

# PAUL'S FIRST LETTER TO THE CHURCH AT THESSALONICA

{*The city of Thessalonica was located in Macedonia on the site of the ancient city of Therma, having originally been established because of some hot springs. It was located in present day Greece along the Gulf of Salonika. The present day name of Thessalonica is Salonika. It was located along the important Egnatian Way. Because of its location along this highway and the Gulf of Salonika it was, and still remains an important commercial and strategic center. (In the city center one can see an arch from the days of the Paul that spans a small portion of the original Egnatian Way with deep ruts in the stone from the chariots.) It was a community of prominence, wealth and influence during the time of Paul. The believers of Thessalonica were concerned because some of their number had died and the question arose, 'Are they recipients of heaven since the end time had not come prior to their dying?'*}

## CHAPTER 1

### SALUTATION

<I Thessalonians 1:1>

<sup>1</sup> Paul, Silvanus, <An alternate form of the name Silas, which means "wooded". cf. Acts 15-17.> and Timothy <The name means, "honor of God".> to the Church of the Thessalonians who belong to God (*literally, in God*) the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace and [peace]<sup>1</sup> to you.

### THE THESSALONIANS' FAITH AND EXAM

<I Thessalonians 1:2-10>

<sup>2</sup> We give thanks to God continually for all of you as we mention you in our prayers. <sup>3</sup> We recall your work in carrying out an active faith and your labor of love along with your constant hope that rests in our Lord Jesus Christ before (*or, in the presence of*) our God and Father. <sup>4</sup> You are aware, my friends (*literally, brothers*), who are beloved by God, that it is God who has chosen you. <sup>5</sup> The Good News did not come to you solely in words but also with power along with the Holy Spirit and with a genuine conviction, for you know how we lived with you, <*as an example*> for your sakes (*or, you know the example for your sakes of our life among you*). <sup>6</sup> You followed our example (*or, imitators*) as well as the Lord's when, through the Holy Spirit you received the Word with joy, even though this was amid severe affliction. <sup>7</sup> Through this you became an example to all believers in Macedonia and Achaia. <*Macedonia was located in northern Greece and the country of Macedonia which formerly was a part of Yugoslavia. Achaia was a portion of central Greece.*> <sup>8</sup> The Lord's message went out from you not only to Macedonia and Achaia but, in fact, because of your faith it has spread out everywhere, so much so that we do not need to talk about it. <sup>9</sup> Everywhere people are talking about how you received us at the time of our visit and how you turned away from idols, to God, serving the living and true God <sup>10</sup> and awaiting with expectation for the return from heaven of God's Son whom He raised from the dead -- Jesus, who redeemed (*or, rescued, delivered*) us from the wrath of God which has come upon the world.

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1 {B} So: B, G, Psi some minuscules, Old Latin, Peshitta Syriac, Sahidic & Fayyumic Coptic, Armenian & Ethiopic. "peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (cf. II Thessalonians 1:2) D, 2127, one Old Latin & some Bohairic Coptic. "peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" Aleph, A, I, K, P & many minuscules. "peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ" 436. "peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ" Bohairic Coptic & some Ethiopic. The word order varies in the manuscript evidence.

## CHAPTER II PAUL'S MINISTRY IN THESSALONICA

<I Thessalonians 2:1-16>

<sup>1</sup> You, yourselves know, my friends (*literally, brothers*), that our visit to you did not prove to be useless (*or, in vain*). <sup>2</sup> As you were aware, we had experienced suffering and cruel treatment in Philippi <Located in present day northern Greece, east of Thessalonica along the Egnatian Way from Rome to Asia.> prior to our coming to you. <sup>3</sup> However, we were given courage by our God to tell the Good News to you, the Good News that does not rest on delusions, neither is it based on impure motives, nor is it based on fraud. <sup>4</sup> No. God directed us, (*or, entrusted us*) to speak the Good News. <sup>5</sup> Because of this we speak out, with no desire to ingratiate ourselves with people (*literally, men*) but rather to please God who tests our motives (*literally, our hearts*). <sup>6</sup> For, as you are aware, we did not come to you with words of flattery, nor any pretext of enriching ourselves -- God is our witness -- we did not seek human praise from you or from anyone else in spite of the fact that we could easily have made heavy demands on you as Christ's apostle (*or, basked in the dignity of being Christ's apostle*). <sup>7</sup> Instead of that we were as [mild mannered] <sup>2</sup> in your presence as a nursing mother who tenderly cares for her children. <sup>8</sup> In fact, we had such tender regard for you that we desired to share with you not only the Good News of God, but also our very own lives as well, because you had become very dear to us (*or, because we had learned to love you*). <sup>9</sup> You surely remember, my friends (*literally, brothers*), our labor and our toil, how we worked night and day, in order that we might not become a burden to any of you while we proclaimed (*literally, preached*) the Good News of God. <sup>10</sup> You are witnesses, as is God, concerning how our dealings with you who are believers were devout, just (*or upright*) and blameless. <sup>11</sup> You know that we treated each one of you as a father treats his own children, admonishing (*or, encouraging*) <sup>12</sup> and appealing to you to live your lives as those who are worthy of God who [invites] <sup>3</sup> you to share in His kingdom and His glory.

<sup>13</sup> It is for this reason that we constantly thank God because when you received the message of God which you heard from us you accepted (*literally, received, or, welcomed*) it not has a human message, but, as it truly is: God's Word which is at work in you who believe. <sup>14</sup> As for you, my friends (*literally, brothers*), follow the example of the churches of God in Christ Jesus who are in Judea, for you too have suffered the same suffering at the hands of your fellow countrymen as they did from the Jews <sup>15</sup> who killed both the Lord Jesus and [the prophets] <sup>4</sup> -- and who persecuted us. These persons (*literally, men*) are continually displeasing God and are opponents (*or, enemies*) of all of humanity, <sup>16</sup> seeking to prevent our preaching to the Gentiles in order that these Gentiles might be saved. In this way they continually fill up the measure of their sins and God's anger has at last overtaken them.

### PAUL'S DESIRE TO VISIT THE CHURCH AGAIN

<I Thessalonians 2:17-3:13>

<sup>17</sup> We, however, my friends (*literally, brothers*), when we are apart from you (*literally, made*

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2 {C} So: A, C in the second corrective hand, D in the third corrective hand, H, P, Psi in the third corrective hand, many minuscules, Peshitta & Harclean Syriac, Sahidic & Fayyumic Coptic & Armenian. "babes" or "infants" <i.e. those who are not speaking> P65, Aleph, B, C & D in the original hands, G, I, Psi in the original hand, 104 in the original hand, several other minuscules, Old Latin, Bohairic Coptic & Ethiopic.

3 {C} So: B, D, G, H, K, P, Psi, many minuscules, several Old Latin & Harclean Syriac (margin). "continually invites" Aleph, A, 104, 326, many Old Latin, Peshitta & Harclean Syriac, Sahidic, Bohairic & Fayyumic Coptic & Armenian.

4 {A} So: Aleph, A, B, D in the original hand, G, I, P, 0208, many minuscules, Old Latin, Sahidic, Bohairic & Fayyumic Coptic, Armenian & Ethiopic. "their own prophets" D in the third corrective hand, K, Psi, a number of minuscules, Harclean & Peshitta Syriac.

to be an orphan) even for a brief time, in person, not in the spirit (*literally, the heart*), have made more intense efforts with great longing to see you face to face. <sup>18</sup> Therefore we desired to come to you. I, Paul, indeed tried several times (*literally, more than once*) but Satan hindered us (*or, interfered with us*). <sup>19</sup> What else is our hope, our happiness, or the crown of achievement about which we can pride ourselves? Is it not you, yourselves, in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at the time of His coming? <sup>20</sup> Yes, you are our glory and our joy!

### CHAPTER III

<sup>1</sup> So when we could no longer stand it we decided to stay alone in Athens <*A leading city in Greece, then and now.*> <sup>2</sup> and that we would send Timothy who is our brother and [fellow worker on behalf of God, to proclaim the Good News of Christ] <sup>5</sup> to you so that you might be provided with strength and to encourage you in your faith <sup>3</sup> in order that none of you should waver (*or, be shaken, disturbed*) <*The Greek word "σάινω" would normally be used for a dog wagging his tail.*> because of these afflictions, for you, yourselves, know that it was for this purpose that we were appointed. <sup>4</sup> When we were with you we told you beforehand that we would soon be in trouble and this is exactly what has happened, as you are aware. <sup>5</sup> It is for this reason that I also, when I could no longer stand it, sent to make sure about your faith for fear that the Tempter might have tempted you and our labor might prove to have been useless.

<sup>6</sup> Now Timothy has returned from you to us and has brought us good news about your faith and love and how you continually hold us in loving remembrance and how you are yearning to see us just as we long to see you. <sup>7</sup> It is because of this, my friends (*literally, brothers*) that we, in our distress and affliction, have been comforted about you because of your faith. <sup>8</sup> Life is worthwhile for you are standing firm in the Lord! <sup>9</sup> How can we give adequate thanks to God for you and for all the joy we feel in the presence of God because of you? <sup>10</sup> Night and day we keep on praying earnestly that we might be able to again see your faces and repair (*or, mend, literally, make good*) whatever is deficient in your faith.

<sup>11</sup> May our God and Father Himself and our Lord Jesus guide our way to you! <sup>12</sup> May the Lord cause your love for one another and for all people to increase and overflow just as ours does for you. <sup>13</sup> In that way He will strengthen your hearts that they may be faultless and holy in the presence of our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus along with [His] <sup>6</sup> holy ones (*or, saints*). [Amen.] <sup>7</sup>

### CHAPTER IV

#### A LIFE PLEASING TO GOD

<I Thessalonians 4:1-12>

<sup>1</sup> Furthermore my friends (*literally, brothers*), we beg you, and urge you strongly (*literally, exhort*), in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ that just as you have learned from us concerning how you ought to live so as to please God; that is to say, this is the way you must continue to live (*or, so you must live*), intensifying your efforts even more. <sup>2</sup> You know the commands we gave you, by the authority (*or, instruction*) of the Lord Jesus. <sup>3</sup> It is the will of God that you be pure (*literally, holy*),

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5 {B} So: D in the original hand & 33. "fellow worker in the Good News of Christ" B & 1962. "those who are ministering (*or, are deacons of*) the Good News of Christ" some Old Latin. "those who are ministers of God and of the Good News of Christ" Aleph, A, P, Psi, several minuscules, Old Latin, Harclean Syriac, Sahidic, Bohairic & Fayyumic Coptic & Ethiopic. "those who minister and are fellow workers of God and the Good News of Christ" D in the third corrective hand, K, many minuscules & Peshitta Syriac. "our fellow workers and ministers of the Good News of God and fellow workers of Christ" Palestinian Syriac. "and fellow workers of the Good News of our God and the Father of Jesus Christ" Armenian.

6 {B} So: Aleph in the third corrective hand, B, D in the third corrective hand, G, K, Psi, many minuscules, Peshitta, Harclean & Palestinian Syriac, Sahidic Coptic & Armenian. In all other manuscripts the word is omitted.

7 {C} So: Aleph in the original hand, A, D in the original hand & minuscule 81 which is from the 6th Century.

that you abstain from fornication. <sup>4</sup> Each of you is to learn how to procure for himself a wife, in purity and honor, <Presumably a woman should know in like manner about procuring a husband.> <sup>5</sup> not in lustful passion as do the Gentiles who do not possess an understanding of God. <sup>6</sup> In this manner then, no one is to take advantage of his brother in business, nor exploit him, for the Lord is the one who punishes (*or, avenges*) in all such cases as we have already taught you and solemnly declared to you. <sup>7</sup> God did not call us to a life of uncleanness (*or, immorality*) but rather to a life of purity (*literally, holiness, consecration or sanctification.*) <sup>8</sup> Therefore: whoever rejects this rejects not persons (*literally, men*) but God who bestows His Holy Spirit into your hearts.

<sup>9</sup> It is not necessary to write to you about love toward our fellow believers for you have yourselves been taught by God to love one another. <sup>10</sup> You actually practice this by your love toward the fellow believers (*literally, brothers*) in all of Macedonia. <sup>11</sup> We urge you, my friends, to intensify your efforts. Make it your aim to lead a quiet life and to mind your own business, working with your hands as we recommended to you, <sup>12</sup> so that your conduct toward outsiders <*i.e. non-Christians*> might be honorable <*i.e. that people outside might admire your life and conduct*> and you will be able to live in independence.

### **THE LORD'S COMING**

<I Thessalonians 4:13-5:11>

<sup>13</sup> Note that we do not want you to be kept in ignorance about those who have fallen asleep (*or, died*) for fear that you will grieve (*or, mourn*) as those others who possess no hope. <sup>14</sup> If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, then in the same way also through Jesus, God will bring with Him those believers who have died. <*It might be translated, 'We do not want you to grieve as those who have no hope. Grieve as those who have hope for we believe that Jesus died and rose again.'*> <sup>15</sup> This is what we declare to you, based on the authority of the Lord's own word. Namely, that we who are alive and remain (*or, we who still remain alive*) until the Lord returns, will not possess any advantage (*or, will not take precedence*) over those who have already died (*literally, fallen asleep*). <sup>16</sup> When the Lord, Himself, descends from heaven with a loud command, with an Archangel's voice, with the trumpet of God and first of all those who have died in Christ will rise. <sup>17</sup> Afterwards we who are alive, who survive, will be snatched up in the clouds and together with them will meet the Lord in the air. As a result we will be with the Lord forever. <sup>18</sup> Therefore: keep on encouraging one another with these words!

### **CHAPTER V**

<sup>1</sup> My friends (*literally, brothers*), about the time periods and dates (*or, the precise moment*) it is not necessary to write anything to you. <sup>2</sup> You are yourselves perfectly aware that the Day of the Lord will come like a thief during the night. <sup>3</sup> Just when people are saying, "There is peace," "There is security," sudden destruction falls on them, as do the birth pangs on a pregnant woman. There is no escape. <sup>4</sup> However, you, my friends (*literally, brothers*), are not in darkness, causing that day to surprise you like a [thief]. <sup>5</sup> All of you are children (*literally, sons*) of the light and children (*or, sons*) of the day. We do not belong to either the night or the darkness. <sup>6</sup> Because of this let us not sleep, as do others <*i.e. those who do not believe*> but let us keep on being awake and somber (*or, on guard and composed*). <sup>7</sup> The sleepers sleep at night and those who get drunk are drunk at night. <sup>8</sup> Let us, however, because we are people of the daylight, then, be sober, clothing ourselves in the breastplate of faith and of love and wear the hope of salvation for a helmet. <sup>9</sup> God has not destined us

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<sup>8</sup> {A} So: Aleph, D, G, K, P, Psi, many minuscules, Old Latin, Peshitta & Harelean Syriac, Sahidic Coptic, Armenian & Ethiopic. "thieves" A, B, & Bohairic Coptic.

to incur His indignation (*or, to be the objects of His anger*) but to obtain salvation through our Lord, Jesus Christ, <sup>10</sup> who died for us so that we, whether we are awake or whether we are asleep, might share in His life (*or, live together with Him*). <sup>11</sup> Because this is the situation, encourage one another, build up one another, as you have, in fact, been doing.

### **FINAL EXHORTATIONS AND GREETINGS**

<I Thessalonians 5:12-28>

<sup>12</sup> We beg you now, my friends (*literally, brothers*), to give recognition to those who work among you, both your leaders in the Lord and those who give you good advice (*or, your leaders who give you good advice*). <sup>13</sup> Because of their work, hold them in highest possible esteem for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves (*or, Do not let anything destroy your personal relationships with each other as Christians.*) <sup>14</sup> We appeal to you, my friends (*literally, brothers*), warn the lazy, <*This is one of the consequences of being disorderly*> encourage those who are discouraged. Pay attention (*or, take an interest in*) those who are weak <*physically or in spirit, i.e. timid*>. Be patient with everyone! <sup>15</sup> See to it that no one repays evil for evil. Instead, always have it as your aim to be helpful to one another and to all people.

<sup>16</sup> Always be joyful! <sup>17</sup> Do not cease to pray! <sup>18</sup> Under all circumstances, be thankful. This is, after all, the will of God for you in Jesus Christ. <sup>19</sup> Do not stifle the activity of the Spirit! <sup>20</sup> Do not show contempt for prophetic revelations <sup>21</sup> but test them all and retain what is good. <sup>22</sup> [But] <sup>9</sup> you must have nothing to do with evil.

<sup>23</sup> May God Himself, the God of Peace, completely sanctify your entire being. May you be kept in such a manner that you will be without blame when our Lord Jesus Christ returns. <sup>24</sup> The One who calls you is faithful and will accomplish this.

<sup>25</sup> My friends (*literally, brothers*), pray for us [also]! <sup>10</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Greet all of the friends (*literally, brothers*) with a holy (*or, sacred*) kiss. <sup>27</sup> I solemnly charge you, in the name of the Lord to have this letter read to all the [holy] <sup>11</sup> brothers.

<sup>28</sup> The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. [Amen.] <sup>12</sup>

### **SUBSCRIPTION**

{*"To the Thessalonians, I" P30, Aleph, B in the original hand, Psi & 33. Minor variants occur in D, F & G. "To the Thessalonians, I, written from Athens" A, B in the first corrective hand, 0278, 1739 in the original hand, 1881 & the Majority Text. 1739 adds, "delivered by Timothy". "To the Thessalonians, I, written in Corinth by Paul, Silvanus (Silas) and Timothy" 81 & with variations, 230, 323, 365, 629, 1505 & 2464.*}

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9 {C} So: Aleph in the third corrective hand, B, D, G, K, P, Psi, many minuscules, Harclean Syriac, Sahidic Coptic & Ethiopic. Omitted by Aleph in the original hand, A, many minuscules, Peshitta & Palestinian Syriac, Bohairic Coptic & Armenian.

10 {C} So: P30, B, D in the original hand, many minuscules, Harclean & Palestinian Syriac, Sahidic Coptic & Armenian. Omitted by Aleph, A, D in the third corrective hand, G, K, P, Psi, many minuscules, Old Latin. Peshitta Syriac, Bohairic Coptic & Ethiopic.

11 {B} So: Aleph in the third corrective hand, A, K, P, Psi, some minuscules, Old Latin, Peshitta, Harclean & Palestinian Syriac, Bohairic Coptic, Armenian & Ethiopic (Pelll Platt). Omitted by Aleph in the original hand, B, D, G, minuscule 436, some Old Latin, Sahidic Coptic & Ethiopic (Rome).

12 {B} So: Aleph, A, D in the third corrective hand, K, P, Psi, many minuscules, Palestinian Syriac, Sahidic Coptic & Armenian. Omitted by B, D in the original hand, several minuscules, Old Latin, Peshitta & Harclean Syriac, Bohairic Coptic & Ethiopic.