

CHAPTER 2

INTRODUCTION TO 1 THESSALONIANS 2

The apostle in this chapter gives a further account of his ministry among the Thessalonians, of the nature, manner, and success of it, and of his regard to them, and conduct and conversation when with them; and commends their readiness in receiving the Gospel, and excuses his present absence from them. He appeals to them themselves for the truth of it, that his entrance to them, or preaching among them, was not in vain and without success, ([1 Thessalonians 2:1](#)) that it was with all boldness and intrepidity of mind, notwithstanding what he had suffered before for it, ([1 Thessalonians 2:2](#)) and with all integrity and faithfulness to the trust reposed in him by the Lord, without deceit and guile, or seeking to please men, but God the searcher of hearts, who had committed this trust unto him, ([1 Thessalonians 2:3,4](#)) and that neither then, nor at any other time, he had used flattery, or showed covetousness; which he calls God to witness, ([1 Thessalonians 2:5](#)) nor of them or others sought glory and honour, even that which was due unto him by virtue of his office, ([1 Thessalonians 2:6](#)) but had showed all gentleness, humanity, and, affection; which he illustrates by the simile of a nurse cherishing her children ([1 Thessalonians 2:7](#)) and by the willingness he showed not only to preach the Gospel to them, but to lay down his life for them, had it been necessary; so great was his affection for them, ([1 Thessalonians 2:8](#)) and, as a proof of this, he puts them in mind of his labours, both in preaching the word, and in working with his own hands; because he would not be burdensome and chargeable to them, ([1 Thessalonians 2:9](#)) and as for his conversation among them, he appeals both to God and them, how holy, just, and unblemished it was, ([1 Thessalonians 2:10](#)) and reminds them of his tenderness, diligence, and faithfulness, in exhorting, comforting, and charging them, particularly to walk worthy of God; since he had called them to his kingdom and glory, ([1 Thessalonians 2:11,12](#)) and then he expresses his thankfulness to God for their reception of the worth of the Gospel; not as an human invention, but as of God, which wrought effectually in them, ([1 Thessalonians 2:13](#)) the evidence of which were partly their imitation of the churches of Christ in Judea, in doctrine and

practice; and partly their suffering the same things they did, of the Jews, (^{<S124>}1 Thessalonians 2:14) who are described by their ill usage of, and cruelty to, Christ, their own prophets, and his apostles, by their not pleasing God, and by their opposition to men; an instance of which is given in prohibiting the apostles to preach to the Gentiles, whose end in so doing with respect to the Gentiles, was that they might not be saved; but God's end in suffering them so to do, was with respect to them that they might fill up their iniquity, and so entire wrath and ruin come upon them, as had been foretold, (^{<S125>}1 Thessalonians 2:15,16) and then the apostle concludes the chapter, by expressing his affectionate concern in parting with them, which was not in heart but in body; by declaring his earnest desire and endeavour to see them again; and by observing to them the reason he had not and could not come unto them, because Satan hindered him, (^{<S127>}1 Thessalonians 2:17,18) the cause of his being so desirous to see them, was their being his hope, joy, glory, and crown of rejoicing, both now and hereafter, (^{<S129>}1 Thessalonians 2:19,20).

Ver. 1. *For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you,* etc.] The apostle having observed in (^{<S109>}1 Thessalonians 1:9) that those persons to whom the report of the Gospel being preached at Thessalonica, and the success of it there was made, showed everywhere both what manner of entrance he and his fellow ministers had in that place, and the conversion of many souls there; he enlarges upon the latter, and here reassumes the former, and appeals to the Thessalonians themselves, who must know full well, and better than others, what an entrance it was; and which is to be understood not merely of a corporeal entrance into their city and synagogue, but of their coming among them, by the preaching of the Gospel, as the ministers of the word and ambassadors of Christ:

that it was not in vain; it was not a vain show with outward pomp and splendour, as the public entrances of ambassadors into cities usually are; but with great meanness, poverty, reproach, and persecution, having been lately beaten and ill used at Philippi; nor was it with great swelling words of vanity, with the enticing words of man's wisdom, to tickle the ear, please the fancy, and work upon the passions of natural men, in which manner the false teachers came: but the apostle came not with deceit and guile, with flattering words or a cloak of covetousness, or with a view to vain glory and worldly advantage; nor was the message they came with, from the King of kings, a vain, light, empty, and trifling one; but solid and substantial, and of the greatest importance; the doctrine they taught was

not comparable to chaff and wind; it was not corrupt philosophy and vain deceit, the traditions and commandments of men, but sound doctrine, the wholesome words of our Lord Jesus Christ: nor was it fruitless and without effect; the word did not return void and empty; but was powerful and efficacious to the conversion of many souls. Christ was with them both to assist them in their ministry, and to bless it to the salvation of men; nor was their coming to Thessalonica an human scheme, a rash enterprise, engaged in on their own heads, on a slight and empty foundation; but upon good and solid grounds, by divine direction and counsel; (see ~~4416~~ Acts 16:9,10).

Ver. 2. *But even after that we had suffered before*, etc.] Before they came to Thessalonica, which they would not have done, had their ministry been a light and empty one in itself, and unprofitable to others; and especially had this been the case, they would never have rashly engaged in it again, and exposed themselves to fresh sufferings and dangers, as they did:

and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi; being beaten with many stripes, and put into prison, and their feet made fast in the stocks, at the instigation of the masters of the damsel that had a spirit of divination, by whom they got much gain, and which Paul dispossessed; (see ~~4416~~ Acts 16:16-24)

we were bold in our God to speak unto you the Gospel of God with much contention: and which still made it more manifestly appear, that the errand they came upon was a matter of importance, and that they did not proceed on a slight foundation: what they spoke was “the Gospel”, salvation by Christ, and not by the works of the law; the pure Gospel, and not a mixed one, free from the mixture of all human doctrines and inventions of men, without any adulteration and inconsistency; the whole of the Gospel, and not a part of it only; they declared the whole counsel of God, and kept back nothing that might be profitable: and this is styled the Gospel of God, to distinguish it from the Gospel of men, or that which the false teachers taught, and which was called the Gospel, though it was not so; and to express the excellency of it, from the author of it, who is God, it being the produce of his wisdom and grace; and from the matter of it, it containing the good will of God to men, setting forth the grace of God in election, redemption, justification, pardon, adoption, regeneration, and glorification, and expressing things relating to the kingdom of God, a meetness for it, and a right unto it; and it being so called shows it to be something divine, a

message sent from God to sinful men; and gives a reason why the apostles were so bold to speak it, because it was not of men, but God. The Syriac version renders it the “Gospel of Christ”; (see ~~<4016>~~Romans 1:16) and it being so, they “were bold to speak it”; or they spoke it both with liberty of mind, the Spirit of God being with them, and with freedom of speech, a door of utterance being opened for them; as also with great courage and intrepidity, notwithstanding what they had suffered before, and the ill treatment they had met with at Philippi; and though they knew that the Gospel they spoke was contrary to the Jews, was a stumblingblock to them, and they had an inveterate prejudice against it; and was foolishness to the Greeks, and was derided by them, and they were sure to meet with reproach and persecution on account of it: yet they boldly and faithfully preached it, fearing not the face of men, nor their revilings: though it was

with much contention; referring to the tumult raised by the baser sort, who, instigated by others, assaulted Jason and the brethren, where the apostles were, (~~<4016>~~Acts 18:5,6) or to the disputes which they had with the unbelieving Jews, who contradicted and blasphemed what they said; or to the division the Gospel made, as through the corruption of nature it makes wherever it comes, between the nearest relations and friends, some being for it, and others against it; or this may be expressive of the zeal with which the apostles preached, who earnestly contended for it, as persons in a combat or agony; they fought the good fight of faith valiantly, they endured hardness as good soldiers of Christ, and gave not way to the enemy, no, not for an hour: and all this was “in our God”; or “by the confidence” of our God, as the Syriac version renders it; trusting in him and relying upon him, being assisted by his grace, and strengthened by his power, and receiving much encouragement from a view of him as a covenant God; faith in God as a covenant God, will make a man bold in his cause; (see ~~<2017>~~Daniel 3:17).

Ver. 3. *For our exhortation*, etc.] Or “consolation”; for the ministry of the Gospel, which is here meant, consists of doctrines full of comfort to distressed minds, such as free justification by the righteousness of Christ, full pardon by his blood, and complete satisfaction by his sacrifice; as well as of exhortations to the exercise of grace and discharge of duty: and this was

not of deceit; or “error”, was not “fallacious”, as the Ethiopic version renders it; it consisted of nothing but truth, it was the word of truth, and

the truth as it is in Jesus; nor did it proceed from any intention to deceive and impose on persons; it was no imposture:

nor of uncleanness; it did not spring from any impure affection for any sin, for popular applause, or worldly interest; nor did the ministers of it connive at uncleanness in others, or practise it themselves, as did the false teachers; but bore their testimony against it, both by word and example, and taught no doctrine that encouraged to it; but, on the contrary, the doctrine which is according to godliness, and which teaches men to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts:

nor in guile; as there was no deceitful design in the ministry of the word, nor anything impure and immoral in the matter of it; so there was no artifice used in the dispensing of it; it was plain and simple, without any colour and guile, without the hidden things of dishonesty, without craftiness and handling the word deceitfully; and this is a reason why the apostles preached it with so much freedom and boldness, because there was nothing false, impure, or artful in it.

Ver. 4. *But as we were allowed of God*, etc.] Or, “approved of God”; not that there were any previous fitness and worthiness in them to be ministers of the word; but such was the good will and pleasure of God, that he from all eternity chose and appointed them to this work; and in his own time by his grace called them to it, and by his gifts qualified them for it, who otherwise were unworthy of it, and insufficient for it:

to be put in trust with the Gospel; which is of great worth and value, a rich treasure, and of the last importance; which to be trusted with is a very great honour; and the discharge of such a trust requires great faithfulness, and which the apostles had:

even so we speak; the Gospel as delivered to them, both as to matter and manner; neither taking from it nor adding to it, nor mixing it with anything of their own, nor disguising it with any artifice:

not as pleasing men; to gain favour and affection, esteem, applause, and honour from them; to escape reproach and persecution, and obtain worldly advantages by dropping, concealing, or blending of truths to make them more agreeable to the taste of natural men:

but God, which trieth our hearts; studying to approve themselves to God, whose Gospel was committed to them, from whom they received gifts to

preach it, and to whom they were accountable for all; and who being the searcher of the hearts, and the trier of the reins of the children of men, knows the intentions and designs of men, and the springs of all actions; and sees through all artifices, and from whom nothing can be hidden, and who will, in his own time, bring to light the hidden things of darkness; under a sense of which faithful ministers act, as of sincerity, and as in the sight of an omniscient God.

Ver. 5. *For neither at any time used we flattering words,* etc.] To introduce them into the affections, and gain the esteem and good will of men; they did not in their ministry deliver such things as flattered men with a good opinion of themselves: they did not preach up the purity of human nature, but on the contrary the doctrine of original sin, the imputation of Adam's transgression to his posterity, and the corruption of all human nature; they asserted the universal pollution of it, of all men, and of all the powers and faculties of their souls, that they are all under the power and dominion of sin, are involved in the guilt of it, and are all guilty before God, and liable to everlasting wrath and punishment; and that unless they repented of their sins and believed in Christ, they would perish eternally; thus they dealt roundly and freely with men's consciences, and plainly, openly, and faithfully told them their case as it was: nor did they cry up the power of man's free will, which would have been grateful to Jews and Gentiles; but they declared the reverse, they asserted the weakness and impotency of man, to anything that is spiritually good; and represented him as a weak and strengthless creature, and unable to do anything, even to think a good thought of himself; and ascribed all that a man is, or has, or does, that is good, to the grace and power of God, who works in him both to will and to do: nor did they plead for the sufficiency of man's righteousness to justify him before God, a doctrine very pleasing to human nature; but, on the contrary, they gave out that there was none righteous, no, not one of the sons of Adam, in and of themselves, or by virtue of any righteousness of their own; so far from it that they were full of all unrighteousness, and were not capable of working out a righteousness, or of attaining to the righteousness of the law; that what they did pretend to was not a justifying righteousness, and would give no right and title to eternal glory; and that the righteousness of Christ was the only righteousness, by which a man could be justified from all things, and in which he could be found safe. They did not blend and mix their doctrine to suit with the tastes of different men, but with all sincerity and plainness

preached the truth, as it is in Jesus; they did not connive at the sins of men, cry Peace, Peace, when there was none, or sow pillows under their armholes, or promise them life, though they should not return from their wicked way; but they with great freedom inveighed against the sins of men, and exhorted them to repentance and reformation, as well as to faith in Christ for pardon and righteousness; nor did they wink at the sins of professors, or of one another, the Apostle Paul withstood Peter to the face because he was to be blamed; and when they praised men for their gifts and graces, and the exercise of them, they took care to ascribe them to the grace of God, and give him the glory, and prevent men from boasting in themselves; in short, they acted the reverse of the false teachers, who had men's persons in admiration because of advantage, and by good words and fair speeches deceived the hearts of the simple; but so did not the apostles of Christ, no, never, not "at any time": when they first came to Thessalonica during their stay there, either in public or in private: and though this was true of any other time and place, yet here must be confined to this, since the apostle appeals to this church for the truth of what he said,

as ye know; for flattering words may be discerned; a flatterer is known by his words; though in general such is the weakness of human nature, that men love to be flattered, though they know they are:

nor a cloak of covetousness; or "an occasion of" it, they did not take the opportunity or advantage by the ministry of the word, to indulge a covetous disposition, or to amass wealth and riches to themselves; or an "excuse" for covetousness, which covetous men are never at a loss to make, always pretending one thing or another to hide and cover their evil; but the apostles made no excuses, nor used any cloak, nor needed any to cover their covetousness, because they had not the thing; they did not pretend one thing and mean another; they did not, as the false apostles did, pretend to serve Christ, preach his Gospel, seek the glory of God and the good of souls, and mean themselves, and design their own worldly advantage; they did not make these a "pretence" for covetousness, they sincerely served Christ, faithfully preached his Gospel, truly sought the glory of God, and were heartily concerned for the good of souls without any mercenary and selfish views; for the truth of which they could appeal to the heart searching and rein-trying God, as the apostle here does, saying,

God is witness; which is properly an oath, a solemn appeal to God; for since covetousness is an internal and secret sin, and may be so coloured and disguised as not easily to be discerned, as flattering words may, the apostle therefore calls God to witness the truth of what he had said.

Ver. 6. *Nor of men sought we glory*, etc.] Honour, esteem, and popular applause; for though there is an honour that is due to the faithful ministers of the word, who are highly to be esteemed for their works' sake, and as ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God; and especially there was an honour and glory that belonged to the apostles of Christ as such, who were set in the highest office and place in the church; yet they did not seek after it as the Pharisees and false teachers did, who received honour one of another, and sought not that which comes from God only: but so did not the apostles; they took no steps this way to procure glory and esteem among men, but all the reverse; they preached doctrines which were not of men, nor according to men, nor agreeable to them; and these they delivered in a disagreeable way, not with enticing words of men's wisdom, they did not seek to please men, but spoke and did everything that rendered them mean and despicable in their eyes; so that they looked upon them as the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things: nor was this any disappointment to them, for to gain the favour of men was not their end and view; they did not seek for glory neither of the men of the world,

neither of you; the church at Thessalonica, and the inhabitants of that place:

nor yet of others; of other men, and churches elsewhere:

when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ: or “have used authority”, which was given them, though not for destruction, but for edification; put on a magisterial air, and made use of the apostolic rod; appeared with some severity and rigour, and so have commanded awe, respect, and reverence: or “have been in honour”; insisted upon being treated in an honourable way, as the apostles of Christ, his ambassadors, who were sent and came in his name, and represented his person; and therefore to be received as he himself; though the phrase may rather have regard to an honourable maintenance, as in (~~4711~~ 2 Corinthians 11:9) which as the apostles of Christ they might have required as their due, but they chose rather to relinquish their right, and labour with their own hands, that they might not be chargeable: and so “glory” in the former clause may mean the same, even great and glorious things for themselves, a

maintenance answerable to their high character and office, which they did not seek; but were content with a poor pittance, and such as they could get with their own hand labour; in which sense the phrase, “double honour”, seems to be used in (⁵⁴⁵⁷-1 Timothy 5:17) as appears by the reason given in the next verse.

Ver. 7. *But we were gentle among you*, etc.] Meek and humble, mild and moderate; not using severity, or carrying it in a haughty imperious manner; assuming power and dominion, lording it over God's heritage, and commanding persons to do homage and honour to them, and forcing themselves upon them, and obliging them to maintain them. The Vulgate Latin and Ethiopic versions, instead of “gentle”, read, “little children”; as the word signifies, by adding a letter to it, and expresses much the same as the other, that they were harmless and modest, and disinterested; and sought not themselves neither honour nor wealth, but the real good of others, and were kind and tender, and affectionate to them:

even as a nurse cherisheth her children: or “the children of her own self”; her own children, and so designs a nursing mother, one whose the children are, has bore them as well as nurses them, and therefore has the most tender concern for them; she lays them in her bosom, and hugs them in her arms, and so warms and cherishes them; gives them the breast, bears with their frowardness, condescends to do the meanest things for them; and that without any self-interest, from a pure parental affection for them: and such were the apostles to these Thessalonians; they were their spiritual parents, of whom they travailed in birth, till Christ was formed in them; they used them with the greatest kindness and tenderness; they fed them with the sincere milk of the word; they bore patiently all the slighting and ill treatment they met with; and condescended to men of low estates, and did them all the good offices they could, without any selfish views or sinister ends: a like simile is used by the Jews ^{f5}, who say,

“he that rises in the night to study in the law, the law makes known to him his offences; and not in a way of judgment, but **amak**, as a mother makes known to her son, “with gentle words”:]”

but the ministration of the Gospel is much more gentle.

Ver. 8. *So being affectionately desirous of you*, etc.] Not of theirs but them; not of glory from them, nor a maintenance by them, but of their spiritual and eternal welfare; were as fond of them as a nursing mother is of

her children, who, when absent from them but ever so little a while, longs to see them; (see ^{<S1P7>}1 Thessalonians 2:17) and (^{<S1P1>}1 Thessalonians 3:1,5-8),

we were willing: took the utmost pleasure, delight, and complacency:

to have imparted unto you, not the Gospel of God only; the sincere milk of the word, which they did freely, fully, and for their spiritual good and profit, without any regard to any advantage of their own:

but also our own souls, or “lives”; which is the highest expression and strongest proof of love that can be given; and respect is still had to the similitude of the nursing mother, who may be said to impart her blood, for such it her milk diversified, for the nourishment of her children: and such was the great concern of the apostles for the interest of Christ, the spread of the Gospel, and the good of souls, that their lives were not dear unto them, so that these ends might be answered: because ye were dear unto us; both because they were loved by God, redeemed by Christ, regenerated by the Spirit of Christ, and had the image of Christ stamped upon them; and also because that they were their spiritual children; and as children are dear to their parents, so were these to them, even to such a degree, as that, were there a necessity for it, they could freely have laid down their lives for them.

Ver. 9. *For ye remember brethren, our labour and travail*, etc.] The great pains they took, even to weariness. The Vulgate Latin version renders the last word, “weariness”; and the Arabic version, “anxiety”; and the Ethiopic version, “affliction”; it is to be understood both of corporeal and spiritual labour, working with their hands and preaching the Gospel; this could not but be remembered by them, since it was not a year ago they were with them:

for labouring night and day; at our handicraft, or “at the work of our hands”, as the Syriac version renders it; which they continually attended to, even night and day, when they were not preaching the Gospel, or disputing with the Jews, or praying and conversing with those that believed, or refreshing themselves with food and rest. The apostle's business was making of tents, (see Gill on “^{<48B>}Acts 18:3”),

because we would not be chargeable to any of you; neither to the whole body, nor to any single person; which shows that they did not seek their own ease and worldly interest; and proves what is before asserted, that

they did not use a cloak of covetousness, but chose to forego, and not insist on what they had a right to, lest the Gospel should be hindered or reproached:

we preached unto you the Gospel of God; freely and with great application and diligence; for this is the other part of their labour and travel; for the ministry of the word is a work, and a laborious one, when closely attended to; a preparation for it by prayer, reading, meditation, and much study, are wearisome and fatiguing; and to preach the word in season and out of season, with all longsuffering and doctrine, is very laborious; to which no man is sufficient of himself, and is a work which requires great faithfulness, application, and industry; and is oftentimes made the more heavy through the malice and opposition of enemies, and the weakness of friends.

Ver. 10. *Ye are witnesses, and God also*, etc.] Not so much to what goes before as to what follows after, relating to their holy walk and conversation among them, the more open part of which they were witness of; and for the more secret part God is appealed to, who is acquainted with the springs of actions, as well as with actions themselves:

how holily, and justly, and unblamably we behaved ourselves among you that believe. The Syriac version joins the last clause of the preceding verse with this, and reads the whole thus, “ye are witnesses, and God also, how purely and justly we preached unto you the Gospel of God, and how unblamable we were among all that believed”; referring the former part to the purity and integrity in which they preached the Gospel, and the latter to their unblemished conduct among the saints; but the whole of it refers to their conversation, which was holy, externally holy, arising from internal principles of holiness in their hearts, and free from that impurity and filthiness with which the false teachers were polluted; and confirms what is before said, that their exhortation was not of uncleanness: and it was likewise “just”, they were righteous in the sight of God through the justifying righteousness of Christ, and in consequence of this lived righteously before men, and were injurious to no man's person nor property: and their conversation was also “unblamable”; not that they were, without sin, and so without blame in themselves, or without the commission of sin by them, or that they passed without censure in the world, for they went through honour and dishonour, through good report and bad report, and had all manner of evil spoken of them falsely for Christ's name's sake; but by the grace of God, they had their conversation

among them that believed so, that there was nothing material to be alleged against them, or any just cause of blame to be laid either on their persons or their ministry; and which is mentioned for imitation.

Ver. 11. *As you know*, etc.] This is added to the end of the last verse in the Arabic version, and which begins this verse thus, “as one of you, and as a father comforting his sons, so we”, etc. but for what is said in the former verse, an appeal is made both to God and to the Thessalonians, so that there is no need of adding such a clause there; it properly stands here in connection with what follows,

how we exhorted; to flee from wrath to come, and to Christ for refuge; to look to, and believe in him, as the only Saviour of lost sinners; to perform the duties of religion, and to continue in the faith; to cleave to Christ, and walk on in him as they had received him, and to abide by the truths and ordinances of the Gospel they had embraced:

and comforted; under a sense of sin, with the soul comforting doctrines of free justification by the righteousness of Christ, of full pardon by his blood, and of a plenary satisfaction and atonement by his sacrifice; and under all their afflictions and persecutions for the sake of Christ, with exceeding great and precious promises of the presence, grace, and strength of Christ here, and glory hereafter:

and charged everyone of you; not only publicly, but privately, going from house to house; not in an austere and domineering way, but with the greatest tenderness, and yet faithfulness: even

as a father doth his children; not only in an authoritative, but in an affectionate way, and also with solid wisdom and judgment; for in such a relation, in a Spiritual sense, did the apostle and his fellow ministers stand in to them; (see ^{<4015>}1 Corinthians 4:15) and the substance of the charge is as follows:

Ver. 12. *That ye would walk worthy of God*, etc.] In imitation of him; not of his perfections, which are inimitable, but of his works; and these not of his power and wisdom, but those of kindness and beneficence, and of righteousness and holiness; and in conformity to his revealed will, which is good, perfect, and acceptable; and agreeably to his Gospel, that that may be adorned, and not blasphemed; and particularly, in a manner worthy of the calling wherewith saints are called by him: since it follows,

who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory; which instance of the grace of God carries in it many arguments, and lays many obligations on the persons interested in it, to walk in their lives and conversations worthy of God; which may be taken from the nature of this call, which is not a mere external one by the outward ministry of the word, but an internal and effectual one, by the powerful and efficacious grace of God; it is a call of persons out of darkness into light, and therefore it becomes them to walk as children of the light, and honestly, as in the daytime; and from a state of bondage to sin and Satan, unto liberty, and therefore ought not to walk after the dictates of corrupt nature, nor the suggestions of Satan, but after the Spirit of God, who is a spirit of liberty; and from fellowship with the world, and the men of it, to communion with Christ, and therefore should not walk as other Gentiles do, nor run with them in the same excess of riot; in short, such are called with an holy calling, and to holiness, and have in their effectual calling principles of holiness implanted in them, and therefore should be holy in all manner of conversation: moreover, arguments may be taken from the consideration of him that calls, God, who is a holy Being, and therefore as he that hath called them is holy, so should they be likewise; he is the God of all grace that has called them, and he has called them by his grace, and to special blessings of grace, and that according to his sovereign will and pleasure; and has called them the most unworthy, base, mean, and despicable, and not others, which greatly enhances the obligation to walk worthy of him: to which add, that he that calls is God that dwells on high in heaven, and changes not, and such is his call; hence it is styled the high calling of God, and the heavenly calling, and said to be without repentance; and therefore the saints should live and walk as pilgrims and strangers here, and be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord: likewise the consideration of what they are called to should engage them to a becoming walk, being called “to his kingdom”; to the kingdom of grace, which lies in righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, and which cannot be moved, and where they are kings and priests unto God; and unto a Gospel church state, and to all the privileges and immunities of it; and unto the kingdom of heaven, prepared by God for them from the foundation of the world, their Father’s free gift to them, of which they are born heirs apparent in regeneration, and have both a meetness for it, and a right unto it; and therefore ought to behave suitable to this high honour and dignity which belong unto them: and this latter sense is the rather to be chose, since it follows, “and glory”: or “to his glory”, as the Syriac, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions read; to the glory of

God, to the beholding of the glory of God through Christ, and the glory of Christ himself; and to a participation of that glory which God has provided, and is in the hands of Christ for them, where it is hid, who when he shall appear, they will appear with him in glory; which will be both upon their souls and bodies; and this will be an eternal glory, a glory that fades not away, and not like the glory of this world, which is transient, and soon passes away, but this will abide for ever; and therefore since the saints are called to the obtaining of this, it is a reason why their conversation should be in heaven now, and as becomes God and his Gospel.

Ver. 13. *For this cause also thank we God without ceasing,* etc.] As for their election of God, (^{<small>3104</small>}1 Thessalonians 1:4) so for their effectual calling by his grace, to his kingdom and glory, just now mentioned, as well as for their reception of the word of God as such, hereafter expressed; since their having it and receiving it, and the effectual operation of it in them, were owing to the goodness and grace of God, and therefore required a constant sense of the favour, and thankfulness, without ceasing, for it. The apostle having at large considered the manner of his and his fellow ministers' entrance among them without guile, flattery, covetousness, or any sinister view, and with all simplicity, integrity, labour, diligence, affection, and tenderness, returns to observe the reception their ministry met with, and the influence and effect it had upon them:

because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us; or “the word of hearing of God”, as the Vulgate Latin version from the Greek text literally renders it; that is, the Gospel which was preached by the apostles, and was heard and received by these Thessalonians: and it is called the word of God, because God is the author of it; it comes from him, and is ministered by his authority, and is a part of that written word which is given by his inspiration; and because his grace in choosing, redeeming, justifying, pardoning, adopting, regenerating, and giving eternal life to men, and the declaration of his will concerning saving them by his Son Jesus Christ, are the subject matter of it; and because he owns and blesses it, for the conversion and comfort of his people: and it may be called the word of hearing of God, because coming from him, and containing his will, and preached by his order, and succeeded by his power, hearing comes by it; it is divinely breathed by him; he speaks in it by his ministers, and he is heard of in it by his people; as he was by these believers, who heard his word both externally and internally; and received it into their understandings, so as to know it spiritually and experimentally; into their minds, not merely

notionally, and so as to assent to the truth of it, and give credit to it, but so as to believe in Christ revealed in it; and into their affections, in the love of it, and with joy in the Holy Ghost; they received it gladly, and with meekness and readiness, so that it became the ingrafted word, and brought forth fruit in them: the manner in which they received it follows,

ye received it not as the word of men: which is often fallacious and deceitful, at least dubious and uncertain, and not to be depended on; nor did they receive it as the words of wise men are received, and because it was clothed with the wisdom, eloquence, and oratory of men, for it was destitute of these; nor upon the credit and authority of men, no, not of the apostles themselves:

but as it is in truth the word of God: it appearing to be agreeably to the perfections of his nature, and to the Scriptures of truth, and it bearing his impress and divine authority, they received it with much assurance and certainty, as infallible truth; and which was inviolably to be adhered to, without any alteration, without adding to it or taking from it; and to be had and retained in the greatest esteem and reverence, and never to be departed from: and that they received it in this manner, appears from its operation in them,

which effectually worketh also in you that believe: the Vulgate Latin version reads, “who worketh”; referring it to God, as indeed it may be referred to him, as well as to his word; but the sense is much the same, for God works by and with his word, and his word only effectually works when it comes in power; or is the power of God unto salvation to them that believe; and when it does come with a divine commission and power, it effectually works to the quickening of dead sinners, the enlightening of dark minds, the unstopping of deaf ears, the softening of hard hearts, producing faith which works by love, encouraging hope, delivering from the bondage of sin, Satan, and the law, and comforting and establishing the hearts of the saints under all afflictions, trials, and persecutions.

Ver. 14. *For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God,* etc.]

As of the Lord and of the apostle, (³⁰⁰⁶1 Thessalonians 1:6) so of the churches of God that were before them, who were gathered out of the world by the grace of God; and who were united in the fear of God, and assembled together for his worship, to bear a testimony to his truth and ordinances, and for the glory of his name: these they followed in the faith and order of the Gospel, and “became like” them, as the Syriac and

Ethiopic versions render the word; or “equal” to them, were upon an equal foot with them, as the Arabic; that is, in suffering reproach and persecution for the Gospel, as the latter part of the verse shows; and their bearing these with patience, courage, and constancy, was a proof that the word of God had a place, and wrought effectually in them; otherwise they would never have endured such things as they did, and as other churches did:

which in Judea are in Christ Jesus; for besides the church at Jerusalem, there were many churches in Judea and Galilee; (see ^{<443E>}Acts 9:31 ^{<812>}Galatians 1:22) which shows that the primitive churches were not national, but congregational: and these were in Christ Jesus; “in the faith” of Jesus Christ, as the Arabic version renders it; which distinguishes them from the synagogues, or congregations of the Jews, which did not believe in Christ; (see Gill on “^{<510E>}1 Thessalonians 1:1”).

For ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen; the inhabitants of Thessalonica, the baser sort of them, who were stirred up by the unbelieving Jews of that place, to make an uproar in the city, and assault the house of Jason, in order to seize upon the apostles; (see ^{<447E>}Acts 17:6).

Even as they have of the Jews; in like manner as the churches of Judea suffered by the Jews their countrymen; (see ^{<448E>}Acts 8:1,3) (^{<512E>}Hebrews 10:32-34).

Ver. 15. *Who both killed the Lord Jesus*, etc.] For though Pilate condemned him to death, and the Roman soldiers executed the sentence, yet it was through the malice and envy of the Jews that he was delivered to him, who brought charges against him, and insisted upon the crucifixion of him; and who are therefore said to have taken him with wicked hands, and crucified and slain him; and to have killed the Prince of life, and to have been the betrayers and murderers of him; and therefore it is no wonder that such persons should persecute the followers of Christ, whether in Judea or elsewhere:

and their own prophets; whom God sent unto them; these they not only mocked and misused, and persecuted, but many of them they put to death, as Isaiah and others; and though this was done by their fathers, yet the present generation were the children of them that killed the prophets; and showed themselves to be of the same principles, and by their practices approved of what they had done: hence our Lord addresses the city of

Jerusalem thus, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killest the prophets”, (^{<423>}Matthew 23:31,34,37). The Vulgate Latin and Ethiopic versions leave out the phrase “their own”, and so does the Alexandrian copy; but it stands in the Syriac and Arabic versions, and is rightly retained, it having an emphasis in it; these prophets being of their own nation, born among them, and raised up in the midst of them, and sent unto them particularly, and yet were so used; and therefore it need not seem strange that they should treat in an ill manner persons of a lower character, that did not agree with them; the consideration of which serves to support under reproach and persecution; (see ^{<4152>}Matthew 5:12).

And have persecuted us; the apostles of Christ; have drove us out of our own country, and pursued us from place to place, and caused us to flee from one city to another:

and they please not God: though they reckoned themselves his chosen people, the favourites of heaven, and whom God delighted in; but neither their persons nor their actions were pleasing to him, their carnal minds being enmity to him, to his law and to his Gospel; and they in the flesh, or in an unregenerate estate, and without faith in Christ, without which it is impossible to please God, and their actions such as before described:

and are contrary to all men; not only Christians, but Heathens; to all the Gentiles, who are called all men, the nations of the world, the world, and the whole world; they were contrary to these, both in their religious and civil principles, and had an aversion to them, of which the following is a full instance.

Ver. 16. *Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles, that they might be saved*, etc.] Speaking or preaching the Gospel is the ordinary means of saving souls, or of acquainting them with the way of salvation, the necessity of it, and of the application of it to them, and with this end and view it is preached: now though the Jews disbelieved the Gospel, and despised the ministry of it, and disavowed any such use and end of it, yet such was their envy at the Gentiles, and their hatred of them, that could they have believed it to be the means of salvation, they would have forbidden the preaching of it to them, as they now did; and it is certain, that even the believing Jews, through ignorance, did at first disapprove of the ministry of the word to the Gentiles; (see ^{<4110>}Acts 11:1-3) such was the aversion of that nation to all others, and which perfectly agrees with their general sentiments, which forbid the explanation of the law to the Gentiles; and

therefore it need not be wondered at, that they should do all that in them lay to hinder the entrance and spread of the Gospel among them, of which take the following proof^{f6}:

“whoever has not the holy name sealed and bound in his flesh (i.e. is not circumcised) *atyrwad hl m hyl a[dwal rysa* “it is forbidden to make known to him a word of the law”, and much less to study in it — and whoever is not circumcised, and they give to him *atyrwad ryzx ta*, “the least thing in the law”, it is as if he destroyed the world, and dealt falsely with the name of God — Hillell and Shammai did not make known to Onkelos a word of the law, until he was circumcised — and the traditions are, that even though a man is circumcised, yet if he does not do the commands of the law, lo, he is as a Gentile in all things, and “it is forbidden to teach him the words of the law”.”

nay, it is a rule with the Jews^{f7}, that

“if a Gentile studies in the law, he is guilty of death:”

and thus were they left in providence, to judicial blindness and hardness of heart,

to fill up their sins alway; the measure of their own and their fathers' iniquities; (see ^{<1232>}Matthew 23:32) a phrase expressive of the abounding of their sins, and of their being under a divine appointment, and of their being limited and restrained by a divine power, and overruled by infinite wisdom, to answer some ends and purposes of God's glory;

for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost: which is to be understood, not of their wrath and fury being come to its highest degree and pitch against the followers of Christ, but of “the wrath of God”, as the Vulgate Latin version and Beza's ancient copy express it; and designs not so much “eternal punishment”, as the Ethiopic version renders the phrase, or everlasting wrath and damnation on the reprobate part of that people, as temporal ruin and destruction, which was now near at hand, and hung over their heads; and therefore is said to be come to them, and which in a little time fell upon their nation and city, and temple, even to the uttermost, to the last degree; and was, as the Arabic version renders it, “wrath consuming”; or “the consummation, and that determined poured upon the desolate”, spoken of in (^{<2022>}Daniel 9:27) and which, as it is come upon them, will remain “unto the end”, as the phrase may also be rendered; unto

the end of the world, until the fulness of the Gentiles is brought in, and then God's elect among the Jews shall obtain mercy, and be called, and so all Israel shall be saved, (Ⓢ125Romans 11:25,26).

Ver. 17. *But we, brethren, being taken from you,* etc.] Here more properly should begin the third chapter, in which the apostle having before observed the manner of his entrance among these people, the nature of his ministry, the reception the word of God met with among them, and the powerful effect it had upon them, insomuch that they patiently and cheerfully bore persecution for the sake of it; he excuses his not having been with them again as yet, which he knew was proper and necessary, as he was their apostle and spiritual father; and expresses an affectionate concern at his parting with them in the manner he did, which was not his own choice and voluntary act, but was obliged to it, being hurried away at once, at an unawares in the night, by reason of the uproar made in the city by the baser sort of people, instigated by the unbelieving Jews; so that he and his fellow ministers had not the opportunity of taking their leave of them, as they would have done: hence he says,

we being taken from you; they were, as it were, passive in it; they were forced away on a sudden, they did not go of themselves; the word used is very uncommon and emphatical, and may be literally rendered, “we being orphanized from you”; which represents this parting to be like the separation made by death, between parents and children; when either parents are deprived of their children, or children of their parents, and are left orphans or fatherless; and just in such a destitute and desolate condition were the apostle and his companions in, in their account; nor need it to be wondered at, when they are before compared to a nursing mother and a tender father, as they were to these their spiritual children: and he further observes, that this removal from them, was

for a short time, or “for the time of an hour”; which may either denote the suddenness of it, being as it were at an hour's warning, having no more notice of it than for the space of an hour; or it may express the great affection he and his fellow ministers had for them, insomuch that they could not bear an absence from them, though but for an hour; or it may be said by way of comfort, that this parting was but for a short time, and that in a little while they might hope to see them again; and if not in this life, yet in the future state, when they should meet and never part more, and which would be but in a short time at longest: moreover, this separation was only

in presence; in person, in face, in sight, in body, it was but a corporeal one: not in heart; the apostle's heart was with them, as much as if present; they were always in his mind, and remembered by him, at the throne; he had as it were the images of them continually before him, as parents have of their children when at a distance from them; his heart was after them, and his affections moved strongly towards them: and the effect this distance had on him, and those that were with him, was this, that they

endeavoured the more abundantly, he observes,

to see your face with great desire; it made them but the more desirous of seeing them face to face again, and put them upon attempting with more abundant earnestness and diligence to come and see them.

Ver. 18. *Wherefore we would have come unto you*, etc.] They not only had a will, and purposed in themselves, and entered into some resolutions to come unto them, but endeavoured to put them into execution:

even I Paul: as well as Silas and Timothy; the latter of which had been with them, and the others had as good a will, and especially Paul: and that

once and again: or “once and twice” so the Jews used ^{f8} to speak **ܝ ܝܢܥܘ ܗܢܘܩܐܪ ܡ[ܦ]**, “one time and a second”; that is, several times:

but Satan hindered us. The Syriac and Ethiopic versions read, “hindered me”; by moving the mob which rose at Thessalonica, to go to Berea, and disturb the apostle there; which obliged him, contrary to his will, to go to Athens instead of returning to Thessalonica, as he intended; and when at Athens, from whence also he might purpose to return thither, he was hindered by the disputes the Jews and the Stoics, and Epicurean philosophers, had with him; and after that, might be prevented by the lying in wait of the Jews for him, of which he might be informed; or by disturbances raised in the church, or churches where he was, by the false teachers; which required his stay with them, to oppose and refute error and heresy and to make up differences that arose among true Christians, fomented by Satan and his emissaries; (see ^{ⲉⲛⲓⲛⲓⲛ}Romans 1:13). Satan does all he can to hinder the preaching of the Gospel, the hearing of the word, the profession of religion, and the saints coming together, and having spiritual conversation with each other; being, as his name “Satan” signifies, an enemy to Christ and his interest, and to the souls of men: indeed he can do nothing but by divine permission, nor can he hinder the will of God, and

the execution of that, though he often hinders the will of man, or man from doing his will; he hindered the apostle from doing what he willed and purposed, but he did not hinder the will of God, which was that Paul should be employed in other work elsewhere.

Ver. 19. *For what is our hope, or joy,* etc.] The apostle here gives a reason why they were so concerned at parting with the Thessalonians, and were so desirous of seeing them again, and attempted it so often, cause they were their “hope”; not the foundation of it, which was Christ; nor the thing hoped for, which was eternal life; nor the ground of their hope, which was the blood, righteousness, and sacrifice of Christ; but they were persons whom they hoped well of, and of whom their hope was steadfast; as of their election of God, of their redemption by Christ, of their effectual calling, of their perseverance in faith and holiness, notwithstanding all reproach and persecution; and of meeting the Lord, and being together with him for ever: and they were also their “joy”; their conversion was a matter of joy to them, because of the glory of God, Father, Son, and Spirit, displayed therein; because of the abundant grace bestowed on these persons; and because that hereby the kingdom of Satan was weakened, and the kingdom of Christ enlarged and his churches increased and beautified; and their own ministry was blessed and confirmed, and their hearts and hands strengthened, and they encouraged to go on in it: and they continued to be their joy, inasmuch as they stood fast in the Lord, walked on in the truth, and had their conversations as became the Gospel of Christ; and they were persuaded would be their joy hereafter, at the second coming of Christ; when they should give up their account of them with joy, and not with grief: and it is added,

or crown of rejoicing; or of “glorying”, or “boasting”; not that they gloried in them, for they gloried not in men, but in the Lord, in his righteousness, riches, wisdom, strength, and grace, in the person, blood, and cross of Christ; but they gloried of them, as trophies of divine grace, as a prey taken out of the hand of the mighty, and as lawful captives delivered from the power of Satan, and of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of Christ. The Alexandrian copy reads, as we render it,

crown of rejoicing: which is but a stronger phrase, to press the joy they had in their conversion and perseverance, in allusion to crowns wore at times of rejoicing, as at marriage feasts, and the like: hence we read^{f9} of the crowns of the bridegrooms, and of the brides, which were forbidden the

use of in the war of Vespasian; the latter were made of gold, in the form of the city of Jerusalem, and from thence called golden cities^{f10}; and the former, some say, were made of salt and sulphur, to put them in mind of the destruction of the Sodomites, for their unnatural lusts^{f11}; others of a salt stone as clear as crystal, or of the stone Bdelium, painted in the colour of sulphur^{f12}; and some were made of myrtles and roses, but in the war of Vespasian only those made of reeds were used^{f13}; these crowns at weddings seem to be the “beautiful crowns” in (~~23:42~~ Ezekiel 23:42) where the Septuagint use the same phrase as here, **στεφανον καυχησεως**, “a crown of rejoicing”, or “glorying”: the Hebrew phrase **trapt trj** [, may be rendered “a crown of glory”, as the phrase here is by the Vulgate Latin and Arabic versions; but does not mean the crown of glory, life, righteousness, and immortality, the apostle expected at the hands of Christ another day; nor that his being an instrument of the conversion of these persons was the ground of such an expectation, or was what entitled him to such a crown; since he knew that conversion work was owing to the powerful grace of God, and the crown of eternal life was his free gift; but that it would be an honour to him, and give him abundant joy and pleasure at the coming of Christ, to be encircled with such a number of souls he had been useful to, and who were his spiritual children; just as children's children are the crown of old men, (~~17:6~~ Proverbs 17:6) all this is put by way of question, which strongly affirms,

are not even ye; or “ye also”, as well as others, as the Corinthians and Philippians; (see ~~2~~ 2 Corinthians 1:7 Phi 1:6,7 4:1).

In the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? to judge the quick and dead, when both they and these should meet him, and stand before him with confidence, being clothed with his righteousness, and clad with robes of immortality and glory.

Ver. 20. *For ye are our glory and joy.*] Or “our joy”, as the Syriac, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions read; this is a repetition, and a confirmation of what is before said; and signifies that these saints were then the glory of the apostles, being the seals of their ministry; and whom they gloried of and rejoiced in, and hoped and believed they would be such, as would be their joy and crown in time to come, and for ever.