

The Apostle Paul had the occasion to write this epistle to the church at Thessalonica some time after his visit during his second missionary journey (Acts 17). He seems to have wanted to encourage the saints as they were suffering for Christ as well as give them instruction in living lives of moral purity and faithfulness to Christ. In this opening chapter, Paul rejoices because of their response to the gospel and that they were examples of faith to those in the regions of Macedonia and Achaia.

1 Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

“Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus” – Silvanus (Silas) and Timotheus (Timothy) had accompanied Paul on his visit to Thessalonica. Silvanus and Timotheus are the longer names of Silas and Timothy, which Paul apparently used when writing in order to more formally identify his traveling companions to the Thessalonians.

“unto the church of the Thessalonians” – Thessalonica was a city in Macedonia, the region covering northern Greece. Churches in that day were not formal organizations like they are today. Paul is writing to the body of believers that lived in Thessalonica, many of which were converted while Paul was there preaching and teaching. We don’t know how long Paul was there before he was forced to leave but it is likely that he was there at least a month (Acts 17:2-3 indicates that he went to the local synagogue on three consecutive sabbaths trying to convince the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah).

“which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ” – God had accepted them as His children because of their faith in Jesus Christ. They were therefore blessed by the presence of God the Father and Jesus His Son. **Matt 18:20** *“For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”*

“Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ” – This is Paul’s usual greeting in which he conveys his desire that his recipients enjoy the grace and peace that can only be received from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; 3 Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father; 4 Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.

“We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers” – Paul (along with his companions Silvanus and Timotheus) frequently prayed and gave thanks to God for the Thessalonians.

“Remembering without ceasing” – Every time Paul and his companions would pray for the Thessalonians, they would without fail remember and thank God for certain things that they appreciated about the Thessalonians.

“your work of faith” – They were not working to earn their salvation but were working because they had already received salvation from God. Their works were the result of their faith and gave evidence that they were saved, for which Paul and his companions gave thanks. Many people claim to have faith but their lack of works says otherwise (**James 2:18** *“Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works”*).

“and labour [intense labor associated with toil] of love” – The Greek word for “labour” speaks of hard work at which they toiled without quitting because of their love for Jesus Christ and for each other. Love that proves itself by the willingness to persistently work hard in obedience to God is another evidence of salvation. They expressed their love for the lost through their labor to spread the gospel (v. 7-8).

“and patience [endurance; steadfastness] of hope [expectation] in our Lord Jesus Christ” – Their expectation (“hope”) of Christ’s return and of eternal life with Him caused them to be willing to endure the hardships that they were experiencing as a result of their faith in Christ. Instead of escaping the persecutions by denying Christ they faithfully continued to profess their faith in Him.

“in the sight of God and our Father” – God was witness to and the power source behind these things about the Thessalonians that Paul and his companions were gratefully remembering in prayer.

“Knowing [to understand; to perceive], brethren beloved, your election [to pick or choose] of God” – All of these things that Paul has mentioned had helped him recognize the genuine faith of the Thessalonians. These things were evidences that God had chosen to redeem them and Paul gave thanks for this.

5 For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.

“For our gospel [good tidings] came not unto you in word only” – Paul refers to “our gospel” as the gospel that he and his companions taught and preached to the Thessalonians. Paul also declares that this gospel was not just a bunch of talk or merely the topic of an intellectual discussion about a hypothetical concept. On the contrary, the truth and legitimacy of the gospel was backed up by divine involvement.

“but also in power [dunamis – miraculous power]” – Acts 17 does not give details on what Paul and his companions did while they were at Thessalonica (nor how long they stayed), but it is likely that Paul healed the sick and perhaps cast out demonic spirits. The miracles that God performed through Paul demonstrated that the gospel that was being preached was more than just words.

“and in the Holy Ghost” – The presence of the Holy Spirit was manifested when Paul preached. The conviction of the Holy Spirit touched the people’s heart, prompting them to repent of their sin and turn to Christ for salvation.

“and in much assurance [confidence]” – Unlike charlatans who try to convince their audience of things that they don’t believe themselves, Paul and his companions were convinced that the gospel message that they were preaching was true and genuine.

“as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake” – The message of Paul and his companions was backed up by the character of their lives. They were not hypocrites who did not live according to what they preached. Their behavior, both public and private, was in complete agreement with the gospel that they proclaimed.

6 And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost: 7 So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.

“And ye became followers [imitators] of us, and of the Lord” – After seeing the evidences that the gospel being preached was more than words, the Thessalonians used Paul and his companions as examples of how to live for God. Since Paul and his companions were following Christ, by imitating Paul and his companions, the Thessalonians became indirect imitators of Christ as well.

“having received the word in much affliction [pressure; distress; oppression], with joy of the Holy Ghost” – Paul suffered persecution in Thessalonica because of his preaching (Acts 17:5-8) and was eventually forced to leave for his own safety (Acts 17:10). In spite of this persecution, the Thessalonians believed the gospel and also began suffering as well. They were willing to do so because of the joy that the Holy Spirit gave them when they heard good news of salvation through Christ.

“So that ye were ensamples [examples] to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia” – Just as they became imitators of Paul and his companions, the Thessalonians in turn became examples that believers in Macedonia and Achaia (the northern and southern regions of the Grecian peninsula) had begun to follow. They imitated the Thessalonians’ faith and willingness to endure hardships for the sake of Christ.

8 For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing.

“For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia” – The Thessalonians were not content to stay home and enjoy their salvation privately, but they began sharing the good news of Jesus Christ wherever they went throughout the regions of Macedonia and Achaia. The resulting converts began imitating the faith that they saw in the Thessalonians.

“but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad” – The news of the faith of the Thessalonians had spread faster than the Thessalonians could travel, so that even places where these Thessalonian believers had not been had already heard of their faith.

“so that we need not to speak any thing” – When Paul and his companions entered a new city to preach the gospel, there was no reason to mention the faith of the Thessalonians because word of their faith had already spread to that city.

9 For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; 10 And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.

“For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you” – They had already heard and could recount to Paul and his companions how that Paul and his companions had brought the gospel to Thessalonica and the reception the Thessalonians had given them.

“and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God” – They had already heard that the Thessalonians had favorably received the preaching of Christ (v. 8) and, as a result, had turned away from worshiping idols and had begun serving the true and living God.

“And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead” – The Thessalonians believed the truth that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, that God had raised Him from the dead, that He was in heaven sitting on the right hand of His Father, and that He will return.

“even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come” – The Thessalonians’ faith had been placed in Jesus and they understood that He was the means of salvation and protection from the “wrath to come.” This wrath could refer to either God’s wrath that will be poured out on the earth during the tribulation, or to God’s eternal wrath on our sins in hell. It’s also possible that Paul means it more generically, which would cover all of God’s future wrath.