

1 THESSALONIANS: VERSE-BY-VERSE THROUGH PAUL'S FIRST EPISTLE

SESSION 3 | 1 THESSALONIANS 1:8-2:4

1 THESSALONIANS 1:8-10 | THE THESSALONIAN TESTIMONY

- Verse 8 –
 - It was **the word of the Lord** that **sounded out** from the Thessalonians. What is this word?
 - The phrase is only used three times by Paul, each time to the Thessalonians (1 Thess. 1:8, 4:15, 2 Thess. 3:1). It is clearly a revelation of God, but unclear in Pauline usage *which* revelation is referenced.
 - In the New Testament, it is only used 13 times, and is either a reference to the direct words of Jesus Christ, or is used interchangeably between what appears to be the Pauline Gospel (Acts 13:32) and the Kingdom Gospel (1 Peter 1:25).
 - Interpretively, it seems best to take the phrase as a reference to any revelation of God.
 - Paul rejoiced that the word was **sounded out**, using the word ἐξηχέω [ekacheo], a word that inherently requires *sound* (our English word *echo* comes from the root). The sound specifically started **from you**, and then was **spread abroad**. Like the Thessalonians, you and I ought to find ways to *sound out* our faith so that the message will spread.
- Verse 9 –
 - Those living **abroad** (v. 8) were giving testimony of the Thessalonians.
 - The testimony included:
 - The **manner of entering in we had unto you**. There is a textual question here as to whether the text should be referring to the *past* entrance (as in KJV) or to the *current* entrance. The Newberry Interlinear says “what entrance in we have...” (rather than *had*).
 - The truth about how they had **turned to God from idols**. Bullinger states that, “This shows that these converts were mainly Gentiles” (*The Companion Bible, note on 1 Thess. 1:9*). However, as you recall from the introduction, the Thessalonian church began with **devout Greeks** (Acts 17:4) who, at the time Paul met them, **serve[d] the living and true God** as converted Jews and not idol worshipers, for Paul met them in the synagogue, where they were faithful to God.
- Verse 10 –
 - The Thessalonians **turned to God** (v. 9) both **to serve** (v. 9) and **to wait for his Son from heaven** (v. 10).
 - While we want to *assume* that this is said in a Christian sense, there is a better *textual* case that these former Gentile idol worshipers had turned from idol worship to serve God and wait for *the Messiah*. This Messiah, they would later learn (through Paul), would be **raised from the dead**, and would indeed be the man named **Jesus**.
 - I suppose this *Jewish* interpretation, based on the text, would be rejected by most evangelicals, both liberal and fundamentalist.
 - They would favor a *theological* rather than a *textual* interpretation.
 - However, if we are going to stick with the rule of letting *Scripture interpret Scripture*, we are forced into the interpretation I have brought. In fact, the words of this verse are strikingly similar to Acts 7:3, where it is reported that Paul taught the Thessalonians **that Christ must needs have suffered, and [be] risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus...is Christ**.
 - Paul adds that Jesus **delivered us from the wrath to come**.
 - The verb **delivered** is a present passive participle, thus *is delivering*.

- Note that the Lord **delivered us**. The text has a specific first-person plural **we** in verse 9 and **our** in the following verse, 1 Thessalonians 2:1, which would normally lead us to conclude that Paul was referring to himself, along with Silas and Timothy (v. 1). However, in this context there is little means to conclude that Paul did not include the Thessalonians in the **us** of verse 10.
 - Since this deliverance is to a believing Jewish audience, we must then determine what **the wrath to come** makes reference to.
 - The next reference Paul makes to wrath is in 1 Thessalonians 2:16, in which he states that **the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost**, making reference to those who **both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets** (v. 15).
 - Paul then makes reference to the wrath in 1 Thessalonians 5:9, where he states that **God hath no appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation**. The context is **the day of the Lord** (1 Thess. 5:2), which comes *after* the Tribulation has ended (compare Joel 2:31 to Matt. 24:29), thus the salvation of chapter 5 is in reference to the Kingdom, and the wrath is in reference to the day of the Lord.
 - In summary, **the wrath to come** is the Day of the Lord judgment, and is a reference to the nation of Israel, which shall be saved from this wrath. As much as we would like this to be a confirmation of a pre-tribulational rapture, the preponderance of evidence does not support such an argument. Our pre-trib positions must come from *other passages*.

1 THESSALONIANS 2:1-4 | PAUL RECOUNTS HIS VISIT

- Verses 1-2 –
 - This **entrance** is undoubtedly the original trip to Thessalonica, as recorded in Acts 17. Paul went to Thessalonica from Philippi, where he had been **shamefully entreated** (see Acts 16:22-24, along with vv. 37-39).
 - Arriving in Thessalonica, Paul taught **the gospel of God**. To define this gospel, we only need to turn to Acts 17:2-3, which is that Jesus, crucified and risen, is the Messiah. Paul also makes reference to **the gospel of God** in verses 8 and 9. In other Pauline epistles, we find the phrase used in Romans 1:1-2, where it is explicitly stated that this gospel is found spoken by the Prophets and **in the holy scriptures** of the Old Testament. This would make such gospel categorically *not* the Pauline gospel, which **in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men** (Eph. 3:5).
- Verses 3-4 –
 - The **exhortation** (v. 3) in Thessalonica, being the **gospel of God** (v. 2), thus the Gospel of the circumcision, was **not of deceit** (v. 3).
 - The Greek is πλάνη [plane], from which we get *planet*, due to the moving nature of a planet. The word is used 10 times in the New Testament and translated as *error* in seven of those occurrences.
 - It was not in *error* or *delusion* (as the word is translated in 2 Thess. 2:11) that Paul proclaimed the kingdom Gospel.
 - It is interesting that Paul goes to the trouble of explaining that his speech was not in **deceit** (error), **nor of uncleanness, nor in guile** (v. 3). Why would Paul go to such lengths to let us know he wasn't saying the wrong thing? Perhaps it is because he was entrusted with the gospel to the *uncircumcised* (Gal. 2:7), yet the only Biblical record records him giving the gospel of the *circumcised*.
 - In verse 10 Paul tells us that, even though the speech is not recorded in Scripture, the Gospel which was **put in trust** with Paul *was also spoken* as Paul was **allowed of God**.