

Abounding Grace Christian Church

The Second Coming Letters of Paul – Part 2

First Thessalonians

I. Introduction: Today we continue a new study through what are sometimes referred to as *“The Second Coming Letters of Paul.”* This refers to the two letters written to the Christians at Thessalonica. We begin with the first letter which is commonly referred to as First Thessalonians.

II. Exposition of Chapter One (Continued).

A. Verse 4 – “...knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God.”

1. “...beloved brethren...” – The word “beloved” means; “to have love for someone or something, based on sincere appreciation and high regard”¹ Most scholars seem to indicate that this is an expression of God’s love for them. Dr. Robert Utley translates this word as: “divinely loved ones.”² The Kenneth Wuest Translation is as follows:

“Since we know, brethren, that you who have always been loved by God and at the present time are the objects of His affection...”³

2. “...brethren” – Most modern translations render this, “brothers and sisters”. This is valid seeing the Greek word denotes the idea of “relative.”⁴ Dr. Thomas Constable writes:

“Characteristically Paul addressed his fellow Christians as brothers. He used this term (*adelphoi*) 15 times in this one brief epistle (1:4; 2:1, 9, 17; 3:7; 4:1, 10, 13; 5:1, 4, 12, 14, 25–27), and 7 times in 2 Thessalonians (1:3; 2:1, 13, 15; 3:1, 6, 13).

He did not claim superiority over them but recognized the equality of all the redeemed in the sight of their heavenly Father, as he taught elsewhere (e.g., 1 Cor. 12:14–27) and as the Lord taught (Matt. 23:9; etc.). Paul had come a long way from being a proud Pharisee to the place where he could consider Gentiles his equals before God.”⁵

3. “...your election by God.” – The word “election” means; “the act of picking out, choosing.”⁶ There are those who believe that this “choosing” is solely at the discretion of God and by His sovereignty He elects some people to be saved and others not to be. Unfortunately, this is a very popular belief which is part of the theology of “Calvinism.” The Bible teaches that mankind has free will and that God’s election, or choosing of individuals for salvation, is based on His foreknowledge of what their decision will be. (A great website for refuting Calvinism is [Soteriology101 - YouTube](#) with Dr. Leighton Flowers)

“Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied.” – I Peter 1:1-2

B. Verse 5 – “For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake.”

1. “...our gospel...” – The word “gospel” means; “to tell the good news,’ In a number of languages the expression ‘the gospel’ or ‘the good news’ must be rendered by a phrase, for example, ‘news that makes one happy’ or ‘information that causes one joy’...”⁷

2. “...did not come in word only, but also in power...” – This message is not just a message of “Good News”, it contains the power of God to change lives. The Greek word for “power” is the word “*dunamis*” and means; “strength power, ability; inherent power, power residing in a thing by virtue of its nature, or which a person or thing exerts and puts forth.” “power for performing miracles”

¹Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 292.

²Robert James Utley, *Paul’s First Letters: Galatians and I & II Thessalonians*, vol. Volume 11, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International, 1997), 79.

³Kenneth S. Wuest, *The New Testament: An Expanded Translation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1961), 1 Th 1:3–5.

⁴Louw and Nida, 124.

⁵Thomas L. Constable, “1 Thessalonians,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 691.

⁶Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Being Grimm’s Wilke’s Clavis Novi Testamenti* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House., 1977)

⁷Louw and Nida, 412.

3. Other Scriptures where Paul spoke of the Gospel and the Power of God – **Romans 1:16; I Corinthians 2:4; (Also see Hebrews 2:1-4).**

4. **“...and in the Holy Spirit...”** – The New Testament often relates the power of God to the Presence of the Holy Spirit - **Acts 1:8 ; Acts 10:38.**

“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” – Romans 15:13

a. When we share the Word of God, we always need the anointing (empowerment) of the Holy Spirit. He works within the hearts of the hearers, to bring conviction, comfort, and instruction. If the preacher only speaks, then it is a matter of **“word only”**, but when the Holy Spirit works through the Word, the power of God brings great results. There is a spiritual work of God’s Word that goes far beyond the basic educational value of learning the Bible.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ has power. It has power for miracles; power for wonderful signs from God; and best of all, it has the power to change minds, hearts, and lives.

5. **“...and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake.”** – The word **“assurance”** means; **“to be completely certain of the truth of something—‘to be absolutely sure, to be certain, complete certainty.’”**⁸ This is saying that Paul and his team preached the message with confidence and certainty. When we share the Gospel, if we’re uncertain of the truth we’re sharing, people can sense that. Remember when the people were **“...astonished at his (Jesus’) teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.” (Matthew 7:28-29).**

“For our [preaching of the] glad tidings (the Gospel) came to you not only in word, but also in [its own inherent] power and in the Holy Spirit and with great conviction and absolute certainty [on our part]. You know what kind of men we proved [ourselves] to be among you for your good.” – I Thessalonians 1:5 – Amplified Bible

C. Verse 6 – **“And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit,”**

1. **“...followers of us and of the Lord...”** – The word **“followers”** actually means **“to be an imitator.”** Paul exhorted believers to be imitators of him as he imitated Christ (**I Corinthians 4:16; 11:1**). He also said we’re to be **“...imitators of God, as dear children” (Ephesians 5:1)**. We’re also to imitate those who **“...through faith and patience inherit the promises” (Hebrews 6:12)**

2. **“...having received the word in much affliction...”** – Remember when Paul first went to Thessalonica there were unbelieving Jews who became envious and gathered together a mob who attacked the house of Jason. This brought about Paul and Silas escaping to go to Berea. (**Acts 17:1-10**).

3. **“...with joy of the Holy Spirit.”** – In the midst of trials and persecution, there a joy that comes from the Presence of the Holy Spirit that outweighs the difficulties we’re facing.

“For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”
Romans 14:17

a. Joy in the Holy Spirit is:

- 1) Is part of the Fruit of Spirit – **Galatians 5:22-23.**
- 2) Not dependent upon your circumstances.
- 3) Is a weapon against trials and tribulation – **James 1:2-3; I Peter 4:12-14.**

⁸Louw and Nida, 370.