

1 Thessalonians

1:1 Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy to the gathering of the Thessalonians because of God the Father and the Lord Jesus the Messiah—grace and shalom to you.¹

1:2 We thank God always for you all as we make mention of you in our prayers, constantly² **1:3** remembering your work of belief, your labor of love, and your perseverance of hope of our Lord Jesus the Messiah in the presence of our God and Father,³ **1:4** because we know, brothers, who are loved by God, His choice of you,⁴ **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.⁵

Just as you know what sort of people we were among you because of you,⁶ **1:6** you, indeed, became imitators of us and of the Lord, embracing the message in the midst of great stress along with the joy of the Holy Spirit,⁷ **1:7** with the result that you became an example to all believers in Macedonia and Achaia.⁸

1:8 Indeed, from you the message about the Lord has sounded forth. Not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place your belief in God has gone out, so that we have no need to say anything,⁹ **1:9** because they themselves proclaim about us what sort of entrée we had into you as a group and how you turned to God from idols to become enslaved to the living and true God,¹⁰ **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.¹¹

2:1 You yourselves know, brothers, that our entrée into you as a group has not been in vain.¹² **2:2** But, just as you know, after suffering beforehand and being scoffed at among the Philippians, we had the courage, because of our God, to speak to you the good news of God in the midst of a great struggle.¹³ **2:3** Our encouragement is from neither error, nor immorality, nor with deceit.¹⁴ **2:4** But just as we have been proven genuine/approved by God to be entrusted with the good news, so also we speak, not as pleasing men but God who proves out the genuineness of our hearts.¹⁵ **2:5** Indeed, we came neither with a flattering message, just as you know, nor with a false motive of greed (God is our witness).¹⁶ **2:6** Nor were we seeking the glory of men, whether from you or from others,¹⁷ **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.¹⁸ **2:8** Thus, having a strong yearning 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.¹⁹

2:9 Remember, brothers, our labor and trouble. 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.²⁰

2:10 You and God are witnesses how, in a manner pleasing to God, uprightly and acceptably, we behaved towards you believers.²¹ **2:11** Just as you know, as a father acts towards his own children,²² **2:12** we were encouraging, comforting, and imploring you to live worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.²³

2:13 Consequently, we are, indeed, constantly 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 believers.²⁴ **2:14** You, brothers, became imitators of the gatherings of God which are in Judea because of 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,²⁵ **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,²⁶ **2:16** because they hinder us from speaking to the Gentiles in order that they may be saved, with the result that they always fill up their immoral actions. But wrath is coming upon them at the end (εἰς τέλος).²⁷

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,²⁸ **2:18** because we wanted to come to you, I, Paul, more than once, and yet the opponent hindered us.²⁹ **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 coming?³⁰ **2:20** You are our glory and joy.³¹

3:1 Therefore, when we could endure it no longer, we were pleased to be left behind alone in Athens,³² **3:2** and we sent Timothy, our brother and fellow-worker of God with respect to the good news of the Messiah, so that he could strengthen and encourage you as to your belief.³³ **3:3** Our purpose was so that no one would be shaken in the midst of these tribulations, because you yourselves know that we were destined for this.³⁴ **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.³⁵ **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.³⁶

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,³⁷ **3:7** on account of this we have been encouraged, brothers, about you in all our distress and affliction, because of your belief,³⁸ **3:8** because now we live if you are standing firm in the Lord.³⁹ **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,⁴⁰ **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?⁴¹

3:11 And now may God Himself, indeed our Father, and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you,⁴² **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,⁴³ **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 coming of our Lord Jesus along with all His set-apart ones.⁴⁴

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.⁴⁵ **4:2** You know what commandment we gave to you in view of the Lord Jesus.⁴⁶ **4:3** Indeed, this is the will of God, your being different—keeping away from sexual immorality,⁴⁷ **4:4** with each one of you knowing how to control his own vessel with difference and honor,⁴⁸ **4:5** not with emotionally charged passion like the Gentiles, who do not know God,⁴⁹ **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.⁵⁰ **4:7** God has not called us to immorality but to being different.⁵¹ **4:8** Therefore, he who rejects this is not rejecting man but God, who also gives His Holy Spirit to you.⁵²

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.⁵³ **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.⁵⁴ **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,⁵⁵ 4:12 so that you behave decently towards outsiders and not have any need.⁵⁶

4:13 On another subject, we do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, concerning those who are dead, so that you do not grieve as do, indeed, the rest, who have no hope.⁵⁷

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 died through Jesus.⁵⁸

4:15 This we say to you by means of the message of the Lord, that we who are alive, who remain until the coming of the Lord, will definitely not precede those who have died,⁵⁹ 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.⁶⁰ 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.⁶¹ 4:18 Therefore, encourage one another with these words.⁶²

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

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

5:12 And we ask you, brothers, to respect those who toil among you, who lead you with care because of the Lord, and who admonish you.⁷⁴ 5:13 You should esteem them with love beyond all measure because of their work.

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

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.⁷⁷

5:16 Rejoice always.⁷⁸

5:17 Pray constantly.⁷⁹

5:18 Be grateful in every situation. For this is the will of God for you because of the Messiah Jesus.⁸⁰

5:19 Do not cause the Spirit to stop functioning.⁸¹

5:20 Do not treat prophetic comments as worthless,⁸² 5:21 but prove out the genuineness of all things. Hold on to what is good.⁸³

5:22 Refuse to become involved in any kind of evil.⁸⁴

5:23 May the God of shalom Himself set you apart for your whole goal (ὅλοτελεις), and may your spirit, inwardness, and body be preserved for your complete destiny so as to be acceptable at the coming of our Lord Jesus the Messiah.⁸⁵ **5:24** Faithful is He who calls you, who will also do this.⁸⁶

5:25 Brothers, pray for us.⁸⁷

5:26 Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss.⁸⁸

5:27 I put you under oath to the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers.⁸⁹

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

¹ Παῦλος καὶ Σιλουανὸς καὶ Τιμόθεος τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ Θεσσαλονικέων ἐν θεῷ πατρὶ ἰ 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 2nd 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).

² Εὐχαριστοῦμεν τῷ θεῷ πάντοτε περὶ πάντων ὑμῶν μνησθῆναι ἵ ποιούμενοι ἐπὶ τῶν προσευχῶν ἡμῶν, ἀδιαλείπτως – Paul’s, Silvanus’, and Timothy’s main concern for all those who became believers through their telling them about Jesus as the Messiah is the continuation of their belief to the end of their lives. It would be for this that they are praying on behalf of the Thessalonian Christians. 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 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.).

³ 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.

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, 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.

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.

Their “perseverance of hope” refers to their looking forward with great expectation to Jesus’ 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.

⁴ εἰδότες, ἀδελφοὶ ἠγαπημένοι ὑπὸ ὁ[τοῦ] θεοῦ, τὴν ἐκλογὴν ὑμῶν – Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy have become convinced that the Thessalonians are authentic believers, i.e., that God, while He was formulating the story of the cosmos before He began creating it, as mentioned in Genesis 1, chose to create them such that at some point in their own personal histories, they would become Christians and follow 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.

⁵ ὅτι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ἡμῶν οὐκ ἐγενήθη ἕως ὑμᾶς ἐν λόγῳ μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν δυνάμει καὶ ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ καὶ ὁ[έν] πληροφορίᾳ πολλῇ – Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy 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, Silvanus, and Timothy that these Thessalonians were in the process of embracing the truth of the biblical message was their speaking in tongues 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 Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy now go on to explain further.

⁶ καθὼς οἴδατε οἳ ἐγενήθημεν ὁ[έν] ὑμῖν δι’ ὑμᾶς – It makes more sense to see this as the beginning of the next sentence. Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy 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.

⁷ Καὶ ὑμεῖς μιμηταὶ ἡμῶν ἐγενήθητε καὶ τοῦ κυρίου, δεξάμενοι τὸν λόγον ἐν θλίψει πολλῇ μετὰ χαρᾶς ἡ πνεύματος ἁγίου – of a set-apart spirit (?). 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 Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy 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 is the only one who can cause people to persevere in their belief. Morally depraved human beings, even inwardly changed human beings, do not have the independent ability to do so.

⁸ ὥστε γενέσθαι ὑμᾶς ἑτύπον πᾶσιν τοῖς πιστεύουσιν ἐν τῇ Μακεδονίᾳ καὶ ἐν τῇ Ἀχαΐᾳ – Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy 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 as well as in southern Greece, where they were now.

⁹ ἅψ’ ὑμῶν γὰρ ἐξήχηται ὁ λόγος τοῦ κυρίου οὐ μόνον ἐν τῇ Μακεδονίᾳ καὶ ἐν τῇ Ἀχαΐᾳ, ἀλλ’ ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ ἢ πίστις ὑμῶν ἢ πρὸς τὸν θεὸν ἐξελέλυθεν, ὥστε μὴ χρεῖαν ἔχειν ἡμᾶς λαλεῖν τι – The courage and belief of the Thessalonian Christians 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 this message. It’s as though they begin to tell people about Jesus as the Messiah, and the people say, “Oh yes, we already know, because we have heard of the belief of the Thessalonian Christians.”

¹⁰ αὐτοὶ γὰρ περὶ τῆμῶν ἀπαγγέλλουσιν ὅποιαν εἴσοδον ἔσχομεν πρὸς ὑμᾶς, καὶ πῶς ἐπεστρέψατε πρὸς τὸν θεὸν ἀπὸ τῶν εἰδώλων δουλεύειν θεῷ ζῶντι καὶ ἀληθινῷ – In fact, the news of the Thessalonian believers includes the important concept that it is necessary to abandon previous pagan beliefs and practices in order follow the one true God exclusively. And it is clear that the Thessalonians understand this because of the kind of reception that Paul and his companions received from them. They were wholeheartedly welcoming to them.

¹¹ καὶ ἄναμένειν τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν, ὃν ἤγειρεν ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν, Ἰησοῦν τὸν ῥυόμενον ἡμᾶς ἑκ τῆς ὀργῆς τῆς ἐρχομένης – 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 morally depraved human beings when he returns to earth, thus enabling them to escape God’s anger and eternal condemnation. Christians simply need to persevere in their belief and wait for Jesus’ return, while pursuing moral obedience to God.

¹² Αὐτοὶ γὰρ οἴδατε, ἀδελφοί, τὴν εἴσοδον ἡμῶν τὴν πρὸς ὑμᾶς ὅτι οὐ κενὴ γέγονεν – Paul and his companions know that, based upon God’s sovereignty, there is always the possibility that people will reject their 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.

¹³ ἀλλὰ προπαθόντες καὶ ὑβρισθέντες, καθὼς οἴδατε, ἐν Φιλιππίοις ἐπαρρησιασάμεθα ἐν τῷ θεῷ ἡμῶν λαλήσαι πρὸς ὑμᾶς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν πολλῷ ἀγῶνι – 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.

¹⁴ ἢ γὰρ παράκλησις ἡμῶν οὐκ ἐκ πλάνης οὐδὲ ἐξ ἀκαθαρσίας ἑοῦδὲ ἐν δόλῳ – Implicitly, Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy are accusing all presenters of any other worldview, 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). 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.

¹⁵ ἀλλὰ καθὼς δεδοκιμάσαμεθα ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ πιστευθῆναι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον, οὕτως λαλοῦμεν, οὐχ ὡς ἀνθρώποις ἀρέσκοντες ἀλλὰ ἡμεῖς τῷ θεῷ τῷ δοκιμάζοντι τὰς καρδίας ἡμῶν – Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy 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 proven their authenticity as believers and Paul as an apostle. The logical inference from all this proving out 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.

¹⁶ Οὔτε γὰρ ποτε ἐν λόγῳ κολακειᾶς ἐγενήθημεν, καθὼς οἴδατε, οὔτε ἐν προφάσει πλεονεξίας, θεὸς μάρτυς – Paul and his companions 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. Christianity is not so magnanimous.

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy also mention 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 nor demands to be supported or remunerated for his “work.” In fact, to be paid for it would be to deny the gracious nature of the message.

¹⁷ οὔτε ζητούντες ἐξ ἀνθρώπων δόξαν οὔτε ἀφ’ ὑμῶν οὔτε ἀπ’ ἄλλων – 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.

¹⁸ δυνάμενοι ἐν βάρει εἶναι ὡς Χριστοῦ ἀπόστολοι. ἀλλὰ ἐγενήθημεν ἠνθρώποι ἐν μέσῳ ὑμῶν, ὡς ἐὰν τροφὸς θάλπη τὰ ἑαυτῆς τέκνα – Paul’s, Silvanus’, and Timothy’s 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 the conduit of God for this message. In addition, Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy 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.

¹⁹ οὕτως ὁμιρομένοι ὑμῶν εὐδοκοῦμεν μεταδοῦναι ὑμῖν οὐ μόνον τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰς ἑαυτῶν ψυχάς, διότι ἀγαπητοὶ ἡμῖν ἐγενήθητε – 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 Jewish Messiah to them, to the point that Paul committed his whole being and existence to their spiritual, emotional, and even physical well-being. Thus, he loved them. The same, here, is definitely true of his attitude towards and relationship with the Thessalonian Christians.

²⁰ Μνημονεύετε γάρ, ἀδελφοί, τὸν κόπον ἡμῶν καὶ τὸν μόχθον νυκτὸς ἔτι καὶ ἡμέρας ἐργαζόμενοι πρὸς τὸ μὴ ἐπιβάρησαι τινα ὑμῶν ἐκηρύξαμεν εἰς ὑμᾶς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ – Paul’s, Silvanus’, and Timothy’s 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.

²¹ ὑμεῖς μάρτυρες καὶ ὁ θεός, ὡς ὁσίως καὶ δικαίως καὶ ἀμέμπτως ὑμῖν τοῖς ἠπιστεύουσιν ἐγενήθημεν – Paul’s and his companions’ 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.

²² καθάπερ οἶδατε, ὡς ἓνα ἕκαστον ὑμῶν ὡς πατὴρ τέκνα ἑαυτοῦ – If Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy were like a nursing mother to her children in their relationship with the Thessalonians (cf. 2:7), they knew that it was also appropriate to compare this relationship with that of a father towards his children.

²³ παρακαλοῦντες ὑμᾶς καὶ παραμυθούμενοι καὶ μαρτυρούμενοι εἰς τὸ περιπατεῖν ὑμᾶς ἀξίως τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἠκαλοῦντος ὑμᾶς εἰς τὴν ἑαυτοῦ βασιλείαν καὶ δόξαν – 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.

²⁴ Καὶ διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ἡμεῖς εὐχαριστοῦμεν τῷ θεῷ ἀδιαλείπτως, ὅτι παραλαβόντες λόγον ἀκοῆς παρ’ ἡμῶν τοῦ θεοῦ ἐδέξασθε οὐ λόγον ἀνθρώπων ἀλλὰ καθὼς ἔστιν ἀληθὴς λόγον θεοῦ, ὃς καὶ ἐνεργεῖται ἐν ὑμῖν τοῖς ἠπιστεύουσιν – All the evidence of how Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy treated the Thessalonians and they treated them leads them to conclude that the Thessalonians 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 and his fellow apostolic workers also remind 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.

²⁵ 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 – So far, the experiences of Jewish Christians in the area of Israel and of 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.

²⁶ τῶν καὶ τὸν κύριον ἀποκτείναντων Ἰησοῦν καὶ τοὺς ἑπτὰ προφῆτας καὶ ἡμᾶς ἐκδιωζάντων καὶ θεῷ μὴ ἀρεσκόντων καὶ παῶσιν ἀνθρώποις ἐναντίων – Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy indict 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.

²⁷ κωλύοντων ἡμᾶς τοῖς ἔθνεσιν λαλήσαι ἵνα σωθῶσιν, εἰς τὸ ἀναπληρῶσαι αὐτῶν τὰς ἀμαρτίας πάντοτε. ἄρῃθασεν δὲ ἐπ’ αὐτοὺς ἡ ὀργὴ ἡ εἰς τέλος – 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 Day of the Lord on the people in the land of Israel as they experience the ruthlessness and antipathy of the Man of Lawlessness (cf. Daniel 2,7-12; 2 Thessalonians 2).

²⁸ Ἡμεῖς δέ, ἀδελφοί, ἀπορφανισθέντες ἀφ’ ὑμῶν πρὸς καιρὸν ὄρας, 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 continued to Athens and eventually 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.

²⁹ διότι ἠθελήσαμεν ἔλθειν πρὸς ὑμᾶς, ἐγὼ μὲν Παῦλος καὶ Ἄπαξ καὶ Δίς, καὶ ἐνέκοσεν ἡμᾶς ὁ σατανᾶς – However, the opposition in Thessalonica is still so intense that Paul cannot yet return there, even though Timothy has (cf. 3:1ff.). I wonder if “Satan” is a name given to the collective human opposition to and hostility towards God and His truth.

³⁰ τίς γὰρ ἡμῶν ἐλπίς ἢ χαρὰ ἢ στέφανος ἡ καυχῆσεως – ἢ οὐχὶ καὶ ὑμεῖς – ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ ἐν τῇ αὐτοῦ παρουσίᾳ – Paul’s, Silvanus’, and Timothy’s appreciation for the Thessalonians’ belief is so great that they consider them to be a genuine reason for their bragging (so to speak) as apostolic workers to the Gentiles when Jesus returns 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.

³¹ ὑμεῖς γὰρ 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, Silvanus, and Timothy understand completely that their faith and lives are not really because of them, but only and ultimately because of God. It is just, from a human standpoint, that they would really like to be able to feel a sense of accomplishment after their lives of fulfilling Paul’s responsibility as the apostle to the Gentiles is over.

³² Διὸ μηκέτι στέγοντες εὐδοκήσαμεν καταλειθῆναι ἐν Ἀθήναις μόνοι – Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy kept hearing about the opposition that the Jews were continuing to express towards Jesus as the Messiah, such that they were rightly concerned about the perseverance of the belief of the Thessalonian Christians. Their concern was elevated to the level that they felt it necessary to send Timothy back to them to encourage them to endure in their faith.

³³ καὶ ἐπέμψαμεν Τιμόθεον, τὸν ἀδελφὸν ἡμῶν ἡμῶν καὶ συνεργὸν τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ, εἰς τὸ στηριξάει ὑμᾶς καὶ παρακαλέσει ὑμᾶς ὑπὲρ τῆς πίστεως ὑμῶν – Timothy also could continue educating them in the information about Jesus, which would further help encourage them to persevere in their belief.

³⁴ τὸ μῆδένα 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. Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy 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.

³⁵ καὶ γὰρ ὅτε πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἦμεν, προελέγομεν ὑμῖν ὅτι μέλλομεν θλίβεσθαι, 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. Then, they all encountered hostility to the message as they said they would, so that the Thessalonians were able to experience it firsthand.

³⁶ διὰ τοῦτο κἀγὼ μηκέτι στέγων ἔπεμψα εἰς τὸ γνῶναι τὴν πίστιν ὑμῶν, μὴ πως ἐπέειρασεν ὑμᾶς ὁ πειράζων καὶ εἰς κενὸν γένηται ὁ κόπος ἡμῶν – Paul switches to the first person singular to highlight his anxiety level regarding the state of the Thessalonians’ belief, that it reached such a height 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 Corinthian Christians from persevering in their belief.

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,” confidence in their expecting eternal life from God (cf. Romans 5:1-11).

³⁷ Ἄρτι δὲ ἔλθοντος Τιμοθέου πρὸς ἡμᾶς ἀφ’ ὑμῶν καὶ εὐαγγελισσαμένου ἡμῖν τὴν πίστιν καὶ τὴν ἀγάπην ὑμῶν καὶ ὅτι ἔχετε μνησίαν 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 Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy again.

³⁸ διὰ τοῦτο παρεκλήθημεν, ἀδελφοί, ἐφ’ ὑμῖν ἐπὶ πάσῃ τῇ ἀνάγκῃ καὶ θλίψει ἡμῶν ὅτι διὰ τῆς 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).

³⁹ ὅτι νῦν ζῶμεν ἐὰν ὑμεῖς ἵστηκετε ἐν κυρίῳ – Indeed, Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy feel a great sense of relief and even life now that they know how committed to the biblical message are the Thessalonians. They are invigorated in the midst of the additional distresses that they are experiencing in Corinth due to the hostility of the world towards the biblical message.

⁴⁰ τίνα γὰρ εὐχαριστίαν δυνάμεθα τῷ θεῷ ἀνταποδοῦναι περὶ ὑμῶν ἐπὶ πάσῃ τῇ χαρᾷ ἣν χαίρομεν δι’ ὑμᾶς ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν – Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy go on to comment on how grateful to God they are for the Thessalonians and their genuine belief, so that they feel that there is no amount of thanks that they could say to God to pay Him back (so to speak) for the joy that they feel in the light of their authentic belief.

⁴¹ 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 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.

⁴² 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, Silvanus, and Timothy indirectly appeal to God to lead them back to the Thessalonians.

⁴³ ὑμᾶς δὲ ὁ κύριος πλεονάσαι καὶ περισσεύσαι τῇ ἀγάπῃ εἰς ἀλλήλους καὶ εἰς πάντας καθάπερ καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς ὑμᾶς – At the same time, Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy would have God ramp up the Thessalonians’ love for all believers in Jesus as the Messiah, just as God is causing to happen in Paul and his apostolic companions with respect to them.

⁴⁴ εἰς τὸ στηριζαί ὑμῶν τὰς καρδίας ἠμέμπτους ἐν ἁγιασύνῃ ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ πατρός ἡμῶν ἐν τῇ παρουσίᾳ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ μετὰ πάντων τῶν ἁγίων αὐτοῦ, ὁ[ἀμήν] – The increase in genuine, biblical love for other believers within the Thessalonian Christians constitutes 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. As a result, they will be considered different 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, as Paul will go on to explain in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11.

⁴⁵ Λοιπὸν ὁδὸν, ἀδελφοί, ἐρωτῶμεν ὑμᾶς καὶ παρακαλοῦμεν ἐν κυρίῳ Ἰησοῦ, ὅτινα καθὼς παρελάβετε παρ’ ἡμῶν τὸ πὼς δεῖ ὑμᾶς περιπατεῖν καὶ ἀρέσκειν θεῷ, ὁ καθὼς καὶ περιπατεῖτε, ἵνα περισσεύητε μᾶλλον – In the light of the Thessalonians’ commitment to their eternal destiny that comes through the biblical message, Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy exhort them to live accordingly, as apparently they already are, but Paul and his apostolic workers would have them definitely continue doing so. It seems that, as a general rule, people in the Roman Empire did not treat each other very well. The apostolic message required that they believers live quite differently, and it may have been hard to change old habits. Thus, Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy (along with the other apostles; cf. 1 Peter) had to keep encouraging their new converts to love one another, even more and more and more, i.e., to keep going.

⁴⁶ οἴδατε γὰρ τίνας παραγγελίας ἐδόκαμεν ὑμῖν διὰ τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ – Indeed, the Thessalonians should consider the kind of human relationships that Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy were talking about to be a direct commandment from God Himself in light of His plans and purposes regarding the Messiah.

⁴⁷ Τοῦτο γὰρ ἐστὶν θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ, ὁ ἁγιασμός ὑμῶν, ἀπέχεσθαι ὑμᾶς ἀπὸ τῆς πορνείας – Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy state explicitly that God requires of His believers 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 and 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 define essence of their moral nature that he feels it necessary to warn them away from continuing these practices within their newly formed Christian community.

⁴⁸ εἰδέναι ἕκαστον ὑμῶν τὸ ἑαυτοῦ σκεῦος κτᾶσθαι ἐν ἁγιασμῷ καὶ τιμῇ – Paul and his apostolic workers use language here that indicates that 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.

⁴⁹ μὴ ἐν πάθει ἐπιθυμίας καθάπερ καὶ τὰ ἔθνη τὰ μὴ εἰδότα τὸν θεόν – The opposite of honoring one’s body with sexual morality is to succumb to the natural human passions that lead a person to act contrary to morality, if these passions are fulfilled in a context other than that for which God has designed them morally. The pagan idolaters, 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.

⁵⁰ τὸ μὴ ὑπερβαίνειν καὶ πλεονεκτεῖν ἐν ἑτῷ πράγματι τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ, διότι ἐκδικος κύριος περὶ πάντων τούτων, καθὼς καὶ προείπαμεν ὑμῖν καὶ διεμαρτυράμεθα – In this verse, Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy seem to indicate that adultery is not only immoral, but also a taking advantage of the weakness of one’s fellow believer who has not quite grasped the importance of God’s morality in the midst of a very immoral pagan culture.

And they are 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.

⁵¹ οὐ γὰρ ἐκάλεσεν ἡμᾶς ὁ θεὸς ἐπὶ ἀκαθαρσίᾳ ἀλλ’ ἐν αγιασμῷ – 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, particularly their sexual immoral behavior.

⁵² τοιγαροῦν ὁ ἀθετῶν οὐκ ἀνθρώπον ἀθετεῖ ἀλλὰ τὸν θεὸν τὸν ὁ[καὶ] ἰδιδόντα τὸ πνεῦμα αὐτοῦ τὸ ἅγιον εἰς ὑμᾶς – To shine God on in this matter 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 sexual immorality is to reject the transcendent Creator Himself.

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy also imply in this verse that, if God is working in the Thessalonians through His Holy Spirit, then they will embrace what they are saying. Otherwise, they are rejecting the very operation of God within them in addition to God in His transcendence.

⁵³ Περὶ δὲ τῆς φιλαδελφίας οὐ χρεῖαν ἔχετε ἑγράφειν ὑμῖν, αὐτοὶ γὰρ ὑμεῖς θεοδίδακτοὶ ἐστε εἰς τὸ ἀγαπᾶν ἀλλήλους – Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy mention 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 the love of one another as fellow Christians.

But exactly how are they taught by God? What makes sense is the natural, intellectual ideas that God has implanted in all human beings as to how they should interact with one another. 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.

⁵⁴ καὶ γὰρ ποιεῖτε αὐτὸ ἑἰς πάντας τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς ὁ[τούς] ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ Μακεδονίᾳ. Παρακαλοῦμεν δὲ ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί, περισσεύειν μᾶλλον – Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy recognize 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 area, which probably includes Philippi. Thus, they encourage them to keep going.

⁵⁵ καὶ φιλοτιμείσθαι 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, Silvanus, Timothy remind them that they have previously commanded them to do so in line with the biblical truth.

⁵⁶ ἵνα περιπατῆτε εὐσημόνως πρὸς τοὺς ἔξω καὶ μηδενὸς χρεῖαν ἔχητε – The quiet lives that the Thessalonian Christians should lead will allow them to behave in a proper manner among unbelievers and to provide for their own needs, so that they are not reliant on unbelievers for emotional, psychological, or physical support.

⁵⁷ Οὐ θέλομεν δὲ ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν, ἀδελφοί, περὶ τῶν ἑκοιμημένων, ἵνα μὴ λυπήσθε καθὼς καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ ὁ[οὶ] 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 world. Those with no hope who grieve are hit 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, most likely because their worldview does not include this.

⁵⁸ εἰ γὰρ πιστεύομεν ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ἀπέθανεν καὶ ἀνέστη, οὕτως ἑκαὶ ὁ θεὸς τὸς κοιμηθέντας διὰ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἄξει σὺν αὐτῷ – Paul’s, Silvanus’, and Timothy’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. When is the latter? Right away or later when Jesus returns—or even a third option?

⁵⁹ 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, Silvanus, and Timothy go 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 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.

⁶⁰ ὅτι αὐτὸς ὁ κύριος ἐν κελεύσματι, ἐν φωνῇ ἀρχαγγέλου καὶ ἐν σάλπιγγι θεοῦ, καταβήσεται ἀπ’ οὐρανοῦ καὶ οἱ νεκροὶ ἐν Χριστῷ ἀναστήσονται πρῶτον – Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy state 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 died prior to this event. At the same time, the “Lord,” who is Jesus in this case, will enter into the

present realm from “heaven,” from his place of existence up to this moment, and he will meet the resurrected believers as they “rise up first” from the earth.

⁶¹ ἔπειτα ἡμεῖς οἱ ζῶντες ὁἰ περιλειπόμενοι ἅμα σὺν αὐτοῖς ἀρπαγησόμεθα ἐν νεφέλαις εἰς ἁπάντησιν τοῦ κυρίου εἰς ἀέρα· καὶ οὕτως πάντοτε ἕσονται σὺν κυρίῳ ἐσόμεθα – cf. Hebrews 9:26-28, speaking analogically of a judgment. After dead believers are resurrected, 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.

⁶² Ὡστε παρακαλεῖτε ἀλλήλους ἐν τοῖς λόγοις τούτοις – Paul’s, Silvanus’, and Timothy’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 very difficult circumstances. It is as though they want them to say constantly out loud to one another, “Don’t forget. We will rise up to meet Jesus in the air and be with him forever in the eternal Kingdom of God. So hang in there through these difficult circumstances.”

⁶³ Περὶ δὲ τῶν χρόνων καὶ τῶν καιρῶν, ἀδελφοί, οὐ χρεῖαν ἔχετε ὑμῖν γράφεσθαι – An obvious question is, when will the events that Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy 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.

⁶⁴ αὐτοὶ γὰρ ἀκριβῶς οἶδατε ὅτι ἡμέρα κυρίου ὡς κλέπτῃς ἐν νυκτὶ οὕτως ἔρχεται – The reason that Paul and his companions do not give an answer to the Thessalonians is because they cannot give them an answer, because they do not know when the second coming of Jesus will take place. This is exactly like Jesus himself, who said 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”). In addition, 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. Cf. Joel 2:31 – “The sun will be turned into darkness and the moon into blood before the great and awesome Day of the Lord comes.” 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. Cf. 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.

⁶⁵ ὅταν ἡ λέγουσιν εἰρήνη καὶ ἀσφάλεια, τότε αἰφνίδιος ἁὐτοῖς ἐφίσταται ὁλεθρὸς ὡσπερ ἡ ὄδιν τῇ ἐν γαστρὶ ἐχούσῃ, καὶ οὐ μὴ ἔκφυγῶσιν – 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, Silvanus, and Timothy are saying, as Jesus said, that the people in Noah’s day who were destroyed by the flood had no immediate prior warning that the flood was coming. Noah’s building the ark was a sign to them that something catastrophic was going to happen, but they ignored this sign. Then, God did not announce clearly that the rain was beginning and they were going to die. Likewise, the Jews on the land of Israel who will be destroyed by God at Jesus’ second coming will be completely surprised by this event and its consequences. Indeed, they will believe that all is well right up to the moment when Jesus appears and they find themselves confronting the wrath and destruction of God. Nevertheless, it will not have been as though there was no warning at all. The very existence of the Bible, the obvious deduction from the creation that there is a Creator, and the very thoughts that God has planted in all of humanity (cf. Romans 1:32), including the Jews, provide plenty and adequate warning to all human beings that they need to prepare themselves for the judgment of God.

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 (ἡ πῆξ) will not come upon you.’”

⁶⁶ ὑμεῖς δὲ, ἀδελφοί, οὐκ ἐστὲ ἐν σκότει, ἵνα ἡ ἡμέρα ὑμᾶς ὡς ἡ κλέπτῃς καταλάβῃ – Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy remind and encourage their readers that they know as much as one can know about this historic and catastrophic event. They will not be surprised, because they have embraced the truth of these ideas.

⁶⁷ πάντες γὰρ ὑμεῖς νιοὶ φωτός ἐστε καὶ νιοὶ ἡμέρας. Οὐκ ἔσμεν νυκτὸς οὐδὲ σκότους – Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy 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 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.

⁶⁸ ἄρα οὐ 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.

⁶⁹ Οἱ γὰρ καθεύδοντες νυκτὸς καθεύδουσιν καὶ οἱ ἡμεθυσκόμενοι νυκτὸς μεθύουσιν – Thus, Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy confirm 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.

⁷⁰ 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 as the Messiah to return, 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, Silvanus, and Timothy then use military imagery to encourage their readers to protect themselves from the weapons of falsehood, e.g., the breastplate, what we would refer to as a bulletproof vest, of genuine belief in Jesus as the Messiah and love for one another as Christians, as well as the helmet of being certain of God’s future mercy and entrance into the eternal Kingdom of God.

⁷¹ ὅτι οὐκ ἔθετο ἡμᾶς ὁ θεὸς εἰς ὀργὴν ἀλλὰ εἰς περιποίησιν σωτηρίας διὰ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Ὁριστοῦ – 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 and condemnation.

⁷² τοῦ ἀποθανόντος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν, ἵνα εἴτε γρηγορώμεν εἴτε καθευδόμεν ἅμα σὺν αὐτῷ ἔζησωμεν – Jesus is the means to eternal salvation because he has qualified to be our high priest and advocate at the final judgment. Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy indicate that this means that those who are still alive, i.e., awake (switching the reference of his metaphors of sleep and wakefulness), when Jesus returns, or who have died, i.e., are asleep, will always exist together in the presence of Jesus in the eternal Kingdom of God.

⁷³ Διὸ παρακαλεῖτε ἀλλήλους καὶ οἰκοδομεῖτε ἑῖς τὸν ἕνα, καθὼς καὶ ποιεῖτε – Here, by the one (τὸν ἕνα), Paul and his companions mean unity of existence with Jesus that results in obtaining the fulfillment of God’s promise of eternal mercy and life (cf. 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4). Even though the Thessalonians are together whenever they gather as a community of believers, Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy would have them continue working towards what it will be like to be in Jesus’ presence in the Kingdom of God, living in a morally pure and perfectly loving manner. They are also convinced that they are already continuing this work.

⁷⁴ Ἐρωτῶμεν δὲ ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί, εἰδέναι τοὺς κοπιῶντας ἐν ὑμῖν καὶ προϊσταμένους ὑμῶν ἐν κυρίῳ καὶ νουθετοῦντας ὑμᾶς – 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, Silvanus, and Timothy must have done the same thing in Thessalonica, and they encourage their readers to continue to listen respectfully to the men whom *they* selected as Christian leaders among them. The Greek word χειροτονήσαντες seems to be formed from the two words χειρ = hand and τείνω = stretch out. Therefore, these men were hand-picked by Paul as an apostle and Barnabas as an apostolic worker with Paul. 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 word “elder” is first used to refer to leaders of a community in Genesis 50:7, in regard to the leaders of Egypt (עֲלֵי־אֶרֶץ־מִצְרַיִם) (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 (אֲנֹכִי־אֵלֶיךָ) (τὴν γερουσίαν 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 γερουσία is made up of γερ = old and ουσια = being (nominative singular feminine present active participle of εἰμι). The Greek word πρεσβύτερος is first used to refer to the elders of Israel in Exodus 17:5 (אֲנֹכִי־אֵלֶיךָ).

⁷⁵ καὶ ἡγείσθαι αὐτοὺς ὑπερεκπερισσοῦ ἐν ἀγάπῃ διὰ τὸ ἔργον αὐτῶν. εἰρηνεύετε ἐν ἑαυτοῖς – Part of loving one another is to interact without resorting to harsh words and impatient behavior.

⁷⁶ Παρακαλοῦμεν δὲ ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί, νουθετεῖτε τοὺς ἀτάκτους, παραμυθεῖσθε τοὺς ὀλιγοψύχους, ἀντέχεσθε τῶν ἀσθενῶν, μακροθυμεῖτε πρὸς πάντας – Life was not easy for these Thessalonian Christians. Some would get discouraged and even become weak in their faith. Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy encourage all of them to support one another and help each other pursue obedience to God.

⁷⁷ ὁράτε μὴ τις κακὸν ἀντὶ κακοῦ τινι ἀποδοῦ, ἀλλὰ πάντοτε τὸ ἀγαθὸν διώκετε ὁ[καί] 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. This unbiblical behavior required a major correction for those who had come to believe in Jesus as the Messiah. Instead, Christians were required to be forgiving and to pay each other back with only grace and mercy.

⁷⁸ Πάντοτε χαίρετε – In the context of the whole letter, it makes sense that Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy would have these Thessalonians be glad with a viable joy in the midst of God’s promise of eternal mercy and life.

⁷⁹ ἀδιαλείπτως προσεύχεσθε – In the context of the whole letter, it also makes sense that they are encouraging the Thessalonians to pray that God will cause their belief to perseverere, in order that their authentic Christianity will survive the harsh persecutions that they are experiencing and they obtain eternal life.

⁸⁰ 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 in the midst of the discouraging and difficult circumstances that the Thessalonian Christians are experiencing.

⁸¹ τὸ πνεῦμα μὴ σβέννυτε – Assuming that Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy are referring to the Spirit of God, and assuming they 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)), they are encouraging the Thessalonian Christians to continue thinking and acting in line with the apostolic message. They want them to persevere in their genuine and not give up their belief so as to demonstrate that it is not genuine. 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.

This is especially clear in the light of their next statements.

⁸² προφητείας μὴ ἐξουθενεῖτε – Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy were God’s voice to these Thessalonians vis-à-vis the biblical message. Thus, they taught them that it should remain the most valuable information to them, so that they never shy away from it.

⁸³ 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 and that which they do in line with God’s moral commandments to the Jews.

⁸⁴ ἀπὸ παντὸς εἴδους πονηροῦ ἀπέχεσθε – The flip side of the coin is that they should shy away from falsehood and evil, anything that is contrary to what God has stated as truth and called people to do and be.

⁸⁵ Αὐτὸς δὲ ὁ θεὸς τῆς εἰρήνης αγιάσαι ὑμᾶς ὀλοτελεῖς, καὶ ὀλόκληρον ὑμῶν τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ ἡ ψυχὴ καὶ τὸ σῶμα ἀμέμπτως ἐν τῇ παρουσίᾳ τοῦ κυρίου ὁμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τηρηθεῖ – The vocabulary in this verse is difficult, but I think that both ὀλοτελεῖς and ὀλόκληρον refer 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 complete (τέλειοι καὶ ὀλόκληροι = those who complete their goal and reach their destiny), lacking in nothing.” Also cf. Hebrews 5-10.

⁸⁶ πιστὸς ὁ καλῶν ὑμᾶς, ὃς καὶ ποιήσει – Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy state 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.

⁸⁷ Ἀδελφοί, προσεύχεσθε ὅ[καὶ] περὶ ἡμῶν – Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy 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 strictly the Gentiles.

⁸⁸ Ἀσπάσασθε τοὺς ἀδελφούς πάντας ἐν φιλήματι αγίῳ – Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy also want the Thessalonians to receive with open arms those whom they send to them, especially because they are bringing this letter.

⁸⁹ Ἐνορκίζω ὑμᾶς τὸν κύριον ἀναγνωσθῆναι τὴν ἐπιστολὴν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἄδελφοῖς – Switching to the first person singular, Paul considers the ideas that Silvanus, Timothy, and he are presenting in this letter to be so important that he requires that all the Christians in Thessalonica get the opportunity to read it or hear it read.

⁹⁰ 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 actions of God towards morally depraved human beings on the basis of His willingness and desire to rescue them from His condemnation that results in their salvation.