to persecution, and there was some confusion concerning the Parousia. All these needed correction.

#### Date and Place of Writing

The date of writing can be determined with some accuracy since the date of Gallio's tenure of the proconsulship in Corinth to be in 52 for one year. Paul was arraigned before Gallio (Acts 18: 12), and so the Epistle was written in Corinth between late 51 and early 53.