

## 1 Thessalonians

**1:1** Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy to the gathering of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus the Messiah. Grace and peace to you.<sup>1</sup>

**1:2** We always give thanks to God for all of you as we repeatedly make mention of you in our prayers,<sup>2</sup> **1:3** while remembering your work of belief, your labor of love, and your perseverance of hope in our Lord Jesus the Messiah before our God and Father.<sup>3</sup>

**1:4** We know, brothers, who are loved by God, His choice of you,<sup>4</sup> **1:5** because our good news did not come to you by spoken word only but also by power, by the Holy Spirit, and with complete certainty.<sup>5</sup> Just as you know what kind of people we were among you for your sake,<sup>6</sup> **1:6** you also became imitators of us and of the Lord when you embraced the message with the joy of the Holy Spirit in the midst of great affliction.<sup>7</sup>

**1:7** The result has been that you have become an example to all believers in Macedonia and Achaia,<sup>8</sup> **1:8** because, from you the message about the Lord has sounded forth. Not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place, your belief, which is directed towards God, has gone out, so that we have no need to say anything,<sup>9</sup> **1:9** because they themselves report about us what kind of entrance into you as a group we experienced and how you turned to God from idols to serve as slaves the living and true God,<sup>10</sup> **1:10** and to wait for His Son from the heavens, whom He raised from among the dead, Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.<sup>11</sup> **2:1** By inference, you yourselves appreciate, brothers, that our entrance into you as a group has not been in vain.<sup>12</sup>

**2:2** Yet, as you also know, after suffering beforehand and being scoffed at among the Philippians, we had the courage in our God to speak to you the good news of God in the midst of a great conflict.<sup>13</sup> **2:3** For our persuasion is from neither error, nor immorality, nor with deceit.<sup>14</sup> **2:4** But just as we have been attested by God to be entrusted with the good news, so also we speak, not as pleasing men but God who assesses the genuineness of our hearts.<sup>15</sup> **2:5** Indeed, we came neither with a flattering message, just as you have known, nor with a false motive of boundaryless evil (God is our witness).<sup>16</sup> **2:6** Nor were we seeking the glory of men, whether from you or from others,<sup>17</sup> **2:7** even though we could throw our weight around as apostles of the Messiah. Instead, we were gentle among you as a nursing mother takes care of her own children.<sup>18</sup>

**2:8** Thus, having so fond an affection for you, we were pleased to impart to you not only the good news of God, but also our own lives, because you became dearly loved by us.<sup>19</sup> **2:9** Remember, brothers, our labor and hardship. As we worked night and day in order not to be a financial burden to any of you, we proclaimed the good news of God to you.<sup>20</sup> **2:10** You and God are witnesses how, in a manner pleasing to God, uprightly and acceptably, we behaved towards you who believe.<sup>21</sup> **2:11** Just as you have appreciated, towards each one of you like a father towards his own children,<sup>22</sup> **2:12** we were encouraging, comforting, and imploring you to live worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.<sup>23</sup>

**2:13** Consequently, we are, indeed, repeatedly thanking God that, when you received the message of God that you heard from us, you embraced it, not as the message of men, but just as it is—truly the message of God, who also is working in you who believe.<sup>24</sup> **2:14** You, brothers, became imitators of the gatherings of God which are in Judea in the Messiah Jesus, because you, indeed, suffered the same kinds of things at the hands of your own countrymen as they also did at the hands of the Jews,<sup>25</sup> **2:15** who, in fact, killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, persecuted us, are not pleasing to God, but stand opposed to all men,<sup>26</sup> **2:16** because they hinder us from speaking to the Gentiles in order that they may be saved. The result is that they always fill up the measure of their sins. But wrath is coming upon them at the end (εἰς τέλος).<sup>27</sup>

**2:17** But we, brothers, having been separated from you for a short while (physically, but not in heart), even more so have done our best with great passion to see your face,<sup>28</sup> **2:18** because we wanted to come to you, I, Paul, more than once, and yet Satan hindered us.<sup>29</sup> **2:19** Who is our

hope or joy or crown of bragging? Is it not indeed you in the presence of our Lord Jesus at his grand appearance?<sup>30</sup> 2:20 You are our glory and joy.<sup>31</sup>

3:1 Therefore, when we could endure it no longer, we were pleased to be left alone in Athens,<sup>32</sup> 3:2 and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's co-worker with respect to the good news of the Messiah, so that he could strengthen and encourage you as to your belief.<sup>33</sup> 3:3 Our purpose was so that no one would be shaken in the midst of these afflictions, because you yourselves know that we were destined for this.<sup>34</sup> 3:4 Indeed, when we were with you, we were telling you in advance that we were about to suffer affliction, just as both it happened and you know.<sup>35</sup> 3:5 Therefore, when I could indeed endure it no more, I sent to find out about your belief, lest somehow the tempter had tempted you, and our labor had been in vain.<sup>36</sup>

3:6 However, now that Timothy has come to us from you and proclaimed the good news to us of your belief and love, and that you always have fond memories of us and greatly desire to see us just as we also greatly desire to see you,<sup>37</sup> 3:7 on account of this we have been encouraged, brothers, about you in all our distress and affliction, because of your belief,<sup>38</sup> 3:8 because now we live if you are standing firm in the Lord.<sup>39</sup> 3:9 What thanks concerning you can we pay back to God in return for all the joy with which we rejoice on account of you in the presence of our God,<sup>40</sup> 3:10 as we night and day keep asking more than ever to see your face and to complete what is lacking in your belief?<sup>41</sup>

3:11 And now may God Himself, indeed our Father, and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you,<sup>42</sup> 3:12 and may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another and for all Christians, just as we also do for you,<sup>43</sup> 3:13 in order that he may establish your hearts as being acceptable in a state of being set apart in the presence of our God and Father at the grand appearance of our Lord Jesus along with all His set-apart ones.<sup>44</sup>

4:1 Finally then, brothers, we ask and encourage you because of the Lord Jesus, that just as you received from us how you must live and please God, just as indeed you are living, that you abound in this regard.<sup>45</sup> 4:2 You know what commandment we gave to you in view of the Lord Jesus.<sup>46</sup> 4:3 Indeed, this is the will of God, your being different—for example, keeping away from sexual immorality,<sup>47</sup> 4:4 with each one of you knowing how to control his own vessel with holiness and honor,<sup>48</sup> 4:5 not with emotionally charged passion like the Gentiles, who do not know God,<sup>49</sup> 4:6 so as not to cross the line morally and take unfair advantage of his brother in the matter. This is important because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we told you before and solemnly warned you.<sup>50</sup> 4:7 For God has not called us to uncleanness but to holiness.<sup>51</sup> 4:8 Therefore, he who rejects this is not rejecting man but God, who also gives His Holy Spirit to you.<sup>52</sup>

4:9 Concerning the love of the brothers, you have no need for us to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another.<sup>53</sup> 4:10 Indeed, you do practice it towards all the brothers in the whole of Macedonia, and we encourage you, brothers, to abound in this regard.<sup>54</sup> 4:11 Make it your goal to live peaceably, to mind your own affairs, and to work with your own hands, just as we commanded you,<sup>55</sup> 4:12 so that you behave decently with respect to outsiders and not have any need.<sup>56</sup>

4:13 On another subject, we do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, concerning those who are asleep, so that you do not grieve as do, indeed, the rest who have no hope.<sup>57</sup> 4:14 Because we believe that Jesus died and rose from the dead, it is just as certain that God also will bring with him those who have fallen asleep through Jesus.<sup>58</sup>

4:15 For this we say to you by means of the message of the Lord, that we who are alive, who remain until the grand appearance of the Lord, will definitely not precede those who have fallen asleep,<sup>59</sup> 4:16 because the Lord himself, when the command is given by means of the voice of the archangel and the trumpet of God, will come down from heaven, and the dead in the Messiah will themselves rise up first.<sup>60</sup> 4:17 Then we, who are alive and who remain, will be snatched away

together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord.<sup>61</sup> 4:18 Therefore, encourage one another with these words.<sup>62</sup>

5:1 Concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you do not need for us to write to you,<sup>63</sup> 5:2 because you yourselves correctly know that the Day of the Lord is coming like a thief in the night.<sup>64</sup> 5:3 While they are saying, "Shalom and safety," sudden destruction will overtake them like birth-pains in the womb, and they will not escape.<sup>65</sup>

5:4 But you, brothers, are not in darkness that the day would overtake you like a thief,<sup>66</sup> 5:5 because all of you are sons of light and sons of day. We are not of the night nor of the darkness.<sup>67</sup> 5:6 Therefore, let us not sleep like the rest, but let us be alert and sober.<sup>68</sup> 5:7 Those who sleep sleep at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night.<sup>69</sup> 5:8 But since we are of the day, let us be sober, putting on the breastplate of belief and love and the helmet of the hope of salvation,<sup>70</sup> 5:9 because God has not destined us for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus the Messiah,<sup>71</sup> 5:10 who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him.<sup>72</sup> 5:11 Therefore, encourage one another and build one another towards the one, just as indeed you are doing.<sup>73</sup>

5:12 And we ask you, brothers, to appreciate those who labor among you, who lead you with care in the Lord, and who admonish you.<sup>74</sup> 5:13 You should esteem them with love beyond all measure because of their work.

Be at peace among yourselves.<sup>75</sup> 5:14 Thus, we encourage you, brothers, admonish the disorderly, console the discouraged, help the weak, and be patient with all.<sup>76</sup>

5:15 See that no one pays back evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good for one another and for all.<sup>77</sup>

5:16 Rejoice always.<sup>78</sup> 5:17 Pray unceasingly.<sup>79</sup> 5:18 Be thankful in every situation, for this is the will of God for you in the Messiah Jesus.<sup>80</sup>

5:19 Do not cause the Spirit to stop functioning.<sup>81</sup> 5:20 Do not treat prophetic comments as worthless,<sup>82</sup> 5:21 but assess the genuineness of all things. Hold on to what is good.<sup>83</sup> 5:22 Refuse to become involved in any kind of evil.<sup>84</sup>

5:23 May the God of shalom Himself set you apart all the way to the end (ὀλοτελείς), and may your spirit be wholly sound (ὀλόκληρον) while your existence and body be kept acceptable (ἀμέμπτως) at the grand appearance of our Lord Jesus the Messiah.<sup>85</sup> 5:24 Faithful is He who calls you, who will also do this.<sup>86</sup>

5:25 Brothers, pray for us.<sup>87</sup> 5:26 Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss.<sup>88</sup> 5:27 I put you under oath to the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers.<sup>89</sup>

5:28 The grace of our Lord Jesus the Messiah be with you.<sup>90</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Παῦλος καὶ Σιλονανὸς καὶ Τιμόθεος τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ Θεσσαλονικέων ἐν θεῷ πατρὶ ὁ καὶ κυρίῳ Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ, χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη – This is Paul’s second letter (Galatians having been the first a few years earlier), written from Corinth during his 2<sup>nd</sup> trip west from Antioch, which had taken him through some of the cities in what is now Turkey and then through upper Greece (Macedonia), including the cities of Philippi and Thessalonica. The date is around A.D. 52.

Timothy was from Derbe/Lystra in Turkey and has been with Paul since he visited these cities at the beginning of this second trip (around A.D. 50). Timothy will go on to be one of Paul’s most faithful companions and strongest believers in Jesus as the Messiah.

Silvanus was one of the believers chosen by the apostles to accompany Paul and Barnabas back to Antioch after they had come to Jerusalem to discuss the issue of circumcision with respect to the Gentiles (Acts 15 around A.D. 49). His Aramaic name is Silas, and he very well may be Peter’s scribe of his first letter (cf. 1 Peter 5:12). Both Silvanus and Timothy are what I call apostolic co-workers in that Paul can trust them to proclaim the exact same message as he does of Jesus as the Messiah and neither changer it nor be influenced by others who have.

The word ἐκκλησία means called out of, from ἐκ + καλέω, and was used before Christianity to refer to any group or assembly of people with a common identity or purpose, e.g., an investment club in our day. Here it seems to be the gathering of Christians in the city of Thessalonica. This letter and 2 Thessalonians are the only two letters where Paul does not refer to the gathering in the city, e.g., the gather at Colossae, but instead uses “of the Thessalonians.”

Our word church comes from the Greek κύριος for master, lord. So at some point Christians looked at their gatherings as those with a common master, Jesus.

Thus Paul is writing to the Christian community who are “in God the Father,” i.e., in the context where God operates by changing people’s hearts and causing them to believe and persevere in their belief for the sake of acquiring His eternal mercy and life. He is also their Father as the source of their existence and relationship with Him as sons and daughters. They are in His family.

These Christians are also “in,” associated with, a person who is their Lord or Master, i.e., from whom they receive their marching orders as to how they must live their lives on an intellectual and moral level. This person is Jesus of Nazareth, Joshua of Nazareth, Yeshua of Nazareth. And he is the Christ, the Anointed One, Messiah, who is the permanent king of Israel and the Kingdom of God according to the Davidic Covenant.

Paul greets these Christians with a desire for God to be gracious and merciful to them now that they have become authentic believers, and he knows God will do so according to His faithfulness.

Paul also greets them with either 1) peace as reconciled sinners to God, no longer His enemies, or 2) eternal shalom which will be the result of the faith and belief. It is hard to say which option is correct. Or it could be the combination of the two, referring to what is true now and in the future.

<sup>2</sup> Εὐχαριστοῦμεν τῷ θεῷ πάντοτε περὶ πάντων ὑμῶν μνησθῆναι ὅτι ποιοῦμενοι ἐπὶ τῶν προσευχῶν ἡμῶν, ἀδιαλείπτως – As repeatedly as Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy pray, they are always concerned for all those who became believers through their telling them about Jesus as the Messiah. As Paul says more explicitly in Colossians 1:9-12, he prays for them, in order that they may be filled with the knowledge, wisdom, and understanding of God’s desire for them, in order that they may live their lives in accordance with God’s moral commandments, that they may be strengthened with the power of God’s glory, which will be clear when He brings about the Kingdom of God, for the purpose of being steadfast in their belief, while joyously giving thanks to God for the future inheritance of eternal life in His kingdom of truth.

The same is true of what Paul says in Ephesians 1:15-23.

**Colossians 1:9** On account of this, we also, from the day we heard, have not ceased praying for you and asking that you be filled with the true knowledge of His desire in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, **1:10** so that you may walk worthy of the Lord, to the extent that everything you do is pleasing to Him—[1] bearing fruit by means of every good action, and [2] increasing in a true knowledge of God, **1:11** [3] being made capable with all power according to His glorious strength for all perseverance and long-suffering, **1:12** [4] with joy thanking the Father who, by means of the light, has made you qualified for a portion of the inheritance of those who are set apart.

**Ephesians 1:15** Therefore, after hearing about your belief in the Lord Jesus and your love towards all those who have been set apart, **1:16** I do not stop giving thanks for you while I mention you in my prayers, **1:17** that the God of our Lord Jesus the Messiah, the Father of glory, would give you a spirit of wisdom and revealing in the knowledge of Him, **1:18** because the eyes of your heart have been enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance among those who are set apart, **1:19** and what is the surpassing greatness of His power towards us who believe in accordance with the operation of the power of His strength, **1:20** which He activated in the Messiah, when He raised him from the dead and seated him at His right hand in the heavens, **1:21** far above every ruler, authority, power, jurisdiction, and every name being named, not only in this age, but in the age to come. **1:22** And He placed everyone in submission under his feet, and He gave him as head above everyone to the gathering, **1:23** which is his body, the fullness of him who himself provides the fullness of everyone in the all.

Thus, they basically always ask God to cause them to persevere in their belief to the end of their lives. They are also grateful, probably more than we can imagine, for the fact that these Thessalonian Christians are still believing in the midst of the intense persecution that started around six months or a year ago when they were there and is continuing now. We will see that Timothy has reported that their belief is still genuine and strong (cf. 3:1ff.).

<sup>3</sup> μνημονεύοντες ὑμῶν τοῦ ἔργου τῆς πίστεως καὶ τοῦ κόπου τῆς ἀγάπης καὶ τῆς ὑπομονῆς τῆς ἐλπίδος τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ πατρὸς ἡμῶν – After Thessalonica, Paul had gone with Silvanus and Timothy to Berea, but then he had to leave there and escape to Athens, because the unbelieving Jews from Thessalonica sought to put him to death. Silvanus and Timothy had stayed behind in Berea and then joined Paul after he had moved on to Corinth, probably reporting to him how the Christians were faring in Thessalonica and the rest of Macedonia. Paul is encouraged by the news that they bring him and can say that they truly have continued believing, while loving one another and placing their future hope in the promise of God of eternal life in the Kingdom of God through Jesus the Messiah. Therefore, it makes sense to Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy to continue remembering the Thessalonians' response to their presenting the biblical message to them, because their response now is just as genuine as it was back when they first heard the message.

The fact that Paul is briefer than Colossians 1:3-8 and Ephesians 1:15-23 in regard to these elements of authentic Christianity is probably because he has recently been to Thessalonica and so has Timothy so that he is confident that they remember the other details which he leaves out here and which they both would have taught these fairly new Christians.

Their "work of belief" refers to the effort that they originally put into listening to these three apostolic workers as they spoke about the Jewish Messiah, Jesus, and then the effort that they put in from a human existential standpoint to changing what they believed to be true about the nature of reality. No longer did they believe the false ideas about the Greek pagan gods or the strictly humanistic Judaism that was being taught in the synagogues, but now they believed that the ideas about the transcendent Creator and His envoy and proxy, Jesus of Nazareth, was the only and correct way to think about reality. Obviously, they are continuing to work at believing in the midst of their persecution and the temptation to abandon the biblical ideas in order to stop the persecution.

This belief is no different in its nature from any other belief in reality which a sinful human engages in at every moment of his life, except that this particular belief can come into existence only if God inwardly changes a person's orientation to Him through the work of the Holy Spirit. In other words, to believe that the sun is shining is no different in its basic nature as to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, but sinful human beings are hostile to the latter belief and must be inwardly changed by God in order to perform it.

Their "labor of love" refers to the great effort that they were putting into caring for each other as fellow believers in the Messiah, even while experiencing intense persecution because of it. There are options for the object of their love—1) God, 2) their fellow Christians, 3) their fellow human beings. But probably #2 is correct in the light of Paul's being more explicitly about this in Colossians 1:4, "the love which you have for all the saints." And rather than this love being a feeling like romantic love, it is a choice to do what is good and right with respect to another Christian's belief and obedience in God, to assist other Christians in their growing in their understanding of God and their becoming more established in their belief and obedience to God.

Their "perseverance of hope of our Lord Jesus the Messiah before [in front of] our God and Father" refers to their looking forward with great anticipation and expectation to Jesus' return and ultimately advocating on their behalf before God when He fulfills His promise to Abraham to "bless" with eternal mercy and life him and those associated with him who have the same kind of genuine belief. Cf. 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 3:13. Another option is that Paul remembers "in the presence of God our Father" the spiritual condition of the Thessalonians as he prays. But the syntax and purpose of Jesus by God for sinners lends itself to the first option.

Thus, these three pillars of the Christian life reveal what it is in contrast to arguing about all the details of the Mosaic Covenant which in other letters such as 1 Timothy, etc. even Christians are doing. We are called to believe in God and Jesus as His Messiah with all that this means in regard to God's eternal plans and purposes. And we are called to love our fellow Christians, i.e., to care for their physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual well-being, especially by repeating the truth to them as encouragement to persevere in their belief in God and care for one another. And we are called to hope and wait expectantly for the fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham which will start to unfold when Jesus returns and restores the Kingdom of Israel and rules over the entire earth. Christianity is this simple—again in contrast to the Mosaic Covenant.

**Colossians 1:3** When we pray, we always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus the Messiah, for you, **1:4** because we have heard of your belief in the Messiah Jesus and the love which you have for all those who are set-apart, **1:5** on account of the hope which is stored away for you in the heavens, which you heard about beforehand in the message of the truth of the good news, **1:6** which has come to you. Just as it is certainly bearing fruit and increasing in all the world, to the same degree it is also bearing fruit and increasing in you from the day you heard and understood the grace of God contained in the truth, **1:7** just as you learned about it from our beloved fellow-slave Epaphras, who is a faithful servant of the Messiah on your behalf. **1:8** And he informed us of your love because of the Spirit.

**Ephesians 1:15** Therefore, after hearing about your belief in the Lord Jesus and your love towards all those who have been set apart, **1:16** I do not stop giving thanks for you while I mention you in my prayers, **1:17** that the God of our Lord Jesus the Messiah, the Father of glory, would give you a spirit of wisdom and revealing in the knowledge of Him, **1:18** because the eyes of your heart have been enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance among those who are set apart, **1:19** and what is the surpassing greatness of His power towards us who believe in accordance with the operation of the power of His strength, **1:20** which He activated in the Messiah, when He raised him from the dead and seated him at His right hand in the heavens, **1:21** far above every ruler, authority, power, jurisdiction, and every name being named, not only in this age, but in the age to



come. 1:22 And He placed everyone in submission under his feet, and He gave him as head above everyone to the gathering, 1:23 which is his body, the fullness of him who himself provides the fullness of everyone in the all.

<sup>4</sup> εἰδότες, ἀδελφοὶ ἡγαπημένοι ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ, τὴν ἐκλογὴν ὑμῶν – The three men have become convinced that the Thessalonians are authentic believers, i.e., that God, while He was formulating the story of the cosmos and of each individual human being in this earth's history before He began creating the cosmos and telling its story, as mentioned in Genesis 1 and John 1 (“In the beginning was the story, and the story was with God, and God was the author of the story), chose to create these Thessalonian Christians such that, at some point in their own personal histories, they would become genuine believers in God and follow and obey the Jewish Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. This also means that God loves and cares for them by ensuring that they remain believers and obtain His promise of eternal life and forgiveness in the Kingdom of God.

Thus, the word εἰδότες, the plural active participle m. pl. nom. of οἶδα which typically means simply to know something, here means this plus probably to appreciate and value something. Paul and his companions know and appreciate what God has done by choosing these Thessalonians for His eternal kingdom. This meaning is in line with how Paul uses οἶδα in 5:12 And we ask you, brothers, to appreciate (εἰδέναι) those who labor among you, who lead you with care in the Lord, and who admonish you. As a result, Paul is implying and encouraging mutual appreciation between his readers and him as he will go on to point out in the next verse, 1:5—that all which is involved in these Thessalonians becoming Christians is of God's doing!

<sup>5</sup> ὅτι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ἡμῶν οὐκ ἐγενήθη εἰς ὑμᾶς ἐν λόγῳ μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν δυνάμει καὶ ἐν πνεύματι ἀγίῳ καὶ ἐν πληροφορίᾳ πολλῇ – These men got to see God fully engage the Thessalonians in their presentation of the biblical message by virtue of outward evidence that made this clear. This means that God powerfully changed their inwardness and made the truth acceptable to them, so that they no longer rebelled against it (cf. Romans 1). And, more than likely, the outward evidence that convinced Paul that these Thessalonians were in the process of embracing the truth of the biblical message was their speaking in tongues (and perhaps other miracles through Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, even though none of these is mentioned in Acts 17) along with the three things that they just mentioned, their belief, love, and hope. In addition, the Thessalonian believers exhibited a committed settledness in regard to the truth of this message and the value of embracing it, as they now go on to explain further.

Thus, at least what Paul observed of the Thessalonians' expressing their belief in the gospel is what he means by the good news coming to them with power and by the Holy Spirit. This is also to say that it came “with complete certainty,” that sense of knowing that something is true and right and ought to be believed and used as a basis for how a person lives and acts, especially morally, i.e., with Christian love for one another and by obeying the biblical moral commandments that describe goodness for human beings.

<sup>6</sup> καθὼς οἴδατε οἷοι ἐγενήθημεν ἐν ὑμῖν δι' ὑμᾶς – As in 1:4 and 5:12, the word οἴδατε from οἶδα = know, includes the connotation of value and appreciate.

I think it makes more sense to see this “just as” clause as starting the next sentence—that just as the Thessalonian Christians knew and appreciated how Paul and his apostolic co-workers behaved in their presence, they then chose to imitate them by embracing the gospel with great joy which came from the Holy Spirit, and this was all in the midst of experiencing the same kind of affliction, i.e., persecution from the Jews, which they were encountering. And this Paul's behavior of faith with joy in the midst of affliction was all for the sake of encouraging the Thessalonians to believe in Jesus the Messiah and acquire the same eternal salvation.

Paul and his apostolic co-workers encountered a lot of opposition to their message in Thessalonica. Cf. Acts 17:6,7 – “When [the hostile and unbelieving Jews] did not find them, they began dragging Jason and some brethren before the city authorities, shouting, ‘These men who have upset the world have come here also; and Jason has welcomed them, and they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus.’” Therefore, the new believers in this city had the opportunity to observe them as they faced into this opposition and to learn how to do the same thing. The result was that they actually chose to act like Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy.

Thus, Paul acted with great love towards the Thessalonians for the sake of their obtaining salvation through hearing the message of the gospel amidst being persecuted for being Christians and the threat of losing his own life.

<sup>7</sup> Καὶ ὑμεῖς μιμηταὶ ἡμῶν ἐγενήθητε καὶ τοῦ κυρίου, δεξάμενοι τὸν λόγον ἐν θλίψει πολλῇ μετὰ χαρᾶς ἡ πνεύματος ἁγίου – Two options – 1) joy that is the result of a set-apart inner spirit; 2) joy that comes from the inner work of the Spirit of God when He provides a sinner with the full realization of the promise of God through Jesus. #2 seems more profound and in line with what Paul is confident in thanking God. The great stress that the Thessalonians experienced was the same that Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy experienced, i.e., hostile opposition to the biblical message from unbelieving Jews in the city. They, like these apostolic workers, had to choose whether or not it was worth it to continue to embrace this message. Their choice was to do so, thus demonstrating to the three men that God truly was at work within them according to His choice of them. The result was their rejoicing in God's promise of mercy and eternal life.

The implication of what Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy are saying is that God through His Spirit is the only one who can cause people to persevere in their belief and to rejoice in the midst of suffering for their faith. Sinful human beings, even inwardly changed human beings, do not have the independent ability to do so. In other words, we will naturally bail on God if He does not powerfully cause us to persevere in our faith. But fortunately, He is faithful and committed to make sure those whom He has predestined to eternal life will persevere in their belief as the necessary condition.

<sup>8</sup> ὥστε γενέσθαι ὑμᾶς ἑαυτοῖς τῷ τύπον πᾶσιν τοῖς πιστεύουσιν ἐν τῇ Μακεδονίᾳ καὶ ἐν τῇ Ἀχαΐᾳ – Paul and his co-workers also know that the courage and belief of the Thessalonians in the face of great opposition to their belief became an encouragement to other believers in their area of northern Greece, Macedonia, as well as in southern Greece, Achaia, where they were now.

How did their reputation spread? Probably as traveling Christians, who were also involved in business and looking for Christian fellowship in the various cities they visited, came in contact with them.

<sup>9</sup> ἀφ' ὑμῶν γὰρ ἐξήχηται ὁ λόγος τοῦ κυρίου οὐ μόνον ἐν τῇ Μακεδονίᾳ καὶ ἐν τῇ Ἀχαΐᾳ, ἀλλ' ἐν παντί τόπῳ ἡ πίστις ὑμῶν ἡ πρὸς τὸν θεὸν ἐξελέλυθεν, ὥστε μὴ χρεῖαν ἔχειν ἡμᾶς λαλεῖν τι – The courage and belief of the Thessalonian Christians in the face of persecution has become a kind of proclamation of the message of Jesus as the Messiah to people even beyond Greece, with the result that Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy do not have to say anything about the condition of the Thessalonians' faith. It's all out there on the "internet" of the 1<sup>st</sup> century Roman Empire. People are saying, "Oh yes, we already know about the Thessalonians and their resilient faith in the midst of difficult circumstances, because we have heard about them from traveling salesmen who are Christians."

Paul's wording here, ἡ πίστις ὑμῶν ἡ πρὸς τὸν θεόν, is unusual. Only in Philemon 5 does he use the it – ἀκούων σου τὴν ἀγάπην καὶ τὴν πίστιν<sup>1</sup>, ἣν ἔχεις πρὸς τὸν κύριον Ἰησοῦν<sup>2</sup> καὶ εἰς πάντας τοὺς ἁγίους. While the basic meaning is probably belief in God, the additional notion is towards, that the Thessalonians are directing their belief towards God in that they are embracing as true everything that He has "said" to them through Paul and his proclaiming the gospel. This implies that we human beings direct our belief towards someone or something for what we consider to be true and worthy of our attention for how we think and act in our lives.

<sup>10</sup> αὐτοὶ γὰρ περὶ τῶν ἠδὲ ἀπαγγέλλουσιν ὅποιαν εἰσοδὸν ἔσχομεν πρὸς ὑμᾶς, καὶ πῶς ἐπεστρέψατε πρὸς τὸν θεὸν ἀπὸ τῶν εἰδώλων δουλεύειν θεῷ ζῶντι καὶ ἀληθινῷ – The question here is what exactly does Paul mean by "idols" (εἰδώλων)? Does he mean only pagan images of the natural forces in the creation which the Greeks worshiped, such as Zeus, Apollo, Aphrodite, etc.? Or does he mean any understanding of reality that is false because it rejects all or part of God's truth as revealed in the Bible, which is the way John is using the word in 1 John 5:21 Little children, guard yourselves from idols [i.e., from erroneous ideas about God and Jesus where the latter is not considered to be the Messiah]?

The story of Paul and Silas at Thessalonica in Acts 17:1-9 helps, Acts 17:1 Now when they had traveled through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. 2 And according to Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, 3 explaining and giving evidence that the Messiah had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Messiah." 4 And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, along with a large number of the God-fearing Greeks and a number of the leading women. 5 But the Jews, becoming jealous and taking along some wicked men from the market place, formed a mob and set the city in an uproar; and attacking the house of Jason, they were seeking to bring them out to the people. 6 When they did not find them, they began dragging Jason and some brethren before the city authorities, shouting, "These men who have upset the world have come here also; 7 and Jason has welcomed them, and they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus." 8 They stirred up the crowd and the city authorities who heard these things. 9 And when they had received a pledge from Jason and the others, they released them.

Verse 4 is key in that it indicates that some of the Jews in the synagogue became believers in Jesus along with Greek God-fearers. Therefore, the Christian community in Thessalonica contained some Jews who had previously had an erroneous understanding of the OT like those Jews who remained opposed to the message which Paul and Silas were presenting to them about Jesus. This means that they turned from "idols" (i.e., false conceptions about the nature of reality, whether Greek pagan or Jewish) just as their Greek brothers and sisters did.

Therefore, here in 1 Thessalonians 1:9, Paul is saying that the news of the Thessalonian believers includes the important fact that it is necessary to abandon previous false pagan and Jewish beliefs and practices in order follow the one true God and His Messiah exclusively. And it is clear to the traveling Christian businessmen and to the Thessalonians who are reading this letter that they understand this because of the kind of reception that Paul and his companions received from them. They were wholeheartedly welcomed by them with open arms, which in a pagan society and in the Jewish synagogues in the midst of the hostile Jewish persecution would have been rather startling. Yet it also reveals the fact that God was truly at work within these people. It is a miracle anytime sinners embrace the truth of the gospel and those who present it to them!

Paul is also saying that any false god, including God as people think the Bible is teaching them, but they are wrong in their interpretations, is a dead god. The God of the Bible is the only "living God" and therefore the only "true God."

<sup>11</sup> καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀναμένειν τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν, ὃν ἡγείρεν ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν, Ἰησοῦν τὸν ῥυόμενον ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῆς ὀργῆς τῆς ἐρχομένης – This is the first time in the letter that the 1<sup>st</sup> person plural refers to the three men and the Thessalonian Christians together—and certainly by extrapolation to all believers in Jesus as their Messiah.

The news of the Thessalonian Christians also includes the important information about Jesus as high priest, that it is he who intervenes between God and sinful human beings when he returns to earth by either raising them from the dead or rapturing them from the earth wherever they are living (cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:13ff.), thus enabling them to escape God's anger and eternal condemnation both at the beginning of the millennial kingdom when God destroys all the unbelieving Jews and the Gentile armies who have invaded the land of Israel and at the end of the millennial kingdom when God destroys all unbelievers and even death itself. Thus, Christians need to persevere in their belief and wait for

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Jesus' return, while pursuing moral obedience to God that includes repentance.

Perhaps Paul is referring also to the Great and Terrible Day of the Lord which will be directed mainly towards unbelieving Jews immediately before and including Jesus' return. If this is the case, then he is probably lumping together the two expressions of God's wrath and judgment, that towards the Jews in conjunction with the return of Jesus and his restoring the Kingdom of Israel and that towards all unbelievers at the Great White Throne Judgment at the end of the millennial kingdom. However, it does seem to make more sense that the focus is on the latter as a complete and final judgment by God and mankind.

Two options for "from the heavens" –

1) From Jesus' current place of existence somewhere within the creation but that is certainly other than the earth.

2) From God.

Taking into account 1 Thessalonians 4:16, I think that the first option makes more sense.

Some examples of "heaven" and "heavens" in the NT (the word οὐρανός is used 272x in the NT)–

**Matthew 21:25** "The baptism of John was from what source, from heaven or from men?" And they began reasoning among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' He will say to us, 'Then why did you not believe him?'" [Here "from heaven" clearly means from God, not simply from some location above the earth.]

**Mark 13:25** AND THE STARS WILL BE FALLING from heaven, and the powers that are in the heavens will be shaken. [Here "from heaven" clearly means from a location above the earth and within the creation, while "in the heavens" may very well mean in the invisible realm where Satan dwells so that these powers' being shaken means that they lose much if not all their power, such as when Revelation 20 says that Satan is locked in the abyss during the millennial kingdom.]

**Luke 10:18** And He said to them, "I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning. **10:19** Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing will injure you. **10:20** "Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven." **10:21** At that very time He rejoiced greatly in the Holy Spirit, and said, "I praise You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants. Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight. **10:22** All things have been handed over to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him." [Assuming that Jesus in v. 18 is referring to something which he "saw" while the disciples were casting out demons in various villages and towns, "from heaven" means not an actual place but a metaphorical one that is likened to a level of power and influence over the creation that was greater for Satan before he "fell" from it to a lower level. Jesus is saying that he witnessed (somehow) a radical reduction in Satan's power and influence as the disciples were casting out demons during their journey. But maybe the reduction is not less demonic activity but eliminating this activity by virtue of God's working through these disciples and causing the demons to leave the people whom they were influencing so dramatically.]

Then, the second use in the prepositional phrase "in heaven" is actually "in the heavens" in the Greek text and refers to the place of permanence whereby the disciples can be assured (if they are of authentic faith) that they will acquire eternal life and salvation and no one can rob them of this. Their names are permanently recording in a permanent location so to speak where no one on the earth can erase this recording. Thus, eternal life and salvation is guaranteed for them.

Finally, the third use, "O Father, Lord of heaven and earth," is a reference to the far reaches of the universe as in Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning, Elohim created the heavens and the earth," i.e., all the universe. God is the creator of all the physical reality that exists in this universe.]

**John 3:27** John answered and said, "A man can receive nothing unless it has been given him from heaven. [Here "from heaven" most likely means "from God".]

**John 6:38** "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me." [Here "from heaven" most likely means "from God".]

[Compare the verse above with **John 1:6** There came a man sent from God, whose name was John. (Here "from God" does not mean from a location other than the earth and above it somewhere in the creation. It simply means that John came into existence as part of God's plans and story to fulfill the role that He assigned to him.)]

**Acts 9:3** As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. [Here "from heaven" probably means from God, that this light did not have a natural source such as the sun, but a supernatural source, i.e., God who simply wrote it into the story.]

**1 Corinthians 15:47** The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven. [Here "from heaven" probably means from God in the sense of having a special role and responsibility within the creation, so special in Jesus' case that the creation is all about him as the created icon of God who will rule over God's people, the world, and the new earth and all believers for eternity.]

**1 Peter 1:12** It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven — things into which angels long to look. [Here "from heaven" clearly means from God. This is His Spirit who directed those who presented the gospel of Jesus as the Messiah to Peter's readers.]

Some examples of "heavens" –

**Matthew 6:9** "Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who is in the heavens, hallowed be Your name. [Here "in the



heavens” means in that realm which is outside the creation and where it is also true that God is an eternal and permanent being.]

**2 Corinthians 5:1** For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. [Here “in the heavens” probably means in the mind of God and therefore eventually from God and morally perfect in contrast to “made with hands” which would be in this creation and earthy, temporary, and subject to sin and decay.]

**Ephesians 6:12** For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavens. [Here “in the heavens” does not mean eternal, but only permanent during the existence of the present realm and earth, so that the “spiritual forces” are those which influence the religious rulers and powers who seek to lead people away from God instead of towards Him and His truth in the Bible.]

<sup>12</sup> Αὐτοὶ γὰρ οἶδατε, ἀδελφοί, τὴν εἴσοδον ἡμῶν τὴν πρὸς ὑμᾶς ὅτι οὐ κενὴ γέγονεν – There are at least two options for what Paul means by κενή – 1) That, based upon God’s sovereignty, there is always the possibility that people will reject his message of Jesus as the Messiah, in which case they would consider their efforts to proclaim this message to be “in vain,” i.e., for nothing, eternally speaking. This would be similar to 1 Thessalonians 3:5 and Paul’s use of the phrase εἰς κενὸν. 2) That Paul’s coming into contact with these Thessalonian Christians was neither with information that was baseless in reality nor with motives for financial gain, i.e., trying to sell them something that was especially eternally useless.

By putting this sentence at the end of the paragraph of 1:7-2:1, I think that Paul is encouraging his readers to grab hold of just how significant it is that they have become Christians and continue to be such in the face of so much opposition there in Thessalonica. In the next two paragraphs of 2:2-7 and 2:8-12, Paul will describe the integrity that Silvanus, Timothy, and he displayed when they first presented the gospel to the Thessalonians. Then in 2:13, he will come back to their response and its authenticity. Therefore, I think that he is referring to #1, to the theological possibility that these new Christians are only pretending to be Christians.

This is a profound thing, that these former pagan idolators and Jewish adherents to erroneous Judaism have now become bona fide followers of the Jewish Messiah. It is practically unbelievable and can only have come about because it is what God has chosen to happen for them from before the beginning of the creation and has produced the authenticity of their Christianity through the overall work of His Spirit while also using Paul and his companions as human instruments of His love, grace, and mercy.

<sup>13</sup> ἀλλὰ προπαθόντες καὶ ὑβρισθέντες, καθὼς οἶδατε, ἐν Φιλίπποις ἐπαρρησιασάμεθα ἐν τῷ θεῷ ἡμῶν λαλήσαι πρὸς ὑμᾶς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν πολλῷ ἀγῶνι – Now, Paul begins a series of statements to defend and demonstrate what Timothy, Silvanus, and he brought to the table that resulted in these Thessalonians’ becoming Christians, that it was truth and not error or lies—such as would be the case with Jewish false teachers of the Mosaic Covenant, even if they claimed to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, but they would be promoting Moses above Jesus and encouraging even the Gentiles to obey the covenant, especially the ritual commandments in order to make themselves worthy of God’s blessings. Paul could also be thinking of traveling teachers of Greek philosophy who would hire themselves out to wealthy families to instruct their children.

And again, the word οἶδατε from οἶδα has more the connotation of value and appreciate because of what these people truly know about Paul and the other two men with him.

Paul’s first statement of defense that he is all about eternal truth and divine morality is that he and his companions proclaimed the gospel to these Thessalonians even after being so harshly treated in Philippi. They did not let persecution from keeping them from continuing their responsibility of making this message available to others in the same kind of situation, i.e., extreme persecution.

Acts 16:11-40 tells the story of the troubles Paul and his companions bumped into in Philippi, including his imprisonment with Silvanus and yet success in seeing people believe in Jesus as the Messiah. In spite of their rather unpleasant experience in Philippi, Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy remembered that God had commissioned Paul to be the apostle to the Gentiles. Therefore, they all felt compelled to continue proclaiming the biblical message in Thessalonica, even when they encountered the same kind of hostility to it there. While, in Philippi, the antipathy came from Gentile pagans, in Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-15), the source was religious and unbelieving Jews. But Paul’s position “in God,” in the grips of the sovereign God who has assigned him the responsibility to be the apostle to the Gentiles, gave him the courage to continue to proclaim this controversial message.

<sup>14</sup> ἡ γὰρ παράκλησις ἡμῶν οὐκ ἐκ πλάνης οὐδὲ ἐξ ἀκαθαρσίας ἰσχυρὴ ἐν δόλῳ – Paul’s second statement of defense is simply a statement to the effect that whatever he was seeking to persuade the Thessalonians to believe, it contains nothing that is false or immoral. Nor did they seek to gain some personal advantage by faking some of the information. Implicitly, Paul is accusing all presenters of any other worldview, whether erroneous Judaism or false Greek philosophy, as though it is worthwhile to embrace and should become the basis for all decision making, of all of these characteristics. They are in error. They are immoral and rebellious against God. And they are trying to pull the wool over people’s eyes, because every human being fundamentally knows the truth about the transcendent Creator (cf. Romans 1). And they are trying to gain some personal advantage through their lies—self-aggrandizement at the expense of other people’s being deceived. They are scammers using a dishonest scheme to get money, power, and prestige.

Therefore, Paul and his companions are declaring that they state only the truth, and that, by implication, there is only

one truth—God’s that is found in the Bible. It is perhaps not always the case, but people who spew lies as their ideology will be much more accepted by the world than those who present the truth of God from the Bible. Thus, Paul is making the case that he has no intention of flattering people and gaining their approval by being a demagogue and speaking only what they want to hear, lies and false ideas in opposition to God. Instead, his goal is to please God and present the truth, regardless of how much hostility he encounters from the world and its vast collection of sinners who are in rebellion against God.

<sup>15</sup> ἀλλὰ καθὼς δεδοκίμασθεθα ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ πιστευθῆναι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον, οὕτως λαλοῦμεν, οὐχ ὡς ἄνθρωποις ἀρέσκοντες ἀλλὰ ὅτι θεὸς τῷ δοκιμάζοντι τὰς καρδίας ἡμῶν – Paul’s third statement of defense is that God gave him the message he is proclaiming, and he is always mindful of this by having his goal be to please God and not himself as he carries out this responsibility.

Paul and his companions are saying that God has placed them in enough difficult circumstances where they could have said, “Enough! We are not going to do this anymore!” and yet, they continued to commit themselves to Paul’s responsibility to make public the apostolic message of Jesus as the Messiah, that by now the result is that God has provided clear evidence to the effect that they are genuine believers and Paul is an apostle. The logical inference from all this clear evidence of Paul and his companions through suffering is that they are motivated by a desire to please God and not people. If they were more concerned about the latter, they would have avoided the apostolic message and the hostility that it causes for themselves in order to keep people on good terms and friendly with them.

<sup>16</sup> Οὐτε γὰρ ποτε ἐν λόγῳ κολακείας ἐγενήθημεν, καθὼς οἴδατε, οὔτε ἐν προφάσει πλεονεξίας, θεὸς μάρτυς – Paul’s fourth statement of defense is that the gospel does not flatter people as to how good they are. It does the exact opposite and first condemns them as sinners before revealing that God is gracious and mercy and will save them from His condemnation.

Paul and the other two men are implying that all other worldviews in some way flatter people so as to be attractive to them. For example, paganism, “Yes, you can please the gods through your religious efforts simply by performing these ceremonies.” Or Judaism, “Yes, you can please God through your religious obedience to the Mosaic Covenant.” Thus all other worldviews basically commend people for their moral and religious potential, in and of themselves, to do what is good and right before the gods or God. Christianity is not so magnanimous.

Paul also mentions greed as a possible motivation, which they have avoided. Perhaps they are referring to Sophists, who were still plying people with their “wisdom” 400 years after Socrates and Plato, claiming that they could educate the youth, so that they could become good human beings—for a fee! Apostolic wisdom was free, even though Paul argues in 1 Corinthians 9 that the value of the commodity that he is offering is so great that there is no problem with people feeling a moral obligation to support him financially. Yet, he never expects or demands to be supported and remunerated for his “work.” In fact, to demand payment for it in an authoritarian manner would be to deny the gracious nature of the message.

<sup>17</sup> οὐτε ζητοῦντες ἐξ ἀνθρώπων δόξαν οὔτε ἀπ’ ὑμῶν οὔτε ἀπ’ ἄλλων – Paul’s fifth statement of defense is that he can honestly say that his proclamation of the gospel was never for the purpose of getting applause from his listeners. Impressing other people is not his goal. By inference, only pleasing God is.

It is pretty heady stuff to be commissioned by God through the King of the cosmos, the Jewish Messiah, to function as an authorized and inerrant spokesman on behalf of the Messiah. Paul could very easily have become so proud of himself that he would expect and demand that people practically worship him—or certainly pay him for his invaluable work. But he and his companions did not even come close to doing this.

<sup>18</sup> δυνάμενοι ἐν βάρει εἶναι ὡς Χριστοῦ ἀπόστολοι. ἀλλὰ ἐγενήθημεν ὡς ἐὰν τροφὸς θάληται τὰ ἐαυτῆς τέκνα – Paul’s sixth statement of defense is that, if anyone might seem to have the right to declare publicly his credentials so that people would be so impressed that they would grant him the respect that he actually deserves, it is he as an authoritative spokesman for the most important person in human history, the Messiah.

And his seventh statement of defense is defense is how gently and carefully he treated the Thessalonians. He was like a nursing mother towards them. Certainly, Jewish false teachers did not treat people so well, and probably the traveling Greek sophists of Paul’s day did not either.

Their position as apostolic workers of God’s Messiah to the Gentiles made them the most important persons in the Roman Empire, even more important than the apostles in Jerusalem, because their responsibility was to go out into the empire and convey the biblical message, thereby providing themselves with the opportunity to become much more well known than the Jerusalem apostles could be. However, Paul and his companions never saw themselves this way. They were always simply a humble and meek conduit of God for this message.

In addition, they were always subservient to the people to whom they spoke and who responded positively to the news of Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah. In fact, Paul and his companions treated the Thessalonian Christians as though they were like newborn infants and they were their mother, who was responsible for providing them with sustenance in order to keep them alive. Indeed, their eternal lives depended upon their ingesting and digesting the food of the biblical message.

<sup>19</sup> οὕτως ὅμοιρόμενοι ὑμῶν ἐυδοκοῦμεν μεταδοῦναι ὑμῖν οὐ μόνον τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰς ἐαυτῶν ψυχάς, διότι ἀγαπητοὶ ἡμῖν ἐγενήθητε – Paul’s eighth statement of defense is that everything he did in Thessalonica was obviously for these new Christians’ well-being and not for himself, because he sincerely loved them. Paul’s affection for people who responded positively to his message of Jesus was always very strong. Obviously, this made it quite easy to convey the news of the Jewish Messiah to them, to the point that Paul committed his whole being

and existence to their spiritual, emotional, and even physical well-being. It was thus that he loved even the Thessalonian Christians.

**Philippians 1:8** For God is my witness, how I long for you all with the **affection** of Christ Jesus (ἐν σπλάγχνοις Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ).

**Philippians 2:1** Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any **affection** and compassion (εἴ τις σπλάγχνα καὶ οἰκτιρμοί).

<sup>20</sup> Μνημονεύετε γάρ, ἀδελφοί, τὸν κόπον ἡμῶν καὶ τὸν μόχθον· νυκτὸς ἡμέρας ἐργαζόμενοι πρὸς τὸ μὴ ἐπιβαρῆσαι τινα ὑμῶν ἐκηρύξαμεν εἰς ὑμᾶς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ – Paul’s ninth statement of defense is that he worked at his trade, whatever it might have been, so that he never needed anything monetary or material from the Thessalonians. He earned his own living and did not rely at all on donations and support from them. And his intent was so that he would not burden them with giving what they needed for themselves to him and his companions. Plus, he still found time to teach them the gospel and mature them in their understanding of it.

Their desire to be subservient to the Thessalonians led them to avoid completely having to be supported financially by them. Instead, they worked night and day at another trade (or trades) in order to do so. Yet, they still took time to educate the Thessalonians in the most important ideas available to human beings, the information about the one true God, the transcendent Creator, and His Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. Cf. 1 Corinthians 9 where Paul argues his freedom to receive compensation or not for his work as an apostle, while he chooses not to receive in certain instances because he does not want to be a financial burden to people or because he wants to make sure he does not miscommunicate the central idea of God’s grace.

Paul was always concerned about burdening Christians who were poor with supporting him. He also did not want to confuse anyone about the fact that it is God’s sovereign, independent grace alone which saves sinner and not the religious actions of the people which motivates God to act on their behalf.

<sup>21</sup> ὑμεῖς μάρτυρες καὶ ὁ θεός, ὡς ὁσίως καὶ δικαίως καὶ ἀμέμπτως ὑμῖν τοῖς ἡμῶν πιστεύουσιν ἐγενήθημεν – Paul’s tenth statement of defense is that certainly both God and the Thessalonians would have to conclude that how much he and his companions behaved with the highest integrity.

Paul’s way of loving the Thessalonians by not being a financial responsibility to them was not only the right thing to do, but it was also a manner of existing that was pleasing to God.

<sup>22</sup> καθάπερ οἶδατε, ὡς ἕνα ἕκαστον ὑμῶν ὡς πατὴρ τέκνα ἑαυτοῦ – If Paul was like a nursing mother to her children in his relationship with the Thessalonians (cf. 2:7), he knew that it was also appropriate to compare this relationship with that of a father towards his children. Not only was he tender and gentle with them, but he was also assertive and instructive, too, exhorting them to believe the truth of the gospel and to make choices in accordance with God’s moral commandments as he goes on to say in the next verse.

<sup>23</sup> παρακαλοῦντες ὑμᾶς καὶ παραμυθούμενοι καὶ μαρτυρόμενοι εἰς τὸ περιπατεῖν ὑμᾶς ἀξίως τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἡμῶν πατρὸς εἰς τὴν αἰωνίαν βασιλείαν καὶ δόξαν – Paul’s eleventh statement of defense is that he took on the role of a father towards them and instructed, encouraged, comforted, and sought to persuade them in the best manner possible to be obedient to God who would eventually grant them a glorious and eternal existence in the future Kingdom of God.

Thus, Paul and his companions were constantly instructing and exhorting these Thessalonians to obey their ultimate Father, the one and only God, their Creator, by living in a manner that would result in their entering into the future eternal Kingdom of God, which would be the final demonstration of God’s greatness and goodness when He transformed them into morally perfect beings with an eternal existence.

<sup>24</sup> Καὶ διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ἡμεῖς εὐχαριστοῦμεν τῷ θεῷ ἀδιαλείπτως, ὅτι παραλαβόντες λόγον ἀκοῆς παρ’ ἡμῶν τοῦ θεοῦ ἐδέξασθε οὐ λόγον ἀνθρώπων ἀλλὰ καθὼς ἔστιν ἀληθὺς λόγον θεοῦ, ὃς καὶ ἐνεργεῖται ἐν ὑμῖν τοῖς πιστεύουσιν – Paul’s twelfth statement of defense is his gratitude for the Thessalonians’ demonstrating clearly and explicitly through their changed behavior that they recognized that the gospel which he was proclaiming came from the one, true God and had not been fabricated by human beings for selfish reasons. He is implying that all other worldviews, whether erroneous Judaism or something invented by Gentiles, are man-made and not from the creator God who is the only source of truth about the nature of reality.

Whenever Paul and the other two men get the opportunity to address God directly, all the evidence of how they treated the Thessalonians and the Thessalonians treated them leads them to conclude that they genuinely received and embraced the biblical message that they presented to them, so that they understood that this was truth and information from the one transcendent God and not false ideas made up by man, which is the case with the pagan idolatry out of which they came. Paul also reminds them that the reason why they had such a positive reception to the news of Jesus as the Messiah was because God is the one who is causing it by operating powerfully within them to change their inwardness.

<sup>25</sup> ὑμεῖς γὰρ μιμηταὶ ἐγενήθητε, ἀδελφοί, τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν τοῦ θεοῦ τῶν οὐσῶν ἐν τῇ Ἰουδαίᾳ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, ὅτι τὰ αὐτὰ ἐπάθετε καὶ ὑμεῖς ὑπὸ τῶν ἰδίων συμφυλετῶν καθὼς καὶ αὐτοὶ ὑπὸ τῶν Ἰουδαίων – Paul’s thirteenth statement of defense is that the Thessalonians, who may be mostly Jews according in line with the story in Acts 17, are experiencing the same kind of persecution in their city that the Jewish Christians experienced back in Israel when the Christian movement began after Jesus’ ascension. To embrace the message of God in the midst of all the lies and false ideas being emitted by the world is also to be willing to suffer the persecution of the world which opposes God so vehemently.

So far, the experiences of Jewish Christians in the area of Israel and of both Jewish and Gentile Christians outside Israel in other parts of the Roman Empire has been difficult in the light of the level of hostility that unbelievers are demonstrating towards them. Thus, the experiences of both believing Jews and believing Gentiles has been very similar.

<sup>26</sup> τῶν καὶ τὸν κύριον ἀποκτείναντων Ἰησοῦν καὶ τοὺς ὁ προφήτας καὶ ἡμᾶς ἐκδιωξάντων καὶ θεῷ μὴ ἀρεσκόντων καὶ πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις ἐναντίων – Paul indicts the Jews in the area of Israel for putting to death their Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. These same Jews also have persecuted the apostles. Therefore, Paul and his fellow apostolic workers can say that God is not pleased with the Jews who did away with their Messiah and that they are actually opposed to mankind, too, because they do not want the truth expressed to them.

<sup>27</sup> κωλύοντων ἡμᾶς τοῖς ἔθνεσιν λαλῆσαι ἵνα σωθῶσιν, εἰς τὸ ἀναπληρῶσαι αὐτῶν τὰς αμαρτίας πάντοτε. ἔφθασεν δὲ ἐπ' αὐτοὺς ἡ ὀργή ὅτι εἰς τέλος – Paul's fourteenth statement of defense is that the long-term effect of the Jewish unbelievers who try to suppress the spread of the gospel to the Gentiles is that God will express His anger and condemnation towards them (either when Jesus returns if they are still alive so that they are killed by God's judgments as described in Revelation, or at the Great White Throne Judgment of Revelation 20, or both).

These same unbelieving Jews do all they can to prevent Paul and his companions from speaking to Gentiles about Jesus, whose information would result in their being rescued from God's eternal condemnation if they embrace it. This hindering the spread of the news of Jesus in a sense fills up the bucket of judgment for these Jews and will result ultimately in God's condemning them and destroying them, which will include the The Great and Terrible Day of the Lord on the Jews in the land of Israel as they experience the ruthlessness and antipathy of the Man of Lawlessness (cf. Daniel 2,7-12; Joel 2; Malachi 4; 2 Thessalonians 2) and death when Jesus returns. It will also include destruction after the millennial kingdom at the Great White Throne Judgment of Revelation 20 (cf. 2 Peter 3).

<sup>28</sup> Ἥμεῖς δέ, ἀδελφοί, ἀποφανισθέντες ἀφ' ὑμῶν πρὸς καιρὸν ὥρας, προσώπῳ οὐ καρδία, περισσοτέρως ἐσπουδάσαμεν τὸ πρόσωπον ὑμῶν ἰδεῖν ἐν πολλῇ ἐπιθυμίᾳ – The spiritual environment in Thessalonica in Acts 17 was so hostile that Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy had to flee for their lives. They then went to Berea, where Silvanus and Timothy remained after some Jews from Thessalonica showed up to hassle him again, but Paul escaped to Athens. Eventually Silvanus and Timothy joined him after he continued on to Corinth, from where they are writing this letter. Paul, especially, has been, for a short while, physically separated from the Thessalonians, and he is doing all that he can to get back to see them—as he will say in 3:10, to complete what is lacking in their understanding of the gospel and to encourage them in their faith.

<sup>29</sup> διότι ἠθελήσαμεν ἐλθεῖν πρὸς ὑμᾶς, ἐγὼ μὲν Παῦλος καὶ ἄπαξ καὶ δῖς, καὶ ἐνέκοψεν ἡμᾶς ὁ σατανᾶς – Paul does not go into detail on how Satan has hindered him from returning to Thessalonica. But maybe he means that the opposition from both Jews and Gentiles to the gospel in that city is still so intense that this is preventing Paul from going back there, even though Timothy has (cf. 3:1ff.). It would be that Satan has found such a large following in the city that most people are rejecting God and the gospel which Paul is presenting them.

<sup>30</sup> τίς γὰρ ἡμῶν ἐλπὶς ἡ χαρὰ ἢ στέφανος ἡ καυχῆσεως – ἢ οὐχὶ καὶ ὑμεῖς – ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ ἐν τῇ αὐτοῦ παρουσίᾳ – Paul's appreciation for the Thessalonians' belief and their perseverance as Christians is so great that he considers them to be a genuine reason for his bragging (so to speak) as the apostle to the Gentiles when Jesus returns (his *parousia* = grand appearance as the king of Israel) and all believers and unbelievers are revealed through the resurrection and ascension of the former, i.e., those already dead and those still alive respectively. It will be like winning a race and "earning" a wreath of victory for having persuaded (on a strictly human level) sinners to repent and appeal to God for mercy. And the joy of receiving this crown is something for which he genuinely hopes, just as he hopes for his own salvation—a guaranteed expectation that he knows he only has to wait for and it will happen.

<sup>31</sup> ὑμεῖς γάρ ἐστε ἡ δόξα ἡμῶν καὶ ἡ χαρὰ – Again, the Thessalonian Christians are reason for Paul and his companions not only to rejoice, but also to consider as bringing them a level of honor and recognition because of their positive response to their presentation of the biblical message. Nevertheless, Paul and his co-workers understand completely that the Thessalonians' faith and obedience are not really because of them, but only and ultimately because of God and His sovereign choice of them. From a human standpoint, Paul would really like to be able to feel a sense of accomplishment from seeing his efforts work out for the salvation of these new Christians after his life of fulfilling his responsibility as the apostle to the Gentiles is over. This is how important to him are these Thessalonian Christians. And the same can and should be true for any of us Christians, that we feel that we really have done something to bring about the kingdom of God by influencing people either to come to genuine belief or to persevere in their belief. We want to be able to pat ourselves on the back, not out of arrogance, but out of a very human and appropriate desire to feel that we have done something truly worthwhile in this world. In other words, we should allow ourselves, as Paul did, a sense of gratification that comes from our work for the Kingdom of God as we do for our work in any other area of our lives. Indeed, unbelievers place all their expectation for gratification in their accomplishments in this world, but Christians enjoy both what they do that is temporary in their lives and what they do that will persist into eternity in regard to their fellow Christians' faith and obedience, especially in the face of persecution and opposition similar to what Paul and the Thessalonians experienced.

<sup>32</sup> Διὸ μηκέτι στέγοντες εὐδοκῆσαμεν καταλειφθῆναι ἐν Ἀθήναις μόνοι – To make sense of the sequence of details in Acts 17-18:5, Paul must have sent word to Timothy in Berea to return to Thessalonica, and then Timothy with Silas, who remained in Berea, rejoined Paul in Corinth.

Consequently, the “we” of 1 Thessalonians 3:1 probably includes Luke and even some other unnamed coworkers, because Acts 17:14 says that Silas and Timothy remained in Berea when Paul had to flee to Athens. And then Acts 18:5 says that “Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia” to join Paul in Corinth. To fit all the details, the sequence of events must have been this –

- 1) Paul, Silas, Timothy, Luke, and others come to Thessalonica and then flee to Berea.
- 2) Paul, Luke, and others flee Berea to Athens, leaving at least Silas and Timothy in Berea.
- 3) Paul from Athens sends word to Timothy to return to Thessalonica and encourage the Christians there, while Silas probably remains in Berea. This leaves Paul, Luke, and the others “alone” in Athens.
- 4) Paul, Luke, and the others leave Athens and travel to Corinth.
- 5) Timothy finishes his assignment in Thessalonica, travels to Berea where he meets up with Silas to continue his journey, and the two together rejoin Paul and the others in Corinth.

Therefore, Paul, Luke, and the others keep hearing about the opposition that the Jews are continuing to express towards Jesus as the Messiah, such that they are rightly concerned about the perseverance of the belief of the Thessalonian Christians. Their concern is elevated to the level that they feel it necessary to send Timothy from Berea back to them to encourage them to endure in their faith.

Another way to look at this, though, is that for someone who believes in the sovereignty and faithfulness of God as strongly as Paul does, he sure got nervous in regard to the perseverance of people’s belief. This is similar to the situation in 2 Corinthians where Paul describes his leaving Ephesus and traveling towards Corinth to meet up with Titus who is bringing a report about the Corinthian Christians’ response to his third letter.

This also speaks to the fact that Paul could not tell 100% if people had genuine faith or not, which all the more should instruct us to judge carefully and humbly the authenticity of people’s faith so that we work to encourage them to persevere in their faith even if we are relatively convinced that they have it.

<sup>33</sup> καὶ ἐπέμψαμεν Τιμόθεον, τὸν ἀδελφὸν ἡμῶν ἡμῶν καὶ συνεργὸν τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ, εἰς τὸ στηριῆσαι ὑμᾶς καὶ παρακαλέσαι ὑμῶν τῆς πίστεως – Timothy also had the ability to continue educating the Thessalonians in the information about Jesus, which would further help encourage them to persevere in their belief. Thus, Paul assumes that God will use Timothy in this manner.

Paul calls Timothy “our brother,” meaning their fellow Christian and coheir of eternal life. He also calls him “God’s co-worker with respect to the good news of the Messiah,” meaning that God had given Timothy to Paul as someone who would join him in proclaiming the gospel of Jesus as the Messiah.

But is this not putting Timothy in harm’s way by sending him back to Thessalonica alone? Why would Paul do such a thing? It must be that Paul believes that somehow Timothy is capable to fly underneath the radar of those who are persecuting Christians in Thessalonica. Probably, the Jews recognized in Paul that he was the ringleader in this group of itinerant preachers. If they can get rid of him, most likely the group will fall apart.

<sup>34</sup> τὸ ‘μηδένα σαίνεσθαι’ ἐν ταῖς θλίψεσιν ταύταις. αὐτοὶ γὰρ οἶδατε ὅτι εἰς τοῦτο κείμεθα – Paul and his apostolic workers explicitly state that their purpose in sending Timothy was so that the Thessalonians would not give up their faith, even though they were experiencing such a high level of antipathy towards Jesus and them, too. They also assert that Christians must expect this kind of negative reaction to their faith, because God has absolutely predestined the world to operate this way.

<sup>35</sup> καὶ γὰρ ὅτε πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἦμεν, προελέγομεν ὑμῖν ὅτι μέλλομεν θλιβεσθαι, καθὼς καὶ ἐγένετο καὶ οἶδατε – In fact, Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, before the persecution even happened, warned the Thessalonians of this, because this is part of their biblical worldview and what they had seen happen in other cities of the 1<sup>st</sup> century Roman Empire—from both Jews and Gentiles. Then, they all encountered hostility to the message as they said they would, so that the Thessalonians were able to experience it firsthand.

Thus, Paul probably had a sense that trouble lay ahead in Thessalonica even as they approached the city. The problem had been the Gentile pagans in Philippi, and the problem in Thessalonica was going to be the Jews. Indeed, he could always count on some of the Jews to become very antagonistic towards the gospel. They just naturally were going to object to the whole idea of a crucified Messiah, in spite of the fact that the OT which they supposedly had studied teaches this.

<sup>36</sup> διὰ τοῦτο καὶ γὰρ μηκέτι στέγων ἐπεμψα εἰς τὸ γνῶναι τὴν πίστιν ὑμῶν, μή πως ἐπείρασεν ὑμᾶς ὁ πειράζων καὶ εἰς κενὸν γένηται ὁ κόπος ἡμῶν – Paul switches to the first person singular to highlight his own anxiety regarding the state of the Thessalonians’ belief, that it reached such a level that he just could not stand it anymore and sent Timothy to find out whether all the effort that they had put into presenting the biblical message to them was possibly for nothing. Satan as the primary opponent of God and His purposes to rescue undeserving sinners from His eternal condemnation often tempts people through difficult circumstances to abandon their belief in God and thereby give up the promised eternal destiny of mercy and life. Paul’s concern is that Satan as this master tempter had succeeded in dissuading the Thessalonian Christians from persevering in their belief. (cf. Matthew 6 and the Lord’s Prayer, “Do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one,” i.e., save us from abandoning our faith.)

But fortunately God uses these same circumstances simply to test authentic believers and confirm and further solidify their faith which reveals to them that they do have genuine belief and therefore gives them “hope” and confidence in their expecting eternal life from God (cf. Romans 5:1-11). And God does this through His faithfulness to His promises to those whom He has chosen by working powerfully within them through His Holy Spirit.



<sup>37</sup> Ἀρτί δὲ ἐλθόντος Τιμοθέου πρὸς ἡμᾶς ἀφ' ὧν καὶ εὐαγγελισαμένου ἡμῖν τὴν πίστιν καὶ τὴν ἀγάπην ὧν καὶ ὅτι ἔχετε μνησθῆναι ἡμῶν ἀγαθὴν πάντοτε, ἐπιποθοῦντες ἡμᾶς ἰδεῖν καθάπερ καὶ ἡμεῖς ὑμᾶς – Timothy has returned to Corinth from Thessalonica and brought a very favorable report to Paul and Silvanus of the Thessalonian Christians' faith—that it is genuine and accompanied by love for their fellow believers, along with a deep desire to see these three men again.

Thus, Paul continues describing the symbiotic relationship which he has with the Thessalonian Christians. They need him to teach them the gospel, and he needs them for the gratification he gets from seeing his work as an apostle bear fruit for the sake of eternal life for those to whom he proclaims the gospel. And both elements of this mutual relationship are legitimate and healthy.

<sup>38</sup> διὰ τοῦτο παρεκλήθημεν, ἀδελφοί, ἐφ' ὧν ἐπὶ πάσῃ τῇ ἀνάγκῃ καὶ θλίψει ἡμῶν ἡμεῖς ὑμῶν πίστεως – The good report concerning the Thessalonians is now helping Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy to endure the additional experiences in Corinth of the Jews' hostility towards the biblical truth (cf. Acts 18:6-17).

<sup>39</sup> ὅτι νῦν ζῶμεν ἐὰν ὑμεῖς ἵστηκετε ἐν κυρίῳ – Indeed, Paul feels a great sense of relief and even life now that he knows how committed to the biblical message are the Thessalonians. He is invigorated in the midst of the additional distresses that the three of them are experiencing in Corinth due to the hostility of the world towards the gospel.

<sup>40</sup> τίνα γὰρ εὐχαριστίαν δυνάμεθα τῷ θεῷ ἀνταποδοῦναι περὶ ὧν ἐπὶ πάσῃ τῇ χαρᾷ ἣ χαίρομεν δι' ὑμᾶς ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν – Paul goes on to comment on how grateful to God he is for the Thessalonians and their genuine belief, so that he feels that there is no amount of thanks that he could say to God to pay Him back (so to speak) for the joy that he feels in the light of their authentic belief.

<sup>41</sup> νυκτὸς καὶ ἡμέρας ὑπερεκπερισσοῦ δεόμενοι εἰς τὸ ἰδεῖν ὑμῶν τὸ πρόσωπον καὶ καταρτίσαι τὰ ὑστερήματα τῆς πίστεως ὑμῶν – The Thessalonians' faith also leads Paul and his apostolic co-workers to ask God that they may return to them and continue educating them. The expression “complete what is lacking in your belief” must be an idiomatic one that means that Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy would like to educate them to the point that they need no more education in the biblical message, i.e., that they would become like Paul specifically, having a complete and full understanding of God that is obtainable from the Bible and is the privilege of an apostle. Certainly, the Thessalonians' belief is sufficient to gain them eternal life. But the more knowledge and understanding of God the better. This is what all the apostles believe and write in their letters. Cf. 1 Peter 2:2,19; 3:16,21.

<sup>42</sup> Αὐτὸς δὲ ὁ θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ ἡμῶν καὶ ὁ κύριος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦς κατευθύνει τὴν ὁδὸν ἡμῶν πρὸς ὑμᾶς – As a sort of benediction with respect to this last section of 1 Thessalonians 1:2-3:10, Paul indirectly appeals to God to lead the three of them back to the Thessalonians. He includes the words “and our Lord Jesus” to mean that whatever God is doing with respect to the gospel of Jesus as the Messiah, it obviously includes Jesus. So even if Jesus is not directly directing Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, nevertheless he is doing so indirectly through the sovereign will of God who is bringing about the eternal Kingdom of God that will involve Jesus as its king within the creation.

<sup>43</sup> ὑμᾶς δὲ ὁ κύριος πλεονάσαι καὶ περισσεύσαι τῇ ἀγάπῃ εἰς ἀλλήλους καὶ εἰς πάντας καθάπερ καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς ὑμᾶς – At the same time, Paul would have “the Lord” ramp up the Thessalonians' love for all believers in Jesus as the Messiah, just as this causing Paul and his apostolic companions to love the Thessalonian Christians even though they are not in physically present in the same Christian community.

I think that the “Lord's causing” this to happen is the teaching of the gospel having its proper effect on the Thessalonians such that they are truly motivated to love one another and other Christians as they understand better and better what it really means for the Messiah to have loved them all by dying for them—that they exhibit the same kind of sacrificial love towards one another. Therefore, it is both the Father's doing as the transcendent creator and Jesus' doing because of what Paul has taught the Thessalonians during the brief time that he was with them.

Thus, I am interpreting the καὶ εἰς πάντας as “and to all Christians” instead of “and to all people” as the NAS95 does. The context, including 4:9-10, lends itself more towards the former.

<sup>44</sup> εἰς τὸ στηρίξαι ὑμῶν τὰς καρδίας ῥαμέμπους ἐν ῥαγιωσύνῃ ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ πατρὸς ἡμῶν ἐν τῇ παρουσίᾳ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ μετὰ πάντων τῶν ἁγίων αὐτοῦ, ὅ[α]μήν – The effect of the teaching of the gospel of Jesus will be there all the way to the end of these Christians' lives or when Jesus returns, whichever occurs first.

The increase in genuine, biblical love for other believers among the Thessalonian Christians and in Christian communities in other cities that comes from grasping the gospel of a crucified Messiah constitutes the establishment of the verification of the authenticity of their inwardness and belief that means that they will find acceptance from God at the second coming of the Messiah. They will have fulfilled the necessary condition as sinners for entering into the Kingdom of God, starting with a changed heart and then having this manifest itself through belief in the gospel and appropriate care and concern for their fellow Christians.

As a result, they will be considered different and set apart from others in the world who have rejected the biblical message. In addition, they will, for the first time, personally meet Jesus, who will be accompanied by all other genuine believers who died before his second coming and are resurrected at this second coming (or who are lifted from the earth if they are still alive at this time), as Paul will go on to explain in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11.

cf. [Revelation 19:14](#) And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses.

Jesus' παρουσία will be his grand appearance as king and priest when he returns to restore the Kingdom of Israel which begins the eternal Kingdom of God.

<sup>45</sup> Λοιπὸν ὁὖν, ἀδελφοί, ἐρωτῶμεν ὑμᾶς καὶ παρακαλοῦμεν ἐν κυρίῳ Ἰησοῦ, ὅτινα καθὼς παρελάβετε παρ' ἡμῶν τὸ πῶς δεῖ ὑμᾶς περιπατεῖν καὶ ἀρέσκειν θεῷ, ὡσαύτως καὶ περιπατεῖτε, ἵνα περισσεύητε μᾶλλον – In the light of the Thessalonians' commitment to their eternal destiny that comes through the biblical message, Paul exhorts them to live accordingly, as apparently they already are, but Paul and his apostolic workers would have them definitely continue doing so even more than they are doing now.

It seems that, as a general rule, people in the Roman Empire did not treat each other very well. The apostolic message required that believers live quite differently, and it may have been hard to change old habits. Thus, Paul (along with the other apostles; cf. 1 Peter) had to keep encouraging his new converts to love one another, even more and more and more, i.e., to keep going.

We never achieve a level of moral goodness, love, and care for one another as Christians such that we can say that there is nothing more that we can do or that we cannot do better than we already are. There is always room for improvement in both our understanding of the gospel and our living it.

<sup>46</sup> οἴδατε γὰρ τίνας παραγγελίας ἐδώκαμεν ὑμῖν διὰ τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ – Indeed, the Thessalonians should consider the kind of human relationships that Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy were talking about which are in contrast to the way other people are living in the Romans Empire to be a direct commandment from God Himself in light of His plans and purposes regarding the Messiah.

<sup>47</sup> Τοῦτο γάρ ἐστιν θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ, ὁ ἀγιασμός ὑμῶν, ἀπέχεσθαι ὑμᾶς ἀπὸ τῆς πορνείας – Paul states explicitly that God requires of His believers that they be different from the world in their moral behavior. For example, that they shun sexual immorality, which was very different from the Thessalonians' religious, pagan culture that encouraged temple prostitution and, perhaps, even condoned to a degree adultery among married people, especially in the light of how women were viewed as second class citizens and thus poorly treated. This was not only simply part of the fabric of these new Christians' Thessalonian culture but also Paul knows a natural outcome of their own evil cravings originating in the defining essence of their moral nature that he feels it necessary to warn them away from continuing these practices within their newly formed Christian community.

It is also probably true that among Jews who claimed to be obeying the Mosaic Covenant that sexual immorality existed, along with various other sins—without there being true repentance and a fundamental desire to change their behavior because they lacked changed hearts and authentic belief. Certainly, the OT has examples of this being the case among the Jews. So it is not out of the realm of possibility that the same was true within the Jewish communities of Paul's day.

<sup>48</sup> εἰδέναι ἕκαστον ὑμῶν τὸ ἑαυτοῦ σκεῦος κτᾶσθαι ἐν ἀγιασμῷ καὶ τιμῇ – Paul uses language here that indicates that all morality, and especially sexual morality, is personal treatment of an individual's body that demonstrates that he honors and reveres his body as that which has been created and given him by the morally perfect transcendent Creator. Or it could be that he recognizes that God will honor him with eternal life and moral perfection if he pursues moral goodness.

And this is far, far different from people in the pagan and even Jewish culture of the 1<sup>st</sup> century Roman Empire. The body for the pagans was probably more a place where strong desires existed which were better satisfied than not. It may very well have been the same for Jews even as they thought that they were obeying the Mosaic Covenant.

<sup>49</sup> μὴ ἐν πάθει ἐπιθυμίας καθάπερ καὶ τὰ ἔθνη τὰ μὴ εἰδότα τὸν θεόν – The opposite of honoring one's body with morality, especially sexual morality, is to succumb to the natural human passions that lead a person to act contrary to God's moral commandments, if these passions are fulfilled in a context other than that for which God has designed them morally. The Gentile, pagan idolators, who engage in temple prostitution and culturally acceptable adultery, demonstrate, by their actions, that they do not grasp in their minds the significance of the transcendent Creator and the morality that He requires among human beings. They simply allow themselves to be led by their inner, sinful passions without giving them a second thought as to their goodness or morality in the light of their being contrary to what their Creator requires.

<sup>50</sup> τὸ μὴ ὑπερβαίνειν καὶ πλεονεκτεῖν ἐν τῷ πράγματι τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ, διότι ἕκδικος κύριος περὶ πάντων τούτων, καθὼς καὶ προεῖπαμεν ὑμῖν καὶ διεμαρτυράμεθα – In this verse, Paul seems to indicate that any kind of immorality, and certainly sexual immorality where he may mean adultery, is not only immoral, but is also cheating one's fellow believer out of being cared for properly, which all believers deserve from one another. Or Paul could be saying any kind of sin is a taking advantage of and defrauding one's "brother" who deserves to be treated with kindness and moral love by having his fellow Christians pursue obedience to God. But the fact that Paul uses the singular "his brother" instead of the plural "his brothers" or "the church gathering" probably indicates that he means the 1<sup>st</sup> option above and not the second. In other words, sexual immorality among married people was more than likely commonplace in the pagan and idolatrous communities of the Gentiles in the Roman Empire.

And Paul is quick to remind the Thessalonians that they have already mentioned to them that God's judgment and condemnation towards those who ignore His moral commandments is real and will be certain. Therefore, just as they warned them before, they say now that they ignore this to their eternal peril.

I think that Paul is also saying that we are not saved "by faith alone," but by how we live. In the midst of our intellectual belief in the gospel, we are also required to behave in such a manner that our lives match as much as possible God's moral commandments. Thus, it is our whole lives that "save" us before God.

**Romans 2:5** But in accord with your stubbornness and unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and the revealing of the righteous judgment of God, **2:6** who will pay back each man according to his

deeds—2:7 on the one hand, eternal life to those who, in accordance with the perseverance of doing good, seek for glory, honor, and immortality, 2:8 but, on the other hand, wrath and anger to those who, out of contentiousness, both disobey the truth and obey unrighteousness. 2:9 God will pay back affliction and anguish to everyone who does evil, to the Jew first and also to the Greek, 2:10 but glory, honor, and shalom to everyone who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

<sup>51</sup> οὐ γὰρ ἐκάλεσεν ἡμᾶς ὁ θεὸς ἐπὶ ἀκαθαρσίᾳ ἀλλ' ἐν ἁγιασμῷ – God's intent for believers is that they be different from the rest of the world, who remain hostile to the biblical truth and who demonstrate this through their immoral behavior, including their sexual immoral behavior.

Thus, God has brought sinners into a relationship with Him by changing their hearts which results in their obeying His moral commandments as that which will be different from the rest of the world.

<sup>52</sup> τοιγαροῦν ὁ ἄθετὼν οὐκ ἄνθρωπον ἀθετεῖ ἀλλὰ τὸν θεὸν τὸν ὁ[καί] ῥιζιδόντα τὸ πνεῦμα αὐτοῦ τὸ ἅγιον εἰς ῥῆμας – To ignore God in this matter by not taking seriously how a person should behave in the midst of his belief in Jesus as the Messiah is not to reject something that man has made up, which would be the case if the Thessalonians rejected their former pagan idolatry, or any worldview other than the biblical one. Instead, to engage wholeheartedly in immorality is to reject the transcendent Creator Himself.

Paul also implies in this verse that, if God is working in the Thessalonians through His Holy Spirit, then they will embrace what he is saying. Otherwise, they are rejecting the very operation of God within them in addition to God in His transcendence. They have lived their lives up to the time of their conversion to Christianity by rejecting God. Now, they must make every effort to choose to live in a loving and moral way towards their fellow Christians and in the presence of non-Christians as part and parcel of what it means for them to be believers in Jesus to escape God's wrath, condemnation, and destruction.

<sup>53</sup> Περὶ δὲ τῆς φιλαδελφίας οὐ χρεῖαν ῥέχετε ῥάγραφειν ὑμῖν, αὐτοὶ γὰρ ὑμεῖς θεοδιδασκτοὶ ἐστε εἰς τὸ ἀγαπᾶν ἀλλήλους – Paul mentions the second important thing on their minds in regard to the way that the Thessalonians must live as a result of being authentic believers in Jesus as the Messiah. It is to love one another as fellow Christians, but his purview extends beyond the Thessalonian Christian community to other gatherings of Christians—that everyone should be cognizant of other Christian gatherings and become aware of how to care for their physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual needs too.

But exactly how are they taught by God? Two options—1) Paul is referring to what he and Timothy have taught them during the respective visits, so that it should be translated, “you are those who have been taught by God [through our visits and teaching you, and you are taking our instructions seriously and acting upon them]”; 2) The natural, intellectual ideas that God has implanted in all human beings as to how they should interact with one another.

#1 makes more sense. Now that the Thessalonians have experienced a changed inwardness by the Holy Spirit of God, they should acknowledge even more willingly the way that they should treat one another as God has commanded them through Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy.

Thus, in the midst of resisting all the immoral temptations that their culture encourages, they should do more and follow through on all that these men have taught them about how to treat one another.

<sup>54</sup> καὶ γὰρ ποιεῖτε αὐτὸ ὅτι εἰς πάντας τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς ὁ[τοὺς] ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ Μακεδονίᾳ. Παρακαλοῦμεν δὲ ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί, περισσεύειν μᾶλλον – Paul recognizes that the Thessalonians, based upon Timothy's report, have been doing very well in the manner in which they interact with other Christians throughout the Macedonian (northern Greece) area, which probably includes Philippi. Thus, they encourage them to keep going and treat all Christians in line with what they have been taught.

<sup>55</sup> καὶ φιλοτιμεῖσθαι ἡσυχάζειν καὶ πράσσειν τὰ ἴδια καὶ ἐργάζεσθαι ταῖς ὁ[ιδίαις] χερσὶν ὑμῶν, καθὼς ὑμῖν παρηγγείλαμεν – The religious and social climate in which these Thessalonian Christians are living is difficult and hostile towards the ideas that they have embraced and towards them as believers in these ideas. Paul and his apostolic workers tell them that the best way to handle the hostile environment is just to keep their heads down, to pay attention to their own lives and needs, and to work in a normal manner to meet these needs, thus living as peaceably as possible among those who would want to harm them. Paul reminds them that he has previously commanded them to do so in line with the biblical truth.

There are probably also those who are taking advantage of the love and charity which the Christians are exhibiting towards one another by claiming that they are in need rather than working for a living. Thus, instead of loudly clamoring for attention and for being taken care of by the Christian community, Paul encourages these irresponsible Christians to work hard quietly and make a living for themselves.

<sup>56</sup> ἵνα περιπατῇτε εὐσχημόνως πρὸς τοὺς ἔξω καὶ μηδενὸς χρεῖαν ἔχητε – The quiet and hardworking lives that the Thessalonian Christians should lead will allow them to present the proper model of Christianity to non-believers and not misrepresent it. The idea is for each person within the Christian community to become as self-reliant as possible so as not to take advantage the natural charity and love which exists within the community. This will, in turn, enable each Christian to be as loving as possible towards his fellow believers.

Certainly, if an individual Christian cannot work and needs help surviving in this life, then this is one reason why the Christian community exists. But charity should be given only as a last resort.

<sup>57</sup> Οὐ ῥέλομεν δὲ ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν, ἀδελφοί, περὶ τῶν ῥοιμωμένων, ἵνα μὴ λυπησθε καθὼς καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ ὁοὶ μὴ ἔχοντες ἐλπίδα – It would seem strange that Paul and his companions had not previously taught the Thessalonians about the second coming of the Messiah, but, perhaps, they simply feel that it is necessary to explain it again in the

light of the difficulties that they are experiencing. Thus, they are further encouraging them to persevere in their belief, just as they have been doing. The “dead” would be those who have already died physically and become non-existent in the present reality.

Those with no hope who “grieve” in the manner which Paul means are hit extra hard emotionally by the loss of loved ones, because they have no real basis to expect them to obtain eternal life and to see them again. And this would be because, on account of their pagan idolatry (as Gentiles) or lack of proper understanding of even the Mosaic Covenant (as Jews), their worldview does not include eternal life as the Bible promises. Cf. [Acts 17:32](#) Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some began to sneer, but others said, “We shall hear you again concerning this.” And cf. [1 Corinthians 15:12](#) If the Messiah is being proclaimed as having been raised from the dead, how are some of you saying that there is no resurrection of the dead?

Paul is not saying the Christians should not be naturally sad at the death and loss of loved ones who have been fellow believers, whether family members or friends, but that their grieving will not despairing as that of non-believers, because of the hope and expectation of the gift of eternal life through God’s grace and mercy.

<sup>58</sup> εἰ γὰρ πιστεύομεν ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ἀπέθανεν καὶ ἀνέστη, οὕτως ἔκαὶ ὁ θεὸς τοὺς κοιμηθέντας διὰ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἄξει σὺν αὐτῷ – Paul’s logical conclusion from the death and resurrection of the Messiah is that believers in Jesus will have the same experience—death and then resurrection to eternal life. The clause τοὺς κοιμηθέντας διὰ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ means those who have fallen asleep in the midst of their relationship with Jesus as authentic believers so that this means for them, in the light of God’s eternal plans and purposes, that they will rise from the dead and acquire both immortality and moral perfection in the Kingdom of God.

These are sinners who persevered in their faith in God and Jesus as the Messiah to the very end of their lives, which qualified them to be resurrected by God when Jesus returns.

<sup>59</sup> Τοῦτο γὰρ ὑμῖν λέγομεν ἐν λόγῳ κυρίου, ὅτι ἡμεῖς οἱ ζῶντες οἱ περιλειπόμενοι εἰς τὴν παρουσίαν τοῦ κυρίου οὐ μὴ φθάσωμεν τοὺς κοιμηθέντας – By what Paul goes on to say, the issue of “preceding” has to do with “always being with the Lord,” i.e., remaining in the presence of the Messiah as living, eternal beings (cf. v. 17). Thus, Paul and his apostolic workers are explaining that the resurrection of those who have already died as believers (including those in OT times, e.g., Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, et al.) and being brought into the presence of the Messiah will take place before the ascending from the earth of believers who are still alive when the Messiah returns.

Paul seems to be speaking of the possibility of his being alive when Jesus returns, but this does not necessarily mean that he misunderstood the point that Jesus made for example in the Olivet Discourse of Matthew 24 that his return was a long way off, which Paul has either figured out from his study of the OT or learned from the other apostles. Instead, Paul is using himself simply as an example, if it were to happen, which he knows it will not. In other words, the “we” here is a community “we” with Paul’s referring to whatever Christians will be present when Jesus returns.

Paul does say that he is telling the Thessalonians about this “by means of the message of the Lord,” which it would seem to me is his way of saying that he learned these specific details from the other apostles when he would have visited them in Jerusalem.

<sup>60</sup> ὅτι αὐτὸς ὁ κύριος ἐν κελεύσματι, ἐν φωνῇ ἀρχαγγέλου καὶ ἐν σάλπιγγι θεοῦ, καταβήσεται ἀπ’ οὐρανοῦ καὶ οἱ νεκροὶ ἐν Χριστῷ ἀναστήσονται πρῶτον – Here Paul states that the transcendent Creator will issue an explicit command by means of an “archangel,” a chief conventional angel that will be accompanied by the sound of a trumpet like the *shofar* of the Old Testament. The response to this command will be the resurrection from death of believers who have passed away prior to this event.

At the same time, the “Lord,” who is Jesus in this case, will enter into the present realm “from heaven.”

Two options for interpreting “from heaven” like those for “from the heavens” of 1:10 –

1) From his place of existence up to this moment which is “above” the earth so to speak. And he will meet the resurrected believers as they “rise up first” from the earth. Because the created reality is as narrative, this means that God will cause dead, former believers to enter back into the story wherever they were buried. Or it could be that He will cause them to re-exist at some location where Jesus will be as he is returning to earth in order that they may be with him by the time the living believers are gathered to him “in the air.” In other words, the words “rise up first” may refer to the dead believers coming back into existence in some other location besides their actual graves before the living believers are lifted up from the earth and come into Jesus’ presence in the atmosphere.

2) From God. That God Himself will send Jesus back to fulfill his responsibility as the Messiah who will establish his messianic kingdom on earth.

But the fact that Paul uses the phrase “will come down from heaven” seems to indicate that Jesus is not presently here on earth but will return from his location which is somewhere “up there” so to speak. And indeed, “the command...given by the voice of the archangel and the trumpet of God” means that Jesus is coming from God, i.e., at the command of God, who is the transcendent creator of all reality and is outside the creation. So I think that the first option is more likely correct.

<sup>61</sup> ἔπειτα ἡμεῖς οἱ ζῶντες ὅσοι περιλειπόμενοι ἅμα σὺν αὐτοῖς ἀρπαγησόμεθα ἐν νεφέλαις εἰς ἁπάντησιν τοῦ κυρίου εἰς ἄερα: καὶ οὕτως πάντοτε ἑσόμεθα – cf. Hebrews 9:26-28, speaking analogically of a judgment. After dead believers are resurrected (however God brings them back into His story), living believers will themselves rise up from the earth in order to come into the presence of the Messiah Jesus, so that both resurrected believers and ascended believers will remain for all eternity in his presence, starting with reigning with him over the

millennial kingdom on this earth and centered in Jerusalem and the land of Israel and ending with the eternal new heavens and new earth after the Great White Throne Judgment (cf. Revelation 20,21).

<sup>62</sup> Ωστε παρακαλεῖτε ἀλλήλους ἐν τοῖς λόγοις τούτοις – Paul’s purpose in relating this information is so that the Thessalonians can repeat it to each other as encouragement for their persevering in their belief under the very difficult circumstances of the persecution they are experiencing. It is as though he wants them to say constantly out loud to one another, “Don’t forget. We ourselves will either be resurrected from the dead like those believers who have already died or rise up from the earth to meet Jesus in the air, so that we will all be with him forever in the eternal Kingdom of God. Therefore, hang in there through these difficult circumstances, even if you die because of them.”

<sup>63</sup> Περὶ δὲ τῶν χρόνων καὶ τῶν καιρῶν, ἀδελφοί, οὐ χρεῖαν ἔχετε ὑμῖν γράφεσθαι – An obvious question from what Paul has just said at the end of chapter 4 is, when will the events that they have just described regarding the return of the Messiah take place? The beginning of their answer to this question is that the Thessalonians have no need for them to answer. Why is this?

<sup>64</sup> αὐτοὶ γὰρ ἀκριβῶς οἶδατε ὅτι ἡμέρα κυρίου ὡς κλέπτῃς ἐν νυκτὶ οὕτως ἔρχεται – As in 4:9 regarding what Paul and his apostolic co-workers have already taught the Thessalonians regarding love, here he is also referring to what they have already taught them about the coming Day of the Lord. He is referring to both when the three of them first came to Thessalonica and when Timothy returned to check on them.

The reason that Paul and his companions do not give an answer to the Thessalonians is because they cannot give them an answer. They simply do not know exactly when the second coming of Jesus will take place. This is what Jesus said of even himself in Matthew 24—that he did not know, even though he is the Messiah (cf. **Matthew 24:36** – “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone”).

Paul also says that this event will sneak up on people the same way that a thief does not announce that he is breaking into someone’s home so that they could be prepared for it. But how does this fit with Revelation and the trumpets and bowls of wrath which will provide plenty of signs and evidence that Jesus’ return is near?

Even **Joel 2:31** says, “The sun will be turned into darkness and the moon into blood before the great and awesome Day of the Lord comes.”

Here in Joel 2, the whole context indicates that the “Day of the Lord” refers to the events whereby God doles out His anger and justice on the Jews who have rejected Him, resulting in their destruction on the land of Israel. There is also **Isaiah 13** where God calls the “Day of the Lord” the end of the Babylonian Empire when it was conquered by the Medes in 539 B.C. In other words, there have been at least one other Day of the Lord, but certainly here Paul is referring to that of Joel 2 since the Babylonian event is long past. But it also makes sense that Paul would use this technical phrase in the same sense as the prophets who looked into the far distant future to what God was going to do as He fulfilled His promise to Abraham to make the Jews a “great nation” (cf. Genesis 12:1-3).

But the way Paul is speaking here does not have to mean that he expects Jesus’ return to be soon. Instead, he is encouraging the Thessalonian Christians to live their lives as if Jesus were returning soon, which Paul must know from his instruction by Jesus is not the case.

In addition, Jesus’ coming like a thief in the night is not referring to there being no obvious signs of his appearance (because we know there will be; cf. Revelation) but to the dullness and hardness of the hearts of unbelievers, even unbelieving Jews, that prevents them from being willing to interpret the signs correctly and repent of their sin. This is coherent with what Paul says of the Thessalonian Christians in 5:4,5, that they are “sons of light” and not “of darkness,” that they have embraced the truth and will not reject the obvious signs leading up to Jesus’ return. This is also in conjunction with the statements in Revelation to the effect that the Jews especially will continue to reject God even as He brings His judgment and suffering on them. So their being caught off guard will not be because of the lack of obvious signs, but because of their impoverished subjectivity. They will be unwilling to acknowledge that God is in the process of finishing the present age before the millennial kingdom and fulfilling His promise to the Jews to make them a great nation of believers in Jesus.

<sup>65</sup> ὅταν ἡ λέγωσιν εἰρήνη καὶ ἀσφάλεια, τότε αἰφνίδιος ἑαυτοῖς ἐφίσταται ὁλεθρὸς ὥσπερ ἡ ὥδιν τῇ ἐν γαστρὶ ἐχούσῃ, καὶ οὐ μὴ ἑκφυγῶσιν – cf. **Matthew 24:37-40**, “For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. As in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be.”

Paul is saying, as Jesus said, that the people in Noah’s day who were destroyed by the flood ignored the signs that God was sending to warn them of the impending disaster of His judgment. Noah’s building the ark, probably in the middle of nowhere (as crazy as it looked) was a clear sign to them that something catastrophic was going to happen, but they ignored this sign from God.

An important question here is, who are the “they”? Again, if Paul is using the phrase “Day of the Lord” in the same sense as the OT prophets, then he is referring to unbelieving Jews—primarily. Therefore, the Jews on the land of Israel who will be destroyed by God at Jesus’ second coming will not be completely surprised by this event and its consequences, because many signs will be given them through the seven trumpets and seven bowls of wrath of Revelation. Nevertheless, they will be hardhearted and stubborn so that they refuse to believe that all is not well for them right up to the moment when Jesus appears and they find themselves confronting the final wrath and destruction of God on this earth before the beginning of the millennial kingdom.

In addition, the Gentile armies of the Beast of Revelation (the Man of Lawlessness of 2 Thessalonians 2) who have



invaded Israel will also be subjectively dull to the signs of the times and will find themselves also in the process of being destroyed by Jesus and his armies when he returns. Thus, there will be disaster that will come upon both Jews and Gentiles like birth-pains on a woman, centered on the land of Israel, but extending to unbelieving Jews throughout the rest of the world, too. No unbelieving Jew will escape God's wrath and destruction just before Jesus returns.

Cf. **Jeremiah 23:17**, "[The false prophets] keep saying to those who despise Me, 'Yahweh has said, "You will have shalom."' And as for everyone who walks in the stubbornness of his own heart, they say, 'Calamity (קָטָן) will not come upon you.'"

People simply refuse to acknowledge the truth of the Bible, regardless of how obvious it is, e.g., the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. As a result, they say "Shalom and safety" to one another to encourage each other to continue to ignore God together as a group. They are thinking that they are strength in numbers, but how deceived they will be as they fight against God!

<sup>66</sup> ὑμεῖς δέ, ἀδελφοί, οὐκ ἐστὲ ἐν σκότει, ἵνα ἡ ἡμέρα ὑμᾶς ὡς ῥαλῆπτης καταλάβῃ – Continuing with the theme of the Day of the Lord, Paul uses it as a metaphor to say to his audience that they are not "in the darkness" or of the night, which will prevent Jesus' return and the coming destruction of Jewish unbelievers from overtaking them like a thief. Instead, he reminds and encourages them that they know as much as one can know about this historic and catastrophic event and that they are characterized subjectively by hearts of faith who grasp that Jesus is returning to save those like them and destroy those who reject God and him—even if the final judgment does not come until after the millennial kingdom at The Great White Throne Judgment. Thus, they will not be surprised, because they have embraced the truth of these ideas and will recognize the signs (cf. Revelation).

<sup>67</sup> πάντες γὰρ ὑμεῖς νιοὶ φωτός ἐστε καὶ νιοὶ ἡμέρας. Οὐκ ἔσμεν νυκτὸς οὐδὲ σκότους – Paul and his companions label the Thessalonian Christians and themselves as people who are able to see clearly what the future holds, just as people can see clearly where they are going during the day but find it difficult, if not impossible, to find their way at night because it can be so dark outside. This "clear sight" that Christians have is because of what they know from the biblical message taught them by Paul and the others and because God has caused them inwardly to embrace these ideas. People of the "night" may see physically what is going on around them, but they are hostile to God's plans and, therefore, willfully and intentionally blind themselves to what God is doing and will do with respect to His judgment and either eternal life or eternal death.

<sup>68</sup> ἄρα οὖν μὴ καθεύδωμεν ὡς ἡ οἱ λοιποὶ ἀλλὰ γρηγορῶμεν καὶ νήφωμεν – Here Paul and his companions liken unbelievers to those who are sleeping their way through the present realm by not waking up to the fact that Jesus will return and destroy them because of their unbelief. They are like drunkards who do not and cannot think clearly about reality so that they face into God's coming judgment and the possibility of both salvation and destruction, depending on how a person is relating to God.

Obviously, Paul is using the metaphor of sleep here differently from 4:13 & 14, where it meant "dead." Here it means subjectively dead or dull in the sense that people are unwilling to acknowledge the truth of the Bible and believe in God.

Thus, Paul exhorts the Thessalonians and himself not to live life like unbelievers who are completely ignoring that eventually God is going to bring condemnation on unbelieving Jews and all of other unbelievers. Instead, they should move through every moment aware that the day of judgment is coming and they want to be prepared by being authentic believers in Jesus and acting as such also.

The task of a human being is to prepare himself for the judgment.

<sup>69</sup> Οἱ γὰρ καθεύδοντες νυκτὸς καθεύδουσιν καὶ οἱ ῥεθυσκόμενοι νυκτὸς μεθύουσιν – Thus, Paul confirms that people who are asleep to the biblical truth are also people who are drunk enough on false ideas that they cannot think clearly about the reality of God and His plans of judgment and mercy leading to the eternal Kingdom of God. This is in line with the Thessalonian (and Roman) culture that enjoyed sleeping after getting drunk as part of their living out their evil cravings in their pagan culture.

Those who sleep and get drunk do so during the night, just as those who are spiritually asleep and drunk on false ideas do so in the midst of their spiritual darkness—the night of their intellectual and spiritual existence, which will result in God's destruction and not His gift of eternal life.

<sup>70</sup> ἡμεῖς δὲ ἡμέρας ὄντες νήφωμεν ἐνδυσάμενοι θώρακα πίστεως καὶ ἀγάπης καὶ περικεφαλαίαν ἐλπίδα σωτηρίας – To be "of the day" is to be not only knowledgeable of God's plans for Jesus to return and re-establish the Kingdom of Israel and rule over the rest of the world, but also to embrace these plans with authentic belief and to wait patiently for God to complete His promises. It also means not getting "drunk" on the false ideas of the world, but remaining committed to the truth of the biblical message.

Paul then uses military imagery to encourage his readers to protect themselves from the weapons of falsehood, that will come from unbelievers of all kinds who contrive false ideas about reality as they continue their unwillingness to include God and the Bible in their conversations about the nature of existence. Paul wants the Thessalonian Christians to put on a breastplate, what we would refer to as a bulletproof vest, of genuine belief in Jesus as the Messiah and of love for God and for one another as Christians. This is protection that is over their hearts, which can become quite unstable in the midst of life's trials. They should also put on a helmet over their minds, and this is the information regarding the "hope of salvation," where the biblical meaning is certainty of salvation—that they are to look to what God has guaranteed for their future for being fulfilled and carefree in their existence, which will happen when Jesus returns. With the gospel message, they can be certain of God's future mercy and entrance into the eternal Kingdom of

God.

These two defensive pieces of armament protect the Christian from buying into the lies of Satan in this world and from despairing instead of eagerly looking forward to the eternal Kingdom of God regardless of what happens in the present realm.

<sup>71</sup> ὅτι οὐκ ἔθετο ἡμᾶς ὁ θεὸς εἰς ὀργὴν ἀλλὰ εἰς περιποίησιν σωτηρίας διὰ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Ὁ Χριστοῦ – Paul and his companions present the reason for complete confidence in one's future salvation as God's predestination of those whom He will rescue from His anger, condemnation, and eternal destruction that will occur first when Jesus returns at the beginning of the millennial kingdom and destroys all the unbelieving Jews and the Gentile armies who have invaded the land of Israel and second at the end of the millennial kingdom at the Great White Throne Judgment. And this will happen by means of Jesus as the Messiah who will be their advocate and high priest.

They had mentioned this in chapter 1—**1:4** We appreciate, brothers, who are loved by God, His choice [that is the same as His predestination] of you.

<sup>72</sup> τοῦ ἀποθανόντος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν, ἵνα εἴτε γρηγορώμεν εἴτε καθεύδωμεν ἅμα σὺν αὐτῷ ἔζησωμεν – Jesus, by his death (and resurrection) in obedience to God, has become the means to eternal salvation for sinners because he has qualified to be their high priest and advocate at the final judgment.

Paul indicates that this means that those who are still “awake,” i.e., alive (switching again the reference of his metaphors of sleep and wakefulness), when Jesus returns, or who are “asleep,” i.e., have died before his return, will always exist together in the presence of Jesus in the eternal Kingdom of God, starting with the millennial kingdom on this earth and ending with the kingdom of the new earth as indicated in Revelation 20 & 21.

<sup>73</sup> Διὸ παρακαλεῖτε ἀλλήλους καὶ οἰκοδομεῖτε ἑῖς τὸν ἕνα, καθὼς καὶ ποιεῖτε – As they did in 4:18, Paul and his companions end this paragraph with an exhortation to encourage one another with these ideas which he has presented to his audience.

This is as strange phrase that Paul uses, that they are to “encourage one another and build one another towards the one (εἰς τὸν ἕνα), which “the one” being masculine. So the question is, what is the masculine referent of “the one”? The options are 1) unity of existence with Jesus or 2) Jesus that results in obtaining the fulfillment of God's promise of eternal mercy and life (cf. 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4) or 3) the one truth of the destiny of believers which is eternal life with Jesus. Truth, i.e., #3, is a feminine noun in Greek, so that I don't think it fits. And while Paul is certainly all about unity (#1) as he has mentioned in other letters, I think that #2 makes the most sense. He wants his audience to build up one another with the truth and with their mutual encouragement towards the one person who is the focal point of all reality, Jesus of Nazareth.

Paul is also convinced, maybe because of what Timothy has recently reported, that these Christians have been doing exactly this. He simply wants them to keep going in the same direction.

<sup>74</sup> Ἐρωτῶμεν δὲ ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί, εἰδέναι τοὺς κοπιῶντας ἐν ὑμῖν καὶ προϊσταμένους ὑμῶν ἐν κυρίῳ καὶ νοουθετοῦντας ὑμᾶς – Here the word εἰδέναι as the perfect active infinitive of οἶδα, which typically simply means know, has more of a connotation of appreciate and respect. Paul wants the Thessalonians to appreciate the valuable role that these men are playing in regard to their eternal destinies and salvation.

cf. **1:4** We appreciate, brothers, who are loved by God, His choice of you,

cf. **2:1** Certainly [By inference], you yourselves appreciate, brothers, that our entrance into you as a group has not been in vain.

cf. **2:2** Yet, as you also must appreciate, after suffering beforehand and being scoffed at among the Philippians, we had the courage in our God to speak to you the good news of God in the midst of a great conflict.

cf. **Acts 14:23**, “When they had appointed elders for them in every church (χειροτονήσαντες δὲ αὐτοῖς κατ' ἐκκλησίαν πρεσβυτέρους), having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.” Paul must have done the same thing in Thessalonica, and he encourages his readers to continue to listen respectfully to the men whom Silvanus, Timothy, and he selected as Christian leaders among them so as to appreciate the valuable role they are playing in their lives for the sake of their eternal salvation.

The Greek word χειροτονήσαντες seems to be formed from the two words χειρ = hand and τείνω = stretch out.

Therefore, these men in Acts 14:23 and by inference here in Thessalonica were hand-picked by Paul and his co-worker(s). It is also most likely that he would have said to them face to face, “Do not teach anything other than what I have said to you and taught you regarding Jesus as the Messiah and how he relates to all the other information in the Bible, i.e., the OT” (which would have been all that existed in Paul's day). However, after the apostles had died, there was no one with their authority or accuracy of understanding of the biblical message who could appropriately appoint elders.

Consequently, since the time of the apostles, leaders within the Christian community cannot be said to be actual, biblical elders. At best, they are simply discussion leaders who are as dependent on only the apostolic documents as their followers, and they can never be said to have an accurate understanding of them and their message as Paul, Peter, et al. would have concluded about the men whom they personally appointed. The multiple disagreements about what the Bible is teaching certainly demonstrates that no one has the right or authority as the apostles did to say that he is right. This means that all of us Christians must exercise great humility in our discussions with one another about the Bible.

The word “elder” is first used to refer to leaders of a community in Genesis 50:7, in regard to the leaders of Egypt (אֲנָשֵׁי חָכְמָה) (οἱ πρεσβύτεροι τῆς γῆς Αἰγύπτου) who accompanied Joseph to the land of Canaan to bury his

father Jacob. Then, in Exodus 3:16, God commands Moses, “Go and gather the elders of Israel (לְאֶלְפֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל) (τὴν γερονσίαν τῶν υἱῶν Ἰσραὴλ) and say to them, ‘Yahweh, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, has appeared to me.’” The Greek word γερονσία is made up of γερ = old and ουσία = being (nominative singular feminine present active participle of εἶμι). The Greek word πρεσβύτερος is first used to refer to the elders of Israel in Exodus 17:5, “Then Yahweh said to Moses, ‘Pass before the people and take with you some of the elders of Israel (לְאֶלְפֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל) (ἀπὸ τῶν πρεσβυτέρων τοῦ λαοῦ); and take in your hand your staff with which you struck the Nile, and go.’”

<sup>75</sup> καὶ ἡγείσθαι αὐτοὺς ὕπερεκπερισσὸν ἐν ἀγάπῃ διὰ τὸ ἔργον αὐτῶν. εἰρηνεύετε ἐν ἑαυτοῖς – Because of how priceless is the task of helping other sinners understand and believe in the one, true God for the sake of their eternal salvation, Paul wants his readers to esteem (ἡγείσθαι = think, consider, regard; from ἡγέομαι) the men whom he handpicked to continue to lead them in his place. But since there really are no apostle-appointed elders in our day, we all should appreciate everyone who is willing to work at interpreting and understanding the Bible with us, regardless of the format. And of course this is within the context of great humility by everyone regardless of how much biblical education a person has had, because the Bible in its entirety is just a very difficult collection of documents to learn so that we put all their ideas together in our minds into a coherent whole.

Also in this verse, Paul points out that part of loving one another is to interact without resorting to harsh words and impatient behavior, which obviously implies exercising great patience as Paul will make explicit at the end of v. 14.

<sup>76</sup> Παρακαλοῦμεν δὲ ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί, νουθετεῖτε τοὺς ἀτάκτους, παραμυθεῖσθε τοὺς ὀλιγοψύχους, ἀντέχεσθε τῶν ἁσθενῶν, μακροθυμεῖτε πρὸς πάντας – Life is not easy for these Thessalonian Christians. Some are probably getting discouraged and even becoming weak in their faith. Paul encourages all of them to support one another and help each other pursue obedience to God. In other words, this is not a commandment to only the elder/leaders. The responsibility to admonish those whose sin is spilling out quite demonstrably, to console those whose loss, pain, and suffering is causing them to grieve and potentially give up their faith, to help the weak in faith and moral pursuit, and to be patient towards all Christians within the gathering in Thessalonica falls on the shoulders of each person in this (and every) Christian community.

<sup>77</sup> ὁρᾶτε μὴ τις κακὸν ἀντὶ κακοῦ τινι ἀποδῶ, ἀλλὰ πάντοτε τὸ ἀγαθὸν διώκετε ὅ[καὶ] εἰς ἀλλήλους καὶ εἰς πάντας – By the stories that we have in Acts, it seems that people in the Roman Empire were in the habit of paying each other back in kind if they were mistreated. Certainly, it seems reasonable in the light of the Mosaic Covenant statement in Exodus 21:24, “eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.” This is to say that if I mistreat someone by stealing one hundred dollars from him, then I owe him (at least) one hundred dollars, and perhaps more if I have made his money unavailable to him for a long time.

But Paul is clearly steering away from this principle of justice and encouraging the Thessalonian Christians to respond to one another in the manner in which God treats them, by forgiving them their sins and not requiring that they satisfy his justice. He wants them to pay each other back with only grace and mercy. And they were also to pursue this in their relationships with the “all” = those outside the community of believers. He could mean all other human beings, both believers and unbelievers, or he could mean all other believers. But assuming that most of these Thessalonians will not come in contact with too many (any) other Christians in other cities, Paul probably means the former—that grace, mercy, and forgiveness should be the mark of a Christian behavior towards all people who mistreat him, regardless of the inner condition of his heart.

<sup>78</sup> Πάντοτε χαίρετε – In the context of the whole letter, it makes sense that Paul would have these Thessalonians be glad with a viable joy in the midst of God’s promise of eternal mercy and life. They should live their lives with a sense of joy at all times, because they are those who will later and eventually gain eternal life. The joy is because of what God is doing within them and for them that will culminate in their gaining the future, eternal Kingdom of God. Therefore, everything a Christians does should be in the light of his eternal destiny which God has granted to him by his sovereign grace, mercy, and forgiveness.

<sup>79</sup> ἀδιαλείπτως προσεύχεσθε – In the context of the whole letter, it also makes sense that Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy are encouraging the Thessalonians to pray “unceasingly,” not that this is existentially possible, but that all Christians’ perspective in life is that everything they need now and in the future comes ultimately from God and His sovereign choices—especially that God would grant them the strength and courage to persevere in their belief in order to qualify for life in the eternal Kingdom of God. Therefore, whether in the midst of harsh circumstances and even persecutions or in the midst of calm and painless circumstances, Christians need God’s faithful work within them not to turn away from Him and to persevere in their belief.

As Soren Kierkegaard has said, “Prayer does not change God, but it changes the one who prays.”

<sup>80</sup> ἐν παντὶ εὐχαριστεῖτε τοῦτο γὰρ θέλημα θεοῦ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ εἰς ὑμᾶς – The promise of eternal mercy and life should also naturally result in a viable level of gratitude even if it is in the midst of discouraging and difficult circumstances in which the Thessalonian Christians find themselves. And this is for them who are “in the Messiah Jesus,” i.e., ensconced with genuine faith in the presence of and instruction of Jesus as their head and leader.

<sup>81</sup> τὸ πνεῦμα μὴ σβέννυτε – Assuming that Paul is referring to the Spirit of God, and assuming the Thessalonian Christians know that it is impossible to stop God from accomplishing His eternal plans and purposes in people’s lives through the work of His Spirit within them, and in regard to the fact that Paul uses a term that sometimes refers to fire (“do not quench” (μὴ σβέννυτε)), he is encouraging the Thessalonian Christians to continue thinking and acting in line with the apostolic message so as to attest to the genuineness of their faith. He wants them to persevere in their authentic

belief. If they do not, they will not “quench the fire” of the Holy Spirit within them and among them as they live out their Christianity and encourage each other to persevere in the faith in order to obtain God’s gracious gift of eternal life. This sounds irrational but makes sense in the light of the dynamic of God’s sovereign grace and human beings’ personal accountability and responsibility before God. While God is sovereignly in control of every human choice, the Bible still presents our choices as that which determines the momentary reality of our existences. God determines our choices, and we determine our choices. Both are true, and both are real. It is just that God’s controlling choices are more real (the most real) than ours.

This is especially clear in the light of the next statements by Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy.

Also, cf. [Revelation 2:2](#) ‘I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false; 3 and you have perseverance and have endured for My name’s sake, and have not grown weary. 4 ‘But I have this against you, that you have left your first love. 5 ‘Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place — unless you repent.’

<sup>82</sup> προφητείας μὴ ἐξουθενεῖτε – Paul along with Silvanus and Timothy were God’s prophetic voice to these Thessalonians vis-à-vis the biblical message. They were authentic spokesmen for God because of Paul’s calling as the apostle to the Gentiles. Thus, they taught them that their message should remain the most valuable information to them, so that they never shy away from it or reject it.

However, Paul and his co-workers are aware that people can fake the Christian faith and then demonstrate that this is what they are doing by rejecting all or a part of the biblical message—some part that they do not like because it is contrary to what they want to do or think out of their own pride and arrogance of which they are unwilling to repent. But to be unwilling to repent in one area of their life can be like leaven whereby it spreads to other areas and then the whole of their lives and they basically “lose” their faith. The apostolic authors are saying, “Don’t do this!”

<sup>83</sup> πάντα ὁδὲ δοκιμάζετε, τὸ καλὸν κατέχετε – Indeed, the Thessalonians should see their lives as a demonstration of the truth of God’s instructions to mankind through the OT and Jesus’ teaching while on earth. This should include their grasping and not letting go of that which can be considered by God to be good and moral and right. Consequently, the “good” here incorporates both that which they think in line with the apostolic message, i.e., the truth, and that which they do in line with God’s moral commandments to the Jews and to all mankind.

These authors are encouraging their readers to let the clear evidence of all things good to shine forth within their Christian community by embracing them and living them as that to which God has called them as His people.

<sup>84</sup> ἀπὸ παντὸς εἶδους πονηροῦ ἀπέχεσθε – The flip side of the coin is that they should eschew and shun falsehood, lies, deceitful ideas that are not biblical, and all evil and immorality, i.e., anything that is contrary to what God has stated as truth and goodness and called people to do and be.

The NAS95 translates this, “Abstain from every form of evil.” I have translated εἶδους as “kind.” Paul’s admonition is most likely for these followers of Jesus to avoid any kind of evil that comes along as a temptation to them in their culture.

<sup>85</sup> Αὐτὸς δὲ ὁ θεὸς τῆς εἰρήνης ἀγαθὰς ὑμᾶς ὀλοτελεῖς, καὶ ὁλόκληρον ὑμῶν τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ ἡ ψυχὴ καὶ τὸ σῶμα ἀμέμπτως ἐν τῇ παρουσίᾳ τοῦ κυρίου ὁμήων Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τηρηθεῖ – The vocabulary in this verse is difficult, Paul is saying the same thing in three different ways.

I think that ὀλοτελεῖς refers to the Thessalonians’ completing their goal and destiny as believers in the biblical message. Cf. [James 1:4](#), “And let endurance have its perfect result (ἔργον τέλειον = goal completing effect (?)), so that you may be perfect and sound (τέλειοι καὶ ὁλόκληροι = those who inwardly are sound in their sanctification and belief in order to complete their goal and reach their destiny), lacking in nothing.”

Also cf. Hebrews 5-10. Thus, Paul is saying here in 1 Thessalonians that he hopes and expects (ἀγαθὰς – optative) God to sanctify, i.e., make different, from the world his Thessalonian readers all the way to end of their lives in this realm so that they acquire eternal life.

If we understand the spirit as both our essential conception of ourselves originating in God’s mind, i.e., what a human being is going to be all about in the mind of God, and that which describes a person’s most inward reality in regard to God, i.e., whether the person is oriented towards God or away from God, then Paul wants this concept to be sound with a genuine orientation towards God and the truth vs. its being unsound and therefore characterized by an orientation towards lies and unbelief. Thus, the person is someone who is committed to biblical goodness and morality because his heart/spirit/mind is truly oriented towards God. It would also mean that the person would be a noble specimen of a what it means to be a sinful human being this side of Jesus’ return and his inaugurating the Kingdom of God.

Then, thirdly, Paul wants their personal existence, the expression of them as persons (each one a ψυχή = their existence as a living creature with thinking, feeling, and doing of acts by the choices they make with their wills according to the inward reality of their spirit) in bodily form (which actually is essential for someone to be a person), to be such that they are kept acceptable to God until Jesus returns and advocates for them when he initiates the Kingdom of God. As a result, they will express their freedom, character, and ideology (which is really their theology) in a manner that demonstrates that they are sanctified by God as individuals. Thus, their “soul” (ἡ ψυχή) is referring to their existence as human beings with a particular spirit and heart that is either dedicated to obeying God or not, and their body is referring mainly to that which contains their spirit and existence. If God keeps acceptable to Himself their existences and their bodies which reveal what is going on inside them, then He is keeping them without any defect that would disqualify them from eternal life right up to the time of the parousia of Jesus, his grand appearance as the king of Israel and the

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Kingdom of God. This will be the same as being of sound spirit, mind, and heart.

And as a result, the Thessalonian Christians will continue to exist on into eternity instead of meeting with destruction because of God's wrath and condemnation.

<sup>86</sup> πιστὸς ὁ καλὸν ὑμᾶς, ὃς καὶ ποιήσει – Paul states that God always fulfills His promises and will do so in the case of the Thessalonian Christians, making sure that they reach their goal of eternal existence in the Kingdom of God in the manner he has described and hoped for with the optative verbs in v. 23. God has called them into a relationship with Him such that they are authentic believers, and as a result God will do what Paul has made a request to Him that He do on their behalf.

<sup>87</sup> Ἀδελφοί, προσεύχεσθε ὅ[καὶ] περὶ ἡμῶν – Paul would have the Thessalonians pray also for the enduring of their belief, as well as for God's providing them with opportunities and success in their role as the apostolic workers for the sake of the Gentiles.

<sup>88</sup> Ἀσπάσασθε τοὺς ἀδελφούς πάντας ἐν φιλήματι ἀγίῳ – Two options here—1) Paul also wants the Thessalonians to receive with open arms those whom he sends to them, especially because they are bringing this letter; 2) Paul wants all the Thessalonian Christians in the various house churches to greet each other warmly since they are all on the same page and will acquire the same eternal destiny in the Kingdom of God.

Probably #2 fits the context better in the light of what Paul says in the next verse about all the brothers.

<sup>89</sup> Ἐνορκίζω ὑμᾶς τὸν κύριον ἀναγνωσθῆναι τὴν ἐπιστολὴν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἁδελφοῖς – Switching to the first person singular, Paul considers the ideas that he is presenting in this letter to be so important that he requires that all the Christians in the various house churches of Thessalonica get the opportunity to read it or hear it read. In other words, this letter is that important for everyone who is a follower of Jesus in this city to hear it and embrace its truth and ideas.

<sup>90</sup> Ἡ χάρις τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ μεθ' ὑμῶν – Of course, God's grace through the Messiah, specifically Jesus as the Messiah, is what Paul wants ultimately for his readers, because it is the gracious actions of God towards morally depraved and sinful human beings on the basis of His willingness and desire to rescue them from His condemnation that results in their salvation.