

**A PERSONAL  
VERSE BY VERSE COMMENTARY**

**1THESSALONIANS**

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**1Th. 1:1 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.***

In this salutation we learn that this letter to the Thessalonians was a joint missive from Paul, Silvanus (whom we know more readily as Silas), and Timothy. In three places in this letter (2:18; 3:5; 5:27) Paul identifies himself in such a way as to logically conclude that he was the primary author.

Paul identifies the church as positioned **in** God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. This is another statement of the unity of Father and Son. Using the phrase “God the Father” is a term that marks distinction between the Father and His Son within that unity. The phrase “Lord Jesus Christ” is a direct reference to Jesus as the Messiah (Christ = Christos = Messiah) and as the One to whom we, as believers, are to submit as Lord/Master.

Paul begins every letter he writes with a blessing of grace and peace to the recipients. (Hebrews would be the only exception if he is the author of that epistle.) *Grace* is a reference to “the divine influence upon the heart” and *peace* is a reference to “quietness, rest, set at one again.” Grace and peace go hand in hand. They are both the result of recognition of God’s provision for our sin through His Son Jesus and submitting to Him as Lord in our lives.

**1Th. 1:2 We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers;**

**1Th. 1:3 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;**

**1Th. 1:4 Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.**

Paul, Silas and Timothy were evidently prayer partners on a regular basis while they traveled together. They recognized the importance that Jesus had placed on prayer and knew, as did James, that “the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (James 5:16). Logic concludes that unity in prayer will only strengthen the effectiveness of that prayer. As they prayed, they were faithful to remember those to whom they had ministered. Concerning the Thessalonian church, their memories were of a people that caused them to give thanks to God. They remembered that the believers:

- Worked in faith without ceasing. – Working in faith is a reference to working according to moral conviction, according to what you are persuaded is true. The Thessalonians were known for working “without ceasing” according to their faith; they were consistent in applying the truth to their way of life.
- Labored in love. – The Greek for the word *labour* is a reference to effort expended to the point of pain and weariness. The motive for their labor was their love for the Lord Jesus Christ, their Savior.
- Labored in patience of hope in the Lord Jesus Christ. – The Thessalonians worked so consistently and so hard because of their expectations rooted in the Lord Jesus Christ. As this letter continues, we will learn that a large part of this expectation was regarding His coming again to take them

home with Him before the tribulation yet to come on planet earth. As I continued to meditate on the phrase “in the sight of God and our Father,” I looked up the Greek for *sight* and it referenced “in front of, before, in presence of.” This would seem to directly relate to their hope in Jesus of being taken to the Father’s house for protection. We know that Jesus taught that He was leaving to prepare a place for believers “in the Father’s house” and would come and take the believers to be with Him there. When that happened, they would be in the sight/presence of God the Father.

John 14:1 Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.

John 14:2 In my Father’s house are many mansions: if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

John 14:3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, **I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.**

Paul and his ministry partners were confident that these believers were true believers because their actions were proof of their profession.

**1Th. 1:5 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.**

“our gospel” - Paul, Silas and Timothy treasured the gospel as a personal possession. It doesn’t mean that their gospel was different from the gospel of Christ. The wording also places the emphasis on the message, not the messengers.

They did not just talk about the gospel; they boldly and confidently declared the gospel through the empowerment of the Holy Ghost. We all know the difference in listening to one who is inspired and passionate about their message and one who is not. These men taught with the inspiration and power of the Holy Spirit. There is no greater source of inspiration or power. The way they conducted themselves was in accordance with the truth they taught. This is also a statement regarding their special concern for their testimony before the people. Their big concern was that they not do anything that would cause the believers in Thessalonica to stumble.

**1Th. 1:6 And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost:**

It is a blessed person indeed who can boldly declare that his testimony is like that of the Lord Jesus. Paul and his companions were so confident in their life practices that they could encourage people to imitate (from the Greek for *follow*) them because they were imitating Christ.

“having received the word in much affliction” – The Greek for *affliction* is a reference to “pressure, anguish, persecution, trouble.” It would seem that the believers in Thessalonica soon began to experience the persecution associated with their decision to follow Jesus. This was an area in which the disciples felt like they identified with the example set by the Savior—though certainly not to

the same extent. This defining of a particular area of imitation is a truth with which I can more readily identify. I could single out a few areas of my life that I would encourage people to imitate.

“with joy...” – Even though the believers suffered persecution for their stand for Christ, they responded with “joy of the Holy Ghost.” To be able to joy in such circumstances is possible only through the supernatural provision of the Holy Spirit. Our nature is not to respond to difficult circumstances with joy. Only because of faith in the truth of the Word of God and the empowerment of the Spirit can a believer overcome responding to such circumstances in the flesh.

(5/07) In my current study of Colossians, my understanding of the “joy” of a Christian was broadened. After looking at Webster, I learned that *joy* is synonymous with the hope of the Christian; it’s an expectation of good to come.

**1Th. 1:7 So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.**

**1Th. 1:8 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.**

The testimony of the believers at Thessalonica was such that it had impact on believers in the whole region beyond their city. Their testimony was rooted in the strength of their faith in God. Evidently, there was a strong possibility that anyone who passed through Thessalonica would hear the gospel message because of the enthusiasm of this body of believers. Paul and his companions were finding out in their travels that the message being proclaimed by the Thessalonians was proving so effective and broad in its outreach that Paul and his companions could often only affirm the truth of that message.

**1Th. 1:9 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;**

As Paul, Silas and Timothy encountered those who had heard the gospel message from the Thessalonians, they were told of the impact that their teaching had on the Thessalonians. The Thessalonian believers boldly proclaimed how they no longer served idols; they now served the “living and true God.”

Although idols were images meant to represent “gods,” it was obvious that these idols were as dead and impotent as the gods they represented. The God that Paul was declaring, however, is alive and embodies truth. There are a couple of wonderful passages in particular that elaborate on this truth.

Is. 44:6 Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I *am* the first, and I *am* the last; and beside me *there is* no God.

Is. 44:7 And who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for me, since I appointed the ancient people? and the things that are coming, and shall come, let them shew unto them.

Is. 44:8 Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared *it*? ye *are* even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me? yea, *there is* no God; I know not *any*.

Is. 44:13 The carpenter stretcheth out *his* rule; he marketh it out with a line; he fitteth it with planes, and he marketh it out with the compass, and maketh it after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man; that it may remain in the house.

Is. 44:14 He heweth him down cedars, and taketh the cypress and the oak, which he strengtheneth for himself among the trees of the forest: he planteth an ash, and the rain doth nourish *it*.

Is. 44:15 Then shall it be for a man to burn: for he will take thereof, and warm himself; yea, he kindleth *it*, and baketh bread; yea, he maketh a god, and worshippeth *it*; he maketh it a graven image, and falleth down thereto.

Is. 44:16 He burneth part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eateth flesh; he roasteth roast, and is satisfied: yea, he warmeth *himself*, and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire:

Is. 44:17 And the residue thereof he maketh a god, *even* his graven image: he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth *it*, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou *art* my god.

Is. 44:18 They have not known nor understood: for he hath shut their eyes, that they cannot see; *and* their hearts, that they cannot understand.

Is. 44:19 And none considereth in his heart, neither *is there* knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burned part of it in the fire; yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh, and eaten *it*: and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? shall I fall down to the stock of a tree?

Is. 44:20 He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, *Is there* not a lie in my right hand?

Psa. 115:2 Wherefore should the heathen say, Where *is* now their God?

Psa. 115:3 But our God *is* in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.

Psa. 115:4 Their idols *are* silver and gold, the work of men's hands.

Psa. 115:5 They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not:

Psa. 115:6 They have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not:

Psa. 115:7 They have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat.

Psa. 115:8 They that make them are like unto them; *so is* every one that trusteth in them.

**1Th. 1:10** And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, *even* Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.

Not only did the Thessalonians serve a true and living God, they were waiting for His Son, specifically identified as Jesus. It is God the Father who raised Jesus from the dead. This was a public declaration of His acceptance of the sacrifice

Jesus made of Himself to atone for the sins of mankind. Paul is also emphasizing the fact that the Son is now in *heaven*, the term used to reference the place of God's presence.

I believe the last phrase of this verse is directly connected to the hope being referenced in verse 3. By accepting Jesus Christ through faith, the believer can now consider himself delivered (past tense, a done deal) from the wrath to come. The question now becomes, "What wrath to come?" In his letter to the Colossians, Paul clarifies that it will come on the children of disobedience.

Col. 3:6 For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience:

John the Baptist used this phrase in reference to the Lord separating the wheat from the chaff and purging the floor to determine who would enter the kingdom of heaven, the Messiah's kingdom (Matthew 3:1-12 and Luke 3:1-9). When I was doing my study on the book of Revelation, one of the side studies I did was on the references to God's wrath in scripture. I am not going to list all the verses here, but I will share some of my observations from that study.

- It is directed toward the wicked, the disobedient, the ungodly, the unrighteous, and the adversaries/enemies of God.
- It's a time of God's righteous judgment.
- It is heavily connected to the judgments of God described in the book of Revelation associated with the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Jacob that we commonly call "the tribulation."
- It's a time that will cause men to tremble with fear.
- It is a time of God's vengeance.
- It is a time that some will escape.