

# Faith in Thessalonica

# 1 THESSALONIANS 1

24 APRIL 2022

# STEPHEN SPENCE

# Introduction to First Thessalonians

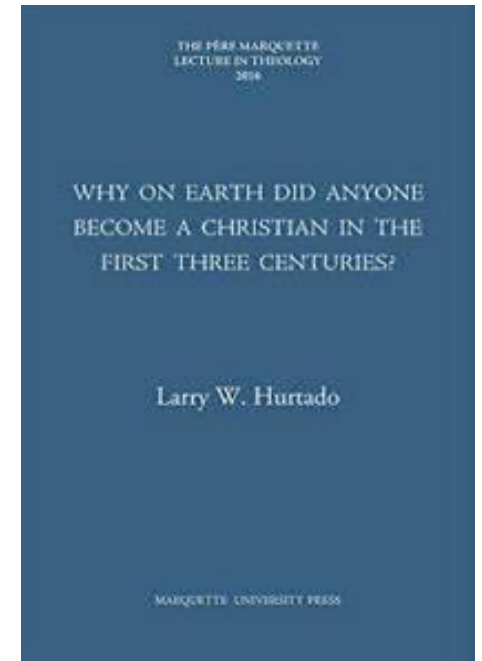
- ▶ Paul's first letter (c.50 CE)
- ▶ Thessalonica was an important regional centre
- ▶ To a church he founded, but left in a hurry (Acts 17)





# Introduction to First Thessalonians

- 1 Thessalonians gives us a unique window to observe
- ▶ what (and how) Paul preached to “pagans”
  - ▶ what their response to the gospel involved
  - ▶ the problems of those first Christians
  - ▶ the success of those first Christians



# Introduction to First Thessalonians

We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers, constantly remembering before our God and Father

your work of **faith** and

your labour of **love** and

your steadfastness of **hope** in our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Thessalonians 1:2-3

# The Christ-followers in Thessalonica

The early Christians in Thessalonica were, mainly, ordinary Greeks and Romans with a Greco-Roman approach to religion.

“...**turn from idolatry** to serve the living God” (I Thess 1:9)

# Greco-Roman Religion

The gods as patrons – reciprocity (e.g., Emperor worship)

More concerned with **their daily bread** than the Afterlife

- The Lord's Prayer
- Psalm 23
- The wrath to come

# Greco-Roman Religion

Temples are not churches  
GR religion was individual, not communal  
GR religion was about power, not morality

Thessalonian church known for their love  
for each other and their morality;  
evidence of God's Spirit at work.



# Greco-Roman Religion

Didn't require "relational faith" in a god  
Worship and prayer was transactional.





# Their Work of Faith

For their daily bread, the Thessalonian Christians had placed their faith in Jesus.

To Thessalonians, Christianity looked like a form of Atheism:

like a Smart Phone with no apps



# Their Work of Faith πίστις

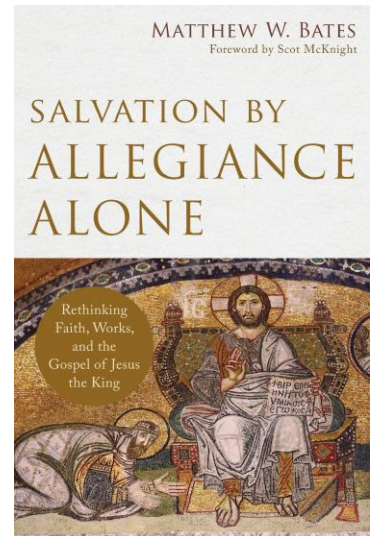
*pistis* didn't begin life as a religious term

*pistis* is more than “believe” or “trust”

*pistis* is closer to “faithfulness” or “allegiance”

\* Christian

\* \* Jesus is Lord



# Their Work of Faith

11

NOT like their neighbours  
who paid their dues to  
idols (false world powers),

THESSALONIAN Christians  
followed the ways of the  
true God



# Their Work of Faith

NOT like their neighbours  
who play by the rules of their  
families, friends, workplace,  
culture

CBBC Christians gave their  
allegiance to, and followed  
the ways of, the true God

