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# THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS : AN EXPANDED PARAPHRASE

## I. INTRODUCTION (Ch. 1: 1-10)

### (a) *Salutation* (Ch. 1: 1)

To the church of the Thessalonians, established by faith in God as Father and Jesus Christ as Lord, this letter comes from Paul, Silvanus and Timothy. Grace and peace be yours!

### (b) *Thanksgiving for their faith and steadfastness*

(Ch. 1: 2-10)

We continually thank God for all of you, as we remember you in our prayers. We can never forget your work inspired by faith, your loving toil and your enduring hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, as we think of you in the presence of our God and Father. You are our brothers, on whom God has set His love; we recognize you full well as those whom He has chosen. When we brought you the saving message, it was no mere matter of words; it was attended by divine power, by tokens of the Holy Spirit's working, and it produced full conviction.

You know how we conducted ourselves for your sakes when we were with you, and you in turn imitated us—better still, you became imitators of our Lord—when you received the message, amid all your affliction, with joy implanted by the Holy Spirit. In this way you set an example to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. Not only has the Lord's message been sounded out from you throughout Macedonia and Achaia, but the news of your faith in God has been spread abroad everywhere. We have no need to speak about it, for those who have heard it tell our story for us. They tell how we came among you, and how you turned to God from idols, to be servants and worshippers of the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, the Son whom He raised from the dead—Jesus, our Deliverer from the wrath to come.

## II. PAUL'S APOLOGIA (Ch. 2: 1-3: 13)

### (a) *Explanation of his recent conduct* (Ch. 2: 1-16)

You know yourselves, my brothers, how we came among you. Our visit was by no means fruitless; for after the pain and outrage to which we had been subjected at Philippi, as you know, we were emboldened by God to declare His gospel to you in the face

of great opposition. What we urged upon you was not based on any desire to mislead you ; there was no impurity or guile about it. Our accreditation came from God Himself, who entrusted us with the gospel, and accordingly we speak—not with the aim of pleasing men, but rather of pleasing God, who examines our hearts. We never indulged in flattering talk, as you well know : our preaching was no mere cloak for covetousness, God is our witness. We sought no praise from men, neither from you nor from others. We might have burdened you with the necessity of supporting us, asserting our undoubted rights as apostles of Christ ; but we did no such thing. Instead, we treated you gently, like a nurse caring for her children. We conceived such a kindly feeling for you that we made up our minds not only to share God's good news with you, but our own lives as well, so dear did you become to us. You remember, brothers and sisters, how we toiled and laboured ; we worked night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you while we were heralds of God's good news to you. You can bear us witness—and so can God—that our behaviour towards you believers was pure and just and free from blame ; you know that we encouraged you each one like a father encouraging his children, that we entreated and urged you to conduct yourselves in a way worthy of God, who was calling you into His own kingdom and glory.

For this very reason we give God unending thanks, for when you received His message which you heard from us you took it to your hearts. You did not regard it as human teaching but as the word of God, which in truth it is—the word that works so effectively in you believers. Yes, brothers and sisters, you became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus which are established in Judaea. How? Because you had the same things to endure at the hands of your fellow-countrymen as they did at the hands of the Jews. Their persecutors are the people who put our Lord Jesus to death as they formerly killed the prophets ; it is they who have driven us out from one place after another. They refuse to do God's pleasure and set themselves in opposition to men everywhere ; they even try to keep us from showing Gentiles the way of salvation, and thus they continually fill up the full measure of their sins, and have incurred unmitigated retribution.

*(To be continued)*