

# FREE BIBLE COMMENTARY

**YOU CAN UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE!**

## ***Paul's First Letters: Galatians and 1 & 2 Thessalonians***

By Dr. Bob Utley, retired professor of hermeneutics (Biblical interpretation)

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# ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THIS COMMENTARY

AB	Anchor Bible Commentaries, ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman
ABD	Anchor Bible Dictionary (6 vols.), ed. David Noel Freedman
AKOT	Analytical Key to the Old Testament by John Joseph Owens
ANET	Ancient Near Eastern Texts, James B. Pritchard
BDB	A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament by F. Brown, S. R. Driver and C. A. Briggs
IDB	The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (4 vols.), ed. George A. Buttrick
ISBE	International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (5 vols.), ed. James Orr
JB	Jerusalem Bible
JPSOA	The Holy Scriptures According to the Masoretic Text: A New Translation (The Jewish Publication Society of America)
KB	The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament by Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner
LAM	The Holy Bible From Ancient Eastern Manuscripts (the Peshitta) by George M. Lamsa
LXX	Septuagint (Greek-English) by Zondervan, 1970
MOF	A New Translation of the Bible by James Moffatt
MT	Masoretic Hebrew Text
NAB	New American Bible Text
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NEB	New English Bible
NET	NET Bible: New English Translation, Second Beta Edition
NRSV	New Revised Standard Bible
NIDOTTE	New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis (5 vols.), ed. Willem A. VanGemeren
NIV	New International Version
NJB	New Jerusalem Bible
OTPG	Old Testament Passing Guide by Todd S. Beall, William A. Banks and Colin Smith
REB	Revised English Bible
RSV	Revised Standard Version
SEPT	The Septuagint (Greek-English) by Zondervan, 1970
TEV	Today's English Version from United Bible Societies
YLT	Young's Literal Translation of the Holy Bible by Robert Young
ZPBE	Zondervan Pictorial Bible Encyclopedia (5 vols.), ed. Merrill C. Tenney

# A Word From the Author: How Can This Commentary Help You?

Biblical interpretation is a rational and spiritual process that attempts to understand an ancient inspired writer in such a way that the message from God may be understood and applied in our day.

The spiritual process is crucial but difficult to define. It does involve a yieldedness and openness to God. There must be a hunger (1) for Him, (2) to know Him, and (3) to serve Him. This process involves prayer, confession and the willingness for lifestyle change. The Spirit is crucial in the interpretive process, but why sincere, godly Christians understand the Bible differently is a mystery.

The rational process is easier to describe. We must be consistent and fair to the text and not be influenced by our personal or denominational biases. We are all historically conditioned. None of us are objective, neutral interpreters. This commentary offers a careful rational process containing three interpretive principles structured to help us overcome our biases.

## **First Principle**

The first principle is to note the historical setting in which a biblical book was written and the particular historical occasion for its authorship. The original author had a purpose, a message to communicate. The text cannot mean something to us that it never meant to the original, ancient, inspired author. His intent—not our historical, emotional, cultural, personal or denominational need—is the key. Application is an integral partner to interpretation, but proper interpretation must always precede application. It must be reiterated that every biblical text has one and only one meaning. This meaning is what the original biblical author intended through the Spirit's leadership to communicate to his day. This one meaning may have many possible applications to different cultures and situations. These applications must be linked to the central truth of the original author. For this reason, this study guide commentary is designed to provide an introduction to each book of the Bible.

## **Second Principle**

The second principle is to identify the literary units. Every biblical book is a unified document. Interpreters have no right to isolate one aspect of truth by excluding others. Therefore, we must strive to understand the purpose of the whole biblical book before we interpret the individual literary units. The individual parts—chapters, paragraphs, or verses—cannot mean what the whole unit does not mean. Interpretation must move from a deductive approach of the whole to an inductive approach to the parts. Therefore, this study guide commentary is designed to help the student analyze the structure of each literary unit by paragraphs. Paragraph and chapter divisions are not inspired, but they do aid us in identifying thought units.

Interpreting at a paragraph level—not sentence, clause, phrase or word level—is the key in following the biblical author's intended meaning. Paragraphs are based on a unified topic, often called the theme or topical sentence. Every word, phrase, clause, and sentence in the paragraph relates somehow to this unified theme. They limit it, expand it, explain it, and/or question it. A real key to proper interpretation is to follow the original author's thought on a paragraph-by-paragraph basis through the individual literary units that make up the biblical book. This study guide commentary is designed to help the student do that by comparing modern English translations. These translations have been selected because they employ different translation theories:

1. The United Bible Society's Greek text is the revised fourth edition (UBS4). This text was paragraphed by modern textual scholars.

2. The New King James Version (NKJV) is a word-for-word literal translation based on the Greek manuscript tradition known as the Textus Receptus. Its paragraph divisions are longer than the other translations. These longer units help the student to see the unified topics.
3. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) is a modified word-for-word translation. It forms a mid point between the following two modern versions. Its paragraph divisions are quite helpful in identifying subjects.
4. The Today's English Version (TEV) is a dynamic equivalent translation published by the United Bible Society. It attempts to translate the Bible in such a way that a modern English reader or speaker can understand the meaning of the Greek text. Often, especially in the Gospels, it divides paragraphs by speaker rather than by subject, in the same way as the NIV. For the interpreter's purposes, this is not helpful. It is interesting to note that both the UBS4 and TEV are published by the same entity, yet their paragraphing differs.
5. The Jerusalem Bible (JB) is a dynamic equivalent translation based on a French Catholic translation. It is very helpful in comparing the paragraphing from a European perspective.
6. The printed text is the 1995 Updated New American Standard Bible (NASB), which is a word for word translation. The verse by verse comments follow this paragraphing.

### **Third Principle**

The third principle is to read the Bible in different translations in order to grasp the widest possible range of meaning (semantic field) that biblical words or phrases may have. Often a Greek phrase or word can be understood in several ways. These different translations bring out these options and help to identify and explain the Greek manuscript variations. These do not affect doctrine, but they do help us to try to get back to the original text penned by an inspired ancient writer.

This commentary offers a quick way for the student to check his interpretations. It is not meant to be definitive, but rather informative and thought-provoking. Often, other possible interpretations help us not be so parochial, dogmatic, and denominational. Interpreters need to have a larger range of interpretive options to recognize how ambiguous the ancient text can be. It is shocking how little agreement there is among Christians who claim the Bible as their source of truth.

These principles have helped me to overcome much of my historical conditioning by forcing me to struggle with the ancient text. My hope is that it will be a blessing to you as well.

Bob Utley  
June 27, 1996

# A GUIDE TO GOOD BIBLE READING: A PERSONAL SEARCH FOR VERIFIABLE TRUTH

What follows is a brief explanation of Dr. Bob Utley's hermeneutical philosophy and the procedures used in his commentaries.

Can we know truth? Where is it found? Can we logically verify it? Is there an ultimate authority? Are there absolutes which can guide our lives, our world? Is there meaning to life? Why are we here? Where are we going? These questions—questions that all rational people contemplate—have haunted the human intellect since the beginning of time (Eccl. 1:13-18; 3:9-11). I can remember my personal search for an integrating center for my life. I became a believer in Christ at a young age, based primarily on the witness of significant others in my family. As I grew to adulthood, questions about myself and my world also grew. Simple cultural and religious clichés did not bring meaning to the experiences I read about or encountered. It was a time of confusion, searching, longing, and often a feeling of hopelessness in the face of the insensitive, hard world in which I lived.

Many claimed to have answers to these ultimate questions, but after research and reflection I found that their answers were based upon (1) personal philosophies, (2) ancient myths, (3) personal experiences, or (4) psychological projections. I needed some degree of verification, some evidence, some rationality on which to base my worldview, my integrating center, my reason to live. I found these in my study of the Bible. I began to search for evidence of its trustworthiness, which I found in (1) the historical reliability of the Bible as confirmed by archaeology, (2) the accuracy of the prophecies of the Old Testament, (3) the unity of the Bible message over the sixteen hundred years of its production, and (4) the personal testimonies of people whose lives had been permanently changed by contact with the Bible. Christianity, as a unified system of faith and belief, has the ability to deal with complex questions of human life. Not only did this provide a rational framework, but the experiential aspect of biblical faith brought me emotional joy and stability.

I thought that I had found the integrating center for my life—Christ, as understood through the Scriptures. It was a heady experience, an emotional release. However, I can still remember the shock and pain when it began to dawn on me how many different interpretations of this book were advocated, sometimes even within the same churches and schools of thought. Affirming the inspiration and trustworthiness of the Bible was not the end, but only the beginning. How do I verify or reject the varied and conflicting interpretations of the many difficult passages in Scripture by those who were claiming its authority and trustworthiness? This task became my life's goal and pilgrimage of faith. I knew that my faith in Christ had brought me great peace and joy. My mind longed for some absolutes in the midst of the relativity of my culture and the dogmatism of conflicting religious systems and denominational arrogance. In my search for valid approaches to the interpretation of ancient literature, I was surprised to discover my own historical, cultural, denominational and experiential biases. I had often read the Bible simply to reinforce my own views. I used it as a source of dogma to attack others while reaffirming my own insecurities and inadequacies. How painful this realization was to me!

Although I can never be totally objective, I can become a better reader of the Bible. I can limit my biases by identifying them and acknowledging their presence. I am not yet free of them, but I have confronted my own weaknesses. The interpreter is often the worst enemy of good Bible reading! Let me list some of the presuppositions I bring to my study of the Bible so that you, the reader, may examine them along with me:

## I. Presuppositions

1. I believe the Bible is the sole inspired self-revelation of the one true God. Therefore, it must be interpreted in light of the intent of the original divine author through a human writer in a specific historical setting.
2. I believe the Bible was written for the common person—for all people! God accommodated Himself to speak to us clearly within a historical and cultural context. God does not hide truth—He wants us to understand! Therefore, it must be interpreted in light of its day, not ours. The Bible should not mean to us what it never meant to those who first read or heard it. It is understandable by the average human mind and uses normal human communication forms and techniques.
3. I believe the Bible has a unified message and purpose. It does not contradict itself, though it does contain difficult and paradoxical passages. Thus, the best interpreter of the Bible is the Bible itself.
4. I believe that every passage (excluding prophecies) has one and only one meaning based on the intent of the original, inspired author. Although we can never be absolutely certain we know the original author's intent, many indicators point in its direction:
  - a. the genre (literary type) chosen to express the message
  - b. the historical setting and/or specific occasion that elicited the writing
  - c. the literary context of the entire book as well as each literary unit
  - d. the textual design (outline) of the literary units as they relate to the whole message
  - e. the specific grammatical features employed to communicate the message
  - f. the words chosen to present the message

The study of each of these areas becomes the object of our study of a passage. Before I explain my methodology for good Bible reading, let me delineate some of the inappropriate methods being used today that have caused so much diversity of interpretation, and that consequently should be avoided:

## II. Inappropriate Methods

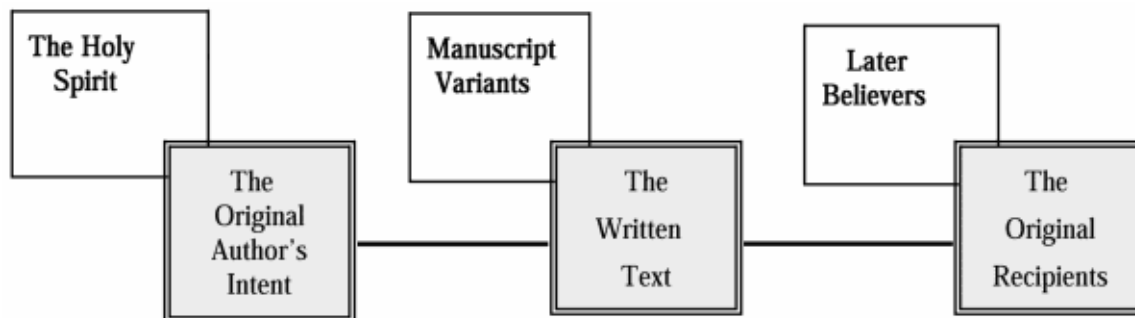
1. Ignoring the literary context of the books of the Bible and using every sentence, clause, or even individual words as statements of truth unrelated to the author's intent or the larger context. This is often called "proof-texting."
2. Ignoring the historical setting of the books by substituting a supposed historical setting that has little or no support from the text itself.
3. Ignoring the historical setting of the books and reading it as the morning hometown newspaper written primarily to modern individual Christians.
4. Ignoring the historical setting of the books by allegorizing the text into a philosophical/theological message totally unrelated to the first hearers and the original author's intent.
5. Ignoring the original message by substituting one's own system of theology, pet doctrine, or contemporary issue unrelated to the original author's purpose and stated message. This phenomenon often follows the initial reading of the Bible as a means of establishing a speaker's authority. This is often referred to as "reader response" ("what-the-text-means-to-me" interpretation).

At least three related components may be found in all written human communication:



In the past, different reading techniques have focused on one of the three components. But to truly affirm

the unique inspiration of the Bible, a modified diagram is more appropriate:



In truth all three components must be included in the interpretive process. For the purpose of verification, my interpretation focuses on the first two components: the original author and the text. I am probably reacting to the abuses I have observed (1) allegorizing or spiritualizing texts and (2) "reader response" interpretation (what-it-means-to-me). Abuse may occur at each stage. We must always check our motives, biases, techniques, and applications. But how do we check them if there are no boundaries to interpretations, no limits, no criteria? This is where authorial intent and textual structure provide me with some criteria for limiting the scope of possible valid interpretations.

In light of these inappropriate reading techniques, what are some possible approaches to good Bible reading and interpretation which offer a degree of verification and consistency?

### III. Possible Approaches to Good Bible Reading

At this point I am not discussing the unique techniques of interpreting specific genres but general hermeneutical principles valid for all types of biblical texts. A good book for genre-specific approaches is *How To Read The Bible For All Its Worth*, by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, published by Zondervan.

My methodology focuses initially on the reader allowing the Holy Spirit to illumine the Bible through four personal reading cycles. This makes the Spirit, the text and the reader primary, not secondary. This also protects the reader from being unduly influenced by commentators. I have heard it said: "The Bible throws a lot of light on commentaries." This is not meant to be a depreciating comment about study aids, but rather a plea for an appropriate timing for their use.

We must be able to support our interpretations from the text itself. Five areas provide at least limited verification:

1. historical setting
2. literary context
3. grammatical structures (syntax)
4. contemporary word usage
5. relevant parallel passages
6. genre

We need to be able to provide the reasons and logic behind our interpretations. The Bible is our only source for faith and practice. Sadly, Christians often disagree about what it teaches or affirms. The four reading cycles are designed to provide the following interpretive insights:

1. The first reading cycle
  - a. Read the book in a single sitting. Read it again in a different translation, hopefully from a different translation theory
    - (1) word-for-word (NKJV, NASB, NRSV)
    - (2) dynamic equivalent (TEV, JB)
    - (3) paraphrase (Living Bible, Amplified Bible)

- b. Look for the central purpose of the entire writing. Identify its theme.
  - c. Isolate (if possible) a literary unit, a chapter, a paragraph or a sentence which clearly expresses this central purpose or theme.
  - d. Identify the predominant literary genre
    - (1) Old Testament
      - a) Hebrew narrative
      - b) Hebrew poetry (wisdom literature, psalm)
      - c) Hebrew prophecy (prose, poetry)
      - d) Law codes
    - (2) New Testament
      - a) Narratives (Gospels, Acts)
      - b) Parables (Gospels)
      - c) Letters/epistles
      - d) Apocalyptic literature
2. The second reading cycle
- a. Read the entire book again, seeking to identify major topics or subjects.
  - b. Outline the major topics and briefly state their contents in a simple statement.
  - c. Check your purpose statement and broad outline with study aids.
3. The third reading cycle
- a. Read the entire book again, seeking to identify the historical setting and specific occasion for the writing from the Bible book itself.
  - b. List the historical items that are mentioned in the Bible book
    - (1) the author
    - (2) the date
    - (3) the recipients
    - (4) the specific reason for writing
    - (5) aspects of the cultural setting that relate to the purpose of the writing
    - (6) references to historical people and events
  - c. Expand your outline to paragraph level for that part of the biblical book you are interpreting. Always identify and outline the literary unit. This may be several chapters or paragraphs. This enables you to follow the original author's logic and textual design.
  - d. Check your historical setting by using study aids.
4. The fourth reading cycle
- a. Read the specific literary unit again in several translations
    - (1) word-for-word (NKJV, NASB, NRSV)
    - (2) dynamic equivalent (TEV, JB)
    - (3) paraphrase (Living Bible, Amplified Bible)
  - b. Look for literary or grammatical structures
    - (1) repeated phrases, Eph. 1:6,12,14
    - (2) repeated grammatical structures, Rom. 8:31
    - (3) contrasting concepts
  - c. List the following items
    - (1) significant terms
    - (2) unusual terms
    - (3) important grammatical structures
    - (4) particularly difficult words, clauses, and sentences
  - d. Look for relevant parallel passages
    - (1) look for the clearest teaching passage on your subject using a) "systematic theology" books b) reference Bibles c) concordances



- (2) look for a possible paradoxical pair within your subject. Many biblical truths are presented in dialectical pairs; many denominational conflicts come from proof-texting half of a biblical tension. All of the Bible is inspired, and we must seek out its complete message in order to provide a Scriptural balance to our interpretation.
- (3) look for parallels within the same book, same author or same genre; the Bible is its own best interpreter because it has one author, the Spirit.
- e. Use study aids to check your observations of historical setting and occasion
  - (1) study Bibles
  - (2) Bible encyclopedias, handbooks and dictionaries
  - (3) Bible introductions
  - (4) Bible commentaries (at this point in your study, allow the believing community, past and present, to aid and correct your personal study.)

#### **IV. Application of Bible Interpretation**

At this point we turn to application. You have taken the time to understand the text in its original setting; now you must apply it to your life, your culture. I define biblical authority as "understanding what the original biblical author was saying to his day and applying that truth to our day."

Application must follow interpretation of the original author's intent both in time and logic. We cannot apply a Bible passage to our own day until we know what it was saying to its day! A Bible passage should not mean what it never meant!

Your detailed outline, to paragraph level (reading cycle #3), will be your guide. Application should be made at paragraph level, not word level. Words have meaning only in context; clauses have meaning only in context; sentences have meaning only in context. The only inspired person involved in the interpretive process is the original author. We only follow his lead by the illumination of the Holy Spirit. But illumination is not inspiration. To say "thus saith the Lord," we must abide by the original author's intent. Application must relate specifically to the general intent of the whole writing, the specific literary unit and paragraph level thought development.

Do not let the issues of our day interpret the Bible; let the Bible speak! This may require us to draw principles from the text. This is valid if the text supports a principle. Unfortunately, many times our principles are just that, "our" principles—not the text's principles.

In applying the Bible, it is important to remember that (except in prophecy) one and only one meaning is valid for a particular Bible text. That meaning is related to the intent of the original author as he addressed a crisis or need in his day. Many possible applications may be derived from this one meaning. The application will be based on the recipients' needs but must be related to the original author's meaning.

#### **V. The Spiritual Aspect of Interpretation**

So far I have discussed the logical process involved in interpretation and application. Now let me discuss briefly the spiritual aspect of interpretation. The following checklist has been helpful for me:

1. Pray for the Spirit's help (cf. I Cor. 1:26-2:16).
2. Pray for personal forgiveness and cleansing from known sin (cf. I John 1:9).
3. Pray for a greater desire to know God (cf. Ps. 19:7-14; 42:1ff.; 119:1ff).
4. Apply any new insight immediately to your own life.
5. Remain humble and teachable.

It is so hard to keep the balance between the logical process and the spiritual leadership of the Holy Spirit. The following quotes have helped me balance the two:

1. from James W. Sire, *Scripture Twisting*, pp. 17-18:  
 "The illumination comes to the minds of God's people—not just to the spiritual elite. There is no guru class in biblical Christianity, no illuminati, no people through whom all proper interpretation must come. And so, while the Holy Spirit gives special gifts of wisdom, knowledge and spiritual discernment, He does not assign these gifted Christians to be the only authoritative interpreters of His Word. It is up to each of His people to learn, to judge and to discern by reference to the Bible which stands as the authority even to those to whom God has given special abilities. To summarize, the assumption I am making throughout the entire book is that the Bible is God's true revelation to all humanity, that it is our ultimate authority on all matters about which it speaks, that it is not a total mystery but can be adequately understood by ordinary people in every culture."
  
2. on Kierkegaard, found in Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, p. 75:  
 According to Kierkegaard the grammatical, lexical, and historical study of the Bible was necessary but preliminary to the true reading of the Bible. "To read the Bible as God's word one must read it with his heart in his mouth, on tip-toe, with eager expectancy, in conversation with God. To read the Bible thoughtlessly or carelessly or academically or professionally is not to read the Bible as God's Word. As one reads it as a love letter is read, then one reads it as the Word of God."
  
3. H. H. Rowley in *The Relevance of the Bible*, p. 19:  
 "No merely intellectual understanding of the Bible, however complete, can possess all its treasures. It does not despise such understanding, for it is essential to a complete understanding. But it must lead to a spiritual understanding of the spiritual treasures of this book if it is to be complete. And for that spiritual understanding something more than intellectual alertness is necessary. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned, and the Bible student needs an attitude of spiritual receptivity, an eagerness to find God that he may yield himself to Him, if he is to pass beyond his scientific study unto the richer inheritance of this greatest of all books."

## **VI. This Commentary's Method**

The Study Guide Commentary is designed to aid your interpretive procedures in the following ways:

1. A brief historical outline introduces each book. After you have done "reading cycle #3" check this information.
2. Contextual insights are found at the beginning of each chapter. This will help you see how the literary unit is structured.
3. At the beginning of each chapter or major literary unit the paragraph divisions and their descriptive captions are provided from several modern translations:
  - a. The United Bible Society Greek text, fourth edition revised (UBS4)
  - b. The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update (NASB)
  - c. The New King James Version (NKJV)
  - d. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)
  - e. Today's English Version (TEV)
  - f. The New Jerusalem Bible (NJB)

Paragraph divisions are not inspired. They must be ascertained from the context. By comparing several modern translations from differing translation theories and theological perspectives, we are able to analyze the supposed structure of the original author's thought. Each paragraph has one major truth. This has been called "the topic sentence" or "the central idea of the text." This unifying thought is the key to proper historical, grammatical interpretation. One should never interpret, preach or teach on less than a paragraph! Also remember that each paragraph is related to its surrounding paragraphs. This is why a paragraph level outline of the entire book is so important. We must be able to follow the logical flow of the subject being addressed by the original inspired author.

4. Bob's notes follow a verse-by-verse approach to interpretation. This forces us to follow the original author's thought. The notes provide information from several areas:
  - a. literary context
  - b. historical, cultural insights
  - c. grammatical information
  - d. word studies
  - e. relevant parallel passages
5. At certain points in the commentary, the printed text of the New American Standard Version (1995 update) will be supplemented by the translations of several other modern versions:
  - a. The New King James Version (NKJV), which follows the textual manuscripts of the "Textus Receptus."
  - b. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), which is a word-for-word revision from the National Council of Churches of the Revised Standard Version.
  - c. The Today's English Version (TEV), which is a dynamic equivalent translation from the American Bible Society.
  - d. The Jerusalem Bible (JB), which is an English translation based on a French Catholic dynamic equivalent translation.
6. For those who do not read Greek, comparing English translations can help in identifying problems in the text:
  - a. manuscript variations
  - b. alternate word meanings
  - c. grammatically difficult texts and structure
  - d. ambiguous texts Although the English translations cannot solve these problems, they do target them as places for deeper and more thorough study.
  - e. At the close of each chapter relevant discussion questions are provided which attempt to target the major interpretive issues of that chapter.

# INTRODUCTION TO GALATIANS

## INTRODUCTION

- A. The books of Galatians and Romans are the clearest expressions of the new covenant of salvation by grace alone, through faith alone in Christ alone! Galatians has been called "The Magna Carta of Christian Liberty."
- B. This letter stirred the fires of the Protestant Reformation.
1. Martin Luther said, "the little book of Galatians is my letter; I have betrothed myself to it; it is my wife."
  2. John Wesley said he found lasting peace from a sermon on Galatians.
  3. In his *Study Guide Commentary*, p. 11, Curtis Vaughan wrote, "few books have more profoundly influenced the minds of men, have so significantly shaped the course of human history, or continued to speak with such relevance to the deepest needs of modern life."
- C. This doctrinally oriented letter, possibly Paul's first, was a precursor to Romans and its development of the doctrine of justification by grace through faith apart from Judaism's emphasis on a works righteousness by obedience to the Mosaic Law and traditions of the elders (i.e., Oral Traditions).
1. Salvation cannot be found in both human performance and grace.
  2. Salvation must be found in either human performance or grace.
  3. Christlikeness will follow a true conversion.
  4. Theologically there is a distinction between Judaism's legalism which brought salvation and Christian legalism, which attempts to judge and restrict Christian freedom. Paul denounces Judaism's performance based model as worthy of damnation, but is willing to work with Christian legalism (i.e., weak faith, cf. Rom. 14:1-15:15; 1 Corinthians 8-10). It is the free gospel of salvation by grace through faith that Paul defends, yet he still recognizes the legalistic tendencies in some believers.
- D. This radically free salvation, by grace alone through faith alone, in Christ alone is desperately needed in our day because of the recurrent, subtle pull of our self-oriented, works-oriented religious consciousness. In every age the simple truth of God's initiating, self-giving, unconditional covenant love mediated through human repentance and humble faith is challenged! It is not that the false teachers were rejecting Christ's central place in redemption, but they were adding prerequisites to Him. It is not what we add, but that we add anything!

## AUTHOR

Paul's authorship of this letter has never been seriously doubted, as it forms a significant pillar of the Pauline Corpus. Galatians is very autobiographical and personal. It is highly emotional yet clearly presented gospel truth.

## DATE AND RECIPIENTS

- A. These two aspects of background material must be dealt with together because two opposing theories of the identities of the recipients affect the dating of the letter. Both theories have logical weight and limited biblical evidence.

B. The two theories are:

1. The traditional theory that was unanimous until the eighteenth century.
  - a. It is called the "Northern Galatian Theory."
  - b. It assumes that "Galatia" refers to the ethnic Galatians of the northern central plateau of Turkey (cf. 1 Pet. 1:1). These ethnic Galatians were Celts (Greek *Keltoi* or Latin *Gall*) who invaded this area in the third century b.c. They were called "Gallo-Graecians" to distinguish them from their western European brothers. They were defeated in 230 b.c. by Attalus I, the King of Pergamum. Their geographical influence was limited to northern central Asia Minor or modern Turkey.
  - c. If this ethnic group is assumed, then the date would be the mid 50's during Paul's second or third missionary journey. Paul's traveling companions would be Silas and Timothy.
  - d. Some have linked Paul's illness in Gal. 4:13 to malaria. They assert that Paul went north into the highlands to get away from the marshy, malaria-infested, coastal lowlands.
2. The second theory is championed by Sir Wm. M. Ramsay, *St. Paul the Traveller and Roman Citizen*, New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1896.
  - a. As the traditional theory defined "Galatia" as ethnic, this theory defines it as administrative. It seems that Paul often used Roman provincial names (cf. 1 Cor. 16:19; 2 Cor. 1:1; 8:1, etc.) The Roman province of "Galatia" included a larger area than ethnic "Galatia." These ethnic Celts supported Rome very early and were rewarded with more local autonomy and expanded territorial authority. If this large area was known as "Galatia," then it is possible that Paul's first missionary journey to these southern cities of Antioch in Pisidia, Lystra, Derbe and Iconium, recorded in Acts 13-14, is the location of these churches.
  - b. If one assumes this "Southern Theory," the date would be very early—close to, but before, the "Jerusalem Council" of Acts 15, which addresses the same subject matter as the book of Galatians. The Council occurred in a.d. 48-49 and the letter was probably written during the same period. If this is true, Galatians is the first letter of Paul in our New Testament.
  - c. Some evidences for the southern Galatian theory:
    - (1) There is no mention of Paul's traveling companions by name but Barnabas is mentioned three times (cf. Gal. 2:1,9,13). This fits the first missionary journey of Paul.
    - (2) It is mentioned that Titus was not circumcised (cf. Gal. 2:1-5). This fits best before the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15.
    - (3) The mention of Peter (cf. Gal. 2:11-14) and the problem of fellowship with Gentiles fits best before the Jerusalem Council.
    - (4) When the money was taken to Jerusalem several companions of Paul from different areas (cf. Acts 20:4) were listed. None, however, were listed from northern Galatia cities, although we know these ethnic Galatian churches participated (cf. 1 Cor. 16:1).
3. For the detailed presentation of the different arguments concerning these theories consult a technical commentary. They each have valid points but at this point in time there is no consensus, but the "Southern Theory" seems to fit all of the facts best.

C. Relationship of Galatians to Acts:

1. Paul made five visits to Jerusalem, recorded by Luke in the book of Acts:
  - a. Acts 9:26-30, after his conversion
  - b. Acts 11:30; 12:25, to bring famine relief from the Gentile churches
  - c. Acts 15:1-30, the Jerusalem Council
  - d. Acts 18:22, brief visit
  - e. Acts 21:15ff., another explanation of Gentile work
2. There are two visits to Jerusalem recorded in Galatians:
  - a. Gal. 1:18, after three years
  - b. Gal. 2:1, after fourteen years
3. It seems most probable that Acts 9:26 is related to Gal. 1:18. Possibly Acts 11:30 or

15:1ff or an unrecorded visit is mentioned in Gal. 2:1.

4. There are some differences between the Acts 15 and Gal. 2 accounts but this is probably due to:
  - a. different perspectives
  - b. different purposes of Luke and Paul
  - c. the fact that Galatians 2 may have occurred sometime before the meeting described in Acts 15 but in conjunction with it

D. Possible chronology of Paul's writings following F. F. Bruce and Murry Harris with minor adaptations.

	<u>Book</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Place of Writing</u>	<u>Relation to Acts</u>
1.	Galatians	48	Syrian Antioch	Acts 14:28; 15:2
2.	1 Thessalonians	50	Corinth	Acts 18:5
3.	2 Thessalonians	50	Corinth	
4.	1 Corinthians	55	Ephesus	Acts 19:20
5.	2 Corinthians	56	Macedonia	Acts 20:2
6.	Romans	57	Corinth	Acts 20:3
7.-10.	Prison Letters			
	Colossians	early 60s	Rome	
	Ephesians	early 60s	Rome	
	Philemon	early 60s	Rome	
	Philippians	late 62-63	Rome	Acts 28:30-31
11.-	Fourth Missionary Journey			
13.	1 Timothy	63 (or later,	Macedonia	
	Titus	63 but before	Ephesus (?)	
	2 Timothy	64 a.d. 68)	Rome	

## PURPOSE OF THE LETTER

A. Paul addressed three distinct areas of concern about the message of the false teachers. These heretics have been labeled "Judaizers" (cf. 2 Corinthians 3) because they believed that one had to become a Jew before he could become a Christian (cf. Gal. 6:12). His concerns revolved around the charges of the Judaizers (learned from Paul's defensive statements):

1. Paul was not truly an Apostle like the Twelve (cf. Acts 1:21-22); therefore, he was dependent on their authority or at least the authority of the Mother Church in Jerusalem.
2. Paul's message was different from theirs, and thus, false. This seems directly related to the concept of "justification by faith apart from the Law." The Apostles in Jerusalem were still very Jewish in their personal lives.
3. An element of libertinism was connected in some way with these churches (cf. Gal. 5:18-6:8). Exactly how this is to be explained is debated. Some have even seen two target groups in Paul's letter: Judaizers and Gnostics (cf. Gal. 4:8-11). However, it seems best to relate these verses to pagan practices. The believing Jews were concerned about the lifestyle of believing Gentiles. How did Paul's radical free grace relate to pagan idolatry and excess?

B. Doctrinally, this letter is a precursor to Paul's letter to the Romans. These two books contain Paul's major doctrines repeated and developed in different settings and later summarized in Ephesians.

C. In reality Galatians focuses on the differences between the Old Covenant (OT) in Moses and the New Covenant (NT) in Christ. The first was understood by the rabbis (Paul does not react against the Mosaic covenant, but its misinterpretation and application by Jewish tradition) to base God's acceptance on human performance, but the second was based on a new heart and a new spirit (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-38). Both were based on God's grace; both desire a righteous people.

The difference between them is how that righteousness is accomplished. This is developed in the NT book of Hebrews.

## **BRIEF OUTLINE**

A. Prologue, Gal. 1:1-10

1. general introduction to the book
2. the occasion for writing the book

B. Paul defends his Apostleship, Gal. 1:11-2:14

C. Paul defends the doctrinal truths of his gospel, Gal. 2:15-4:20

D. Paul defends the practical implications of his gospel, Gal. 5:1-6:10

E. Personal summary and closing, Gal. 6:11-18

Like all of Paul's letters, there is a doctrinal section (i.e., chapters 1-4) and a practical section (i.e., chapters 5-6).

## **READING CYCLE ONE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Therefore, read the entire biblical book at one sitting. State the central theme of the entire book in your own words.

1. Theme of entire book
2. Type of literature (genre)

## **READING CYCLE TWO (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Therefore, read the entire biblical book a second time at one sitting. Outline the main subjects and express the subject in a single sentence.

1. Subject of first literary unit
2. Subject of second literary unit
3. Subject of third literary unit
4. Subject of fourth literary unit
5. Etc.

# GALATIANS 1

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Salutation	Greetings	The Salutation	Salutation	Address
1:1-5	1:1-5	1:1-5	1:1-2 1:3 1:4-5	1:1-5
There is No Other Gospel	Only One Gospel	The Galatian Apostasy	The One Gospel	A Warning
1:6-9	1:6-10	1:6-10	1:6-9	1:6-10
1:10			1:10	
How Paul Became An Apostle	Call to Apostleship	Paul's Vindication of His Apostleship	How Paul Became an Apostle	God's Call
1:11-12	1:11-17	1:11-12	1:11-12	1:11-24
1:13-17		1:13-17	1:13-14 1:15-19	
	Contacts at Jerusalem			
1:18-24	1:18-24	1:18-24	1:20 1:21-24	

\* Although they are not inspired, paragraph divisions are the key to understanding and following the original author's intent. Each modern translation has divided and summarized the paragraphs. Every paragraph has one central topic, truth, or thought. Each version encapsulates that topic in its own distinct way. As you read the text, ask yourself which translation fits your understanding of the subject and verse divisions.

In every chapter we must read the Bible first and try to identify its subjects (paragraphs), then compare our understanding with the modern versions. Only when we understand the original author's intent by following his logic and presentation can we truly understand the Bible. Only the original author is inspired—readers have no right to change or modify the message. Bible readers do have the responsibility of applying the inspired truth to their day and their lives.

Note that all technical terms and abbreviations are explained fully in the following documents: [Brief Definitions of Greek Grammatical Structure](#), [Textual Criticism](#), and [Glossary](#).

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.



Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired but it is the key to following the original author's intent which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Gal. 1:1-5, basically the prologue to Galatians, is one sentence in Greek.
- B. Paul's usual note of thanksgiving (cf. Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians) is absent. This reflects the tension between Paul and this group of churches.
- C. Gal. 6-10 establishes the theological theme of the entire book. It could almost be said that these few verses contain all of the theological elements which Paul develops in the letter.
- D. Galatians 1:11-2:21 forms an autobiographical section where Paul defends his Apostleship and, by that, his gospel. This is very similar to 2 Corinthians 10-13.
- E. Galatians 1:11-2:14 divides into the following areas:
  1. Paul was not dependent on the Apostles in Jerusalem, Gal. 1:11-24.
  2. Paul was recognized by the Church in Jerusalem, Gal. 2:1-10.
  3. An example of Paul's equality, Gal. 2:11-14.
- F. The main body of this letter is contained in Gal. 2:15-6:10. It can be divided as follows:
  1. Paul defends the doctrinal truths of his gospel, Gal. 2:15-4:20.
  2. Paul defends the implication of his gospel, Gal. 5:1-6:10.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: GALATIANS 1:1-5**

**<sup>1</sup>Paul, an apostle (not *sent* from men nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead), <sup>2</sup>and all the brethren who are with me, to the churches of Galatia: <sup>3</sup>Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>4</sup>who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, <sup>5</sup>to whom *be* the glory forevermore. Amen.**

**1:1 "Paul"** Saul of Tarsus is first called Paul in Acts 13:9. It is probable that most Jews of the "diaspora" had a Hebrew name and a Greek name. If so, then Saul's parents gave him this name but why, then, does "Paul" suddenly appear in Acts 13? Possibly (1) others began to call him by this name or (2) he began to refer to himself by the term "little" or "least." The Greek name *Paulos* meant "little." Several theories have been advanced about the origin of his Greek name.

1. the second century tradition that Paul was short, fat, bald, bow-legged, bushy eye-browed, and had protruding eyes is a possible source of the name, deriving from a non-canonical book from Thessalonica called *Paul and Thekla*
2. passages where Paul calls himself the "the least of the saints" because he persecuted the Church as in Acts 9:1-2 (cf. 1 Cor. 15:9; Eph. 3:8; 1 Tim. 1:15).

Some have seen this "leastness" as the origin of the self-chosen title. However, in a book like Galatians, where he emphasized his independence and equality with the Jerusalem Twelve, this option is somewhat unlikely (cf. 2 Cor. 11:5; 12:11; 15:10).

■ **"an apostle"** "Apostle" comes from one of the Greek words "to send" (*apostellō*). Jesus chose twelve of His disciples to be with Him in a special sense and called them "Apostles" (cf. Mark 6:30; Luke 6:13).

Paul asserted his apostleship in all of his letters except for Philippians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, and Philemon. This introductory paragraph is one of the strongest affirmations of his apostleship found in any of his letters, due to the situations in the churches where false teachers tried to refute his gospel by attacking him personally.

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: SEND \(APOSTELLŌ\)](#)

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"not sent from men, nor through the agency of man"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"not from men nor through man"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"sent neither by human commission nor from human authorities"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"did not come from man or by means of man"</b>
<b>JB</b>	<b>"who does not owe his authority to men or his appointment to any human being"</b>

This underscores one of Paul's major emphases, that his apostleship originated from a divine, not human, source (cf. Gal. 1:12,16). The false teachers may have alleged that Paul received his gospel from: (1) the Twelve in Jerusalem (cf. Acts 9:19-22); or (2) the Mother Church, but he had subtly changed this gospel that he had been given. Paul defended himself in this regard because the gospel itself, not his credentials or reputation, was at stake (cf. 2 Cor. 10-13).

■ **"but through Jesus Christ and God the Father"** Note Paul's bold assertion that he received his revelation and the content of the gospel from the resurrected, glorified Jesus Himself (cf. Gal. 1:12). Although Paul did not fit the criteria of apostleship found in Acts 1:21-22, he believed he was called by the Lord to perform this specific task (i.e., Apostle to the Gentiles).

"Jesus" means "YHWH saves" (cf. Matt. 1:21). It is the same as the Hebrew name Joshua. When this term is used alone in the NT, it emphasizes the humanity of Jesus (cf. Eph. 4:21).

"Christ" is equivalent to the Hebrew term, *Messiah* or Anointed One (see [SPECIAL TOPIC: MESSIAH](#) below), which emphasizes the OT promise of the uniquely called, divinely inspired, coming One to bring in the New Age of righteousness.

"Jesus Christ" and "God the Father" are linked by one preposition which was the NT author's way of asserting the full deity of Christ; this occurs both in Gal. 1:1 and Gal. 1:3 (cf. 1 Thess. 1:1; 3:11; 2 Thess. 1:2,12; 2:16).

God is Father, not in the sense of sexual generation or chronological precedence, but interpersonal relationship and leadership, as in a Jewish home.

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: MESSIAH](#)

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: FATHER](#)

■ **"who raised Him from the dead"** Paul emphasizes that it was God the Father, who raised Jesus from the dead. It was both the Father and the Son who gave him the gospel. Paul may have been asserting that he was called by the Risen Lord while the Twelve in Jerusalem were called by the still-human Lord, although this may be reading too much into the phrase.

In most passages, it is God the Father who raised Jesus from the dead and thereby gives Him the divine stamp of approval on His ministry (cf. 2 Cor. 4:14; Acts 2:24; 3:15; 10:40; Rom. 6:4; 1 Pet. 1:21). In Rom. 8:17 it is God the Spirit who raises Jesus from the dead. However, in John 10:17-18, God the Son asserts that He laid down His own life, and took it up again. This shows the fluidity between the work of the persons of the Trinity.

## SPECIAL TOPIC: THE RESURRECTION

**1:2 "and all the brethren who are with me"** It is unfortunate for modern Bible students that Paul did not name his companions, which would have confirmed one of the two theories concerning the recipients of the letter. The Northern Theory focuses on ethnic Galatia while the Southern Theory focuses on the Roman administrative province of Galatia. Paul did not mention whether it was Barnabas (first journey) or Timothy and Silas (second journey). The name "Barnabas" occurs three times in Galatians implying the first journey and, therefore, the early date.

Paul uses "brethren" often in this letter (cf. Gal. 3:15; 4:12; 5:11; 6:18), possibly because his message to these churches was so pointed, stern, or even combative. Paul often introduced new subjects by beginning with "brothers."

■ **"to the churches of Galatia"** Again, the exact location of these churches remains undetermined. Some assert that it is Northern Galatia (cf. 1 Pet. 1:1), and make the date of this epistle in the middle 50's a.d. Acts 26:6 and 18:23 are interpreted as evidence that Paul preached in this area. Others interpret Galatia as the Roman province of Galatia, which encompassed a much larger area referred to in Acts 13 and 14 and would thereby refer to the first missionary journey of Paul and Barnabas. This would make the date in the late 40's a.d., just before, but not identical with, the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15.

## SPECIAL TOPIC: CHURCH (EKKLESIA)

**1:3 "Grace to you and peace"** The normal Greek epistolary greeting was the word *charein*. Paul characteristically changed this to the similar sounding Christian term *charis*, or grace. Many have suggested Paul combined the Greek greeting of "grace" with the Hebrew greeting "peace" [*shalom*]. Although this is an attractive theory, it may be reading too much into this typically Pauline introductory phrase. Theologically it is interesting to notice that grace alone precedes peace.

■ **"the Lord"** The Greek term *kurios* is similar in meaning to the Hebrew term *adon*. Both were used in the sense of "sir," "master," "owner," "husband," or "lord" (cf. Gen. 24:9; Exod. 21:4; 2 Sam. 2:7; and Matt. 6:24; John 4:11; 9:36). However, it also came to refer to Jesus as God's Sent One, the Messiah (cf. John 9:38).

The OT usage of this term comes from the later reluctance of Judaism to pronounce the covenant name for God, YHWH, which is the Hebrew verb "to be" (cf. Exod. 3:14). They were afraid of breaking one of the Ten Commandments which said, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord Thy God in vain." Therefore, they thought if they did not pronounce it, they could not take it in vain. So, they substituted the Hebrew *adon* [Lord] which has a similar meaning to the Greek *kurios* [Lord]. The NT authors used this term to describe the full deity of Christ. The phrase "Jesus is Lord" was the public confession of faith and baptismal formula of the early church (cf. Rom. 10:9-14).

YHWH

1. This is the name which reflects deity as the covenant making God; God as savior, redeemer! Humans break covenants, but God is loyal to His word, promise, covenant (cf. Ps. 103).

This name is first mentioned in combination with *Elohim* in Gen. 2:4. There are not two creation accounts in Genesis 1-2, but two emphases: (1) God (i.e., *Elohim*) as the creator of the universe (the physical) and (2) God as the special creator of humanity (i.e., YHWH). Genesis 2:4 begins the special revelation about the privileged position and purpose of mankind, as well as the problem of sin and rebellion associated with the unique position.

2. In Gen. 4:26 it is said "*men* began to call upon the name of the Lord " (YHWH). However, Exod. 6:3 implies that early covenant people (the Patriarchs and their families) knew God only as *El-Shaddai*. The name YHWH is explained only one time in Exod. 3:13-16, esp. Gal. 1:14. However, the writings of Moses often interpret words by popular word plays, not etymologies (cf. Gen. 17:5; 27:36; 29:13-35). There have been several theories as to the meaning of this name (taken from IDB, vol. 2, pp. 409-11).

- a. from an Arabic root, "to show fervent love"
  - b. from an Arabic root "to blow" (YHWH as storm God)
  - c. from a Ugartic (Canaanite) root "to speak"
  - d. following a Phoenician inscription, a causative participle meaning "the One who sustains," or "the One who establishes"
  - e. from the Hebrew *Qal* form "the One who is," or "the One who is present" (in future sense, "the One who will be")
  - f. from the Hebrew *Hiphil* form "the One who causes to be"
  - g. from the Hebrew root "to live" (e.g., Gen. 3:20), meaning "the ever living, only living One"
  - h. from the context of Exod. 3:13-16 a play on the imperfect form used in a perfect sense, "I shall continue to be what I used to be" or "I shall continue to be what I have always been" (cf. J. Wash Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Old Testament*, p. 67
    - The full name YHWH is often expressed in abbreviation or possibly an original form
      - (1) *Yah* (e.g., Hallelu - yah)
      - (2) *Yahu* (names, e.g., the "iah" in Isaiah)
      - (3) *Yo* (names, e.g., Joel)
3. As with *El*, often YHWH is combined with other terms to emphasize certain characteristics of the Covenant God of Israel. While there are many possible combinations terms, here are some.
- a. YHWH – *Yireh* (YHWH will provide), Gen. 22:14
  - b. YHWH – *Rophekha* (YHWH is your healer), Exod. 15:26
  - c. YHWH – *Nissi* (YHWH is my banner), Exod. 17:15
  - d. YHWH – *Meqaddishkem* (YHWH the One who sanctifies you), Exod. 31:13
  - e. YHWH – *Shalom* (YHWH is Peace), Jdgs. 6:24
  - f. YHWH – *Sabbaoth* (YHWH of hosts), 1 Sam. 1:3,11; 4:4; 15:2; often in the Prophets)
  - g. YHWH – *Ro'l* (YHWH is my shepherd), Ps. 23:1
  - h. YHWH – *Sidqenu* (YHWH is our righteousness), Jer. 23:6
  - i. YHWH – *Shammah* (YHWH is there), Ezek. 48:35

**1:4** This series of phrases illuminates three major aspects of Paul's gospel message. Paul expanded the introduction to show the centrality of the person and work of Jesus of Nazareth. The three aspects are:

1. His substitutionary death on our behalf (cf. Rom. 4:25; 5:6,8; 1 Cor. 15:3; 2 Cor. 5:14,21)
2. His introduction of the New Messianic Age—this is an aorist middle verbal form which means "He, Himself, once and for all, plucked us out" of this present evil age
3. His mission was in obedience to the eternal, redemptive plan of God. He came to die (cf. Gen. 3:15; Isa. 53:4,10; Mark 10:45; John 3:16; Acts 2:22-23; 4:27-28; 2 Cor. 5:21; 2 Tim. 1:9; 1 Pet. 1:20 and Rev. 13:8). See Special Topic: YHWH's ETERNAL REDEMPTIVE PLAN at Gal. 1:7.

"Wicked" is placed in an emphatic position which conveys the idea that "this is an evil, godless age" (cf. John 12:31; 2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:2-7). The concept of the two Jewish ages—a current evil age and the age to come, which will be brought in by God's Messiah—can be seen in Matt. 12:32; 13:39; 28:20 and other passages in the NT. Although Jesus has ushered in the New Age, it has not yet been fully consummated.

■ **"who gave Himself for our sins"** The word "gift" is a metaphor for God's initiating, free grace toward sinful humanity.

1. Jesus gave Himself, cf. Matt. 20:28; Luke 22:19; Gal. 1:4; 1 Tim. 2:6
2. God gave His Son for the world to be saved, cf. John 3:16; 1 John 4:10
3. Jesus is the gift of God, cf. John 4:10; Rom. 5:15; 2 Cor. 9:15
4. justification by grace through faith in Christ is the gift of God, cf. Rom 3:24; Eph. 2:8

NASB, NIV	"rescue us"
NKJV	"deliver us"
NRSV	"to set us free"

TEV "to deliver us"  
NJB "to liberate us"

This is an aorist middle subjunctive. In Acts 7:10,34 it is used of the Exodus. Jesus is the new Moses/new Exodus! In the context of Galatians this means that Christ's death brings believers forgiveness of sin (cf. Isaiah 53) potentially to all humans. It is God's will that sinful mankind be saved (cf. John 3:16; 1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9).

▣ **"this present evil age"** See Special Topic following.

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: THIS AGE AND THE AGE TO COME](#)

▣ **"according to the will of our God and Father"** See Special Topic following.

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: THE WILL \(\*thelēma\*\) OF GOD](#)

**1:5 "to whom be the glory forevermore"** Typically Pauline, this doxology breaks into the context because of the majesty of God. Often the pronouns in Paul's writings have ambiguous antecedents. Most of the time, in these occurrences, the masculine singular pronouns refer to God the Father.

▣ **"the glory"** In the OT the most common Hebrew word for "glory" (*kabod*, BDB 217) was originally a commercial term (which referred to the use of a pair of scales) which meant "to be heavy." That which was heavy was valuable or had intrinsic worth. Often the concept of brightness (*Shekinah* cloud of glory during the wilderness wandering period) was added to the word to express God's majesty. He alone is worthy and honorable. He is too brilliant for fallen mankind to behold. God can only be truly known through Christ (cf. Jer. 1:14; Matt. 17:2; Heb. 1:3; James 2:1).

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: GLORY \(\*DOXA\*\)](#)

▣ **"forevermore"** Literally "unto the ages of the ages."

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: FOREVER \(\*GREEK IDIOM\*\)](#)

▣ **"Amen"** This is a form of the OT Hebrew term for "faith" (*emeth*, cf. Hab. 2:4, see Special Topic at Gal. 3:6). Its original etymology was "to be firm or sure." However, the connotation changed to that which is to be affirmed (cf. 2 Cor. 1:20). It was used metaphorically of someone who was faithful, loyal, steadfast, trustworthy (cf. Robert B. Girdlestone, *Synonyms of the Old Testament*, pp. 102-106). Here it functions as a close to a doxology to God the Father (cf. Rom. 1:25; 9:5; 11:36; 16:27; Eph. 3:21; Phil. 4:20).

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: AMEN](#)

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: GALATIANS 1:6-10**

**<sup>6</sup>I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; <sup>7</sup>which is *really* not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. <sup>8</sup>But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! <sup>9</sup>As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you have received, he is to be accursed! <sup>10</sup>For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.**

**1:6 "I am amazed"** Instead of a thanksgiving—so common in Pauline writings—Paul observed with

astonishment (the verb is found only here and 2 Thess. 1:10 in Paul's writings) that the Galatians had been too easily wooed away from the pure, simple, majestic gospel of justification by grace through faith by the false teachers.

- **"so quickly"** Two senses are possible: (1) so soon after they accepted the gospel that Paul preached, or (2) so soon after the false teachers came.
- **"deserting Him"** This verb is present tense, indicating the Galatians were in the process of turning away. "deserting" is a military term for revolt. Note the emphasis is on the personal element of turning away from God Himself by rejecting Paul's gospel. It can be a present passive verbal form, but the larger context (cf. Gal. 3:1ff. and 5:7) implies a present middle form. This emphasizes that although the false teachers instigated the deserting, the Galatians willingly participated in it.
- **"who called you by the grace of Christ"** The phrase "called you" usually refers to an action of God the Father (cf. Rom. 8:30; 9:24; 1 Cor. 1:9). This is significant because of the textual problem with the addition of the phrase "of Christ." It is not found in the papyrus P<sup>46</sup>, F<sup>\*</sup>, or G, but it is found in the papyrus P<sup>51</sup>, and the uncial manuscripts  $\kappa$ , A, B, K and F<sup>2</sup>. "Of Jesus Christ" is found in MS D. This may be an early addition to clarify that it is the Father who calls us through Christ. It must be stated again: God always takes the initiative in human salvation (cf. John 6:44,65; Rom. 9; Eph. 1:3-14). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: ELECTION/PREDESTINATION AND THE NEED FOR A THEOLOGICAL BALANCE](#) at 1 Thess. 1:4 and [SPECIAL TOPIC: CALLED](#) at 2 Thess. 1:11.
- **"for a different gospel"** "Different" [*heteros*] is sometimes used in the sense of "another of a different kind," (cf. 2 Cor. 11:4). In verse 7 *allos* (i.e., "another of the same kind") is used; it can be translated "another of the same kind in a series." However, in Koine Greek these terms were becoming synonymous and a distinction should not be insisted upon too strongly. But, in this context, Paul obviously used both for contrast.

1:7

NASB	"which is <i>really</i> not another"
NKJV	"which is not another"
NRSV	"not that there is another gospel"
TEV	"there is no 'other gospel'"
NJB	"Not that there can be more than one Good News"

There are not two gospels, though the one true gospel is often perverted. The KJV translation of Gal. 2:7 has been often interpreted as referring to two gospels, one for the Greeks and one for the Jews. This is an unfortunate and untrue inference, although it may have been a statement of the false teachers.

NASB	"only there are some who are disturbing you"
NKJV	"but there are some who trouble you"
NRSV	"but there are some who are confusing you"
TEV	"there are some people who are upsetting you"
NJB	"it is merely that some troublemakers among you"

"Disturbing" refers to a purposeful action like a military revolt (i.e., this context has several military terms). "False teachers" is plural in Gal. 5:12, but possibly only the leader of the false teachers is actually meant because of the use of the singular in Gal. 5:7 and twice in Gal. 5:10. They are called "agitators" in Gal. 5:12. Many assume the Judaizers of Galatians are synonymous with the converted Pharisees or priests of Acts 15:1,5,24. They emphasized the necessity of becoming a Jew before one could become a Christian. The Judaizers' emphasis on the Jewish Law can be seen in:

1. the necessity of circumcision (cf. Gal. 2:3-4; 5:1; 6:12-15)
2. their keeping of special days (cf. Gal. 4:10)



3. a possible inclusion of keeping the food laws which is implied in Paul's confrontation with Peter (cf. Gal. 2:11-14)

This was probably the same group of false teachers mentioned in 2 Cor. 11:26 and 1 Thess. 2:14-16. Their problem was not that they denied the central place of Christ in salvation, but that they also required the Mosaic Law, which confuses grace and human performance. The New Covenant does not focus on human merit (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-38).

The theological and practical problem of how to relate the OT and NT remains even today. Here are some possible options suggested through the years.

1. ignore the OT
2. magnify the OT
3. continue the ethics, but not the cultus of Israel
4. read the NT through the eyes of the OT categories
5. read the OT through the new message of Jesus
6. see it as a promise (OT) and fulfillment (NT)

I have struggled with this issue! It seems to me the OT is surely revelation (Matt. 5:17-19; 2 Tim. 3:15-16). One cannot understand the Bible without Genesis. The OT surely reveals God in marvelous ways, however, it seems to me that Judaism mishandled the Mosaic covenant by emphasizing the human aspect of covenant! I prefer to emphasize the divine universal aspect (i.e., Gen. 3:15; 12:3; Exod. 19:5-6) with a mandated covenantal human response!

The NT universalizes the national promises to Israel whereby the original intent of God to redeem fallen mankind, made in His image and likeness (cf. Gen. 1:26-27) is fully realized! One God, one world, one way to restored fellowship (i.e., Isaiah's message)!

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: YHWH's ETERNAL REDEMPTIVE PLAN**

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"and want to distort the gospel of Christ"</b>
<b>NKJV, NRSV</b>	<b>"and want to pervert the gospel of Christ"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"and trying to change the gospel of Christ"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"want to change the Good News of Christ"</b>

"To distort" is an aorist infinitive meaning "to reverse," possibly another military term. Although morality is a significant element of the gospel, it always follows salvation. It does not precede it as the Judaizers asserted (cf. Eph. 2:8-9 & 10). Paul's gospel was Christ, then Christlikeness; their gospel was works righteousness (Mosaic Law) and then God's righteousness in Christ.

**1:8 "but even if"** This third class conditional sentence with an aorist middle subjunctive which shows a hypothetical situation (cf. 2 Cor. 11:3-4). Paul asserted that if he, or an angel from heaven, should preach a different gospel, they should be judged and separated from God.

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"he is to be accursed!"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"let him be accursed"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"let that one be accursed"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"may he be condemned to hell"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"he is to be condemned"</b>

"Curse" (*anathema*, cf. Matt. 18:7; Rom. 9:3; 1 Cor. 12:3; 16:22) may reflect the Hebrew word *herem* which was employed in the sense of dedicating something to God. *Herem* developed a negative connotation from its use in the case of Jericho being dedicated to God for destruction (cf. Joshua 6-7). God's curse is a natural result of His people breaking a covenant (cf. Deut. 27:11-26). However, Paul specifically used this term to show the seriousness of the false teachers' gospel by consigning them to God's wrath

Syntactically, Gal. 1:8 and 9 are parallel. However, the third class condition sentence of Gal. 1:8 shows potential action (i.e., hypothetical), while the first class condition sentence of Gal. 1:9 shows current,

assumed action (i.e., the preaching of the false teachers).

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: CURSE (ANATHEMA)**

**1:9 "as we have said before"** This is a perfect active indicative plural, which refers to the previous teaching and preaching of Paul's mission team.

■ **"a gospel contrary to that which you have received"** The verb "received" (*paralambanō*, aorist active indicative) is a technical term in rabbinical writings for passing on "the Oral Tradition," indicating Paul was passing on the gospel tradition (cf. Gal. 1:12; 1 Cor. 11:23; 15:3; Phil. 4:9; 1 Thess. 2:13; 4:1; 2 Thess. 3:6)), but the context is emphatic that he did not receive this tradition from other humans (cf. Gal. 1:12).

To become a Christian one must receive (cf. John 1:12) or to put it another way, believe (cf. John 3:16) the gospel. Christian conversion has three aspects, all of which are crucial (all three correspond to the three uses of *pistis* - *pistellō*, see note at Gal. 1:23-24):

1. welcome Jesus personally (a person to believe in)
2. believe the NT truths about Him (truths about that person to affirm)
3. live a life like His (a life to live like that person's)

It must be clarified that the central elements of Paul's gospel came from Jesus directly (cf. Gal. 1:12). Paul contemplated and developed them for several years before he went to visit the Mother Church and its leaders in Jerusalem (cf. Gal. 1:18; 2:1). However, Paul also learned much about the words and actions of Jesus from those who knew Him in the flesh:

1. those he persecuted witnessed to him
2. he saw and heard the defense of Stephen (cf. Acts 7:58)
3. Ananias witnessed to him (cf. Acts 9:10-19)
4. he visited with Peter for 15 days (cf. Gal. 1:18)

Additionally, Paul also quotes many creeds or hymns of the early Church in his writings (cf. Gal. 1:4-5; 1 Cor. 15:3-4; Eph. 5:14; Phil. 2:6-11; Col. 1:15-20; 1 Tim. 3:16); and mentions Christian traditions several times (cf. 1 Cor. 11:2; 2 Thessalonians 3:6). Paul was speaking in very specific terms and in a guarded sense because of the accusations of the false teachers.

**1:10 "For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God"** This is a development and continuation of the theme which began in Gal. 1:1. Paul's strong words to the false teachers proved that he was not trying to please men which they had apparently alleged. Possibly Paul was being criticized for his statement that he became all things to all men similar to 1 Cor. 9:19-27; Acts 21:17-26. This was misinterpreted as:

1. compromising with pagan culture
2. his preaching two gospels, one for Jews and another easier one for pagans

■ **"If"** Verse 10 is a second class conditional sentence which expresses a statement "contrary to fact." Amplified, the sentence would read: "If I were still trying to please men, which I am not, then I would not be a bond-servant of Christ, which I am." See Appendix One, VII.

■ **"I were still trying to please men"** There has been much discussion about the word "still." Does this imply that he never appealed to men or that it was a confession that as a zealous Pharisee in his earlier days he did attempt to please men (i.e., Pharisees, cf. Gal. 1:14)?

■ **"I would not be a bond-servant of Christ"** This is an allusion to Christ's teaching that one cannot serve two masters (cf. Matt. 6:24). "Bond-servant" may have been used by Paul to refer to

1. Jesus as Lord and Paul as slave
2. an honorific title of leadership from the OT used of Moses (cf. Deut. 34:5; Jos. 8:31,33), Joshua (cf. Jos. 24:29; Jdgs. 2:8), and to David (cf. 2 Sam. 7:5; title, Psalm 18)



**<sup>11</sup>For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. <sup>12</sup>For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but *I received it* through a revelation of Jesus Christ. <sup>13</sup>For you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it; <sup>14</sup>and I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions. <sup>15</sup>But when God, who had set me apart *even* from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased <sup>16</sup>to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, <sup>17</sup>nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus.**

**1:11-2:14** This is a literary unit in which Paul defends his apostleship, so as to defend his gospel.

**1:11**

**NASB** "For I would have you know, brethren"

**NKJV** "But I make known to you, brethren"

**NRSV** "For I want you to know, brothers and sisters"

**TEV** "Let me tell you, my brothers"

**NJB** "The fact is, brothers, and I want you to realize this"

The KJV translates this as "I certify to you," a technical rendering of the phrase (cf. 1 Cor. 12:3; 15:1; 2 Cor. 8:1).

**1:11-12 "the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man"** This begins a phrase which repeats the twin disclaimers of Gal. 1:1. Paul claimed that his message does not have a human origin (cf. 2 Thess. 2:13; 2 Pet. 1:20-21). He further asserted that he did not receive it from any human. The word "receive" was used of students being taught in rabbinical schools. The gospel was contrary to the teachings Paul received as a rabbinical student in Jerusalem. It was taught to him by a revelation from Jesus Christ, both on the road to Damascus and in Arabia (cf. Eph. 3:2-3). He stated this three times in verses 11-12!

The word "gospel" and the verb "was preached" are both from the compound term

1. *eu*, "good"

2. *angelion*, "news" or "message"

Paul uses them together in 1 Cor. 15:1.

**1:12 "a revelation of Jesus Christ"** This may be either subjective genitive case (emphasizing Jesus as the agent of the revelation, i.e., opposite "from men") or objective genitive case (emphasizing Jesus as the content of the revelation, cf. Gal. 1:16).

**1:13 "you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism"** It is not certain how these churches heard.

1. it was common knowledge

2. Paul shared with them

3. the false teachers had alluded to his former conduct

"Judaism" seems to refer to Pharisaism (cf. Acts 26:4-5). After the destruction of Jerusalem in a.d. 70 by the Roman general Titus, the Pharisaic party moved to the city of Jamnia. The Sadducean element was completely eliminated and Pharisaism developed into modern rabbinical Judaism. Paul mentioned something of his life as a zealous Pharisee in Phil. 3:4-6.

**SPECIAL TOPIC: PHARISEES**

NASB	"how I used to persecute beyond measure"
NKJV	"how I persecuted"
NRSV	"I was violently persecuting"
TEV	"how I persecuted without mercy"
NJB	"how much damage I did to it"

This imperfect tense verb is used in Acts 9:4, referring to his repeated activity described in Acts 8:1-3; 22:20; and 26:10 (cf. 1 Cor. 15:9; 1 Tim. 1:13). These are the same general contexts in which Paul shared his personal testimony.

For "beyond measure" (hyperbole), see Special Topic following.

### SPECIAL TOPIC: PAUL'S USE OF "HUPER" COMPOUNDS

▣ **"the church of God"** *Ekklesia* is a compound Greek word from "out of" and "to call." This was used in Koine Greek to describe any kind of assembly, such as a town assembly (cf. Acts 19:32). The Church chose this term because it was used in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, written as early as 250 b.c. for the library at Alexandria, Egypt. This Greek term translated the Hebrew term *qahal* which was used in the covenantal phrase "the assembly of Israel" (cf. Num. 20:4). The NT writers asserted that they were the "divinely called out ones" who were the People of God of their day. They saw no radical break between the OT People of God and themselves, the NT People of God. We must assert that the Church of Jesus Christ is the true heir to the OT Scriptures, not modern rabbinical Judaism.

Note that Paul mentioned the local churches in Gal. 1:2 and the universal Church in Gal. 1:13. "Church" is used in three different ways in the NT.

1. house churches (cf. Rom. 16:5)
2. local or area churches (cf. Gal. 1:2; 1 Cor. 1:2)
3. the whole body of Christ on earth (1:13; Matt. 16:18; Eph. 1:22; 3:21; 5:23-32)

▣ **"and tried to destroy it"** This verb phrase is imperfect tense, meaning repeated action in past time.

**1:14 "I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries"** This refers to Paul's fellow rabbinical students in Jerusalem. No one is more enthusiastic than a first-year theology student! The Jewish zeal for the Law was/is actually devotion and zeal without knowledge and truth (cf. Rom. 10:2ff.). Paul was trying to please his Jewish contemporaries!

▣ **"being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions"** Here is the use of the term "traditions" which was a technical term for "the Oral Tradition." The Jews believed that the Oral Tradition, like the written Old Testament, was given by God to Moses on Mt. Sinai. The Oral Tradition was meant to surround, protect, and interpret the written Old Testament. Later codified in the Babylonian and Palestinian Talmuds, it resulted in formalism and folklore instead of a vital faith relationship (cf. Isa. 29:13; Col. 2:16-23; 2 Tim. 3:1-5). See note on "traditions" at 2 Thess. 2:15.

**1:15**

NASB	"But when God"
NKJV	"But when it pleased God"
NRSV	"But when God"
TEV	"But God"
NJB	"Then God"

Many reliable ancient manuscripts, instead of having the term "God," use the Masculine pronoun "he," (cf. manuscripts P<sup>46</sup> and B). *Theos* [God] does occur in manuscripts x, A, and D. "He" was likely original and scribes later added *theos* to clarify the ambiguous pronoun. See Appendix Two.

▣ **"who had set me apart even from my mother's womb and called me through His grace"** Paul is

alluding to the call of some OT prophets, particularly Jeremiah (cf. Jer. 1:4-5, or the Servant of YHWH, Isaiah 49:1,5). He felt a divine call to the ministry (cf. Rom. 1:1). This is another way of asserting that his authority and apostleship were not from men (cf. Gal. 1:1, 11-12). The concept of being "called" by God is emphasized in Paul's personal testimony (cf. Acts 9:1-19; 13:2; 22:1-16; and 26:9-18). Some of the strongest biblical passages on election can be found in Paul's writings (cf. Romans 9 and Ephesians 1).

It is interesting that Paul's "through His grace" seems to be synonymous with "Holy Spirit." The terminology is common in Paul's writings (cf. Rom. 3:24; 1 Cor. 15:10; 2 Cor. 6:1; Eph. 2:8).

Grace reflects the unchanging character of God and the spirit makes the contact between the Holy God and sinful mankind (cf. John 6:44,65).

**1:16**

**NASB, NKJV,**

**NJB "to reveal His Son in me"**

**NRSV, TEV "to reveal his Son to me"**

"To reveal" [*apocaluptō*], translated "revelation" in verse 12 typically means "a clear manifestation or unveiling." Apparently this occurred on the Damascus road and later in Arabia (cf. Gal. 1:17).

The phrase "in me" has been much debated. Some believe it means that God revealed Jesus to Paul while others think it means that God revealed Jesus through Paul. Both are true. The *Revised English Bible* translation combines both possibilities ("to reveal His Son in and through me"). The larger context seems to fit the first option best, but in Gal. 1:16 the second option fits best.

■ **"that I might preach about Him among the Gentiles"** The phrase "in me" is paralleled by "in the Gentiles." God called Paul to call the heathen (cf. Acts 9:15; 22:15; 26:16-18; Rom. 1:5; 11:13; 15:16; Gal. 2:7,9; Eph. 3:8; 1 Tim. 2:7). We derive the English word "ethnic" from this Greek word for "Gentiles."

**NASB "I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood"**

**NKJV "I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood"**

**NRSV "I did not confer with any human being"**

**TEV "I did not go to anyone for advice"**

**NJB "I did not stop to discuss this with any human being"**

This seems to refer to Paul's private study time in Arabia (cf. Gal. 1:17). We are not sure how long he studied or how long he remained in Arabia. It was probably the Nabatean kingdom, which was very close to the city of Damascus, just to the southeast (cf. 2 Cor. 11:32). From verse 18 it seems that he could have stayed for as long as three years (but not necessarily). Paul's basic purpose for mentioning this (it is omitted in the book of Acts) was to show that he did not receive his gospel from the Apostles in Jerusalem, nor was he officially sanctioned by the Church in Jerusalem, but from God and by God (cf. Gal. 1:1,11-12).

"Flesh" has sexual connotations. See Special Topic below.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: FLESH (*sarx*)**

**1:17 "to those who were apostles before me"** Paul certainly recognized the leadership of the original Twelve, but also asserted his equality to them.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: GALATIANS 1:18-24**

**<sup>18</sup>Then three years later I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas, and stayed with him fifteen days. <sup>19</sup>But I did not see any other of the apostles except James, the Lord's brother. <sup>20</sup>(Now in what I am writing to you, I assure you before God that I am not lying.) <sup>21</sup>Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. <sup>22</sup>I was *still* unknown by sight to the churches of Judea which were in Christ; <sup>23</sup>but only, they kept hearing, "He who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith which he once tried to destroy." <sup>24</sup>And they were**

**1:18 "Then three years later I went up to Jerusalem"** Paul freely admitted that he visited Jerusalem. The emphasis of this sentence is that Paul had no contact with Jerusalem or the Twelve until three years after his conversion. The book of Acts records five visits by Paul to Jerusalem, but Galatians only records two. It is very difficult to know which of the visits recorded in Acts are similarly recorded in the book of Galatians or if there were additional visits. Most people believe that this visit mentioned in Gal. 1:18 is equal to the visit recorded in Acts 9:26-30. See Introduction, Date and Recipients, C.

■ **"to become acquainted with"** This is a Greek phrase from which we get our English word "history." Paul went (1) to get to know Peter or (2) for the specific purpose of learning from Peter the teachings of Jesus. Yet Paul did not stay with Peter the entire time (cf. Acts 9:28-30). He was preaching in the area and probably just spent the evenings and the Sabbath with him. This verse also emphasizes that he only stayed for fifteen days, which is much too short a stay for extended instruction. However, from the Pauline terminology and theology so obvious in 1 and 2 Pet., Peter may have learned more from Paul than Paul did from Peter.

**NASB, NRSV,**  
**NJB** "Cephas"  
**NKJV, TEV** "Peter"

Cephas (Aramaic for "rock") is found in MSS P<sup>46</sup>, P<sup>51</sup>,  $\kappa^*$ , A, B. Peter (Greek for boulder) is found in MSS  $\kappa^c$ , D, F, G, K, L, and P. Paul uses "Cephas" in Gal. 2:9,11,14.

**1:19 "But I did not see any other of the apostles except James, the Lord's brother"** This Greek sentence is very ambiguous. The context implies that James was an apostle, but this meaning is not certain. It (apostles) could refer to Peter in Gal. 1:18. James seems to be an "apostle" in the same sense as Barnabas (cf. Acts 14:4, 14); Andronicus and Junias (cf. Rom. 16:7); Apollos (cf. 1 Cor. 4:9); Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:25); or Silvanus and Timothy (cf. 1 Thess. 2:6; Acts; 18:5). This James was identified as the Lord's half-brother (cf. Matt. 13:55; Mark 6:3), in order to differentiate him from James the Apostle, part of the Inner Circle, who was killed very early (cf. Acts 12). For several generations the church in Jerusalem had a physical relative of Jesus as their leader. Several biblical passages (cf. Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18; 1 Cor. 15:7; and James 1:1) indicate that James was a very important leader in the Church in Jerusalem. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: JAMES, THE HALF-BROTHER OF JESUS](#) at Gal. 2:9.

For "apostles" see Special Topic: Send at Gal. 1:1.

**1:20 "I assure you before God that I am not lying"** Paul knew the seriousness of oath-taking and still felt that it was important to assert his truthfulness by oath (cf. Rom. 9:1; 1 Tim. 2:7). Paul also employed God as a witness to his truthfulness elsewhere (cf. Rom. 1:9; 2 Cor. 1:23; 4:2; 11:31; 1 Thess. 2:5,10). Paul was certain of the divine origin and content of his message.

**1:21 "Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia"** Syria and Cilicia were Roman provinces but the smaller province of Cilicia was not totally independent (cf. Acts 15:41). This may be the reason it was mentioned second, even though in chronology it is first, Paul's work was in Cilicia first, for it was the area in which Tarsus, his hometown, was located. This seems to be recorded in Acts 9:30. Paul's time in Syria is recorded in conjunction with Antioch which was the capital of the Roman province of Syria. This period is recorded in Acts 11:25-26.

**1:22 "but I was still unknown by sight to the churches of Judea"** The word "unknown" in Greek is reflected in the English cognate "agnostic." "Knowledge" [*gnosis*] in this case has the alpha privative which negates it. This is somewhat surprising because Paul was a famous persecutor of the Church, however, not all of the churches knew who he was, and he did not seek recognition from the churches of Palestine for his ministry.

■ **""churches"** See Special Topic at Gal. 1:2.

**1:23-24** Although Paul did not seek affirmation from these early Jewish Christian churches, they gave it to him (cf. Gal. 1:24) when they heard about his ministry among the Gentiles. This is another point in his argument against the Jewish "Christian" false teachers who said that he did not have proper authority.

■ **"the faith"** This term may have several distinct connotations. For the most part the presence or absence of the article does not help clarify which meaning.

1. OT background means "faithfulness" or "trustworthiness," therefore, it is used of our faithing the faithfulness of God or our trusting in the trustworthiness of God
2. in our accepting or receiving God's free offer of forgiveness in Christ
3. in the sense of faithful, godly living
4. in the collective sense of the Christian faith or truth about Jesus (cf. Acts 6:7 and Jude 1:3 & 20)

In several passages, such as 2 Thess. 3:2, it is difficult to know which sense Paul had in mind. Here, option #4 is best.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. What is unique about Paul's opening remarks to the churches of Galatia?
2. List the three phrases which describe the person and work of Christ found in verse 4.
3. Why was Paul so appalled at the action of the Galatian churches?
4. Who were the false teachers and what was the basic content of their message?
5. What does the term "accursed" mean?
6. How does Paul prove that he is not a man-pleaser?
7. Why does Paul repeat the emphasis he made in Gal. 1:1 again in verses 11 and 12?
8. How were the false teachers using Paul's previous life against him?
9. Why did Paul go to Arabia?
10. Explain some of the possible charges that the false teachers were making against Paul and how he answered them in Gal. 1:10ff.

# GALATIANS 2

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Paul Accepted by Other Apostles	Defending the Gospel	Paul's Apostleship Recognized in Jerusalem	Paul and the Other Apostles	The Meeting at Jerusalem
2:1-10	2:1-10	2:1-10	2:1-5 2:6-10	2:1-10
Paul Rebukes Peter at Antioch	No Return To the Law	Paul Rebukes Peter's Inconsistency at Antioch	Paul Argues with Peter	Peter and Paul at Antioch
2:11-21	2:11-21	2:11-14  A Statement of Principle  2:15-21	2:11-14  2:15-16  2:17-21	2:11-13 2:14  The Gospel as Preached by Paul  2:15-21

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

#### CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This section continues the literary unit (Paul defends his Apostleship) which began in Gal. 1:11 and extends through Gal. 2:14.
- B. In Gal. 2:15-21 a transition passage introduces the content of Paul's gospel, further elaborated in chapters 3 & 4. This is Paul's autobiographical defense of his apostleship and gospel as based on the revelatory will of God and not on any human tradition, even those traditions derived from the Twelve Apostles and the Jerusalem Church.
- C. This passage is notoriously difficult to interpret for two reasons:
  1. The first section, Gal. 2:1-10, contains grammatical idiosyncrasies. Paul began a subject in



Gal. 2:1 and 2, but in Gal. 2:3-10 he broke into this subject with a series of three parentheses and broken sentences. The subject of Gal. 2:1-2 resumes again in verses 6-10. Although this is difficult to graph grammatically, the overall meaning is clear.

By comparing the unusual punctuation of Gal. 2:1-10 in modern translations (i.e., parentheses, dashes, three dots), one can see the problems in trying to follow Paul's thought.

2. The next section, Gal. 2:11-21, is also difficult to interpret because the conclusion of Paul and Peter's discussion is uncertain. The NRSV, TEV, and JB translations restrict the quote to Gal. 2:14 while, the NASB ends the quote at Gal. 2:21. I think Paul concluded his address to Peter at Gal. 2:14 and a theological summary relating to believing Jews and Judaizers' understanding of the place of the Law begins in Gal. 2:15 and goes through Gal. 2:21.

Paul answers a series of questions, charges, or misunderstandings about his gospel of God's free grace in verses Gal. 2:15-21. The questions are not from Peter but from the Judaizers and their Pharisee backers. His response to these questions will be expanded in chapters 3 and 4.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: GALATIANS 2:1-10

**<sup>1</sup>Then after an interval of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also. <sup>2</sup>It was because of a revelation that I went up; and I submitted to them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but I did so in private to those who were of reputation, for fear that I might be running, or had run, in vain. <sup>3</sup>But not even Titus, who was with me, though he was Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. <sup>4</sup>But it was because of the false brethren secretly brought in, who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us into bondage. <sup>5</sup>But we did not yield in subjection to them for even an hour, so that the truth of the gospel would remain with you. <sup>6</sup>But from those who were of high reputation (what they were makes no difference; God shows no partiality)—well, those who were of reputation contributed nothing to me. <sup>7</sup>But on the contrary, seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been to the circumcised <sup>8</sup>(for He who effectually worked for Peter in his apostleship to the circumcised effectually worked for me also to the Gentiles), <sup>9</sup>and recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, so that we might go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. <sup>10</sup>They only asked us to remember the poor—the very thing I also was eager to do.**

**2:1 "after an interval of fourteen years"** The fourteen year period has been the subject of much scholarly disagreement. This period of time may either relate to

1. Paul's conversion (cf. Gal. 1:15-16)
2. Paul's time in Arabia (cf. Gal. 1:17)
3. his first visit to Jerusalem (cf. Gal. 1:18)

The time element is only significant to show how delayed and sporadic were his visits and contacts with the Apostles in Jerusalem.

■ **"I went up again to Jerusalem"** "Again" implies the second or later visit. The exact time is uncertain, for in Acts five different visits by Paul to Jerusalem are recorded. The last two are too late to refer to this context, but which of the other three he meant is uncertain. I personally believe Galatians 2 relates to Acts 15 because in both cases Barnabas was present, the subject matter is the same, and Peter and James are both named. Beyond this author's speculation, other scholars such as the preeminent F. F. Bruce in the *New International Commentary Series* and Richard Longenecker in the *Word Biblical Commentary*

*Series* believe that Galatians 2 relates to the famine visit recorded in Acts 11:30.

The phrase "went up to Jerusalem" is theological in nature. A converse reference occurs in Acts 11:27 when they went "down to Antioch." Jerusalem, because it is the holy city, is considered to be "up" from any direction.

■ **"with Barnabas "** Acts 4:36 provides the information that Barnabas was a Levite from Cyprus whose name was Joseph. The disciples nicknamed him Barnabas meaning "son of encouragement." He was the first one to accept Paul's conversion (cf. Acts 11:24). He was obviously a leader in the Jerusalem Church (cf. Acts 11:22) as was Silas (cf. Acts 15:22). He went to Tarsus and searched for Saul to get him to help with the work in Antioch (cf. Acts 11:19-27). He was the missionary companion of Paul on the first missionary journey (cf. 1 Cor. 9:6). See Special Topic at Gal. 2:13.

■ **"taking Titus along also"** Titus was one of Paul's faithful helpers (cf. 2 Cor. 8:23). He used him in especially difficult places such as Corinth and Crete. He was a full Gentile, and not half-Gentile as Timothy. The Jerusalem church did not demand that Paul circumcise him (cf. Acts 15). Surprisingly, Titus is never mentioned by name in Acts. Sir William Ramsay and A. T. Robertson speculate that Titus was Luke's brother, explaining the absence of any specific mention of him (an act of family humility), but this is unsubstantiated. Martin Luther speculated that Paul took Titus with him to Jerusalem as a test case. Others say that he took Titus along, but only later did Paul realize the significance of the Jerusalem Church's failure to demand that Titus be circumcised because he was a pure Greek (cf. Gal. 2:3).

**2:2 "It was because of a revelation that I went up"** If one assumes that Acts 15 is the setting, Acts 15:2 produces a discrepancy. However, it has been supposed that the revelation came from one of the five prophets at Antioch who conveyed it to the church. Then the church at Antioch passed on to Paul the need for a visit to Jerusalem.

■ **"and I submitted to them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles"** This is very significant in its relationship to Gal. 2:3-5. Why did Paul lay his gospel before the Apostles? (1) Did he want them to agree with him and affirm his gospel? or (2) Was he reacting to the presence of false teachers (cf. Gal. 2:4)? The latter possibility best fits the parenthetical aside of Gal. 2:4 and 5. This reporting session seems to parallel Acts 15:12.

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"but I did so in private to those who were of reputation"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"but privately to those who were of reputation"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"(though only in a private meeting with the acknowledged leaders)"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"In a private meeting with the leaders"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"and privately I laid before the leading men"</b>

Reading Acts 15 to find a private meeting first poses a difficulty. However, Acts 15:2b and Gal. 2:6 could refer to a meeting of the top leadership. Paul may have met with the leadership first for the purpose of getting a better hearing instead of meeting with the whole congregation which may have been previously infiltrated with Judaizers (those who demanded that one had to be a Jew before one could be saved).

Some scholars have suggested in recent years, probably due to the overemphasis of the Tübingen theologians from Germany, that tension existed between Paul and the Apostles in Jerusalem. Some assert that Paul's three unusual phrases referring to the Jerusalem leaders found in Gal. 2:2, 6 (twice), and 9 are somewhat disparaging. These phrases may be viewed pejoratively with three points in mind.

1. They underscore the false teachers' overemphasis of the original Twelve Apostles in their attempt to depreciate Paul, not that Paul had any personal tension with the Twelve.
2. Possibly Paul was disappointed with some of the Apostles, where they did not really grasp the worldwide mission of the Church, or in Peter's shameful withdrawal from the fellowship table with Gentiles because of the arrivals of some from Jerusalem in Gal. 2:11-14.
3. These phrases may refer not to the Apostles, but to other church leaders who claimed authority or they refer to only some of the Apostles.



<b>NASB, TEV</b>	<b>"for fear that I might be running, or had run, in vain"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"lest by any means I might run, or had run, in vain"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"in order to make sure that I was not running, or had not run, in vain"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"for fear the course I was adopting or had already adopted would not be allowed"</b>

This obviously does not refer to Paul seeking theological affirmation from the Jerusalem leaders for this would go against the entire context. But here, the practicality of the mission effort among the Gentiles was at stake (cf. 2 Cor. 7:14; 9:9) and Paul hoped and prayed for a consensus which he would subsequently receive. Paul expressed similar fears elsewhere (cf. Phil. 2:16; 1 Thess. 3:5).

### **2:3 "But not even Titus who was with me, though he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised"**

- Even with its straightforward meaning, questions arise regarding:
1. a manuscript variation in verse 5 where the word "not" is omitted in the western family of manuscripts, particularly manuscript D
  2. the ambiguity of verse 4 which has caused some to say that Paul did circumcise Titus, not out of compulsion but to show his freedom

However, this undermines the entire structure of Paul's argument. Paul was already under attack, apparently for circumcising Timothy (cf. Acts 16:3), who was half-Jewish, but he would not, for a minute, yield to the circumcision of Titus. In reality the issue was not really circumcision (cf. Rom. 2:28-29 and Gal. 6:15), but how a human becomes right with God. In Galatians Paul contrasted the works-oriented way of the Jews and Judaizers with the grace-oriented way of the gospel of Jesus.

### **2:4**

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"But <i>it was</i> because of the false brethren. . .secretly brought in"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"but <i>this occurred</i> because of false brethren secretly brought in"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"But because of false believers secretly brought in"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"had pretended to be brothers and joined the group"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"The question came up only because some who do not really belong to the brotherhood have furtively crept in"</b>

These false brothers are mentioned in other places (cf. Acts 15:1,5; 2 Cor. 11:13,26 and 1 Thess. 2:14-16). The verbal form is passive, implying that they were smuggled in by someone, possibly

1. unbelieving Jews
2. a sect of believing Jews called Judaizers
3. Satan himself

The term "false brothers" (*pseudadelphous*) is similar to the compound used in 2 Pet. 2:1 to designate "false leadership" (*pseudoprophētai* and *pseudodidaskaloi*). The term's usage in Koine Greek commonly designated traitors within a city who allowed the enemy to sneak into the city and survey its defenses.

Another problem in interpretation concerns the locale of the treachery. Did the false brothers sneak into:

1. the Church at Jerusalem
2. the Jerusalem Council
3. the Church at Antioch

On these minutiae of interpretation, certainty is impossible and, therefore, dogmatism is unwarranted.

▣ **"to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us into bondage"** Paul's emphasis on freedom in Christ was paramount (cf. Acts 13:39; Gal. 5:1,13). In this context, freedom from Jewish rules and regulations is meant, a concept expanded in the following chapters. It is important to note that we are truly free in Christ, but our freedom is not intended as a license for sin (cf. Rom. 14:1-15:13 and 1 Corinthians 8-10). This dialectical tension between freedom and responsibility, inherent in the gospel, is illustrated in Paul's emphases on "responsibility" to the church at Corinth but on "freedom" to the churches of Galatia. Both are true! They must be held in balance!

**2:5 "But we did not yield in subjection to them for even an hour"** "We" must refer to Paul and Barnabas. They were agreed in their opposition to the requirement that all Gentiles be circumcised (and become responsible to the Mosaic Law) after their conversion.

"Not" is present in manuscripts P<sup>46</sup>,  $\kappa$ , B, C, D<sup>1</sup>, F, and G (UBS<sup>4</sup> gives its inclusion an "A" rating). It is missing only in the corrector of the sixth century manuscript D2 and the Old Latin Version. The reason that Paul emphasizes submission to each other in Eph. 5:21 and yet staunchly stands against submission in this case is because he believes that these "false brothers" are not really Christians. Paul asserts his belief that those who base their right standing with God upon their own effort are not true Christians (cf. Gal. 1:8,9; 5:2-12; Rom. 10:2-5; and 1 Thess. 2:14-16). The crucial question, then, is "on whom did they base their trust: themselves or Christ?"

■ **"so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you"** No small matter, this argument was the basis for continuing the Gentile mission. Truth is such an important NT word. See Special Topic following.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: "TRUTH" IN PAUL'S WRITINGS**

**2:6**

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"But from those who were of high reputation"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"But from those who seemed to be something—whatever they were"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"And from those who were supposed to be acknowledged leaders"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"But those who seemed to be the leaders"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"these people who are acknowledged leaders"</b>

This phrase can either refer to: (1) some of the Twelve; or (2) certain leaders in the Jerusalem church. Paul's point was that their opposition does not affect his God-given call, assignment and gospel. However, F. F. Bruce quotes Josephus in *War of the Jews*, 3.453; 4.141,159 to illustrate that "seemed" is not always used derogatorily.

■ **"God shows no partiality"** This OT judicial metaphor (cf. Deut. 10:17; 2 Chr. 19:7) originally meant "to lift the face" (cf. Lev. 19:15; Deut. 1:17; 16:19; Acts 10:34). Paul was alluding to the practice of judges making decisions based on favoritism or special standing of the person accused. There is no partiality in God (cf. Rom. 2:11; Eph. 6:9; Col. 3:25; 1 Pet. 1:17).

<b>NASB, NRSV</b>	<b>"contributed nothing to me"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"added nothing to me"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"made no new suggestions to me"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"had nothing to add to the Good News as I preach it"</b>

Here is Paul's central affirmation of independence ("to me" is fronted for emphasis), both for himself and for his gospel, from the authority of the Twelve or the Mother Church in Jerusalem. This is not a debasement of the Twelve or the leaders of the Jerusalem Church but an emphasis on the divine nature of Paul's call and revelation.

**2:7 "But on the contrary, seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised"**

A major Pauline point, he continued to build on the context begun in Gal. 1:10. When the Jerusalem leaders saw and heard Paul, they affirmed that God had called and chosen him.

■ **"I had been entrusted"** is a perfect passive verbal form, emphasizing Paul's continuing role as a steward of the gospel by means of God's call and equipping through the Spirit (cf. 1 Cor. 9:17; 1 Thess. 2:4; 1 Tim. 1:11; Titus 1:3). Other passages further support Paul's call to be an Apostle to the Gentiles (cf. Acts 9:15; Rom. 1:5; 11:13; 15:16; Gal. 1:16; Eph. 3:8; 1 Tim. 2:7; 2 Tim. 4:17).

■ **"just as Peter"** The use of the term "Peter" in Gal. 2:7 and 8 is somewhat unusual in Galatians. In all of the other citations by Paul in Galatians where Peter is named, he is called "Cephas," Aramaic for "rock,"

(cf. Gal. 1:18; 2:9,11,14). However, "Peter" does seem to be original here, and the two names are synonymous.

**2:8** Another parenthesis inside the complex grammatical structure of verses 1-10, it may refer to either geography or an ethnic community (cf. Gal. 2:9d). Both Peter and Paul had divine assignments!

**2:9 "and recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James, Cephas, and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship"** These "pillars" were the three leaders of the Christian church in Jerusalem. This title was used in connection with "the Apostles" by Clement of Rome (writing in a.d. 95) and Ignatius. It is also used positively in Rev. 3:12. Possibly the phrase originated in the rabbis' use of the term to describe Abraham and Moses. Paul again supported his claim that not only was he independent, but that at least some of the Apostles (Peter and John, part of Jesus' inner circle) recognized his God-given authority and affirmed him with the right hand of fellowship. This "James" is not one of the Twelve, but Jesus' half-brother and the leader of the Jerusalem church (cf. Acts 15).

The phrase, "who were reputed to be pillars," is not a negative assessment, but probably a reference to the false teachers' accusation against Paul. In this context Paul does not want to depreciate these three leaders, but accentuate the fact that they publically acknowledged his and Barnabas' ministry!

▣ **"the grace that had been given to me"** the verbal is an aorist passive participle. See note at Gal. 1:15 about the relationship between "grace" and "Spirit."

▣ **"James"** See Special Topic below.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: JAMES, THE HALF-BROTHER OF JESUS**

▣ **"fellowship"** See Special Topic following.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: KOINŌNIA**

▣ **"so that we might go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised"** This phrase refers primarily to geography, not race. There were Gentiles in Palestine and Jews outside Palestine. Many of Paul's churches were a mixture of both because when he came to a new city, he went first to the synagogue to preach.

**2:10 "They only asked us to remember the poor"** Paul was first introduced to the concept of a special offering for the poor in Jerusalem by the church at Antioch (cf. Acts 11:27-30). He developed this into a project for Gentile churches (cf. Acts 24:17; 1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 8,9; and Rom. 15:25-27). If Galatians 2 parallels Acts 15, explaining why the other fellowship stipulations of Acts 15:23-29 are not mentioned becomes more difficult. Therefore many have seen this verse as an argument for making this visit contemporary with Acts 11:27-30.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: GALATIANS 2:11-21**

**<sup>11</sup>But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. <sup>12</sup>For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision. <sup>13</sup>The rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy. <sup>14</sup>But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all, "If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews? <sup>15</sup>We are Jews by nature and not sinners from among the Gentiles; <sup>16</sup>nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in**

Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified. <sup>17</sup>But if, while seeking to be justified in Christ, we ourselves have also been found sinners, is Christ then a minister of sin? May it never be! <sup>18</sup>For if I rebuild what I have *once* destroyed, I prove myself to be a transgressor. <sup>19</sup>For through the Law I died to the Law, so that I might live to God. <sup>20</sup>I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. <sup>21</sup>I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness *comes* through the Law, then Christ died needlessly."

**2:11 "But when Cephas came to Antioch"** The time of Peter's visit to Antioch is unknown. Some scholars place the visit immediately after the Jerusalem Council; some place it before. Apparently the mention of this visit is out of chronological order. It could have followed the Council meeting of Acts 15 highlighting the fact that all of the practical problems were not completely solved. However, it is difficult to imagine Peter acting like this after affirming Paul and his gospel at the Council (cf. Gal. 2:9; Acts 15:6-11), this then becomes another argument for those who think it refers to the Acts 11 vision.

▣ **"I opposed him to his face"** Paul uses this example to assert his independence from and equality with the Jerusalem Apostles. This is a strong idiom (cf. Eph. 6:13 and James 4:7).

NASB	"because he stood condemned"
NKJV	"because he was to be blamed"
NRSV	"because he stood self-condemned"
TEV	"because he was clearly wrong"
NJB	"since he was manifestly in the wrong"

This periphrastic pluperfect passive verb speaks of something that had already happened, that had become a settled position and had been performed by the outside agent. This construction does not imply that Peter continued in this attitude. Also notice that the leader of the Apostolic group made a mistake. The Apostles were inspired to write trustworthy and eternal Scripture, but this never implied that they did not sin or did not make poor choices in other areas!

**2:12 "For prior to the coming of certain men from James"** The "certain men" were probably members of the Church in Jerusalem, but whether they had official authority or not is uncertain. Clearly they were not representatives sent from James, for James agreed completely with Paul's position concerning Gentile Christianity (cf. Acts 15:13-21). Perhaps they were a fact-finding committee that had exceeded their authority. They were possibly there to check on the implementations of the Council's stipulations (cf. Acts 15:20-21). They caught Peter, a believing Jew, in table fellowship with Gentile believers in direct violation of the oral law (i.e., Talmud). Peter had struggled with this very issue earlier (cf. Acts 11:1-18). This was not a minor issue even during Jesus' life (cf. Matt. 9:11; 11:19; Luke 19:1-10; 15:2; Acts 15:28-29).

▣ **"he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision"** Three imperfect tense verbs occur in Gal. 2:12. The first states that Peter ate regularly with the Gentile believers. The second and third stress that when the delegation from the Jerusalem Church arrived Peter began to reduce his social contact with the Gentile believers. This was not over the single issue of circumcision but rather the general relationship of the Mosaic Law to the new Gentile believers.

**2:13 "The rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy"** The deadly tentacles of the Judaizers' corrupting influence affected even the most faithful. Paul was clearly disappointed by the actions of Barnabas. Barnabas had preached to Gentiles and stood up for the free gospel in Acts 15. The problem here was not the freedom of Gentile

believers from the requirements of the Mosaic Law, but rather the implications of this freedom for the Jewish believers. Were Peter and Barnabas also free to reject the oral tradition which interpreted the Mosaic Law? See Special Topic: Paul's View of the Mosaic Law at Gal. 3:19.

## [SPECIAL TOPIC: BARNABAS](#)

**2:14**

**NASB, NKJV** "straightforward"

**NRSV** "not acting consistently"

**TEV** "not walking a straight path"

This is literally "that they walked not straight." This has two metaphors.

1. "walked" means lifestyle
2. "straight" is a play on walking the clear path of righteousness (i.e., straight measuring rod, see Special Topic: Righteousness at Gal. 2:21)

■ **"the truth of the gospel"** See Special Topic: "Truth" in Paul's Writings at Gal. 2:5.

■ **"I said to Cephas in the presence of all"** Usually church problems need to be dealt with privately, but the actions of Peter hit at the heart of the gospel. The conflict had affected the entire church at Antioch and had to be addressed publicly and decisively in order to resolve the church's disunity (cf. 1 Tim. 5:20).

■ **"If you, being a Jew"** This first class conditional sentence (assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes) is the beginning of Paul's discussion with Peter. Gal. 2:15-21 is probably a theological summary and not necessarily Paul's exact words to Peter. Paul's public confrontation of Peter over his hypocrisy and inconsistency further proved Paul's independence.

■ **"to live like Jews"** Paul turns the noun "Jews" into an infinitive (present active), found only here in the NT.

**2:15-21** See note at the beginning of the chapter (i.e., Contextual Insights, C.). It seems to me that Paul's address to Peter may stop at Gal. 2:14 because Gal. 2:15-21 address a wider audience (note paragraphing of NRSV, TEV, NJB). The problem is that there is no apparent textual marker for the transition. It is possible that Gal. 2:15-21 are addressed to the Galatian Christians. If so, they form a summary statement of the truths of the gospel related to the claims of the Judaizers, not just the inappropriate actions of Peter and Barnabas (and other Jewish Christians who were present).

The interpretive question is, "Who does the 'we' of Gal. 2:15,16,17 refer to":

1. Paul, Peter, and other believing Jews
2. Paul and the Galatian believers (generalizing the theological principle of justification by faith, cf. Gal. 2:16; Rom. 2:28-29)

**2:15 "We are Jews by nature"** Obviously, the Jews had some spiritual advantages (cf. Rom. 3:1,2; 9:4,5). But their advantages did not relate to salvation but to revelation and fellowship with God through the Old Covenant as the People of God. Thus, the heart of Paul's gospel to the Gentiles was the equality of believing Jews and Gentiles before God (cf. Gal. 3:28; 1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 2:11-3:13; Col. 3:11).

■ **"and not sinners from among the Gentiles"** Paul was apparently using a derogatory phrase which was common in rabbinical Judaism and was possibly used by the false teachers. Gentiles were sinners by virtue of their being outside the OT covenant people (cf. Eph. 2:11-12).

**2:16 "that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus"** This verse contains a threefold emphasis concerning the doctrine that justification by grace through faith alone is for every human (cf. Eph. 2:8-9), beginning with "a man," then to "we" and concluding with "no flesh."

This threefold repetition is overwhelming in its impact. The truth of justification by faith for all mankind (Jews and Gentiles) is the essence of Paul's definitive theological presentation in Romans 1-8, summarized in Rom. 3:21-31.

"Justified" (as well as "righteous") denoted the OT concept of a measuring reed (see Special Topic at Gal. 2:21). YHWH used this metaphor for His own character and moral standards. God is the standard of spiritual measurement (cf. Matt. 5:48). In the NT God gives us His own righteousness through the death of Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 5:21), received by repentance and faith on a person's part (cf. Mark 1:15 and Acts 3:16,19; 20:21).

Justification by grace through faith—presented in Gal. 2:16 and 17 as our position in Christ—is based entirely on God's initiating love, Christ's finished work, and the wooing of the Spirit. However, the emphasis on our Christlike living is fully stated in verse 21 where our position must result in living a Christlike life (i.e., Special Topic: Sanctification at 1 Thess. 4:3, cf. Rom. 8:29; Gal. 4:19; Eph. 1:4; 2:10; 1 John 1:7). Paul did not deny that good works were significant. He just denied that they were the grounds of our acceptance. Ephesians 2:8-10 shows Paul's gospel clearly—God's initiating grace, through mankind's faith response, unto good works. Even Gal. 2:20, which seems to emphasize our sanctification—but in the context of the paragraph, proves the validity and pervasiveness of the doctrine of the imputed righteousness of Jesus, totally apart from human merit or lifestyle or ethnic origin.

Paul emphasizes the requirement of justification is not

1. "by works of the Law," Gal. 2:16a
2. "and not by the works of the Law," Gal. 2:16b
3. since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified," Gal. 2:16c

Then Paul gives the only way for sinful mankind to be justified.

1. "through faith in Christ Jesus" (lit. "through [*dia*] faith of Christ Jesus"), Gal. 2:16a
2. "we have believed in Christ Jesus" (lit. "in [*eis*] Christ Jesus we believed" [aorist active indicative]), Gal. 2:16b
3. "by faith in Christ" (lit. "by [*ek*] faith of Christ"), Gal. 2:16c

This threefold repetition is for clarity and emphasis! The only problem comes in how to understand and translate the genitives "of Christ Jesus," Gal. 2:16a and "of Christ," Gal. 2:16c. Most translations take the phrase as an objective genitive, "faith in Christ," but it can be a subjective genitive (cf. NET Bible), reflecting an OT idiom of "Christ's faithfulness" to the Father's will. This same grammatical question affects the understanding of Rom. 3:22,26; Gal. 2:20; 3:22; Eph. 3:12; Phil. 3:9. Whichever was Paul's intent, they both show that justification is not found in human actions, merit, or obedience, but in Jesus Christ's actions and obedience. Jesus is our only hope!

**NASB, NKJV** "even we have believed in Christ Jesus"  
**NRSV** "And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus"  
**TEV** "We, too, have believed in Christ Jesus"  
**NJB** "we had to become believers in Christ Jesus"

The Greek terms *pistis* (noun) and *pisteuō* (verb) may be translated in English as "trust," "believe," or "faith." This term conveys two distinct aspects of our relationship with God.

1. we put our trust in the trustworthiness of God's promises and Jesus' finished work
2. we believe the message about God, mankind, sin, Christ, salvation, etc. (i.e., Scripture)

Hence, it can refer to the message of the gospel or our trust in the person of the gospel. The gospel is a person (Jesus Christ) to welcome, a message about that person to believe, and a life like that person to live. See Special Topic: Believe at Gal. 3:6 and 1 Thess. 5:9.

▣ **"the Law" (twice)** The NASB, NKJV, NRSV, TEV, and JB translations all have the definite article twice. The definite article does not appear in the Greek text, but it is assumed because of Paul's continuing use of this phrase for the Mosaic Law. Although he had this primarily in mind, any other human effort (societal norm) serving as a supposed basis for our right standing with God could be implied here.

■ **"no flesh"** This expression means "no human being." See Special Topic: Flesh (*sarx*) at Gal. 1:16.

**2:17 "if"** "If" introduces a first class conditional sentence, assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes. Paul and his companions (like all humans) are assumed to be sinners (cf. Rom. 3:9-18,19,23; 11:32; Gal. 3:22).

■ **"we ourselves have also been found sinners"** This phrase proves difficult to interpret. Several possible theories have been advanced.

1. most commentators relate it to Rom. 3:23 and say "We, like the heathen, are all in need of God's righteousness because we all have sinned"
2. some relate this phrase to the antinomian question of Romans 6-8, that if one is saved apart from human effort, why does God judge us in relation to our sin
3. this phrase may set the stage for Paul's discussion of the Law in chap. 3, where to break it once, in any area, removes the possibility of being right with God through keeping the Law. The believing Jews, Peter, Paul, and Barnabas had broken the Law by eating forbidden food. This view would relate Gal. 2:17 to the immediate context denying an untrue conclusion which has been based on a valid premise
4. Paul was referring to Jews and Gentiles being one in Christ

If this is not God's will, this unity would make the Jewish believers sinners and Christ a party to their sin (cf. Eph. 2:11-3:6).

**NASB** "is Christ then a minister of sin? May it never be"

**NRSV** "is Christ then a servant of sin"

**NKJV** "is Christ therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not"

**TEV** "does this mean that Christ has served the interest of sin? By no means"

**NJB** "it would follow that Christ had induced us to sin, which would be absurd"

Paul's argument continued, though difficult to follow. That he was responding to (1) Peter's actions or (2) the charges and/or the teachings of the false teachers is obvious, but the exact issue to which this relates remains uncertain.

Paul's other usages of the phrase "may it never be" or "God forbid" are important in interpreting this passage (cf. Gal. 3:21; Rom. 6:2). Usually Paul used this rare optative structure to deny an untrue conclusion based on a valid premise.

**2:18 "For if I rebuild what I have *once* destroyed, I prove myself to be a transgressor"** This is a first class conditional sentence, which is assumed true from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes. Scholars are unsure of Paul's exact reference here. Was it his preaching of the gospel or his previous life in Judaism? This same ambiguity is found in Romans 7. "Rebuild" and "destroy" may be rabbinical terms similar to "bind" and "loose" of Matt. 16:19.

**2:19 "For through the Law I died to the Law"** This significant statement is not so much mystical in its focus as it is legal. Somehow when Jesus died on our behalf, we died with Him (cf. Gal. 2:20; Rom. 6:6-7; 2 Cor. 5:14-15). Therefore, our mandatory relationship to the Law, as far as salvation is concerned, was broken. We are able to come to Christ freely. This is the focus in Gal. 2:20 and 21, similar to Paul's developed argument in Rom. 6:1-7:6.

■ **"so that I may live to God"** Again, the twin theological aspects of our position in Christ and our mandated lifestyle for Christ are asserted. This paradoxical truth can be stated in several ways.

1. the indicative (statement of our position) and the imperative (demand to live out our position)
2. objective (the truth of the gospel) and subjective (living the gospel)
3. "we have won" (we are accepted by God in Christ) but now "we must run" (we must live for Christ out of gratitude)

This is the dual nature of the gospel—salvation is absolutely free, but it costs everything that we are and



have! It must be reiterated that the free gift comes before the call to Christlikeness. We died to sin that we might serve God (cf. Rom. 6:10)!

**2:20 "I have been crucified with Christ"** In the Greek sentence, "with Christ" is placed first for emphasis (in the UBS<sup>4</sup> Greek text it occurs in Gal. 2:19). The verb (a perfect passive indicative) implies that something happened in the past with abiding results and was accomplished by an outside agent. It is the focus of Rom. 6:1-11 and 7:1-6.

Paul uses the term "crucified" in Gal. 5:24 and 6:14, which relates to the believer's relationship with this fallen world system. However, the emphasis here seems to be the believer's connection to the Law (cf. Gal. 3:13). It is important to remember that once we have died with Christ, we are alive to God (cf. Gal. 2:19; Rom. 6:10). This concept is emphasized over and over again as

1. our responsibility to walk as He walked (cf. 1 John 1:7)

2. that we ought to walk worthy of the calling wherewith we have been called (cf. Eph. 4:1,17; 5:2)

Once we know Christ in free forgiveness it is important that we live a life of responsible servanthood (cf. Col. 2:12-14, 20; 3:1-4; and 2 Cor. 5:14-15).

■ **"but Christ lives in me"** Jesus is often said to indwell believers (cf. Matt. 28:20; John 14:23 [Jesus and the Father]; Rom. 8:10; Col.1:27). This is often associated with the ministry of the Holy Spirit (cf. Rom. 8:9,11; 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19; 2 Tim. 1:14). The work of the Spirit is to magnify and reproduce the Son in believers (cf. John 16:7-15; Rom. 8:28-29; Gal. 4:19).

■ **"and the life I now live in the flesh"** See Special Topic: Flesh (*sarx*) at Gal. 1:16.

■ **"I live by faith"** The Greek terms *pistis* (noun) and *pisteuō* (verb) can be translated "trust," "believe," or "faith," primarily emphasizing our trust in God's trustworthiness or our faith in God's faithfulness. See Special Topic at Gal. 3:6. This faith is our initial response to God's promises, followed by a continuing walk in those promises. "Faith" is used in three senses in the NT.

1. personal trust

2. trustworthy living

3. a reference to the body of Christian doctrine, such as in Acts 6:7; 13:8; 14:22; Gal. 1:23; Jude 1:3 and 20

This may be an allusion to Habakkuk 2:4 (cf. Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38).

■ **"the Son of God"** Some very ancient MSS (i.e., P<sup>46</sup>, B, D, F, G) have "God and Christ," but Paul does not use this phrase nor assert that belief in God brings salvation. The phrase "the Son of God" is found in MSS  $\kappa$ , A, C, D<sup>2</sup> and most of the early church Fathers. UBS<sup>4</sup> gives it an "A" rating (certain).

■ **"who loved me and delivered Himself up for me"** This is the heart of the substitutionary atonement (cf. Gal. 1:4; Mark 10:45; Rom. 5:6,8,10; Gen. 3:15; Isa. 53:4-6).

**2:21 "if"** This introduces another first class conditional sentence which is assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes. One would have expected a second class conditional sentence. This is a good example of a first class conditional sentence to emphasize a false assertion. There is only one way to God—not through Law, but through faith in the finished work of Christ (cf. Gal. 3:21). If the Law could have brought salvation, then Christ did not need to die!

■ **"righteousness"**

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: RIGHTEOUSNESS**

■ **"then Christ died needlessly"** This is the theological climax of Paul's rejection of the Judaizers' emphasis on human performance. If human actions could bring right standing with God, then there was no need for Jesus to die! However, both (1) the OT, especially Judges and the history of Israel (cf. Nehemiah



9) and (2) the current experiences of diligent religionists such as Paul, show humanity's inability to obey and conform to God's covenant. The Old Covenant, instead of bringing life, brought death and condemnation (cf. Galatians 3). The New Covenant (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-38) brings life as a gracious gift from a loving God by giving believing, fallen mankind a new heart, new mind, new spirit! This gift is only possibly through the sacrificial work of Christ. He fulfilled the Law! He restores the breach of fellowship (i.e., the damaged image of God in humanity from Genesis 3 has been repaired and restored!).

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Why is it so difficult to interpret this chapter?
2. Does Paul speak disparagingly of the Jerusalem Apostles in verses 2, 6 and 9?
3. Why was the situation concerning Titus such an important issue in connection with the Jerusalem Council?
4. Who were the false teachers? What did they infiltrate? What was their purpose?
5. Why was Peter's refusal to eat with the Gentiles so condemning in light of Paul's understanding of the gospel?
6. Define the word "justification."
7. Define the word "faith."
8. How are verses 19 and 20 related to their context?

# GALATIANS 3

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Law or Faith	Justification by Faith	An Appeal to Experience	Law or Faith	The Christian Experience
3:1-6	3:1-9	3:1-5	3:1-5	3:1-5
		An Appeal to Abraham's Experience in Scripture		Witness of Scripture. Faith and the Law
		3:6-9	3:6-9	3:6-9
3:7-14				
	The Law Brings a Curse			The Curse Brought by the Law
	3:10-14	3:10-14	3:10-12	3:10-14
			3:13-14	
The Law and the Promise	The Changeless Promise	An Example from the Covenant with Abraham	The Law and the Promise	The Law Did Not Cancel the Promise
3:15-20	3:15-18	3:15-18	3:15-18	3:15-18
	Sons and Heirs	The True Purpose of the Mosaic Law		The Purpose of the Law
		3:19-20	3:19-20	3:19-22
Slaves and Sons			The Purpose of the Law	
(3:21-4:7)			(3:21-4:7)	
3:21-22		3:21-22	3:21-22	The Coming of Faith
3:23-25		3:23-26	3:23-25	3:23-29
		An Appeal to Baptismal Equality		
3:26-4:7	3:26-4:7		3:26-29	
		3:27-29		

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired but it is the key to following the original author's intent which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Chapter 3 continues the literary unit begun in Gal. 2:15-21. In chapters 3 and 4 Paul develops the theological aspects of his gospel (these become developed further in the book of Romans). Apparently, the Judaizers attacked him personally as a means of attacking his preaching.
- B. The structure of chapter 3 is easily discernible.
1. In Gal. 3:1-5 Paul appealed to the personal salvation experiences of the Galatians. He used his personal testimony as evidence of the truth of his gospel in Gal. 1:10-2:21, but here he uses their personal experiences. He does this with four or five rhetorical questions.
  2. In Gal. 3:6-18 Paul develops the Old Testament experience of Abraham as a paradigm for the experience of all humans in the area of salvation. He particularly focuses on Abraham receiving justification by grace through faith before and apart from the Mosaic Law. This chapter is the theological precursor to Romans 4!
- C. Paul quotes the Old Testament seven times in Gal. 3:6-18.
1. Gal. 3:6 – Gen. 15:6
  2. Gal. 3:8 – Gen. 12:3
  3. Gal. 3:10 – Deut. 27:26 (also possibly 28:58)
  4. Gal. 3:11 – Hab. 2:4
  5. Gal. 3:12 – Lev. 18:5
  6. Gal. 3:13 – Deut. 21:23
  7. Gal. 3:16 – Gen. 13:15 (also possibly 22:18)
- The possible reasons for the extensive use of the OT were:
1. Paul wanted the Judaizers and Galatians to see that his gospel was based on the OT also.
  2. The Judaizers used the OT in their argument, therefore, Paul did also
 

We must remember that Paul's presentation is being shaped by (1) current Jewish theology and (2) the emphases of the Judaizers. Paul's argument is ambiguous to us because we do not know the theology of the Judaizers and how (texts, illustrations, metaphors) they presented it. We are reading only half a conversation. It is obvious the people of the OT saw God's Law as a gift and a blessing, but Jewish legalism had distorted it!
- D. Because of Paul's vehement attack on the misinterpretation and application of the Law by the Judaizers, he states the purpose of the Mosaic legislation (verses 19-29). He accomplished this with two questions (Gal. 3:19 and 21). It must be asserted that Paul was using the term "law" here in a very specific manner. Paul was refuting the theology of the false teachers (i.e., that the Law is a means of salvation, cf. Rom. 4:14). One must balance this view of the Law with Jesus' use of the term in Matthew 5:17-21. The Law is good—the Law is from God! The Law is eternal (cf. Rom. 7:7,12-14). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: PAUL'S VIEWS OF THE MOSAIC LAW](#) at Gal. 3:19.
- E. The Mosaic Law was personified in two senses (cf. Gal. 3:23-25; 4:1-2) which were known in the Greco-Roman world:
1. Gal. 3:23, "we were locked up under the law" – the law as jailor
  2. Gal. 3:24, "the law has been our attendant" – the law as a child's custodian
    - a. Gal. 4:2, "guardians" – a child's custodian from birth through 14 years of age
    - b. Gal. 4:2, "trustee" – a young person's custodian from age 14 to 25 years of age

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: GALATIANS 3:1-5

**<sup>1</sup>You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? <sup>2</sup>This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? <sup>3</sup>Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? <sup>4</sup>Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain? <sup>5</sup>So then, does He who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?**

**3:1, 3**

**NASB, NKJV,**

**NRSV, TEV "You foolish Galatians"**

**NJB "are you people in Galatia mad"**

This is the term "mind" [*nous*] with the alpha privative which is translated "foolish" (cf. Luke 24:25). Paul asserts emphatically that they had not clearly thought through the implications of the Judaizers' false teachings (cf. Gal. 1:6). As always, these false teachers must have been strong, gifted, logical personalities!

▣ **"who has bewitched you"** The use of the singular pronoun "who" may be a method of pointing out one primary false teacher to whom Paul was referring (cf. Gal. 5:7,10). But this may be reading too much into this context since the plural is used in Gal. 5:12.

"Bewitched" is likely a metaphor for mental confusion, though some scholars see it in this context as an OT allusion to "the evil eye," (cf. Deut. 15:9; 28:54; Prov. 23:6; 28:22; Matt. 20:15; Mark 7:22).

▣ **"before whose eyes Jesus Christ was portrayed"** The Koine Greek papyri found in Egypt (cf. Moulton and Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*) have shown that "portrayed" meant (1) to "vividly portray" or (2) an official legal notice posted publicly. This metaphor was used of Paul's clear teaching and preaching of the person and work of Jesus Christ. Evidently, the Galatian churches were turning from Paul's teaching to Jewish legalism.

▣ **"as crucified"** "Crucified" is a perfect passive participle implying that Jesus remains the crucified One. This may be a title, "the crucified One" (cf. Matt. 28:5; Mark 16:6; 1 Cor. 1:23; 2:2). When we see Him, He will still have the marks of His crucifixion. They are now symbols of His victory!

The passive voice may speak of God the Father as the true agent in the sacrifice of the Son (cf. Isa. 53:10; John 3:16; 2 Cor. 5:21).

**3:2 "did you receive the Spirit"** Receiving the Spirit is not a secondary act of grace (i.e., Acts 8:14-17); it occurs when one becomes a Christian (cf. Rom. 8:9). One has the Spirit or he/she is not a Christian. The Spirit here is seen as a sign of the New Age spoken of in Jeremiah 31:31-34. "Receive the Spirit" is another way of saying "receive the gospel." Beyond this point in Galatians, Paul mentions the Holy Spirit sixteen times. Paul and John develop the theology of the Spirit more than any other NT authors.

**NASB "by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith"**

**NKJV "by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith"**

**NRSV "by doing the works of the law or by believing what you heard"**

**TEV "by doing what the Law requires, or by hearing and believing the gospel"**

**NJB "was it because you practiced the Law that you received the Spirit, or because you believed what was preached to you"**

"Faith" [*pistis*] is used repeatedly in this chapter and may be interpreted or translated in English as

"faith," "trust," or "believe." See the Special Topics on both the OT and NT use of faith at Gal. 3:6. The English concepts of believing and trusting are very similar (cf. Gal. 2:26; 3:2, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 14, 22, and 26).

**3:3 "Are you so foolish"** This is the same term as in verse 1.

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"Having started with the Spirit, are you now ending with the flesh"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"You began by God's Spirit; do you now want to finish by your own power"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"Are you foolish enough to end in outward observances what you began in the Spirit"</b>

The grammatical structure of this second clause can be understood as (1) middle voice (NRSV, TEV, JB) or (2) Passive voice (NASB, NKJV). The middle voice emphasized the Galatians' actions while the passive would emphasize an outside agent. The middle voice fits the context best. The Galatians were trying to complete their salvation by their own efforts in fulfilling the Mosaic Law. Both our salvation and maturity are appropriated by grace through faith! The two significant terms in this phrase are also used together in Phil. 1:6. The rest of Paul's argument will focus on the fact that believers are complete and mature in Jesus Christ and Christ alone.

Paul's statement in Gal. 3:3 does not imply that believers do not make choices about how they live. Salvation is a response to God's initiating grace; so, too, is the Christian life is a continuing response to the Spirit's guidance by repentance, faith, obedience, and perseverance. This is progressive Christlikeness (cf. Gal. 5:1-6:10)!

For "flesh" see Special Topic at Gal. 1:16.

### **3:4**

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"Did you suffer so many things in vain"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"Have you suffered so many things in vain"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"Did you experience so much for nothing"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"Did all your experience mean nothing at all"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"Have all the favours you received been wasted"</b>

"Suffer" may refer to

1. physical suffering (we do have some record of the churches in southern Asia Minor experiencing Jewish persecution as in Acts 14:2, 5, 19, 22)
2. emotional upheaval in their conversion
3. in Greek literature the term can refer to "benefits" (cf. Magill *NT TransLine*, p. 688)

■ **"if indeed it was in vain"** This is a third class conditional sentence. There are two theories about this phrase: (1) it may relate to Gal. 1:16 (i.e., Paul's ministry to the Gentiles) or (2) it may relate to Paul's sustained argument about the spiritual futility of trusting in human performance of the Mosaic Law. If they are reverting to human effort then Christ's grace will not help them (cf. Gal. 4:11; 5:2-4; 1 Cor. 15:2).

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE NEED TO PERSEVERE**

**3:5 "So then, does He who provides you with the Spirit"** God's provision of the Spirit is a reference to initial salvation (cf. Gal. 3:14; Rom. 8:9). The participle is present active, also used of God's provision in 2 Cor. 9:10. Earlier uses of the word suggest it meant "to lavish upon" or "to grant freely."

■ **"and works miracles among you"** This is also a present active participle which may indicate the continuing effect of

1. the miracle of their salvation

2. the accompanying signs and miracles which confirmed the gospel
3. the spiritual gifts (cf. 1 Corinthians 12) which were being manifested within the Galatian congregations

Translators disagree whether the phrase should read "in you," speaking of individuals, or "among you," speaking of "in your midst," speaking of the church.

Did God graciously give all His blessings because they were performing the Law of Moses? No! These miracles were God's confirmation of the true gospel that they received by grace through faith.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: GALATIANS 3:6-9**

**<sup>6</sup>Even so Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. <sup>7</sup>Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham. <sup>8</sup>The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "All the nations will be blessed in you." <sup>9</sup>So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer.**

**3:6 "Even so Abraham"** Verses 6-9 amplify the example of Abraham, the spiritual and racial father of the Jewish nation. The false teachers may have used Abraham as an example of someone who believed God and then later was circumcised. This explains why Paul's argument recorded in Romans 4 is not developed here. Abraham is paradigmatic of how all humans come to God (cf. LXX of Gen. 15:6). Salvation and right standing with God has always been by grace through faith. This was not a new message!

"Even so," Curtis Vaughan, *A Study Guide Commentary*, makes the comment that this makes the comment that this phrase implies that as Abraham was made right with God by grace through faith, so too, the Galatians (p. 61). The faith principle is expanded to all who have faith in Gal. 3:7,9; even to Gentiles, Gal. 3:8!

One's relationship to Abraham was not determined by (1) physical lineage (Israel) or (2) physical sign (circumcision, cf. Rom. 2:28-29), but by grace (cf. Gal. 3:18) through faith (cf. Eph. 2:8-9)!

■ **"believed"**

**[SPECIAL TOPIC: BELIEVE, TRUST, FAITH, AND FAITHFULNESS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT \(אמי\)](#)**

**[SPECIAL TOPIC: Faith, Believe, or Trust \(Pistis \[noun\], Pisteuō, \[verb\], Pistos \[adjective\]\)](#)**

■ **"it was reckoned to him as righteousness"** This is a quote from the Septuagint of Gen. 15:6. "Reckoned," an aorist passive verb, is a commercial term that meant "to make a deposit into another's account" (cf. Rom. 4:3,9,22). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: RIGHTEOUSNESS](#) at Gal. 2:21. God's righteousness was given to Abraham because of God's love and Abraham's faith that God would give him an heir. The Gen. 15:6 quotation comes from the Septuagint. Paul quotes the Law of Moses several times (see Contextual Insights, C) to strengthen his argument. Since the false teachers used the Law to make their argument, Paul used the same technique to prove them wrong. The writings of Moses (Genesis – Deuteronomy) were the most authoritative section of the Hebrew canon for Judaism for first century Judaism.

**3:7 "be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham"** This statement is the major thrust of this contextual unit. This declaration would have appalled the Jewish-oriented false teachers. This same truth (i.e., Jews were not right with God because of their ethnic origins) is alluded to in the message of John the Baptist (cf. Luke 3:8) and specifically in the words of Jesus in John 8:37-59. This theological truth is developed by Paul in Gal. 3:14,29 and Rom. 2:28-29. One can tell Abraham's sons by

1. who they trust and know (personal relationship with Jesus)
2. how they live (Christlikeness), not by who their parents (ancestors) are

**3:8 "The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith"** This Hebraic idiom affirms the full inspiration of the OT. In this verse the Scripture is personified twice. See note at Gal. 4:30.

The salvation of all humans has always been God's plan (cf. Gen. 3:15; 12:3; Exod. 19:5-6). There is only one God and all humans are made in His image (Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1; 9:6), therefore, He loves everyone (cf. Ezekiel 18:32; John 3:16; 1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9). The universal love of God, which includes the Gentiles, is clearly seen in Isaiah (cf. Isa. 2:2-4; 45:21-25; 56:1-8; 60:1-3).

The mechanism of this universally available salvation is God's grace through

1. the work of Christ
2. the drawing of the Spirit
3. a human faith response (cf. Eph. 2:8-9)
4. which issues in Christlikeness (Gal. 3:10)

■ **"preached the gospel beforehand"** This English phrase translates one work in Greek (*proeuangelisato*, aorist middle [deponent] indicative).

1. *pro* – before
2. *eu* – good
3. *angelia* – message/news
4. *euangelizomai* – means to preach
5. all together it means "preach the good message beforehand"

It is found only here in the NT. It denotes that God's love for all humans was revealed to Abraham in his initial call (i.e., Gen. 12:3). The gospel (*euangelion*) has its roots in the writings of Moses.

■ **"All the nations will be blessed in you"** Here Paul quotes God's promise to Abraham, recorded in Gen. 12:3; 18:18; 22:18; 26:4. The Hebrew verb form may be

1. a passive form, "will be blessed" (cf. Gen. 18:18; 28:14)
2. a middle reflexive form, "will bless themselves" (cf. Gen. 22:16-18; 26:4)

However, in the Septuagint and in Paul's quote, it is passive, not middle. In this text Paul combined Gen. 12:3 with 18:18 from the Septuagint. The salvation of all humans made in God's image has always been God's plan! See [SPECIAL TOPIC: YHWH'S ETERNAL REDEMPTIVE PLAN](#) at Gal. 1:7.

### 3:9

NASB	<b>"those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer"</b>
NKJV	<b>"those who <i>are</i> of faith are blessed with believing Abraham"</b>
NRSV	<b>"those who believe are blessed with Abraham who believed"</b>
TEV	<b>"Abraham believed and was blessed; so all who believe are blessed as he was"</b>
NJB	<b>"Those therefore who rely on faith receive the same blessing as Abraham, the man of faith"</b>

The preposition "*syn*," meaning "joint participation with," shows the close identification between Abraham and all those who have faith in God. The description of Abraham as "faithful" or "believing" emphasizes that Abraham believed God by trusting in His promise. NT faith also means trusting in the trustworthiness of God and His promises. However, remember that Abraham did not have perfect faith, he too, tried to help God fulfill His promise by having a natural child with Hagar (cf. Genesis 16). It is not mankind's perfect faith, but the object of their faith.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: GALATIANS 3:10-14**

**<sup>10</sup>For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law to perform them."  
<sup>11</sup>Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, "The righteous man shall live by faith."  
<sup>12</sup>However, the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, "He who practices them shall live by them."  
<sup>13</sup>Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—**



for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"—<sup>14</sup>in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

### 3:10

**NASB** "For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse"  
**NKJV** "For as many as are of the works of the law are under a curse"  
**NRSV** "For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse"  
**TEV** "Those who depend on obeying the Law live under a curse"  
**NJB** "those who rely on the keeping of the Law are under a curse"

In the next step in the argument, Paul moved from Abraham to the strict legal requirements of the Mosaic Law. The argument challenges the bad theology of the Judaizers. Trusting in adherence to the Law characterized the Pharisees of Jesus' day (cf. Rom. 10:2-5). Paul asserted that self-effort to obtain right standing is only a road to damnation (cf. Gal. 2:16). Paul knew this road well! Although Paul was primarily referring to the Mosaic Law, the referent is "law" in general or human effort by means of some external moral standard. Which standard is not important—the essential truth is that fallen mankind cannot claim that their moral accomplishment deserves acceptance by God. We call this approach self-righteous legalism. It is alive and well and thrives among religious people!

■ **"for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law to perform them'"** This alludes to Deut. 27:26 and 28:58ff. Although the word "all" does not appear in Deut. 27:26, it does appear in Deut. 28:58. The curse of the Law is alluded to in John 7:49. If one breaks the law (after *Bar Mitzvah*) in one way, even just once, he falls under the condemnation of the Law, (cf. James 2:10; Gal. 5:3). The OT Law became a death sentence for all humans (Col. 2:14). God said "the soul that sins, it will surely die" (cf. Ezek. 18:4,20). All of the children of Adam have sinned! The Law, as a means of right standing with God, is only applicable to the one who never commits sin. The problem with this is that all have sinned and have come short of the glory of God (cf. Rom. 3:9-18,22,23; 11:32).

### 3:11

**NASB** "for, 'The righteous man shall live by faith'"  
**NKJV** "'The just shall live by faith'"  
**NRSV** "'The one who is righteous will live by faith'"  
**TEV** "He who is put right with God through faith shall live"  
**NJB** "*the righteous man finds life through faith*"

Here Paul quotes Hab. 2:4 (cf. Rom. 1:17 and Heb. 10:38). Rather an ambiguous verse, Hab. 2:4 has been understood in several different ways.

1. the Masoretic Text has "the righteous shall live by his faith/faithfulness"
2. the Septuagint has "the righteous shall live on the basis of my (God's) faithfulness"
3. Paul's use favors faith-based righteousness through Christ versus works-based righteousness through the Mosaic Law (cf. Gal. 3:12, which quotes Lev. 18:5)

There may be a veiled allusion to Gen. 15:6 because both Hab. 2:4 and Gen. 15:6 contain the same two key terms: "faith" and "righteousness."

See [SPECIAL TOPIC: BELIEVE, TRUST, FAITH, AND FAITHFULNESS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT \(xii\)](#) at Gal. 3:6.

### 3:12

**NASB, NKJV** "the Law is not of faith"  
**NRSV** "the law does not rest on faith"  
**TEV** "the Law does not depend on faith"



Here is the basic assumption! In the matter of right standing (salvation) with God, the choice is faith or law, not faith and law. The Judaizers had turned faith in God into rules by God. Even in the OT the individual Israelite was only right by personal faith in YHWH. Never were all Israelites right with God because of their descent from Abraham (cf. John 8:31-59)

■ **"on the contrary, 'He who practices them shall live by them'"** This quotation comes from Lev. 18:5 (cf. Rom. 10:25), stressing the importance of performing the demands of God (i.e., Moscaï law). However, the OT is a history of mankind's inability to perform the OT Law (cf. Nehemiah 9). The OT accentuated fallen humanity's spiritual need (cf. Gal. 3:19,22). Therefore, another way of salvation was introduced, which in reality, had always been God's means of salvation: not human effort, but faith (cf. Hab. 2:4). Salvation by grace through faith is the essence of the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-36; Acts 2; Rom. 4; Eph. 2:8-9).

**3:13 "Christ redeemed us"** Here Paul refers to the substitutionary atonement of Christ. He purchased for us that which we could not purchase for ourselves (cf. Isa. 53; Mark 10:45; 2 Cor. 5:21). The term "redeemed" or "ransomed" means "to buy someone back from slavery" or "capture" (cf. Acts 20:28; 1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23; 1 Pet. 1:18-19).

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: RANSOM/REDEEM**

■ **"from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us"** This verse quotes Deut. 21:23 which was used to describe someone who had already been killed and was then publicly hanged or impaled as an act of public humiliation. This inappropriate burial was interpreted as a curse by God (cf. Isa. 53:4, 10). Jesus' crucifixion as a sinless substitute meant that He took the curse of the Law on Himself for us (cf. 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 2:8). This truth is overwhelming—He became the curse for us! He fulfilled the law Himself, but died under its curse on our behalf (cf. Isaiah 53) and thereby destroyed its power (cf. Col. 2:14).

**3:14** The two purpose clauses in Gal. 3:14 serve to describe the purpose of God in calling Abraham.

1. to bring the heathen into the blessings enjoyed by Israel through the promise to Abraham (cf. Gen. 12:3; Gal. 3:8-9)

2. that by faith all might receive the Spirit which was the promised sign of the New Age

The experience of Pentecost was a sign to the Apostles that the New Age had dawned. Receiving the Spirit is a metaphor for salvation (cf. Gal. 3:1; Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4; Rom. 8:9).

There are two words apparently confused in this verse in some ancient Greek manuscripts.

1. the blessing (*eulogia*) of Abraham

2. the promise (*epaggelian*) of the Spirit

The ancient papyrus manuscript P<sup>46</sup> (written about a.d. 200) and the uncial manuscript Bezae (D, fifth century) have "blessing" twice, but the vast majority of other ancient witnesses (MSS  $\alpha$ , A, B, C, D<sup>2</sup>) have "promise" in the second phrase. The UBS<sup>4</sup> gives "promise" an "A" rating (certain).

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: GALATIANS 3:15-22**

**<sup>15</sup>Brethren, I speak in terms of human relations: even though it is *only* a man's covenant, yet when it has been ratified, no one sets it aside or adds conditions to it. <sup>16</sup>Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, "And to seeds," as referring to many, but *rather* to one, "And to your seed," that is, Christ. <sup>17</sup>What I am saying is this: the Law, which came four hundred and thirty years later, does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise. <sup>18</sup>For if the inheritance is based on law, it is no longer based on a promise; but God has granted it to Abraham by means of a promise. <sup>19</sup>Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels**

by the agency of a mediator, until the seed would come to whom the promise had been made. <sup>20</sup>Now a mediator is not for one *party only*; whereas God is *only* one. <sup>21</sup>Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be! For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law. <sup>22</sup>But the Scripture has shut up everyone under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

3:15-17

NASB, NKJV "a man's covenant"

NRSV "a person's will"

TEV "that covenant"

NJB "If a will"

Paul proceeds with his argument by means of a common human illustration. He uses a term in Koine Greek which may be translated as either "will" or "testament," in connection with one's inheritance. In Classical Greek it is translated "covenant." In the Septuagint this term is always used of a covenant between God and humanity. Due to this ambiguity, Paul used this legal metaphor as an example for God's covenanting or contracting with Abraham and his descendants. This contract cannot be changed! The same type of argumentation using the concept of a last will and testament is found in Heb. 9:15-20.

### SPECIAL TOPIC: COVENANT

3:15

NASB "yet when it has been ratified, no one sets it aside or adds conditions to it"

NKJV "yet *if it is* confirmed, no one annuls or adds to it"

NRSV "once a person's will has been ratified, no one adds to it or annuls it"

TEV "when two men agree on a matter and sign a covenant, no one can break that covenant or add anything to it"

NJB "has been drawn up in due form, no one is allowed to disregard it or add to it"

Paul responds to the Judaizers' claim that the Mosaic Law superseded the Abrahamic promise. The promise to Abraham in Genesis 15 was ratified by both God's promise (i.e., the Exodus) and a sacrifice in which Abraham had no covenant responsibilities, only faith (i.e., an unconditional divine covenant, cf. Gen. 15:12-21).

**3:16 "the promises"** "Promises" is plural because of the number of times God repeats His promise to Abraham (cf. Gen. 12:1-3; 13:14-18; 15:1-5, 12-18; 17:1-14; 22:9-19).

▣ **"his seed"** The use of "seed" is a word play on a common idiom for descendant. Although singular in form, it can be singular or plural in meaning. In this case, Paul used it as a reference to Jesus, not Isaac—thus, God's promise was not linked to the Mosaic Covenant. "Seed" could be understood in the corporate sense of God's children by faith, like Abraham (cf. Rom. 2:28-29).

**3:17 "the Law, which came four hundred and thirty years later"** Paul gives another reason for the superiority of the Abrahamic promise, it preceded the Mosaic Law in time. There has been much discussion about the number four hundred and thirty years, which comes from Exod. 12:40-41 and relates to the Egyptian captivity. Some scholars use the Septuagint translation and the Samaritan Pentateuch of Exod. 12:40 which adds "and in the land of Canaan" (F. F. Bruce, *Answers to Questions*, p. 170). Genesis 15:13 and Acts 7:6 record that Israel was in captivity in Egypt for 400 years. Others assert, however, that the promise was not to Abraham alone, but was repeated to all of the Patriarchs, and simply refers to the time from the last repeated promise to the Patriarchs to the time of Moses' receiving the Law. In context, Paul's explanation concerns not the duration of time, but the long interval between the promise to Abraham

and the Law to Moses.

■ **"as to nullify the promise"** This word (*katargeō*) is translated so many different ways but its main meaning is to make something useless, null and void, inoperative, powerless but not necessarily non-existent or destroyed.

### SPECIAL TOPIC: NULL AND VOID (KATARGEŌ)

■ **"by God"** This is the reading of the best ancient manuscripts (P<sup>46</sup>, κ, A, B, C, P) to which UBS<sup>4</sup> gives an "A" rating (certain), but wait, several tenants of biblical criticism come into play.

1. on the positive side
  - a. usually the shorter reading is to be preferred (scribes tended to add and clarify, not remove)
  - b. the older and most widespread geographical reading is probably original. The longer reading is first found in MS D (sixth century)
2. on the other side
  - a. the most unusual reading is probably original. Paul normally has "in Christ" (*en Christō*), not "into Christ" (*eis Christon*)
  - b. the author's normal usage affects how one views a variant. However, Paul uses the same unusual form in Gal. 2:16 and 3:24.

See Appendix Two: Textual Criticism.

#### **3:18**

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"but God has granted it to Abraham by means of a promise"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"but God gave <i>it</i> to Abraham by promise"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"but God granted it to Abraham through the promise"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"However, it was because God had promised it that he gave it to Abraham"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"and it was precisely in the form of a promise that god made his gift to Abraham"</b>

This perfect middle (deponent) indicative emphasizes what God Himself has done in the past with results that abide into the present. The basic root of "granted" (*charizomai*) is "gift" or "grace" (*charis*). It emphasizes the free nature of God's acts, solely on the grounds of His character through the work of the Messiah.

#### **3:19**

<b>NASB, NRSV</b>	<b>"Why the Law then"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"What purpose then <i>does</i> the law <i>serve</i>"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"What was the purpose of the Law, then"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"What then was the purpose of adding the Law"</b>

Paul returned to his rhetorical style of verses 1-5. He began with two questions through which he tries to explain the purpose of the Mosaic Law in the plan of God (cf. Gal. 3:19 and 21). He engages in this contrasting approach because he had so devastated the purpose of the Law in his previous argument that some readers might think he was advocating antinomianism. The OT still functions in sanctification but not (and never did) in justification!

### SPECIAL TOPIC: PAUL'S VIEWS OF THE MOSAIC LAW

■ **"It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed would come to whom the promise had been made"** There are several different readings in the MSS tradition, but the one printed in NASB is rated "A" by the UBS<sup>4</sup>. Four elements regarding the Law's inferiority to the promise may be discerned here.

1. it was added later
2. it increased transgressions

3. it was only until the Messiah, "the seed," came

4. it was given through an intermediary

The phrase "increased transgressions" can be interpreted "limit transgressions." This translation is possible syntactically. However, according to Paul's full exposition in the early chapters of Romans (cf. Rom. 3:20; 5:20; 7:1), the Law was given to clearly show humans their sins. Before the Law sin was not counted (cf. Rom. 4:15; 5:13).

Philippians 3:6 and Rom. 7:7-11 pose a paradox. Paul felt that he had fulfilled the requirements of the Law in his life. However, covetousness, which was later made obvious to him, showed him that he was a sinner and in need of spiritual salvation.

The rabbinical view of angels as agents in the mediation of the Law can be seen in the translation of Deut. 33:2 in the Septuagint. The angel(s) who are related to the giving of the Law are also discussed in Acts 7:38,53 and Heb. 2:2; Josephus' *Antiquities of the Jews*, 15.5.3; and the non-canonical *Book of Jubilees*, 1:27-29. Paul may have had in mind the Angel of the Lord who continued with the people when YHWH did not (cf. Exod. 23:20-33; 32:34; 33:2).

### 3:20

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"Now a mediator is not for one party only; whereas God is only one"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"Now a mediator does not mediate for one only, but God is one"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"Now a mediator involves more than one party; but God is one"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"But a go-between is not needed when there is only one person; and God is one"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"Now there can only be an intermediary between two parties, yet God is one"</b>

This verse presents the interpreter with many different possibilities. In context, an obvious reading would be that the order of the Law's transmission was from God, through angels, to Moses, to the people. Therefore, the promise is superior because it was given face-to-face between only two persons, God and Abraham, while the Mosaic covenant involved four parties. The promise to Abraham required no mediation.

It could also refer to God's unconditional promise to Abraham in Gen. 15:12-21. Only God participated in its ratification. Now, although God's initial contact with Abraham was conditional (cf. Gen. 12:1), Paul is using the Genesis 15 passage to make his point. The Mosaic covenant was conditional for God and mankind (see Special Topic at Gal. 3:15-17). The problem was that since the Fall (cf. Genesis 3) mankind was incapable of performing their part of the covenant. The promise, therefore, based on God (i.e., "God is One") alone, is superior!

**3:21 "Is the law then contrary to the promises of God"** The Greek text does not have the article with the term "law," which would have implied the Mosaic Law. The use of "law" with no article occurs three times in Gal. 3:21 and 4:5. Often "law" in Galatians does not have the article in which case it refers to mankind's attempt to earn God's favor by means of the performance of religious guidelines or cultural norms. The key is not which guidelines, but the belief that a human being cannot earn acceptance with a holy God (cf. Eph. 2:9). Here is where a careful reading of Romans 7 is crucial.

The phrase "of God" has some variations in the Greek manuscripts.

1. some have "of God" – MSS  $\kappa$ , A, C, D, F, G
2. some later minuscule manuscripts (104, 459) have "of Christ"
3. some omit the words – MSS P<sup>46</sup>, B

The UBS<sup>4</sup> cannot decide on the wording ("C" rating) and puts "of God" in brackets, which fits the context best.

▣ **"For if a law had been given"** This second class conditional sentence which expresses a concept "contrary to fact." An amplified translation would read: "if a law had been given that was able to impart life (which there never was), then right standing would have come through law (which it does not)." The Law was never the way to be right with God. It is a true revelation from God (Matt. 5:17-19; Rom. 7:12). The Law is inspired revelation and valuable but not in the area of right standing or salvation.

▫ **"righteousness"** See Special Topic at Gal. 2:21.

**3:22**

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"But the Scripture has shut up everyone under sin"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"But the Scripture has confined all under sin"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"But the scripture has imprisoned all things under the power of sin"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"But the Scripture has said that the whole world is under the power of sin"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"Scripture makes no exceptions when it says that sin is master everywhere"</b>

To which OT text Paul was alluding is uncertain, though one possibility is Deut. 27:26, referred to earlier in Gal. 2:16; 3:10. The fall of humanity and their estrangement is the first point of Paul's gospel (cf. Rom. 3:9-18,22-23; 11:32).

Literally this is "all things" (neuter), not "all men" (masculine). Some see here the cosmic significance of Christ's redemption (cf. Rom. 8:18-25; Eph. 1:22 and the entire book of Colossians whose theme is cosmological redemption in Christ). However, in this context, it refers to all mankind, including Jews, Judaizers, and Gentiles.

▫ **"that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe"** This is a summary of the entire discussion that God's grace and favor come through His promise to Abraham and his "Seed" (i.e., Messiah), not through human merit or performance! Notice the repetition of the term, *pistis*, translated as "faith" and "believe." See Special Topic at Gal. 3:6.

For a discussion of how to understand and translate "by faith in Jesus Christ" see note at Gal. 2:16.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: GALATIANS 3:23-29**

**<sup>23</sup>But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. <sup>24</sup>Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. <sup>25</sup>But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. <sup>26</sup>For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. <sup>27</sup>For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. <sup>28</sup>There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. <sup>29</sup>And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.**

**3:23 "But before this faith came"** The definite article used in tandem with "faith" implies the body of Christian truth (i.e., the gospel, cf. Acts 6:7; 13:8; 14:22; Gal. 1:23; 6:10; Jude 1:3,20). However, in this context, it is metaphorical for the gospel age.

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"we were imprisoned and guarded under the law until faith would be revealed"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"the Law kept us all locked up as prisoners, until this coming faith should be revealed"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"we were allowed no freedom by the Law; we were being looked after till faith was revealed"</b>

The law was first depicted as a jailor as in v.22. Humans were put in protective custody until the Messiah came (cf. Phil. 4:7; 1 Pet. 1:5). The second metaphor used to describe the law is in Gal. 3:24, where it is called our custodian (cf. Gal. 4:1-2). In Greek and Roman society, this term referred to caretakers of young Greek or Roman boys. The guardian was in charge of their protection, food, transportation, and tutoring, so

"custodian" had a dual connotation: protector and disciplinarian. Paul distinguished the two intentional purposes of the law in the plan of God:

1. to show us our sinfulness
2. to keep us as a guardian until the free offer of grace in Christ came (cf. John 1:12; 3:16; Rom. 1:16; 10:9-13)

**3:24**

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"the Law has become our tutor <i>to lead us to Christ</i>"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"the law was our disciplinarian until Christ came"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"So the Law was in charge of us until Christ came"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"The Law was to be our guardian until the Christ came"</b>

Two varying interpretations of the prepositional phrase "to Christ" are possible: (1) to bring us to Christ, as in the NASB, NKJV, and NIV or (2) until Christ came, as in NRSV, TEV, and the JB.

▣ **"that we may be justified by faith"** "Justified by faith" was Luther's famous slogan of the Reformation. The Law has a part to play in God's free gift in Christ. It provides a necessary pre-condition to the gospel—our need! The saving "faith" always has (1) cognitive, (2) volitional, and (3) relational elements.

**3:25 "But now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor"** Believers are no longer underage children, but they have become full sons, full heirs! All of this occurs through God's grace, Christ's finished work, and our repentant faith response.

**3:26 "you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus"** The phrase "are all sons of God" refers to those who have received Christ by faith (cf. John 1:12; 3:16; Rom. 8:14-17). This verse does not advocate universalism; nor does Rom. 5:18 or 11:32, but it does speak of the universal offer of salvation. "All" appears first in the Greek sentence for emphasis.

**3:27 "For all of you who were baptized into Christ"** This is not an emphasis on baptism as a means to salvation, for that is exactly the argument the Judaizers were using in connection with circumcision. Christian baptism is a sign of the work of the Spirit which is mentioned earlier in verses Gal. 3:2,3,5,14 (cf. 1 Cor. 12:13). To be baptized in/by/with the Spirit was a biblical metaphor for becoming a Christian. Baptism was simply the opportunity for a public confession of faith in Christ and an accompanying symbol of an inner change. To make water baptism a precondition for salvation is to become a neo-Judaizer!

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: BAPTISM**

▣ **"have clothed yourselves with Christ"** This is an aorist middle indicative which emphasizes a purposeful action on our part. This involves the idea of our "putting on" (as a garment) the family characteristics of God. This clothing metaphor was used often by Paul (cf. Rom. 13:14; Eph. 4:22,24,25,31; Col. 3:10,12,14). It is possible that it refers to the Roman rite of passage when a boy traded his childhood toga for his adult toga, thereby becoming a full citizen (like the Jewish rite, *Bar Mitzvah*). This then would symbolize our becoming of full age and, thereby, a full heir.

**3:28** The distinctions which the Judaizers emphasized are now totally removed in Christ. There are no barriers for anyone to become a Christian. The Jewish arrogance against Gentiles, slaves, and women has been totally removed. Distinctions are not valid for salvation (cf. Rom. 3:22; 1 Cor. 12:13; and Col. 3:11), yet this does not mean that we are no longer male or female, slave or free, Jew or Greek. Those distinctions remain and there are passages that speak to these distinctions, but in the area of becoming a Christian there are no barriers. Every barrier raised by self-righteous, legalistic or biased humans, Christ has knocked down once and for all. Hallelujah!

Manfred T. Brauch, *Abusing Scripture*, p. 68 (also F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, p. 187)



asserts that the three contrasting groups reflect an ancient synagogue prayer where Jewish men thank God they were not created as women, slaves, or Gentiles! The new reality in Christ has negated and revealed the bias of first century Judaism. "In Christ" supercedes everything!

### SPECIAL TOPIC: RACISM

■ **"for you are all one in Christ Jesus"** As humans are all one in Adam (Rom. 5:12ff.), they are all potentially one in Christ (cf. Rom. 5:18). The only barrier is personal repentance and faith in Christ (Mark 1:15; Acts 3:16,19; 20:21).

This collective emphasis is very similar to the concept of corporate Israel. We are now one new collective unit, the Church (cf. John 17; Rom. 12:4,5; 1 Cor. 12:12ff.).

**3:29 "if"** Here, "if" introduces a first class conditional sentence, assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes.

■ **"if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise"** Not all national or racial Israel is truly spiritual Israel (cf. Gal. 6:16; Rom. 2:28-29; 9:6), but all who are the true Israel are so by faith. Therefore, no more distinction was made between Jew and Gentile; only between those who have faith in the Messiah and those who do not. There is no favoritism with God. God's one-time, universal gracious plan for the redemption of mankind is repentance and faith in His crucified Son. Those who respond by faith are made sons and heirs of God (cf. Titus 3:7)! There is no longer the OT distinction of Jew vs. Greek.

This new reality also affects the nationalistic and geographical prophecies. The distinction between Jew and Gentile is no longer valid. Now the distinction is unbeliever and believer. No NT author, including Jesus, ever reaffirms the OT nationalistic prophecies to Israel. Palestine and Jerusalem are no longer the focus of God's activity. The whole world is the new holy land. Jerusalem is no longer a special, holy city. It is now "new Jerusalem" (cf. Rev. 3:12; 21:2,10), which is a symbol of heaven. Be careful of systematic theologies that focus or magnify OT prophecies as ultimate future realities!

Here is a selected part of the introductory notes to my commentary on Revelation (pp. 1-2).

**"FIRST TENSION** (OT racial, national, and geographical categories vs. all believers over all the world)

The OT prophets predict a restoration of a Jewish kingdom in Palestine centered in Jerusalem where all the nations of the earth gather to praise and serve a Davidic ruler, but Jesus nor the NT Apostles ever focus on this agenda. Is not the OT inspired (cf. Matt. 5:17-19)? Have the NT authors omitted crucial end-time events?

There are several sources of information about the end of the world:

1. OT prophets (Isaiah, Micah, Malachi)
2. OT apocalyptic writers (cf. Ezek. 37-39; Dan. 7-12; Zech.)
3. intertestamental, non-canonical Jewish apocalyptic writers (like I Enoch, which is alluded to in Jude)
4. Jesus Himself (cf. Matt. 24; Mark 13; Luke 21)
5. the writings of Paul (cf. 1 Cor. 15; 2 Cor. 5; 1 Thess. 4-5; 2 Thess. 2)
6. the writings of John (1 John and Revelation).

Do these all clearly teach an end-time agenda (events, chronology, persons)? If not, why? Are they not all inspired (except the Jewish intertestamental writings)?

The Spirit revealed truths to the OT writers in terms and categories they could understand. However, through progressive revelation the Spirit has expanded these OT eschatological concepts to a universal scope ("the mystery of Christ," cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13. See Special Topic at Gal. 10:7). Here are some relevant examples:

1. The city of Jerusalem in the OT is used as a metaphor of the people of God (Zion), but is projected into the NT as a term expressing God's acceptance of all repentant, believing humans (the new Jerusalem of Revelation 21-22). The theological expansion of a literal,

physical city into the new people of God (believing Jews and Gentiles) is foreshadowed in God's promise to redeem fallen mankind in Gen. 3:15, before there even were any Jews or a Jewish capital city. Even Abraham's call (cf. Gen. 12:1-3) involved the Gentiles (cf. Gen. 12:3; Exod. 19:5).

2. In the OT the enemies of God's people are the surrounding nations of the Ancient Near East, but in the NT they have been expanded to all unbelieving, anti-God, Satanically-inspired people. The battle has moved from a geographical, regional conflict to a worldwide, cosmic conflict (cf. Colossians).
3. The promise of a land which is so integral in the OT (the Patriarchal promises of Genesis, cf. Gen. 12:7; 13:15; 15:7,15; 17:8) has now become the whole earth. New Jerusalem comes down to a recreated earth, not the Near East only or exclusively (cf. Rev. 21-22).
4. Some other examples of OT prophetic concepts being expanded are:
  - a. the seed of Abraham is now the spiritually circumcised (cf. Rom. 2:28-29)
  - b. the covenant people now include Gentiles (cf. Hos. 1:10; 2:23, quoted in Rom. 9:24-26; also Lev. 26:12; Exod. 29:45, quoted in 2 Cor. 6:16-18 and Exod. 19:5; Deut. 14:2, quoted in Titus 2:14)
  - c. the temple is now Jesus (cf. Matt. 26:61; 27:40; John 2:19-21) and through Him the local church (cf. 1 Cor. 3:16) or the individual believer (cf. 1 Cor. 6:19)
  - d. even Israel and its characteristic descriptive OT phrases now refer to the whole people of God (i.e., "Israel," cf. Rom. 9:6; Gal. 6:16, i.e., "kingdom of priests," cf. 1 Pet. 2:5, 9-10; Rev. 1:6)

The prophetic model has been fulfilled, expanded, and is now more inclusive. Jesus and the Apostolic writers do not present the end-time in the same way as the OT prophets (cf. Martin Wyngaarden, *The Future of The Kingdom in Prophecy and Fulfillment*). Modern interpreters who try to make the OT model literal or normative twist the Revelation into a very Jewish book and force meaning into atomized, ambiguous phrases of Jesus and Paul! The NT writers do not negate the OT prophets, but show their ultimate universal implication. There is no organized, logical system to Jesus' or Paul's eschatology. Their purpose is primarily redemptive or pastoral.

However, even within the NT there is tension. There is no clear systemization of eschatological events. In many ways the Revelation surprisingly uses OT allusions in describing the end instead of the teachings of Jesus (cf. Matt. 24; Mark 13)! It follows the literary genre initiated by Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zechariah, but developed during the intertestamental period (Jewish apocalyptic literature). This may have been John's way of linking the Old and New Covenants. It shows the age-old pattern of human rebellion and God's commitment to redemption! But it must be noted that although Revelation uses OT language, persons, and events, it reinterprets them in light of first century Rome (cf. Rev. 1:7)."

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. What does it mean "to receive the Spirit?"
2. Why did Paul use Abraham as the focus for his argument?
3. How does the term "curse" apply to us, to the Judaizers, and to all men?
4. Did Paul record an error in chronology in verse 17? Why or why not?
5. Give the four aspects of why the Law is inferior to the promises listed in verse 19.
6. List the two reasons for God's purpose for the Law in verses 23-24.



7. Explain the implications of verse 28 in the Church today.

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# GALATIANS 4

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Slaves and Sons  (3:21-4:7)  3:26-4:7	Sons and Heirs  (3:26-4:7)  3:26-4:7	Enslavement under the Law; Freedom for God's Children    4:1-7	The Purpose of the Law  (3:21-4:7)  4:1-5  4:6-7	Sons of God    4:1-7
Paul's Concern for the Galatians  4:8-11	Fears for the Church  4:8-20	4:8-11  An Appeal to the Galatians in Their Relationship to Paul  4:12-20	Paul's Concern for the Galatians  4:8-11  4:12-16  4:17-20	4:8-11  A Personal Appeal  4:12-20
The Allegory of Hagar and Sarah  4:21-5:1	Two Covenants  4:21-31	A Final Proof  4:21-5:1	The Example of Sarah and Hagar  4:21-27  4:28-31	The Two Covenants: Hagar/Sarah  4:21-31

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired but it is the key to following the original author's intent which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

A. This chapter divides into three distinct sections:

1. Gal. 4:1-11 (or 1-7) continues discussing Gentiles as full heirs of God by faith (like Abraham) and not slaves to the world's crude notions. Verses 1-11 are very similar to the emphasis of Romans 8:1-17.
2. Gal. 4:12-20 (or 8-20) contains Paul's appeal to their personal experiences (cf. Gal. 3:1-5).
3. Gal. 4:21-31 contains an Old Testament allegory based on the first two sons of Abraham.

B. Paul used two cultural metaphors to emphasize the purpose of the Old Testament Law and its relationship to New Testament believers:

1. Roman law concerning children and their guardians.
2. Rabbinical typology concerning Abraham's life.

C. This chapter also illustrates the close relationship between Jesus the Son and the Holy Spirit (cf. Gal. 4:6):

1. Jesus asks the Father and He sends the Spirit
  - a. Jesus sends the Spirit in John 14:16; 15:26; 16:7
  - b. the Father sends the Spirit in John 14:26
  - c. both from the Father and the Son in Luke 24:49
  - d. Jesus spoke out of His unity with the Father, so the Spirit speaks out of His unity with them both
2. "Another of the same kind." The best name for the Spirit is "the other Jesus":
  - a. both "sent" from the Father
    - 1) Son – Gal. 4:4
    - 2) Spirit – Gal. 4:6
  - b. both called "truth"
    - 1) Son – John 14:6
    - 2) Spirit – John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13
  - c. both called "paraclete"
    - 1) Son – 1 John 2:1
    - 2) Spirit – John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7
  - d. Spirit called by Jesus' name (NASB)
    - 1) Acts 16:7 – "The Spirit of Jesus"
    - 2) Rom. 8:9 – "Spirit of God. . . Spirit of Christ"
    - 3) 2 Cor. 3:17 – "The Lord is Spirit. . . the Spirit of the Lord"
    - 4) 2 Cor. 3:18 – "The Lord, the Spirit"
    - 5) Gal. 4:6 – "The Spirit of His Son"
    - 6) Phil. 1:19 – "The Spirit of Jesus Christ"
    - 7) 1 Pet. 1:11 – "The Spirit of Christ"
  - e. both indwell believers
    - 1) Son – Matt. 28:20; John 14:20, 23; 15:4; 17:23; Rom. 8:10; 2 Cor. 13:5; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 3:17; Col. 1:27
    - 2) Spirit – John 14:16-17; Rom. 8:11; 1 Pet. 1:11
    - 3) Father – John 14:23; 17:23; 2 Cor. 6:16
  - f. both described as "holy"
    - 1) Spirit – Luke 1:35
    - 2) Son – Luke 1:35; 14:26

D. Definitions of Allegory and Typology (Gal. 4:21-31)

1. Allegory seeks a hidden, deeper level of meaning in every text. It imports meaning into the text that has no relation at all to the intended meaning of the original author or his day or even the thrust of Scripture as a whole.
2. Typology seeks to focus on the unity of the Bible, based on one divine Author and one divine

Plan. Similarities between the OT and NT pre-figure truths. These similarities (i.e., Hos. 11:1) rise naturally out of a reading of the entire Bible (cf. Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:6,11; 1 Pet. 1:12).

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: GALATIANS 4:1-7

**<sup>1</sup>Now I say, as long as the heir is a child, he does not differ at all from a slave although he is owner of everything, <sup>2</sup>but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by the father. <sup>3</sup>So also we, while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world. <sup>4</sup>But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, <sup>5</sup>so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. <sup>6</sup>Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying "Abba! Father!" <sup>7</sup>Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.**

#### 4:1

NASB, NKJV "Now I say"

NRSV "My point is this"

TEV "But to continue"

NJB "Let me put this another way"

Paul used this standard literary technique to introduce an expansion of a previous subject (cf. Gal. 3:17; 5:16).

■ **"the heir"** The great truth that believers are heirs of God in Christ is the focus of Gal. 3:7,16,24-26,29 (cf. Rom. 8:17). This same emphasis is continued in Gal. 4:1, 5, 6, 7, 28-31. The real descendants of Abraham are not ethnic, but believers (cf. Rom. 2:28-29; Phil. 3:3; Col. 2:11).

■ **"is a child"** This was the Greek term for infant, used in the sense of

1. spiritual babies
2. legal minors

In ancient Mediterranean cultures, the rite of passage from boyhood to manhood occurred at different ages and was a major cultural/religious event

1. in Jewish culture, it was age 13
2. in Greek culture, it was age 18
3. in Roman culture, it was usually at age 14

**4:2 "but he is under guardians and managers"** Galatians 3:22-25 says we were "under the Law," described as: (1) a jailor which kept us in protective custody (cf. Gal. 3:22-23) or (2) an adolescent custodian (cf. Gal. 3:24-25). However, in chapter 4, the metaphor changes to "guardian" and "trustee." In Roman law, boys from birth to 14 years of age were in the charge of a legal guardian (cf. Gal. 3:23-25). From age 14 to 25, their property was administered by trustees (cf. Gal. 4:2). Paul was alluding to this Roman custom by using these precise terms.

■ **"until the date set by the father"** This phrase gives further evidence that Roman fathers had some discretion in setting the time of his son's transition from boyhood to manhood. This is a unique feature of Roman law. It implies that God the Father chose the time that His Son would bring in our maturity (cf. Gal. 4:4).

**4:3 "while we were children"** The pronoun "we" could refer to

1. the Jews who were under the guardianship of the Mosaic Law

2. Jews and Gentiles who were part of the old age before the gospel

3. the Gentiles' paganism with all its rules and rites

In the context it might relate to "heirs" (Gal. 4:1), therefore, option #2.

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"were in bondage under the elemental things of the world"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"we were enslaved to the elemental spirits of the world"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"were slaves of the ruling spirits of the universe"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"we were as good as slaves to the elemental principles of this world"</b>

This phrase is periphrastic pluperfect passive participle. This construction emphasizes our fixed status as children. "Elemental things" [*stoicheia*] originally meant "to stand side by side in a row." It had a wide range of meanings in the Greco-Roman world of Paul's day:

1. the ABC's of a child's training or the elemental teachings of any subject (cf. Heb. 5:12; 6:1)
2. the basic components of the physical universe—air, water, fire, earth (cf. 2 Pet. 3:10,12), which were often deified by the Greeks
3. the heavenly bodies (cf. I Enoch 52:8-9); and this is how the early church fathers interpreted its use in Col. 2:8,20

Closely identified with #3 was the indirect meaning that behind heavenly bodies were spiritual powers, a common usage which could influence the interpretation of Gal. 4:3,8-10 (cf. the angels of Col. 2:18-20 and Gal. 3:19). However, in his book *Christ and the Powers*, Hendrik Berkhof states that these powers are impersonal structures (such as politics, democracy, social class, public mores, sports, education, medicine, etc.) in our natural, fallen world which tend to unify mankind apart from God (cf. p. 32). This interpretation fits the biblical examples. Paul was making a parallel between the Law as adolescent custodian (cf. Gal. 3:22-4:7) and *stoicheia* as slave master (cf. Gal. 4:3, see note at Gal. 4:8).

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: PAUL'S USE OF KOSMOS (WORLD)**

**4:4 "But when the fullness of the time came"** This implies that God is in control of history and that Christ came in God's timing (cf. Mark 1:15; Eph. 1:10; 1 Tim. 2:6; Tit. 1:3). Many commentators have seen the phrases related to

1. Roman peace
2. Roman highways, shipping
3. a common language in the entire area
4. the religious and moral searching of the Mediterranean world for the true God and for fellowship with Him

This statement relates to Gal. 4:2, "until the time fixed by the father." The New Age was inaugurated in God's time by the Christ event, the New Covenant had come, the Old Covenant (as a means of salvation) had passed away in Christ.

■ **"God sent forth His Son"** "Sent" is the Greek term *apostellō* from which we derive "apostle." This same phrase occurs in Gal. 4:6, where God the Father sends the Holy Spirit. Notice that the three persons of the Trinity are mentioned in Gal. 4:4-6. Although the term "Trinity" does not appear in the Bible, the concept does over and over again. See Special Topic below.

The fact that God sent His Son implies the pre-existence of the Son in heaven and, thereby, the Deity of the Son (cf. John 1:1-3, 14, 18; 1 Cor. 8:6; Phil. 2:6; Col. 1:15-17; Heb. 1:2). Herein is the conflict with the "monotheism" of Israel (cf. Deut. 4:35,39; 6:4; 33:26; Isa. 43:10-11; 45:21-22; 46:9; Jer. 10:6-7).

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE TRINITY**

■ **"born of a woman"** Paul emphasized the full humanity of Jesus Christ possibly due to the tendency of the docetic Gnostics (Ephesians, Colossians, the Pastoral Epistles and 1 John) to affirm the Deity of Jesus but to deny His humanity. However, there is scant evidence that this heresy influenced the writing of

Galatians (cf. Gal. 4:3).

The phrase "born of a woman" would certainly remind the Judaizers of Gen. 3:15 and Isa. 7:14. The author of the book of Hebrews makes this a cardinal point in his theology (cf. Heb. 2:14, 17). A very similar phrase which emphasizes the true humanity of Jesus but without a sin nature, is found in Rom. 8:3; Phil. 2:7. That Jesus was fully God (John 1:1-14) and fully man is a major truth of the gospel of the first century Church (cf. 1 John 4:1-3).

Surprisingly, the virgin birth of Jesus is not emphasized or even mentioned outside of the passages on Jesus' birth in Matthew and Luke. Possibly it was too easily misunderstood and connected by pagans to the mythical activities of the Mt. Olympus gods.

▣ **"born under the Law"** This shows that Jesus was born within the Jewish tradition under Jewish Law (cf. Rom. 1:3). There is no article with the term "law," but the context shows it must refer to the Law of Moses, which was the *stoicheia* to which Jesus was subject. Jesus was also subject to Roman law. This phrase could also relate to "the curse of the Law" on mankind, which He voluntarily shared (cf. Gal. 3:10-13).

**4:5 "so that He might redeem those who were under the Law"** "Redeem" (aorist active subjunctive) is used in Gal. 3:13 (aorist active indicative) to speak of God's buying back either (1) all humanity from the slavery of sin or (2) the Jews from the Mosaic Law and the Gentiles from the *stoicheia*, through the life, death and resurrection of Christ. This shows mankind's helplessness (cf. Rom. 1:18-3:31; Eph. 2:1-3) and God's gracious provision (cf. Mark 10:45; Eph. 2:4-6). It is difficult in this context to know if Paul was speaking of Mosaic Law, 3:19, or law in the general sense of human merit (cf. Gal. 3:21). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: RANSOM/REDEEM](#) at Gal. 3:13.

**NASB, NKJV "that we might receive the adoption as sons"**

**NRSV "that we might receive adoption as children"**

**TEV "so that we might become God's sons"**

**NJB "to enable us to be adopted as sons"**

Paul continued his discussion of the privileges that believers receive as full heirs of Abraham through faith in Christ. Paul used the familial metaphor "adoption" of our salvation while John and Peter used the familial metaphor "born again." The adoption metaphor was used primarily in two contexts in Roman culture. In Roman law, adoption was very difficult. A long, involved and expensive legal procedure, once enacted adoption afforded several special rights and privileges.

1. all debts were cancelled
2. all criminal charges were dropped
3. they could not be legally put to death by their new father
4. they could not be disinherited by their new father

In legal terms, they were a completely new person. Paul was alluding to the believers' security in Christ by using this Roman legal procedure (cf. Rom. 8:15, 23). When a father publicly adopted a son, he officially and permanently became his heir. Also, the metaphor was used in the official ceremony of a boy becoming a man, held on the 17<sup>th</sup> of March each year.

**4:6 "Because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts"** Similar to Rom. 8:14-17, Paul reiterated God's gracious act in sending His Son and His Spirit (the new guardians). The exact meaning of the Greek phrase is unclear. Is the Spirit the evidence or the result of sonship? "Through His Son we become sons" is the motto of Gal. 2:15-4:31. It is interesting to note that the Spirit was mentioned so frequently in chapter 3 in reference to our becoming Christians (cf. Gal. 4:2,5,14). He is now called "the Spirit of His Son." This shows two works of the Spirit: (1) wooing to Christ; and (2) forming Christ in us (cf. John 16:7-15) of the three works of the Spirit (John 14-16). The third being, "baptizes believers into Christ" (cf. 1 Cor. 12:13). The ministry of the Son and the Spirit has always been closely identified (cf. Introduction to this Chapter, C).

■ **"hearts"** See Special Topic following.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE HEART**

■ **"crying, 'Abba' Father"** This phrase contains both the Greek and Aramaic terms for father. The term *Abba* was the Aramaic word for the intimate family relationship between a child and his father (cf. Mark 14:36; Rom. 8:15), very similar to our use of "Daddy." Familial expressions such as this highlight the intimate relationship between Jesus and the Father. Because of our response to God's offer in Christ, we have this same intimate access to the Father (cf. Rom. 8:26-27). Truly, we are adopted sons!

**4:7 "Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God"** This is a First class conditional sentence, "since you are sons" (TEV, NIV). The Spirit removes our slavery and bondage and establishes our sonship (cf. Rom. 8:12-17). This assures our inheritance (cf. 1 Pet. 1:4-5).

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: BELIEVERS' INHERITANCE**

■ **"through God"** The KJV reads "through Christ." Older Greek manuscripts have "through God." This emphasizes God as the originator and initiator of grace (cf. John 6:44,65 and Gal. 4:9). Several manuscripts have variations but manuscripts P<sup>46</sup>,  $\kappa$ , A, B, and C<sup>\*</sup> have "through God." Of all the many variants, this one seems to be the most unusual and probably the source of all the others. The UBS<sup>4</sup> gives it an "A" rating (certain).

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: GALATIANS 4:8-11**

**<sup>8</sup>However at that time, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those which by nature are no gods. <sup>9</sup>But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again? <sup>10</sup>You observe days and months and seasons and years. <sup>11</sup>I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored over you in vain.**

**4:8 "However at that time, when you did not know God"** This is a perfect active participle which emphasizes a settled state. Although some modern commentators have tried to identify this with a Jewish background, it fits much better with the concept of the Gentiles who were pagans estranged from God (cf. Eph. 2:12-13; Col. 1:21). It is true that all humans have the potential of knowing God both from creation (Ps. 19:1-5 and Rom. 1:19-20) and also an inner moral witness (cf. Rom. 2:14-15). This knowledge is called "natural revelation," but the Bible asserts that all of us, Jews and Gentiles, have rejected this knowledge (cf. Rom. 3:23).

"Know" is used both in its Hebrew sense of interpersonal, intimate, family relationships and its Greek sense of cognitive content but the focus here is on the Greek sense as Gal. 4:9 is on the Hebrew sense.

■ **"you were slaves to those which by nature are no gods"** Idol worship is vain and futile (cf. Acts 17:29 and 1 Cor. 8:4-5). However, Paul asserted that behind the vanity of idol worship is demonic activity (cf. 1 Cor. 10:20; Rev. 9:20). Mankind's slavery to the demonic is also implied in the verb of 1 Cor. 12:2. Paul may have been referring to one of several possible things:

1. the *stoicheia* of Gal. 4:3 and 9
2. pagan idols
3. demons behind pagan idols
4. the Jewish Law, which in its legalism and ritualism had replaced YHWH

**4:9 "But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God"** The time element in verse 8 is contrasted with Gal. 4:9. In Gal. 4:9 Paul used another powerful, rhetorical question as he did in Gal. 3:1-5, 19,21, and 4:15. "Know" (*ginōskō*) in Gal. 4:9 is a different, and perhaps, more relational Greek

word choice than the term used in verse 8 (*oida*), although it is hard to make this distinction in Koine Greek. This term theologically carries the Hebrew connotation of knowledge as an interpersonal relationship (cf. Gen. 4:1; Jer. 1:5). Their new relationship was not based on facts about God but God's initiating a new covenant through Christ with those who had been estranged (cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13).

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"how can you turn back again to the weak and beggarly elemental spirits"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"how is it that you want to turn back to those weak and pitiful ruling spirits"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"how can you want to go back to elemental things like these, that can do nothing and give nothing"</b>

This is a present active indicative of a Greek term that reflects the OT concept (*shuv*, BDB 996) of repentance (turning back). This verse contains the word *stoicheia*, as in Gal. 4:3. They were trading the slavery of paganism for the slavery of Judaism as a means of salvation. Both Judaism and paganism were subject to the *stoicheia* (see note at Gal. 4:8)! These fallen world structures are completely inadequate to bring salvation.

The *stoichea* are described as "weak and worthless," which is parallel to Col. 2:15,20.

**4:10 "You observe days and months and seasons and years"** This is a present middle indicative representing continuing action, in this case, a personal, scrupulous religious observance—a reference to the Jewish religious calendar (cf. Col. 2:16). These Galatians were exchanging one religious calendar (pagan) for another (Jewish). Paul's understanding of the gospel allowed him to apply the truth to different situations. The situation in the Galatian churches required Paul to oppose legalism and works righteousness. However, in Romans 14, Paul encouraged strong believers not to judge weaker believers who respected certain days (cf. Rom. 14:5-6). In Galatians it is a matter of the proper understanding of the gospel, in Romans it concerns Christian fellowship (cf. 1 Cor. 8,10).

#### **4:11**

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored over you in vain"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"I am afraid that my work for you may have been wasted"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"I am afraid for you! Can it be that all my work for you has been for nothing"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"You make me feel I have wasted my time with you"</b>

Several modern versions translate this verse in reference to Paul's labor among the Galatian churches (cf. JB and Revised English Bible). However, this verse could be related to Paul's concern for the Galatian believers themselves (cf. TEV). There are two possibilities.

1. Paul was not doubting their salvation but rather their usefulness in spreading, living, and enjoying the radically free gospel
2. Paul was fearful they were rejecting grace for human performance (cf. Gal. 3:4; 5:2-4)

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: GALATIANS 4:12-20**

<sup>12</sup>I beg of you, brethren, become as I am, for I also *have become* as you are. You have done me no wrong; <sup>13</sup>but you know that it was because of a bodily illness that I preached the gospel to you the first time; <sup>14</sup>and that which was a trial to you in my bodily condition you did not despise or loathe, but you received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus *Himself*. <sup>15</sup>Where then is that sense of blessing you had? For I bear you witness that, if possible, you would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me. <sup>16</sup>So have I become your enemy by telling you the truth? <sup>17</sup>They eagerly seek you, not commendably, but they wish to shut you out so that



you will seek them. <sup>18</sup>But it is good always to be eagerly sought in a commendable manner, and not only when I am present with you. <sup>19</sup>My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you—<sup>20</sup>but I could wish to be present with you now and to change my tone, for I am perplexed about you.

**4:12 "I beg of you, brethren, become as I am, for I also have become as you are"** This verb is a Present middle (deponent) imperative. This verse has been variously interpreted.

1. The Williams translation reads "take my point of view," Paul asked them to accept his view of justification by faith because he once had accepted their current tendency of justification by works (Judaism).
2. Some say that "for I also have become as you are" is an allusion to 1 Cor. 9:19-23, where Paul asserted that he became all things to all men in order that he might win some. When he was with Jews, he lived like the Jews. When he was with Gentiles, he lived like the Gentiles. Yet in truth he had abandoned the Law as a way of salvation. He was flexible on the method, but not on the message.

"Brothers" indicates Paul's transition to a new topic. Also, calling them "brothers" lessened the blow of his hard hitting criticisms (cf. Gal. 4:19; 1:11; 3:15).

■ **"You have done me no wrong"** Some think this phrase expresses a negative statement implying "in the past you did me no harm but now you do." But others read it as a positive expression of his appreciation of the Galatian churches' original acceptance of him and his message. This phrase should be read with Gal. 4:13-15.

**4:13 "it was because of a bodily illness that I preached the gospel to you the first time"** The mention of a "first time" implies a second time before the letter was written. However, the phrase may idiomatically mean "formally" as in 1 Tim. 1:13. Paul went to the churches of Galatia

1. for a time of recuperation from some illness
2. because of an illness he had to stop and stay a while

Because of (1) Gal. 4:14-15; (2) in tandem with 6:11; and (3) 2 Cor. 12:1-10, I personally believe Paul is alluding to his "thorn in the flesh," a physical ailment. With the combination of these verses it seems to me that it was some type of eye problem which possibly began with his Damascus Road experience (cf. Acts 9) and was made worse by the diseases of the first century. Paul's partial blindness may have been caused by the repulsive eye disorder, ophthalmia.

For "illness" (lit. "weakness of the flesh") see Special Topic at Gal. 1:16.

#### 4:14

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"and that which was a trial to you in my bodily condition you did not despise or loathe"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"And my trial which was in my flesh you did not despise or reject"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"though my condition put you to the test, you did not scorn or despise me"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"But you did not despise or reject me, even though my physical condition was a great trial to you"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"you never showed the least sign of being revolted or disgusted by my disease that was such a trial to you"</b>

Many Jews and Gentiles would have seen Paul's illness as a judgment from God. The fact that Paul was in God's will, and sick, forces us to rethink the link between sin and sickness (cf. John 9; Job and Psalm 73).

These two verbs invoke strong images. The first means "to count as good for nothing." The second means "to spit out." The use of the second verb is the reason that some relate Paul's illness to the superstition in the Ancient Near East about "the evil eye" (cf. Gal. 3:1). The magical remedy was "to spit" and thereby protect yourself from its spell, possibly referring to (1) an unusual-looking eye or (2) a wild-

eyed look (epilepsy).

■ **"you received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus *Himself*"** A strong statement, Paul implied that they genuinely received the message of God through him, accompanied with great respect for the servant who brought it. The NJB translates the phrase as "messenger of God." The word for "angel" in Hebrew and Greek also means "messenger."

**4:15**

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"Where then is that sense of blessing you had"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"What then was the blessing you <i>enjoyed</i>"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"What has become of the goodwill you felt"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"You were so happy! What has happened"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"What has become of this enthusiasm you had"</b>

In this rhetorical question, Paul wants to know where the original, positive feelings the Galatians held for him has gone. The Phillips translation reads, "What has happened to that fine spirit of yours?"

■ **"that, if possible, you would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me"** This second class conditional sentence should be understood as, "If you had plucked out your eyes which you did not, you would have given them to me which you did not." This reading supports the theory that Paul's thorn in the flesh (cf. 2 Corinthians 12) was eye disease.

**4:16 "So have I therefore become your enemy by telling you the truth"** Paul contrasted their radical change of heart toward him with their change of heart toward the gospel.

**4:17-18** Two difficulties arise in interpreting Gal. 4:17 and 18: (1) the meaning of the phrase "eagerly seek" and (2) the ambiguity of the subject in Gal. 4:18. Does it refer to (1) Paul or (2) the churches of Galatia? With this kind of ambiguity, a dogmatic interpretation is inappropriate but the general sense of the passage is not affected. The Judaizers wanted the Galatians to follow them exclusively and appreciate them the way they previously had Paul.

**4:17**

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"They eagerly seek you"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"They zealously court you"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"They make much of you"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"Those other people show a deep concern for you"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"The blame lies in the way they have tried to win you over"</b>

Literally, this reads "they are zealous of you." This must be a reference to the false teachers, especially in context with the next phrase, "but not sincerely." "Zealous," from the root "to burn," had two connotations in Koine Greek: (1) the affection of young lovers and (2) envy of another. These strong emotions characterized the activity of the sweet-talking false teachers toward the Galatian churches, but their activity derived from selfish motivation.

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"but they wish to shut you out so that you will seek them"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"they want to exclude you, that you may be zealous for them"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"they want to exclude you, so that you may make much of them"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"All they want is to separate you from me, so that you will have the same concern for them as they have or you"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"by separating you from me, they want to win you over to themselves"</b>

The false teachers were jealous of the affection that the Galatian churches had shown Paul (cf. Gal. 4:13-15). They wanted to alienate Paul so they could take his place! This may explain verse 18.

**4:18** Paul was shocked that those who had been so kind and caring toward him had so dramatically become hostile (cf. Gal. 4:16). In the context of verses 13-20, this interpretation fits best.

**4:19 "My children, with whom I am again in labor"** Paul often used familial metaphors because of their warm and caring connotation. He called himself a father in 1 Cor. 4:15 and 1 Thess. 2:11 and here, a mother (cf. 1 Thess. 2:7). Paul may have been making the point that he was the true spiritual parent of the Galatians, not the Judaizers.

▣ **"until Christ is formed in you"** "Formed" [Greek root *morphē*] was used in a medical sense for fetal development. *Morphē* could refer to the abiding character of something. This text refers to their maturity in Christ (cf. Eph. 4:13), or in other words, their Christlikeness (cf. Rom. 8:28-29; 2 Cor. 3:18; 7:1; Gal. 4:19; Eph. 1:4; 4:13; 1 Thess. 3:13; 4:3,7; 5:23; 1 Pet. 1:15). This does not necessarily mean two different experiences of the Christian life—salvation and maturity—and yet we all know that maturity is a developmental experience.

Paul showed that his motives in teaching and preaching to the Galatian churches were totally different from those of the self-seeking false teachers.

**4:20 "but I could wish to be present with you now and to change my tone"** Paul wished they could sense the paternal care he felt for them. His heart was on fire for them, though the printed page seemed cold and harsh.

**NASB, NRSV "for I am perplexed about you"**  
**NKJV "for I have doubts about you"**  
**TEV "I am so worried about you"**  
**NJB "I have no idea what to do for the best"**

The Greek word for "way" with the alpha privative may be translated in at least two ways.

1. the Living Bible reads "I frankly don't know what to do"
2. the Phillips translation reads "I honestly don't know how to deal with you"

These different idiomatic translations express the frustration of Paul in his dealings with these Galatian churches.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: GALATIANS 4:21-5:1**

**21**Tell me, you who want to be under law, do you not listen to the law? **22**For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the bondwoman and one by the free woman. **23**But the son by the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and the son by the free woman through the promise. **24**This is allegorically speaking, for these *women* are two covenants: one *proceeding* from Mount Sinai bearing children who are to be slaves; she is Hagar. **25**Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. **26**But the Jerusalem above is free; she is our mother. **27**For it is written,

Rejoice, barren woman who does not bear;  
Break forth and shout, you are not in labor;  
For more numerous are the children of the desolate  
Than of the one who has a husband."

**28**And you brethren, like Isaac, are children of promise. **29**But as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so it is now also. **30**But what does the Scripture say?

"Cast out the bondwoman and her son,  
For the son of the bondwoman shall not be an heir with the son of the free woman."

**31**So then, brethren, we are not children of a bondwoman, but of the free woman. **5:1**It was

**for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.**

**4:21 "Tell me, you who want to be under law, do you not listen to law"** Paul used the writing of Moses to combat errors based on Moses. This verse resumes the thought of verse 7. Verses 8-20 are another personal, emotional appeal by Paul. The concepts of "sonship" and "heir" in Gal. 4:7 and "seed" in Gal. 3:15-18 are the antecedents to this typology.

**4:22 "Abraham had two sons"** Abraham had more than two sons, but the ones spoken of here are contrasted: his first son, Ishmael, recorded in Genesis 16, and his second son, Isaac, recorded in Genesis 21. The whole point of the typology is that one was born by natural means by a servant girl and one was born by supernatural means according to the promise of God by a free woman, his wife. The emphasis throughout this context has been, as in Gal. 4:23, on the promise of God versus human effort.

**4:23-24** The Jews would have agreed with Paul's typology until verse 23, where he said that in the sense of human effort, the Jews were really the descendants of Ishmael, while the Church was the true descendant of Sarah because of "the promise."

**4:24 "allegorically"** This is not "allegory" as used by Philo, Clement or Origen, but rather typology. Paul saw the current situation as analogous to the two children of Abraham; one by social custom, one by divine promise. One corresponds to works righteousness (Ishmael), the other to free grace (Isaac)! For Paul, the Law could not save but had become a death sentence on sinful mankind (cf. Col. 2:14). Only in Christ could true salvation be found. The essence of OT faith was not found in Mosaic Law but Abrahamic faith.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: TYPOLOGY**

**4:25 "Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia"** There have been two ways of interpreting "is" here: (1) "it represents" or (2) there is some kind of popular etymological connection between Hagar and Mount Sinai. The name "Hagar" is spelled much like the Hebrew term for "rock" (metonymy for mountain). Most commentators choose option #1. Hagar stands for the Mosaic Law given on Mt. Sinai and, thereby, Judaism.

Arabia was a far wider geographical designation in Paul's day than today.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE LOCATION OF MT. SINAI**

■ **"corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children"** The metaphor here is between the current system of Judaism centered in Jerusalem and the coming, eschatological city, New Jerusalem. This city, not made with hands, exists eternally in the heavens (cf. Heb. 11:10; 12:22; 13:14 and Rev. 21:2, 10).

Notice that Paul made the Jerusalem above apply to the Church. NT apostolic writings change the focus of the OT (Jews vs. Greeks) to believers vs. unbelievers. The NT reorients the OT geographical promises from Palestine to heaven (earthly Jerusalem vs. heavenly Jerusalem). It is this basic change of focus that allows the book of Revelation to refer to (1) believers, not Jews or (2) a universal kingdom, not a Jewish kingdom.

**4:26 "free"** Freedom here refers to the believer as being released from the obligation of both Judaism (i.e., free from the curse, cf. Gal. 3:13) and paganism (the *stoicheia*). Freedom is not related to the believer becoming self-directed, but

1. we are free to serve God (cf. Romans 6)
2. we are free from the terrible tyranny of the fallen self

To put it another way, believers are free "to serve" and free from "self." It is a dual freedom! We willingly serve the Father and the family as sons and daughters, not slave and servants!

**4:27** This is a quote from Isaiah 54:1. In context it refers to the restoration of the city of Jerusalem after the

Babylonian exile. The New Jerusalem is mentioned specifically in chapters 65 and 66. Paul projected this eschatological understanding into his typology.

**4:28** The believers in the Galatian churches were the true descendants of Abraham by faith (cf. Rom. 2:28-29).

**4:29** Paul associated all true followers of Jesus with the true descendants of Isaac through God's promise. Although the OT does not specifically mention persecution (i.e., Jewish tradition), it does mention Hagar's haughty attitude toward childless Sarah (cf. Gen. 16:4-5), but also Sarah's mistreatment of Hagar (cf. Gen. 16:6). The rabbis interpreted Gen. 21:9 as Ishmael mocking Sarah and her child. The Hebrew text itself reads "playing" or "laughing" (BDB 850, KB 1019). Possibly Paul was referring to the later animosity between Jews and Gentiles.

The last phrase of Gal. 4:29, "so it is now also," implies that the physical descendants (i.e., children of the Mosaic Covenant) of Abraham are still persecuting the spiritual children (i.e., faith children) of Abraham. There is conflict between the two mountains!

**4:30 "But what does the Scripture say? 'Cast out the bondwoman and her son'"** This is a quotation from Gen. 21:10 (quoting Sarah, *Peil* imperative, BDB 176, KB 204). The Greek verb is aorist active imperative meaning to "drive off the slave girl" and in the context of Galatians would mean "kick the Judaizers out!"

Scripture is personified (cf. John 7:42; Rom. 9:17; Gal. 3:8; 4:36; James 2:23; 4:5). This may be a metaphorical way of referring to the Father or the Spirit speaking, which would be a way of referring to "inspiration" (cf. Matt. 5:17-19).

**4:31 "So then, brethren, we are not children of a bondwoman, but of the free woman"** This was the summary of the argument. We who trust in Jesus Christ are full heirs of the Abrahamic promise and not simply those who are of racial, or natural Israel. This same truth is expressed in Romans 9-11.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Why did Paul continue to emphasize our sonship in Christ?
2. What is the threefold emphasis of verse 4 in connection with the person of Jesus?
3. What is the relationship between verses 8 and 9 as far as our knowing God or our being known by God?
4. What is the meaning of the phrase "the world's crude notion" or "stoicheia?" Explain.
5. What was Paul's thorn in the flesh which is apparently referred to in verses 14-15?
6. Why must we be careful of allegorical interpretations? If Jesus and Paul used it, why can't we?
7. Explain in your own words how verse 9 is related to verses 6 and 7.

# GALATIANS 5

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
		A Final Proof		
(4:21-5:1)		(4:21-5:1)		
Christian Freedom	Christian Liberty	The Nature of Christian Liberty	Preserve Your Freedom	Christian Liberty
	5:1-6		5:1	5:1
5:2-6		5:2-6	5:2-6	5:2-6
	Love Fulfills the Law			
5:7-12	5:7-15	5:7-12	5:7-10 5:11-12	5:7-12
				Liberty and Love
5:13-15		5:13-15	5:13-15	5:13-15
The Fruit of the Spirit and the Works of the Flesh	Walking in the Spirit			
5:16-21	5:16-26	5:16-21	5:16-18	5:16-24
5:22-26		5:22-26	5:19-26	5:25-26

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired but it is the key to following the original author's intent which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

#### CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Chapter 5 articulates the crucial, practical aspect of Paul's justification by grace through faith. The Judaizers were concerned that the Gentile Christians would not conform to their conceptions of Mosaic godliness, therefore, they tried to force the OT regulations upon them. However, Paul was

equally concerned with godliness, but he affirmed that it is not a result of external rules but of a changed heart (i.e., internal guidance, cf. Jer. 31:33; Ezek. 36:26,27). It is correct to say that the Judaizers had all of the elements of true salvation but they had them in a reverse order. They felt that mankind's performance led to or gave evidence of an acceptable place with God. However, the gospel of the crucified Christ shows that it is a personal relationship with Christ by faith which leads to a life of godliness through gratitude. The new life in Christ is not the basis of one's right standing with God, but the evidence of it. Paul was also concerned with the children of God living moral, upright, service-oriented lives. Chapter 5 addresses this moral imperative.

- B. The theme of freedom is expressed in chapter 5 in relation to two different perversions,
1. Gal. 5:1-12 deal with the legalistic (human merit) perversion of freedom
  2. Gal. 5:13-15 deal with the antinomian (lawlessness) perversion of freedom (cf. Rom. 14:1-15:13; 1 Cor. 8; 10:23-33)
- C. This book could be called a message of absolutely free grace. Paul uniquely understood the problems of self-effort (i.e., Gal. 5:1-12). His gospel was a call to freedom, but not a freedom that leads to licensed excess (i.e., Gal. 5:13-15) but one that leads to loving service. In our day we need to see the balance that believers are truly free in Christ, but by being free from the Law they are now free to respond appropriately to God's freely-given love (cf. Romans 6). Romans 14:1-15:13 is a great example of the biblical balance between freedom and responsibility, as is 1 Corinthians 8-10. He (the Spirit) gives us the power to live godly lives.
- D. Gal. 5:16-26 show us the supernatural source of Christian freedom which is the Holy Spirit. As salvation is a free act of God's love through Christ, so also is the Christian life through the Spirit. As believers must yield in repentance and faith to salvation, they must yield in repentance and faith to the ongoing leadership of the Holy Spirit in their daily lives. Justification starts a process; it does not conclude it!

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: GALATIANS 5:1

**<sup>1</sup>It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.**

**5:1 "It was for freedom"** The first phrase of Gal. 5:1 should probably go with 4:21-31 or start a new paragraph (NKJV, TEV, NJB). This may be a play on "freewoman," 4:30,31; "freedom," 5:1, and "free," 5:1. The purpose of the gospel is to free people from the curse of the Mosaic Law so that they might willingly and appropriately respond to God in a way similar to the promise of God to Abraham. Therefore, believers are free not to sin and free to live for God (cf. Gal. 2:4 and Romans 6, especially Gal. 5:11).

The noun "freedom" is fronted and the verb form of the same root is used ("freed," aorist active indicative) to emphasize the concept!

■ **"that Christ set us free"** Christians are truly free in Christ (cf. John 8:32, 36; 2 Cor. 3:17). As Martin Luther said so well, "A Christian man is the most free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian man is the most dutiful servant of all, subject to all." Believers are free from the Fall, free from the tyranny of self, free again to serve God and others!

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"Stand, then, as free men, and do not allow yourselves to become slaves again"</b>
<b>NRSV, JB</b>	<b>"Stand firm therefore, and refuse to submit again to the yoke of slavery"</b>

Paul issued two admonitions in light of believers' true freedom in Christ:

1. that they persevere (cf. Rom 5:2 and 1 Cor. 16:13; see Special Topic at Gal. 3:4)
2. that they stop turning back to different forms of legalism or self-effort

Both of these are present imperatives, however, the second has the negative particle which usually means to stop an act which is already in process.

A good parallel for the "yoke of slavery" can be found in Acts 15:10. Jesus also has a yoke but His is easy (cf. Matt. 11:29-30). The rabbis used "yoke" as a metaphor for the stipulations of the Law. The "law of Christ" is completely different from the law of Judaism or human merit (cf. James 1:25 and 2:8, 12).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: GALATIANS 5:2-12**

**<sup>2</sup>Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you. <sup>3</sup>And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law. <sup>4</sup>You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. <sup>5</sup>For we through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness. <sup>6</sup>For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love. <sup>7</sup>You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth? <sup>8</sup>This persuasion *did not come* from Him who calls you. <sup>9</sup>A little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough. <sup>10</sup>I have confidence in you in the Lord that you will adopt no other view; but the one who is disturbing you will bear his judgment, whoever he is. <sup>11</sup>But I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted? Then the stumbling block of the cross has been abolished. <sup>12</sup>I wish that those who are troubling you would even mutilate themselves.**

5:2

NASB	"Behold I, Paul, say to you"
NKJV	"Indeed I, Paul, say to you"
NRSV	"Listen! I, Paul, am telling you"
TEV	"Listen! I, Paul, tell you this"
NJB	"It is I, Paul, who tells you this"

This is the imperative form of "behold" with the strong, personal pronoun (*egō*). "I, Paul" shows the authoritative emphasis of Paul's remarks. Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, is giving revelatory information!

NASB	"that if you receive circumcision"
NKJV	"that if you become circumcised"
NRSV	"that if you let yourselves be circumcised"
TEV, NJB	"if you allow yourselves to be circumcised"

This is a third class conditional sentence meaning potential action. This would suggest that the Galatian Christians had not yet been circumcised but were tending to submit to the new prerequisites for obtaining salvation (or at least perfection, cf. Gal. 3:1) given by the Judaizers. Yet circumcision was not the fundamental issue (cf. Gal. 5:6; 1 Cor. 7:18-19). Circumcision was only one aspect of the entire Jewish system of works righteousness. Paul circumcised Timothy in Acts 16:3 in order that he might minister to Jews. But Paul reiterated that true circumcision is of the heart (cf. Deut. 10:16; Jer. 4:4), not the body (cf. Rom. 2:28-29; Col. 2:11). The issue was not circumcision but how a person is brought into right standing with God (cf. Gal. 5:4).

▣ **"Christ will be of no benefit to you"** Paul is contrasting two ways of being right with God: (1) human effort and (2) free grace. The theme of the entire paragraph is that these two ways are mutually exclusive: to choose human effort is to negate free grace; to choose free grace is to exclude human effort. One



cannot mix them as a basis of salvation as Gal. 3:1-5 clearly shows.

**5:3 "he is under obligation to keep the whole Law"** If one chooses the way of human effort, then he must adhere perfectly to the Law from the age of moral responsibility (*bar-mitzvah*, age 13 for boys, *bath-mitzvah*, age 12 for girls) to death (cf. Deut. 27:26; Gal. 3:10; James 2:10). The Bible asserts that since no one has ever done this (except Jesus), everyone is in the category of law breakers, sinners (cf. Rom. 3:9-18,22-23; 6:23; 5:8 and 11:32).

**5:4 "who are seeking to be justified by law"** The theological theme of chapters 3 and 4 is that our acceptance by God is based solely on His character, the empowering of the Spirit, and the work of His Messiah. This is the essence of Paul's radical, new gospel of justification by grace through faith alone (cf. Romans 4-8).

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"You have been severed from Christ"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"You have become estranged from Christ"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"You. . . have cut yourselves off from Christ"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"have cut yourselves off from Christ"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"you have separated yourselves from Christ"</b>

This Greek verb (an aorist passive indicative of *katargeō*) is translated in many ways: (1) to render useless; (2) to render powerless; (3) to render unproductive; (4) unprofitable; (5) empty; (6) cancel; (7) make null and void; (8) bring to an end; (9) annihilate; or (10) sever from. It was used by Paul more than twenty times. See Special Topic at Gal. 3:17. One can see some of its flavor from Gal. 3:17 (to abolish) and 5:11 (to annul). If one tries to be right with God through human effort, he/she cuts himself/herself off from grace righteousness as a means of salvation (cf. Gal. 5:12):

1. in an initial salvation (when the Galatians first received the gospel)
2. in a works-oriented life (when the Galatians were thinking of now pursuing the Mosaic Law)

<b>NASB, NKJV,</b>	
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"you have fallen from grace"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"you have fallen away from grace"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"You are outside God's grace"</b>

Those who seek God by human performance have lost the free grace approach which is found in the finished work of the crucified Messiah. This context does not deal primarily with the modern theological question about the possibility of those who had salvation and have now lost it, but how humans find salvation. However, notice that salvation involves an initial and an ongoing response. It is a point and a process, both of which involve grace and faith. Both are crucial (cf. Gal. 5:7).

Paul was dealing in this letter with a legalism connected to salvation. Today most legalism within the church relates to the Christian life (cf. Gal. 3:1-3). Most legalistic Christians are similar to the "weak brothers" of Rom. 14:1-15:13. They are unable to accept the freedom and liberation of the gospel. They are not trusting in their performance for salvation, but are afraid they will somehow offend God. This attitude, however, issues in judgmental criticism toward other believers. This disruption of fellowship occurred in the Galatian churches and is still occurring in the churches of our day.

■ At this point in the discussion of a fully free, but cost-everything salvation, I would like to mention three Special Topics. The first deals with salvation as a process and the second deals with salvation as a relationship to the end of like, and the third the theological issue of apostasy. See Special Topic: Greek Verb Tenses Used for Salvation at 1 Thess. 5:9.

**[SPECIAL TOPIC: PERSEVERANCE](#)**

**[SPECIAL TOPIC: APOSTASY \(APHISTĒMI\)](#)**

**5:5 "For we through the Spirit, by faith"** This phrase shows the two necessary qualifications (i.e., covenant) involved in our salvation:

1. the drawing/wooing of the Holy Spirit (cf. John 6:44, 65; 16:7-13)
2. human response (cf. Mark 1:15; Acts 3:16,19; 20:21)

These phrases are placed first in the Greek sentence for emphasis.

■ **"are waiting for the hope of righteousness"** "Hope" is often used in the NT for the Second Coming. The Second Coming is the time when believers will be completely saved. The NT describes our salvation as

1. a completed act
2. a state of being
3. a process
4. as a future consummation

These four attributes of salvation are complimentary not mutually exclusive. We are saved, have been saved, are being saved, and shall be saved. The future aspect of salvation entails the believers' glorification at the Second Coming (cf. 1 John 3:2). Other passages describing the future event of salvation include Rom. 8:23; Phil. 3:21 and Col. 3:3, 4. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: SALVATION \(GREEK VERB TENSES\)](#) at 1 Thess. 5:9.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: HOPE**

**5:6** This verse encapsulates the theme of the book of Galatians: we are right with God by faith, not by human rituals or performance—including circumcision, the food laws, and/or moral living.

The concluding phrase has been understood in either a passive or middle sense (Barbara and Timothy Friberg, *Analytical Greek New Testament*, p. 584; Harold K Moulton [ed], *The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised*, p. 139). Roman Catholicism has mostly interpreted it as passive which means that love is the source of faith. However, most Protestants have understood it in a middle sense which means that love issues out of faith (cf. 1 Thess. 1:3). This term is used regularly in the NT as middle (cf. Rom. 7:5, 2 Cor. 1:6; Eph. 3:20; 1 Thess. 2:13, and 2 Thess. 2:7). Faith is primary.

This was Paul's answer to the false teachers concerning the lifestyle of pagans who are accepted freely in Christ. It is Spirit-motivated love (after salvation) that sets the standard of conduct for believers and gives the ability to obey. It is the new covenant, a new heart and new mind (cf. Jer. 31:33; Ezek. 36:26-27).

**5:7 "who"** The singular pronoun used of a false teacher is also found in Gal. 5:7 and twice in Gal. 5:10. However, the plural form occurs in Gal. 5:12. It may be a collective use of the singular. But because of Gal. 3:1, the use of the singular may imply

1. a local ring-leader who was converted to the Judaizer's point of view and was now pulling the church in that direction
2. a persuasive visiting leader of the Judaizers

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"You were running well; who prevented you from obeying the truth"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"You were doing so well! Who made you stop obeying the truth"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"You began your race well: who made you less anxious to obey the truth"</b>

"You were running well" is an imperfect active indicative. This means that for a period of time the churches of Galatia were doing so well in Christian maturity. Paul often used athletic metaphors. He was especially fond of "running" (cf. Gal. 2:2; 1 Cor. 9:24-26; Phil. 2:16; 3:12-14; 2 Tim. 4:7).

The verb "hindered" or "prevented" (aorist active indicative) commonly had military and athletic connotations. In the military sense, the word meant the act of destroying a road in the face of an oncoming enemy. In the athletic sense, it meant the act of one runner cutting in front of another, thereby causing them

both to lose the race.

Paul was engaging in a word play between "obeying the truth" in Gal. 5:2, and "persuasion" in Gal. 5:8. This does not imply that the Galatians were not personally responsible, but that they had been influenced.

Paul uses "obeying the truth" as a way of expressing "obeying the gospel." See Special Topic: Truth in Paul's Writings at Gal. 2:5.

**5:8 "Him who calls you"** Often the pronoun antecedents are ambiguous. As in Gal. 1:6, this phrase is always used of the electing choice of God the Father. See note at 1 Thess. 2:12.

**5:9 "a little leaven"** Yeast is a common NT proverb in the Bible, often used in a negative sense (Matt. 16:6; Mark 8:15; 1 Cor. 5:6, though not always (cf. Matt. 13:33). Here the metaphor may be underscoring the pervasive power of the doctrine of works righteousness (cf. Matt. 16:6,32).

### SPECIAL TOPIC: LEAVEN

**5:10 "I have confidence in you"** This is a perfect active indicative which implies that Paul has, in the past, and continues to have, confidence in the Galatian Christians (cf. 2 Cor. 2:3; 2 Thess. 3:4; Philemon 1:21).

▣ **"that you will adopt no other view"** See note at Gal. 4:12.

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"but the one who is disturbing you shall bear his judgment, whoever he is"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"but he who troubles you shall bear his judgment, whoever he is"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"But whoever it is that is confusing you will pay the penalty"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"and that the man who is upsetting you, whoever he is, will be punished by God"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"and anybody who troubles you in the future will be condemned, no matter who he is"</b>

Believers are responsible before God., but they can be influenced (cf. Gal. 1:7; Acts 15:24). The severity of punishment for those who lead God's new believers astray can be seen in Matt. 18:6-7.

**5:11 "if I still preach circumcision"** This is a first class conditional sentence which is assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes (this usage shows that the construction is not always true to reality). Paul is using a rather unusual grammatical construction to say "since they are still accusing me of preaching circumcision," which may be a reference to

1. his circumcision of Timothy (cf. Acts 16:3) and his unwillingness to circumcise Titus (cf. Gal. 2:2-5)
2. Paul's statement in 1 Cor. 7:18-19

Whatever the background, Paul was declaring the Judaizers to be inconsistent, because if he preached circumcision they should have enthusiastically accepted him, but since they were persecuting him, it is a good evidence that he was not advocating circumcision for Gentiles.

▣ **"then the stumbling-block of the cross has been abolished"** "Stumbling-block" or "hindrance" [*skandalon*] means "a baited trap-stick used to capture animals"(cf. Rom. 9:33; 1 Cor. 1:23). The cross was an offense to the Judaizers because it gave freely that which they were working so hard to achieve (cf. Rom. 10:2-5).

▣ **"has been abolished"** This is a perfect passive indicative. See Special Topic at Gal. 3:17.

**5:12**

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"I wish that those who are troubling you would even mutilate themselves"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"I could wish that those who trouble you would even cut themselves off"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"I wish those who unsettle you would castrate themselves"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"I wish that the people who are upsetting you would go all the way; let them go on and castrate themselves"</b>

## **NJB "Tell those who are disturbing you I would like to see the knife slip"**

"Mutilate" is used in the sense of "castration." It is known from history that the cult of Cybele, which was present in the province of Galatia, castrated all of their priests (eunuchs). Paul was making a sarcastic hyperbole of circumcision (as is Phil. 3:2, where he calls them "dogs").

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: GALATIANS 5:13-15**

**<sup>13</sup>For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. <sup>14</sup>For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." <sup>15</sup>But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another.**

**5:13 "For you were called to freedom, brethren"** This begins a new stage of the argument. The term "brethren" usually marks a change of subject. As vs. 1-12 have dealt with the perversion of legalism, Gal. 5:13-15 deal with the perversion of antinomianism. We must not use our freedom as a license for indulging the sinful passions of fallen human nature (cf. Rom. 14:1-15:13).

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"But do not let this freedom become an excuse for letting your physical desires rule you"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"but be careful, or this liberty will provide an opening for self-indulgence"</b>

"Opportunity" is a military term for a military, assault-staging area (cf. Rom. 6:1-14). Several English translations translate "flesh" with the phrase "lower nature." This latter rendering agrees with Paul's use of "flesh" (see Special Topic at Gal. 1:16) in this context as the natural propensities of mankind which have been twisted toward the self ever since the fall, recorded in Genesis 3. The same polarization between the Adamic nature and the Spirit-led life is expressed in Rom. 8:1-11.

▣ **"but through love serve one another"** This verb is present active imperative. Previously Paul asserted that they should not be slaves to legalism, but he now balances this with the command that they must be slaves to one another in love (cf. Gal. 5:6; John 13:34-35; Eph. 5:21; Phil. 2:3-4). This entire context is communal (the church), not individual (cf. Gordon D. Fee, *To What End Exegesis?* pp. 154-172). Modern western interpretation has been deeply influenced by individualism. The Bible is primarily a corporate book.

### **5:14**

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"For all the law is fulfilled in one word"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"For the whole Law is summed up in one commandment"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"since the whole of the Law is summarized in a single command"</b>

This same truth is expressed in Rom. 13:8; James 2:8. This is the "law" as God's revealed will (cf. Matt. 5:17-20), not a works righteousness system of salvation. There is still a proper function for the OT in Christianity! This was a quote of Lev. 19:18 from the Septuagint. It may have functioned as a rabbinical summary regarding the purpose of the Law. It was also used by Jesus in a very similar way in Matt. 5:43-48; 22:39 and in Mark 12:29-31; Luke 10:25-28. This is a Perfect tense verb, which emphasizes a culmination of a past act into a continuing state or condition. It can be understood as (1) a summary of the law or (2) a fulfillment of the law.

**5:15** This is a first class conditional sentence, assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes. This verse uses violent imagery describing wild animals devouring each other, which is a picture of the terrible reality the false teachers had caused in the Galatian churches. This interpretation is reinforced by the equally strong statement in Gal. 5:26. This is a corporate problem, not an individual focus.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: GALATIANS 5:16-24**

**16**But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. **17**For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. **18**But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. **19**Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, **20**idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, **21**envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. **22**But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, **23**gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. **24**Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

**5:16 "walk by the Spirit"** A present active imperative, Paul urged the Galatians to live a life supernaturally and continuously controlled by the Spirit of God (cf. Eph. 4:1,17; 5:2,15-18). A primary idea in Galatians was that the Spirit is He who brings initial salvation. Thus, this verse meant that which was begun by the Spirit (cf. Gal. 3:3), is also that which is perfected by the Spirit (cf. Rom. 8:16-25). The related term "law of the Spirit," Rom. 8:1 and implied in Gal. 5:18, is exactly the same as the "law of Christ" in 1 Cor. 9:21 and James 1:25; 2:8,12. The law of love serves others as well as self (cf. Phil. 2:1-4).

■ **"and you will not carry out the desires of the flesh"** The strongest negation possible in Koine Greek utilizes the double negative with an aorist subjunctive, which means "never under any circumstances." This is found in this verse, followed by a very strong Greek word for "gratify." The Christian life and eternal salvation are of supernatural origin. Believers are not only called to be saved—but called to Christlikeness (cf. Rom. 8:28-29; Gal. 4:19; Eph. 1:4). The contrast between "flesh" and "spirit" is common in Paul (cf. Rom. 8:1-11). "Flesh" [*sarx*] is used in two senses by Paul: (1) the physical body; and (2) mankind's fallen, sinful, Adamic nature. Here it is obviously #2. See Special Topic: Flesh (*Sarx*) at Gal. 1:16.

**5:17** This contrast between the two ways of life is also found in Rom. 8:1-11. Paul presented the two supposed ways of being saved: (1) human effort; and (2) God's free grace in Christ. There are then two ways to live a godly life: (1) human effort (which is affected by the Fall) and (2) God's free power in the Spirit. The Judaizers were asserting human effort in both salvation and the Christian life, but Paul asserted God's supernatural provision in both.

**5:18 "But if you are led by the Spirit"** This is a first class conditional sentence, assumed true from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes. Those who are led by the Spirit are not subject to the law (cf. Rom. 6:14; 7:4,6). This does not imply that Christians will not sin (cf. Romans 7 and 1 John 2:1), but rather that their lives are not characterized by rebellion (cf. 1 John 3:6,9).

■ **"you are not under the Law"** No article precedes "law" in the Greek text, so the word may have a wider connotation than just the Jewish law. Here, the law has the sense of a way of life used to approach God. Here again is the contrast between the two ways of being pleasing or acceptable to God: self-effort and God's free grace.

**5:19 "Now the deeds of the flesh are evident"** Many commentators see several distinct categories in

this list of sins. However, there is a unity here based primarily on pagan worship excesses. People reveal their true selves in their actions and motives (cf. Matt. 7:16,20; 12:33). The results of the Fall are seen in our lifestyle choices.

The KJV adds the term "adultery" to this list. It is only supported by the Greek manuscript D, Codex Bezae, which is from the sixth century a.d. It is also included into some Old Latin and Vulgate manuscripts.

For "flesh" see Special Topic at Gal. 1:16.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: VICES AND VIRTUES IN THE NT**

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"immorality, impurity"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"fornication, uncleanness"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"fornication, impurity"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"immoral, filthy"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"fornication, gross indecency"</b>

This first Greek term [*porneia*] originally meant "harlot," but it came to be used for sexual immorality in general (cf. 1 Cor. 6:9). We get the English term "pornography" from this Greek word. The second term [*akatharsia*], "impurity," is also a general term for sexual immorality, though originally used in the OT in the sense of ceremonial uncleanness or moral uncleanness. Paul intended the latter meaning.

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"sensuality"</b>
<b>NKJV, NRSV</b>	<b>"licentiousness"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"and indecent actions"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"sexual irresponsibility"</b>

This implied a public flaunting of sexual desires (cf. 2 Cor. 12:21). This kind of sexual activity knew no bounds or social inhibitions. Pagan worship was characterized by sexual activity (as were some later Gnostic false teachers, cf. 1 Tim. 1:10; 2 Tim. 3:6; Titus 3:3).

**5:20 "idolatry"** This refers to the worship of anything in place of God (cf. 1 Cor. 10:14; Eph. 5:5; Col. 3:5; 1 Pet. 4:3). It especially related to acts of worship to statues or inanimate objects.

▣ **"sorcery"** This was the Greek term *pharmakia* from which the English word "pharmacy" is derived. Sorcery may have referred to the practice of using drugs to induce a religious experience. It was later used for magical practices of any kind.

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"People become enemies and they fight, they become jealous, angry, and ambitious"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"feuds and wranglings, jealousy, bad temper and quarrels; disagreements, factions"</b>

This litany describes the attitudes and actions of angry, fallen, selfish people. Remember 5:15 and 26.

- ▣ **"enmities"** This word (*echthra*) describes the condition of being characteristically hostile toward people.
- ▣ **"strife"** This means "fighting for prizes."
- ▣ **"jealousy"** This word (*zēlos*) can have positive or negative connotation, but in this context it means "self-centeredness."



- **"outbursts of anger"** This Greek term (*thumos*) means "a sudden, uncontrollable outburst of rage."
- **"disputes"** This implies conflicts based on self-seeking or ambition which knows no bounds.
- **"dissensions, factions"** These two terms go together. They describe a factious dogmatic division within a larger group, something akin to political parties (cf. 1 Tim. 5:15 and 26). It is used to describe churches, like the Corinthian Church (cf. 1 Cor. 1:10-13; 11:19; 2 Cor. 12:20).

**5:21 "envyings"** A common Stoic proverb of the day said "envy is to grieve at another's good."

Some older Greek manuscripts add the word "murders" after the word "envy." It is included in manuscripts A, C, D, G, K, and P, yet it is excluded in P<sup>46</sup>,  $\kappa$ , and B. It is also excluded in the writings of the early heretic Marcion and the early church fathers, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Chrysostom, Jerome, and Augustine. Scribes may have added it from Rom. 1:29.

- **"drunkenness, carousing"** These last two words describe the drunken orgies associated with pagan worship (cf. 1 Cor. 6:9).
- **"and things like these"** This phrase indicates that this list is not exhaustive but representative (cf. 1 Cor. 6:9-10; Eph. 5:5). As a warning, it may have reminded the Galatians of Paul's preaching on a previous occasion. This verse, in tandem with 1 John 5:16, is the source of the Roman Catholic distinction between mortal and venial sins. However, this interpretation is very dubious, in light of the overlapping definitions of the terms, as well as the fact that these sins are even committed by Christians. These verses warn that though Christians could sin in these areas and still be saved, if their lives are characterized or dominated by these sins, they have not really become new creatures in Christ (1 John 3:6,9).

■ **"of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God"** One's lifestyle choices reveal the heart. Those who are truly redeemed still struggle with sin, but their lives are not characterized by sin (cf. 1 John 3:6,9). It is not that these sins cannot be forgiven or that true Christians do not commit these sins, but that in a true believer the process of Christlikeness has begun. The Spirit, who drew believers to Christ, is now forming Christ in them (cf. Gal. 4:19; John 16:8-13). Jesus was very clear about the lifestyle of believers in Matthew 7, "by their fruits you shall know them" and John 15.

The "kingdom of God" is the subject of Jesus' first and last sermons and most of His parables. The reign of God in men's hearts now will someday be consummated over all the earth (cf. Matt. 6:10; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; Eph. 5:5).

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE KINGDOM OF GOD**

**5:22 "But the fruit of the Spirit is"** Paul described human effort as works of the flesh, but he described the Christian life as the "fruit" (cf. John 15) or product of the Spirit. He thereby distinguished human-focused religion and supernatural-focused religion. Obviously, the fruit of the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit are different. While spiritual gifts are given to every believer at salvation (cf. 1 Cor. 12:7,11), the fruit is another metaphor to describe the motives, attitudes and lifestyle of Jesus Christ. As the gifts are the distribution of the different ministries of Christ among the body of Christ, the fruit is the collective attitude of Christ in performing these gifts. It is possible to have an effective gift and not have a Christlike attitude. Therefore, Christlike maturity, which the fruit of the Spirit brings, gives ultimate glory to God through the various gifts of the Spirit. These are both brought about by the filling of the Spirit (cf. Eph. 5:18).

It is also interesting to note that fruit is singular in this verse. The use of the singular can be understood in two ways: (1) love is the fruit of the Spirit, described by the varying terms that follow; or (2) it is a collective singular like "seed."

- **"love"** This Greek form for love, *agapē*, was used in a unique way by the early church of God's self-giving love. This noun was not used often in classical Greek. The church infused it with new meaning to describe God's special love. Love here is theologically analogous to *hesed* (BDB 338), God's covenant

loyalty and love, in the OT.

■ **"joy"** Joy is an attitude of life that rejoices in who we are in Christ regardless of circumstances (cf. Rom. 14:17; 1 Thess. 1:6; 5:16; Jude 24).

■ **"peace"** Peace may mean

1. our sense of well-being because of our relationship to Christ
2. our new world-view based on the revelation of God that does not depend on circumstances
3. tranquility in our relationship with other people, especially believers (cf. John 14:27; Rom. 5:1; Phil 4:7)

Peace with God brings peace within and without (i.e., covenant brothers and sisters).

■ **"patience"** Longsuffering was proper even in the face of provocation. This was a characteristic of God the Father (cf. Rom. 2:4; 9:22; 1 Tim. 1:18; 1 Pet. 3:20). As God has been patient with us, we are to be patient with other people (cf. Eph. 4:2-3), especially believers (cf. Gal. 6:10).

■ **"kindness, goodness"** "Kindness" describes not only the life of Jesus, but His yoke (cf. Matt. 11:30). Together the two terms describe a positive, open and accepting attitude toward others, especially believers (cf. Gal. 6:10).

■ **"faithfulness"** *Pistis* is used in its Old Testament sense of loyalty and trustworthiness. It was usually used of God (cf. Rom. 3:3). Here it describes the believer's new relationship with people, especially believers.

**5:23 "gentleness"** Sometimes translated as "meekness," *praotes* is characterized by a submissive spirit. It was a metaphor taken from domesticated animals. Gentleness was not included in the Greek or Stoic lists of virtues, because the Greeks saw it as a weakness. It is uniquely Christian (cf. 1 Cor. 4:21; 2 Cor. 10:1; Eph. 4:2; Col. 3:12; 1 Tim. 6:11; 2 Tim. 2:25; Titus 3:2). It was used of both Moses (cf. Num. 12:3) and Jesus (cf. Matt. 11:29; 21:5).

■ **"self-control"** The capstone of the list, self-control characterizes Christlike maturity (cf. Acts 24:25; Titus 1:8; 2 Pet. 1:6). This term was used in 1 Cor. 7:9 for the control of our sexual drive and that may be alluded to here because of the list of the sexual abuses of pagan worship.

■ **"against such things there is no law"** There is a new inner law in the life of a believer which shows its presence by living in godliness (cf. Rom. 6:19; James 1:25; 2:8,12). This is exactly the goal of the new covenant (cf. Jer. 31:31-34 and Ezek. 36:22-32). Christlikeness is the goal of God for every Christian (cf. Rom. 8:28-29; Gal. 4:19; Eph. 1:4).

**5:24 "those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh"** This is aorist active indicative which speaks of completed action in past time. This passage, and others which imply mystical union, can be interpreted within theological categories (cf. Rom. 6:6). Throughout the book of Galatians, particularly 2:20, "crucify" is used to characterize our relationship to the Law. Once we accept God's free offer of grace in Christ as our only means of salvation, we decisively cut ourselves off from the evil of our fallen nature and the fallen world system. This personal decision of cutting ourselves off is the biblical metaphor of "crucifixion" as seen in Gal. 2:20; 5:24 and 6:14.

This is often characterized as "death to self." God has made us individually (cf. Psalm 139) to serve Him and not ourselves (cf. Rom. 6). This new life in Christ means death to the fallen, self-centered lifestyle of rebellious mankind (cf. Gal. 2:20; Rom. 6:11; 2 Cor. 5:14-15; 1 John 3:16).

For "Flesh" see Special Topic at Gal. 1:16.

■ **"with its passions and desires"** The Greeks identified the body as the source of sinfulness because they did not have supernatural revelation about creation and the fall of mankind (cf. Gen. 1-3). Therefore,



they blamed the morally neutral physical body as the source of evil. Believers understand from Paul that the body is morally neutral (cf. Rom. 4:1; 9:3; 1 Cor. 10:18). Jesus had a real human body (cf. John 1:14; Rom. 1:3; 9:5). Its goodness or wickedness depends on how we use it, for God or for evil. Once we become believers, we must yield our fallen, self-centered tendencies to the power of the Holy Spirit (cf. Rom. 7 and 1 John 2:1).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: GALATIANS 5:25-26**

**<sup>25</sup>If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. <sup>26</sup>Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another.**

**5:25 "If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit"** This is a first class conditional sentence, assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes. It summarizes the entire section (cf. Gal. 5:16; Rom. 8:1-11). Since believers have been given free grace, they ought to live appropriately (cf. Eph. 4:1,17; 5:2,15-21).

**5:26** This is parallel to Gal. 5:15 and shows the terrible consequences of the false teachings of the Judaizers among the churches of Galatia and the absence of the Spirit's control in the disruptive attitudes within the congregations.

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Outline chapter 5 in its relationship to the rest of Galatians.
2. Explain freedom and what it means in the Christian life.
3. Explain the contextual meaning of the concluding phrase of verse 4.
4. How does a gospel which is freely offered to us control our lifestyle?
5. What are the implications of verses 15 and 26 for the Church today?
6. Do verses 19-21 describe the churches of Galatia or the tendency of pagan worship?
7. How are the gifts of the Spirit related to the fruit of the Spirit?

# GALATIANS 6

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Bear One Another's Burdens	Bear and Share Burdens	Specifics in the Use of Christian Liberty	Bear One Another's Burdens	On Kindness and Perseverance
6:1-10	6:1-5  Be Generous and Do Good  6:6-10	6:1-5  6:6  6:7-10	6:1-5  6:6  6:7-10	6:1-5  6:6-10
Final Warnings and Benedictions	Glory Only in the Cross	Paul's Autograph Postscript	Final Warning and Greeting	Postscript
6:11-16	6:11-15  Blessing and a Plea  6:16-18	6:11-16	6:11-16	6:11-16
6:17		6:17	6:17	6:17
6:18		6:18	6:18	6:18

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired but it is the key to following the original author's intent which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

A. Galatians 5:1-6:10 is the practical aspect of Paul's radical free gospel of Christ, made available to believers through the love and grace of God and their repentant faith response.

1. Gal. 6:1-5 gives us specific guidelines on how to deal with a sinning Christian brother.
2. Gal. 6:6-10 has two of the most memorable quotes in the NT. Some see it as a series of unrelated truths. Others see it as a literary unit relating to believers' use of money.

B. Galatians 6:12-16 is a brief summary of the entire letter.

C. Paul's brief close of Gal. 6:17-18 is reminiscent of his cyclical letter, Ephesians, where closing greetings are notably absent. Remember that the book of Galatians was written to several churches in a geographical area.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: GALATIANS 6:1-5

<sup>1</sup>Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; *each one* looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. <sup>2</sup>Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ. <sup>3</sup>For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. <sup>4</sup>But each one must examine his own work, and then he will have *reason for boasting* in regard to himself alone, and not in regard to another. <sup>5</sup>For each one will bear his own load.

**6:1 "if"** This introduces a third class conditional sentence meaning potential, probable action.

▣ **"if anyone is caught"** This is an aorist passive subjunctive. Literally "surprised" (cf. William D. Mounce's *The Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament*, p. 393). The phrase points to our own responsibility for our sin but also of sin's subtle temptations and traps (cf. Eph. 4:14; 6:10-18). Some people did not premeditatively violate God's grace; they were duped.

**NASB, NKJV** "in any trespass"  
**NRSV** "in a transgression"  
**TEV** "in any kind of wrongdoing"  
**NJB** "misbehaves"

At least three sins may be referred to here.

1. light of the false teachers, this may refer to those who had succumbed to the temptation of being circumcised and were trying to gain perfection through the Mosaic Law
2. because of the strong terms used in Gal. 5:15,26, it may refer to the destructive tendencies which were present in the Galatian churches
3. this might be related to the pagan worship excesses described in Gal. 5:19-21

The guidelines which follow are extremely helpful to show the church how believers are to restore a fallen brother to fellowship.

**NASB, TEV** "you who are spiritual"  
**NKJV** "you who are spiritual"  
**NRSV** "you who have received the Spirit"  
**NJB** "the more spiritual of you"

This should not be misconstrued to mean "you who are sinless." Spiritual maturity has already been discussed in Gal. 5:16-18, 22-25. Spiritual maturity is

1. having the mind of Christ
2. living out the fruit of the Spirit
3. having a servant's heart
4. serving fellow Christians

See [SPECIAL TOPIC: JUDGING \(SHOULD CHRISTIANS JUDGE ONE ANOTHER?\)](#) at 1 Thess. 5:21.

▣ **"restore such a one"** "Restore" is a present active imperative, an ongoing command, often used of

setting a broken bone or fixing fishing nets (cf. Matt. 4:21; Mark 1:19). It is crucial for those who are mature in Christ to help all others in the church to attain that stature (cf. Eph. 4:13) and restore those who have fallen (cf. 2 Cor. 13:11).

Forgiveness and non-judgmentalism are biblical signs of a mature Christian (cf. Matt. 5:7; 6:14-15; 18:35; Luke 6:36-37; James 2:13; 5:9). Church discipline must always be redemptive not vindictive (cf. 2 Cor. 2:7; 2 Thess. 3:15; James 5:19-20). We dare not shoot our wounded!

■ **"looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted"** "Tempt" [*peirazō*] in this context has the connotation "to tempt with a view toward destruction." The same word is used of the evil one tempting Jesus in Matthew 4. Another word for "tempt" [*dokimazō*] is used twice in Gal. 6:4, but this word has the connotation "to test with a view toward approval." Satan will test and tempt believers in order to destroy them. Believers must be on guard, without and within (cf. 1 Cor. 10:12; 2 Cor. 13:5). See Special Topic at 1 Thess. 3:5.

**6:2 "Bear one another's burdens"** This is a present active imperative. "One another" is placed in an emphatic position in the Greek sentence. As a way of life mature Christians are to carry their weaker, less mature brothers (cf. Rom. 14:1; 15:1). This fulfills, in a very practical and observable way, the New Law (cf. Gal. 5:14).

"Burden" was used of a crushing weight put on a domestic pack animal (cf. Matt. 23:4). In context it was used metaphorically for the oral traditions of the Judaizers. It is a different term than "burden" in Gal. 6:5, a soldier's backpack.

■ **"and thereby fulfill the law of Christ"** The Law of Christ is also mentioned in 1 Cor. 9:21 and "the law of the Spirit of life in Jesus Christ" in Rom. 8:2. The Law of Christ is also characterized in different ways in James.

1. James 1:25, "the flawless law that makes men free"
2. James 2:8, "the royal law"
3. James 2:12, "the law of liberty"

As the yoke of the oral traditions interpreting the Mosaic Law had become a pressing burden to the Jews, the yoke of Christ is easy and light (cf. Matt. 11:29-30). However, a yoke it is (cf. John 13:34; 1 John 4:21), and this yoke is our responsibility to love and serve one another as brothers and sisters in Christ.

The verb "fulfill" used here is found in two different tenses in the manuscripts.

1. aorist imperative in MSS  $\kappa$ , A, C, D
2. future active indicative in MSS B, F, G
3. future active indicative, but with different initial preposition in MS P<sup>46</sup>

The UBS<sup>4</sup> committee was uncertain which was original. They thought possibly that the future was changed to an aorist imperative because of the preceding infinitive in Gal. 6:1 (Bruce Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*).

**6:3 "if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing"** This is a first class conditional sentence, assumed true from the author's perspective or for the author's literary purposes. Christians should judge themselves so that they can appropriately relate to each other and can avoid overestimating themselves (cf. 1 Cor. 3:18, possibly reflecting Isa. 5:2). This does not mean that Christians do not have sin, but that sin does not dominate their lives (cf. 1 John 1:8; 3:6, 9). Therefore, they can help and pray for those whose lives are dominated by sin (cf. 1 Cor. 3:18).

■ **"he deceives himself"** This verb occurs only once in the entire NT, meaning to seduce oneself into error. The noun form appears in Titus 1:10. Self-deception is the worst kind of blindness.

**6:4 "But each one must examine his own work"** This is a present active imperative of the term for "test" or "tempt" (*dokimazō*) with the connotation of "to test with a view toward approval." See Special Topic at 1 Thess. 3:5.

■ **"and then he will have reason for boasting in regard to himself alone, and not in regard to another"** Believers must be careful not to compare themselves with one another (cf. 2 Cor. 10:12), especially those who have been surprised and overtaken by sin (cf. Gal. 6:1).

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: BOASTING**

**6:5 "For each one will bear his own load"** This may refer to the judgment seat of Christ in an eschatological/end-time setting (cf. 2 Cor. 5:10). At first glance, Gal. 6:2 and 5 seemingly contradict each other until a closer lexical study shows that the two words translated respectively as "burden" and "load" had different usages. The former word in Gal. 6:2 (*baros*) means a "crushing weight," while the latter word in Gal. 6:5 (*phortion*) means a "soldier's backpack filled with his needed equipment." Mature Christians must carry the load of responsibility for themselves and sometimes, for others. An example of this might be 2 Cor. 8:13-14. The same term was used of Jesus' guidelines for Christians in Matt. 11:30.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: GALATIANS 6:6-10**

**<sup>6</sup>The one who is taught the word is to share all good things with the one who teaches *him*. <sup>7</sup>Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. <sup>8</sup>For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. <sup>9</sup>Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. <sup>10</sup>So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.**

**6:6 "the word"** This is from the same root as "Word" in John 1:1, referring to Jesus. The "word" is the gospel of and about Jesus. Paul uses a variety of ways to refer to this "word."

1. "the word of God" – 1 Cor. 14:36; 2 Cor. 2:17; 4:2; Phil. 1:14; Col. 3:16; 1 Thess. 2:13
2. "the word of the Lord" – 1 Thess. 1:8; 2 Thess. 3:1
3. the word – Gal. 6:6; 1 Thess. 1:6; Col. 4:3; 2 Tim. 4:2

■ **"is to share"** This is another present active imperative which relates either to

1. Gal. 6:1-5, a call on the mature to help weaker Christians
2. Gal. 6:7-10, a description of the law of spiritual sowing and reaping (see note at Gal. 6:7)

Those who are taught are under the spiritual responsibility to share in the ministry of those who teach them (cf. Luke 10:7; Rom. 15:27; 1 Cor. 9:9-14). This is a general principle, and although Paul did not personally take advantage of personal remuneration, he advocated it for other ministers. The English word "catechism" is derived from the Greek [*katechēō*] translated as "taught" and "teaches" which are found in this verse.

■ **"good things"** "Good things" is purposefully ambiguous, referring to physical needs, spiritual needs or both. The obvious truth is that those who are being taught should be grateful and responsive. Exactly how this verse relates to the false teachers is uncertain. Paul could have been referring to himself and the Gentile contribution for Jerusalem.

■ **"with the one who teaches *him*"** The teacher ("the one who teaches") refers either to

1. the spiritual gift of teaching as in Acts 13:1 and 1 Cor. 12:28
2. a teacher in the local congregation who trained new believers and children
3. one who taught the entire congregation the implications of the teachings of the Apostles as they applied to their daily lives, as in pastor/teacher of Eph. 4:11

This last option would be similar to the OT task of the local Levites and, later, professional scribes.

**6:7 "Do not be deceived"** This is a present passive imperative with a negative particle which usually means to stop an act which was already in process. They were already being deceived (cf. 1 Cor. 6:9;

15:33; 2 Thess. 2:3; James 1:16).

■ **"God is not mocked"** This verb means "to turn one's nose up at" something or someone. This may refer to those who are called to minister as God's representatives, that is, the teachers of Gal. 6:6. To scoff at Christian ministers is, in a sense, to scoff at God. Jesus, in Matt. 10:42 and 25:40, mentioned that when we help others in His name we are helping Him. This is the same truth but from the opposite direction. However, how these verses relate to one another is uncertain. This may be a general proverb connected with "sowing and reaping" applied in a figurative sense.

This verse may relate to Gal. 6:8-10 and not to Gal. 6:6 at all. This is a moral universe. We do not so much break God's laws as much as we break ourselves on God's laws. Be it known, believer or unbeliever, we reap what we sow. Sin always runs its course, even in the life of believers. Wild oats are very, very expensive—so, too, is self-centered sowing!

■ **"for whatever a man sows"** This is a spiritual principle. God is ethical-moral and so is His creation. Humans break themselves on God's standards. We reap what we sow. This is true for believers (but does not affect salvation) and unbelievers (cf. Job 34:11; Ps. 28:4; 62:12; Pro. 24:12; Eccl. 12:14; Jer. 17:10; 32:19; Matt. 16:27; 25:31-46; Rom. 2:6; 14:12; 1 Cor. 3:8; 2 Cor. 5:10; Gal. 6:7-10; 2 Tim. 4:14; 1 Pet. 1:17; Rev. 2:23; 20:12; 22:12).

**6:8 "For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption"** This refers to the two basic approaches of being right with God (cf. Gal. 5:13, 16-17), human effort (cf. Rom. 8:6-8, 13) and free grace (cf. Rom. 8:2-4, 6, 12-14).

■ **"corruption"** See Special Topic following.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: DESTROY, RUIN, CORRUPT (PHTHEIRŌ)**

■ **"eternal life"** The concept of eternal life which is found in Gal. 6:8 is from the Greek word *zoē*. It is used particularly by John to refer to resurrection life, the life of the new age (cf. Rom. 5:21; 6:22-23; Titus 1:2; 3:7). It has the same implication here. Verses 8-10 show the consequences of our sowing and reaping.

**6:9 "Let us not lose heart in doing good"** This is literally "to despair" or "to lose heart" (NEGATED PRESENT ACTIVE SUBJUNCTIVE cf. Luke 18:1; 2 Thess. 3:13; 2 Cor. 4:1, 16; Heb. 12:3.) Often Christians grow weary of the very things that they have been called to do.

■ **"for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary"** Notice the conditional element (not conditional sentence). It is conditioned on our continued faith response. Also, note the element of God's sovereign timing in our lives. We do not understand why things happen as they do, but because we believe in the sovereignty of God and the specific demands of the free gospel, we direct our lives to certain ways of service and giving. See Special Topic on Perseverance at Gal. 3:4.

**6:10 "So then, while we have opportunity"** Believers must continue to watch for opportunities to live out their faith in Christ (cf. Eph. 5:15-21; Col. 4:2-6). This phrase will refer to

1. opportunities in daily life
2. before persecution comes
3. before the Second Coming

This may be an allusion to Ps. 69:13 or Isa. 49:8 (cf. 2 Cor. 6:2).

■ **"let us do good"** This is a present middle (deponent) subjunctive. Paul states with conviction that our standing with God does not come by human effort, but he is equally emphatic that once we know God we should live a life of strenuous service (i.e., Titus 3:8, 14). These twin truths are found in Eph. 2:8-9 and then Gal. 6:10. We are not saved by good works, but we are most definitely saved unto good works.

■ **"to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith"** Notice that our love

is meant for all people for there is always a view toward evangelism in all of our actions (cf. Matt. 28:19-20; Luke 24:47; John 20:31; Acts 1:8; 1 Cor. 9:19-23; 1 Pet. 3:15). However, our primary focus, as far as fellowship, is on the members of the family of God. This is not denominationally focused for we are to take a person at his word that he has trusted in Christ. Once he has made that confession we are to serve him as Christ served us.

I very much like Gordon Fee's insight in to the corporate nature of this book, not the typical western individual emphasis. This book is about the Spirit-filled life of the community of faith and beyond (cf. *To What End Exegesis?*, p. 163).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: GALATIANS 6:11-16**

**<sup>11</sup>See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand. <sup>12</sup>Those who desire to make a good showing in the flesh try to compel you to be circumcised, simply so that they will not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. <sup>13</sup>For those who are circumcised do not even keep the Law themselves, but they desire to have you circumcised so that they may boast in your flesh. <sup>14</sup>But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. <sup>15</sup>For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. <sup>16</sup>And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.**

**6:11 "See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand"** This is an aorist active imperative. Paul dictated his letters to a scribe (cf. Rom. 16:22). Some see these final words in Paul's own handwriting as Paul's way of verifying his true letters, in light of 2 Thess. 2:2. We know from several of Paul's letters that he wrote the concluding sentences in his own hand (cf. 1 Cor. 16:21; Col. 4:18; 2 Thess. 3:17 and Philemon 1:19). Since I believe that Paul's thorn in the flesh was Oriental ophthalmia, this is an added evidence of his need to write, not in the small, concise writing of a scribe, but with the scrawling hand of a man who was partially blind.

**6:12**

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"Those who desire to make a good showing in the flesh"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"As many as desire to make a good showing in the flesh"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"Those who want to show off and brag about external matters"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"It is only self-interest"</b>

The Judaizers were more concerned with the outer aspects of religion (cf. Col. 2:16-23); they wanted a religious show (cf. Gal. 4:17)! Convincing the Galatians to be circumcised would be a "feather in their caps" (cf. Gal. 6:13c). The false teachers wanted self-affirmation at the expense of the Galatian believers.

For "flesh" see Special Topic at Gal. 1:16.

▣ **"try to compel you to be circumcised"** Gal. 6:12-16 are a summary of the entire letter which focuses on the inappropriate emphasis of the false teachers on human effort as a means of being saved or of being fully matured. This is a recurrent danger in the modern church as believers demand service, enthusiasm, ritual, attendance, Bible knowledge, prayer, or any of the good discipleship techniques as a means of being complete in Christ. Paul's great truth was that believers are complete in their standing with God when they have trusted Jesus Christ by faith. In light of this new, full acceptance, believers then must yield themselves in gratitude to God and service to others (i.e., James 2:14-26).

▣ **"simply so that they will not be persecuted for the cross of Christ"** This may refer to

1. Jewish persecution (cf. Acts 13:45,50; 14:2,5,19); the Judaizers by their insistence on the Law of Moses would not be rejected as strenuously as Paul's teaching of free grace in Christ alone
2. Roman persecution because Christianity was not a legal, recognized religion as was Judaism



The synagogue instituted its curse formula, which was a rabbinical way of forcing Christians out of the synagogue because they would not and could not say "Jesus is accursed" (cf. John 9:22,35; 12:42 & 16:2).

**6:13 "For those who are circumcised do not even keep the Law themselves"** The subject of this sentence is ambiguous, which could be (1) the false teachers or (2) aggressive converts within the churches of Galatia. The men who argued circumcision as a means of being right with God could not even keep the whole Law themselves (cf. Rom. 2:17-29). If you break the Law one time (after the age of moral responsibility), in one way, then James 2:10 (and Gal. 5:3) is a truth to be reckoned with!

**6:14 "But may it never be"** See note at Gal. 2:17.

▣ **"that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ"** Paul, of all people, knew what it was to be redeemed out of an undeserving life, zealous though it may be (cf. Phil. 3:2-16). Human boasting is excluded when human merit is excluded (cf. Jer. 9:23-26; Rom. 3:27-28; 1 Cor. 1:26-31). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: BOASTING](#) at Gal. 6:4.

▣ **"through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world"** This is the continuing metaphor throughout Galatians which speaks of believers' death to the Law and their being alive to God in Christ. This is a perfect passive indicative, which emphasizes a continuing state accomplished by an outside agent, here, the Spirit. This metaphor is used in Gal. 2:19, 5:24, and here expressing how all things become new when believers identify with Christ's death on the cross. They are now free from the Law in order to live for God (cf. Rom. 6:10-11, 12-23).

For "world" see Special Topic: "Kosmos" at Gal. 4:3.

**6:15 "For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation"** Paul has already mentioned that circumcision is not the issue (cf. Gal. 5:6; Rom. 2:28-29; 1 Cor. 7:18-19). The issue is salvation, if believers try to make themselves acceptable to God by human effort, either pagan or Jew, they are totally cut off from the absolutely free gift of God in Jesus Christ. There are two mutually exclusive ways of being right with God.

1. the free gospel of Christ through repentance and faith
2. human effort

Paul restates that circumcision is not really the issue (nor food laws, cf. 1 Cor. 8; 10:23-26), but how one pursues right standing with God by perfectly fulfilling the law.

Several early Greek manuscripts add "in Christ Jesus" after "For neither" (MSS  $\kappa$ , A, C, D, F, G, and most minuscules and versions (cf. NKJV). However, most modern English versions leave it out because it is absent in MSS P<sup>40</sup> and B. The UBS<sup>4</sup> rates its exclusion as "A" (certain). It probably was a scribal assimilation from 5:6.

▣ **"but a new creation"** This is the New Covenant; believers are brand new people in Jesus Christ! All old things have passed away and everything is new (cf. Rom. 6:4; 8:19-22; 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 2:15; 4:24; Col. 3:10).

**6:16 "And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them"** This may be a loose quotation from Ps. 125:5 and 128:6. From the Greek word "rule" (*kanoni*) the English word "canon" is derived. This was a construction term used for a measuring reed. It is used here to refer to the gospel (Jesus' yoke, cf. Gal. 6:2). Notice believers are to walk in it, not just affirm it (cf. James 1:22).

▣ **"the Israel of God"** Significantly Paul calls the Church "the Israel of God." In his writings he has emphasized that Abraham's true seed is not by racial descent but by faith descent (cf. Gal. 3:7,9,29; Rom. 2:28-29; 9:6; Phil. 3:3). The gospel is about Jesus, not national Israel! Believers in Christ are the true "people of God"!

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## NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: GALATIANS 6:17

**17**From now on let no one cause trouble for me, for I bear on my body the brand-marks of Jesus.

**6:17 "From now on let no one cause trouble for me"** The verb is a present active imperative. To whom this is addressed or why is not known. Paul appealed to his service for Christ as the reason that this should not happen again. It possibly refers to the personal attacks that the false teachers used to alienate the Galatian believers from the gospel. The Galatian believers allowed this to happen!

▣ **"for I bear on my body the brand-marks of Jesus"** As the false teachers were emphasizing circumcision as a mark of God's covenant, Paul asserted that he also had an outward sign. They were the scars

1. of his physical persecution for preaching the good news of Christ (i.e., 2 Cor. 4:7-12; 6:4-6; 11:23-28)
2. from his Damascus road encounter with the risen Christ
3. as a sign Paul was a slave/servant of Christ and under His protection

I think #1 fits the context best.

## NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: GALATIANS 6:18

**18**The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen.

**6:18** This is an example of a brief closing blessing in a cyclical letter (because there are no personal greetings, like Ephesians). Note that the term "be with your spirit" is a good example of the small "s" (spirit) which is used of mankind's spirit, not the Holy Spirit. However, in many instances in the New Testament, it refers to the human spirit, which is energized by the Holy Spirit. This is probably the implication here.

## SPECIAL TOPIC: PAUL'S PRAYER, PRAISE, AND THANKSGIVING

▣ **"Amen"** See Special Topic at Gal. 1:5.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. What are the biblical guidelines for restoring a fallen brother?
2. Are verses 2 and 5 contradictory?
3. What does Gal. 6:6 say about Christians supporting Christian ministries?
4. Describe in your own words the biblical law of sowing and reaping.
5. Describe in your own words the biblical idea of two ways to salvation that are brought out in such clarity in the book of Galatians.
6. Explain in your own words how verse Gal. 6:9 is related to verses Gal. 6:6 and Gal. 6:7.
7. If circumcision was not the issue of Gal. 6:15, why did Paul make such an issue of it?
8. What are the implications of the Church being called the true Israel of God in Gal. 6:16?

# INTRODUCTION TO THE THESSALONIAN LETTERS

## A. Brief Summary

1. The Thessalonian letters provide tremendous insight into Paul as both missionary and pastor. We find him establishing a church in a brief time and continuing to pray and be concerned about its growth, development, and ministry.
2. We see him faithfully proclaiming the gospel, concerned for the converts, scolding them, praising them, guiding them, exhorting them, teaching them, loving them, even giving of himself to them. He was thrilled with their progress to that point, but was disappointed with the rate at which they matured.
3. In these Epistles we meet a zealous, loving servant of Christ and a small, zealous, but growing new church. Both were faithful, both were used by God, and both served each other in a Christlike manner seldom found among God's people.

## B. The City of Thessalonica

### 1. Brief History of Thessalonica

- a. Thessalonica was located at the head of the Thermaic Gulf. Thessalonica was a coastal town on the major Roman road, Via Ignatia (the way of the nations), running eastward from Rome. A seaport, it was also very close to a rich, well-watered, coastal plain. These three advantages made Thessalonica the largest, most important commercial and political center in Macedonia.
- b. Thessalonica was originally named Therma, derived from the hot springs located in the area. An early historian, Pliny the Elder, refers to Therma and Thessalonica existing together. If this is the case, Thessalonica simply surrounded Therma and annexed it (Leon Morris, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991, p. 11). Yet most historians believe Cassander, one of Alexander the Great's generals, renamed Therma in 315 b.c. after Philip of Macedonia's daughter and Alexander's half-sister and his wife, Thessalonica (Strabo VII Fragment 21). Sometime during the early centuries of the spread of Christianity, Thessalonica came to be nicknamed "the orthodox city" because of its Christian character (Dean Farrar, *The Life and Work of St. Paul*, New York: Cassell and Company, Limited, 1904, p. 364). Today Thessalonica is known as Salonika and it still is an important city in Greece.
- c. Thessalonica was a cosmopolitan metropolis similar to Corinth, inhabited by peoples from all over the known world.
  - (1) Barbaric Germanic peoples from the north were living there, bringing with them their pagan religion and culture.
  - (2) Greeks lived there, coming from Achaia to the south and from the islands of the Aegean Sea, in turn bringing their refinement and philosophy.
  - (3) Romans from the west also settled there. They were mostly retired soldiers and they brought their strength of will, wealth and political power.
  - (4) Finally, Jews came in large numbers from the east; eventually one third of the population was Jewish. They brought with them their ethical monotheistic faith and their national prejudices.
- d. Thessalonica, with a population of about 200,000, was truly a cosmopolitan city. It was a resort and health center because of the hot springs. It was a commercial center because of its seaport, fertile plains and the proximity of the Ignatian Way.

e. As the capital and largest city, Thessalonica was also the central political headquarters of Macedonia. Being a Roman provincial capital and home of many Roman citizens (mostly retired soldiers), it became a free city. Thessalonica paid no tribute and was governed by Roman law, since most Thessalonians were Roman citizens. Thus the Thessalonian rulers were called "politarchs." This title appears nowhere else in literature but it is preserved by an inscription over the triumphal arch at Thessalonica known as the Vardar Gate (Farrar, p. 371n.).

## 2. Events Leading to Paul's Coming to Thessalonica

a. Many events led Paul to Thessalonica, yet behind all the physical circumstances is the direct, definite call of God. Paul had not originally planned to enter the European continent. His desire on this second missionary journey was to revisit the churches in Asia Minor that he had established on his first journey and then to turn eastward. Yet, just as the moment arrived to turn northeastward, God started closing the doors. The culmination of this was Paul's Macedonian vision (cf. Acts 16:6-10). This caused two things to happen: first, the continent of Europe was evangelized and second, Paul, because of circumstances in Macedonia, began writing his Epistles (Thomas Carter, *Life and Letters of Paul*, Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1921, p. 112).

b. After noting the above spiritual direction, the physical circumstances that led Paul to Thessalonica were:

- (1) Paul went to Philippi, a small town with no synagogue. His work there was thwarted by the owners of a prophetic, demonic slave girl and the town council. Paul was beaten and humiliated yet a church was formed even in the midst of all this. Because of the opposition and physical punishment, Paul was forced to leave, possibly sooner than he had wished.
- (2) Where would he go from there? He passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia that also had no synagogue,
- (3) He came to the largest city in the area, Thessalonica, which did have a synagogue. Paul had made it a pattern to go to the local Jews first. He did this because:
  - (a) of their knowledge of the Old Testament;
  - (b) of the opportunity for teaching and preaching that the synagogue presented;
  - (c) of their position as the chosen people, God's covenant people (cf. Matt. 10:6; 15:24; Rom. 1:16-17; 9-11);
  - (d) Jesus had offered Himself first to them, then to the world—so too, Paul would follow Christ's example.

## 3. Paul's Companions

a. Paul was accompanied by Silas and Timothy in Thessalonica. Luke was with Paul at Philippi and he remained there. We learn this by the "we" and "they" passages of Acts 16 and 17. Luke speaks of "we" at Philippi, but of "they" as traveling to Thessalonica.

b. Silas, or Silvanus, was the man Paul chose to go with him on the second missionary journey after Barnabas and John Mark went back to Cyprus:

- (1) He is first mentioned in the Bible in Acts 15:22 where he is called a chief man among the brethren of the Jerusalem Church.
- (2) He was also a prophet (cf. Acts 15:32).
- (3) He was a Roman citizen like Paul (cf. Acts 16:37).
- (4) He and Judas Barsabbas were sent to Antioch by the Jerusalem Church to inspect the situation (cf. Acts 15:22,30-35).
- (5) Paul praises him in 2 Cor. 1:19 and mentions him in several letters.
- (6) Later he is identified with Peter in writing 1 Peter (cf. 1 Pet. 5:12).
- (7) Both Paul and Peter call him Silvanus while Luke calls him Silas.

c. Timothy was also a companion and fellow-worker of Paul:

- (1) Paul met him at Lystra where he was converted on the first missionary journey.
- (2) Timothy was half Greek (father) and half Jewish (mother). Paul wanted to use him to

work with evangelizing the Gentiles.

(3) Paul circumcised him so that he could work with Jewish people.

(4) Timothy is mentioned in the salutation in: 2 Corinthians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians and Philemon.

(5) Paul spoke of him as "my son in the ministry" (cf. 1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2; Tit. 1:4).

(6) Paul's general tone throughout his letters implies that Timothy was young and timid.

Yet Paul has great confidence and trust in him (cf. Acts 19:27; 1 Cor. 4:17; Phil. 2:19).

d. It is only fitting in the section on Paul's companions that mention is made of the men who came to Thessalonica and accompanied Paul on his later missions. They are Aristarchus (Acts 19:29; 20:4; 27:2) and Secundus (Acts 20:4). Also, Demas could have been from Thessalonica (Philem. 24; 2 Tim. 4:10).

#### 4. Paul's Ministry in the City

a. Paul's ministry in Thessalonica followed his usual pattern of going to the Jews first and then turning to the Gentiles. Paul preached on three Sabbaths in the synagogue. His message was "Jesus is the Messiah." He used Old Testament Scriptures to show that the Messiah was to be a suffering Messiah (cf. Gen. 3:15; Isa. 53), and not a political temporal Messiah. Paul also emphasized the resurrection and offered salvation to all. Jesus was clearly presented as the Messiah promised of old who could save all peoples.

b. The response to this message was that some Jews, many devout Gentiles, and many important women accepted Jesus as Savior and Lord. An analysis of these groups of converts is very meaningful in understanding Paul's later letters to this church.

c. Gentiles comprised most of the members of the church, seen by the absence of allusions to the OT in either of the two epistles. The Gentiles readily accepted Jesus as Savior and Lord for several reasons:

(1) Their traditional religions were powerless superstition. Thessalonica lay at the foot of Mt. Olympus and all knew its heights were empty.

(2) The gospel was free to all.

(3) Christianity contained no Jewish exclusive nationalism. The Jewish religion had attracted many because of its monotheism and its high morals, but it also repelled many because of its repugnant ceremonies (such as circumcision), and its inherent racial and national prejudices.

d. Many "chief women" accepted Christianity, because of these women's abilities to make their own religious choices. Women were more free in Macedonia and Asia Minor than in the rest of the Greco-Roman world (Sir Wm. M. Ramsay, *St. Paul the Traveller and Roman Citizen*, New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1896, p. 227). Yet the poorer class of women, although free, were still under the sway of superstition and polytheism (Ramsay, p. 229).

e. Many have found a problem in the length of time that Paul stayed at Thessalonica:

(1) Acts 17:2 speaks of Paul's reasoning in the synagogue on three Sabbaths while in Thessalonica.

(2) 1 Thess. 2:7-11 tells of Paul's working at his trade. This was tent-making or as some have suggested working with leather.

(3) Phil. 4:16 supports the longer residence, when Paul received at least two money gifts from the church at Philippi while in Thessalonica. The distance between the two cities is about 100 miles. Some suggest that Paul stayed about two or three months and that the three Sabbaths only refer to the ministry to the Jews (Shepard, p. 165).

(4) The differing accounts of the converts in Acts 17:4 and 1 Thess. 1:9 and 2:4 support this view, the key difference in the accounts being the rejection of idols by the Gentiles. The Gentiles in Acts were Jewish proselytes and had already turned from idols. The context implies Paul may have had a larger ministry among pagan Gentiles than Jews.

(5) When a larger ministry might have occurred is uncertain because Paul always went

to the Jews first. After they rejected his message, he turned to the Gentiles. When they responded to the gospel in large numbers, the Jews became jealous (which was one of Paul's missionary techniques, cf. Rom. 9-11) and started a riot among the rabble of the city.

- f. Because of a riot Paul left Jason's house and hid with Timothy and Silas or at least they were not present when the mob stormed Jason's house looking for them. The Politarchs made Jason put up a security bond to insure peace. This caused Paul to leave the city by night and go to Berea. Nevertheless, the church continued its witness of Christ in the face of much opposition.

## AUTHOR

A. 1 Thessalonians. Only modern form critics have seriously doubted the Paul's authorship and the authenticity of 1 Thessalonians, but their conclusions have not convinced many scholars. 1 Thessalonians is included in Marcion's canon (a.d. 140) and in the Muratorian Fragment (a.d. 200). Both lists of canonical books of the NT circulated in Rome. Irenaeus quoted 1 Thessalonians by name—he wrote around a.d. 180.

### B. 2 Thessalonians.

1. The book of 2 Thessalonians has not always been accepted as Pauline and has been attacked on several grounds:
  - a. The vocabulary poses one problem. The letter contains many words not found in the other Pauline letters.
  - b. "The style is stereotyped and at times curiously formal" (Heard, p. 186).
  - c. The eschatology of the two letters is supposedly inconsistent.
  - d. 2 Thessalonians contains a view of the anti-Christ unique in the NT, therefore, some conclude that Paul could not be the author.
2. The authenticity of 2 Thessalonians is based on several premises:
  - a. Polycarp, Ignatius, and Justin recognized it
  - b. The Marcionite canon included it
  - c. The Muratorian Fragment included it
  - d. Irenaeus quoted it by name
  - e. The vocabulary, style and theology are as Pauline as 1 Thessalonians

### C. The Two Compared

1. The two letters are very similar, not only in ideas, but also in actual phraseology. If the opening and closing formula language are excluded, resemblances still occur in about one-third of the material.
2. The general tone of 2 Thessalonians is different from the first letter, being colder and more formal. Yet this can easily be understood when one sees the emotional circumstances involved in the writing of the first letter and the developed problems of the second letter.

### D. The Order of the Letters

1. Another interesting hypothesis is presented by F. W. Manson using Johannes Weiss' notes. They contend that the order of the books is reversed. The reasons for this are:
  - a. the trials and tribulations are at their height in 2 Thessalonians, but are past in 1 Thessalonians;
  - b. in 2 Thessalonians the internal difficulties are spoken of as a new development of which the author of the letter has just learned, whereas in 1 Thessalonians the circumstances were familiar to all concerned;
  - c. the statement that the Thessalonians have no need to be instructed about times and seasons (1 Thess. 5:1) is very relevant if they are acquainted with 2 Thessalonians 2;
  - d. the formula "Now concerning..." in 1 Thess. 4:9, 13; 5:1, is like that in 1 Cor. 7:1,25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1,12, where the writer is replying to points raised in a letter sent to him. Manson

thinks that the replies might concern certain questions arising from statements in 2 Thessalonians.

2. Several premises may counteract this argument:
  - a. the problems occupying Paul's attention intensify and deepen from 1 Thessalonians to 2 Thessalonians;
  - b. the passages in 2 Thessalonians refer to a letter from Paul (II Thess. 2:2, 15; 3:17) and if we assume this letter not to be 1 Thessalonians, then we have the problem of a lost letter;
  - c. the personal reminiscences forming so prominent a part of the first letter are lacking in the second, which seems natural if the letter is a sequel to the first;
  - d. the tone of the letters seems completely unnatural to this situation if the order is reversed.

## DATE OF LETTERS

- A. The date for the writing of the Thessalonian Letters is one of the most certain dates we have involving Paul's letters. It is recorded that while Paul was in "Corinth he was arrested and brought before Gallio, the proconsul of Achaia." An inscription discovered at Delphi answers a question referred to the Emperor Claudius by this same Gallio. It was dated in the twelfth year of the Emperor's tribunal power and after his twenty-sixth acclamation as Emperor. This twelfth year was from 25 January a.d. 52 through 24 January a.d. 53. While the date of the twenty-sixth acclamation is not exactly known, the twenty-seventh was before 1 August a.d. 52. Claudius' decision would have been given to Gallio during the first half of 52. Now, proconsuls usually took office in early summer and held office for one year. It would seem, therefore, Gallio entered his term of office in the early summer of 51 (Morris, p. 15).
- B. This dating of the term of office of the proconsul does not completely solve all the problems of the dating of the Thessalonian Letters. Paul was in Corinth for 18 months (Acts 18:11) but at which time he appeared before Gallio is not known. Most commentators date I and 2 Thessalonians in a.d. 50-51.
- C. Possible chronology of Paul's writings following F. F. Bruce and Murray J. Harris with minor adaptations.

<u>Book</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Place of Writing</u>	<u>Relation to Acts</u>
1. Galatians	48	Syrian Antioch	
2. 1 Thessalonians	50	Corinth	Acts 14:28; 15:2
3. 2 Thessalonians	50	Corinth	Acts 18:5
4. 1 Corinthians	55	Ephesus	Acts 19:20
5. 2 Corinthians	56	Macedonia	Acts 20:2
6. Romans	57	Corinth	Acts 20:3
7.-10. Prison Letters			
Colossians	early 60s	Rome	
Ephesians	early 60s	Rome	
Philemon	early 60s	Rome	
Philippians	late 62-63	Rome	
11.- Fourth Missionary Journey			Acts 28:30-31
13. 1 Timothy	63 (or later,	Macedonia	
Titus	63 but before	Ephesus (?)	
2 Timothy	64 a.d. 68)	Rome	

## EVENTS SURROUNDING THE THESSALONIAN LETTERS

- A. The events that led to Paul's writing of the Thessalonian letters are complex and intertwined.

Certain distinctions must be noted, especially concerning the physical setting and the emotional setting. Paul was forced to leave the new Thessalonian believers because the Jews had incited the superstitious, polytheistic rabble of the city to riot at Jason's house in a search for Paul and his companions. After a hearing before the Politarchs, Jason and other Christian leaders were forced to put up a security bond to assure peace. When Paul heard of this he knew he had to move on and leave this young, immature church. He, therefore, went to Berea with Timothy and Silas. Timothy apparently stayed at first (cf. Acts 17:10) then later joined Silas to go to Athens (cf. Acts 17:15). At first the honest reception of the Jews at Berea was a blessing to Paul in the face of such strong Jewish opposition previously. Yet this did not last long. The Jews from Thessalonica came down to Berea and started causing trouble. Therefore, Paul had to leave again.

- B. This time Paul went to Athens where he received a cold and unresponsive welcome. He became a novelty to the academic philosophers. His experience in Macedonia was characterized by persecution and opposition. He was beaten, stripped naked, and chased out of town by night. Scholars mocked him, and pagans and many of his own countrymen hated him (cf. 2 Cor. 4:7-11; 6:4-10; 11:23-29).
- C. Paul had been forced to leave this promising church at Thessalonica at a crucial time. They were immature in the faith and were facing affliction and persecution. Paul could stand the mental anguish no longer. Worried about the young converts, somewhere between Berea and Athens, Paul sent Timothy and Silas back to the new Macedonian churches. Timothy went to Thessalonica. Many feel he stayed and ministered there for six months to a year. The church desperately needed someone to teach them, comfort them and encourage them. Timothy himself was a fairly new convert. He was converted on Paul's first missionary journey, but he had only been with Paul since Paul went to Lystra on his second missionary journey. He was, therefore, new in the ministry but Paul had great confidence in him. This was Timothy's first assignment as Paul's official representative.
- D. Paul ministered in Athens alone and he became very discouraged and depressed because of the lack of response to the gospel in Macedonia and his incessant concern for the new Christians there. He was concerned about the Thessalonian church in particular. Could a church be founded in such a short time and in difficult circumstances and still endure? (Carter, p. 115) To add to this he had received no word from Timothy and Silas for some time (six months to a year, although some say only one or two months) (Farrar, p. 369). This was the emotional state in which we found Paul as he arrived in Corinth.
- E. In Corinth two things happened that greatly encouraged Paul.
1. The vision that God had many in Corinth who would respond to the gospel (Acts 18:9-10).
  2. Timothy and Silas arrived and brought good news (Acts 18:5). It was Timothy's message from Thessalonica that would lead Paul to write to them from Corinth. Paul was responding to questions from the church on doctrinal and practical issues.
- F. The writing of 2 Thessalonians was not long after 1 Thessalonians because it did not achieve all that Paul had hoped it would. Also, he had become aware of other problems. Many scholars believe 2 Thessalonians was written about six months after 1 Thessalonians

## **PURPOSE OF THE LETTERS**

- A. The Thessalonian Letters have a threefold purpose:
1. to share Paul's joy and thanksgiving to God for the faithfulness and Christlikeness of the Thessalonians, even amidst persecution.
  2. to answer the criticism of his motives and character which had been brought against him.

3. to discuss the return of the Lord. This eschatological element of Paul's preaching caused two questions in the minds of the Thessalonian Christians:
  - a. What would happen to believers who had died before the Lord's return?
  - b. What would happen to the believers in the congregation who had stopped working and were sitting around waiting for the Lord's return (Barclay, pp. 21-22).
4. to answer specific questions asked by the church (cf. 1 Thess. 4:13; 5:1).

B. Much of the above can be explained by the fact that this was a young and very zealous church. Yet because of the circumstances, they were imperfectly trained and disciplined. These problems represent what would be expected of a church of this nature: the new believers, the weak, the fainthearted, the idle, the visionary, and the puzzled.

C. The occasion for 2 Thessalonians was, "It is simply a second prescription for the same case, made after discovering that certain stubborn symptoms had not yielded to the first treatment." (Walker, p. 2968)

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## CONTENT OUTLINE \*

- A. Greeting, 1 Thess. 1:1
- B. Prayer of Thanksgiving, 1 Thess. 1:2-4
- C. Reminiscences, 1 Thess. 1:5-2:16
  1. Response of the Thessalonians to the original preaching, 1 Thess. 1:5-10
  2. The preaching of the Gospel at Thessalonica, 1 Thess. 2:1-16
    - a. The purity of the team's motives, 1 Thess. 2:1-6a



- b. The team's refusal to accept maintenance, 1 Thess. 2:6b-9
  - c. The team's behavior had been impeccable, 1 Thess. 2:10-12
  - d. The team's message of the Word of God, 1 Thess. 2:13
  - e. Persecution, 1 Thess. 2:14-16
- D. The Relationship of Paul to the Thessalonians, 1 Thess. 2:17-3:13
- 1. His desire to return, 1 Thess. 2:17,18
  - 2. Paul's joy in the Thessalonians, 1 Thess. 2:19, 20
  - 3. Timothy's mission, 1 Thess. 3:1-5
  - 4. Timothy's report, 1 Thess. 3:6-8
  - 5. Paul's satisfaction, 1 Thess. 3:9, 10
  - 6. Paul's prayer, 1 Thess. 3:11-13
- E. Exhortation to Christian Living, 4:1-12
- 1. General, 1 Thess. 4:1, 2
  - 2. Sexual purity, 1 Thess. 4:3-8
  - 3. Brotherly love, 1 Thess. 4:9, 10
  - 4. Earning one's living, 1 Thess. 4:11, 12
- F. Problems Associated with the Second Coming, 1 Thess. 4:13-5:11
- 1. Believers who died before the Parousia, 1 Thess. 4:13-18
  - 2. The time of the Parousia, 1 Thess. 5:1-3
  - 3. Children of the day, 1 Thess. 5:4-11
- G. General Exhortations, 1 Thess. 5:12-22
- H. Conclusion, 1 Thess. 5:23-28

\* This book does not outline as neatly into a doctrinal section and a practical section as most of Paul's other letters. If the general pattern is followed Paul's discussion of the Second Coming in 1 Thess. 4:17-18 is the practical section, not the doctrinal! The Second Coming is not a doctrine to be affirmed only, but a life to live in anticipation of His any-moment return.

# 1 THESSALONIANS 1

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS\*

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Salutation	Greeting	Salutation	Salutation	Address
1:1	1:1	1:1	1:1	1:1
The Thessalonians' Faith and Example	Their Good Example	Thanksgiving	The Love and Faith of the Thessalonians	Thanksgiving and Congratulations
1:2-10	1:2-10	1:2-10	1:2-10	1:2-3 1:4-10

\* Although they are not inspired, paragraph divisions are the key to understanding and following the original author's intent. Each modern translation has divided and summarized the paragraphs. Every paragraph has one central topic, truth, or thought. Each version encapsulates that topic in its own distinct way. As you read the text, ask yourself which translation fits your understanding of the subject and verse divisions.

In every chapter we must read the Bible first and try to identify its subjects (paragraphs), then compare our understanding with the modern versions. Only when we understand the original author's intent by following his logic and presentation can we truly understand the Bible. Only the original author is inspired—readers have no right to change or modify the message. Bible readers do have the responsibility of applying the inspired truth to their day and their lives.

Note that all technical terms and abbreviations are explained fully in the following documents: [Brief Definitions of Greek Grammatical Structure](#), [Textual Criticism](#), and [Glossary](#).

## READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired but it is the key to following the original author's intent which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO VERSES 1-10

- 1 Thess. 1:1 is a standard letter form of the first century. Paul made it uniquely Christian by substituting "grace" for the similar sounding Greek word "greetings" (*charis* vs. *charein*).
- 1 Thess. 1:2-10 forms one long thanksgiving prayer to God for the believers at Thessalonica:
  - 1 Thess. 1:2-5 forms one sentence that describes Paul's evangelistic witness.
  - 1 Thess. 1:6-9 describes the Thessalonians' response.

C. The Trinity is revealed in 1 Thess. 1:2-5. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: THE TRINITY](#) at Galatians 4:4.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 THESSALONIANS 1:1

**<sup>1</sup>Paul and Silvanus and Timothy to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace.**

**1:1 "Paul"** Saul of Tarsus is first called Paul in Acts 13:9. It is probable that most Jews of the "diaspora" had a Hebrew name and a Greek name. If so, then Saul's parents gave him this name but why, then, does "Paul" suddenly appear in Acts 13? Possibly (1) others began to call him by this name or (2) he began to refer to himself by the term "little" or "least." The Greek name *Paulos* meant "little." Several theories have been advanced about the origin of his Greek name:

1. the second century tradition that Paul was short, fat, bald, bow-legged, bushy eye-browed, and had protruding eyes is a possible source of the name, deriving from a non-canonical book from Thessalonica called *Paul and Thekla*
2. passages where Paul calls himself the "the least of the saints" because he persecuted the Church as in Acts 9:1-2 (cf. 1 Cor. 15:9; Eph. 3:8; 1 Tim. 1:15)

Some have seen this "leastness" as the origin of the self-chosen title. However, in a book like Galatians, where he emphasized his independence and equality with the Jerusalem Twelve, this is somewhat unlikely (cf. 2 Cor. 11:5; 12:11; 15:10).

Notice there is no defense of Paul's apostleship in this introduction to the Thessalonian church. Of all of Paul's churches Thessalonica and Philippi were the most supportive.

■ **"Silvanus"** This was his Roman name. He, like Paul, was a Roman citizen (cf. Acts 16:37). Luke always calls him "Silas." He was a gifted prophet and a respected member of the Jerusalem church like Barnabas (cf. Acts 15:22,27,32; 1 Pet. 5:12). He replaced Barnabas as Paul's companion on the second and third missionary journeys.

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: SILAS/SILVANUS](#)

■ **"Timothy"** He was Paul's convert from Lystra on his first missionary journey. Timothy became Paul's team member on the second journey (cf. Acts 16:1-3) replacing John Mark. For a fuller description cf. Introduction B. 3.

■ **"the Thessalonians"** Acts 17:1-9 describes Paul's encounter with these people.

■ **"church"** *Ekklesia* means "called out ones." It originally meant a town assembly in Greek society (cf. Acts 19:32). The Greek translation of the OT, the Septuagint, uses it to translate the Hebrew *qahal*, meaning "congregation" (cf. Exod. 12:6; 16:3; Lev. 4:13; Num. 14:5; 20:6; Deut. 5:22; 9:10; 10:4; 18:16). The early church considered themselves the Messianic congregation of Israel. See Special Topic at Gal. 1:2.

■ **"in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ"** God and Jesus are combined in a syntactical way by using one preposition to identify them both (cf. 1 Thess. 3:11; 2 Thess. 1:2, 12; 2:16). This is one technique used by the NT authors to theologically assert the Deity of Christ. Another was to attribute OT titles and functions of YHWH to Jesus of Nazareth. See Special Topic following.

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: FATHER](#)

■ **"the Lord"** God revealed His covenant name to Moses in Exod. 3:14—YHWH. The Jews later became

afraid to pronounce this holy name, lest they take it in vain and break one of the Ten Commandments (cf. Exod. 20:7; Deut. 5:11). Therefore, they substituted another word when they read the Scriptures, *Adon*, which meant, "husband, owner, master, lord." This is the source of the English translation of YHWH: Lord.

Often when the NT authors called Jesus "Lord" (*kurios*), they were asserting the Deity of Jesus. This affirmation became the early church's baptismal creedal statement, "Jesus is Lord" (cf. Rom. 10:9-13; Phil. 2:6-11).

■ **"Jesus"** This name means "YHWH saves" (cf. Matt. 1:21), equivalent to the OT name "Joshua." "Jesus" is derived from the Hebrew word for salvation (*hosea*) suffixed to the covenant name for God (YHWH).

■ **"Christ"** This is a translation of the Hebrew term for "Anointed One" (*mashiach*). This refers to the special empowering and equipping by the Spirit for YHWH's assigned task. It is the Hebrew term for God's Special, Promised, Coming One, "Messiah" (cf. Luke 2:11,26; 3:15; 4:41; 9:20; 22:67; 23:2,35,39; 24:26,46).

■ **"Grace"** Paul changed the secular greeting *charein* (greetings) to *charis* (grace), making it uniquely Christian and theologically primary. Grace always precedes peace.

■ **"peace"** This reflects the Hebrew greeting *shalom*. The phrase "grace and peace" was possibly intended to combine traditional Greek and Hebrew greetings.

The King James Version adds a typical Pauline phrase "from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" from 2 Thess. 1:1 after "peace." This phrase does not appear in the Greek uncial manuscripts B, F, or G. It does appear in the ancient uncial manuscripts  $\kappa$  and A. A slightly modified form appears in manuscript D. It may be a scribal gloss from 2 Thess. 1:2. The UBS<sup>4</sup> gives the shorter text without the additional phrase an "A" rating (certain).

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 THESSALONIANS 1:2-10**

**<sup>2</sup>We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers; <sup>3</sup>constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father, <sup>4</sup>knowing, brethren beloved by God, His choice of you; <sup>5</sup>for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. <sup>6</sup>You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with joy of the Holy Spirit, <sup>7</sup>so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. <sup>8</sup>For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything. <sup>9</sup>For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, <sup>10</sup>and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.**

**1:2 "We"** This refers to Paul, Silas and Timothy (the believing Jewish mission team). Paul used this plural pronoun more often in 1 Thessalonians than in any other letter. It is uncertain how this affected the process of writing the book. Paul often used scribes. Exactly how much freedom these scribes had is unknown.

■ **"give thanks to God"** This is a present active indicative indicating continuous action. A spirit of thanksgiving characterizes the entire letter (cf. 1 Thess. 2:13; 3:9). Paul had a wonderful relationship with this church as he did with the church at Philippi. Paul's opening prayers are not only culturally expected in Greek style, but often seem to outline his theological topics.

#### **SPECIAL TOPIC: THANKSGIVING**

- ▣ **"making mention of you"** This is a present middle participle indicating a purposeful decision by Paul to continue to pray. The syntactical structure of Paul's prayer can be seen in the three dependent clauses: (1) making mention (1 Thess. 1:2); (2) constantly bearing in mind (1 Thess. 1:3); and (3) knowing (1 Thess. 1:4).

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: INTERCESSORY PRAYER**

**1:3 "constantly bearing in mind"** This is a present active participle. This shows Paul's intense, abiding concern for these believers. He thought of and thanked God often for these converts, as he did for all the churches (cf. Rom. 1:9; Eph. 1:16; Phil. 1:3-4; Col. 1:9; 2 Tim. 1:3; Philemon v.4).

**NASB, NRSV "your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope"**

**NKJV "your work of faith and labor of love and patience of hope"**

**TEV "how you put your faith into practice, how your love made you work so hard, and how your hope in our Lord Jesus Christ is firm"**

**NJB "your faith in action, worked for love and persevered through hope"**

Each of these three phrases is in a grammatical construction that asserts that the work is produced by faith, the labor is produced by love, and the steadfastness is produced by hope. The focus is on active, faithful believers. Faith is always a response to God's initiating activity.

These characteristics form the basis of Paul's thanksgiving to God. In Eph. 2:8-10, grace and faith are related to good works. These three terms (faith, hope, and love) are often linked in the NT (cf. Rom. 5:2-5; 1 Cor. 13:13; Gal. 5:5-6; Col. 1:4-5; 1 Thess. 5:8; Heb. 6:10-12; 10:22-24; 1 Pet. 1:21-22). The order often differs. "Faith," in this context, does not refer to doctrine (cf. Jude 1:3, 20), but to personal trust (cf. 1 Thess. 1:8). See Special Topic at Gal. 3:6.

- ▣ **"labor"** "Labor" is a very intense word—Christianity is active not passive (cf. 1 Cor. 15:58).

▣ **"steadfastness"** This is not a passive concept either, but an active, voluntary, steadfast endurance in the face of trials (cf. Lk. 21:19; Rom. 5:3-4). It meant to see a need and then voluntarily help carry the load as long as needed (cf. 2 Thess. 1:4).

▣ **"hope. . .in the presence of our God"** This refers to the *parousia* or Second Coming, a major theme of this letter (cf. 1 Thess. 1:10; 3:13; 4:13-5:11; 5:32; 2 Thess. 1:7,10). Notice that each chapter ends discussing this very subject. "Hope" does not have the connotation of a doubtful "maybe" or "could be" as in English, but rather the expectation of an event with an ambiguous time element. See Special Topic: Hope at Galatians 5:5.

**1:4 "knowing"** This is the third of three participles which relate to Paul's prayer in 1 Thess. 1:2.

▣ **"beloved by God"** Literally "divinely loved ones." This perfect passive participle phrase is theologically linked to their election (cf. Eph. 1:4-5). It emphasizes believers continuing status as "loved ones." The agent of love is God. The adjective "beloved" (*agapētos*) is usually used of the Father's love for Jesus (cf. Matt. 3:17; 12:18; 17:5; Eph. 1:6). It comes to be used for those who trust Him by faith and are now also the beloved by the Father (cf. Rom. 1:7; Col. 3:12; 2 Thess. 2:13).

**NASB "His choice of you"**

**NKJV "your election by God"**

**NRSV "that he has chosen you"**

**TEV "God. . .has chosen you"**

**NJB "that you have been chosen"**

While no verb appears (just the noun phrase "the choice of you"), the agent of the action is God in Christ, which is expressed by the passive voice in the previous verb and with God specifically mentioned. This is asserting the theological necessity of God's initiating love and choice (cf. John 6:44,65). Paul knew they were chosen because they responded to the gospel! God's choice was confirmed by His powerful actions expressed in 1 Thess. 1:5. Election is a call to holiness (cf. Eph. 1:4) and service (cf. Col. 3:12-14; 2 Pet. 1:2-11).

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: ELECTION/PREDESTINATION AND THE NEED FOR A THEOLOGICAL BALANCE**

1:5

**NASB, NKJV** "did not come to you in word only"

**NRSV** "came to you not in word only"

**TEV** "not with words only"

**NJB** "it came to you not only as words"

More than just an abstract idea, the gospel changed their lives (cf. Romans 1:16; James 2:14-26). This must be true of gospel preaching today. Holiness, not only accurate doctrine, is the goal (cf. Rom. 8:28-29; Gal. 4:19; Eph. 1:4). The gospel is (1) a person to welcome, (2) truths about that person to be believed, and (3) a life emulating that person to be lived! All three are crucial.

■ **"in power and in the Holy Spirit "** There are three related things that confirmed God's choice:

1. gospel came in word
2. gospel came in power
3. gospel came in Holy Spirit

This refers to (1) what happened to the Thessalonian believers personally or (2) God's work through Paul (cf. Rom. 8:15-16). There was powerful confirmation of the truth and spiritual power of the gospel through Paul's preaching and teaching.

■ **"with full conviction"** This "full assurance" (cf. Col. 2:2; Heb. 6:11; 10:22) could refer to Paul's preaching or the Thessalonians' response to the gospel.

■ **"as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake"** Paul is contrasting the way he and his mission team acted among the Thessalonians (cf. 1 Thess. 2:7,10) compared to those mentioned in 1 Thess. 2:3-6. Notice the differences in chapter 2:

<u><b>Paul</b></u>	<u><b>Others</b></u>
amid much opposition	
not from error	
not from impurity	error
not by way of deceit	impurity
not men pleasers	deceit
not flattering speech	men pleasers
not for greed	flattering speech
not seeking glory	greed
gentle as a nursing mother	seeking glory
having a fond affection	
imparted the gospel and themselves	

Paul is describing false teachers and trouble makers among the Jews (e.g., Acts 17:5).

**1:6 "You also"** This is an emphatic contrast to the "we" of 1 Thess. 1:2-5.



**NASB, NRSV** "You also became imitators of us and of the Lord"  
**NKJV** "And you became followers of us and of the Lord"  
**TEV** "You imitated us and the Lord"  
**NJB** "and you were led to become imitators of us, and of the Lord"

"Imitators" comes into English as "mimic" (cf. the Greek term and concept are found in 1 Thess. 1:6; 2:14; 2 Thess. 3:7,9; 1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1; Gal. 4:12; Phil. 3:17; 4:9). Christlikeness is God's goal for every believer (cf. Rom. 8:28-29; Gal. 4:19; Eph. 1:4). The image of God in mankind is to be restored (cf. Lev. 11:44; 19:2; Matt. 5:48; Eph. 1:4; 5:1).

**NASB, NKJV** "having received the word"  
**NRSV** "you received the word"  
**TEV** "you received the message"  
**NJB** "you took to the gospel"

This term has the connotation "to receive as a welcomed guest" (cf. Matt. 10: 40-41; 18:5) or "to receive a message" (cf. 2 Cor. 11:4; James 1:21). This is an aorist middle (deponent) participle. Humans must respond to God's offer of love in Christ's finished work by repentance and faith (cf. Mark 1:15; John 1:12, 3:16; Acts 3:16,19; 20:21; Rom. 10:9-13). Salvation is (1) a message (doctrinal truth); (2) a person (existential encounter); and (3) a life to live (1 Thess. 1:6). We receive the gospel message and befriend Jesus. We must trust completely in both. This results in a new life of faithfulness and holiness.

**NASB** "in much tribulation"  
**NKJV** "in much affliction"  
**NRSV** "in spite of persecution"  
**TEV** "even though you suffered much"  
**NJB** "the great opposition all round you"

This is literally "to press" (cf. John 16:33; Acts 14:22; 2 Thess. 1:4,6). Becoming a Christian does not guarantee a lack of tension—on the contrary, it is quite the opposite (cf. Matt. 5:10-12; John 15:18-19; Rom. 8:17; 1 Pet. 3:13-17; 4:12-19). Acts 17 describes some of the persecution Paul (cf. 2 Cor. 4:7-12; 6:3-10; 11:23-28) and this church experienced.

■ **"with the joy of the Holy Spirit"** This joy given by the Spirit is so encompassing and complete that it is present and sustaining amid great persecution and pain. It is a joy unaffected by circumstances (cf. Rom. 5:2-5; 2 Cor. 7:4; 1 Pet. 4:13).

**1:7 "you became an example to all the believers"** In some ways this is hyperbole, but in others very literal. The Thessalonian believers' joy and perseverance under testing and trial was a source of great encouragement to other believers. This is also how the suffering of Job, the prophets (cf. Matt. 5:10,12), the Messiah, and the Apostles affect future believers. Often believers most powerful testimony is during times of trial, pain, and persecution.

■ **"example"** See Special Topic following.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: FORM (TUPOS)**

■ **"in Macedonia and in Achaia"** These were Roman provinces. Achaia is located within modern Greece; Macedonia is a political state independent of Greece, though culturally and economically related.

**1:8 "has sounded forth"** This is literally "trumpeted" or "thundered." It is a perfect passive indicative which implies that through their joy amidst trials the gospel "sounded forth and still sounds." In English we get the word "echo" from this Greek word. Verses 8-10 form one sentence in Greek.

■ **"but also in every place"** This is a metaphorical exaggeration (hyperbole) similar to 1 Thess. 1:2 (cf. Rom. 1:8). The Bible, being an eastern book, often uses figurative language. Be careful of western literalism.

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: EASTERN LITERATURE](#)

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"so that we have no need to say anything"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"so that we do not need to say anything"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"so that we have no need to speak about it"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"There is nothing, then, that we need to say"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"We do not need to tell other people about it"</b>

An ambiguous phrase, many translations supply "the faith" from the previous clause. This does not necessarily mean that they understood everything about Christian doctrine or even about suffering. But their lives showed that the gospel truly took root in their hearts and minds. The Holy Spirit will reveal the basics of the gospel to every receptive heart.

**1:9 "turned to God from idols"** This refers to their repentance from pagan idolatry. The gospel is both negative and positive—repentance and faith (cf. Mark. 1:15; Acts 3:16, 19; 20:21). There is a "turning from" as well as a "turning to."

The NASB Study Bible (p. 1748) makes the observation that the three destructive evidences of the Thessalonian conversion were

1. turning from idols
2. serving God
3. waiting for Christ's return

■ **"to serve"** Literally this means "as a slave." This is a present infinitive. They turned (aorist) from idols and continued to serve the true, living God (cf. Rom. 6:18). This portrays God as King and His followers as servants. In one sense, we are slaves, in another, we are sons.

■ **"a living and true God"** This reflects God's covenantal name, YHWH (cf. Exod. 3:14). YHWH is the ever-living, only-living God. This is the basis of biblical monotheism (cf. Deut. 4:35,39; 6:4; Isa. 45:5,6,18,21-22; 47:8,10).

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: NAMES FOR DEITY](#)

**1:10** This verse is like a summary of the gospel (cf. 1 Cor. 15:1-4). These summaries are often called the *kerygma* ("proclamation").

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: THE KERYGMA OF THE EARLY CHURCH](#)

■ **"to wait for His Son from heaven"** This is another present infinitive. They continued to serve (cf. 1 Thess. 1:9) God and to wait for Christ's return. Paul continued his emphasis on the Second Coming as the theological keynote of the letter. Every chapter ends on this subject (cf. 1 Thess. 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:13-18; 5:23). See Special Topic at 1 Thess. 5:9.

■ **"whom He raised from the dead"** This was confirmation of the Father's acceptance of the Son's substitutionary death (cf. 1 Cor. 15). All three persons of the Trinity were active in Christ's resurrection: the Father—Acts 2:24; 3:15; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30, 33, 34, 37; 17:31; the Spirit—Rom. 8:11 and the Son—John 2:19-22; 10:17-18. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: THE TRINITY](#) at Gal. 4:4.

■ **"rescues us"** This is a present middle (deponent) participle which emphasizes Jesus' continuous action on our behalf. The victory is ongoing (cf. Rom. 8:31-39). He continues to intercede for us (cf. 1 John



2:1; Heb. 7:25; 9:24).

■ **"wrath to come."** For some, Jesus' Second Coming is their great hope, but for others it will be their eternal loss. The believers will experience the persecution and pressure of Jews and pagans, but they will never experience the wrath of God (cf. 1 Thess. 5:9). The wrath of God is coming (present middle [deponent] participle) on all those who reject Christ (cf. 1 Thess. 2:16; Matt. 25; Rom. 1-2). It is surely true that wrath is an anthropomorphic term, but so too, is "the love of God."

At the end of each chapter in 1 Thessalonians an allusion to the Second Coming is prominent (cf. 1 Thess. 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:13-18; 5:23). New Testament writers view time and history through their world-view of a coming day of judgment and reward. The NT is thoroughly eschatological (cf. *Howto Read the Bible For All Its Worth* by Fee and Stuart, pp. 131-134).

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: TRIBULATION](#)

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: GOD DESCRIBED AS A HUMAN \(anthropomorphic language\)](#)

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Why did Paul not assert his apostleship in this letter?
2. What is significant about verse 1?
3. Why are faith, hope and love mentioned together so often in the New Testament?
4. How is election linked to the believers' actions?
5. Why do Christians suffer? How does the Second Coming address the problem of suffering?

# 1 THESSALONIANS 2

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Paul's Ministry in Thessalonica	Paul's Conduct	Paul's Life and Work	Paul's Work in Thessalonica	Paul's Example in Thessalonica
2:1-12	2:1-12	2:1-8  2:9-12	2:1-9  2:10-12	2:1-7a  2:7b-12
	Their Conversion			The Faith and Patience of the Thessalonians
2:13-16	2:13-16	2:13-16	2:13-16	2:13-16
Paul's Desire to Visit the Church Again	Longing to See Them	Paul's Affection for the Thessalonians	Paul's Desire to Visit Them Again	Paul's Anxiety
(2:17-3:13)		(2:17-3:13)	(2:17-3:13)	
2:17-20	2:17-20	2:17-20	2:17-20	2:17-20

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired but it is the key to following the original author's intent which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

#### CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO VERSES 1-13

- A. This chapter reflects the growing Jewish opposition to the Church in Thessalonica (cf. Acts 17:1-9).
- B. This chapter expresses in a wonderful way the characteristics of a true minister. Paul presented these characteristics in three contrasting pairs: first the negative, then the positive (1 Thess. 2:3-7). Paul defends his message, method, and motives.
- C. 1 Thess. 2:10-12 is a summary of 1 Thess. 2:1-9.

D. This chapter reflects some confusion among English translations on where the Greek text should be divided:

1. 1 Thess. 2:6-7.
2. 1 Thess. 2:11-12.

E. Paul digresses in 1 Thess. 2:14-16 to discuss his current situation in Corinth and a summary of his first experiences with Jewish opposition. These verses are Paul's strongest negative comments about the Jews (except for Romans 9-11).

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 THESSALONIANS 2:1-12

<sup>1</sup>For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain, <sup>2</sup>but after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, as you know, we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition. <sup>3</sup>For our exhortation does not *come* from error or impurity or by way of deceit; <sup>4</sup>but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who examines our hearts. <sup>5</sup>For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed—God is witness—<sup>6</sup>nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority. <sup>7</sup>But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing *mother* tenderly cares for her own children. <sup>8</sup>Having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us. <sup>9</sup>For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, *how* working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. <sup>10</sup>You are witnesses, and *so is* God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers; <sup>11</sup>just as you know how we *were* exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father *would* his own children, <sup>12</sup>so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

**2:1 "For you yourselves know,"** Paul appealed to the experience of the Thessalonian Christians so often that this phrase becomes a characteristic of this book (cf. 1 Thess. 1:5; 2:1, 2, 5, 11). Similar phrases are found in 1 Thess. 2:9, "you recall" and 10, "you are witnesses."

NASB, NKJV,

NRSV "that our coming to you was not in vain"

TEV "that our visit to you was not a failure"

NJB "that our visit to you has not proved ineffectual"

This is a perfect active indicative. This can either mean (1) not "fruitless" (cf. 1 Cor. 15:10,58) or (2) not "empty handed" (cf. Mark 12:2). The church continues in spite of the aggressive Jewish opposition just like the churches in Judea who also experienced Jewish wrath (cf. 1 Thess. 2:13-16).

**2:2 "but"** This is a strong adversative conjunction (*alla*, cf. 1 Thess. 2:4 [twice], 7, 8), which denotes a contrast.

■ **"after we had already suffered. . .in Philippi"** Paul begins to relate his own sufferings for the gospel (cf. Acts 16:11-40 and 1 Cor. 4:9-13; 2 Cor. 4:8-12; 6:4-10; 11:24-27).

NASB "mistreated"

NKJV	"spitefully treated"
NRSV	"shamefully mistreated"
TEV	"insulted"
NJB	"grossly insulted"

This was both physical and mental abuse.

NASB	"we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the gospel of God"
NKJV	"we were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God"
NRSV	"we had courage in our God to declare to you the gospel of God"
TEV	"Yet God gave us courage to tell you the Good News that comes from him,"
NJB	"it was our God who gave us the courage to proclaim his Good News to you"

For "boldness" see Special Topic following.

The phrase "the gospel of God" could mean

1. the gospel about God (objective genitive)
2. the gospel from God (subjective genitive, cf. TEV, JB). This same phrase occurs again in 1 Thess. 2:8 and 9 (cf. Rom. 15:16; 1 Tim. 1:11; 1 Pet. 4:17)

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: BOLDNESS (PARRHĒSIA)**

▣ **"amid much opposition"** This is an athletic or military term for rough, hand-to-hand fighting (cf. Phil. 1:30; Col. 2:1). This Greek term enters English as "agony."

2:3

NASB, NKJV	"exhortation"
NRSV, TEV	"appeal"
NJB	"encouragement"

This is from the same root (*paraklēsis*) used of the Spirit (*paraklētos*) in John 14:16, 26; 15:26 and 16:7 and of Jesus in 1 John 2:1 where it is translated as "comforter," "advocate" or "helper." See full note at 1 Thess. 3:7.

NASB	"does not <i>come</i> from error"
NKJV	" <i>did</i> not <i>come</i> from deceit"
NRSV	"does not spring from deceit"
TEV	"is not based on error"
NJB	"because we are deluded"

*Planēs* is the Greek word for "planet," which referred to heavenly lights (planets, comets, shooting stars) that did not follow the usual pattern of the constellations. Thus, they were called "wanderers," which developed metaphorically into error.

NASB	"impurity"
NKJV	"uncleanness"
NRSV, TEV	"impure motives"
NJB	"immoral"

This term implies a sexual looseness (cf. 1 Thess. 4:7; Rom. 1:24; Gal. 5:19; Eph. 5:3; Col. 3:5). It must be remembered that pagan worship often employed sexual acts. Paul may have been accused of advocating moral looseness by Jewish legalists who misunderstood justification by grace through faith.

NASB	"by way of deceit"
NKJV	"nor was <i>it</i> in guile"

<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"or trickery"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"nor do we try to trick anyone"</b>
<b>JB</b>	<b>"or trying to deceive anyone"</b>

The other two terms in verse 3 speak of Paul's motives, but this phrase indicates an atmosphere of trickery (cf. Eph. 4:14). "Deceit" originally meant "to catch with bait" (cf. Matt. 26:4; Mark 7:22; 14:1), but later evolved into a metaphor for trickery for profit (cf. 2 Cor. 4:2 which reflects 2 Cor. 2:17). Paul was often accused of greed (cf. 1 Thess. 2:5).

**2:4 "we have been approved by God"** This perfect passive indicative has the connotation of testing with a view toward approval (*dokimazō*). "Approve" in this sense commonly meant testing the genuineness of coins. The missionary team had been and continued to be tested and approved by God. See Special Topic: Greek Terms for Testing and Their Connotations at 1 Thess. 3:5.

▣ **"entrusted"** This is an aorist passive infinitive. This term comes from the same root (*pisteuō*) as "faith," "believe," or "trust." The basic idea is to entrust something to another (cf. 1 Cor. 9:17; Gal. 2:7; 1 Tim. 1:11; Titus 1:3). Believers are stewards of the gospel (cf. 1 Cor. 4:1-2; 1 Pet. 4:10).

▣ **"so we speak,"** This is a present active indicative. Believers must share the good news they have received (cf. Col. 4:2-6; 1 Pet. 3:15) with boldness (cf. 1 Thess. 2:2).

▣ **"not as pleasing men, but God"** (cf. 1 Thess. 2:6; Gal. 1:10).

▣ **"who examines our hearts"** This reflects the Hebrew usage of "heart" in the sense of the entire personality. God knows our motives (cf. 1 Sam. 16:7; Ps. 7:9; 26:2; 44:21; 139:1,23; Pro. 21:2; Jer. 11:20; 12:3; 17:10; Luke 16:15; Acts 1:24; 15:8; Rom. 8:27; Rev. 2:23). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: THE HEART](#) at Gal. 4:6.

**2:5 "we never came with flattering speech"** This term implies manipulation for false motives. Opponents, especially at Corinth (Paul was in Corinth when he wrote this letter), often accused Paul of false motives as did the Jews here.

▣ **"nor with a pretext for greed"** Paul was often accused of greed or opportunism, possibly because it was characteristic of Greek itinerant teachers (cf. Acts 20:33). This is why he would not regularly receive money from churches he was currently serving. He did later receive help from Philippi (twice, cf. Phil. 4:16) and Thessalonica.

▣ **"God is witness"** Paul was swearing an oath using God as a witness (cf. 1 Thess. 2:10; Rom. 1:9; 1 Cor. 1:23; 11:31; Gal. 1:19; Phil. 2:25).

**2:6 "though as apostles of Christ"** This includes Silas and Timothy. This illustrates the wider use of the term. In 1 Cor. 12:28 and Eph. 4:11, "apostles" are mentioned as an ongoing spiritual gift in the church. Some examples are:

1. Barnabas (cf. Acts 14:4,14)
2. Andronicus and Junias (cf. Rom. 16:6-7)
3. Apollos (cf. 1 Cor. 4:6)
4. James the Just (cf. Gal. 1:19)

It is uncertain to what aspect of ministry this ongoing gift relates: (1) church planting; (2) evangelism; (3) area leadership; or (4) ?. It is linked to prophets, evangelists, and pastors/teachers in Eph. 4:11, all of whom proclaim the gospel with differing emphases.

▣ Some English translations put this phrase in 1 Thess. 2:6 and others in 1 Thess. 2:7.

**NASB, 2:6 "we might have asserted our authority"**

**NKJV, 2:6 "we might have made demands"**

**NRSV, 2:7 "we might have made demands"**

**TEV, 2:7 "we could have made demands"**

**JB, 2:7 "we could have imposed ourselves on you with full weight"**

Literally, this translates "with weight." The intended meaning could be (1) apostolic authority; (2) apostolic honor; or (3) financial compensation (cf. 1 Thess. 2:9; 1 Thess. 3:8; 1 Cor. 9:3-14; 2 Cor. 11:7-11).

**2:7 "we proved to be gentle among you"** There is a Greek manuscript variant between the use of the terms (1) "infants" (*nēpios*, cf. MSS P<sup>65</sup>, κ, B, C, D, F, G) and (2) "gentle" (*ēpios*, cf. MSS κ<sup>c</sup>, A, C<sup>2</sup>, D<sup>2</sup>). Only their initial letter is different. On purely textual basis number 1 is best; on contextual basis number 2 seems best (which may reflect an intentional scribal change). The UBS<sup>4</sup> gives "infants" a "B" rating almost certain).

Origen and Augustine believed Paul spoke to the Thessalonians in baby language so they could understand. Paul uses parental language in 1 Thess. 2:7, 8 and 11. He saw himself as their spiritual parent.

▣ **"as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children"** This is a third class conditional sentence. The verb literally means "to warm" and was commonly used of mother birds "warming" their young (cf. Eph. 5:29). It was a metaphor for breast feeding. Paul (cf. Gal. 4:19), like Jesus (cf. Matt. 23:37), describes his love for them in feminine terms (and YHWH cf. Exod. 19:4; Isa. 66:13; Hos. 11:4; and the Spirit cf. Gen. 1:2).

**2:8**

**NASB "Having so fond an affection for you"**

**NKJV "So, affectionately longing for you"**

**NRSV "So deeply do we care for you"**

**TEV "Because of our love for you"**

**NJB "we felt so devoted and protective towards you"**

The word (*homeiromai*) appears nowhere else in the entire New Testament. It is used in the Septuagint in Job. 3:21. In Greek literature it was a strong term of affection related to parents longing for their dead children.

▣ **"we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us"** This shows the costliness of the ministry as well as the love of the Apostle. Ministry is not something we do—it is who we are.

**2:9 "our labor and hardship"** These are strong synonymous terms (cf. 1 Thess. 3:8 and 2 Cor. 11:27). Greek society designated labor as only for slaves. Paul, being a Jew, respected manual labor. He often encouraged it, especially in this Thessalonian correspondence because some in the fellowship had quit their jobs to wait for the Second Coming (cf. 2 Thess. 3:6-15).

▣ **"how working night and day"** All rabbis had to have a trade or livelihood (cf. Acts 18:3; 1 Cor. 4:12). Paul would not accept money for his ministry because of accusations of greed (cf. 1 Thess. 2:5).

"Night and day" reflects Jewish reckoning of time where the day begins at dusk (cf. Gen. 1:5,8,13,19,23, 21). Paul worked during the day at tent making or leather working and at night he preached the gospel. Ministry requires hard work!

**2:10 "You are witnesses, and so is God"** This is another oath-like expression by Paul which asserts the truthfulness of his statements and actions. God is a witness as the oath of 1 Thess. 2:5 affirms and, so too, the believers at Thessalonica.

▣ **"devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers"** Some in the church,

in the community or outsiders must have questioned his motives. Paul was always having to defend his motives.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: BLAMELESS, INNOCENT, GUILTLESS, WITHOUT REPROACH**

**2:11 "exhorting"** See note at 1 Thess. 2:3. Notice the three participles (all starting with *para*) describing Paul's preaching activity: (1) "exhorting" (present active); (2) "encouraging" (present middle [deponent]) and (3) "imploring" (present middle [deponent]).

**2:12 "walk in a manner worthy"** This is a present infinitive. This metaphor refers to our continuing lifestyle, which must reflect our Master's (cf. Col. 1:10; 2:6; Eph. 2:10; 4:1,17; 5:2, 15). Notice at the end of 1 Thess. 2:12 believers are called to share and thereby reflect God's glory.

▣ **"who calls you"** There is a Greek manuscript variant in the tense of this phrase: (1) manuscripts  $\kappa$  and A have the aorist, like Gal. 1:6. This would emphasize God's initiating call (cf. Gal. 1:6; 1 Pet. 1:15). (2) Manuscripts B, D, F, G, H, K, L, and P have the present which would emphasize God's continuing call to holiness (cf. Rom. 8:28-29; Gal. 4:19; Eph. 1:4). The UBS<sup>4</sup> gives option #2 a "B" rating (almost certain).

Notice the theological balance between a God who calls and believers who must walk worthy (cf. Phil. 2:12-13). Different denominations focus on one aspect or the other (predestination or human free will). God deals with us in a covenant relationship. Both His calling and our mandated response (initial and ongoing) are necessary.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: Election/Predestination and the Need for a Theological Balance**

▣ **"His own kingdom"** Paul does not use this term often. This refers to God's rule in believers' hearts and minds now which will one day be consummated over all the earth (cf. Matt. 6:10). This was the burden of Jesus' teaching and preaching. It reflects the "already" but "not yet" tension of the time between the Incarnation and the Second Coming (cf. *Howto Read the Bible For All Its Worth* by Fee and Stuart, pp. 131-134).

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE KINGDOM OF GOD**

▣ **"and glory"** See full note at Galatians 1:5.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 THESSALONIANS 2:13-16**

**<sup>13</sup>For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe. <sup>14</sup>For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, for you also endured the same sufferings at the hands of your own countrymen, even as they did from the Jews, <sup>15</sup>who both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out. They are not pleasing to God, but hostile to all men, <sup>16</sup>hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved; with the result that they always fill up the measure of their sins. But wrath has come upon them to the utmost.**

**2:13 "we also constantly thank God"** A present active indicative, it may refer to 1:2-10. This reflects Paul's ongoing prayer life and writing style (cf. 1 Thess. 1:2; 5:17-18). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: THANKSGIVING](#) at 1 Thess. 1:2.

▣ **"received"** This is an aorist active participle. This shows the necessity of our personal response. Here, it refers to the message. In John 1:12 it refers to the person of Christ. In 1 Thess. 4:1, it refers to lifestyle. The gospel focuses around three emphases: (1) personal relationship (cf. Col. 2:6), (2) doctrinal truth (cf. 2

Thess. 3:6; 1 Cor. 15:1-4), and (3) lifestyle Christlikeness (cf. Phil.4:9). The believer must respond to all three for maturity.

The phrase "received the Word of God" becomes an idiom for "receive the gospel" ("he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me," John 5:24).

1. *dechomai* – Luke 8:13; Acts 8:14; 11:1; 17:11; 1 Thess. 1:16
2. *paralambanō* – 1 Thess. 2:13
3. *paradechomai* – Mark 4:20
4. *apolambanō* – James 1:21

Notice there is a cognitive element and a volitional element.

The NT has several things connected to the verb translated "receive."

A. The negative things

1. Rom. 8:15 – not receive (*lambanō*) the spirit of slavery
2. 1 Cor. 2:14 – the natural man does not receive (*apolambanō*) the things of the Spirit of God
3. 1 Cor. 2:12 – not receive (*lambanō*) the spirit of the world
4. 2 Cor. 6:1 – not to receive (*apolambanō*) the grace of God in vain
5. 2 Thess. 2:10 – they have not received (*apolambanō*) the love of the truth so as to be saved

B. The positive things

1. Acts 1:8 – receive (*lambanō*) power
2. Acts 2:33 – receive (*lambanō*) the Father's promise
3. Acts 2:38; 8:15,17,19; 10:47; 19:2 – receive (*lambanō*) the gift of the Holy Spirit
4. Acts 10:43; 26:18 – receive (*lambanō*) forgiveness
5. Rom. 5:11 – receive (*lambanō*) reconciliation
6. Rom. 5:17 – receive (*lambanō*) the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness
7. Rom. 8:15 – receive (*lambanō*) a spirit of adoption
8. Gal. 3:14 – receive (*lambanō*) the promise of the Spirit through faith
9. Col. 2:6 – receive (*paralambanō*) Jesus Christ
10. Heb. 10:36 – receive (*komizō*) the things promised
11. Heb. 11:17 – receive (*anadechomai*) the promises
12. Heb. 12:28 – receive (*paralambanō*) a kingdom which cannot be shaken
13. James 1:21 – receive (*apolambanō*) the word implanted which is able to save souls
14. 1 Pet. 5:4 – receive (*komizō*) the unfading crown of glory
15. 1 John 2:27 – received (*lambanō*) the anointing

Wow, what a range of wonderful things come with the gospel!

■ **"received. . .accepted"** These synonymous terms describe the need for a human response to the divine gospel offer! Fallen mankind must repent and believe the gospel (cf. Mark 1:15; Acts 3:16,19; 20:21), and continue to repent, believe, and live the gospel.

The former word is a compound term found in John 1:12. The latter means to welcome someone as a guest. In this context, one must welcome the gospel. The NT describes the gospel as both a person and a message.

■ **"the word of God"** Paul's preaching (the gospel's message) was revelation inspired by God (cf. 2 Tim. 3:15-17; 1 Pet. 1:23-25; 2 Pet. 1:20-21; 3:15-16). Here this does not refer to the Bible, but apostolic proclamation and teaching. The NT only records a selected portion of Jesus' words and acts and the Apostle's message.

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"God's word, which is also at work in you believers"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"as God's message, which indeed it is. For God is at work in you who believe"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"God's message. . .it is still a living power among you who believe it"</b>



This is present middle indicative (cf. Phil. 2:13). "Work" was a favorite word for Paul, related to the English cognate "energy." Paul personified the gospel as continuing to energize believers! This probably reflects the OT understanding of the power of the spoken word, as in Genesis 1 and Isa. 55:11 (and also John 1:1).

■ **"in you who believe"** This is present active participle. Again, continuing belief is the key! The gospel is not a product (a ticket to heaven, an insurance policy), but a personal, growing relationship with the Father through the Son.

**2:14 "the churches"** This translates literally "the called out ones." In the Septuagint, the same idea is expressed as "the congregation of Israel." The early church saw itself as the continuation of the OT people of God. Notice they are called "the churches of God." See Special Topic at Gal. 1:2.

■ **"in Christ Jesus"** This phrase takes the locative of sphere case, which means "in" or "surrounded by"—an atmosphere, like a fish in water. A very common Pauline expression, it speaks of our union with Jesus. We live and move and have our being in Him. For an example of Paul's use of this form notice Eph. 1:3-14: (1) "in Christ" 1:3,10,12; (2) "in Him" 1:4,7,9,10,13(twice); (3) "in the Beloved" 1:6.

■ **"in Judea"** The Thessalonian churches were experiencing Jewish persecution just like the churches in Judea (cf. Matt. 5:10-12).

■ **"you also endured the same sufferings"** Generally, the reaction to the Christian message in the Roman world was persecution (cf. 1 Pet. 4:12-16), because of the exclusive nature of the message (cf. John 14:6).

■ **"at the hands of your own countrymen"** In context this refers to persecution from Jews of the diaspora, just as Paul, who was in Corinth at the time of the writing, was also confronting the same opposition.

**2:15 "who both killed the Lord Jesus"** The Jews did not physically kill Jesus, but they were responsible for His death (cf. Matt. 21:33-46; Acts 2:23).

■ **"and the prophets"** God's people did not want to hear God's message, so they killed His spokespersons (cf. Matt. 23:31,37; Acts 7:52).

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECY](#)

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: NEW TESTAMENT PROPHECY](#)

■ **"and drove us out"** Possibly this is related to (1) Jason's peace bond (cf. Acts 17:5-9) or (2) the general experience of Paul's ministry (cf. Acts). Paul saw his experience as parallel to the OT Prophets and especially Jesus' rejection by His contemporaries.

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"They are not pleasing to God"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"they do not please God"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"they displease God"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"How displeasing they are to God"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"acting in a way that cannot please God"</b>

The Jews thought their actions were God's will, defending His covenant with Moses. They believed they were His servants defending the faith against false teachers (Paul knew these feelings well). Tragically ironic, they were the false teachers.

■ **"but hostile to all men"** The hostility mentioned here was rooted in Jewish national arrogance and

prejudice. They had rejected the Messiah and His universal gospel (cf. Isa. 2:2-4; 45:22; 49:6; 60:3; 66:18,23; John 3:16; Eph. 2:11-2:13).

**2:16 "hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles"** This reflects Paul's experience in Corinth at the time of the writing of 1 Thessalonians. These sentences are Paul's strongest complaint against the Jews (cf. Romans 9-11).

■ **"so that they may be saved"** This is an aorist passive subjunctive. God wants to save all humans made in His image (cf. Gen. 3:15; 12:3; Exod. 19:5-6; Ezek. 18:23,32; Jonah; John 3:16; Acts 28:28; Eph. 2:11-2:13; 1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9), but they must repent and believe in Christ (cf. Mark 1:15; Acts 3:16,19; 20:21).

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"they always fill up the measure of their sins"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"to fill up <i>the measure of their sins</i>"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"they have constantly been filling up the measure of their sins"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"This is the last full measure of their sins they have always committed"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"They never stop trying to <i>finish off the sins they have begun</i>"</b>

Paul may have taken this terminology from (1) the OT because the exact Greek phrase is found in the Septuagint of Gen. 15:16; or (2) from the words of Jesus in Matt. 23:32 related to the book of deeds (cf. Dan. 7:10; Rev. 20:12 and Ps. 56:8; 139:16; Isa. 65:6; Mal. 3:16). God records the evil deeds of humans and they will give an account (cf. Matt. 25-26; Rev. 20:11-15).

■ **"But wrath has come upon them"** This is an aorist active indicative. This verse seems to relate to the spiritual blindness (hardness) that has come upon Israel (typified in the parable of Mark 12:1-12 [also Matt. 21:33-46 and Luke 20:9-19] and explicitly stated in Rom. 11:7,25; 2 Cor. 3:14). God's wrath is present and future (temporal and eschatological).

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"to the utmost"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"to the uttermost"</b>
<b>NRSV, TEV,</b>	
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"at last"</b>

This phrase may be translated several ways, so compare your English Bibles to grasp more fully the possible translations. Basic renderings include

1. looking back and summing up
2. looking forward to consummation
3. used in the Semitic sense of "completely," which are scary descriptions of God's wrath.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 THESSALONIANS 2:17-20**

**<sup>17</sup>But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short while—in person, not in spirit—were all the more eager with great desire to see your face. <sup>18</sup>For we wanted to come to you—I, Paul, more than once—and yet Satan hindered us. <sup>19</sup>For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at his coming? <sup>20</sup>For you are our glory and joy.**

**2:17**

<b>NASB, NKJV</b>	<b>"having been taken away from you"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"we were made orphans by being separated from you"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"we were separated from you"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"we had been separated from you"</b>

This is an aorist passive participle. Highly emotional language fills this whole paragraph. This continues Paul's parenting metaphors of 1 Thess. 2:7 and 11. It is literally "orphaned" by an outside agent.

Probably the accusers of Paul stated or insinuated that his quick exit and long-term absence showed he did not truly care for them. Paul refutes this in 1 Thess. 2:17-20 and 3:6.

▣ **"with great desire"** This term is often rendered "lust," in its pejorative sense, but rarely, as it does here, it is used positively. Paul's desire to see them is graphically portrayed in 1 Thess. 3:10.

**2:18 "For we wanted to come to you"** All of Paul's plans did not work out (cf. Rom. 1:13; 15:22).

▣ **"Satan"** A personal evil force is active in our world, seeking to thwart God's plans and purposes by the agency of: (1) a fallen world system, (2) the demonic, and (3) fallen humanity (cf. Eph. 2:2-3 and James 4). We see Satan in the OT in Job 1-2 and Zech. 3 as a servant of YHWH. By the NT he is an enemy (cf. Rom. 16:20; 1 Cor. 5:5,7; 7:5; 2 Cor. 2:11; 11:14; 12:7) but still under God's control! For a good discussion of the intensification of evil in the Bible, read A.B. Davidson's *Old Testament Theology*, pp. 300-306.

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: PERSONAL EVIL](#)

▣ **"hindered"** This is a military term used for the destruction of roads and bridges in the face of the enemy's advance. There really is a spiritual conflict (cf. Eph. 4:14; 6:10-18).

It is also a possibility that a physical illness was the problem, not Satan (cf. 2 Cor. 12). Paul saw his life in spiritual as well as physical categories.

**2:19** The mark of the genuineness of Paul's apostleship was the success of his ministry among the Gentiles (cf. 1 Thess. 2:20).

▣ **"hope"** See Special Topic at Gal. 5:5.

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"Is it not even you"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"Is it not even you"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"Is it not you"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"It is you—you, no less than others"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"You are"</b>

The problem with this phrase is how it related to Paul's affection and love for the Thessalonian church compared to his other Gentile churches. Were they somehow special? TEV's translation of "you, no less than others" may represent the thought.

In a sense the Thessalonian believers were a powerful witness to Paul's effective work as an Apostle to the Gentiles. As Paul mimicked Jesus, they mimicked Paul, which is an outward evidence of their new heart and spirit (New Covenant).

▣ **"at His coming?"** "*Parousia*," literally meaning "presence," and by metaphorical extension, means "coming." This is the first use of the term in the NT (cf. 1 Thess. 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23; 2 Thess. 2:1,8-9; 1 Cor. 15:23). It was used in secular literature of the first century for a royal visit by a king. It came to have a technical meaning in the church for the Second Coming. This coming of Jesus is the theological focus of 1 & 2 Thessalonians. Every chapter of 1 Thessalonians ends on this note (cf. 1 Thess. 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:13-18; 5:23). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: NT TERMS FOR CHRIST'S RETURN](#) at 1 Thess. 3:13.

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: THE ANY-MOMENT RETURN OF JESUS VS. THE NOT YET](#)

**2:20**

<b>NASB, NKJV,</b>	
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"our glory"</b>
<b>TEV, NJB</b>	<b>"our pride"</b>

This is the use of the term glory as pride. This does not relate to the theological glory used to describe God (cf. 1 Thess. 2:12).

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Who was attacking Paul and why?
2. Why was Paul so firm in denying compensation for his preaching?
3. Why does Paul bring in the subject of Jewish opposition to the gospel?
4. What does verse 16 mean to the Jewish nation as to God's purposes?
5. Why are verses 17 - 20 so emotional?

# 1 THESSALONIANS 3

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Paul's Desire to Visit the Church Again (2:17-3:13)	Concern for Their Faith	Paul's Affection for the Thessalonians (2:17-3:13)	Paul's Desire to Visit Them Again (2:17-3:13)	Timothy's Mission to Thessalonika
3:1-5	3:1-5 Encouraged by Timothy	3:1-5	3:1-5	3:1-5 Paul Thanks God for Good Reports of the Thessalonians
3:6-10	3:6-10 Prayer for the Church	3:6-10	3:6-10	3:6-10
3:11-13	3:11-13	3:11-13	3:11-13	3:11-13

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired but it is the key to following the original author's intent which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

#### BRIEF OUTLINE OF CHAPTER 3

- A. Paul, in great anxiety, sends Timothy to them, 1 Thess. 3:1-5
- B. Timothy returns with good news, 1 Thess. 3:6-10
- C. Paul's prayer for the Thessalonian Church, 1 Thess. 3:11-13

#### WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

##### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 THESSALONIANS 3:1-10**

**<sup>1</sup>Therefore when we could endure *it* no longer, we thought it best to be left behind at Athens alone, <sup>2</sup>and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's fellow worker in the gospel of**

Christ, to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith, <sup>3</sup>so that no one would be disturbed by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we have been destined for this. <sup>4</sup>For indeed when we were with you, we *kept* telling you in advance that we were going to suffer affliction; and so it came to pass, as you know. <sup>5</sup>For this reason, when I could endure *it* no longer, I also sent to find out about your faith, for fear that the tempter might have tempted you, and our labor would be in vain. <sup>6</sup>But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always think kindly of us, longing to see us just as we also long to see you, <sup>7</sup>for this reason, brethren, in all our distress and affliction we were comforted about you through your faith; <sup>8</sup>for now we *really* live, if you stand firm in the Lord. <sup>9</sup>For what thanks can we render to God for you in return for all the joy with which we rejoice before our God on your account, <sup>10</sup>as we night and day keep praying most earnestly that we may see your face, and may complete what is lacking in your faith?

**3:1 "could endure it no longer"** Paul was worried about this church because (1) it was born in persecution (cf. 1 Thess. 2:17-20) and (2) he had to leave so soon. His pastor's heart would give him no rest (cf. 1 Thess. 3:5).

■ **"to be left behind"** This present active participle was used of (1) a child leaving his parents, Eph. 5:31 (possibly another parental metaphor like 2:7,11,17) or (2) the death of one's spouse (cf. Mark 12:19). Paul deeply loved this church.

■ **"at Athens alone"** Paul's visit is recorded in Acts 17:15-34. This was the intellectual center of the Hellenistic world. Paul had eye problems (compare 2 Cor. 12:7 with Gal. 4:15 and 6:11), and it was very hard for him to be alone, especially in an unfamiliar environment such as Athens. The term "alone" is plural but the meaning is uncertain. Acts 18:5 implies both Silas and Timothy were on assignment. This verse may be an example of Paul's use of "we" as an editorial plural, referring only to himself.

### 3:2

NASB	"God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ"
NKJV	"minister of God, and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ"
NRSV	"co-worker for God in proclaiming the gospel of Christ"
TEV	"who works with us for God in preaching the Good News about Christ"
NJB	"who is God's helper in spreading the Good News of Christ"

This phrase refers to Timothy. The Greek manuscripts differ: manuscript B has "co-laborer," while manuscripts  $\kappa$  and A have "minister." It denoted the lowly service of a slave. Most modern translations follow manuscript B. Possibly a scribe was shocked at Paul calling Timothy "God's co-laborer."

This verse is functioning like a letter of recommendation for Timothy (cf. Acts 18:27; Rom. 16:1; 2 Cor. 8:18-24; 3 John 9,10).

■ **"to strengthen and encourage you"** Paul was worried about this new church under persecution (cf. 1 Thess. 1:6; 2:14; 3:3).

**3:3 "so that no one would be disturbed by these afflictions"** This is the only use of the term "disturbed" in the NT. It originally referred to a dog wagging its tail. In classical Greek (Homer), it was used in the sense of "flattered." This may relate to 1 Thess. 2:1 or 3:5. True faith perseveres (cf. Matt. 13:1-23; Gal. 6:9; Rev. 2:2-3,7,11,17,19,26; 3:5,8,10,11,12,21). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: THE NEED TO PERSEVERE](#) at Gal. 3:4.

■ **"we have been destined for this"** This is a present passive (deponent) indicative. The passive voice implies that God is the active agent. It is not a reference to the pagan idea of an impersonal fate nor the

Islamic idea of determinism. Suffering is the norm for believers in a fallen world (cf. 1 Thess. 3:4; Matt. 5:10-12; John 15:18, 20; 16:33; Acts 14:22; Rom. 8:17 2 Cor. 4:7-11; 11:23-27; 2 Tim. 3:12; 1 Pet. 2:21; 4:12-16). Suffering is a means of spiritual maturity (cf. Heb. 5:8).

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: WHY DO CHRISTIANS SUFFER?**

**3:4 "we kept telling you in advance"** This is an imperfect tense which means repeated action in past time. Paul must have warned them several times about the persecution and suffering connected to the gospel. He knew this from Jesus' teachings and personal experience. They now know it experientially also.

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"we were going to suffer afflictions"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"we would suffer tribulation"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"we were to suffer persecutions"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"that we were going to be persecuted"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"we must expect to have persecutions to bear"</b>

This is a present active indicative with a present passive infinitive. The Williams' translation footnote says "a picture of a loaded wagon crushed under its heavy load."

**3:5 "your faith"** This is possibly used in the OT sense of "faithfulness." Were they true to their profession of faith? See Special Topic at Gal. 3:6.

■ **"the tempter might have tempted you"** A personal, evil force (*ho peirazōn*) is active in our world and in our lives (cf. 1 Thess. 2:18). This Greek word translated "tempt" (*peirazō*) connotes tempting "with a view toward destruction," the opposite of "approved" (*dokimazō*) in 1 Thess. 2:4. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: PERSONAL EVIL](#) at 1 Thess. 2:18.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: GREEK TERMS FOR TESTING AND THEIR CONNOTATIONS**

■ **"our labor would be in vain"** The use of moods is important here; the indicative which is the mood of reality is used of Satan, but the subjunctive which is the mood of contingency is used of Paul's labor. This may relate to 2:1. The question is, "Does 'in vain' relate to their personal conversion or the establishment of a viable functioning church in Thessalonica?" I think the latter is the best contextual option, although Paul probably would not have made a distinction.

Paul uses the concept of "vain" or "fruitless" often and incorporates three different words.

1. *eikē* – Rom. 13:4; 1 Cor. 15:2; Gal. 3:4; 4:11; Col. 2:18
2. *kenos* – 1 Cor. 15:10,14,58; 2 Cor. 6:1; Gal. 2:2; Eph. 5:6; Phil. 2:16; Col. 2:8; 1 Thess. 2:1; 3:3 (verb in 2 Cor. 9:3)
3. *matalos* – 1 Cor. 3:20; 15:17; Titus 3:9 (verb in Rom. 2:21)

Paul knew the power of the gospel was from divine activity, but he also knew the choices of humans affected the effective outcome!

**3:6 "good news"** This is the only use of this Greek term in the NT where it does not refer to the gospel of Christ. The message about the faithful condition of this church was "gospel," "good news" to Paul.

■ **"of your faith and love"** This phrase can have several meanings (cf. 1 Thess. 1:3). This refers either to: (1) orthodox doctrine and loving care for one another or (2) faithfulness and love toward God.

■ **"think kindly of us, longing to see us just as we also long to see you"** This shows that neither the persecution nor the false teachers had embittered this church against Paul.

**3:7 "in all our distress and affliction"** Paul's problems in Corinth are listed in 1 Cor. 4:9-13; 2 Cor. 4:7-12; 6:4-10 and 11:23-28. Oh my! The costs of being a servant of Christ!!

- **"we were comforted "** Paul uses this compound word ("with" and "call") often. It has several senses.
  1. to urge, exhort, encourage (cf. 1 Thess. 2:3,11; 4:1; 5:14; 2 Thess. 3:12)
  2. to comfort (cf. 1 Thess. 2:11; 3:2; 4:18; 5:11; 2 Thess. 2:17)
  3. its noun form (*paracletos*) used of both the helping ministry of the Spirit (cf. John 14:16,26; 15:26; 16:7) and the Son (cf. 1 John 2:1)

**3:8 "for now we really live"** Paul is using metaphorical language to express his release from tension because of the good news about this church.

- **"if you stand firm in the Lord"** This is a Greek conditional sentence, combining first class and third class conditions, thereby adding contingency to Paul's statement. He assumed that they would stand firm but that remained for him to see (cf. 1 Thess. 2:1 and 3:5).

"Standing firm" relates to our position in Christ. The Bible presents our salvation in a tension-filled pair of truths: (1) it is free, it is in Christ, but (2) it is costly, it is progressive, it is seen in our lifestyle choices (Matthew 7; James, 1 John). Both are true. This verse emphasizes the first truth (cf. Rom. 5:2; 1 Cor. 15:1 and Eph. 6:11, 13).

**3:9-10** This is a rhetorical question that leads into a prayer, 1 Thess. 3:11-13, concluding the first half of Paul's letter.

**3:10 "night and day"** This is the Jewish order of time (see note at 1 Thess. 2:9). This reflects Paul's constant, persistent prayer life (cf. 1 Thess. 1:2; 2:12; 2 Tim. 1:3).

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"keep praying most earnestly"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"praying exceedingly"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"we pray most earnestly"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"we ask him with all our heart"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"We are earnestly praying"</b>

The adverb "most earnestly" is a very strong, triple compound (*hyper + ek + perissou*), emotional term (cf. Eph. 3:20; 1 Thess. 3:10; 5:13). Paul worried and prayed about these new churches (cf. 2 Cor. 11:28). See Special Topic: Paul's Use of *Hyper* Compounds at Gal. 1:13.

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"may complete what is lacking in your faith"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"perfect what is lacking in your faith"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"restore whatever is lacking in your faith"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"supply what is needed in your faith"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"make up any shortcomings in your faith"</b>

They had done well but they were not yet mature in their understanding, as the misunderstanding about the Second Coming shows. This is the use of faith (1) as doctrine (cf. 1 Thess. 4:13-5:11) or (2) the recurrent emphasis on lifestyle, "what was lacking" may have had an ethical aspect (cf. 1 Thess. 4:1-12). Paul uses this term faith (*pistis/pisteuō*) often in these letters (cf. 1 Thess. 1:3,8; 3:2,5,6,7,10; 5:8; 2 Thess. 1:3,4,11; 3:2), but especially in this context. See Special Topic at Gal. 3:6.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 THESSALONIANS 3:11-13**

**<sup>11</sup>Now may our God and Father Himself and Jesus our Lord direct our way to you; <sup>12</sup>and may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all people, just as we also do for you; <sup>13</sup>so that He may establish your hearts without blame in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints.**

**3:11-13** This is one sentence in Greek. This prayer contains three rare optative verbal forms: "direct" (1



Thess. 3:11), "increase" (v.12) and "abound" (v.12). Optative mood is the mood of potentiality used in prayers.

**3:11 "may. . .direct"** This is a rare aorist active singular optative verb, used in several prayers in the NT (cf. 1 Thess. 5:23; 2 Thess. 2:16; 3:5, 16 and in Rom. 15:5-6,13). Note the verb is singular, though it refers to both God the Father and Jesus Christ. This was a way for the NT authors to assert the deity of Jesus of Nazareth (cf. 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 2:16).

Another theological point is that just as Satan prevented Paul from coming to them, recorded in 1 Thess. 2:18, Paul asked the Father and Son to make a way (straight or smooth: cf. Luke 1:79) for him to visit them!

▣ **"Father"** See Special Topic at Gal. 1:1.

**3:12-13** Paul prayed for himself in 1 Thess. 3:11, but now his petition turns toward the church at Thessalonica. He prayed for their love for one another and all people (cf. Eph. 6:18). He also prayed for the believers' holiness (cf. 1 Thess. 3:13; Eph. 1:4). God's will for every believer is Christlikeness (cf. Rom. 8:28-29; Gal. 4:19).

▣ **"abound"** Special Topic following.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: ABOUND (*perisseuō*)**

▣ **"for all people"** God's love is as wide as the world (cf. John 1:29; 3:16; 1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9); so too, must be ours who know Him.

**3:13 "hearts"** See Special Topic at Gal. 4:6.

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"without blame in holiness"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"blameless in holiness"</b>
<b>NRSV, NJB</b>	<b>"in holiness that you may be blameless"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"perfect and holy"</b>

Holiness is both a gift and a task (indicative and imperative). It is characteristic of someone above reproach, against whom no accusation may be brought (cf. Eph. 5:27). This leaves Satan with no basis for criticism (cf. Rom. 8:31,32,33). God's will for every believer is Christlike holiness (cf. 1 Thess. 4:3; Rom. 8:28-29; Gal. 4:19; Eph. 1:4). See note at 2 Thess. 4:3. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: BLAMELESS, INNOCENT, GUILTLESS, WITHOUT REPROACH](#) at 1 Thess. 2:10. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: NEW TESTAMENT HOLINESS/SANCTIFICATION](#) at 1 Thess. 4:3.

▣ **"at the coming of our Lord Jesus"** This shows Paul's continuing concern about end time events (cf. 1 Thess. 2:19; 4:15-17; also 2 Thessalonians 2).

The exact relationship between the events of the Second Coming, the Rapture (cf. 1 Thess. 4:13-18), the Judgment Seat of Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 5:10), and the White Throne of Judgment (cf. Matt. 25 and Rev. 20) are uncertain. Paul was not a systematic theologian. See Special Topic below.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: NT TERMS FOR CHRIST'S RETURN**

▣ **"His saints"** "Saints" (lit. "holy ones") are either (1) angels who will accompany Jesus (cf. Deut. 33:2-3; Zech. 14:5; Matt. 16:27; 25:31; Mark 8:38; 2 Thess. 1:7; Rev. 19:4); or (2) His people, saints (cf. 1 Thess. 4:14-16). Paul never called angels "saints" or "holy ones," possibly solving the interpretive issue. Probably both angels and saints will return with Him on the clouds of heaven. This church was unsure if the dead saints would participate in the end-time events.

Saints, literally "holy ones," are called to holiness (cf. 1 Thess. 4:3) by the Holy One (cf. 1 Pet. 1:15)! The goal of Christianity is "holiness" now (cf. Eph. 1:4), not heaven when we die!

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: SAINTS**

For a Special Topic on "Amen" see Gal. 1:5.

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Why was it hard for Paul to be alone?
2. List the different meanings of the term "faith."
3. Is suffering normal for believers? Why?
4. Is sanctification initial or progressive?
5. Does verse 5 refer to one's salvation or fruitfulness? How do 2:1 and 3:5 relate to the parable of the Soils (cf. Matt. 13:1-23)?

# 1 THESSALONIANS 4

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
A Life Pleasing to God	Plea to Unity	Exhortations to the Purity	A Life that Praises God	Live in Holiness and Charity
4:1-8	4:1-8	4:1-8	4:1-8	4:1-2 4:3-8
	A Brotherly and Orderly Life			
4:9-12	4:9-12	4:9-12	4:9-12	4:9-12
The Lord's Coming	The Comfort of Christ's Coming	Questions Concerning the Coming of the Lord	The Lord's Coming	The Dead and the Living at the Time of the Lord's Coming
(4:13-5:11)		(4:13-5:11)		
4:13-14	4:13-18	4:13-18	4:13-14	4:13-18
4:15-18			4:15-18	

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired but it is the key to following the original author's intent which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

#### EXPANDED OUTLINE OF VERSES 1-12

A. Introductory remarks, 1 Thess. 4:1-2

B. Warnings about sexual immorality, 1 Thess. 4:3-8

1. be holy, 1 Thess. 4:3a
2. practice abstinence from sexual immorality, 1 Thess. 4:3b
3. be sexually self disciplined, 1 Thess. 4:4-5
4. practice appropriate sexuality by not defrauding your covenant brother's sexual rights

C. Exhortations to other Christians, 1 Thess. 4:9-12

1. Christians are to love one another, 1 Thess. 4:9-10
2. live better and better, 1 Thess. 4:10b
3. live quiet lives, 1 Thess. 4:11a
4. tend to your own affairs, 1 Thess. 4:11b
5. do your own labor, 1 Thess. 4:11c
6. so that you may be a witness to the lost, 1 Thess. 4:12

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 THESSALONIANS 4:1-8

**<sup>1</sup>Finally, then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us *instruction* as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you excel still more. <sup>2</sup>For you know what commandments we gave you by *the authority of the Lord Jesus*. <sup>3</sup>For this is the will of God, your sanctification; *that is*, that you abstain from sexual immorality; <sup>4</sup>that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, <sup>5</sup>not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; <sup>6</sup>*and* that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is *the avenger* in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you. <sup>7</sup>For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification. <sup>8</sup>So, he who rejects *this* is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you.**

**4:1 "Finally then"** This is literally "for the rest." This begins Paul's practical section. Most of Paul's letters can be divided into a doctrinal section and a practical section although it is hard to do this in 1 Thessalonians. Paul used this phrase to introduce the last major subject, not as an immediate prelude to a closing (e.g., 2 Cor. 13:11; Eph. 6:10; 2 Thess. 3:1).

■ **"brethren"** Paul often uses this term to start a new subject (cf. 1 Thess. 1:4; 2:1,9,14,17; 3:7; 4:1,10,13; 5:1,4,12, 14,25,26,27; 2 Thess. 1:3; 2:1,13,15; 3:1,6,13).

■ **"request and exhort"** Paul uses these present active indicatives to emphasize continuing action and to soften his commands as an Apostle (cf. 1 Thess. 4:2,11; 2 Thess. 3:4,6,10,12).

■ **"as you received from us *instruction*"** This is an aorist active indicative, which points to the time Paul was with them personally. This is the Greek term that means "receive traditional teachings from another" (cf. 1 Thess. 2:13; 1 Cor. 15:1). Paul not only taught them how to be saved (justification), but also how to live as saved people (sanctification).

■ **"as to how you ought to walk"** This is a present infinitive. Walk is a biblical metaphor for lifestyle faith (cf. 1 Thess. 2:12; Eph. 2:10; 4:1,17; 5:2,15; Col. 1:10; 2:6). Christianity was originally called "The Way" (cf. Acts 9:2; 19:9,23; 22:4; 24:14,22; 18:25-26). This speaks of an abiding lifestyle faith. Our initial response in repentance and faith must be followed by continuing obedience and perseverance. Eternal life has observable characteristics! In Christ every day is sacred, special, and used for worship and ministry.

■ **"and please God"** God's will for His children is not heaven when they die only, but Christlikeness now (cf. Rom. 8:28-29; Gal. 4:19; Eph. 1:4; 2:10; 1 Pet. 1:15).

NASB	"(just as you actually do walk)"
NKJV	[Omitted]
NRSV	"(as, in fact, you are doing)"

TEV            **"This is, of course, the way you have been living"**  
NJB            **"as you are already living it"**

A Greek manuscript problem is connected to this phrase. This phrase is missing in the Greek manuscripts D<sup>c</sup>, K, L, and the Textus Receptus texts. It is present in MSS  $\kappa$ , A, B, D<sup>\*</sup>, F, G and also in the Syriac, Coptic, and Vulgate translations. It is surprising that the early manuscripts have it and the later ones omit it. This implies that it was dropped out accidentally. The UBS<sup>4</sup> rates its inclusion as "A" (certain).

This is either present indicative or imperative mood. It is probably indicative in that it asserts Paul's confidence in their Christlike lifestyle (cf. NASB, NRSV, TEV, and JB).

▣ **"that you excel still more "** They were doing well, but Paul urged them on to even greater holiness (cf. 1 Thess. 4:10). See Special Topic: Abound (*Perisseuō*) at 1 Thess. 3:12.

**4:2**  
NASB, NKJV    **"commandments"**  
NRSV, NJB,  
TEV            **"instructions"**

This is a rare military word for authoritative commands handed down through the ranks (cf. 1 Tim. 1:5, 18).

▣ **"by the authority of the Lord Jesus"** These were not Paul's personal thoughts but Jesus' teachings. Paul's Apostolic authority rested on Jesus' authority (cf. 1 Thess. 4:8).

**4:3-6** This is one sentence in Greek.

**4:3 "For this is the will of God"** There is no article, therefore, this is one of God's wills (cf. Eph. 5:17), after salvation (cf. John 6:40).

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE WILL (*thelēma*) OF GOD**

▣ **"your sanctification"** This word shares the same root word with "holy" and "saints." Sanctification, like justification, is an initial instantaneous act of grace (cf. 1 Cor. 1:2,30; 6:11). Positionally, believers are in Christ. However, it should develop into lifestyle character, progressive sanctification (cf. 1 Thess. 4:7; 3:13; Rom. 6:19-23). God's will for every Christian is Christlikeness!! We cannot separate justification from sanctification!

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: NEW TESTAMENT HOLINESS/SANCTIFICATION**

▣ **"abstain from sexual immorality"** This is literally "fornication." Premarital and extramarital sex were distinguished in the OT by separate words, but this word's meaning was broader in scope in the NT. "Fornication" meant all inappropriate sexual activity, including homosexuality and bestiality. Often pagan worship included sexual activity (cf. 1 Thess. 5:22).

**4:4**  
NASB, NKJV    **"to possess"**  
NRSV            **"to control"**  
TEV            **"how to take"**  
NJB            **"to use"**

This is a present middle (deponent) infinitive. It is literally "to continually acquire or possess."

NASB, NKJV    **"his own vessel"**  
NRSV            **"your own body"**

TEV            "a wife"  
NJB            "the body that belongs to him"

This can refer to "his own body" or "his own wife." Theodore of Mopsuestia, Augustine, rabbinical usage, 1 Pet. 3:7, and the Septuagint interpret this in the sense of "wife" (cf. TEV). But the early Church Fathers (i.e., Tertullian and Chrysostom) interpreted it as "body" and this fits the context best (cf. NRSV, JB, NV). Vessel is used in the sense of "body" in 2 Cor. 4:7.

■ **"in sanctification and honor"** Knowing Jesus changes the way one lives. Believers are stewards, dependant on another's will. God's will is to use every believer to show His transforming power to a lost world. Christian marriage is a powerful witness in a fallen confused world!

**4:5 "not in lustful passion"** This refers to fallen mankind's inability to control themselves sexually (pagan worship). Self control is a characteristic of a Spirit filled, Spirit led life (cf. Gal. 5:23).

■ **"like the Gentiles"** This is literally "the nations." Here, however, it does not refer to non-Jews but to all non-Christians. The lifestyle of the pagans of Paul's day was very immoral.

■ **"who do not know God"** This does not exclude "natural revelation" (cf. Ps. 19:1-6 and Romans 1-2), but speaks of personal knowledge (cf. Gal. 4:8-9). In the OT "know" has the connotation of intimate, personal relationship (cf. Gen.4:1; Jer. 1:5). Gentiles are estranged from God (cf. Eph. 2:11-13; 5:8; Col. 1:21).

**4:6 "transgress"** This term means "to go beyond bounds."

■ **"defraud"** This term means "to take advantage of." It is related to the term "greed."

■ **"his brother"** This may relate to taking sexual liberties with another believer's family (cf. 1 Thess. 4:9). But the term "brother" in context could refer to any other human, similar to "neighbor" (cf. 1 Thess. 4:12).

■ **"in the matter"** This has the definite article and therefore refers to 1 Thess. 4:3-5 (i.e., sexual purity). The word itself refers to business affairs. Therefore, it could be used metaphorically for sexual matters or Paul changes subjects in 1 Thess. 4:6 and is now dealing with financial issues. I think the first option is best.

■ **"because the Lord is *the* avenger in all these things"** This refers to even-handed justice—both temporal (cf. Rom. 1:24,26,28) and eschatological (cf. Matt. 25:31ff.). YHWH is an ethical God (cf. Gal. 6:7.) In 1 Thess. 4:6, 7a and 8a, three different reasons are given why the believers should live holy lives.

■ **"as we also told you before and solemnly warned you"** This is a strong statement concerning sexual purity (cf. Heb. 13:4). See Special Topic: Paul's Use of *Huper* Compounds at Gal. 1:13.

**4:7 "God. . .called"** God always takes the initiative (cf. John 6:44,65) both in salvation and in sanctification.

**4:8 "he who rejects *this* is not rejecting man but the God"** This is literally "treat as of little value." Paul asserts that along with the truth of the gospel goes the lifestyle imperatives. These are God's truths, not Paul's, 2:13; 3:1-2.

■ **"who gives His Holy Spirit to you"** This is a present active participle. This refers to the indwelling Spirit as both an initial and ongoing experience (i.e., Acts 2:38; 2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5; 1 John 3:24). As with the resurrection, so also the promise of divine indwelling. All three persons of the Trinity are involved in all the redemptive events. Believers are indwelt by (1) the Spirit (cf. Rom. 8:9-10); (2) the Son (cf. Matt. 28:20; Col. 1:27); and (3) the Father (cf. John 14:23).

## NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 THESSALONIANS 4:9-12

<sup>9</sup>Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for *anyone* to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; <sup>10</sup>for indeed you do practice it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more, <sup>11</sup>and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you, <sup>12</sup>so that you will behave properly toward outsiders and not be in any need.

### 4:9

NASB	"love of the brethren"
NKJV	"brotherly love"
NRSV	"love of the brothers and sisters"
TEV	"love for your fellow believers"
NJB	"loving our brothers"

This is the Greek term, *philadelphia*. This refers to love for covenant partners (cf. Rom. 12:10; Heb. 13:1; 1 Pet. 1:23; 2 Pet. 1:7). The balancing statement about loving the lost is in 1 Thess. 4:12 (cf. 1 Thess. 3:12).

▣ **"you have no need of *anyone* to write to you"** This was Paul's tactful way of affirming them and yet encouraging them to greater effort (cf. 1 Thess. 4:10c). This does not refer to doctrinal matters (i.e., the Second Coming), but practical, ethical lifestyle.

▣ **"for you yourselves are taught by God"** This is present tense. The teaching continues as the indwelling Spirit continues (cf. 1 Thess. 5:1; John 14:26; 16:13; 2 Cor. 9:1; 1 John 2:20,27), which is a sign of the New Covenant (cf. Jer. 31:33-34). The Greek term *theodidaktoi* (found only here in the NT) means "God taught" (cf. John 6:45) and its object is to "love one another" (cf. John 13:34; 15:12,17; 1 John 2:7-8; 3:11,23; 2 John 5).

**4:10 "you do practice"** This is another present tense verb which speaks of continuing action (cf. 1 Thess. 4:17). Paul affirms their love but challenges them to do even more (as he did their lifestyle purity in 1 Thess. 4:1).

▣ **"to excel still more "** They are doing a good job, but need to keep on even more (cf. 1 Thess. 4:1). Love is the signature of God. We never love enough (cf. 1 Thess. 3:12). See Special Topic: Abound at 1 Thess. 3:12.

### 4:11

NASB	"to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life"
NKJV	"that you also aspire to lead a quiet life"
NRSV	"to aspire to live quietly"
TEV	"Make it your aim to live a quiet life"
NJB	"we do urge you, brothers, to go on making even greater progress and to make a point of living quietly"

Verse 11 is a series of four present infinitives used as imperatives, commanding continuing action. This is probably exhorting patience and normalcy in the excited atmosphere of the anticipation of the Second Coming (cf. 2 Thess. 3:10-12). "Stay ready and stay faithful," not "get ready," is the NT message in this area.

The term "ambition" means "consider as an honor" or "aspire." It is also used in Rom. 15:20 and 2 Cor. 5:9.

▣ **"work with your hands"** Remember the historical occasion for the writing was that some in the church misunderstood Paul's preaching on the Second Coming and had quit working anticipating Christ's return (cf. 2 Thess. 2:1-4 and 3:6-15).

In Greek culture, manual labor was believed to be exclusively the work of a slave. But in Hebrew culture, everyone needed a vocation—a means of supporting themselves, even rabbis (cf. Acts 20:35; 1 Cor. 4:17).

Some early Greek uncial manuscripts,  $\kappa^*$ , A, D (NRSV), add "work with your own hand," but others ( $\kappa^2$ , B, D<sup>\*</sup>) omit it. UBS<sup>4</sup> is uncertain whether it should be included ("C" rating).

▣ **"just as we commanded you"** This is a strong term for "order" (cf. 2 Thess. 3:4,6,10,12).

**4:12**

**NASB, NRSV** "that you will behave properly toward outsiders"

**NKJV** "that you may walk properly toward those who are outside"

**TEV** "In this way you will win the respect of those who are not believers"

**NJB** "so that you are seen to be respectable by those outside the Church"

People are watching. We are witnesses (cf. Matt. 5:13-16; Col. 4:5; 1 Tim. 3:7; 5:14; 6:1; Titus 2:5).

**NASB** "not be in any need"

**NKJV** "*that* you may lack nothing"

**NRSV** "and be dependent on no one"

**TEV** "and will not have to depend on anyone for what you need"

**NJB** "though you do not have to depend on them"

Apparently the Christians who quit work were expecting the other Christians to provide all their needs. Believers are to use their resources for the needs of the Christian family (cf. 2 Cor. 8-9; Eph. 4:28), but not for those who refuse to work!

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: WEALTH**

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 THESSALONIANS 4:13-18**

**<sup>13</sup>But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. <sup>14</sup>For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. <sup>15</sup>For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. <sup>16</sup>For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of *the* archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. <sup>17</sup>Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. <sup>18</sup>Therefore comfort one another with these words.**

**4:13-5:11** The context about the Second coming runs through 5:11. Remember its focus is pastoral (cf. 1 Cor. 15:58). Doctrine is given, but only as it serves a godly lifestyle now!

**4:13 "we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren"** This is a common phrase in Paul's writings (cf. Rom. 1:13; 11:25; 1 Cor. 10:1; 12:1; 2 Cor. 1:8). Usually it introduced an important statement, similar to Jesus' use of "Amen, amen." Knowledge of Christian truth (doctrine and world-view) gives believers a stability in a fallen world.

▣ **"about"** Timothy might have communicated some questions from the Church concerning the Second



Coming to Paul.

1. What about the believers who had already died? Would they participate in the end-time events?
2. Would believers be surprised by the Second Coming and thereby be unprepared for the end-time events?

Paul often uses this preposition "about" to introduce his answers to the Corinthian Church's questions (cf. 1 Cor. 7:1,25; 8:1; 12:1; also 1 Thess. 5:1).

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"those who are asleep"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"those who have fallen asleep"</b>
<b>NRSV, TEV,</b>	
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"those who have died"</b>

Greek manuscripts vary here: (1) some uncial manuscripts have a present participle,  $\kappa$ , A, B, and (2) others have a Perfect participle, such as D, F, G, K, and L. Scribes probably changed the original present to a perfect following the usage in Matt. 27:52 and 1 Cor. 15:20 (i.e., Metzger, p. 632).

Jesus used the OT euphemism for death, "sleep" (cf. BDB 1011, i.e., 2 Sam. 7:12; 1 Kgs. 22:40; references in NT: Matt. 27:52; John 11:11-13; Acts 7:60; 1 Cor. 7:39; 11:30; 15:18; 2 Pet. 3:4). The English term "cemetery" is derived from this Greek word.

This does not refer to the doctrine of "soul sleep," that believers wait unconsciously until Resurrection Day. The NT speaks of conscious, but limited fellowship (cf. Luke 16:19-31; 23:43; 2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23) until Resurrection Day, the Second Coming.

■ **"that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope"** The verb "grieve" is a present passive subjunctive (cf. Eph. 2:12). Believers must not continue to be grieved by physical death because we know the truths of the gospel.

1. Jesus died for us
2. the Spirit who raised Him will raise us
3. He is coming back for us
4. those who have died are already with Him

The pagan world (i.e., "the rest," cf. 1 Thess. 5:16) was at a loss for comfort at death. Socrates said, "Oh, that there were some divine word upon which we could more securely and less perilously sail, upon a stronger vessel." See Special Topic: Hope at Gal. 5:5.

**4:14 "if"** This is a first class conditional sentence which is assumed true from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes.

■ **"we believe"** This is the important theological verb (present active indicative) for human's putting their faith in Christ. This is the Greek verb *pisteuō*, which is translated into English by "faith," "trust," or "believe." See Special Topic: Believe at Gal. 3:6. This personal trust is characterized in the NT by using all the common Greek verb tenses:

1. Aorist (past simple act), Acts 15:11; Rom. 8:24; 2 Tim.1:9; Titus 3:5
2. Present (ongoing process), 1 Cor. 1:18; 15:2; 2 Cor. 2:15; 1 Thess. 4:14
3. Perfect (past action which has come to completion and abides as a state of being), Eph. 2:5,8
4. Future (in verb tense or context), Rom. 5:9,10; 10:9; 13:11; 1 Cor. 3:15; Phil. 1:28; 1 Thess. 5:8-9; Heb. 1:14; 9:28

It is an initial decision, followed by lifestyle discipleship that will one day be consummated in an eternal body and face-to-face fellowship with the Triune God (cf. 1 John 3:2). The theological progression can be seen in Rom. 8:29-30, from election, to justification, to sanctification, to glorification.

■ **"that"** This *hoti* clause gives doctrinal content to the gospel. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: BELIEVE, TRUST, FAITH, AND FAITHFULNESS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT](#), E. #5.

■ **"Jesus died and rose again"** These are both aorist active indicatives which reflect historical facts.

These gospel truths are the basis for the believer's hope: (1) vicarious substitutionary atonement (cf. Isa. 53; Mark 10:45; 2 Cor. 5:21) and (2) bodily, physical, eternal resurrection (cf. 1 Thess. 1:10; 1 Cor. 15).

▣ **"God will bring with Him"** This is a difficult phrase because the verb (*agō*) has such a wide semantic field (to bring, to lead, to lead away, to lead out, to go, to go away, etc.). Does it imply that the dead are with Jesus in heaven or that the dead will be raised at Jesus' coming?

In context the pronoun refers to Jesus, at His coming. The Thessalonian believers did not understand Paul's preaching about the Second Coming. They wanted to know if those of their church who had already died would participate in the end-time events. This is Paul's positive response. Not only will they participate, they will receive their new bodies first and will accompany Jesus on the clouds of heaven.

The NT is not clear about the state of believers between death and Resurrection Day. When this passage is compared to 2 Cor. 5:6,8, postulating a disembodied period becomes a logical necessity. Believers are with the Lord, but as yet do not have their resurrection bodies.

**4:15 "For this we say to you by the word of the Lord"** Paul was not giving his personal opinion but was relating Jesus' teachings (cf. 1 Thess. 4:2), however, this particular saying of Jesus is unrecorded in the Gospels. It is uncertain if this refers to

1. oral Christian tradition (cf. Acts 20:35)
2. Jesus' sermons, like Matt. 24 or Mark 13 or Luke 21
3. if this was part of Jesus' personal revelation to Paul while in Arabia, Gal. 1:17
4. later, direct revelation like 2 Cor. 12:1ff

This phrase implies that Paul is stating something he had received, which means that his eschatological views were not uniquely his; he is passing on what he received. The problem is we moderns do not know the source of this revelation or how wide spread it was known.

**NASB, NKJV "we who are alive *and* remain until the coming of the Lord"**

**NRSV "we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord"**

**TEV "we who are alive on the day the Lord comes"**

**NJB "left alive until the Lord's coming"**

The use of the pronoun "we" could mean (1) Paul expected the Lord back during his lifetime or (2) the editorial use of we. See Special Topic: Jesus' Return at 1 Thess. 2:19 and 3:13. This expectation of an "any-moment" return of the Lord is the privilege of every generation of believers, but the experience of only one. This does not imply that Paul was inaccurate which would question inspiration.

This may also be just a literary technique because in 2 Thessalonians Paul asserts a delayed Second Coming as Jesus did in Matthew 24 (and parallels) and Peter in 2 Peter 3.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE ANY-MOMENT RETURN OF JESUS VERSUS THE NOT YET**

**NASB "will not precede"**

**NKJV, NRSV "will by no means precede"**

**TEV "will not go ahead"**

**NJB "will not have any advantage"**

This is a strong double negative, "never—no, never." Those saints who have died will fully participate in all the end-time events as will the believers who are alive at the Second Coming. The KJV "prevent" is misleading. In 1611 English it meant "precede." No human can prevent the Second Coming.

**4:16 "the Lord Himself"** The Greek text emphasizes Jesus' personal return—not a surrogate (cf. John 5:25-28).

▣ **"will descend from heaven"** Jesus will leave the Father's presence a second time to retrieve the family of faith (cf. John 14:2-3).

NASB, NKJV	"with a shout, with the voice of <i>the</i> archangel and with the trumpet of God"
NRSV	"with a cry of command, with the archangel's call and with the sound of God's trumpet"
TEV	"There will be the shout of command, the archangel's voice, the sound of God's trumpet"
NJB	"at the trumpet of God, the voice of the archangel will call out the command"

The question remains how many heavenly persons are related to these three parallel events. There is a shout (this word is found only here in the NT), a voice and a trumpet blast. The JB assumes all three are done by the archangel and then Jesus descends. Other translations imply the first "cry," "command" or "shout" is from Jesus and then the archangel calls for the trumpet blast.

Heaven is prepared for this event—it is on the calendar. The uncertainty of when and how the event will occur fades into insignificance with the knowledge of Who will be coming. Jesus is coming again to receive His own.

■ **"the archangel"** No article appears, thus, it should read "an archangel." Although Dan. 10:13 implies several, the Bible only mentions one: Michael (cf. Jude 9). He is the national angel of Israel.

■ **"trumpet"** The sounding of trumpets was a cultural way of announcing the approach of royalty in the East (cf. Heb. 12:18-19). However, it also functions in other ways.

1. divine judgment, Rev. 8:2; 11:15-19
2. resurrection, 1 Cor. 15:52
3. gathering of the elect by angels, Matt. 24:31

This was a very important means of communication in the OT, used for religious and military events (cf. Exod. 19:16; Isa. 27:13; Joel 2:1; Zeph. 1:16; Zech. 9:14; 1 Cor. 15:52).

Two types of trumpets appear in the OT: (1) silver trumpets (cf. Num. 10:2,8-10; 31:6) and (2) the left horn of a ram called the *shophar* (cf. Exod. 19:16,19; 20:18; Lev. 25:9; Joshua 6).

It is possible that all three sounds (shout, voice, trumpet) refer to the sounds of the angel because in Rev. 4:1 the angel's voice is called a trumpet (cf. Rev. 1:10).

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: HORNS USED BY ISRAEL**

■ **"and the dead in Christ will rise first"** This phrase causes confusion about where the dead go between their death and resurrection day. This verse implies that they will remain in the grave (cf. Matt. 27:52-53). However, 2 Cor. 5:6,8 implies that they are with the Lord. The solution may be in postulating a disembodied state. The physical body remains in the grave, the life force goes to be with the Lord. There are many unanswered questions here. The Bible does not provide a clear teaching passage on this subject. See William Hendricksen, *The Bible On the Life Hereafter*.

Most translations translate it as if the saints are with God/Jesus and return with Him (cf. NASB). Another view is found in TEV, "Those who have died believing in Christ will rise to life first."

**4:17 "caught up"** Our theological concept of "rapture" originates from this verb. "Rapture" is a Latin rendering of the Greek verb here (*harpazō* – future passive indicative), which implies a forceful "snatching away" (cf. John 6:15; 10:12, 28-29). This event is also mentioned in 1 Cor. 15:51-52.

Many have disagreed about this end-time event. Some expect a secret rapture of believers (cf. Matt. 24:40-42) before a thousand-year reign of Christ upon the earth. Often a seven-year tribulation period (cf. Dan. 7:25; 9:27) is linked to this. Some theologians have the rapture before, in the middle, or after this seven year period. The order and nature of these end-time events are ambiguous at best. Dogmatism is surely inappropriate here.

Believers are going to meet the Lord in the air, because in the NT the air was seen as the realm of Satan (cf. Eph. 2:2) and Greeks thought the lower air (atmosphere) was unclean and, therefore, the domain of unclean spirits. Believers will be reunited with their Lord in the midst of Satan's kingdom to show its complete overthrow.

■ **"together with them"** This church had misunderstood Paul's preaching about the Second Coming. Paul wrote both 1 and 2 Thessalonians to answer these questions. The church wanted to know: (1) Would the Christians who had died participate in these end-time events? and (2) When would dead and living believers be reunited? This subject is picked up in 2 Thess. 2:1.

■ **"in the clouds"** Clouds are the traditional means of the transportation of deity (cf. Dan. 7:13; Matt. 24:30; 26:64; Acts 1:9-11; Rev. 1:7). The image calls to remembrance the Shekinah cloud of the OT exodus experience (cf. Exod. 13:21,22; 14:19,20,24; 16:10; 19:9,16; 24:15,16,18; 34:5; 40:34-38) which symbolizes God's presence with His people.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: COMING ON THE CLOUDS**

■ **"to meet"** This is the Greek word *apanēsis*, which is used in the sense of meeting someone and then accompanying them (cf. Matt. 25:6; Acts 28:15). So believers meet the Lord and return to a recreated earth with Him!

■ **"in the air"** The air was the dominion of Satan and his followers (cf. Eph. 2:2). We are going to meet the Lord there to show the complete victory. I think that while believers are united with Christ in the air, the in prophecy of cleansing and renewal in 2 Pet. 3:10, heaven is depicted as a restored Garden of Eden (cf. Genesis 1-2 compared with Revelation 21-22).

■ **"we shall always be with the Lord"** Nothing further can be said (cf. Psalm 23:6). The Second Coming is referred to repeatedly in 1 Thessalonians (cf. 1 Thess. 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:13-18; 5:1-11). Notice that neither in this book nor 2 Thessalonians does Paul mention (some see 1 Cor. 15:25 as a reference to an earthly reign) a thousand-year reign but an eternal reign, like Dan. 7:13-14.

Paul's terminology implies the eternal kingdom begins when Jesus returns. All of the other end-time events are simply not mentioned as in 1 Cor. 15:50-58. Paul does not even imply that Jesus returns completely to the earth. In Robert G. Clouses' *The Meaning of the Millennium*, all four major millennial positions are articulated by various authors. In the a-millennial response George E. Ladd makes this surprising statement, "I admit that the greatest difficulty to any pre-millennialism is the fact that most of the New Testament pictures the consummation as occurring at Jesus' parousia" (pp. 189-190). This is exactly what Paul is asserting here without any further elaboration.

**4:18** This, like 1 Thess. 4:13, shows the purpose of Paul's presentation of these end-time events. The believers had many concerns about their fellow believers who had died. Would they be involved in the wonderful events of the Lord's return? Paul assured them that all believers, alive and dead, will be ultimately involved in the Second Coming. Remember this passage is primarily pastoral (as is 1 Cor. 15:58), not didactic. How this fits into other eschatological passages is not clear.

■ "comfort" This is a present active imperative.

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Where in the Bible is the most detailed discussion of the Second Coming?
2. What was the reason for Paul writing this passage?
3. What is the Rapture? Who is involved? When will it occur?



# 1 THESSALONIANS 5

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Lord's Coming  (4:13-5:11) 5:1-11	The Day of the Lord  5:1-11	Questions Concerning the Coming of the Lord  (4:13-5:11) 5:1-11	Be Ready for the Lord's Coming  5:1-11	Watchfulness While Awaiting the Coming of the Lord  5:1-3 5:4-11
Final Exhortations and Greetings 5:12-15  5:16-22	Various Exhortations  5:12-22  Blessing and Admonition 5:23-24	Concluding Exhortations  5:12-22  5:23-24	Final Instructions and Greetings 5:12-13  5:14-15 5:16-18 5:19-22	5:12-13a 15:13b 5:14-18 5:19-22 Closing Prayer and Farewell 5:23-24
5:23-24	5:23-28	5:23-24	5:23-24	5:23-24
5:25		5:25	5:25	5:25
5:26-27		5:26-27	5:26 5:27	5:26-27
5:28		5:28	5:28	5:28

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired but it is the key to following the original author's intent which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one, and only one, subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO VERSES 1-22

- A. 1 Thess. 4:1-11 are closely linked to 1 Thess. 4:4:13-18. Notice the similar ending in 1 Thess. 4:18 and 5:11. These passages are primarily pastoral. Their contextual purpose is to comfort, not give doctrine, although surely Paul does.
- B. This continues the discussion of the Second Coming and how Christians should live in light of the Lord's imminent return.
- C. 1 Thess. 4:13-22 have fifteen present imperatives which speak of ongoing lifestyle characteristics demanded of believers in light of the end-time events.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 THESSALONIANS 5:1-11

**<sup>1</sup>Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. <sup>2</sup>For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. <sup>3</sup>While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape. <sup>4</sup>But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief; <sup>5</sup>for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness; <sup>6</sup>so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober. <sup>7</sup>For those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night. <sup>8</sup>But since we are of *the* day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation. <sup>9</sup>For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>10</sup>who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him. <sup>11</sup>Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing.**

**5:1 "Now as to"** The subject of the Second Coming continues, but a new aspect of the event is approached: the judgment of unbelievers.

NASB	"the times and the epochs"
NKJV, NRSV	"the times and the seasons"
TEV	"the times and occasions"
NJB	"times and seasons"

Although believers are not to seek specific times (cf. Matt. 24:36), they do need to recognize the trends of history (cf. Acts 1:7; Matt. 24:32-33). The Greek *chronōn*, translated "times," answers the question, "How long?" It speaks of the passing of time. The English word "chronology" is derived from this Greek root. *Kairōn*, translated "epochs," answers the question, "when?" It speaks of special events.

- **"brethren"** This is often used by Paul to mark a transition to a new subject (see 4:1).
- **"you have no need of anything to be written to you"** Paul had not been able to give them extensive and prolonged information about the Second Coming. Remember, he only stayed a short time in Thessalonica, but he must have preached on this subject several times. This phrase does not mean to imply the Thessalonian believers perfectly understood all aspects of the end-time events but that the Spirit would lead them and inform them in the necessary areas (cf. John 14:26; 16:13; 1 John 2:20,27) especially those truths that relate to: (1) the gospel, and (2) the Christian life.

The other possible option is that it refers to the New Covenant of Jer. 31:31-34, especially 1 Thess. 5:33-34. The New Age of righteousness is characterized by believers knowing God in intimate personal ways. They will not need a teacher for God has written His word on their hearts by means of the Spirit.

**5:2 "the day of the Lord"** This corresponds to an OT phrase referring to God or His Messiah breaking into history to set up the new age of righteousness (cf. Joel 1:15; 2:11,31; Amos 5:18; Isa. 2:12). In the OT God's coming could be for blessing or for judgment. For believers it will be the culmination of salvation but for unbelievers the consummation of judgment.

The eschatological emphasis of a special coming day when humans will meet Jesus (as Savior or Judge) goes by several designations in Paul's writings:

1. "the day of our Lord Jesus Christ" (cf. 1 Cor. 1:8)
2. "the day of the Lord" (cf. 1 Cor. 5:5; 1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Thess. 2:2)
3. "the day of the Lord Jesus" (cf. 2 Cor. 1:14)
4. "the day of Jesus Christ" (cf. Phil. 1:6)
5. "the day of Christ" (cf. Phil. 1:10; 2:16)
6. "His day (Son of Man)" (cf. Luke 17:24)
7. "the day that the Son of Man is revealed" (cf. Luke 17:30)
8. "the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ" (cf. 1 Cor. 1:7)
9. "when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven" (cf. 2 Thess. 1:7)
10. "in the presence of the Lord Jesus at His coming" (cf. 1 Thess. 2:19)

In the OT the writers saw two ages, an evil age and a coming age of righteousness, the age of the Spirit. God would intervene in history through His Messiah to set up this new age. This event was known as the "Day of the Lord." Notice that NT writers attribute this to Christ. His first coming, the Incarnation, was foretold in many OT texts. The Jews did not expect a divine person, just a divine intervention. The two comings of the Messiah, one as suffering servant and savior, one as Judge and Lord, were not obvious to OT people. See Special Topic: The Two Ages in Gal. 1:4.

▣ **"will come just like a thief in the night"** This is a present tense used as a future. This "any-moment" return is a recurrent theme in the NT (cf. Matt. 24:42-44; 25:13; Luke 12:40,45; 21:34-36; 2 Pet. 3:10; Rev. 3:3; 16:15). See Special Topic at 1 Thess. 4:15.

There was a Jewish tradition that the Messiah would come at midnight on Passover like the Death Angel of the Exodus.

**5:3 "While they are saying, 'Peace and safety'"** This was the message of the false prophets of Jeremiah's day (cf. Jer. 6:14; 8:11,28). Human life and society will appear normal before God's intervention (cf. Matt. 24:37-38; Luke 17:26-27). They will not be expecting the Messiah.

The NT emphasis is that there will be intense suffering before the Second Coming (cf. Matt. 24:21; Mark 13:19-20).

▣ **"then destruction will come upon them suddenly"** This passage strongly contrasts "them" (1 Thess. 5:3) and "brothers" (1 Thess. 5:4). This destruction does not refer to annihilation, but is a biblical metaphor for God's judgment (cf. 2 Thess. 1:9; Dan. 12:2).

"Suddenly" is only found here and in Luke's account of Jesus' Olivet discourse (cf. Luke 21:34). It implies a sudden and unexpected event.

▣ **"labor pains"** This OT metaphor of judgment (cf. Isa. 13:6-8; Jer. 4:31) became a NT metaphor (i.e., birth pains of the new age, cf. Matt. 24:8; Mark 13:8; Rom. 8:22). It speaks of the suddenness yet certainty of an event, as well as the severe pain involved.

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"and they will not escape"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"And they shall not escape"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"and there will be no escape"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"They will not escape"</b>
<b>JB</b>	<b>"and there will be no way for anybody to evade it"</b>



This is an emphatic double negative: "Never, no, never under any circumstances."

**5:4 "But you, brethren, are not in darkness"** God has revealed—through the OT prophets, Jesus, and NT writers—the basic outline of end-time events so that those believers who are alive will not be surprised by what is occurring. This is one way that God has provided courage to His followers amid the difficulties of this life and the end-time tribulation period.

One reason for the recurrent confusion among believers about these events is that every generation of believers has tried to force these events into their history.

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: OLD TESTAMENT PREDICTIONS OF THE FUTURE VS. NEW TESTAMENT PREDICTIONS](#)

**5:5 "sons of light and sons of day"** These are two Semitic idioms for the righteous (cf. Luke 16:8; John 1:4-9; 3:17-21; 8:12; 11:9-10; 12:35-36,46; Eph. 5:8; 1 John 1:5,7; 2:8-10). This metaphorical dualism of light versus darkness is characteristic of the Ancient Near East. It is a recurrent theme in the Apostle John's writings and in the Dead Sea Scrolls.

**5:6 "let us not sleep"** This is a different word from 4:13ff. It is often used in the NT for moral indifference (cf. Mark 13:36; Eph. 5:14). Notice the three different uses of "sleep" (*katheudō*): (1) lack of moral alertness, (1 Thess. 5:6); (2) physical rest, (1 Thess. 5:7); (3) death, (1 Thess. 5:10).

**NASB, NKJV,**  
**NRSV** "as others do"  
**TEV** "like the others"  
**NJB** "as everyone else does"

This is literally "the remaining" or "the rest." It is the same term used to describe unbelievers who have no hope in 1 Thess. 4:13.

▣ **"let us be alert and sober"** Verse 6 has three present active subjunctives. The first is negative, "do not continue to sleep." The next two are positive, "keep alert and sober." These emphasize continual diligence, but with an element of contingency. Some believers are asleep and are not alert or sober. Alertness is a common theme of the NT for Christians concerning the Second Coming (cf. Matt. 24:42-43; 25:13; Mark 13:34; Luke 21:34). Both "alert" and "sober" are used metaphorically. "Sober" in 1 Thess. 5:6 & 8 is used of mental alertness or self-control (cf. 2 Tim.4:5; 1 Pet. 1:13; 4:7; 5:8).

**5:8 "having put on"** This is an Aorist middle participle which could read "having once for all ourselves put on." This usage is very similar to Rom. 13:12; Eph. 6:11-14, which reflects Isa. 59:17. Paul used this military armor metaphor often, but not always using the armor to represent the same Christian attributes. Believers must personally avail themselves of the spiritual weaponry provided by Christ. Maturity's protection is not automatic (cf. 1 Thess. 5:7).

▣ **"faith. . .love. . .hope"** This was Paul's favorite triad of Christian virtues (cf. Rom. 5:2-5; Gal. 5:5-6; Col. 1:4-5; 1 Thess. 1:3; Heb. 6:10-12; 1 Pet. 1:21-22). They form a link from initial faith to consummated faith.

▣ **"hope"** This often is used to refer to the Second Coming, especially in I & 2 Thessalonians. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: HOPE](#) at Gal. 5:5.

**5:9 "for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ"** God's love flows to us only through Christ. He is the only way (cf. John 14:6); the door (John 10:1-3); the only mediator (1 Tim. 2:5).

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: SALVATION \(GREEK VERB TENSES\)](#)

**5:10 "who died for us"** This expresses Jesus' substitutionary vicarious sacrifice on our behalf (cf. Isa.

53; Mark 10:45; 2 Cor. 5:21).

■ **"whether we are awake or asleep"** There are two interpretive options: (1) the church was concerned about those members of their fellowship who have died or (2) Jesus died for even those believers who are not alert and not sober.

■ **"we will live together with Him"** Heaven is surely a place (cf. John 14:2-3a), but primarily it is being with Jesus (cf. John 14:3c; 2 Cor. 5:6,8). Heaven, like salvation, is a personal relationship!

**5:11 "encourage one another"** This is a present active imperative. "Encourage" is from the same root as *paraclētos* (cf. John 14:16,26; 15:26; 16:17; 1 John 2:1). Paul's discussion of the Rapture (cf. 1 Thess. 4:13-18) ends in an ethical, ministry admonition (cf. 1 Cor. 15:58; Eph. 4:13). Doctrine should encourage godly living (cf. Luke 12:48).

■ **"build up one another"** This is another present active imperative. The expectation of Christ's return and heaven should motivate us to minister to one another, not fight over competing human eschatological systems!

### SPECIAL TOPIC: EDIFY

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 THESSALONIANS 5:12-22**

**<sup>12</sup>But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, <sup>13</sup>and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another. <sup>14</sup>We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone. <sup>15</sup>See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all people. <sup>16</sup>Rejoice always; <sup>17</sup> pray without ceasing; <sup>18</sup>in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. <sup>19</sup>Do not quench the Spirit; <sup>20</sup>do not despise prophetic utterances. <sup>21</sup>But examine everything *carefully*; hold fast to that which is good; <sup>22</sup>abstain from every form of evil.**

**5:12 "brethren"** This is often used by Paul to show a transition to a new subject (cf. 1 Thess. 4:13; 5:1), though not always (cf. 1 Thess. 5:14 and 25, 26). Here it shows that Paul was addressing the whole church.

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"appreciate"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"recognize"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"respect"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"to pay proper respect"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"be considerate"</b>

This is a perfect infinitive, literally "to know," used in the sense of "to appreciate," "to show people respect," "to acknowledge the value of" or "know the value of." Believers must respond appropriately and respectfully toward God-called leadership (cf. 1 Cor. 16:18; Phil. 2:29; 1 Tim. 5:17).

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"those who diligently labor amongst you"</b>
<b>NKJV, NRSV</b>	<b>"those who labor among you"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"to those who work among you"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"those who are working amongst you"</b>

This term for "labor" means "strenuous effort" (cf. 1 Cor. 16:16). This entire section seems to refer to an attitude problem in the church toward its leadership.

1. "who diligently labor among you" (present active participle)
2. "who have charge over you" (present middle participle)
3. "who give you instructions (present active participle). There is one article in the Greek text followed by these three descriptive phrases, all of these participles refer to leadership.

■ **"have charge over you in the Lord"** This is literally "to be set before." They will give an account to God for their ministry (cf. 1 Cor. 3:10-17; Heb. 13:17).

■ **"give you instruction"** This is literally "put sense into." It is usually translated "to admonish the unruly."

**5:12-22** There is a series of fifteen present imperatives urging believers to live appropriately in a fallen world on the verge of destruction. Our godly lives should point lost people to Christ.

**5:13**

**NASB, NKJV,**

**NRSV** "esteem them very highly in love"

**TEV** "Treat them with the greatest respect and love"

**NJB** "Have the greatest respect and affection for them"

The verbal is a present infinitive which emphasizes continuing personal action. The adverb is a triple compound term used three times by Paul (cf. Eph. 3:20; 1 Thess. 3:10). Believers should respect their leaders (cf. 1 Cor. 16:18; Phil. 2:29; 1 Tim. 5:17). See Special Topic: Paul's Use of *Huper* Compounds at Gal. 1:13.

■ **"because of their work"** Leadership is a gift from God (cf. Eph. 4:11-13). When He assigns the task, He honors the task, not necessarily the person who receives it. The term translated "work" in 1 Thess. 5:13 is different from the one in 1 Thess. 5:12. This hard working group of leaders may have been contrasted with those who refused to work (cf. 1 Thess. 5:14 and 2 Thess. 3:6-11).

■ **"Live in peace with one another"** This is a present active imperative, a continual command for believers and a common NT appeal (cf. Mark 9:50; Rom. 12:18; 2 Cor. 13:11). This reflects a common problem in the churches. Christianity embraced men and women from many differing backgrounds (cf. Rom. 14:1-15:13; 1 Cor. 8:1-13; 10:23-33).

**5:14 "brethren"** This verse could refer primarily to the leaders (cf. 1 Thess. 5:27), but the things mentioned would apply to all believers. This is also true of 1 Timothy 3. New Testament Christianity does not make a distinction between "clergy" and "laity." We are all God-called, Spirit-gifted ministers of Jesus (cf. Eph. 4:11-13). Within this family of gifted ministers God does choose leaders!

**NASB** "admonish the unruly"

**NKJV** "warn those who are unruly"

**NRSV** "to admonish the idlers"

**TEV** "warn the idle"

**NJB** "warn the idlers"

This begins a series of present imperatives, denoting continuous or habitual action. There are fifteen imperatives in 1 Thess. 5:12-22. This one could have one of two meanings: (1) a military term for disorderly conduct; or (2) used in the Koine Greek papyri from Egypt for "idlers." The latter connotation fits the context of this letter better (cf. 2 Thess. 3:7-16).

**NASB, NRSV** "encourage the fainthearted"

**NKJV** "comfort the fainthearted"

**TEV** "encourage the timid"

## **NJB "give courage to those who are apprehensive"**

A present middle (deponent) imperative, this is literally, "little-minded." The KJV has "feeble-minded," but it is really used in the sense of "fainthearted" or "little-faithed" (cf. Rom. 14:1-15:13; 1 Cor. 8; 10:23-33). It may be an allusion to Isa. 35:4 in the Septuagint.

■ **"help the weak"** This present middle imperative is used in the sense of weak in body and/or mind. This may designate the same type of Christian as characterized in Rom. 14:1-15:13 (i.e., 1 Cor. 8:7; 9:22) or it may refer to a physical problem.

■ **"be patient with everyone"** This is a present active imperative. It is a command to continually be longsuffering, not short-tempered (cf. 1 Cor. 13:4; Eph. 4:2). This is directed to both leaders and people. It also gives us a window into the problems of the early church.

There are two Greek terms translated "patience": (1) *makrothomia* and (2) *hupomonē*. They are listed together in 2 Cor. 6:6; Gal. 5:22; Col. 1:11; 2 Tim. 3:10. The first one is used in this text. It can refer to a characteristic of God (cf. LXX of Isa. 57:15; Rom. 2:4; 9:22; 1 Pet. 3:20; 2 Pet. 3:9). Believers are to emulate the character (image) of their Father.

It is also used of patience with (1) something, cf. Heb. 6:12; James 5:7,8 or (2) someone. cf. Matt. 18:26,29; 1 Cor. 13:1; 1 Thess. 5:14; James 5:10. This is evidence of spiritual maturity and Christlike living.

**5:15 "See that no one repays another with evil for evil"** This is another present active imperative (cf. Matt. 5:44; Rom. 12:17-21; 1 Pet. 3:9). Believers must respond differently than unbelievers. Believers should act in love, not react in anger. Difficult and unfair situations are often the most effective witnessing opportunities.

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"always seek after that which is good"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"always pursue what is good"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"always seek to do good"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"at all times make it your aim to do good"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"you must all think of what is best"</b>

This present active imperative is rendered literally "continue to pursue good" (cf. 1 Thess. 5:21; Rom. 12:9). The term "good" here is *agathos*, which usually emphasizes a moral quality. But one wonders how this relates to the next phrase "for one another and for all people." The term *kalos* (good or beautiful) is used in 1 Thess. 5:21. There is a large semantic overlap between these two terms in Koine Greek. Is there meant to be a distinction? Both immediate contexts refer to "evil" (cf. 1 Thess. 5:15a, 22). Verse 15 relates to Christian actions toward believers and non-believers (all men), but 1 Thess. 5:21 relates to analyzing Christian leaders or gifts. I am currently thinking that they are synonymous. There was a simplification in grammar and vocabulary occurring in Koine Greek in Paul's day. For a good discussion of *kalos* see William Barclay's *New Testament Words* pp. 151-161.

■ **"for one another and for all people"** This is much like 1 Thess. 5:14 and 3:12. Believers must put the good of the community above personal benefit (cf. Rom. 12:10; 1 Cor. 12:7; Phil. 2:1-5). How believers treat other believers should be generalized to the way they treat nonbelievers also (cf. Gal. 6:10).

**5:16 "Rejoice always"** This present active imperative is the theme of the book of Philippians (cf. Phil. 2:18; 3:1; 4:4,10). It is a world-view based on our relationship with Christ and our covenant relationship with other Christians, not on circumstances (cf. Rom. 8:31-39).

**5:17 "pray without ceasing"** Another present middle (deponent) imperative, this must refer to lifestyle prayer, a moment by moment fellowship with God (cf. 1 Thess. 1:3; 2:13). Paul sensed a need for prayer and believed it affected his ministry (cf. 1 Thess. 5:25; Eph. 6:18-19; 2 Thess. 3:1).

**5:18**

**NASB, NKJV** "in everything give thanks"  
**NRSV** "give thanks in all circumstances"  
**TEV** "be thankful in all circumstances"  
**NJB** "for all things give thanks to God"

This is another present active imperative. Circumstances must not dictate our thanksgiving or our joy (cf. Rom. 8:26-30, 31-39; Eph. 5:20). Remember that thanksgiving should flow not "for all things," but "in all circumstances." See Special Topic: Paul's Praise, Prayer, and Thanksgiving at Gal. 6:18. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: THANKSGIVING](#) at 1 Thess. 1:2.

▣ **"God's will"** This is literally "a will of God" like Eph. 5:17. The will of God is that fallen mankind believe in Christ (cf. John 6:29). After this there are several "wills" of God. One is to rejoice and give thanks even during persecution and conflict. See Special Topic at 1 Thess. 4:3.

**5:19**

**NASB, NKJV,**  
**NRSV** "Do not quench the Spirit"  
**TEV** "Do not restrain the Holy Spirit"  
**NJB** "Never try to suppress the Spirit"

Verses 19-20 are present active imperatives with the negative particle, usually meaning stop an act in process. The Williams translation has "stop stifling the Spirit." The five imperatives of 1 Thess. 5:19-22 must go together. The first two negative imperatives of 1 Thess. 5:19, 20 set the boundaries for the three positive imperatives of 1 Thess. 5:21-22. "Quench" means "to put out a fire." Our actions affect the working of the Spirit (cf. Isa. 63:10; Eph. 4:30).

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: THE PERSONHOOD OF THE SPIRIT](#)

**5:20**

**NASB** "do not despise prophetic utterances"  
**NKJV** "Do not despise prophecies"  
**NRSV** "Do not despise the words of prophets"  
**TEV** "do not despise inspired messages"  
**NJB** "never. . .treat the gift of prophecy with contempt"

The definition of "prophecy" in the NT has been much debated. The gift is included in the list of spiritual gifts in 1 Cor. 12:28-29 and Eph. 4:11. How the Scripture writing prophets of the OT are related to the post-apostolic gift of "prophecy" is uncertain. Most scholars want to limit inspiration/revelation to the NT period (cf. Jude 3,20).

Clearly NT prophets are not synonymous with OT prophets. The NT gift usually relates to practical application issues, not new revelatory information. However, there is a predictive element in Acts 11:27-30 and 21:10-11. In 1 and 2 Corinthians prophecy and prophesy (cf. 1 Cor. 13:1; 14:1,39) mean proclaim the gospel. Exactly how this proclamation differed between apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers is uncertain.

Verse 20 is in some way related to 1 Thess. 5:19. Exactly how this fits into the Thessalonian church is uncertain. Believers must vigorously reject false leaders, but enthusiastically embrace godly leaders.

**5:21**

**NASB** "examine everything *carefully*"  
**NKJV** "Test all things"  
**NRSV** "test everything"  
**TEV** "Put all things to the test"

## NJB "think before you do anything"

This is a present active imperative. It is literally, "and all things prove." In context this could refer to (1) church leaders, (2) spiritual gifts, (3) a spiritual message, or (4) doctrine. The word (*dokimazō*, see Special Topic at 1 Thess. 3:5) implies "to test with a view toward approval" (cf. 1 Cor. 12:10; 14:29; 1 John 4:1ff.). Some things appear spiritual but actually are not (cf. Matt. 7:21-23; Col. 2:16-23).

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: JUDGING \(SHOULD CHRISTIANS JUDGE ONE ANOTHER?\)](#)

■ **"hold fast to that which is good"** "Hold fast" is another present active imperative. It seems to relate to the things examined. This is the Greek term *kalos* (good or beautiful), not *agathos* as in 1 Thess. 5:15.

**5:22 "abstain from every form of evil"** "Abstain" is a present middle imperative. "Evil" can be masculine or neuter. This causes problems in passages like Matt. 6:13, because the text could refer to Satan or evil in general. In this context it could be evil persons or evil in general. There is no emphasis on false teachers in 1 Thessalonians, therefore, it is probably parallel to the generic "good" in 1 Thess. 5:21.

The phrase "every form of" can be understood in two ways: (1) KJV translates it as "every appearance of evil," as in Luke 9:29. This is also the way the early Church Fathers understood the term or (2) the *Didache* 3:1 seems to use the term in a general sense of "all evil," not just apparent, but real evil.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 THESSALONIANS 5:23-24**

**<sup>23</sup>Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

**<sup>24</sup>Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.**

**5:23 "may the God of peace Himself"** This is a common phrase in the closings of Paul's letters (cf. Rom. 15:33; 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:11; Phil. 4:6; 2 Thess. 3:16 ). What a wonderful, descriptive title for deity!

■ **"sanctify. . .be preserved"** These are both aorist optatives, which is the mood of wishing or praying. Paul prayed that believers be sanctified and preserved by God. This shows sanctification is both a gift at salvation and a continuing task. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: NEW TESTAMENT HOLINESS/SANCTIFICATION](#) at 1 Thess. 4:3.

■ **"sanctify you entirely"** In this sentence, two Greek adjectives, "entirely" and "complete," combined with three nouns, "spirit, soul, and body," underscores the completeness of our person, not that man is a trichotomous being like the Triune God. In Luke 1:46-47 the parallelism shows that soul and spirit are synonymous. Humans do not have a soul—they are a soul (cf. Gen. 2:7). This phrase emphasizes believers' call to holiness in every area of their lives (cf. Matt. 5:48; Eph. 1:4).

■ **"may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete"** This is not a proof-text for an ontological trichotomy in mankind (humans a trinity like God), but humans have a dual relationship to both this planet and to God. The Hebrew word *nephesh* is used of both mankind and the animals in Genesis (cf. Gen. 1:24; 2:19), while "spirit" (*ruah*) is used uniquely of mankind (the breath of life). This is not a proof-text on the nature of mankind as a three-part (trichotomous) being, nor is Heb. 4:12. Mankind is primarily represented in the Bible as a unity (cf. Gen. 2:7). For a good summary of the theories of mankind as trichotomous, dichotomous, or a unity, see Millard J. Erickson's *Christian Theology* (second edition) pp. 538-557 and Frank Stagg's *Polarities of Man's Existence in Biblical Perspective*.

■ **"without blame"** This term is only found here in the NT. It has been found in inscriptions at Thessalonica. It means free from blame or accusations, therefore, morally pure. It possibly reflects the OT term "blameless" that meant free of defects and, therefore, available for sacrifice. See Special Topic at 1 Thess. 2:10.

■ **"at the coming of our Lord"** This has been the theological focus of the entire book, the Second Coming (cf. 1 Thess. 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:13-15:11; 5:23). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: JESUS' RETURN](#) at 1 Thess. 2:19 and 3:13.

**5:24 "Faithful is He"** This functions both as the second descriptive title (cf. Deut. 7:9; Isa. 49:7; 1 Cor. 1:9; 10:13; 2 Cor. 1:18; 2 Thess. 3:3) and as a characteristic of YHWH (cf. Ps. 36:5; 40:10; 89:1,2,5,8; 92:2; 119:90). The believers' confidence is in the established, settled, unchanging character of YHWH (cf. Malachi 3:6).

■ **"He who calls. . . He also will bring it to pass"** The third descriptive title, "He who calls," always refers to God the Father (cf. 1 Thess. 2:12; 4:7). This verse refers to the believers' election plus glorification (cf. Rom. 8:29-34). It focuses on the trustworthy God who initiates and perfects (cf. Phil. 1:6; 2:13). Our hope is in God's trustworthiness to keep His promises.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 THESSALONIANS 5:25**

**<sup>25</sup>Brethren, pray for us.**

**5:25 "pray for us"** Paul felt a need for prayer (cf. Rom. 15:30; Eph. 6:18-19; Col. 4:3-4; Phil. 1:19). Prayer somehow releases the power of God for effective ministry. The sovereign God has chosen to limit Himself in some areas to the prayers of His children (cf. James 4:2). What a responsibility this puts on each one of us as Christians. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: INTERCESSORY PRAYER](#) at 1 Thess. 1:2.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 THESSALONIANS 5:26-27**

**<sup>26</sup>Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss. <sup>27</sup>I adjure you by the Lord to have this letter read to all the brethren.**

**5:26 "holy kiss"** The "who," "where," and "how" of the early church's use of this type greeting is uncertain. Later, men kissed men and women kissed women on the cheek (cf. Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:23; 1 Pet. 5:14). The holy kiss was discontinued because of cultural misunderstanding by the pagans.

This was their cultural sign of love, support, and community. In our day in American culture, a hug or a warm handshake functions in the same way. It is a symbol to acknowledge our oneness!

**5:27** This verse is addressed to the leaders. Paul's letters were for public reading (cf. Col. 4:16) and later to be passed around to other churches. Paul understood that his writings had meaning beyond their original setting and time.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 THESSALONIANS 5:28**

**<sup>28</sup>The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.**

**5:28** Paul probably wrote this himself to authenticate the letter (cf. 2 Thess. 3:17-18).

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Should we try to set the date of Jesus' return? Why?
2. Define the phrase "Day of the Lord."



3. Why is the Second Coming described as: (1) a thief in the night; and (2) a woman in labor?
4. Where else in the Bible is the Christian armor discussed?
5. Which of these verses was written to the congregation and which to leaders?
6. What was the possible background at Thessalonica for this chapter?
7. Why are there so many "present imperatives" in this chapter? What does this grammatical form mean to us?



# 2 THESSALONIANS 1

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Salutation	Greetings	Salutation	Greetings	Address
1:1-2	1:1-2	1:1-2	1:1 1:2	1:1-2
The Judgment at Christ's Coming	God's Final Judgment and Glory	Thanksgiving	The Judgment at Christ's Coming	Thanksgiving and Encouragement. The Last Judgment
1:3-12	1:3-12	1:3-4 The Judgment of God 1:5-12	1:3-4 1:5-10 1:11-12	1:3-5 1:6-10 1:11-12

\* Although they are not inspired, paragraph divisions are the key to understanding and following the original author's intent. Each modern translation has divided and summarized the paragraphs. Every paragraph has one central topic, truth, or thought. Each version encapsulates that topic in its own distinct way. As you read the text, ask yourself which translation fits your understanding of the subject and verse divisions.

In every chapter we must read the Bible first and try to identify its subjects (paragraphs), then compare our understanding with the modern versions. Only when we understand the original author's intent by following his logic and presentation can we truly understand the Bible. Only the original author is inspired—readers have no right to change or modify the message. Bible readers do have the responsibility of applying the inspired truth to their day and their lives.

Note that all technical terms and abbreviations are explained fully in the following documents: [Brief Definitions of Greek Grammatical Structure](#), [Textual Criticism](#), and [Glossary](#).

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired but it is the key to following the original author's intent which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO VERSES 1-10

A. 2 Thessalonians develops the eschatological themes of 1 Thessalonians.

B. 2 Thess. 1:3-10 is one sentence in Greek. They describe Paul's confidence in the believers and confidence in God's judgment on the unbelievers. This is a very strong passage on God's final judgment. The earthly roles, the blessed and unblessed, of the persecutor and persecuted will be reversed.

C. 2 Thess. 1:11-12 is a summary of verses 3-10.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2 THESSALONIANS 1:1-2

**<sup>1</sup>Paul and Silvanus and Timothy to the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: <sup>2</sup>Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.**

**1:1 "Paul"** Saul of Tarsus is first called Paul in Acts 13:9. It is probable that most Jews of the "diaspora" had a Hebrew name and a Greek name. If so, then Saul's parents gave him this name but why, then, does "Paul" suddenly appear in Acts 13? Possibly

1. others began to call him by this nickname
2. he began to refer to himself by the term "little" or "least"

The Greek name *Paulos* meant "little." Several theories have been advanced about the origin of his Greek name.

1. the second century tradition that Paul was short, fat, bald, bow-legged, bushy eye-browed, and had protruding eyes is a possible source of the name, deriving from a non-canonical book from Thessalonica called *Paul and Thekla*
2. passages where Paul calls himself the "the least of the saints" because he persecuted the Church as in Acts 9:1-2 (cf. 1 Cor. 15:9; Eph. 3:8; 1 Tim. 1:15)

Some have seen this "leastness" as the origin of the self-chosen title. However, in a book like Galatians, where he emphasized his independence and equality with the Jerusalem Twelve, this is somewhat unlikely (cf. 2 Cor. 11:5; 12:11; 15:10).

#### ■ "Silvanus" Silas

1. He is called Silas in Acts and Silvanus in the Epistles
2. He, like Barnabas, was a leader in the Jerusalem Church (cf. Acts 15:22-23)
3. He is closely associated with Paul (cf. Acts 15:40; 16:19ff; 17:1-15; 1 Thess. 1:1)
4. He, like Barnabas and Paul, was a prophet (cf. Acts 15:32)
5. He is called an apostle (cf. 1 Thess. 2:6)
6. He, like Paul, was a Roman citizen (cf. Acts 16:37-38)
7. He, like John Mark, is also associated with Peter, even possibly acting as a scribe (cf. 1 Pet. 5:12)

#### ■ "Timothy"

1. His name means "one who honors God."
2. He was the child of a Jewish mother and a Greek father and he lived in Lystra (cf. Acts. 16:1). The Latin translation of Origen's commentary on Rom. 16:21 says Timothy was a citizen of Derbe. This is possibly taken from Acts 20:4.
3. He was instructed in the Jewish faith by his mother and grandmother (cf. 2 Tim. 1:5; 3:14-15).
4. He trusted Christ during Paul's first missionary journey (cf. Acts 13:49-14:25).
5. He was asked to join Paul and Silas' missionary team on the second journey (cf. Acts 16:1-5). He was confirmed by prophecy (cf. 1 Tim. 1:18; 4:14).

6. He was circumcised by Paul in order to work with both Jews and Greeks (cf. Acts 16:3).
7. He was a dedicated companion and co-worker of Paul. He is mentioned by name more than any other of Paul's helpers (17 times in 10 letters, cf. Rom. 16:21; 1 Cor. 4:17; 16:10; Phil. 1:1; 2:19,22; Col. 1:5; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2:6; 3:2; 1 Tim. 1:2,18; 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:2; 3:14-15).
8. Paul affectionately calls him "my child in the faith" (cf. 1 Tim. 1:2), "my beloved son" (cf. 2 Tim. 1:2), and "my true child in a common faith" (cf. Titus 1:4).
9. He was apparently in Rome when Paul was released from prison and accompanied him on his fourth missionary journey (cf. Col. 1:1; Philemon 1).
10. He is called an "apostle" (cf. 1 Thess. 2:6).
11. Two of the three Pastoral Epistles are addressed to him.
12. He is last mentioned in Heb. 13:23.

■ **"church"** The Greek term *ekklesia* means "the called out ones." The same term signified called town meetings in Greek cities (cf. Acts 19:32). It was used in the Septuagint to translate *qahal* (BDB 874, i.e., Exod 12:6; Lev. 16:17; Num. 20:4; Deut. 31:30) or "congregation" of Israel. The early Christians saw themselves as the fulfillment and extension of OT Israel. See Special Topic at Gal. 1:2.

■ **"in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ"** This phrase is one of the few differences between the introduction in 1 Thess. 1:1 and 2 Thess. 1:1. Believers can call God "our Father" (cf. Matt. 6:9). Of course, God is not our father in a physically generative or chronological sense, but in the sense of a familial relationship. See Special Topic at Gal. 1:1.

The grammatical structure (one preposition "en" with two objects "Father" and "Lord") is one of the ways that NT authors linked the Father and the Son (cf. 1 Thess. 1:1). This construction would assert their equality and thereby Jesus' deity.

Paul's favorite way of designating believers is "in Christ," but here he asserts that believers are also in the Father.

**1:2 "Grace to you and peace"** Many see this as a combination of the Greek and Jewish greetings. The repeated phrase "from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" links the Father and Son by the conjunction "and" and the Single preposition, showing Paul's theology of Jesus' deity (just like 2 Thess. 1:1). Theologically grace always precedes peace.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2 THESSALONIANS 1:3-12**

<sup>3</sup>We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is *only* fitting, because your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows ever greater; <sup>4</sup>therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure. <sup>5</sup>This is a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering. <sup>6</sup>For after all it is *only* just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, <sup>7</sup>and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, <sup>8</sup>dealing out retribution to those who do not know God to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. <sup>9</sup>These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, <sup>10</sup>when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed—for our testimony to you was believed. <sup>11</sup>To this end also we pray for you always, that our God will count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power, <sup>12</sup>so that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and *the* Lord Jesus Christ.

**1:3 "We ought always to give thanks to God for you"** This reflects Paul's prayer life for the churches (cf. v.11; 1 Thess. 1:2; 2 Thess. 2:13 and Phil. 1:3-4; 2 Cor. 11:28). Paul felt an oughtness to always pray with thanksgiving (cf. 1 Thess. 5:18). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: THANKSGIVING](#) at 1 Thess. 1:2.

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"because your faith is greatly enlarged"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"because your faith grows exceedingly"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"because your faith is growing abundantly"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"because your faith is growing so much"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"because your faith is growing so wonderfully"</b>

This metaphor from agriculture expresses vigorous plant growth (cf. 2 Cor. 10:15; 2 Pet. 3:18). See Special Topic: Paul's Use of *Huper* Compounds at Gal. 1:13. Paul applauded the development of their faith and love. This is similar to 1 Thess. 1:3. But notice "hope" is missing. There was still much confusion in this area (i.e., the Second Coming, see Special Topic at Gal. 5:5).

▣ **"the love of each one of you toward one another"** In light of the internal fellowship problems within the church (cf. 1 Thess. 3:12; 5:12-13; 1 John 4:7,11,12,31), this affirmation of their love for one another was important .

▣ **"grows ever greater"** This expression was used metaphorically to invoke images of swelling flood waters.

**1:4 "we ourselves speak proudly of you"** The emphasis of this phrase is on "we ourselves" in contrast to "you." The church itself felt weak (cf. 1 Thess. 5:14). Paul saw and articulated their strengths. Their Christlikeness under persecution was evidence of Paul's effective ministry and thereby his apostleship (cf. 1 Thess. 2:19).

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"perseverance"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"patience"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"steadfastness"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"about the way you continue to endure"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"constancy"</b>

This is literally "voluntary, active, steadfast endurance" (cf. 1 Thess. 1:3). It relates both to people and to circumstances. It was another evidence of the Spirit's work in their lives. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: PERSEVERANCE](#) at Gal. 5:4.

▣ **"faith"** This term in the OT was used of God's trustworthiness and mankind's response in trust (cf. Hab. 2:4, see Special Topic at Gal. 3:4). Here it is used of their faithfulness in the midst of persecution. Paul prayed for their faith in 1 Thess. 3:10 and praised them here for their faith. Through faith God's faithfulness becomes the believer's faithfulness. See Special Topic at Gal. 3:6.

▣ **"in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure"** Suffering is normal for believers in a fallen world (cf. Matt. 5:10-12; Acts 14:22; Rom. 8:17-18; 1 Thess. 2:14; 3:3; James 1:2-4; 1 Pet. 4:12-16). It often is the very means of our spiritual growth (cf. Heb. 5:8). See Special Topics: Tribulation at 1 Thess. 1:10 and Why Do Christians Suffer? at 1 Thess. 3:3.

**1:5 "This is a plain indication of God's righteous judgment"** This refers to God's wrath poured out on unbelievers who persecute His people (cf. Phil. 1:28).

For a word study of "righteous" see Special Topic at Gal. 2:21.

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"so that you will be considered worthy"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"that you may be counted worthy"</b>

<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"is intended to make you worthy"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"because as a result of all this you will become worthy"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"you may be found worthy"</b>

This is an aorist passive infinitive, "to be declared worthy." The passive voice implies that God the Father is the agent. This is one purpose of suffering. It builds character (cf. 2 Thess. 1:11; Rom. 5:3-4; Heb. 5:8).

This is a good example of the theological distinction between a positional righteousness in Christ yet also the need for a developing righteousness in the believer. Our standing before God is a gift (indicative), but also a mandate (imperative). One way to express this truth may be with an athletic metaphor. Believers have won the race by their faith relationship with Christ. Now they must run the race for Him in faithfulness. Gratitude, not required performance, drives the Christian to godliness (cf. 1 Thess. 2:12; Eph. 4:1,17; 5:2).

■ **"of the kingdom of God"** This is such a key phrase in the Synoptic Gospels (see Special Topic at Gal. 5:21). Jesus' first and last sermons, and most of His parables, dealt with this topic. It refers to the reign of God in human hearts now! It is surprising that the Gospel of John has this phrase only twice (and never in Jesus' parables). In John's gospel "eternal life" is a key term and metaphor.

The phrase relates to the eschatological (end-time) thrust of Jesus' teachings. This "already, but not yet" theological paradox relates to the Jewish concept of two ages, the current evil age and the righteous age to come, which will be inaugurated by the Messiah. The Jews expected only one coming of a Spirit-empowered military leader (like the Judges in the OT). The two comings of Jesus caused an overlapping of the two ages (see Special Topic: The Two Ages at Gal. 1:4). The Kingdom of God has broken into human history with the incarnation at Bethlehem. However, Jesus came not as the military conqueror of Rev. 19, but as the Suffering Servant (cf. Isaiah 53) and humble leader (cf. Zech. 9:9). The Kingdom, therefore, is inaugurated (cf. Matt. 3:2; 4:17; 10:7; 11:12; 12:28; Mark 1:15; Luke 9:9,11; 11:20; 21:31-32), but not consummated (cf. Matt. 6:10; 16:28; 26:64).

**1:6**

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"For after all it is <i>only</i> just"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"since <i>it is</i> a righteous thing"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"For it is indeed just"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"God will do what is right:"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"God will very rightly"</b>

This is an implied first class conditional sentence, assumed true from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes. God's judgment is just.

■ **"for God to repay"** This is a moral world order. God will set things right (see full note at Gal. 6:7).

**1:7 "to us as well"** Paul was suffering too (cf. 1 Cor. 4:9-13; 2 Cor. 4:8-12; 6:4-10; 11:24-27).

■ **"when the Lord Jesus will be revealed"** Literally "at the revelation of the Lord Jesus." There is no verb. *Apocalypsis* means "to clearly reveal" (cf. 1 Cor. 1:7). This refers to the Second Coming of Jesus. The time of God's righteous judgment (cf. 2 Thess. 1:5) will be the Second Coming/Resurrection Day/Judgment Day (cf. Matt. 25:31-46; Rev. 20:11-15). See Special Topic at 1 Thess. 3:13.

■ **"with His mighty angels"** This is a common biblical theme (cf. Deut. 33:2; Zech. 14:5; Matt. 16:27; 25:31; Mark 8:38; Jude 14; Rev. 19:14). He will also come with His saints (cf. 1 Thess. 4:13-18). Matt. 13:41 and 24:31 implying that angels will gather and separate mankind (cf. Matt. 13:39-41; 24:31).

■ **"in flaming fire"** This is a symbol of God's judgment (cf. Isa. 29:6; 30:27-30; 66:14-15; Dan. 7:9-10).

Confusion exists whether this phrase goes with 2 Thess. 1:7 or 8. If it goes with 2 Thess. 1:7 it relates to the angels; if it goes with 2 Thess. 1:8 it relates to judgment. The NKJV, NRSV, and REB translations place it in 2 Thess. 1:8.

## SPECIAL TOPIC: FIRE

1:8	
NASB	"dealing out retribution"
NKJV	"taking vengeance"
NRSV	"inflicting vengeance"
TEV	"to punish"
NJB	"to impose the penalty"

This is a present active participle. This is not an emotional, vindictive reaction but "full justice for all." God's creation will reflect God's character.

■ **"on those who do not know God"** This word reflects the pagan's willful rejections of light (cf. (cf. Ps. 79:6; Jer. 10:25; 1 Thess. 4:5; John 3:17-21; Rom. 1:18,25; 2:14-15) and persecution of the believers at Thessalonica. This phrase does not only refer to cognitive truth about God (Greek concept of "know"), but also intimate fellowship with God (Hebrew concept of "know"). The term "know" has the Hebrew connotation of intimate fellowship (cf. Gen 4:1; Jer. 1:5; Mark 14:71; Titus 1:16).

## SPECIAL TOPIC: KNOW (USING MOSTLY DEUTERONOMY AS A PARADIGM)

■ **"to those who do not obey the gospel"** Some commentators think this refers to a second group that is persecuting the Thessalonian believers; the first phrase referring to pagans ("those who do not know God") and the second to Jews.

**1:9 "the penalty"** This is the same root as "retribution" in 2 Thess. 1:8.

■ **"eternal destruction"** "Eternal" (cf. Matt. 18:8; 25:41; Mark 3:29; Heb. 6:2; Jude 1:7) shares the same root with "age" (cf. Matt. 28:20; Heb. 1:2). In Matt. 25:46 it describes both heaven and hell (cf. 1 Thess. 2:16). A person's response to the gospel in the present time (age) seals his/her future time (age).

The term "destruction" (*olethros*) is also found in 1 Cor. 5:5; 1 Thess. 5:3; 1 Tim. 6:9. It means "the loss of all that gives worth to existence" (Moulton, Milligan, p. 445), but not annihilation (*exolethreuō*, LXX of Deut. 18:19).

## SPECIAL TOPIC: ETERNAL

■ **"away from the presence of the Lord"** This is the worse aspect of hell. In the KJV of Ps. 139:8 it says "if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there," but in Psalm this refers to *Sheol* or *Hades* (the holding place of the dead, cf. Matt. 11:23; 16:18; Luke 10:15; 16:23; Rev. 1:18; 20:13,14), not *Gehenna*, which is the place of permanent separation from God (cf. Matt. 5:22,29,30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15,33; Mark 9:43,45,47; Luke 12:5).

## SPECIAL TOPIC: Where Are the Dead?

■ **"and from the glory of His power"** This may be an allusion to Isa. 2:10,19,21. Fallen mankind will flee the glorious presence of the Holy One of Israel. The tragedy of creation is that mankind's greatest need is fellowship with God, but because of sin and rebellion, we fear Him and flee from Him who created us like Himself for glorious fellowship.

In the OT the most common Hebrew word for "glory" (*kabod*, BDB 458) was originally a commercial term (which referred to a pair of scales) which meant "to be heavy." That which was heavy was valuable or had intrinsic worth. Often the concept of brightness was added to the word to express God's majesty (cf. Exod. 15:16; 24:17; Isa. 60:1-2). He alone is worthy and honorable. He is too brilliant for fallen mankind to behold (cf. Exod. 33:17-23; Isa. 6:5). God can only be truly known through Christ (cf. Jer. 1:14; Matt. 17:2; Heb. 1:3; James 2:1).

The term "glory" is somewhat ambiguous: (1) it may be parallel to "the righteousness of God"; (2) it may refer to the "holiness" or "perfection" of God; or (3) it could refer to the image of God in which mankind was created (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1; 9:6), but which was later marred through rebellion (cf. Gen. 3:1-22). It is first used of YHWH's presence with His people (cf. Exod. 16:7,10; Lev. 9:23; Num. 14:10). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: GLORY \(DOXA\)](#) at Gal. 1:5.

**1:10**

**NASB, NKJV** "to be glorified in His saints"  
**NRSV** "to be glorified by his saints"  
**TEV** "to receive glory from all his people"  
**NJB** "*to be glorified among his saints*"

This phrase can be understood in at least two ways.

1. reflecting a Hebrew idiom, the majesty of the Second Coming will cause Jesus to receive glory from His followers
2. reflecting the normal meaning of the Greek preposition, in addition to the unusual compound with the preposition repeated with the noun, (2 Thess. 1:10,12) that Jesus will be glorified among or in believers

"Saints" is literally "holy ones." The term "saints" is always plural except once in Phil. 4:21, and even there, it is corporate. To be saved puts us in Christ's body and in His family. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: SAINTS](#) at 1 Thess. 3:13.

This is not so much an experience as a position. Hopefully our position is becoming more actualized in our daily lives. When He returns our glorification will be instantaneous and complete (cf. 1 John 3:2; Romans 8:30). Jesus is glorified in the godly lives of His godly ones (cf. 2 Thess. 1:12; 1 Thess. 2:12; John 17:9-10).

■ **"on that day"** This emphatic phrase is an OT metaphor of the time when God will return to His creation either for blessing (believers) or judgment (unbelievers). See fuller note at 1 Thess. 5:2.

**NASB** "and to be marveled at among all who have believed"  
**NKJV** "and to be admired among all those who believe"  
**NRSV** "and to be marveled at ... among all who have believed"  
**TEV** "and honor from all who believe"  
**NJB** "and *seen in his glory* by all who believe in him"

There are two ambiguous phrases in 2 Thess. 1:10. They can mean (1) the saints are glorified with Christ and this amazes them, or (2) the angels are amazed at what God does for believers (cf. Eph. 2:7; 3:10; 1 Cor. 4:9).

■ **"for our testimony to you was believed"** The believers' response was opposite of the pagans in 2 Thess. 1:8. They had received the gospel as both a message and a person (i.e., John 1:12; 3:16,36; 6:40; 11:25-26; Rom. 10:9-13).

**1:11 "we pray for you always"** Paul continually prayed for these churches (cf. 2 Thess. 1:3; 2:12; 1 Thess. 1:2; 5:13-18). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: INTERCESSORY PRAYER](#) at 1 Thess. 1:2.

**NASB** "God will count you worthy of your calling"  
**NKJV** "God would count you worthy of *this* calling"  
**NRSV, NJB** "God will make you worthy of his call"  
**TEV** "God to make you worthy of the life he called you to live"

God does it (cf. Phil. 1:6; 2:13; Eph. 4:4), but believers must allow Him and cooperate with the Spirit (cf. Phil. 2:12; Eph. 4:1). It is the paradox of God's sovereignty and mankind's free will that there must be an initial and a progressive faith response. In this context the emphasis is on the Christian's new life (cf. Eph.

4:1; 5:2,15). The gospel is a person to welcome, a message about that person to believe, and a life like that person's to live.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: CALLED**

■ **"and fulfill every desire for goodness"** Paul was praying that their new intentions be actualized (cf. 1 Thess. 1:3). As with their new heart (cf. Ezek. 36:26-27), they have acquired a new mouth, hands, and feet (cf. Rom. 6:4; 2 Cor. 5:17; Col. 3:10).

Paul uses the concept of "goodness" often in the Thessalonian letters:

1. *agathos*, 1 Thess. 3:6; 2 Thess. 2:16-17;
  - a. *agathon*, 1 Thess. 5:15
  - b. *agathōsunē*, 2 Thess. 1:11
2. *kalon*, 1 Thess. 5:21
3. *eudokia*, 2 Thess. 1:11

**1:12 "the name of our Lord Jesus. . .in Him"** Here it is obvious from the parallel structure that "the name" represents the person. See Special Topic below.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE NAME OF THE LORD**

■ **"in you, and you in Him"** Jesus is glorified in believers and believers are glorified in Him.

■ **"according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ "** It is common in the Thessalonian letters for Paul to emphatically link the Father and the Son (cf. 1 Thess. 1:1,3; 3:11,13; 5:18,23; 2 Thess. 1:1,2; 2:12; 2:13,16; 3:5).

It is possible that this phrase refers to Christ alone. If so, it would be in line with other NT texts that assert Jesus' Deity (i.e., John 1:1; 8:57-58; 20:28; Rom. 9:5; Phil. 2:6; Titus 2:13; Heb. 1:8; 1 John 5:20; 2 Pet. 1:1,11).

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. What is the central theme of chapter 1? How is it different from 1 Thessalonians 1?
2. Why is suffering normal for believers? (verse 5)
3. Is God vindictive and vengeful? If not, what does verse 8 mean?
4. Is Hell forever?



# 2 THESSALONIANS 2

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Man of Lawlessness	The Great Apostasy	The Day of the Lord	The Wicked One	The Coming of the Lord and the Prelude to it
2:1-12	2:1-12	2:1-12	2:1-4 2:5-12	2:1-3a 2:3b-8 2:9-12
Chosen for Salvation	Stand Fast	Thanksgiving and Exhortation	You are Chosen for Salvation	Encouragement to Persevere (2:13-3:5)
2:13	2:13-17	2:13-15 2:16-17	2:13-15 2:16-17	2:13-17

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired but it is the key to following the original author's intent which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

#### CONTEXTUAL AND THEOLOGICAL INSIGHTS TO VERSES 1-12

A. This passage is very difficult to interpret as the numerous theories throughout church history illustrate.

##### B. Biblical Background

1. As chapter 1 dealt with the Second Coming of Christ and judgment of unbelievers, chapter 2:1-12 deals with the coming and judgment of the Anti-Christ. This is the most detailed description of this person in the NT. Paul does not use the Johannine term "Anti-Christ" (1 John 2:18,22; 4:3; 2 John 7) but called him "the man of lawlessness" in 2 Thess. 2:3 and "the lawless one" in 2 Thess. 2:8.
2. The general background of this passage lies in the OT belief in a final confrontation between the people of God and the people of the evil one (cf. Ps. 2; 48:4-8; Ezek. 38-39; Dan. 7; Zech.

- 14). This conflict became personalized into individual leaders of both camps: God's Messiah and the Anti-Messiah (cf. Gen. 3:15; Daniel 7; 9:23-27).
3. The related passages in the NT are Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 17; 21; 1 Thessalonians 4-5; 1 John 2 and Revelation.
  4. Three time elements are involved in 2 Thess. 2:1-12.
    - a. current events
    - b. future events but preceding the Second Coming
    - c. future events concerning the Day of the Lord
- C. It must be remembered that the whole subject of the return of Christ is presented in the Bible in a dialectical tension. On one hand, the imminent return of the Lord is balanced with several events which must happen first. One of these truths does not eliminate or contradict the other. Some examples of the predicted preliminary events would be:
1. the apostasy (cf. Matt. 24:1-13; 1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim. 3:1ff. and 2 Thess. 2:3ff)
  2. the great tribulation (cf. Matt. 24:21-22, 29-31)
  3. gospel preached to all nations (cf. Matt. 24:24)
  4. revealing of Anti-Christ (cf. Matthew 24, 2 Thessalonians 2; and Revelation 13)
  5. salvation of the full number of Gentiles and Jews (cf. Rom. 11:11-36)
- D. Many see this chapter as apocalyptic in genre. See Special Topic following.

## SPECIAL TOPIC: APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE

### WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2 THESSALONIANS 2:1-12**

**<sup>1</sup>Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, <sup>2</sup>that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. <sup>3</sup>Let no one in any way deceive you, for *it will not come* unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, <sup>4</sup>who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. <sup>5</sup>Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things? <sup>6</sup>And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed. <sup>7</sup>For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains *will do so* until he is taken out of the way. <sup>8</sup>Then the lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of his coming; <sup>9</sup>*that is*, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, <sup>10</sup>and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. <sup>11</sup>For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, <sup>12</sup>in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.**

**2:1 "with regard to the coming"** This is the Greek term *parousia* meaning "presence." The cultural background of the term was royal visits for which this word was regularly employed. Three words are used in the NT to describe the Second Coming.

1. *parousia*, cf. 2 Thess. 2:1,8; 1 Thess. 2:19
2. *epiphaneia*, cf. 2 Thess. 2:8, a visible radiant coming
3. *apocalypsis*, cf. 2 Thess. 1:6-7, meaning "an unveiling" for the purpose of revealing

The last word is also employed at the manifestation of the Anti-Christ in 2 Thess. 2:3,6,8.

"Second Coming" is not a biblical term. It was first used by Justin Martyr. See Special Topics: Jesus' Return at 1 Thess. 2:19 and NT Terms for Christ's Return at 1 Thess. 3:13.

■ **"our gathering together to Him"** This is a reference to the "rapture" of 1 Thess. 4:13-18. From the context, one coming is intended (cf. Matt. 24:27,31; 25:31ff.; Mark 13:27), not two. Verse 3 speaks both of the saints experiencing tribulation and of the revelation of the Anti-Christ. These two verses, 1 and 3, contradict the view of a pre-tribulational, pre-millennial secret rapture of believers.

Usually Matt. 24:32-44 (cf. Luke 17:22-37) is used as support for a secret rapture of believers while the unredeemed are left. However, in context (Noah's day), the unredeemed are taken to be judged. In Matt. 24:39, "took them all away" describes those destroyed in the flood (cf. 2 Thess. 2:37-38).

The real theological purpose of some theologians for a secret rapture distinct from a later, visible return of Jesus is to remove the tension between the imminent return of Jesus and the necessity that some prophesied events must occur before the return and in the case of dispensational pre-millennialism to remove the church from earth so that the OT prophecies may be literally fulfilled to national Israel, which is surprising in light of 1 Thess. 2:13-16.

## 2:2

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"not be quickly shaken from your composure"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"not to be soon shaken in mind"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"not to be quickly shaken in mind"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"do not be so easily confused in your thinking"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"please do not get excited too soon"</b>

This is an aorist passive infinitive which speaks of a mental confusion and anxiety caused by an outside agent, here a spirit, or a message. This word literally could describe an earthquake or the coming of God or the Spirit (cf. Heb. 12:26-28). Figuratively it refers to a mental state of wavering loyalty (cf. LXX of Ps. 15:8 and Acts 2:25).

"Quickly" implies (1) Paul's surprise that so soon after he talked to them about these things that so much confusion, fear, and speculation had occurred or (2) their ready acceptance of another person's opinion on this subject.

■ **"or be disturbed"** This is a present passive infinitive which speaks of a continuing occurrence by an outside agent, here a spirit or message. If the first term in 2 Thess. 2:2 refers to their thinking process, this rare term refers to their feelings. This term is found only in eschatological contexts (cf. Matt. 24:6; Mark 13:7).

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"either by a spirit or"</b>
<b>NKJV, NRSV</b>	<b>"either by spirit or"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"by the claim. . .Perhaps this was said by someone prophesying"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"by any prediction or"</b>

Paul lists three things (using *metē* three times) which should not disturb the Thessalonian believers (i.e., "a spirit," "a message," and "a letter"). The first is the term "a spirit" (*pneumatōs*) used in the sense of a prophet's message or another supernatural revelation (cf. 1 John 4:1, which also relates *pneuma* with the anti-Christ).

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"or a message"</b>
<b>NKJV, NRSV</b>	<b>"or by word"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"or by someone preaching"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"or rumor"</b>

This term (*logos*) could be rendered "by means of someone's personal interpretation" or "by means of someone's speech."

NASB	"or a letter as if from us"
NKJV	"or by letter, as if from us"
NRSV	"or by letter, as though from us"
TEV	"Or it may have been said that we wrote this in a letter"
NJB	"or any letter claiming to come from us"

Paul began to personally autograph his letters to insure their genuineness (cf. 2 Thess. 3:17). This could refer to someone's false interpretation of 1 Thessalonians or Paul's preaching at Thessalonica.

▣ **"to the effect that the day of the Lord has come"** This is a perfect active indicative, i.e., "The day of the Lord had come." This whole theological issue about eschatology was the major problem Paul was trying to clear up. The remainder of 2 Thess. 2:3-12 is an explanation as to why this statement cannot be true (cf. Matt. 24:23,26). The events that accompany the Second Coming had not yet begun (see Intro. to this chapter). For full discussion on "the Day of the Lord" see note at 1 Thess. 5:2.

### 2:3

NASB	"Let no one in any way deceive you"
NKJV	"Let no one deceive you by any means"
NRSV	"Let no one deceive you in any way"
TEV	"Do not let anyone fool you in any way"
NJB	"Never let anyone deceive you in this way"

This is a strong double negative with an aorist active subjunctive + *tis*, implying a personal agency. Apparently purposeful deception was occurring.

▣ **"for it will not come unless"** This is a third class conditional sentence. Some events must happen first (cf. Introduction to this chapter, section C). This Second Coming was not immanent. In this context, two events are mentioned: (1) the great apostasy and (2) the revealing of "the man of sin."

NASB	"the apostasy comes first"
NKJV	"the falling away comes first"
NRSV	"the rebellion comes first"
TEV	"the final Rebellion takes place"
NJB	"the Great Revolt has taken place"

This compound term *apo + histēmi*, literally means "to stand away from" (see Special Topic: Apostasy at Gal. 5:4). It can be used in a negative sense (rebellion) or a positive sense (away from sin, cf. 2 Tim. 2:19). This word was used in Greek literature (Plutarch and Acts 5:37) of political or military rebellion, but in the Septuagint (cf. Jos. 22:22) and Apocrypha, it often refers to spiritual rebellion. Who is rebelling is uncertain, but they are rejecting God and even trying to replace Him. It could be the pagans, the Jews, or part of the visible church (cf. Matt. 24:3-12; 1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim. 3:1,8,13; 1 John 2:18-19).

NASB	"the man of lawlessness is revealed"
NKJV	"the man of sin is revealed"
NRSV	"the lawless one is revealed"
TEV	"the Wicked One appears"
NJB	"the Rebel. . .has appeared"

There is a Greek manuscript problem here. "Lawlessness" is found in the Greek uncial manuscripts  $\alpha$ , B, the Coptic and Armenian translations, and the Greek texts used by Origen and Marcion, according to Tertullian, while "sin" is found in manuscripts A, D, F, G, K, L, P, and the Vulgate and Syriac translations and was known by most early church fathers. "Lawlessness" (*anomias*) is rare in Paul's writings (cf. Rom. 4:7; 6:19; Titus 2:14) and scribes may have substituted the more familiar term "sin" (*hamartias*). The term

"lawlessness" is also used in 2 Thess. 2:7 and 8. The UBS<sup>4</sup> rates "lawlessness" as "almost certain" (B).

Satan is not intended as in 2 Thess. 2:9, but his yielded servant, his incarnation (a parody of Christ, cf. Rev. 13:1-8). Paul never used the term "Anti-Christ," but 1 John 2:18; 4:3; and 2 John 7 (written after Paul's death) refer to the same person. In 1 John "sin" and "lawlessness" are equated (cf. 1 John 3:4).

It is possible that Paul's "man of lawlessness" is related to the Jewish apocalyptic personification of "the worthless one" (*belial*) into a false Messiah, a Satanically inspired world leader. The term may be used in this sense in

1. Deut. 13:13, one who leads others away from YHWH to false gods
2. 1 Sam. 2:12, one who does not know YHWH
3. Nahum 1:15, personified evil
4. *Book of Jubilees* 1:20, personified spirit
5. *Ascension of Isaiah*, 4:18

The verb is an aorist passive subjunctive. The passive voice implies an outside agent. God, not Satan, is in control of history. In God's time (cf. 2 Thess. 2:6) this parody of Christ, this incarnated evil, this servant of Satan will be allowed to manifest himself in history (the term "reveal" was used for Christ's revelation in 2 Thess. 1:7).

The subjunctive mood does not imply that it may not occur, but confirms the ambiguous, but future, time of the revelation (cf. 2 Thess. 2:6,8).

Notice the phrases that describe this end-time person.

1. the man of lawlessness
2. the son of destruction
3. who opposes
4. who exalts himself
5. so that he takes his seat in the temple of God
6. displaying himself as God

This person not only opposes God, but tries to replace Him! The preposition "anti" originally meant "in the place of" and later came to mean "against." Both of these connotations fit this man of lawlessness. He wants power, control, and worship. The essence of the Fall, human and angelic independence, is personified (cf. Dan. 11:3,16,36).

In so many ways these descriptions characterize kings and potentates. A good example is Nero!

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"the son of destruction"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"the son of perdition"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"the one destined for destruction"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"who is destined to hell"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"the Lost One"</b>

This Hebrew idiom literally translates "the son of perdition." It was used of Judas Iscariot in John 17:12. This eschatological person, like Judas, will be spiritually lost and doomed to eternal punishment although deeply involved in religion (cf. 2 Thess. 2:4).

## **2:4**

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"He opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"He will oppose everything which men worship and everything which men consider divine"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"This is the Enemy, the one who claims to be so much <i>greater than all</i> that men call 'god,' so much greater than anything that is worshiped"</b>

These are two present middle participles. What is represented here is an evil counterfeit and parody of

Christ seeking glory and worship (cf. Isa. 14:13-14; Ezek. 28:2; Dan. 7:25; 8:9-14; 9:27; 11:36-37; Matt. 24:15; Mark 13:14; Revelation 13).

■ **"exalts himself"** This is the Greek compound *huperairomai*. See Special Topic: Paul's Use of *Huper* Compounds at Gal. 1:13.

■ **"so that he takes his seat in the temple of God"** This phrase is often used by those who believe that all the eschatological events mentioned by Jesus (cf. Matt. 24; Mark 13; Luke 17,21) or John (cf. 1 John 2; Rev) are future events. If so, this seems to imply a rebuilt Jewish Temple, possibly along the lines of Ezekiel 40-48.

Other interpreters believe that these revealed eschatological events were "soon" to take place and, therefore, must refer to historical events of the first century Mediterranean world.

1. Caligula putting a statue of himself in the Temple in Jerusalem
2. the fall of Jerusalem to Titus in a.d. 70
3. Nero's and Domitian's reigns of terror and persecution of believers

Others of us see these eschatological events as referring to both past first-century events and future events. The OT prophets often took the events of their day and projected them into a future "Day of the Lord" setting. In this way the NT has a message to its own day and every succeeding period of history. We must take seriously the historical setting of the original author, but also the surprising 2000 year delay of the Second Coming.

This very specific and personal passage suggests a future personal historical fulfillment. Yet this text is also ambiguous. Notably this kind of language (i.e., "abomination of desolation," Daniel's name for this sacrilege) fits the Seleucid (Antiochus Epiphanes IV) and Roman (Titus) invasions of Jerusalem during which pagan gods were enthroned in the Temple area. This end-time figure also resembles the pride and arrogance of the kings of Babylon (Isa. 14) and Tyre (Ezek. 28), which possibly are types of Satanic apostasy.

This Greek term for "temple" (*naos*) was used for the Holy of Holies in the Jewish Temple, though no seat was in it. The term was also employed for pagan temples where deities were enthroned. This may imply that the Jewish temple must be physically rebuilt (cf. Dan. 9:24-27), possibly following Ezekiel 40-48, but not necessarily. Remember the Jewish temple had no place to sit. It was only a Greek temple (i.e., Zeus') which had a throne. If literal this phrase could not refer to a Jewish place of worship.

Chrysostom interpreted "a temple" as a common Pauline metaphor for the Church (cf. 1 Cor. 3:16-17; 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:21). This view sees the Anti-Christ as manifesting himself in the visible church.

■ **"displaying himself as being God"** The lawless one actually claims deity. He is a parody of Christ, he is Satan incarnated.

In the Revelation of John there is a Satanic trinity (beast from the sea, beast from the land, which is the false prophet, and Satan). The beast from the sea is a parody of Christ, i.e.,

1. has a fatal wound but is alive, cf. Rev. 13:3,14
2. title "who is like the beast" reflects YHWH's description in Isa. 40:18-22; 43:11; 44:6,8,9-20; 45:6
3. performed great signs cf. Rev. 13:13
4. gives an identifying mark to his followers, cf. Rev. 13:16, like God's mark on Christ's followers, cf. Rev. 7:3

**2:5 "I was telling you these things"** This is an imperfect tense signifying that these believers had repeatedly heard preaching or teaching about this subject. They had information about this subject that modern readers do not have (cf. 2 Thess. 2:5, "do you not remember" and 2 Thess. 2:6, "you know.") Therefore, all modern interpretations, to some extent, are incomplete and suppositional. Dogmatism must be avoided though careful exegesis is helpful. It is uncertain if this phrase is referring to the information given in 2 Thess. 2:1-5 or 2 Thess. 2:6-12.

**2:6 "you know"** This implies that (1) these believers knew who/what Paul was referring to or (2) they were currently experiencing the power/person in their lives.

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"what restrains him now"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"what is restraining"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"what is now restraining him"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"there is something that keeps this from happening now"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"what is still holding him back"</b>

This verb can mean

1. "hold back" (cf. Luke 4:24; Philem. 13)
2. "hold fast" (cf. 1 Thess. 5:21; Luke 8:15)
3. "hold away" (no biblical example)

The context favors "hold back" or "restrains." The real question is: who or what is this restrainer? An interesting grammatical change occurs from the neuter in 2 Thess. 2:6, 7 to the masculine in 2 Thess. 2:7, 8. This implies an influence capable of personification. Because of this, at least three interpretations are plausible.

1. law vs. anarchy, personified in the Roman emperor
2. angelic authority, personified in a specific angel(s), cf. Rev. 7:1-3
3. God, in the person of His Spirit or the Spirit's empowering the preaching of the gospel

The first theory is very old and pervasive, first stated by Tertullian. It fits the contextual criteria that the Thessalonian Christians would have understood. Paul also spoke of his experiences with and the benefit of law (cf. Rom. 13:1ff; Acts 17-18). The second theory is closely related. It uses Daniel 10 as evidence for angelic control and authority over nations and their law systems. The third theory is of a more recent vintage. It has much to commend it but is also very presuppositional. This is employed mostly by particular dispensationalists to support a secret rapture.

The spirit of the Anti-Christ has always been in the world (cf. 1 John 2:18; 4:3; 2 John 7), but one day he will be ultimately personified. Satan does not know God's plan and possibly has evil people ready in every age. This restraining force is ultimately supernatural and under God's control and plan (cf. 2 Thess. 2:6b-7).

■ **"so that in his time he will be revealed"** The person/power referred to is apparently being restrained by God. At the appointed time in the future, he will be allowed to manifest himself.

**2:7 "the mystery"** God has a unified purpose for mankind's redemption that even preceded the fall (cf. Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28; 17:31; Luke 22:22). Hints of this plan are revealed in the OT (cf. Gen. 3:15; 12:3; Exod. 19:5-6; and the universal passages in the prophets). However the full agenda was not clear. With the coming of Jesus and the Spirit it begins to become more obvious. Paul used the term "mystery" to describe this total redemptive plan (cf. 1 Cor. 4:1; Eph. 6:19; Col. 4:3; 1 Tim. 3:9). However, he used it in several different senses.

1. A partial hardening of Israel to allow Gentiles to be included . This influx of Gentiles will work as a mechanism for Jews to accept Jesus as the Christ of prophecy (cf. Rom. 11:25-32).
2. The gospel was made known to the nations, which are all included in Christ and through Christ (cf. Rom. 16:25-27; Col. 2:2).
3. Believers' new bodies at the Second Coming (cf. 1 Cor. 15:5-57; 1 Thess. 4:13-18).
4. The summing up of all things in Christ (cf. Eph. 1:8-11).
5. The Gentiles and Jews are fellow-heirs (cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13).
6. Intimacy of the relationship between Christ and the Church described in marriage terms (cf. Eph. 5:22-33).
7. Gentiles included in the covenant people and indwelt by the Spirit of Christ so as to produce Christlike maturity, that is, restore the marred image of God in fallen humanity (cf. Col. 1:26-28).
8. The end-time Anti-Christ (cf. 2 Thess. 2:1-11).
9. Early Christian creed or hymn (cf. 1 Tim. 3:16).

This term may also be used in the sense that God has a "mystery plan" for the future, so too, Satan has a "mystery plan." These verses reveal how the personification of evil will mimic Christ.

■ **"of lawlessness is already at work"** This is a present middle indicative. It is a concept also revealed in 1 John (cf. 1 John 2:18-29; 4:3). This compound form of the term "work" (*energeō*) is used almost exclusively of supernatural agencies (cf. 1 Cor. 12:6,11; 2 Cor. 4:12; Gal. 2:8; 3:5; Eph. 1:11,20; 2:2; 3:7; 4:16; Phil. 2:13; 3:21; Col. 1:29; 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Thess. 2:9; 1 Timothy 2:12). This spiritual rebellion has been occurring since the fall. The rebellion will one day be personified. Currently God is restraining this influence. The Scriptures project an end-time confrontation between personal evil and God's Messiah (cf. Psalm 2).

**NASB** "only he who now restrains *will do so* until he is taken out of the way"  
**NKJV** "only He who now restrains *will do so* until He is taken out of the way"  
**NRSV** "but only until the one who now restrains it is removed"  
**TEV** "until the one who holds it back is taken out of the way"  
**NJB** "and the one who is holding it back has first to be removed"

This is a present active participle with an aorist middle (deponent) subjunctive. God (or His agent) is still continuing to restrain, but sometime in the future this restraining influence will be removed. For the theories about the identity of "the one restraining," see 2 Thess. 2:6. Who or whatever it is, God, not the lawless one, is in control of history.

**2:8 "Then that lawless one will be revealed"** The time element is the question. The text implies immediately after God removes the restraining power. The following verses detail his activity (cf. Dan. 7:13; 8:29; 9:24-27).

**NASB** "whom the Lord will slay"  
**NKJV** "whom the Lord will consume"  
**NRSV** "whom the Lord Jesus will destroy"  
**TEV** "the Lord Jesus will kill him"  
**NJB** "The Lord *will kill him*"

There are two Greek manuscript problems in this verse. The first is the name "Lord" or "Lord Jesus." The single title is in manuscripts B, D<sup>C</sup>, and K. The double title is in manuscripts  $\kappa$ , A, D<sup>\*</sup>, G, P and the Vulgate, Syrian, and Coptic translations.

The second problem is the verb. "Destroy" is in manuscripts  $\kappa$ , A, D<sup>\*</sup>, G, and P as well as the Vulgate, Syrian and Coptic translations. Paul was possibly alluding to Isa. 11:4, where this same verb (slay) occurs in the Septuagint. The unusual term "consume" is found in manuscripts F and G and a variant form in D<sup>C</sup> and K. The Second Coming will end this period of rebellion.

■ **"with the breath of His mouth"** The OT background for this is Job 4:9; 15:30 or Isa. 11:4; 30:28,33. The NT usage is Rev. 2:16; 9:15. The Hebrew and Greek terms can refer to both, wind, breath, or spirit as John 3:8 shows, but here the context demands "breath." This may refer to (1) the power of His words (John Calvin) or (2) the power of the spoken word in the OT (cf. Genesis 1; Isa. 55:11).

**NASB** "bring to an end"  
**NKJV, NRSV** "destroy"  
**TEV** "kill him"  
**NJB** "will annihilate him"

This is a very popular word for Paul. He used it over 27 times. This phrase means "to make inoperative" not "to eliminate" or "to destroy" (cf. Rom. 3:3; 6:6). See Special Topic: To Make Null and Void (*Kartargeō*) at Gal. 3:17.

**NASB** "the appearance"  
**NKJV** "the brightness"



**NRSV** "the manifestation"  
**TEV** "his glorious appearing"  
**NJB** "his glorious appearance"

This term has many possible translations: "brightness," "radiance," "splendor," "glory." This is strong affirmation of a visible manifestation of Christ's physical return to earth (cf. 1 Tim. 6:14; 2 Tim. 1:10; 4:1,8; Titus 2:11,13; 3:4). The English "epiphany" is a transliteration of this Greek term. See note at 2 Thess. 2:1. See Special Topic on Christ's Return at 1 Thess. 3:13.

■ **"of His coming"** This is the Greek term *parousia* which means "presence." In its day it referred to a royal visit. It even came to be used in Greek literature of the coming of a god. It is used of Jesus in 2 Thess. 2:1 and 8, but of Satan's pawn in 2 Thess. 2:9. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: JESUS' RETURN](#) at 1 Thess. 2:19.

**2:9 "with the activity of Satan"** The lawless one is empowered and directed by Satan (see [SPECIAL TOPIC: PERSONAL EVIL](#) at 1 Thess. 2:18. cf. Rev. 13:2). Since the time of Theodore of Mopsuestia, the Anti-Christ has been seen as an ape or imitator of Christ. Notice in this context how much like Christ this one is: "revealed" or "unveiled," 2 Thess. 2:3,6,8; "coming," 2 Thess. 2:9; "signs" 2 Thess. 2:9; "he will have a committed following," 2 Thess. 2:10,12.

**NASB** "with all power and signs and false wonders"  
**NKJV, NRSV** "with all power, signs, and lying wonders"  
**TEV** "with the power of Satan and perform all kinds of miracles and false signs and wonders"  
**NJB** "there will be all kinds of miracles and a deceptive show of signs and portents"

Miracles are not automatically a sign of God (cf. Exod. 7:11-12,22; Deut. 13:1-5; Matt. 7:21-23; 24:24; Mark 13:22; Revelation 13). Satan counterfeits everything to trick and confuse the children of Adam. Verse 9 seems to precede verse 8 chronologically. Also, verses 9-10 may involve a considerable time.

**2:10 "with all the deception of wickedness"** Satan tricks unbelievers (cf. Matt. 13:19; 2 Cor. 4:4) as well as believers (Eph. 4:14) if they remain spiritually immature.

■ **"they did not receive the love of the truth"** This is not in the abstract sense, but a reference to

1. the person and work of Jesus, cf. John 14:6
2. the Spirit, cf. John 14:17; 15:16; 16:13
3. the message about Jesus, cf. John 17:17

"Receive" is used in 1 Thess. 1:6 and 2:13 in the sense of personally welcome as a guest. These unbelievers refused to believe the gospel and welcome Jesus. See Special Topic: Truth at Gal. 2:5.

■ **"so as to be saved"** In the OT this term meant "physical deliverance" (cf. James 5:15). However, in the NT it takes on spiritual/eternal significance.

**2:11**  
**NASB** "For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence"  
**NKJV** "And for this reason God will send them strong delusion"  
**NRSV** "For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion"  
**TEV** "For this reason God sends the power of error to work in them"  
**NJB** "The reason why God is sending a power to delude them"

This is a present active indicative used as a future. The major truth here is that God is in control of all things, even Satan (cf. Job 1-2; Zech 3). This sending is either: (1) God's actively sending judgment on them who reject the truth (cf. Rom. 11:7-10) or (2) God's passively allowing the consequences of their unbelief to become manifested in their lives (cf. Ps. 81:12; Hos. 4:17; Rom. 1:24, 26, and 28). This

ambiguity exists also in the OT account of Pharaoh, where it is said, Pharaoh hardened his own heart (cf. Exod. 7:14; 8:15, 32), and also God hardened his heart (Exod. 4:21; 7:3,13; 9:12,35; 10:1,20,27; 14:4,8).

The plural pronouns refer to the wicked men of 2 Thess. 2:10.

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"so that they will believe"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"that they should believe"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"leading them to believe"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"so that they believe"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"and make them believe"</b>

The human who refuses Christ is rejected by God (cf. Hos. 5:6c; John 3:17-21). This is not double predestination, but the consequences of active unbelief (cf. 1 Kings 22:19-23).

<b>NASB, NRSV,</b>	
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"what is false"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"the lie"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"what is untrue"</b>

This is literally "the lie" (cf. John 8:44; Rom. 1:25). It is in contrast to "the truth" of verse 10. In 1 John "the liar" is the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ (cf. 2 Thess. 2:22). This liar is called the "antichrist."

## **2:12**

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"in order that they all may be judged"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"that they all may be condemned"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"so that all. . .will be condemned"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"The result is that all. . .will be condemned"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"to condemn all"</b>

The KJV translated this as "damned." This term means "to be fairly judged" (as did "damned" in a.d. 1611).

■ **"but took pleasure in wickedness"** They were not only cold to the truth but warm to evil (cf. Heb. 11:25).

## **CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO VERSES 2 THESSALONIANS 2:13-17**

- A. This context is a prayer to God for His initiating and electing grace (opposite of 2 Thess. 2:11) in the lives of the Thessalonian Christians. As 2 Thess. 1:3-4 is a prayer of thanksgiving for the believers, this is a prayer for God's continuing activity in their lives.
- B. In many ways the close of chapter 2 is similar to the close of chapter 1.
- C. Verses 13ff are in obvious contrast to the doom of the unbelievers in 2 Thess. 2:11-12.
- D. Three thought units appear in this section:
  - 1. 2 Thess. 2:13-14, the believer and sanctification
  - 2. 2 Thess. 2:15, the believer's perseverance
  - 3. 2 Thess. 2:16-17, the believer's encouragement and hope issues in "good things" (in each section God's initiating grace is balanced by mankind's appropriate response)

## **WORD AND PHRASE STUDY**

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2 THESSALONIANS 2:13-15**

**<sup>13</sup>But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. <sup>14</sup>It was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory**

of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>15</sup>So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word *of mouth* or by letter from us.

**2:13 "we should always give thanks to God"** This same truth is expressed in 2 Thess. 5:18. See Special Topic: Paul's Praise, Prayer, and Thanksgiving at Gal. 6:18.

▣ **"God. . . Lord. . . Spirit"** Paul often alluded to the Trinity (cf. Rom. 1:4-5; 5:1,5; 8:1-4,8-10; 1 Cor. 12:4-6; 2 Cor. 1:21; 13:14; Gal. 4:4-6; Eph. 1:3-14,17; 2:18; 3:14-17; 4:4-6; 1 Thess. 1:2-5; Titus 3:4-6). It is also assumed by other NT authors (cf. Matt. 3:16-17; 28:19; John 14:26; Acts 2:32-33,38-39; 1 Pet. 1:2 and Jude 20-21). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: THE TRINITY](#) at Gal. 4:4.

▣ **"brethren beloved by the Lord"** "Beloved" is the perfect passive participle form of *agapaō*. This implies election (cf. Rom. 1:7; Col. 3:12; 1 Thess. 1:4). The wonderful Messianic title "My Beloved" (cf. Matt. 3:17; 17:5) has now become a designation for His followers. They are beloved because they love the truth (cf. 2 Thess. 2:10).

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"because God from the beginning chose you for salvation"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"because God chose you as the first fruits for salvation"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"For God chose you as the first to be saved"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"because God chose you from the beginning to be saved"</b>

This is an aorist middle indicative meaning God Himself has chosen believers (cf. Eph. 1:4). This is the theological opposite of 2 Thess. 2:11. The doctrine of election is (1) a call to holiness (Eph. 1:4), not favored standing; (2) not against the lost, but for the saved. It is mentioned several times by Paul in the NT (cf. Rom. 9; 1 Cor. 7:7; Eph. 1:4-13; 2 Tim. 1:9). It is alluded to in 1 Thess. 2:12; and 5:9. God's control of salvation and history is the focus of this context. Evil exists in the spiritual and physical realms, but there is no dualism. Although believers cannot fully understand the mystery of election, they have confidence that the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is in complete and loving control of all things.

Election is a wonderful doctrine. However, it is not a call to favoritism, but a call to be a channel, a tool, or a means of other's redemption. In the OT the term was used primarily for service; in the NT it is used primarily for salvation which issues in service. The Bible never reconciles the seeming contradiction between God's sovereignty and mankind's free will, but affirms them both! Two good example of the biblical tension are Romans 9 on God's sovereign choice and Romans 10 on mankind's necessary response (cf. 2 Thess. 10:11,13).

The key to this theological tension may be found in Eph. 1:4. Jesus is God's elect man and all are potentially elect in Him (Karl Barth). Jesus is God's "yes" to fallen man's need (Karl Barth). Ephesians 1:4 also helps clarify the issue by asserting that the goal of predestination is not heaven, but holiness (Christlikeness). John 15:16 says Jesus chose us to bear fruit! We are often attracted to the benefits of the gospel and ignore the responsibilities! God's call (election) is for time as well as eternity.

Doctrines come in relation to other truths, not as single, unrelated truths. A good analogy would be a constellation versus a single star. God presents truth in eastern, not western, genres. We must not remove the tension caused by dialectical (paradoxical) pairs.

The theological concept of "covenant" unites the sovereignty of God (who always takes the initiative and sets the agenda) with a mandatory initial and continuing repentant faith response from man. Be careful of proof-texting one side of the paradox and depreciating the other! Be careful of asserting only your favorite doctrine or system of theology.

The phrase "from the beginning" is from the Greek manuscripts  $\alpha$ , D, K, and L and the Peshitta translation (cf. NEB). But manuscripts B, F, G, and P, the Vulgate, and the Harclean Syriac translations have "first fruits" (cf. NIV, NAB). The problem is that the phrase, "from the beginning," is not used by Paul elsewhere. A. T. Robertson thinks it was the original wording, cf. *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, vol. IV, p. 54 and the UBS<sup>4</sup> gives it a "B" rating (almost certain). He uses, "from the ages," (cf. Col. 1:26) or

"before the age," (cf. 1 Cor. 2:7). However, Paul never used the concept of "first fruits" to illustrate election. See Appendix Two on the Principles of Textual Criticism.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: ARCHĒ**

▣ **"through sanctification by the Spirit"** Two aspects of the concept of holiness present themselves: (1) initial holiness is positional in Christ and (2) progressive holiness is growth toward Christlikeness (cf. Rom. 8:28-29; Gal. 4:19). The Spirit woos us to Christ, convicts us of sin and convinces us of the truth of the gospel, baptizes us into Christ, and forms Christ in us (cf. John 16:8-16). See Special Topic on Sanctification at 1 Thess. 4:3.

▣ **"and faith in the truth"** "Truth" in 2 Thess. 2:13 is parallel to "gospel" in 2 Thess. 2:14.

**2:14 "It was for this He called you"** This is another emphasis on election (cf. 1 Thess. 2:12; 5:9,24). This small, persecuted, discouraged group of believers was the chosen people of God. They were called to holiness (cf. Eph. 1:4), to Christlikeness (cf. Rom. 8:28-29; Gal. 4:9).

▣ **"through our gospel"** The gospel is both a message to be believed and a person to be received. It is the mechanism of God's blessing flowing to fallen man. There is no other channel.

▣ **"that you may gain the glory of our Lord"** This is a restatement of 2 Thess. 1:12. "Glory" is difficult to define. It is used many different ways in the OT. In this context it reflects the believers' call from the Father to be sanctified by the Spirit through the work of Christ (cf. Eph. 1:4). Believers are to be like Christ and at the Second Coming they will share His glory (cf. 1 John 3:2).

See fuller note at 2 Thess. 1:9 and [SPECIAL TOPIC: GLORY \(DOXA\)](#) at Gal. 1:5.

▣ **"Lord"** The covenant name for God in the OT is YHWH. This verb may be alternately rendered "I will be what I cause to be" or "I am what I am." The Jews were reluctant to pronounce this name aloud when they read the Scriptures, in fear of taking God's name in vain (cf. Exod. 20:7). Therefore, they substituted the Hebrew word *adon*, which meant "owner, husband, master, or lord." Our English Bible translates YHWH in all capitals, Lord. When the NT authors use this term for Jesus, it was one of their ways to identify Him with the God of the OT. See Special Topic: The Names for Deity at 1 Thess. 1:9.

▣ **"Jesus"** When used by itself this term was the NT author's way to refer to the humanity of Jesus of Nazareth.

▣ **"Christ"** This is a transliteration of the Hebrew term for "Messiah" which is literally "an anointed one." In the OT three different types of offices were anointed: prophets, priests, and kings. It was a symbol of God's calling and equipping for special service. Jesus fulfills all three OT offices (cf. Heb. 1:2-3).

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: ANOINTING IN THE BIBLE (BDB 603)**

**2:15 "brethren"** This shows a transition to a summary statement.

▣ **"stand firm"** This is the first of two present active imperatives. Paul often uses this metaphor for perseverance (cf. 1 Thess. 3:8; 1 Cor. 16:13; Eph. 6:11,13). This emphasizes the need for believers to persevere in the face of physical and mental persecution and false teaching. In 1 Cor. 15:1 this term is used for our position in Christ. This brings a balance to the above emphasis on election. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: PERSEVERANCE](#) at Gal. 5:4.

▣ **"hold to"** This is another present active imperative. Believers are to continue to cling to the truths that Paul preached (cf. 1 Cor. 11:2). This is the theological balance to election.

▣ **"the traditions"** This term (*pardosis*) is used in several senses:

1. in 1 Cor. 11:2,23 for gospel truths
2. in Matt. 15:6; 23:1ff.; Mark 7:8; Gal. 1:14 of Jewish traditions
3. in Col. 2:6-8 of gnostic speculations
4. Roman Catholics use this verse as a biblical proof-text for Scripture and tradition being equal in authority

However, in this context it refers to Apostolic truth either spoken or written (cf. 2 Thess. 3:6).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2 THESSALONIANS 2:16-17**

**<sup>16</sup>Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace, <sup>17</sup>comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word.**

**2:16-17** This is a prayer, like 1:2 and 3:16.

**2:16 "our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us"** In the Greek text there are two subjects but with an intensive singular pronoun, "himself" and two singular aorist participles (loved and given). Also notice that Jesus is mentioned first. This shows the unity and equality of the subjects (cf. 1 Thess. 1:1,2; 3:11). The Son and the Father have given us eternal comfort and good hope. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: FATHER](#) at 1 Thess. 1:1.

**NASB, NRSV "eternal comfort"**  
**NKJV "everlasting consolation"**  
**TEV "eternal courage"**  
**NJB "inexhaustible comfort"**

The believers' comfort and hope are based on the grace of God seen and enacted through Christ. Notice the pastoral context of encouragement just like 1 Thess. 4:18. Paul's insights about the Second Coming were not given to fill out our charts and theories, but to energize our daily Christlikeness (cf. 1 Cor. 15:58).

▣ **"good hope"** This specific form is only used here in the NT. The term "hope" is often used in the NT in the sense of the Second Coming (see [SPECIAL TOPIC: HOPE](#) at Gal. 5:5). This is especially true in the Thessalonian letters which focused on this theological subject. "Good hope" only comes by God's grace.

**2:17** Jesus Christ and God the Father have loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by means of Their grace, which is designed to

1. comfort our hearts
2. strengthen our hearts for the purpose of
  - a. every good work
  - b. every good word

This is the same term in Greek as "comfort" in 2 Thess. 2:17. These two verses form one sentence in Greek. Notice that believers are encouraged to do and say "good things." We are not saved by doing good things but we are saved for doing and saying good things. Our relationship with Christ must lead to Christlikeness. We were called unto good works (cf. Eph. 1:4; 2:10). The goal of every believer is not only heaven when we die but Christlikeness now. These good works and sayings are to help us as believers reach those who do not know our Savior.

▣ **"hearts"** See Special Topic at Gal. 4:6.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of

the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Why is the subject of the Second Coming so debated in the Church?
2. Is the Second Coming imminent or must certain events occur first?
3. Does God cause people not to believe?
4. What is "the lie"?

# 2 THESSALONIANS 3

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Pray for Us	Pray for Us	Closing Appeals, Rebukes and Prayers	Pray for Us	Encouragement to Perseverance  (2:13-3:5)
3:1-5	3:1-5	3:1-5	3:1-2  3:3-4  3:5	3:1-5
Warnings Against Idleness	Warnings Against Idleness		The Obligation to Work	Against Idleness and Disunity
3:6-15	3:6-15	3:6-13	3:6-10   3:11-12  3:13-15	3:6  3:7-9  3:10-12  3:13-15
		3:14-15		
Benediction	Benediction		Final Words	Prayer and Farewell Wishes
3:16	3:16-18	3:16	3:16	3:16
3:17-18		3:17-18	3:17  3:18	3:17-18

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired but it is the key to following the original author's intent which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.



## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO VERSES 1-18

- A. Paul asks for prayer for his gospel preaching (cf. Eph. 6:19; Col. 4:3). He sought the blessing of God for his future preaching as it occurred in his first messages to them (cf. 2 Thess. 3:1).
- B. Paul warns of the disruptive consequences of false teachings about the Second Coming as seen in the believers who have refused to work.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2 THESSALONIANS 3:1-5

**<sup>1</sup>Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified, just as *it did* also with you; <sup>2</sup>and that we will be rescued from perverse and evil men; for not all have faith. <sup>3</sup>But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one. <sup>4</sup>We have confidence in the Lord concerning you, that you are doing and will *continue to do* what we command. <sup>5</sup>May the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the steadfastness of Christ.**

**3:1 "Finally"** This phrase ("for the rest ") is used by Paul to mark off his last major truth or subject (cf. 1 Thess. 4:1). It is the beginning of the conclusion. It is also used to introduce his closing statements (cf. 2 Cor. 13:11).

There is also the possibility that this is a literary marker for the central thrust of a chiasm (cf. 1 Thess. 4:1).

■ **"pray for us"** This is a present middle (deponent) imperative. Paul felt the need for prayer and believed it affected the effectiveness of his ministry (cf. 1 Thess. 5:25; Eph. 6:19; Col. 4:3). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: INTERCESSORY PRAYER](#) at 1 Thess. 1:2.

■ **"that the word of the Lord"** Paul asks prayer for the sake of the gospel, not himself.

In Genesis 15:1,4 the phrase "the word of the Lord (YHWH)" referred to God's message to Abraham. It is used in a prophetic sense in 1 Sam. 15:10 and Isa. 1:10.

In the NT it occurs in two forms.

1. using *rhēma* (spoken word), Luke 22:61; Acts 11:16; 1 Pet. 1:25

2. using *logos*, Acts 8:25; 13:44,48,49; 15:35; 16:32; 19:10,20; 1 Thess. 1:8; 4:15

There seems to be no theological distinction between the two forms.

**NASB, NRSV "will spread rapidly and be glorified"**

**NKJV "may have *free course* and be glorified"**

**TEV "may continue to spread rapidly and receive glory"**

**NJB "may spread quickly, and be received with honour"**

There are two present subjunctives. The term "spread" is literally "run a race" (present active subjunctive). This may be an allusion to Ps. 147:15. "Glory" (present passive subjunctive) in this context must be understood as "honor." It refers to the gospel being received and rejoiced in. The gospel is honored when fallen humans respond to it appropriately (cf. 2 Thess. 3:2) and are changed.

**3:2 "we will be rescued from perverse and evil men"** This is an aorist passive subjunctive. This tense and the article with two adjectives, show that a specific incident is being referred to in Paul's life. This church understood what incident was intended (cf. 1 Thess. 2:16). Paul, writing from Corinth, had so many trials while there (cf. 2 Cor. 4:8-11; 6:4-10; 11:23-28).

■ **"for not all have faith"** This is literally "the faith." This can refer to (1) the personal experience of



receiving the gospel or (2) the truth of the gospel in a doctrinal sense. Evil often masquerades as good (cf. Matt. 7:21-23). See Special Topic: Believe at Gal. 3:6.

**3:3 "But the Lord is faithful"** Here the term "faith" is used in its OT sense of faithfulness. Jesus is exactly opposite of the evil men of 2 Thess. 3:2 (cf. 1 Thess. 5:24). See Special Topic: Believe in the OT at Gal. 3:6.

■ **"strengthen"** In the Septuagint (LXX) this term was used of establishing something like a city. It came to be used metaphorically of establishing or confirming a person (cf. Rom. 16:25; 1 Thess. 3:2; 2 Thess. 2:17; 3:3). The faithful Lord will establish and guard His own from evil, evil men, and the evil one.

■ **"protect"** This is one of many military terms in this chapter (cf. 1 Pet. 1:3-12; 1 John 5:18).

■ **"from the evil one"** This inflected Greek form can be neuter or masculine. The Eastern Church Fathers and Tertullian interpret it as masculine, while the Western Church Fathers interpret it as neuter (cf. Rom. 12:9). The NT seems to support the masculine (cf. Matt. 5:37; 6:13; 13:19,38; John 17:15; Eph. 6:16; 1 John 2:13-14; 3:12; 5:18-19). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: PERSONAL EVIL](#) at 1 Thess. 2:18.

This context has two possible orientations: (1) the false teachers of Paul's day (antichrists, cf. 1 John 2:18) or (2) the eschatological evil of the Anti-Christ (cf. Revelation 13). Evil is always present, but so too, the faithful Lord! He will rescue and preserve His followers from evil men and He will strengthen and protect them from the evil one.

**3:4 "We have confidence in the Lord concerning you"** This is a perfect active indicative, an action that occurred in the past and has now become a state of being. Paul's confidence was "in the Lord" but also in these believers. This same balance can be seen in Phil. 2:12-13. Salvation is both from a sovereign God and a responsive human being ("doing" and "will continue to do"). All of God's dealings with humans involve unconditional, yet conditional, covenant promises.

■ **"command"** This is a military term. It is used repeatedly in this context (cf. 2 Thess. 3:4,6,10,12). This shows Paul's authority as an Apostle. This term could refer to (1) Paul's preaching; (2) his first letter, 1 Thessalonians; or (3) his current instructions, 2 Thessalonians

**3:5 "May the Lord. . .of God. . .of Christ"** The ambiguity of the term "Lord" is obvious. In the OT it is always YHWH. New Testament authors often quote OT passages where they attribute actions of YHWH to Jesus. The fluidity may be purposeful because the original, inspired NT author wanted to affirm the Deity of Jesus and the unified action of the Triune God (cf. 2 Thess. 2:16-17).

■ **"direct"** This is an aorist active optative, which reflects a prayer (cf. 1 Thess. 3:11-13). It is another military term, "make straight by removing obstacles." It is an allusion to the OT metaphor, "well-worn paths of righteousness" (cf. Luke 1:79; 1 Thess. 3:11). Notice the two aspects of this prayer: (1) the love of God and (2) the steadfastness of Christ.

■ **"hearts"** This is used in the OT for the entire person, but can be used more specifically of the mind, which fits this context best. See Special Topic at Gal. 4:6.

■ **"the love of God"** This genitive phrase can be understood as objectively or subjectively, that is, God's love for us and our love for Him. In context God's love for us fits better.

■ **"the steadfastness of Christ"** This phrase is used nowhere else in Paul's writings. It is somewhat ambiguous. It is an active term for "voluntary, steadfast endurance." Because of Christ's example of patient endurance (cf. Phil. 2:6-11), believers can patiently endure.

This genitive phrase can mean the believers' patience like Christ's patience or the patience that Christ gives to believers. It is possibly a subjective genitive, like the previous phrase. In either case this patience relates to

1. their current persecution
2. their response to false teaching and its resulting idleness on the part of some church members
3. the believers' patience, trust, and expectant faith-living in light of the any-moment return and/or delayed return of Jesus (unlike those of 2 Thess. 3:11)

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2 THESSALONIANS 3:6-15**

**<sup>6</sup>Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us. <sup>7</sup>For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you, <sup>8</sup>nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we *kept* working night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you; <sup>9</sup>not because we do not have the right to *this*, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, so that you would follow our example. <sup>10</sup>For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either. <sup>11</sup>For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. <sup>12</sup>Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread. <sup>13</sup>But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary of doing good. <sup>14</sup>If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that person and do not associate with him, so that he will be put to shame. <sup>15</sup>Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.**

**3:6 "we command you, in the name of our Lord"** This is the polite plural including Silas and Timothy, but in reality it is a word from Paul the Apostle. He recognizes his inspiration and authority in Christ to lead and command (present active indicative) the church (cf. 2 Thess. 3:10,12). "In the name of" is a Hebrew idiom referring to one's character or person.

▣ **"in the name of "** This is a Semitic idiom representing a person's character (cf. 2 Thess. 1:12). Paul did not speak from his own authority. See Special Topic: The Name of the Lord at 2 Thess. 1:12.

▣ **"keep away from"** This is a present middle infinitive, often used in Koine Greek as an imperative, "you, yourselves, continue to keep away from" (cf. 2 Thess. 3:14). Believers should not enter into intimate personal relationships with those who do not obey (cf. Rom. 16:17; 1 Cor. 5:11; 2 Thess. 3:14). This is not referring to casual friendship with lost people and errant believers (cf. 2 Thess. 3:15).

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"leads an unruly life"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"walks disorderly"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"living in idleness"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"who are living a lazy life"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"who refuses to work"</b>

This is another military term "disorderly conduct" (cf. 2 Thess. 3:6,7,11). It is used here for idle, uncooperative believers (cf. 1 Thess. 4:11-12; 5:14). The apparent closeness of the Second Coming had caused many believers to quit the normal affairs of life. They expected to be supported by other church members. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: WEALTH](#) at 1 Thess. 4:2.

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"which you received from us"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"which he received from us"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"that they received from us"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"that we gave them"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"we passed on to you"</b>

There is a Greek manuscript variant related to the form of the verb:

1. *parelabosan* or *parelabon* (aorist active indicative, third person plural), "they received" – NRSV
2. *parelaben* (aorist active indicative, third person singular) "he received" – NKJV
3. *parelabete* (AORIST ACTIVE INDICATIVE, 2<sup>nd</sup> PERSON PLURAL) "you received" – NASB, NJB

There is much manuscript variation in Paul's letters in areas involving the pronouns.

**3:7 "ought to follow our example"** There was no written NT at this time. These believers had to (1) receive Paul's gospel, and (2) walk in his example (cf. 2 Thess. 3:9; 1 Cor. 4:16; Phil. 3:17; 4:9; 1 Thess. 1:6).

**3:8 "nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it"** This is a Hebrew idiom. Paul, like all rabbis, worked for his daily needs (cf. 1 Cor. 9:12,18; 11:7; 2 Cor. 11:9; 12:13-14; 1 Thess. 2:9). In the Greco-Roman world many traveling tricksters and con-men preyed upon people. Paul had often been accused of preaching for money. Being sensitive to this charge, he seldom took money from those who heard him preach.

▣ **"with labor and hardship we kept working"** To the Greeks manual labor was for slaves only, but the Bible affirms work as from God. In Genesis work is both before the Fall and after (cf. Gen. 2:15; 3:19; Exod. 31:3; 35:35; Deut. 5:13; Isa. 54:16). The concept of working for one's own needs is crucial to this context. Some believers had rejected work because they assumed the Second Coming was near.

▣ **"night and day"** This is the Jewish order of time (cf. Gen. 1:5,8,13,19,23,31). This is an idiom meaning "worked full time," not literally 24 hours a day.

**3:9 "not because we do not have the right to this"** Paul was affirming the concept that believers should support their leaders (cf. 1 Cor. 9:4-17; Gal. 6:6). However, in this specific situation he acted (1) to set an example for those who had quit working and (2) to avoid possible criticism.

▣ **"model"** See Special Topic: Form at 1 Thess. 1:7.

**3:10 "we used to give you this order"** This is an imperfect active indicative, which in context must mean that Paul had told them over and over when he was with them. This command was not new information. This problem must have surfaced early in this church, possibly even before Paul had left.

▣ **"if"** This is a first class conditional sentence. There were people like this in the church.

▣ **"anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either"** This is a present active indicative followed by a present active imperative. This is the point of the entire chapter. It addresses lifestyle inactivity, not temporary unemployment. One must balance this with Paul's other letters on his care for the poor (cf. Acts 24:17; Rom. 15:26-29; 2 Cor. 8-9; Gal. 2:10). This command can be understood as (1) not feeding those who refused to work or (2) excluding them from the common Christian meal or love feast (cf. 2 Thess. 3:13,14).

**3:11 "we hear"** This is a present active indicative, which is literally "keep hearing."

NASB	"but acting like busy-bodies"
NKJV	"but are busy-bodies"
NRSV	"not doing any work"
TEV	"who do nothing except meddle in other people's business"
NJB	"interfering with everyone else's"

This is a play in the Greek text on the word "work" — "not working (*epgazomenous*), but working around

(*periergazomenous*)." Their "work" had become interfering with everyone else's business (work). Paul uses the term "work" often in this chapter (cf. 2 Thess. 3:8,10,11,12 and 1 Thess. 4:11).

**3:12** Paul uses strong words of admonition

1. "command" present active indicative
2. "exhort" present active indicative)
3. "in the Lord Jesus Christ"

This could imply (1) that the idlers are Christians or (2) that it is in the name of Jesus that Paul commands them.

■ **"to work in quiet fashion"** This is a recurrent admonition of Paul's (cf. 1 Thess. 4:11; 1 Tim. 2:2). This seems to mean that believers are not to draw undue attention to themselves by strange, unusual behavior, but by living appropriate quiet, gentle, patient, moral, loving, caring, working lives (the opposite of 2 Thess. 3:11).

So often in our day believers make the "headlines" because of their strange beliefs or actions! As Paul was an example to working and witnessing, so too, should modern believers. If the message causes conflict, so be it, but not the messengers!

**NASB, NKJV "eat their own bread"**

**NRSV "do their own work"**

**TEV "work to earn their own living"**

**NJB "earning the food that they eat"**

This is an idiom which means to support yourself with your own labor.

**3:13 "do not grow weary of doing good"** This refers to the church's quiet, gentle, daily living (cf. Luke 18:1; 2 Cor. 4:1; Gal. 6:9). People are watching and taking notice of godly living.

**3:14 "if"** This is a first class conditional sentence which is assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes.

**NASB "take special note of that person"**

**NKJV "note that person"**

**NRSV "take note of those"**

**TEV, NJB "take note of him"**

This is a present middle imperative. This is literally "tag" or "mark." This is a metaphor of "taking notice of" mentally.

■ **"do not associate with him"** This is a present middle (deponent) INFINITIVE used in an imperative sense. This is the same as "draw back from" of 2 Thess. 3:6. It is uncertain if this involved

1. a full excommunication
2. an exclusion from the collective church meals (*agape* feasts)
3. some type of exclusion from leadership roles or fellowship situations

It is similar to 1 Cor. 5:9,11 (same word, found only here and 1 Cor. 5), which refers to intimate fellowship/friendship. Paul did not want these to radicalize the other believers, but neither did he want them to leave the fellowship of believers (and possibly start a rival eschatological faction).

■ **"so that he will be put to shame"** The purpose of church discipline is redemptive as well as disciplinary (cf. 2 Thess. 3:15; Gal. 6:1; 1 Thess. 4:15). The goal is restoration!

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2 THESSALONIANS 3:16**

**<sup>16</sup>Now may the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance. The Lord be with you all!**

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**3:16 "the Lord of peace"** This is a common title for God the Father (cf. Rom. 15:33; 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:11; Phil. 4:9; 1 Thess. 5:23; Heb. 13:20). Notice how the close of 2 Thessalonians is similar to the close of 1 Thessalonians. Paul is developing his letter-writing style.

▣ **"The Lord be with you all"** The Greek term "all" (*pantos*) is in this verse twice and in 2 Thess. 3:18. Paul's admonition involves even those erring ones. "Lord" could refer to Jesus or the Father. See parallel in 1 Thess. 3:11.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2 THESSALONIANS 3:17-18**

**<sup>17</sup>I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand, and this is a distinguishing mark in every letter; this is the way I write. <sup>18</sup>The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.**

**3:17 "write this greeting with my own hand"** Paul dictated his letters to a scribe, but he wrote the closing sentences in his own hand to verify his authorship (cf. 2 Thess. 2:2; 1 Cor. 16:21; Gal. 6:11; Col. 4:18; Philem. 19). This may have set the pattern for all of Paul's following letters.

**3:18** This closing is very similar to 1 Thess. 5:28. Most Greek manuscripts add "Amen," but it is absent in  $\alpha$  and B. Scribes tended to add it to every book.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. How is the church to treat others in their midst who reject the Scriptures?
2. What does this chapter say to our modern welfare state?
3. Why is the truth of verse 16 so important?

# BRIEF DEFINITIONS OF GREEK GRAMMATICAL TERMS

Koine Greek, often called Hellenistic Greek, was the common language of the Mediterranean world beginning with Alexander the Great's (336-323 b.c..) conquest and lasting about eight hundred years (300 b.c.-a.d. 500). It was not just a simplified, classical Greek, but in many ways a newer form of Greek that became the second language of the Ancient Near East and Mediterranean world.

The Greek of the New Testament was unique in some ways because its users, except Luke and the author of Hebrews, probably used Aramaic as their primary language. Therefore, their writing was influenced by the idioms and structural forms of Aramaic. Also, they read and quoted the Septuagint (Greek translation of the OT) which was also written in Koine Greek. But the Septuagint was also written by Jewish scholars whose mother tongue was not Greek.

This serves as a reminder that we cannot push the New Testament into a tight grammatical structure. It is unique and yet has much in common with (1) the Septuagint; (2) Jewish writings such as those of Josephus; and (3) the papyri found in Egypt. How then do we approach a grammatical analysis of the New Testament?

The grammatical features of Koine Greek and New Testament Koine Greek are fluid. In many ways it was a time of simplification of grammar. Context will be our major guide. Words only have meaning in a larger context, therefore, grammatical structure can only be understood in light of (1) a particular author's style; and (2) a particular context. No conclusive definitions of Greek forms and structures are possible.

Koine Greek was primarily a verbal language. Often the key to interpretation is the type and form of the verbals. In most main clauses the verb will occur first, showing its preeminence. In analyzing the Greek verb three pieces of information must be noted: (1) the basic emphasis of the tense, voice and mood (accidence or morphology); (2) the basic meaning of the particular verb (lexicography); and (3) the flow of the context (syntax).

## I. TENSE

A. Tense or aspect involves the relationship of the verbs to completed action or incomplete action. This is often called "perfective" and "imperfective."

1. Perfective tenses focus on the occurrence of an action. No further information is given except that something happened! Its start, continuation or culmination is not addressed.
2. Imperfective tenses focus on the continuing process of an action. It can be described in terms of linear action, durative action, progressive action, etc.

B. Tenses can be categorized by how the author sees the action as progressing

1. It occurred = aorist
2. It occurred and the results abide = perfect
3. It was occurring in the past and the results were abiding, but not now = pluperfect
4. It is occurring = present
5. It was occurring = imperfect
6. It will occur = future

A concrete example of how these tenses help in interpretation would be the term "save." It was used in several different tenses to show both its process and culmination:

1. aorist - "saved" (cf. Rom. 8:24)
2. perfect - "have been saved and the result continues" (cf. Eph. 2:5,8)
3. present - "being saved" (cf. I Cor. 1:18; 15:2)
4. future - "shall be saved" (cf. Rom. 5:9, 10; 10:9)

C. In focusing on verb tenses, interpreters look for the reason the original author chose to express

himself in a certain tense. The standard "no frills" tense was the aorist. It was the regular "unspecific," "unmarked," or "unflagged" verb form. It can be used in a wide variety of ways which the context must specify. It simply was stating that something occurred. The past time aspect is only intended in the indicative mood. If any other tense was used, something more specific was being emphasized. But what?

1. perfect tense. This speaks of a completed action with abiding results. In some ways it was a combination of the aorist and present tenses. Usually the focus is on the abiding results or the completion of an act (example: Eph. 2:5 & 8, "you have been and continue to be saved").
2. pluperfect tense. This was like the perfect except the abiding results have ceased. Example: John 18:16 "Peter was standing at the door outside."
3. present tense. This speaks of an incomplete or imperfect action. The focus is usually on the continuation of the event. Example: I John 3:6 & 9, "Everyone abiding in Him does not continue sinning." "Everyone having been begotten of God does not continue to commit sin."
4. imperfect tense. In this tense the relationship to the present tense is analogous to the relationship between the perfect and the pluperfect. The imperfect speaks of incomplete action that was occurring but has now ceased or the beginning of an action in the past. Example: Matt. 3:5, "then all Jerusalem were continuing to go out to him" or "then all Jerusalem began to go out to him."
5. future tense. This speaks of an action that was usually projected into a future time frame. It focused on the potential for an occurrence rather than an actual occurrence. It often speaks of the certainty of the event. Example: Matt. 5:4-9, "Blessed are . . . they will . . ."

## II. VOICE

- A. Voice describes the relationship between the action of the verb and its subject.
- B. Active voice was the normal, expected, unemphasized way to assert that the subject was performing the action of the verb.
- C. The passive voice means that the subject was receiving the action of the verb produced by an outside agent. The outside agent producing the action was indicated in the Greek NT by the following prepositions and cases:
  1. a personal direct agent by *hupo* with the ablative case (cf. Matt. 1:22; Acts 22:30).
  2. a personal intermediate agent by *dia* with the ablative case (cf. Matt. 1:22).
  3. an impersonal agent usually by *en* with the instrumental case.
  4. sometimes either a personal or impersonal agent by the instrumental case alone.
- D. The middle voice means that the subject produces the action of the verb and is also directly involved in the action of the verb. It is often called the voice of heightened personal interest. This construction emphasized the subject of the clause or sentence in some way. This construction is not found in English. It has a wide possibility of meanings and translations in Greek. Some examples of the form are:
  1. reflexive - the direct action of the subject on itself. Example: Matt. 27:5 "hanged himself."
  2. intensive - the subject produces the action for itself. Example: II Cor. 11:14 "Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light."
  3. reciprocal - the interplay of two subjects. Example: Matt. 26:4 "they counseled with one another."

## III. MOOD (or "MODE")

- A. There are four moods in Koine Greek. They indicate the relation of the verb to reality, at least within the author's own mind. The moods are divided into two broad categories: that which indicated reality (indicative) and that which indicated potentiality (subjunctive, imperative and optative).
- B. The indicative mood was the normal mood for expressing action that had occurred or was occurring, at least in the author's mind. It was the only Greek mood that expressed a definite time, and even here this aspect was secondary.
- C. The subjunctive mood expressed probable future action. Something had not yet happened, but the

chances were likely that it would. It had much in common with the future indicative. The difference was that the subjunctive expresses some degree of doubt. In English this is often expressed by the terms "could," "would," "may," or "might."

- D. The optative mood expressed a wish which was theoretically possible. It was considered one step further from reality than the subjunctive. The optative expressed possibility under certain conditions. The optative was rare in the New Testament. Its most frequent usage is Paul's famous phrase, "May it never be" (KJV, "God forbid"), used fifteen times (cf. Rom. 3:4, 6, 31; 6:2, 15; 7:7, 13; 9:14; 11:1, 11; I Cor. 6:15; Gal. 2:17; 3:21; 6:14). Other examples are found in Luke 1:38, 20:16, Acts 8:20, and I Thess. 3:11.
- E. The imperative mood emphasized a command which was possible, but the emphasis was on the intent of the speaker. It asserted only volitional possibility and was conditioned on the choices of another. There was a special use of the imperative in prayers and 3rd person requests. These commands were found only in the present and aorist tenses in the NT.
- F. Some grammars categorize participles as another type of mood. They are very common in the Greek NT, usually defined as verbal adjectives. They are translated in conjunction with the main verb to which they relate. A wide variety was possible in translating participles. It is best to consult several English translations. *The Bible in Twenty Six Translations* published by Baker is a great help here.
- G. The aorist active indicative was the normal or "unmarked" way to record an occurrence. Any other tense, voice or mood had some specific interpretive significance that the original author wanted to communicate.

IV. For the person not familiar with Greek the following study aids will provide the needed information:

- A. Friberg, Barbara and Timothy. *Analytical Greek New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988.
- B. Marshall, Alfred. *Interlinear Greek-English New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976.
- C. Mounce, William D. *The Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993.
- D. Summers, Ray. *Essentials of New Testament Greek*. Nashville: Broadman, 1950.
- E. Academically accredited Koine Greek correspondence courses are available through Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, IL.

## V. NOUNS

- A. Syntactically, nouns are classified by case. Case was that inflected form of a noun that showed its relationship to the verb and other parts of the sentence. In Koine Greek many of the case functions were indicated by prepositions. Since the case form was able to identify several different relationships, the prepositions developed to give clearer separation to these possible functions.
- B. Greek cases are categorized in the following eight ways:
  1. The nominative case was used for naming and it usually was the subject of the sentence or clause. It was also used for predicate nouns and adjectives with the linking verbs "to be" or "become."
  2. The genitive case was used for description and usually assigned an attribute or quality to the word to which it was related. It answered the question, "What kind?" It was often expressed by the use of the English preposition "of."
  3. The ablative case used the same inflected form as the genitive, but it was used to describe separation. It usually denoted separation from a point in time, space, source, origin or degree. It was often expressed by the use of the English preposition "from."
  4. The dative case was used to describe personal interest. This could denote a positive or negative aspect. Often this was the indirect object. It was often expressed by the English preposition "to."
  5. The locative case was the same inflected form as the dative, but it described position or location in space, time or logical limits. It was often expressed by the English prepositions "in, on, at, among, during, by, upon, and beside."



6. The instrumental case was the same inflected form as the dative and locative cases. It expressed means or association. It was often expressed by the English prepositions, "by" or "with."
7. The accusative case was used to describe the conclusion of an action. It expressed limitation. Its main use was the direct object. It answered the question, "How far?" or "To what extent?"
8. The vocative case was used for direct address.

## VI. CONJUNCTIONS AND CONNECTORS

A. Greek is a very precise language because it has so many connectives. They connect thoughts (clauses, sentences, and paragraphs). They are so common that their absence (asyndeton) is often exegetically significant. As a matter of fact, these conjunctions and connectors show the direction of the author's thought. They often are crucial in determining what exactly he is trying to communicate.

B. Here is a list of some of the conjunctions and connectors and their meanings (this information has been gleaned mostly from H. E. Dana and Julius K. Mantey's *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*).

### 1. Time connectors

- a. *epei, epeidē, hopote, hōs, hote, hotan* (subj.) - "when"
- b. *heōs* - "while"
- c. *hotan, epan* (subj.) - "whenever"
- d. *heōs, achri, mechri* (subj.) - "until"
- e. *priv* (infin.) - "before"
- f. *hōs* - "since," "when," "as"

### 2. Logical connectors

#### a. Purpose

- (1) *hina* (subj.), *hopōs* (subj.), *hōs* - "in order that," "that"
- (2) *hōste* (articular accusative infinitive) - "that"
- (3) *pros* (articular accusative infinitive) or *eis* (articular accusative infinitive) - "that"

#### b. Result (there is a close association between the grammatical forms of purpose and result)

- (1) *hōste* (infinitive, this is the most common) - "in order that," "thus"
- (2) *hiva* (subj.) - "so that"
- (3) *ara* - "so"

#### c. Causal or reason

- (1) *gar* (cause/effect or reason/conclusion) - "for," "because"
- (2) *dioti, hotiy* - "because"
- (3) *epei, epeidē, hōs* - "since"
- (4) *dia* (with accusative) and (with articular infin.) - "because"

#### d. Inferential

- (1) *ara, poinun, hōste* - "therefore"
- (2) *dio* (strongest inferential conjunction) - "on which account," "wherefore," "therefore"
- (3) *oun* - "therefore," "so," "then," "consequently"
- (4) *toinoun* - "accordingly"

#### e. Adversative or contrast

- (1) *alla* (strong adversative) - "but," "except"
- (2) *de* - "but," "however," "yet," "on the other hand"
- (3) *kai* - "but"
- (4) *mentoi, oun* - "however"
- (5) *plēn* - "never-the-less" (mostly in Luke)
- (6) *oun* - "however"

#### f. Comparison

- (1) *hōs, kathōs* (introduce comparative clauses)
- (2) *kata* (in compounds, *katho, kathoti, kathōsper, kathaper*)

- (3) *hosos* (in Hebrews)
- (4) *ē* - "than"
- g. Continuative or series
  - (1) *de* - "and," "now"
  - (2) *kai* - "and"
  - (3) *tei* - "and"
  - (4) *hina, oun* - "that"
  - (5) *oun* - "then" (in John)

### 3. Emphatic usages

- a. *alla* - "certainty," "yea," "in fact"
- b. *ara* - "indeed," "certainly," "really"
- c. *gar* - "but really," "certainly," "indeed"
- d. *de* - "indeed"
- e. *ean* - "even"
- f. *kai* - "even," "indeed," "really"
- g. *mentoi* - "indeed"
- h. *oun* - "really," "by all means"

## VII. CONDITIONAL SENTENCES

- A. A conditional sentence is one that contains one or more conditional clauses. This grammatical structure aids interpretation because it provides the conditions, reasons or causes why the action of the main verb does or does not occur. There were four types of conditional sentences. They move from that which was assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his purpose to that which was only a wish.
- B. The first class conditional sentence expressed action or being which was assumed to be true from the writer's perspective or for his purposes even though it was expressed with an "if." In several contexts it could be translated "since" (cf. Matt. 4:3; Rom. 8:31). However, this does not mean to imply that all first classes are true to reality. Often they were used to make a point in an argument or to highlight a fallacy (cf. Matt. 12:27).
- C. The second class conditional sentence is often called "contrary to fact." It states something that was untrue to reality to make a point. Examples:
  - 1. "If He were really a prophet which He is not, He would know who and of what character the woman is who is clinging to Him, but He does not" (Luke 7:39)
  - 2. "If you really believed Moses, which you do not, you would believe me, which you do not" (John 5:46)
  - 3. "If I were still trying to be pleasing to men, which I am not, I would not be a slave of Christ at all, which I am" (Gal. 1:10)
- D. The third class speaks of possible future action. It often assumes the probability of that action. It usually implies a contingency. The action of the main verb is contingent on the action in the "if" clause. Examples from I John: 1:6-10; 2:4,6,9,15,20,21,24,29; 3:21; 4:20; 5:14,16.
- E. The fourth class is the farthest removed from possibility. It is rare in the NT. As a matter of fact, there is no complete fourth class conditional sentence in which both parts of the condition fit the definition. An example of a partial fourth class is the opening clause in I Pet. 3:14. An example of a partial fourth class in the concluding clause is Acts 8:31.

## VIII. PROHIBITIONS

- A. The present imperative with *mē* particle often (but not exclusively) has the emphasis of stopping an act already in process. Some examples: "stop storing up your riches on earth. . ." (Matt. 6:19); "stop worrying about your life. . ." (Matt. 6:25); "stop offering to sin the parts of your bodies as instruments of wrongdoing. . ." (Rom. 6:13); "you must stop offending the Holy Spirit of God. . ." (Eph. 4:30); and "stop getting drunk on wine. . ." (5:18).

- B. The aorist subjunctive with *mē* particle has the emphasis of "do not even begin or start an act." Some examples: "Do not even begin to suppose that. . ." (Matt. 5:17); "never start to worry. . ." (Matt. 6:31); "you must never be ashamed. . ." (II Tim. 1:8).
- C. The double negative with the subjunctive mood is a very emphatic negation. "Never, no never" or "not under any circumstance." Some examples: "he will never, no never experience death" (John 8:51); "I will never, no, never. . ." (I Cor. 8:13).

## IX. THE ARTICLE

- A. In Koine Greek the definite article "the" had a use similar to English. Its basic function was that of "a pointer," a way to draw attention to a word, name or phrase. The use varies from author to author in the New Testament. The definite article could also function
  - 1. as a contrasting device like a demonstrative pronoun;
  - 2. as a sign to refer to a previously introduced subject or person;
  - 3. as a way to identify the subject in a sentence with a linking verb. Examples: "God is Spirit" (John 4:24); "God is light" (I John 1:5); "God is love" (4:8,16).
- B. Koine Greek did not have an indefinite article like the English "a" or "an." The absence of the definite article could mean
  - 1. a focus on the characteristics or quality of something
  - 2. a focus on the category of something
- C. The NT authors varied widely as to how the article was employed.

## X. WAYS OF SHOWING EMPHASIS IN THE GREEK NEW TESTAMENT

- A. The techniques for showing emphasis vary from author to author in the New Testament. The most consistent and formal writers were Luke and the author of Hebrews.
- B. We have stated earlier that the aorist active indicative was standard and unmarked for emphasis, but any other tense, voice, or mood had interpretive significance. This is not to imply that the aorist active indicative was not often used in a significant grammatical sense. (Example: Rom. 6:10 [twice]).
- C. Word order in Koine Greek
  - 1. Koine Greek was an inflected language which was not dependent, like English, on word order. Therefore, the author could vary the normal expected order to show
    - a. what the author wanted to emphasize to the reader
    - b. what the author thought would be surprising to the reader
    - c. what the author felt deeply about
  - 2. The normal word order in Greek is still an unsettled issue. However, the supposed normal order is:
    - a. for linking verbs
      - (1) verb
      - (2) subject
      - (3) complement
    - b. for transitive verbs
      - (1) verb
      - (2) subject
      - (3) object
      - (4) indirect object
      - (5) prepositional phrase
    - c. for noun phrases
      - (1) noun
      - (2) modifier
      - (3) prepositional phrase
  - 3. Word order can be an extremely important exegetical point. Examples:
    - a. "right hand they gave to me and Barnabas of fellowship." The phrase "right hand of

- fellowship" is split and fronted to show its significance (Gal. 2:9).
  - b. "with Christ" was placed first. His death was central (Gal. 2:20).
  - c. "It was bit by bit and in many different ways" (Heb. 1:1) was placed first. It was how God revealed Himself that was being contrasted, not the fact of revelation.
- D. Usually some degree of emphasis was shown by
1. The repetition of the pronoun which was already present in the verb's inflected form. Example: "I, myself, will surely be with you. . ." (Matt. 28:20).
  2. The absence of an expected conjunction, or other connecting device between words, phrases, clauses or sentences. This is called an asyndeton ("not bound"). The connecting device was expected, so its absence would draw attention. Examples:
    - a. The Beatitudes, Matt. 5:3ff (emphasized the list)
    - b. John 14:1 (new topic)
    - c. Romans 9:1 (new section)
    - d. II Cor. 12:20 (emphasize the list)
  3. The repetition of words or phrases present in a given context. Examples: "to the praise of His glory" (Eph. 1:6, 12 & 14). This phrase was used to show the work of each person of the Trinity.
  4. The use of an idiom or word (sound) play between terms
    - a. euphemisms - substitute words for taboo subjects, like "sleep" for death (John 11:11-14) or "feet" for male genitalia (Ruth 3:7-8; I Sam. 24:3).
    - b. circumlocutions - substitute words for God's name, like "Kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 3:2) or "a voice from heaven" (Matt. 3:17).
    - c. figures of speech
      - (1) impossible exaggerations (Matt. 3:9; 5:29-30; 19:24)
      - (2) mild over statements (Matt. 3:5; Acts 2:36)
      - (3) personifications (I Cor. 15:55)
      - (4) irony (Gal. 5:12)
      - (5) poetic passages (Phil. 2:6-11)
      - (6) sound plays between words
        - (a) "church"
          - (i) "church" (Eph. 3:21)
          - (ii) "calling" (Eph. 4:1,4)
          - (iii)"called" (Eph. 4:1,4)
        - (b) "free"
          - (i) "free woman" (Gal. 4:31)
          - (ii)"freedom" (Gal. 5:1)
          - (iii)"free" (Gal. 5:1)
    - d. idiomatic language - language which is usually cultural and language specific:
      - (1) figurative use of "food" (John 4:31-34)
      - (2) figurative use of "Temple" (John 2:19; Matt. 26:61)
      - (3) Hebrew idiom of compassion, "hate" (Gen. 29:31; Deut. 21:15; Luke 14:36; John 12:25; Rom. 9:13)
      - (4) "All" versus "many." Compare Isa. 53:6 ("all") with 53:11 & 12 ("many"). The terms are synonymous as Rom. 5:18 and 19 show.
  5. The use of a full linguistic phrase instead of a single word. Example: "The Lord Jesus Christ."
  6. The special use of *autos*
    - a. when with the article (attributive position) it was translated "same."
    - b. when without the article (predicate position) it was translated as an intensive reflexive pronoun-"himself," "herself," or "itself."
- E. The non-Greek reading Bible student can identify emphasis in several ways:
1. The use of an analytical lexicon and interlinear Greek/English text.
  2. The comparison of English translations, particularly from the differing theories of translations. Example: comparing a "word-for-word" translation (KJV, NKJV, ASV, NASB, RSV, NRSV)

with a "dynamic equivalent" (Williams, NIV, NEB, REB, JB, NJB, TEV). A good help here would be *The Bible in Twenty-Six Translations* published by Baker.

3. The use of *The Emphasized Bible* by Joseph Bryant Rotherham (Kregel, 1994).

4. The use of a very literal translation

a. *The American Standard Version* of 1901

b. *Young's Literal Translation of the Bible* by Robert Young (Guardian Press, 1976).

The study of grammar is tedious but necessary for proper interpretation. These brief definitions, comments and examples are meant to encourage and equip non-Greek reading persons to use the grammatical notes provided in this volume. Surely these definitions are oversimplified. They should not be used in a dogmatic, inflexible manner, but as stepping stones toward a greater understanding of New Testament syntax. Hopefully these definitions will also enable readers to understand the comments of other study aids such as technical commentaries on the New Testament.

We must be able to verify our interpretation based on items of information found in the texts of the Bible. Grammar is one of the most helpful of these items; other items would include historical setting, literary context, contemporary word usage, and parallel passages.

# TEXTUAL CRITICISM

This subject will be dealt with in such a way as to explain the textual notes found in this commentary. The following outline will be utilized

- I. The textual sources of our English Bible
  - A. Old Testament
  - B. New Testament
- II. Brief explanation of the problems and theories of "lower criticism" also called "textual criticism."
- III. Suggested sources for further reading

## I. The textual sources of our English Bible

### A. Old Testament

1. Masoretic text (MT) - The Hebrew consonantal text was set by Rabbi Aquiba in a.d. 100. The vowel points, accents, marginal notes, punctuation and apparatus points started being added in the sixth century a.d. and were finished in the ninth century a.d. It was done by a family of Jewish scholars known as the Masoretes. The textual form they used was the same as the one in the Mishnah, Talmud, Targums, Peshitta, and Vulgate.
2. Septuagint (LXX) - Tradition says the Septuagint was produced by 70 Jewish scholars in 70 days for the Alexandria library under the sponsorship of King Ptolemy II (285-246 b.c.) The translation was supposedly requested by a Jewish leader living in Alexandria. This tradition comes from "Letter of Aristeas." The LXX frequently was based on a differing Hebrew textual tradition from the text of Rabbi Aquiba (MT).
3. Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS) - The Dead Sea Scrolls were written in the Roman b.c. period (200 b.c. to a.d. 70) by a sect of Jewish separatists called the "Essenes." The Hebrew manuscripts, found in several sites around the Dead Sea, show a somewhat different Hebrew textual family behind both the MT and the LXX.
4. Some specific examples of how the comparison of these texts have helped interpreters understand the Old Testament
  - a. The LXX has helped translators and scholars understand the MT
    - (1) the LXX of Isa. 52:14, "As many shall be amazed at him."
    - (2) the MT of Isa. 52:14, "Just as many were astonished over you."
    - (3) in Isa. 52:15 the pronoun distinction of the LXX is confirmed
      - (a) LXX, "so will many nations marvel at him"
      - (b) MT, "so he sprinkles many nations"
  - b. The DSS have helped translators and scholars understand the MT
    - (1) the DSS of Isa. 21:8, "then the seer cried, Upon a watchtower I stand. . ."
    - (2) the MT of Isa. 21:8, "and I cried a lion! My Lord, I always stand on the watch tower by day. . ."
  - c. Both the LXX and DSS have helped clarify Isa. 53:11
    - (1) LXX & DSS, "after the travail of his soul he will see light, he will be satisfied"
    - (2) MT, "he shall see. . .of the travail of his soul, He shall be satisfied"

### B. New Testament

1. Over 5,300 manuscripts of all or parts of the Greek New Testament are extant. About 85 are written on papyri and 268 are manuscripts written in all capital letters (uncials). Later, about the ninth century a.d., a running script (minuscule) was developed. The Greek manuscripts in written form number about 2,700. We also have about 2,100 copies of lists of Scripture texts used in worship that we call lectionaries.
2. About 85 Greek manuscripts containing parts of the New Testament written on papyrus are

housed in museums. Some are dated from the second century a.d., but most are from the third and fourth centuries a.d. None of these MSS contain the whole New Testament. Just because these are the oldest copies of the New Testament does not automatically mean they have fewer variants. Many of these were copied rapidly for a local use. Care was not exercised in the process. Therefore, they contain many variants.

3. Codex Sinaiticus, known by the Hebrew letter  $\aleph$  (*aleph*) or (01), found at St. Catherine's monastery on Mt. Sinai by Tischendorf. It dates from the fourth century a.d. and contains both the LXX of the OT and the Greek NT. It is of "the Alexandrian Text" type.
4. Codex Alexandrinus, known as "A" or (02), a fifth century Greek manuscript which was found in Alexandria, Egypt.
5. Codex Vaticanus, known as "B" or (03), found in the Vatican's library in Rome and dates from the middle of the fourth century a.d. It contains both LXX of the Old Testament and Greek New Testament. It is of "the Alexandrian Text" type.
6. Codex Ephraemi, known as "C" or (04), a fifth century Greek manuscript which was partially destroyed.
7. Codex Bezae, known as "D" or (05), a fifth or sixth century Greek manuscript. It is the chief representative of what is called "The Western Text." It contains many additions and was the main Greek witness for the King James translation.
8. The NT MSS can be grouped into three, possibly four, families that share certain characteristics.
  - a. Alexandrian text from Egypt
    - (1) P<sup>75</sup>, P<sup>66</sup> (about a.d. 200), which record the Gospels
    - (2) P<sup>46</sup> (about a.d. 225), which records Paul's letters
    - (3) P<sup>72</sup> (about a.d. 225-250), which records Peter and Jude
    - (4) Codex B, called Vaticanus (about a.d. 325), which includes the whole OT and NT
    - (5) Origen quotes from this text type
    - (6) other MSS which show this text type are  $\aleph$ , C, L, W, 33
  - b. Western text from North Africa
    - (1) quotes from North African church fathers, Tertullian, Cyprian, and the Old Latin translation
    - (2) quotes from Irenaeus
    - (3) quotes from Tatian and Old Syriac translation
    - (4) Codex D "Bezae" follow this text type
  - c. Eastern Byzantine text from Constantinople
    - (1) this text type is reflected in over 80% of the 5,300 MSS
    - (2) quoted by Antioch of Syria's church fathers, Cappadoceans, Chrysostom, and Therodoret
    - (3) Codex A, in the Gospels only
    - (4) Codex E (eighth century) for full NT
  - d. the fourth possible type is "Caesarean" from Palestine
    - (1) it is primarily seen only in Mark
    - (2) some witnesses to it are P<sup>45</sup> and W

## II. The problems and theories of "lower criticism" or "textual criticism."

### A. How the variants occurred

1. inadvertent or accidental (vast majority of occurrences)
  - a. slip of the eye in hand copying which reads the second instance of two similar words and thereby omits all of the words in between (homoioteleuton)
    - (1) slip of the eye in omitting a double letter word or phrase (haplography)
    - (2) slip of the mind in repeating a phrase or line of a Greek text (dittography)
  - b. slip of the ear in copying by oral dictation where a misspelling occurs (itacism). Often the

misspelling implies or spells a similar-sounding Greek word.

- c. the earliest Greek texts had no chapter or verse divisions, little or no punctuation and no division between words. It is possible to divide the letters in different places forming different words.

## 2. intentional

- a. changes were made to improve the grammatical form of the text copied
- b. changes were made to bring the text into conformity with other biblical texts (harmonization of parallels)
- c. changes were made by combining two or more variant readings into one long combined text (conflation)
- d. changes were made to correct a perceived problem in the text (cf. I Cor. 11:27 and I John 5:7-8)
- e. some additional information as to the historical setting or proper interpretation of the text was placed in the margin by one scribe but placed into the text by a second scribe (cf. John 5:4)

## B. The basic tenets of textual criticism (logical guidelines for determining the original reading of a text when variants exist)

1. the most awkward or grammatically unusual text is probably the original
2. the shortest text is probably the original
3. the older text is given more weight because of its historical proximity to the original, everything else being equal
4. MSS that are geographically diverse usually have the original reading
5. doctrinally weaker texts, especially those relating to major theological discussions of the period of manuscript changes, like the Trinity in I John 5:7-8, are to be preferred.
6. the text that can best explain the origin of the other variants
7. two quotes that help show the balance in these troubling variants

- a. J. Harold Greenlee's book, *Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism*, p. 68:

"No Christian doctrine hangs upon a debatable text; and the student of the NT must beware of wanting his text to be more orthodox or doctrinally stronger than is the inspired original."

- b. W. A. Criswell told Greg Garrison of *The Birmingham News* that he (Criswell) doesn't believe every word in the Bible is inspired, "at least not every word that has been given to the modern public by centuries of translators." Criswell said: "I very much am a believer in the textual criticism. As such, I think, the last half of the 16th chapter of Mark is heresy: it's not inspired, it's just concocted. . . .When you compare those manuscripts way back yonder, there was no such thing as that conclusion of the Book of Mark. Somebody added it..."

The patriarch of the SBC inerrantists also claimed that "interpolation" is also evident in John 5, the account of Jesus at the pool of Bethesda. And he discusses the two different accounts of the suicide of Judas (cf. Matt. 27 and Acts 1): "It's just a different view of the suicide," Criswell said. "If it is in the Bible, there is an explanation for it. And the two accounts of the suicide of Judas are in the Bible." Criswell added, "Textual criticism is a wonderful science in itself. It is not ephemeral, it's not impertinent. It's dynamic and central..."

## III. Manuscript problems (textual criticism)

### A. Suggested sources for further reading

1. *Biblical Criticism: Historical, Literary and Textual*, by R.H. Harrison
2. *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption and Restoration* by Bruce M. Metzger
3. *Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism*, by J. H Greenlee



# GLOSSARY

**Adoptionism.** This was one of the early views of Jesus' relation to deity. It basically asserted that Jesus was a normal human in every way and was adopted in a special sense by God at his baptism (cf. Matt. 3:17; Mark 1:11) or at His resurrection (cf. Rom. 1:4). Jesus lived such an exemplary life that God, at some point, (baptism, resurrection) adopted Him as His "son" (cf. Rom. 1:4; Phi. 2:9). This was an early church and eighth century minority view. Instead of God becoming a man (the Incarnation) it reverses this and now man becomes God!

It is difficult to verbalize how Jesus, God the Son, pre-existent deity, was rewarded or extolled for an exemplary life. If He was already God, how could He be rewarded? If He had pre-existent divine glory how could He be honored more? Although it is hard for us to comprehend, the Father somehow honored Jesus in a special sense for His perfect fulfillment of the Father's will.

**Alexandrian School.** This method of biblical interpretation was developed in Alexandria, Egypt in the second century a.d. It uses the basic interpretive principles of Philo, who was a follower of Plato. It is often called the allegorical method. It held sway in the church until the time of the Reformation. Its most able proponents were Origen and Augustine. See Moises Silva, *Has The Church Misread The Bible?* (Academic, 1987)

**Alexandrinus.** This fifth-century Greek manuscript from Alexandria, Egypt includes the Old Testament, Apocrypha, and most of the New Testament. It is one of our major witnesses to the entire Greek New Testament (except parts of Matthew, John, and II Corinthians). When this manuscript, which is designated "A," and the manuscript designated "B" (Vaticanus) agree on a reading, it is considered to be original by most scholars in most instances.

**Allegory.** This is a type of Biblical interpretation which originally developed within Alexandrian Judaism. It was popularized by Philo of Alexandria. Its basic thrust is the desire to make the Scripture relevant to one's culture or philosophical system by ignoring the Bible's historical setting and/or literary context. It seeks a hidden or spiritual meaning behind every text of Scripture. It must be admitted that Jesus, in Matthew 13, and Paul, in Galatians 4, used allegory to communicate truth. This, however, was in the form of typology, not strictly allegory.

**Analytical lexicon.** This is a type of research tool which allows one to identify every Greek form in the New Testament. It is a compilation, in Greek alphabetical order, of forms and basic definitions. In combination with an interlinear translation, it allows non-Greek reading believers to analyze New Testament Greek grammatical and syntactic forms.

**Analogy of Scripture.** This is the phrase used to describe the view that all of the Bible is inspired by God and is, therefore, not contradictory but complementary. This presuppositional affirmation is the basis for the use of parallel passages in interpreting a biblical text.

**Ambiguity.** This refers to the uncertainty that results in a written document when there are two or more possible meanings or when two or more things are being referred to at the same time. It is possible that John uses purposeful ambiguity (double entendres).

**Anthropomorphic.** Meaning "having characteristics associated with human beings," this term is used to describe our religious language about God. It comes from the Greek term for mankind. It means that we speak about God as if He were a man. God is described in physical, sociological, and psychological terms which relate to human beings (cf. Gen. 3:8; I Kgs. 22:19-23). This, of course, is only an analogy. However, there are no categories or terms other than human ones for us to use.

Therefore, our knowledge of God, though true, is limited.

**Antiochian School.** This method of biblical interpretation was developed in Antioch, Syria in the third century a.d. as a reaction to the allegorical method of Alexandria, Egypt. Its basic thrust was to focus on the historical meaning of the Bible. It interpreted the Bible as normal, human literature. This school became involved in the controversy over whether Christ had two natures (Nestorianism) or one nature (fully God and fully man). It was labeled heretical by the Roman Catholic Church and relocated to Persia but the school had little significance. Its basic hermeneutical principles later became interpretive principles of the Classical Protestant Reformers (Luther and Calvin).

**Antithetical.** This is one of three descriptive terms used to denote the relationship between lines of Hebrew poetry. It relates to lines of poetry which are opposite in meaning (cf. Pro. 10:1, 15:1).

**Apocalyptic literature.** This was predominantly, possibly even uniquely, a Jewish genre. It was a cryptic type of writing used in times of invasion and occupation of the Jews by foreign world powers. It assumes that a personal, redemptive God created and controls world events, and that Israel is of special interest and care to Him. This literature promises ultimate victory through God's special effort.

It is highly symbolic and fanciful with many cryptic terms. It often expressed truth in colors, numbers, visions, dreams, angelic mediation, secret code words and often a sharp dualism between good and evil.

Some examples of this genre are (1) in the OT, Ezekiel (chapters 36-48), Daniel (chapters 7-12), Zechariah; and (2) in the NT, Matthew 24; Mark 13; II Thessalonians 2 and Revelation.

**Apologist (Apologetics).** This is from the Greek root for "legal defense." This is a specific discipline within theology which seeks to give evidence and rational arguments for the Christian faith.

**A priori.** This is basically synonymous with the term "presupposition." It involves reasoning from previously accepted definitions, principles or positions which are assumed to be true. It is that which is accepted without examination or analysis.

**Arianism.** Arius was a presbyter in the church at Alexandria Egypt in the third and early fourth century. He affirmed that Jesus was pre-existent but not divine (not of the same essence as the Father), possibly following Proverbs 8:22-31. He was challenged by the bishop of Alexandria, who started (a.d. 318) a controversy which lasted many years. Arianism became the official creed of the Eastern Church. The Council of Nicaea in a.d. 325 condemned Arius and asserted the full equality and deity of the Son.

**Aristotle.** He was one of the philosophers of ancient Greece, a pupil of Plato and teacher of Alexander the Great. His influence, even today, reaches into many areas of modern studies. This is because he emphasized knowledge through observation and classification. This is one of the tenets of the scientific method.

**Autographs.** This is the name given to the original writings of the Bible. These original, handwritten manuscripts have all been lost. Only copies of copies remain. This is the source of many of the textual variants in the Hebrew and Greek manuscripts and ancient versions.

**Bezae.** This is a Greek and Latin manuscript of the sixth century a.d. It is designated by "D." It contains the Gospels and Acts and some of the General Epistles. It is characterized by numerous scribal additions. It forms the basis for the "Textus Receptus," the major Greek manuscript tradition behind the King James Version.

**Bias.** This is the term used to describe a strong predisposition toward an object or point of view. It is the mindset in which impartiality is impossible regarding a particular object or point of view. It is a prejudiced position.

**Biblical Authority.** This term is used in a very specialized sense. It is defined as understanding what the original author said to his day and applying this truth to our day. Biblical authority is usually defined as viewing the Bible itself as our only authoritative guide. However, in light of current, improper interpretations, I have limited the concept to the Bible as interpreted by the tenets of the historical-grammatical method.

**Canon.** This is a term used to describe writings which are believed to be uniquely inspired. It is used regarding both the Old and New Testament Scriptures.

**Christocentric.** This is a term used to describe the centrality of Jesus. I use it in connection with the concept that Jesus is Lord of all the Bible. The Old Testament points toward Him and He is its fulfillment and goal (cf. Matt. 5:17-48).

**Commentary.** This is a specialized type of research book. It gives the general background of a Biblical book. It then tries to explain the meaning of each section of the book. Some focus on application, while others deal with the text in a more technical way. These books are helpful, but should be used after one has done his own preliminary study. The commentator's interpretations should never be accepted uncritically. Comparing several commentaries from different theological perspectives is usually helpful.

**Concordance.** This is a type of research tool for Bible study. It lists every occurrence of every word in the Old and New Testaments. It helps in several ways: (1) determining the Hebrew or Greek word which lies behind any particular English word; (2) comparing passages where the same Hebrew or Greek word was used; (3) showing where two different Hebrew or Greek terms are translated by the same English word; (4) showing the frequency of the use of certain words in certain books or authors; (5) helping one find a passage in the Bible (cf. Walter Clark's *Howto Use New Testament Greek Study Aids*, pp. 54-55).

**Dead Sea Scrolls.** This refers to a series of ancient texts written in Hebrew and Aramaic which were found near the Dead Sea in 1947. They were the religious libraries of sectarian Judaism of the first century. The pressure of Roman occupation and the zealot wars of the 60's caused them to conceal the scrolls in hermetically sealed pottery jars in caves or holes. They have helped us understand the historical setting of first century Palestine and have confirmed the Masoretic Text as being very accurate, at least as far back as the early b.c. era. They are designated by the abbreviation "DSS."

**Deductive.** This method of logic or reasoning moves from general principles to specific applications by means of reason. It is opposite from inductive reasoning, which reflects the scientific method by moving from observed specifics to general conclusions (theories).

**Dialectical.** This is the method of reasoning whereby that which seems contradictory or paradoxical is held together in a tension, seeking a unified answer which includes both sides of the paradox. Many biblical doctrines have dialectical pairs, predestination-free will; security-perseverance; faith-works; decision-discipleship; Christian freedom-Christian responsibility.

**Diaspora.** This is the technical Greek term used by Palestinian Jews to describe other Jews who live outside the geographical boundaries of the Promised Land.

**Dynamic equivalent.** This is a theory of Bible translation. Bible translation can be viewed as a continuum from "word to word" correspondence, where an English word must be supplied for every Hebrew or Greek word, to a "paraphrase" where only the thought is translated with less regard to the original wording or phrasing. In between these two theories is "the dynamic equivalent" which attempts to take the original text seriously, but translates it in modern grammatical forms and idioms. A really good discussion of these various theories of translations is found in Fee and Stuart's *Howto Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, p. 35 and in Robert Bratcher's Introduction to the TEV.

**Eclectic.** This term is used in connection with textual criticism. It refers to the practice of choosing readings from different Greek manuscripts in order to arrive at a text which is supposed to be close to the original autographs. It rejects the view that any one family of Greek manuscripts captures the originals.

**Eisegesis.** This is the opposite of exegesis. If exegesis is a "leading out" of the original author's intent, this term implies a "leading in" of a foreign idea or opinion.

**Etymology.** This is an aspect of word study that tries to ascertain the original meaning of a word. From this root meaning, specialized usages are more easily identified. In interpretation, etymology is not the main focus, rather the contemporary meaning and usage of a word.

**Exegesis.** This is the technical term for the practice of interpreting a specific passage. It means "to lead out" (of the text) implying that our purpose is to understand the original author's intent in light of historical setting, literary context, syntax and contemporary word meaning.

**Genre.** This is a French term that denotes different types of literature. The thrust of the term is the division of literary forms into categories which share common characteristics: historical narrative, poetry, proverb, apocalyptic and legislation.

**Gnosticism.** Most of our knowledge of this heresy comes from the Gnostic writings of the second century. However, the incipient ideas were present in the first century (and before).

Some stated tenets of Valentian and Cerinthian Gnosticism of the second century are: (1) matter and spirit were co-eternal (an ontological dualism). Matter is evil, spirit is good. God, who is spirit, cannot be directly involved with molding evil matter; (2) there are emanations (*eons* or angelic levels) between God and matter. The last or lowest one was YHWH of the OT, who formed the universe (*kosmos*); (3) Jesus was an emanation like YHWH but higher on the scale, closer to the true God. Some put Him as the highest but still less than God and certainly not incarnate Deity (cf. John 1:14). Since matter is evil, Jesus could not have a human body and still be Divine. He was a spiritual phantom (cf. I John 1:1-3; 4:1-6); and (4) salvation was obtained through faith in Jesus plus special knowledge, which is only known by special persons. Knowledge (passwords) was needed to pass through heavenly spheres. Jewish legalism was also required to reach God.

The Gnostic false teachers advocated two opposite ethical systems: (1) for some, lifestyle was totally unrelated to salvation. For them, salvation and spirituality were encapsulated into secret knowledge (passwords) through the angelic spheres (*eons*); or (2) for others, lifestyle was crucial to salvation. They emphasized an ascetic lifestyle as evidence of true spirituality.

**Hermeneutics.** This is the technical term for the principles which guide exegesis. It is both a set of specific guidelines and an art/gift. Biblical, or sacred, hermeneutics is usually divided into two categories: general principles and special principles. These relate to the different types of literature found in the Bible. Each different type (genre) has its own unique guidelines but also shares some common assumptions and procedures of interpretation.

**Higher Criticism.** This is the procedure of biblical interpretation which focuses on the historical setting and literary structure of a particular biblical book.

**Idiom.** This word is used for the phrases found in different cultures which have specialized meaning not connected to the usual meaning of the individual terms. Some modern examples are: "that was awfully good," or "you just kill me." The Bible also contains these types of phrases.

**Illumination.** This is the name given to the concept that God has spoken to mankind. The full concept is usually expressed by three terms: (1) revelation-God has acted in human history; (2) inspiration-He has given the proper interpretation of His acts and their meaning to certain chosen men to record for

mankind; and (3) illumination-He has given His Spirit to help mankind understand His self-disclosure.

**Inductive.** This is a method of logic or reasoning which moves from the particulars to the whole. It is the empirical method of modern science. This is basically the approach of Aristotle.

**Interlinear.** This is a type of research tool which allows those who do not read a biblical language to be able to analyze its meaning and structure. It places the English translation on a word for word level immediately under the original biblical language. This tool, combined with an "analytical lexicon," will give the forms and basic definitions of Hebrew and Greek.

**Inspiration.** This is the concept that God has spoken to mankind by guiding the biblical authors to accurately and clearly record His revelation. The full concept is usually expressed by three terms: (1) revelation-God has acted in human history; (2) inspiration-He has given the proper interpretation of His acts and their meaning to certain chosen men to record for mankind; and (3) illumination-He has given His Spirit to help mankind understand His self-disclosure

**Language of description.** This is used in connection with the idioms in which the Old Testament is written. It speaks of our world in terms of the way things appear to the five senses. It is not a scientific description, nor was it meant to be.

**Legalism.** This attitude is characterized by an over-emphasis on rules or ritual. It tends to rely on the human performance of regulations as a means of acceptance by God. It tends to depreciate relationship and elevates performance, both of which are important aspects of the covenantal relationship between a holy God and sinful humanity.

**Literal.** This is another name for the textually-focused and historical method of hermeneutics from Antioch. It means that interpretation involves the normal and obvious meaning of human language, although it still recognizes the presence of figurative language.

**Literary genre.** This refers to the distinct forms that human communication can take, such as poetry or historical narrative. Each type of literature has its own special hermeneutical procedures in addition to the general principles for all written literature.

**Literary unit.** This refers to the major thought divisions of a biblical book. It can be made up of a few verses, paragraphs or chapters. It is a self-contained unit with a central subject.

**Lower criticism.** See "textual criticism."

**Manuscript.** This term relates to the different copies of the Greek New Testament. Usually they are divided into the different types by (1) material on which they are written (papyrus, leather), or (2) the form of the writing itself (all capitals or running script). It is abbreviated by "MS" (singular) or "MSS" (plural).

**Masoretic Text.** This refers to the ninth century a.d. Hebrew manuscripts of the Old Testament produced by generations of Jewish scholars which contain vowel points and other textual notes. It forms the basic text for our English Old Testament. Its text has been historically confirmed by the Hebrew MSS, especially Isaiah, known from the Dead Sea Scrolls. It is abbreviated by "MT."

**Metonymy.** This is a figure of speech in which the name of one thing is used to represent something else associated with it. As an example, "the kettle is boiling" actually means "the water within the kettle is boiling."

**Muratorian Fragments.** This is a list of the canonical books of the New Testament. It was written in Rome before a.d. 200. It gives the same twenty-seven books as the Protestant NT. This clearly shows the local churches in different parts of the Roman Empire had "practically" set the canon before the major

church councils of the fourth century.

**Natural revelation.** This is one category of God's self-disclosure to man. It involves the natural order (Rom. 1:19-20) and the moral consciousness (Rom. 2:14-15). It is spoken of in Ps. 19:1-6 and Rom. 1-2. It is distinct from special revelation, which is God's specific self-disclosure in the Bible and supremely in Jesus of Nazareth.

This theological category is being re-emphasized by the "old earth" movement among Christian scientists (e.g. the writings of Hugh Ross). They use this category to assert that all truth is God's truth. Nature is an open door to knowledge about God; it is different from special revelation (the Bible). It allows modern science the freedom to research the natural order. In my opinion it is a wonderful new opportunity to witness to the modern scientific western world.

**Nestorianism.** Nestorius was the patriarch of Constantinople in the fifth century. He was trained in Antioch of Syria and affirmed that Jesus had two natures, one fully human and one fully divine. This view deviated from the orthodox one nature view of Alexandria. Nestorius' main concern was the title "mother of God," given to Mary. Nestorius was opposed by Cyril of Alexandria and, by implication, his own Antiochian training. Antioch was the headquarters of the historical-grammatical-textual approach to biblical interpretation, while Alexandria was the headquarters of the four-fold (allegorical) school of interpretation. Nestorius was ultimately removed from office and exiled.

**Original author.** This refers to the actual authors/writers of Scripture.

**Papyri.** This is a type of writing material from Egypt. It is made from river reeds. It is the material upon which our oldest copies of the Greek New Testament are written.

**Parallel passages.** They are part of the concept that all of the Bible is God-given and, therefore, is its own best interpreter and balancer of paradoxical truths. This is also helpful when one is attempting to interpret an unclear or ambiguous passage. They also help one find the clearest passage on a given subject as well as all other Scriptural aspects of a given subject.

**Paraphrase.** This is the name of a theory of Bible translation. Bible translation can be viewed as a continuum from "word to word" correspondence, where an English word must be supplied for every Hebrew or Greek word to a "paraphrase" where only the thought is translated with less regard to the original wording or phrasing. In between these two theories is "the dynamic equivalent" which attempts to take serious the original text, but translates it in modern grammatical forms and idioms. A really good discussion of these various theories of translations is found in Fee and Stuart's *How to Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, p. 35.

**Paragraph.** This is the basic interpretive literary unit in prose. It contains one central thought and its development. If we stay with its major thrust we will not major on minors or miss the original author's intent.

**Parochialism.** This relates to biases which are locked into a local theological/cultural setting. It does not recognize the transcultural nature of biblical truth or its application.

**Paradox.** This refers to those truths which seem to be contradictory, yet both are true, although in tension with each other. They frame truth by presenting it from opposite sides. Much biblical truth is presented in paradoxical (or dialectical) pairs. Biblical truths are not isolated stars, but are constellations made up of the pattern of stars.

**Plato.** He was one of the philosophers of ancient Greece. His philosophy greatly influenced the early church through the scholars of Alexandria, Egypt, and later, Augustine. He posited that everything on earth was illusionary and a mere copy of a spiritual archetype. Theologians later equated Plato's "forms/ideas" with the spiritual realm.

**Presupposition.** This refers to our preconceived understanding of a matter. Often we form opinions or judgments about issues before we approach the Scriptures themselves. This predisposition is also known as a bias, an *a priori* position, an assumption or a preunderstanding.

**Proof-texting.** This is the practice of interpreting Scripture by quoting a verse without regard for its immediate context or larger context in its literary unit. This removes the verses from the original author's intent and usually involves the attempt to prove a personal opinion while asserting biblical authority.

**Rabbinical Judaism.** This stage of the life of the Jewish people began in Babylonian Exile (586-538 b.c.). As the influence of the Priests and the Temple was removed, local synagogues became the focus of Jewish life. These local centers of Jewish culture, fellowship, worship and Bible study became the focus of the national religious life. In Jesus' day this "religion of the scribes" was parallel to that of the priests. At the fall of Jerusalem in a.d. 70, the scribal form, dominated by the Pharisees, controlled the direction of Jewish religious life. It is characterized by a practical, legalistic interpretation of the Torah as explained in the oral tradition (Talmud).

**Revelation.** This is the name given to the concept that God has spoken to mankind. The full concept is usually expressed by three terms: (1) revelation-God has acted in human history; (2) inspiration-He has given the proper interpretation of His acts and their meaning to certain chosen men to record for mankind; and (3) illumination-He has given His Spirit to help mankind understand His self-disclosure.

**Semantic field.** This refers to the total range of meanings associated with a word. It is basically the different connotations a word has in different contexts.

**Septuagint.** This is the name given to the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament. Tradition says that it was written in seventy days by seventy Jewish scholars for the library of Alexandria, Egypt. The traditional date is around 250 **b.c.** (in reality it possibly took over one hundred years to complete). This translation is significant because (1) it gives us an ancient text to compare with the Masoretic Hebrew text; (2) it shows us the state of Jewish interpretation in the third and second century b.c.; (3) it gives us the Jewish Messianic understanding before the rejection of Jesus. Its abbreviation is "LXX."

**Sinaiticus.** This is a Greek manuscript of the fourth century a.d. It was found by the German scholar, Tischendorf, at St. Catherine's monastery on Jebel Musa, the traditional site of Mt. Sinai. This manuscript is designated by the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet called "*aleph*" [א]. It contains both the Old and the entire New Testaments. It is one of our most ancient uncial MSS.

**Spiritualizing.** This term is synonymous with allegorizing in the sense that it removes the historical and literary context of a passage and interprets it on the basis of other criteria.

**Synonymous.** This refers to terms with exact or very similar meanings (although in reality no two words have a complete semantic overlap). They are so closely related that they can replace each other in a sentence without loss of meaning. It is also used to designate one of the three forms of Hebrew poetic parallelism. In this sense it refers to two lines of poetry that express the same truth (cf. Ps. 103:3).

**Syntax.** This is a Greek term which refers to the structure of a sentence. It relates to the ways parts of a sentence are put together to make a complete thought.

**Synthetical.** This is one of the three terms that relates to types of Hebrew poetry. This term speaks of lines of poetry which build on one another in a cumulative sense, sometimes called "climatic" (cf. Ps. 19:7-9).

**Systematic theology.** This is a stage of interpretation which tries to relate the truths of the Bible in a unified and rational manner. It is a logical, rather than mere historical, presentation of Christian

theology by categories (God, man, sin, salvation, etc.).

**Talmud.** This is the title for the codification of the Jewish Oral Tradition. The Jews believe it was given orally by God to Moses on Mt. Sinai. In reality it appears to be the collective wisdom of the Jewish teachers through the years. There are two different written versions of the Talmud: the Babylonian and the shorter, unfinished Palestinian.

**Textual criticism.** This is the study of the manuscripts of the Bible. Textual criticism is necessary because no originals exist and the copies differ from each other. It attempts to explain the variations and arrive (as close as possible) to the original wording of the autographs of the Old and New Testaments. It is often called "lower criticism."

**Textus Receptus.** This designation developed into Elzevir's edition of the Greek NT in 1633 a.d. Basically it is a form of the Greek NT that was produced from a few late Greek manuscripts and Latin versions of Erasmus (1510-1535), Stephanus (1546-1559) and Elzevir (1624-1678). In *An Introduction to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament*, p. 27, A. T. Robertson says "the Byzantine text is practically the Textus Receptus." The Byzantine text is the least valuable of the three families of early Greek manuscripts (Western, Alexandrian and Byzantine). It contains the accumulation errors of centuries of hand-copied texts. However, A.T. Robertson also says "the Textus Receptus has preserved for us a substantially accurate text" (p. 21). This Greek manuscript tradition (especially Erasmus' third edition of 1522) forms the basis of the King James Version of a.d. 1611.

**Torah.** This is the Hebrew term for "teaching." It came to be the official title for the writings of Moses (Genesis through Deuteronomy). It is, for the Jews, the most authoritative division of the Hebrew canon.

**Typological.** This is a specialized type of interpretation. Usually it involves New Testament truth found in Old Testament passages by means of an analogical symbol. This category of hermeneutics was a major element of the Alexandrian method. Because of the abuse of this type of interpretation, one should limit its use to specific examples recorded in the New Testament.

**Vaticanus.** This is the Greek manuscript of the fourth century a.d. It was found in the Vatican's library. It originally contained all the Old Testament, Apocrypha and New Testament. However, some parts were lost (Genesis, Psalms, Hebrews, the Pastorals, Philemon and Revelation). It is a very helpful manuscript in determining the original wording of the autographs. It is designated by a capital "B."

**Vulgate.** This is the name of Jerome's Latin translation of the Bible. It became the basic or "common" translation for the Roman Catholic Church. It was done in the a.d. 380's.

**Wisdom literature.** This was a genre of literature common in the ancient near east (and modern world). It basically was an attempt to instruct a new generation on guidelines for successful living through poetry, proverb, or essay. It was addressed more to the individual than to corporate society. It did not use allusions to history but was based on life experiences and observation. In the Bible, Job through Song of Songs assumed the presence and worship of YHWH, but this religious world view is not explicit in every human experience every time.

As a genre it stated general truths. However, this genre cannot be used in every specific situation. These are general statements that do not always apply to every individual situation.

These sages dared to ask the hard questions of life. Often they challenged traditional religious views (Job and Ecclesiastes). They form a balance and tension to the easy answers about life's tragedies.

**World picture and worldview.** These are companion terms. They are both philosophical concepts related to creation. The term "world picture" refers to "the how" of creation while "worldview" relates to "the Who." These terms are relevant to the interpretation that Genesis 1-2 deals primarily with the



Who, not the how, of creation.

**YHWH.** This is the Covenant name for God in the Old Testament. It is defined in Exod. 3:14. It is the causative form of the Hebrew term "to be." The Jews were afraid to pronounce the name, lest they take it in vain; therefore, they substituted the Hebrew term *Adonai*, "lord." This is how this covenant name is translated in English.

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# DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

I do not particularly care for statements of faith or creeds. I prefer to affirm the Bible itself. However, I realize that a statement of faith will provide those who are unfamiliar with me a way to evaluate my doctrinal perspective. In our day of so much theological error and deception, the following brief summary of my theology is offered.

1. The Bible, both the Old and New Testament, is the inspired, infallible, authoritative, eternal Word of God. It is the self-revelation of God recorded by men under supernatural leadership. It is our only source of clear truth about God and His purposes. It is also the only source of faith and practice for His church.
2. There is only one eternal, creator, redeemer God. He is the creator of all things, visible and invisible. He has revealed Himself as loving and caring although He is also fair and just. He has revealed Himself in three distinct persons: Father, Son and Spirit, truly separate and yet the same in essence.
3. God is actively in control of His world. There is both an eternal plan for His creation that is unalterable and an individually focused one that allows human free will. Nothing happens without God's knowledge and permission, yet He allows individual choices both among angels and humans. Jesus is the Father's Elect Man and all are potentially elect in Him. God's foreknowledge of events does not reduce humans to a determined pre-written script. All of us are responsible for our thoughts and deeds.
4. Mankind, though created in God's image and free from sin, chose to rebel against God. Although tempted by a supernatural agent, Adam and Eve were responsible for their willful self-centeredness. Their rebellion has affected humanity and creation. We are all in need of God's mercy and grace both for our corporate condition in Adam and our individual volitional rebellion.
5. God has provided a means of forgiveness and restoration for fallen humanity. Jesus Christ, God's unique son, became a man, lived a sinless life and by means of his substitutionary death, paid the penalty for mankind's sin. He is the only way to restoration and fellowship with God. There is no other means of salvation except through faith in His finished work.
6. Each of us must personally receive God's offer of forgiveness and restoration in Jesus. This is accomplished by means of volitional trust in God's promises through Jesus and a willful turning from known sin.
7. All of us are fully forgiven and restored based upon our trust in Christ and repentance from sin. However, the evidence for this new relationship is seen in a changed, and changing, life. The goal of God for humanity is not only heaven someday, but Christlikeness now. Those who are truly redeemed, though occasionally sinning, will continue in faith and repentance throughout their lives.
8. The Holy Spirit is "the other Jesus." He is present in the world to lead the lost to Christ and develop Christlikeness in the saved. The gifts of the Spirit are given at salvation. They are the life and ministry of Jesus divided among His body, the Church. The gifts which are basically the attitudes and motives of Jesus need to be motivated by the fruit of the Spirit. The Spirit is active in our day as He was in the biblical times.
9. The Father has made the resurrected Jesus Christ the Judge of all things. He will return to earth to judge all mankind. Those who have trusted Jesus and whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life will receive their eternal glorified bodies at His return. They will be with Him forever. However, those who have refused to respond to God's truth will be separated eternally from the joys of fellowship with the Triune God. They will be condemned along with the Devil and his angels.

This is surely not complete or thorough but I hope it will give you the theological flavor of my heart. I like the statement:

"In essentials—unity, In peripherals—freedom, In all things—love.