

Class: NT615 Exegetical

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Subject: 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy,

To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

Grace to you and peace.

We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly[a] mentioning you in our prayers, 3 remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. 4 For we know, brothers[b] loved by God, that he has chosen you, 5 because our gospel came to you not only in word but also in power and the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. 6 And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, 7 so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. 8 For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere so that we need not say anything. 9 For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you 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, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

## **STEP 7. BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL CONTEXTS**

### **7.1 How does your passage compare to other passages in Scripture which address similar issues?**

The greetings in the text are similar to other letters written by the Apostle Paul, Colossians 1:1-6, Philippians 1:1-6, Ephesians 1:1-4, and 1 Corinthians 1:1-9. The difference is in the letter to Colossians and Philippians. Timothy accompanied him, and in Ephesians, he was alone in the greetings.

From v 4-10, this letter was one of encouragement, and commendation, calling on the saints to remember their faith v, 3,8. Baker Expository Dictionary explains faith as believing, trusting, and committing to God. This faith is also expressed in Colossians 1:4, Titus 1:1, and Philemon 6 (p.282).

Verse 4. Speaks of their election and compares with the text in Romans 9:11, 11:5, 28, and 2 Peter 1:10.

The Anchor Yale Bible on 1 Thessalonians describes this epistle as clearly paraenetic, meaning to give advice, instruction, or counsel, and could be persuasive with the repetitive *oidate* "you know" or you as cited in v. 1,2,5,6,7,9, and throughout the epistle. The personal pronoun you make is unique and nurturing, showing pastoral care.

- Similar to the Ephesians, the passage addresses their election by God.
- The power of the Holy Spirit, by which they receive the Word—this experience we see throughout the book of Acts.
- Their affliction because of their faith.
- Their examples as believers in affliction are well known, nearby, and far away.
- Their marvelous testimony in turning to God from idols.

## **7.2 What would be lost, or how would the message of the Bible be less complete if your passage did not exist?**

We would lose the faith of these believers in difficult times. For example, today, they were not as fickle as the Galatians or inconsistent as the Corinthians. They produced a legacy for believers on how to stand firm during challenges. I hope the Church in China, Pakistan, and Northern Nigeria today can find courage to stand in these difficult times.

## **7.3 What is the theological importance of your passage?**

Their election by God. The New Testament verb *eklegomai* signifies a choice or preference. Theologically this verb is central to the discussions of an election. *Eklektos* predominantly describes people as selected from the world (Baker, 150-51). Young analytical concordance translates election in this text as *ekloge*.

Some other theological importance is Thanksgiving, Faith, Hope, Love, Power, and the Holy Spirit. The letter is demonstrating gentleness, self-giving, affection, comfort in time of distress, with an assurance of the love and care of God and His Son, Jesus Christ.

In V 10, there is the theology of the resurrection of Christ and the assurance that the saints will be strong, knowing that He will come to deliver them someday.

**STEP 8. ACCUMULATE A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF SECONDARY SOURCES AND READ WIDELY.**

**8.1 Find a combination of at least 6 commentaries, books, or academic or pastoral journal articles which deal with your passage and read the contributions of other scholars. List the sources here using the correct Turabian style).**

Brown, Jeannine K. *Scripture as Communication: Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics*. 2nd Edition. Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing, 2021.

Köstenberger, Andreas J., and Richard J. Patterson. *Biblical Interpretation: Exploring the Hermeneutical Triad of History, Literature, and Theology*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2011.

Malherbe, Abraham, J., ed. *Anchor Yale Bible, Letters to the Thessalonians*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000.

Shogren, Gary S., and Clinton E. Arnold, eds. *Exegetical commentary on the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012.

Stott, John, R.W. *The Message of 1&2 Thessalonians*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2021.

Strauss, Mark, L. and Tremper Longman 111, eds. *Baker Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*. Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing, 2022.

Sundberg, Albert C. "Enabling Language in Paul." *The Harvard Theological Review* 79, no. 1/3 (1986): 270–77. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1509420>.

- 1:3 Your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.
- 1:4 We know, brethren beloved by God, that he has chosen you
- 1:6 You became imitators of us and of the Lord; you received the word in much affliction, with joy inspired by the Holy Spirit
- 1:7 You became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia.
- 1:9 They themselves report concerning us what a welcome we had among you, you turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven

### 1 Corinthians

- 1:4 The grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus
- 1:5 In every way you were enriched in him with all speech and all knowledge the testimony to Christ was confirmed among you
- 1:7 You are not lacking in any spiritual gift
- 1:8 (Our Lord Jesus Christ) will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

### 2 Corinthians

- 1:7 Our hope for you is not shaken; we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort.

### Romans

- 1:8 Your faith is proclaimed in all the world
- 1:12 That we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine

### Philippians

- 1:3 For all your remembrances of me
- 1:5 Thankful for your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.
- 1:6 He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion on the day of Jesus Christ
- 1:7 I hold you in my heart; you are all partakers with me of grace

## Philemon

- 5 I hear of your love and of the faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and all the saints
- 7 I have derived much joy and comfort from your love, my brother; the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you

Gupta, Nijay K. "Thanksgiving for the Thessalonians (1 Thess 1:1–10)." In *1-2 Thessalonians: A New Covenant Commentary*, 1st ed., 38–49. The Lutterworth Press, 2016.  
<https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1131g3z.6>.

## Prescript (1:1)

1:1 Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Messiah Jesus—grace and peace to you.

Ancient letters of Paul's time began much like in 1 Thessalonians: sender—the recipient—greeting. In this case, while Paul uses "I" several times throughout the letter (2:18; 3:5; 5:27), he lists his co-workers, Silvanus and Timothy. It is probably not the case that they served as co-writers in a formal sense, but rather Paul wanted to express that he functioned as part of a larger group (and Timothy and Silvanus were people whom they already knew; 3:2). While we think of Paul as the apostle to the Gentiles, we must remember that, even in the account of Paul's acceptance by the "pillar apostles" in Galatians, it is Paul and Barnabas who receive the right hand of fellowship (Gal 2:9). He often demonstrated a hearty spirit of community and collaboration. As 2 Cor 1:19 reminds us, Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy proclaimed the gospel as a team. In most of his letters, Paul identifies himself as an apostle or slave, but here he is simply "Paul." The most likely reason for this unadorned appellation is that he was not determined to reinforce his authority. He wished to write a simple letter of encouragement and teaching for a church he deeply loved and cared about.

1. Paul writes to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Messiah Jesus. Perhaps, in our familiarity with this language in Paul's letters, we might miss its potency. Paul was marking the identity of this community as primarily determined by their relationship with God and Jesus the Messiah, and in particular, that they now have life and security and wholeness of their being within the ambit of that realm.

Paul explains in Colossians that the Father "rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son" (1:13 AT). This is precisely the sentiment carried by the statement in 1 Thess 1:1—this is who you are, where you are, you belong with God and Jesus, and they have made a home for you.

2. It becomes clear very early on in the letter that the Thessalonians are facing many burdens, worries, and afflictions, and Paul's reminder to them that they have been relocated, as it were, into the realm or domain of God and Jesus supplies a kind of identity anchor on the stormy sea of life. Here he adds to his wish for God's "grace and peace" for them. This is a typical kind of well-wish for a letter of his time, but these are two powerful words for Paul theologically. It is not simply a lovely sentiment from Paul but a mark of the ongoing, out-flowing work of the gospel of Jesus the Messiah, where he never has more favors to bestow. Keep in mind that in chapter five, he warns them not to be naïve, embracing cheap offers of "peace and security" from the world (5:3). When Paul conveys words of peace, it is a deeper kind than the world can offer, just as Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid" (John 14:27). As Jesus comforted his disciples, so Paul his converts—Jesus "released" his peace and left it for his followers; Paul offers it to the Thessalonians

#### Thanksgiving for the Thessalonians' Praise-Worthy Trust (1:2-10)

2 We always thank God for all of you whenever we remember you in our prayers. 3 In particular, we continually remember in prayer before our God and Father your loyalty that works, your love that labors and your endurance driven by hope in our Lord Messiah Jesus. 4 And we know, my dear brothers and sisters, who are loved by God, that God chose you, 5 because our good news did not come to you as a message only, but it also came in a powerful way through the Holy Spirit and deep conviction, just as you know what kind of people we became when we were with you for your sake.

6 And, as for you, you became people who imitated us and the Lord when, in the midst of great affliction, you accepted the message with the joy of the Holy Spirit. 7 So then you became a model for all those who believe in Macedonia and Achaia. 8 The message of the Lord trumpeted forth from you, echoing not only throughout Macedonia and Achaia but your loyalty towards God went out into every place, even to the extent that we didn't need to tell anyone. 9 For they themselves report about us the kind of welcome we had with you, and how you turned towards God, rejecting idols in order to serve a new master, the living and true God. 10 And you wait eagerly for his Son to come from heaven, the one whom God raised from the realm of the dead, Jesus who will rescue us from God's coming anger for justice.

As far as we can tell from the Pauline letters in the New Testament collection, his opening greeting was typically followed by a word of thanksgiving (Galatians being the obvious

exception). He was moved to prayer and thanks to God because of something special about His work in and through his people (here, the Thessalonians' exemplary reception of and reaction to the good news of Messiah Jesus). Of special note, in 1 Thess 1:2, is the constancy and passion of Paul's prayer life (see also 5:17). The catalyst for his thanksgiving-prayer here was his memories. For Paul, remembering was a spiritual discipline (Rom 1:9). Looking to God's work among his people (God's faithfulness and theirs) was critical for survival in a world full of uncertainties and pressures. The same word that Paul uses for memory in 1:2 is found in the Septuagint in Deut 7:18. There Moses urged the Israelites, at a time when they were afraid to step out in covenantal trust into an unknown future, to remember God's power over and against Egypt when he led them out. Israel was regularly called to establish a memorial whenever they saw God's faithful work (see, e.g., Joshua 4:7). The Thessalonians are enjoined to remember their record of trust. Paul introduces here his familiar triad of trust, hope, and love (see 1 Thess 5:8; cf. 1 Cor 13:13). Traditionally, *pistis* is translated as "faith" in the New Testament, but here it takes on the more common Hellenistic meaning of "loyalty" or "trust."<sup>4</sup> Paul is not commending them for what they believe per se, but rather for their firm commitment to God from the start.

## **8.2 What are some of the most significant differences (presuppositional, theological, hermeneutical, etc.) between your approach and that of some authors you have read?**

- The outline of the text.
- The main idea of the passage.
- A better understanding of the structure of the text.
- Identifying the rhetorical statements and having a working definition of antithesis.

## **8.3 State a few places where you will use other scholars' work to support your conclusions, indicating some quotations from them worthy of citing in your paper. "Be careful not to let them dictate what you conclude about the passage. Be critical of your sources, and do not be afraid to disagree with commentators. As always, cite your sources so as not to plagiarize" (Duvall and Hayes, *Grasping God's Word*, p. 506).**

In the commentary by Gupta, Nijay K. on 1 Thessalonians, the author uses a much more comprehensive range of Scripture to strengthen his explanation of some of the essential theological words in the text. For example, Paul's explanation to the Colossians is similar to what he said to the Thessalonians to encourage them. In using the word *memory*, this word is found in the Septuagint in Deuteronomy 7:18, and the word for *faith* in the New Testament is a word beyond commending for belief. It means trusting someone, and in this text, it's God.

I would consider the explanation in verses 8-10 by John R. W. Stott, *The Message of 1 & 2 Thessalonians*. On the verb *execheo* and the word for faith as it is used in this text.

**8.4 State a few places where significant differences between you and some scholar(s) demand that you deal with their views in your paper and show why they are wrong. You need not write your full refutation here.**

From the articles I read, in my observation, I have a lot to learn. In the introduction commentary of the ESV Study Bible, there is an article concerning some scholars who believe this letter was for male members only because of the salutation because it only mentions brothers. I cannot agree with the scholars who believe that. There is a short statement by John R.W. Stott " I think the apostle Paul may be forgiven for a little harmless exaggeration" I did not identify the exaggeration in the text, and this is not something I will discuss in my final paper. However, I may encounter something later to this effect.

**8.5 Hypothesize what the passage of Scripture you chose to investigate means. Then write out a well-crafted preliminary thesis statement that either explains how you will interpret the significance of the subject matter or question under discussion, what to expect from the rest of the project/paper, and/or makes a claim that others might dispute. A thesis statement is an essential part of any graduate project/paper, so you need to identify enough resources to support the claims being made. A thesis is often revised once you have gathered enough supporting evidence to begin your Final Project/Paper. The more quality attention is given here, the better your final project will be.**

Sermons may not use this written thesis, but they should reflect the preparation that went into the sermon, and a thesis statement (reflected in the Big Idea) is an important part.

The Thessalonian saints became an inspiration to believers then and now.

My preliminary thesis statement will be, " An exemplary life despite afflictions."

Christians today have the same God, Holy Spirit, and the example of the Thessalonians saints and others throughout Scripture to guide and help in different situations of afflictions in the world today.

