1 Thessalonians

Salutation

1:1 From Paul1 and Silvanus and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians2 in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace and peace to you!13

Thanksgiving for Response to the Gospel

1:2 We thank God always for all of you as we mention you constantly4 in our prayers, 1:3 because we recall5 in the presence of our God and Father6 your work of faith and labor of love and endurance of hope7 in our Lord Jesus Christ. 1:4 We know,8 brothers and sisters9 loved by God, that he has chosen you,10 1:5 in that11 our gospel did not come to you merely in words,12 but in power and in the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction (surely you recall the character we displayed when we came among you to help you).13

1:6 And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, when you received14 the message with joy that comes from the Holy Spirit, despite great affliction. 1:7 As a result you became an example15 to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. 1:8 For from you the message of the Lord16 has echoed forth not just in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place reports of your faith in God have spread,17 so that we do not need to say anything. 1:9 For people everywhere18 report how you welcomed us19 and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God 1:10 and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus our deliverer from the coming wrath.20

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1 tn Grk “Paul.” The word “from” is not in the Greek text, but has been supplied to indicate the source of the letter.
2 map For the location of Thessalonica see JP1-C1; JP2-C1; JP3-C1; JP4-C1.
3 tc The majority of witnesses, including several early and important ones (א A [D] 1 33 37 bo), have ἵππον και κυριοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (“to you through our Lord Jesus Christ”) plus the dative to refer to the location of the church. Thus, the internal evidence is overwhelming in support of the shorter reading, for scribes would have been strongly motivated to rework this salutation in light of Paul’s style elsewhere. And the external evidence, though not overwhelming, is supportive of this shorter reading, found as it is in some of the best witnesses of the Alexandrian and Western texttypes.
4 tn Grk “Grace to you and peace.”
5 Or “mention you in our prayers, because we recall constantly...”
6 tn Grk “making mention...recalling.” The participle ποιούμενοι (poioüme noi) in v. 2 has been translated as temporal, and μνημονεύοντες (mnēmonéontes) in v. 3 has been translated as causal.
7 Or the phrase may connect at the end of the verse: “hope...in the presence of our God and Father.”
8 tn These phrases denote Christian virtues in action: the work produced by faith, labor motivated by love, and endurance that stems from hope in Christ.
9 tn Grk “knowing.” Because of the length and complexity of the Greek sentence, the participle εἰδότες (eidotes) has been translated as a finite verb and a new sentence started here in the translation.
10 tn Grk “your election.”
11 tn Or “because.”
12 tn Or “speech,” or “an act of speaking.”
13 tn Grk “just as you know what sort of people we were among you for your sakes.” Verse 5 reflects on the experience of Paul and his fellow preachers; v. 6 begins to describe the Thessalonians’ response.
14 tn Or “after you received.”
15 tc Most MSS (א A C D* F G Ψ 0278 330 1739 1881) have the plural τύπων (tupōn, “examples”) here, while a few important witnesses have the singular τύπον (tupon, “example”; B D* 633 81 104 1739 1881 pc lat). With ὑπέρ (hypér) “(you)” immediately preceding, the plural form looks motivated: Scribes would be expected to change the singular to the plural here. Although the external evidence for the singular reading is not overwhelming, the internal evidence for it is compelling.
16 tn Or “the word of the Lord.”
17 sn “The word of the Lord” is a technical expression in OT literature, often referring to a divine prophetic utterance (e.g., Gen 15:1; Isa 1:10, Jonah 1:1). In the NT it occurs 15 times: 3 times as ῥήμα τοῦ κυρίου (rēma tou kyriou; Luke 22:61, Acts 11:16, 1 Pet 1:25) and 12 times as λόγος τοῦ κυρίου (logos tou kyriou; here and in Acts 8:25; 13:44, 48, 49; 15:35, 36; 16:32; 19:10, 20; 1 Thess 4:15; 2 Thess 3:1). As in the OT, this phrase focuses on the prophetic nature and divine origin of what has been said. Here the phrase has been translated “the message of the Lord” because of the focus upon the spread of the gospel evident in the passage.
18 tn Grk “your faith in God has gone out.”
19 tn Grk “they themselves,” referring to people in the places just mentioned.
20 tn Grk “what sort of entrance we had to you” (an idiom for how someone is received).
Paul’s Ministry in Thessalonica

1 Thessalonians 2:15

2:1 For you yourselves know, brothers and sisters, about our coming to you – it has not proven to be purposeless. But although we suffered earlier and were mistreated in Philippi, as you know, we had the courage in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in spite of much opposition.

2:3 For the appeal we make does not come from error or impurity or with deceit, but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we declare it, not to please people but God, who examines our hearts.

2:5 For we never appeared with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed – God is our witness – nor to seek glory from people, either from you or from others; although we could have imposed our weight as apostles of Christ; instead we became little children among you. Like a nursing mother caring for her own children, with such affection for you we were happy to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us.

2:9 For you recall, brothers and sisters, our toil and drudgery: By working night and day and so as not to impose a burden on any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God. 2:10 You are witnesses, and so is God, as to how holy and righteous and blameless our conduct was toward you who believe.

2:11 As you know, we treated each one of you as a father treats his own children, exhorting and encouraging you and insisting that you live in a way worthy of God who calls you to his own kingdom and his glory. 2:13 And so we too constantly thank God that when you received God’s message that you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human message, but as it truly is, God’s message, which is at work among you who believe.

2:14 For you became imitators, brothers and sisters, of God’s churches in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, because you too suffered the same things from your own countrymen as they in fact did from the Jews, who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets and persecuted us severely. They

1 In Grk “brothers.” See note on the phrase “brothers and sisters” in 1:4.

2 In Grk “has not become empty.” Paul is defending himself against the charge that he lacked earnestness and personal concern for them, but appeared in their city out of greed or egotism. In his defense he appeals to what they recall of his ministry and what has become of it since he left, all of which demonstrates his God-given earnestness and effectiveness.

3 Map For location see JP1-C1; JP2-C1; JP3-C1; JP4-C1.

4 In The genitive in the phrase τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ (the gospel of God”) could be translated as either a subjective genitive (“the gospel which God brings”) or an objective genitive (“the gospel about God”). Either is grammatically possible. This is possibly an instance of a plenary genitive (see ExSyn 119-21; M. Zerwick, Biblical Greek, §§36-39). If so, an interplay between the two concepts is intended: The gospel which God brings is in fact the gospel about himself. This same phrase occurs in vv. 8 and 9 as well.

5 In Grk “For our exhortation.” Paul here uses παρακλήσεις (parakalouontos) to speak in broad terms about his preaching of the gospel, in which he urges or appeals to people to respond to God’s salvation (cf. the verb form παρακαλοῦντος [parakalountos] in 2 Cor 5:20).

6 In Grk “[is] not” (the verb “to be” is implied in the Greek construction).

7 In Or “came on the scene,” “came.”

8 In Punctuating vv. 6 and 7 is difficult. One must consider the temporal of v. 7 (see note on the word “children” in that verse) as well as the grammar of the verse. In the translation above, “little children” is understood to be a predicate nominative connected to the verb “became.” This allows a full stop to be placed at the end of v. 6 and before the predicate nominative connected to the verb “became.” This separates the two metaphors which impact the textual problem and allows for greater clarity in the way the sentence is read.

9 In Or “were,” “proved to be.”

10 In The variant ήμισι (hipioi, “gentile”) has fair support (N* A C D* Ψ 0278 33 1739 1881 𝔓86), but νηπιοι (nepioi, “little children”) has significantly stronger backing (L* NA B C* D* F G 1* 9* pc it bo). It is not insignificant that the earliest Alexandrian and Western witnesses treat his own children, but Ἰουσιου (Ioudaios, “their own prophets”) is found in D* Ψ 63 89 sy Mcion. This is obviously a secondary reading. Marcion’s influence may stand behind part of the tradition, but the Byzantine text probably added the adjective in light of its mention in v. 14 and as a clarification or interpretation of which prophets were in view.

11 In Or “and drove us out” (cf. Acts 17:5-10).
are displeasing to God and are opposed to all people, 2:16 because they hinder us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved. Thus they constantly fill up their measure of sins, 2 but wrath 3 has come upon them completely. 3

**Forced Absence from Thessalonica**

2:17 But when we were separated from you, brothers and sisters, 4 for a short time (in presence, not in affection) 6 we became all the more fervent in our great desire 6 to see you in person. 7 2:18 For we wanted to come to you (I, Paul, in fact tried again and again) 8 but Satan thwarted us. 2:19 For who is our hope or joy or crown or boast of before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not of course you? 2:20 For you are our glory and joy!

3:1 So when we could bear it no longer, we decided to stay on in Athens 10 alone. 3:2 We 11 sent Timothy, our brother and fellow worker for God 22 in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen you and encourage you about your faith, 3:3 so that no one would be shaken by these afflictions. For you yourselves know that we are destined for this. 3:4 For in fact when we were with you, we were telling you in advance that we would suffer affliction, and so it has happened, as you well know. 3:5 So 14 when I could bear it no longer, I sent to find out about your faith, for fear that the tempter somehow tempted you and our toil had proven useless.

3:6 But now Timothy has come 15 to us from you and given us the good news of your faith and love and that you always think of us with affection 16 and long to see us just as we also long to see you! 3:7 So 18 in all our distress and affliction, we were reassured about you, brothers and sisters, 19 through your faith. 3:8 For now we are alive again, 20 if you stand firm in the Lord. 3:9 For how can we thank God enough for you, 21 for all the joy we feel 22 because of you before our God? 3:10 We pray earnestly night and day to see you in person 23 and make up what may be lacking in your faith.

3:11 Now may God our Father himself and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you. 3:12 And may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another and for all, just as we do for you, 3:13 so that your hearts are strengthened in holiness to be blameless before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints. 24
A Life Pleasing to God

4:1 Finally then, brothers and sisters, we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received instruction from us about how you must live and please God (as you are in fact living) that you do so more and more. 4:2 For you know what commands we gave you through the Lord Jesus. 4:3 For this is God’s will: that you become holy, that you keep away from sexual immorality, that each of you know how to possess his own body in holiness and honor, not in lustful passion like the Gentiles who do not know God. 4:4 In this matter no one should violate the rights of his brother or take advantage of him, because the Lord is the avenger in all these cases, as we also told you earlier and warned you solemnly. 4:5 For God did not call us to impurity but in holiness. 4:6 Consequently the one who rejects this is not rejecting human authority but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you.

4:7 Now on the topic of brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another. 4:8 And indeed you are practicing it toward all the brothers and sisters in all of Macedonia. But we urge you, brothers and sisters, to do so more and more, to aspire to lead a quiet life, to attend to your own business, and to work with your hands, as we commanded you. 4:9 In this way you will live a decent life before outsiders and not be in need.

4:10 Now we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve like the rest who have no hope. 4:11 For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, so also we believe that God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep as Christians. 4:12 For we tell you this by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will surely not go ahead of those who have fallen asleep. 4:13 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a shout of command, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the cloud to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will be with the Lord for ever. Therefore encourage one another with these words.
will rise first. 4:17 Then we who are alive, who are left, will be suddenly caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will always be with the Lord. 4:18 Therefore encourage one another with these words.

The Day of the Lord

5:1 Now on the topic of times and seasons, brothers and sisters, you have no need for anything to be written to you. 5:2 For you know quite well that the day of the Lord will come in the same way as a thief in the night. 5:3 Now when they are saying, “There is peace and security,” then sudden destruction comes on them, like labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will surely not escape. 5:4 But you, brothers and sisters, are not in the darkness for the day to overtake you like a thief would. 5:5 For you all are sons of the light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of the darkness. 5:6 So then we must not sleep as the rest, but must stay alert and sober. 5:7 For those who sleep, sleep at night and those who get drunk are drunk at night. 5:8 But since we are of the day, we must stay sober by putting on the breastplate of faith and love and as a helmet our hope for salvation. 5:9 For God did not destine us for wrath but for gaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. 5:10 He died for us so that whether we are alert or asleep we will come to life together with him. 5:11 Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, just as you are in fact doing.

Final Instructions

5:12 Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, to acknowledge those who labor among you and preside over you in the Lord and admonish you, 5:13 and to esteem them most highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves. 5:14 And we urge you, brothers and sisters, to admonish the undisciplined, comfort the discouraged, help the weak, be patient toward all. 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. 5:16 Always rejoice, 5:17 constantly pray, 5:18 in everything give thanks. For this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus. 5:19 Do not extinguish the Spirit. 5:20 Do not treat prophecies with contempt. 5:21 But examine all things; hold fast to what is good. 5:22 Stay away from every form of evil.

Footnotes:
1 tc The words οἱ περιλθαμμένοι (hoi perilepomenoi, “[the ones who are left]”) are lacking in F G (0226-04) or b as well as a few fathers, but the rest of the textual tradition has the words. Most likely, the Western mss omitted the words because of perceived redundancy with οἱ γόνες (hoi zõîntes, “[the ones] who are alive”).
2 tn Or “snatched up.” The Greek verb ἀφεπτόξου implies that the action is quick or forceful, so the translation supplied the adverb “suddenly” to make this implicit notion clear.
3 tn Or “simultaneously,” but this meaning does not fit as well in the parallel in 5:10.
6 sn The day of the Lord is the period of time in the future when the Lord will intervene in the events of this earth to consummate his redemption and his judgment (Isa 2:11-12; 13:6-13; Ezek 30:3; Joel 1:15; 2:32; 3:18; Amos 5:18-20; Obad 15-17; Zeph 1:7-18; 2:2-3; Zech 14:1-13, 20-21; Mal 4:1-5; 1 Cor 1:8; 5:5; 2 Cor 1:14; 2 Thess 2:2; 2 Pet 3:10). It includes both blessings and curses, though the latter is emphasized here.
7 sn Jesus used a thief coming at night as an illustration of the unexpected and hostile nature of the coming of God’s judgment in the future. This is repeated in various ways in v. 4; 2 Pet 3:10; Rev 3:3; 16:15.
8 tc θέλειν (de, “now”) is found in N* B D 0226 6 1505 1739 1881 al, but lacking in N* A F G 33 it. θάπτομαι (gar, “for”) is the reading of the Byzantine text and a few other witnesses (Ψ 0278 Ψ). Although normally the shorter reading is to be preferred, the external evidence is superior for θέλειν (being found in the somewhat better Alexandrian and Western witnesses), What, then, is to explain the θάπτομαι? Scribes were prone to replace θέλειν with θάπτομαι, especially in sentences suggesting a causal or explanatory idea, thus making the point more explicit. Internally, the omission of θέλειν looks unintentional, a case of homoiocarion (ΟΤΟΔΝΕΛΕΑΓΕΤΙUCIN). Although a decision is difficult, in this instance θέλειν has the best credentials for authenticity.
9 tn Grk “peace and security,” with “there is” understood in the Greek construction.
10 tn Grk a singular “birth pain.”
12 sn An allusion to Isa 59:17.
13 sn The phrases alert or asleep may be understood (1) of moral alertness (living in faith, love, and hope as vv. 6, 8 call for, versus being unresponsive to God) or (2) of physical life and death (whether alive or dead). The first fits better with the context of 5:1-9, while the second returns to the point Paul started with in 4:13-18 (no disadvantage for the believing dead).
14 sn God did not destine us for wrath. In context this refers to the outpouring of God’s wrath on the earth in the day of the Lord (1 Thess 5:2-4).
15 tn Grk “the one who died,” describing Jesus Christ (1 Thess 5:5). Because of the length and complexity of the Greek sentence, a new sentence was started at the beginning of v. 10 in the translation.
16 sn The phrases alert or asleep may be understood (1) of moral alertness (living in faith, love, and hope as vv. 6, 8 call for, versus being unresponsive to God) or (2) of physical life and death (whether alive or dead). The first fits better with the context of 5:1-9, while the second returns to the point Paul started with in 4:13-18 (no disadvantage for the believing dead).
Conclusion

5:23 Now may the God of peace himself make you completely holy and may your spirit and soul and body be kept entirely blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 5:24 He who calls you is trustworthy, and he will in fact do this. 5:25 Brothers and sisters, pray for us too. 5:26 Greet all the brothers and sisters with a holy kiss. 5:27 I call on you solemnly in the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers and sisters. 5:28 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

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1 tn Grk “who will also do,” with the object understood from v. 23.
4 tn Grk “I adjure you by the Lord,” “I put you under oath before the Lord.”
5 tc Most witnesses, including some important ones (Ψ [33] 1739 1881 ar vg sy bo), read “holy” before “brothers [and sisters]” (ἅγιοι ἀδελφοί, hagioi adelphoi). It is possible that ἅγιοι dropped out by way of homoioteleuton (in uncial script the words would be written διὰ ἃ ἁγιοι ἀδελφοι, διὰ ἁγιοι ἀδελφοι), but it is equally possible that the adjective was added because of the influence of ἅγιος (hagios) in v. 26. Another internal consideration is that the expression ἅγιοι ἀδελφοί (holy brothers”) is not found elsewhere in the corpus Paulinum, though Col 1:2 comes close. But this fact could be argued either way: It may suggest that such an expression is not Pauline; on the other hand, the unusualness of the expression could have resulted in an alteration by some scribes. At the same time, since 1 Thessalonians is one of the earliest of Paul’s letters, and written well before he addresses Christians as saints (ἅγιοι) in 1 Corinthians for the first time, one might argue that Paul’s own forms of expression were going through something of a metamorphosis. Scribes insensitive to this fact could well impute later Pauline collocations onto his earlier letters. The internal evidence seems to support, albeit slightly, the omission of ἅγιοις here. Externally, most of the better witnesses of the Alexandrian and Western texts (A B D F G 0278 it sa) combine in having the shorter reading. Although the rating of “A” in UBS for the omission seems too generous, this reading is still to be preferred.

7 tc Most witnesses, including a few important ones (A D* [Ψ] 1739* ar lat sy bo), conclude this letter with ἀμήν (amēn, “amen”). Such a conclusion is routinely added by scribes to NT books because a few of these books originally had such an ending (cf. Rom 16:27; Gal 6:18; Jude 25). A majority of Greek witnesses have the concluding ἀμήν in every NT book except Acts, James, and 3 John (and even in these books, ἀμήν is found in some witnesses). It is thus a predictable variant. Further, the witnesses for the omission are sufficiently early and diffuse (B D* F G 0278 6 33 1739* 1881 it sa) to render the verdict against the particle here.