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**Text of 1 Thessalonians (Chapter in 1 & 2 Thessalonians:
Zondervan Critical Introductions to the New Testament)**

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CHAPTER 1

TEXT OF 1 THESSALONIANS

The first port of call in this study is to identify the origins of 1 Thessalonians with a focus on the integrity of the text, authorship, and date, followed by an extended discussion of genre, style, and structure. Thereafter, I will discuss some of the possible sources behind 1 Thessalonians.

TEXTUAL WITNESSES AND SIGNIFICANT TEXT-CRITICAL CONCERNS

Textual Witnesses to 1 Thessalonians

For 1 Thessalonians, the consistently cited witnesses of the NA²⁸ text are as follows:¹

PAPYRI

Ⲑ³⁰: 4:12–13, 16–17; 5:3, 8–10, 12–18, 25–28

Ⲑ⁴⁶: 1:1; 1:9–2:3; 5:5–9, 23–28

Ⲑ⁶¹: 1:2–3

Ⲑ⁶⁵: 1:3–2:1, 6–13

MAJUSCULES

Ⲁ (01): Pauline corpus

A (02): Pauline corpus

B (03): Pauline corpus

C (04): lacking 1:1, 2:9–5:28 (end)

1. See Barbara and Kurt Aland et al., eds., *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 28th ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012); hereafter NA²⁸. In the NA²⁸, the consistently cited witnesses for 1 Thessalonians are found on page 64*. Roy Ciampa deserves credit for compiling relevant information in a database pertaining to the specific contents of these witnesses; see http://www.viceregency.com/Manual_08_Contents.pdf.

D (06): Pauline corpus
 F (010): Pauline corpus
 G (012): Pauline corpus
 H (015): contains only 2:9–13; 4:5–11
 I (016): contains only 1:1–2, 9–10; 2:7–9, 14–16; 3:2–5, 11–13;
 4:7–10; 4:16–5:1, 9–12, 23–27
 K (018): Pauline corpus
 L (020): Pauline corpus
 P (025): lacking 3:5–4:17
 Ψ (044): Pauline corpus
 048: contains only 1:1, 5–6
 0183: contains only 3:6–9; 4:1–5
 0208: 2:4–7, 12–17
 0226: 4:16–5:5
 0278: all of 1 Thess

MINUSCULES

33: Pauline corpus
 81: Pauline corpus
 104: Pauline corpus
 365: Pauline corpus
 630: Pauline corpus
 1175: lacking 1:10–3:2
 1241: Pauline corpus
 1505: Pauline corpus
 1739: Pauline corpus
 1881: Pauline corpus
 2464: Pauline corpus

LECTIONARIES

/249: Pauline corpus
 /846: Pauline corpus

Major Textual Variants in 1 Thessalonians

There are fourteen verses in 1 Thessalonians with textual variant discussions worth consideration.²

2. For the latest discussion of the practice of textual criticism, see B. D. Ehrman and M. W.

1:1 χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη

The NA²⁸/UBS⁵ text of 1 Thessalonians 1:1 ends with χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη. Some manuscripts contain a longer salutation such as ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (e.g., D 0150 256 263 1319 1573 2127 / 593).³ Similarly, we also find ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (e.g., **Σ** A I 6 33 81 104). The best and earliest manuscripts support the short reading. Furthermore, the longer readings can be explained as assimilation to Pauline style (see 1 Cor 1:3).

1:5 εὐαγγέλιον ἡμῶν

While the reading “our gospel” is widely attested, apparently some copyists found the language of “our” inappropriate, thus omitting it. The witnesses **Σ**^c and C read εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ (no ἡμῶν); similarly **Σ**^{*} has εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν.

2:7 νήπιοι

This is one of the most controversial text-critical issues in the whole Pauline corpus. We will devote more attention to historical and theological issues related to this text on pages 106–14. Here we will reserve ourselves primarily to comment only on the manuscript witnesses and potential unintentional scribal behavior. The two main options for textual readings are νήπιοι, which means “infants,” and ἥπιοι, “gentle.”

νήπιοι: **ℙ**⁶⁵ **Σ**^{*} B C^{*} D^{*} F G I **Ψ**^{*} 0150 104^{*} 263 459 1962 / 147 / 592 / 593 / 603^c it^{ar}, b, d, f, g, mon, o vg^{cl}, ww cop^{sams}, bo eth Origen^(gr1/3), lat, Ambrosiaster Jerome Pelagius Augustine

ἥπιοι: **Σ**^c A C² D² **Ψ**^c 075 6 33 81 104^c 256 365 424 436 1241 1319 1573 1739 1852 1881 1912 2127 2200 2464 Byz [K L P] Lect vgst (syr^{p, h}) cop^{samss, fay} arm (geo) slav Clement Origen^{2/3} Basil Chrysostom Theodore^{lat}

Metzger notes that νήπιοι could have occurred by dittography (accidental repeating of a letter), or ἥπιοι by haplography (accidental omission of a

Holmes, eds., *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research: Essays on the Status Quaestionis*, 2nd ed., NTTS 42 (Leiden: Brill, 2013); cf. K. Wachtel and M. W. Holmes, *The Textual History of the Greek New Testament: Changing Views in Contemporary Research* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2011).

3. For a detailed critical apparatus, see UBS⁵.

letter).⁴ Nevertheless, Metzger's committee preferred νήπιοι on account of "what is admittedly the stronger external attestation."⁵

2:12 καλοῦντος

The weight of extant manuscript evidence favors καλοῦντος (present tense), but there are some manuscripts that have the aorist καλέσαντος (e.g., \aleph A 104 459 1912 2464). The aorist variant could be explained as assimilation to Paul's use of the aorist form in 1 Corinthians 1:9, Galatians 1:6, and 1 Thessalonians 4:7.⁶

2:15 προφήτας

Again, external evidence overwhelmingly supports the short reading, but some witnesses (including most minuscules, as well as the Textus Receptus) have the reading ιδίους προφήτας, understood as "their own prophets" (i.e., *Jewish* prophets versus *Christian* prophets). Metzger wonders whether those witnesses that include the longer reading may have been influenced by Marcion's text.⁷

2:16 ὀργή

Some later Western-type manuscripts add τοῦ θεοῦ to ὀργή to clarify the reference to God's wrath. In the context, though, this addition is unnecessary and thus superfluous.

3:2 καὶ συνεργὸν τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ

Some manuscripts have διάκονον instead of συνεργόν. Another matter is τοῦ θεοῦ—it is occasionally omitted. Metzger argues that on external evidence alone, the reading καὶ διάκονον τοῦ θεοῦ is very strong, but the UBS choice {B} seems best able to explain how the other readings came into existence. He reasons that some copyists may have been uncomfortable with the idea of being "coworkers of God," thus removing τοῦ θεοῦ to avoid

4. B. M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: German Bible Society, 1994), 561.

5. *Textual Commentary*, 562. Both the SBLGNT and the THGNT prefer ἥπιοι. Philip Comfort strongly prefers νήπιοι as the original reading. Comfort explains that the change to ἥπιοι may have occurred because of the uncomfortable dual metaphor presented by νήπιοι, but the external support for νήπιοι is decisive. See P. W. Comfort, *A Commentary on the Manuscripts and Text of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2015), 355–56.

6. See R. L. Omanson, *A Textual Guide to the Greek New Testament* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006), 425.

7. Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 562.

confusion (is God a “coworker”?). Others preferred διάκονον to soften the language. Some manuscripts have both διάκονον and συνεργόν (F G it^{f,g}).⁸

3:13 αὐτοῦ, [ἀμήν].

One cannot decide on the originality of ἀμήν based on external evidence alone, since both readings are strongly attested. Not much hangs on its *inclusion*, though one wonders why a copyist would exclude it.

4:1 καθὼς καὶ περιπατεῖτε

Though the *inclusion* of this clause is strongly attested, it is lacking in many minuscules. The most likely reason why it was dropped is because it could appear redundant.

4:11 [ιδίαις]

There is fairly even manuscript support for the *inclusion* of ἰδίαις: ἐργάζεσθαι ταῖς [ιδίαις] χερσὶν ὑμῶν. The UBS committee was undecided [C]. It may have been dropped because it could appear unnecessary.

Includes: **ℵ*** A D¹ 33 81 424* 436 1241 1852 1962 2200 Byz [K L]

Omits: **ℵ**² B D* F G Ψ 075 0150 6 104 256 263 365 424^c

4:13 κοιμωμένων

The Western and Byzantine witnesses tend to read here κεκοιμημένων, while the Alexandrian witnesses favor κοιμωμένων. The latter is preferred, supported by more ancient texts; moreover, κοιμωμένων (present tense) is the more difficult reading.

5:25 [καί]

Does the text read “pray for us” or “pray *also* for us”? Encouragement for apostolic prayer is found in Colossians 4:3: προσευχόμενοι ἅμα καὶ περὶ ἡμῶν. External evidence does not support one reading as stronger. Most translations do not add “also.”

5:27 ἀδελφοῖς

A number of minuscules (and evidence from non-Greek ancient translations) include ἅγιος (τοῖς ἁγίοις ἀδελφοῖς). The external evidence

8. See Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 563.

supports the shorter reading, and perhaps the addition of ἅγιος can be explained by its use in 5:26.

5:28 ὑμῶν

In the Alexandrian-type texts, 1 Thessalonians ends with ὑμῶν ("The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you"). A large number of manuscripts (including \aleph A D^c K L P Ψ 614 1739^c), though, include a final ἀμήν, though this might be explained based on liturgical use.

TEXTUAL INTEGRITY

In the last few decades, Thessalonian scholarship has lost much interest in theories that question the integrity of the text of 1 Thessalonians as we have it in the manuscript traditions (besides the possible interpolation of 1 Thessalonians 2:13/14–16, discussed below). In a previous generation, it was more common to see division theories;⁹ among contemporary academic commentaries, only that of Earl Richard entertains (and in his case adopts) a division theory. Richard notes that the two thanksgiving sections of the letter have raised concern for some (2:1–10; 2:13). However, Richard finds more problematic the way 2:13–4:2 sits within the text. He postulates that 2:13–4:2 could be read as a "short earlier missive" with a later text being comprised of 1:1–2:12 + 4:3–5:28.¹⁰

It must be underscored again, though, that Richard is unique among recent commentators; nearly all other commentaries defend integrity, and some ignore the topic altogether.¹¹ Part of this involves the *theory* of integrity. Richard is quite transparent on this: "It should be stressed that the

9. For a survey of the discussion up to the 1970s, see R. F. Collins, "Apropos the Integrity of 1 Thess.," *ETL* 65 (1979): 67–106, republished in R. F. Collins, *Studies on the First Letter to the Thessalonians*, BETL 66 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1984), 96–135. An important theory was put forth by W. Schmithals (*Paul and the Gnostics* [Nashville: Abingdon, 1972], 123–218), which divided up both 1 and 2 Thessalonians into a total of four letters: {A} 2 Thess 1:1–12 + 3:6–16; {B} 1 Thess 1:1–2:12 + 4:2–5:28; {C} 2 Thess 2:13f., 2:1–12 + 2:15–3:3 (5) + 17f.; {D} 1 Thess 2:13–4:1. For a refutation of Schmithals's reconstruction, see R. Jewett, *The Thessalonian Correspondence: Pauline Rhetoric and Millenarian Piety* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 33–36. Brief mention can also be made here of G. Friedrich's proposal that 5:1–11 is an interpolation; see G. Friedrich, "I. Thessalonicher 5, 1–11, der apologetische Einschub eines Späteren," *ZTK* 70.3 (1973): 288–315. See refutation of the latter in I. H. Marshall, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, NCBC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 12–13.

10. See E. J. Richard, *First and Second Thessalonians*, SP (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995), 11–12.

11. Note, for example, the absence of the matter in G. D. Fee, *The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009).

presumption of integrity is an assumption unless it explains satisfactorily serious structural and temporal anomalies.”¹² In my estimation, many scholars begin from the opposite assumption: a theory seeking to question literary integrity must make an especially convincing case.¹³

The only serious matter related to integrity still debated currently is the text of 1 Thessalonians 2:13–16. From a text-critical standpoint, there are no extant Greek manuscripts that omit 2:13, 14, 15, or 16.¹⁴ However, because so many scholars find material in these verses *either* unpauline in thought *or* historically implausible (or both), it is up for discussion.

As Jewett notes, the matter first emerged in the academic sphere in 1905 via Rudolf Knopf, who proposed that 2:16c was a marginal note that later merged into the text in the late first century.¹⁵ The most influential proponent of an interpolation theory in the late twentieth century is Birger Pearson.¹⁶ We will reserve the matter of the so-called “anti-Judaism” of 1 Thessalonians 2:13–16 for a later discussion (see pp. 114–23). Here, as we consider textual-integrity matters, we will deal only with the issue of historical plausibility—is *there sufficient evidence that this is a text “out of its time,” that is, anachronistic? In other words, is this a text that could not be written by the historical Paul?*

A major concern for those that propose an interpolation for 2:13–16 is the aorist ἔφθασεν (2:16). How has the wrath (of God) come upon them *already*?¹⁷ Pearson urges that it *must* refer retrospectively to the destruction

12. Richard, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 12.

13. Thus note Wanamaker’s mindset on this matter: “Unless and until further evidence is forthcoming in support of the interpolation hypothesis, it should be assumed that 2:13–16 formed part of the original text of the letter” (C. A. Wanamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990], 33).

14. See W. O. Walker Jr., *Interpolations in the Pauline Letters*, JSNTSup 213 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 210, though Walker considers 1 Thessalonians 2:13–16 a “likely interpolation”; see pp. 210–23. There is, it should be noted, a Latin manuscript that lacks 2:16d (Vatic. Lat. 5729; eleventh century). As Luckensmeyer explains, the omission may nevertheless be due to a mistake. Thus, “since the witness is exceptionally isolated it is unlikely that the trajectory of this decision goes back to a Greek manuscript” (162). Nevertheless, Luckensmeyer is right to lament that this witness to the 2:16d omission is too often neglected in the discussion (D. Luckensmeyer, *The Eschatology of First Thessalonians*, NTOA 71 [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009], 115–72).

15. See R. Knopf, *Das nachapostolische Zeitalter* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1905), 139; see Jewett, *Thessalonian Correspondence*, 36–37.

16. See B. A. Pearson, “1 Thessalonians 2:13–16: A Deutero-Pauline Interpolation,” *HTR* 64 (1971): 79–94; see also D. Schmidt, “1 Thess 2:13–16: Linguistic Evidence for an Interpolation,” *JBL* 102 (1983): 269–79; cf. H. Koester, Introduction to the New Testament: History and Literature of Early Christianity II (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 113.

17. Most scholars do indeed try to read this in terms of a *past* event (see below), but Luckensmeyer makes the reasonable point that the subject is the *wrath of God*, which tends to have a future orientation in Pauline thought; see *Eschatology*, 163.

of the temple (70 CE). Yet Robert Jewett supplies an important counterargument. While hindsight tells us of the pervasive impact of the Jewish-Roman war, we must remember that “to someone who lived before that catastrophe, several [other] events could easily have appeared to be a final form of divine wrath.”¹⁸ Jewett includes reference to the death of Agrippa (44 CE), the insurrection of Theudas (44–46 CE), the Judean famine (46–47 CE), the Jerusalem riot (48–51 CE), the expulsion of Jews from Rome by Claudius (49 CE), or (pointing to the research of Sherman Johnson) the bloody riot in Jerusalem (after 49 CE).¹⁹

Another historical matter is the reference to Jewish persecution of Judean churches. Is it possible that at such an early period Jews were actively persecuting followers of Jesus? Is this not a phenomenon of a later period where “the ways had parted” enough to underscore distinction, so to speak? Perhaps; however, Jeffrey Weima points to Paul’s own persecution of believers in Jerusalem and the wider area (see 1 Cor 15:9; Gal 1:13, 22–23; Phil 3:6). Weima also mentions, as the most likely reference, a Judean Zealot movement (ca. 46–51 CE; see Josephus, *Ant.* 20.102–15) that sought to rid Palestine of gentile influence; this may have included harassment of Judean churches.²⁰

Perhaps I should register my personal concern with theories of interpolation in Pauline letters (lacking manuscript evidence for omission/displacement); it is not that interpolations are impossible, but rather I wonder if so much energy on deconstruction and reconstruction leads, in the end, to any sort of clarity and settledness about the matter. At best, I believe we can only label the authenticity of a text like 1 Thessalonians 2:13–16 “dubious” when we lack clear(er) extant evidence of textual disunity.²¹

18. Jewett, *Thessalonian Correspondence*, 37. See his argumentation more generally on pp. 31–46.

19. *Thessalonian Correspondence*, 37; cf. S. Johnson, “Notes and Comments,” *ATR* 23 (1941): 173; see further the discussion in J. A. D. Weima, *1–2 Thessalonians*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014); Weima notes that most scholars who take ἔφθασεν as past sense (imagining the time period before 50 CE) prefer Claudius’s expulsion (p. 177).

20. See Weima, *1–2 Thessalonians*, 30–40.

21. I resonate with the concerns of Fee, a respected textual critic, when he asks (the interpolation-theorist), “Why has it [1 Thess 2:14–16] been inserted *here* and not in a more ‘logical’ place in other letters?” (*Thessalonians*, 91); note too the important work of I. Broer in reference to how 2:14–16 fits into 1 Thessalonians in “Der ganze Zorn ist schon über sie gekommen: Bemerkungen zur Interpolationshypothese und zur Interpretation von 1 Thess 2,14–16,” in *The Thessalonian Correspondence*, ed. R. F. Collins, BETL 87 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1990), 137–59; cf. idem, “‘Antisemitismus’ und Judenpolemik im Neuen Testament: Ein Beitrag zum besseren Verständnis von 1 Thess 2:14–16,” *Biblische Notizen* 20 (1983): 59–91; similarly, see E. W. Stegemann, “Zur antijüdischen Polemik in 1 Thess 2,14–16,” in *Paulus und die Welt: Aufsätze*, ed. C. Tuor and P. Wick (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 2005), 62–63. Stegemann writes: “Even though Paul would clearly be relieved of one controversy of this hypothesis, this would only shift the problem to a younger

AUTHORSHIP AND DATE

The authenticity of 1 Thessalonians has not been seriously questioned in recent history. It was, of course, included in the Muratorian Canon as well as Marcion's list (see Tertullian, *Marc.* 5.15). The most well-known advocate of the *exclusion* of 1 Thessalonians from a genuine Pauline corpus is F. C. Baur. He argued that the similarities between 1 Thessalonians and 1 Corinthians are too great not to assume dependence. Baur pointed out, as another concern, discrepancies between 1 Thessalonians and Acts. There have also been concerns raised on occasion with the vocabulary of 1 Thessalonians, though it is commonly recognized today that playing the *hapax legomena* game leads to all manner of fallacies.²²

A much more controversial and serious matter today involves the proper dating of 1 Thessalonians and whether or not it should be considered the first extant letter of Paul (or whether perhaps it should come after Galatians).²³ A conventional assessment of Paul's apostolic *curriculum vitae* requires an integration of the bits of timeline information from 1 Thessalonians combined with the general movements (including geography and duration) from Acts and critical nonbiblical resources such as the Gallio inscription (*SIG3* 2:492–94, §801). Acts narrates a journey of Paul to Macedonia (particularly Philippi and Thessalonica), and then on to the southern part of Achaia (Athens and Corinth). According to Acts 18:1–5, Paul moved from Athens to Corinth by himself, and Timothy joined him later (18:5; cf. 1 Thess 3:1–13). This makes Corinth the most likely place

anonymous figure. To assume a later interpolation is always precarious and should be at best an exegetical last resort. Material and formal considerations necessitate no literary critical solutions. Ingo Broer has recently made a careful examination of the chief arguments for the interpolation theory and concludes that retaining the text as an integral part of 1 Thessalonians is more plausible than seeing it as an interpolation in whole or in part. I find his arguments convincing even if one cannot attain absolute certainty" (trans. mine).

22. See H. W. Hoehner, "Did Paul Write Galatians?" in *History and Exegesis: New Testament Essays in Honor of Dr. E. Earle Ellis for His 80th Birthday*, ed. S.-W. (Aaron) Son (New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 150–69. See too the discussion by F. W. Hughes, "Thessalonians, First and Second Letters to the," in *New Testament: History of Interpretation*, ed. J. H. Hayes (Nashville: Abingdon, 2004), 111–16.

23. On the general discussion of chronology of Paul and his letters, see N. Hyldahl, *Die paulinische Chronologie*, Acta Theologica Danica 19 (Leiden: Brill, 1986); J. D. G. Dunn, *Beginning from Jerusalem*, Christianity in the Making 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 497–518; R. Riesner, *Paul's Early Period: Chronology, Mission Strategy, Theology*, trans. D. Stott (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998); idem, "Pauline Chronology," in *Blackwell Companion to Paul*, ed. S. Westerholm (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 9–29. Hyldahl and Dunn both propose a possibly earlier dating of Paul's time in Corinth (respectively, 49–51 CE, and 49/50–51/52 CE) than most scholars, including Riesner (50–51 CE).

from which Paul sent 1 Thessalonians. We can place his extended stay in Corinth in history relatively well thanks to the Gallio inscription, as it indicates that Gallio was named proconsul in 51 CE.²⁴ Working backwards a bit, scholars offer the general period of Paul's writing of 1 Thessalonians as 49–51 CE.²⁵

It is difficult to determine how long Paul was in Thessalonica, and after how long following his departure from the city he wrote 1 Thessalonians. Acts 17:2 mentions Paul's ministry in the synagogue that lasted "three Sabbath days," which sets a minimum time of about three to four weeks. However, the impression from 1 Thessalonians itself is that Paul would have spent enough time in Thessalonica with the new believers to have given them instruction in the faith (4:2) as well as time to share his *life* with them (2:8). Regarding how soon *after* his departure he wrote 1 Thessalonians, Malherbe gives a hypothesis of four months, enough time to travel through Beroea (Berea), Athens, and then to settle in Corinth.²⁶

It behooves us to mention here a more recent approach developed by Douglas A. Campbell regarding not just the dating of 1 Thessalonians but all of Paul's missionary work and letters. This is outlined in his book *Framing Paul: An Epistolary Biography* (2014). While most NT scholars have used the book of Acts in companion with the Pauline letters to sketch a life of Paul, Campbell works only with the epistles. This approach yields results starkly different than the consensus view of Paul's ministry. Campbell argues for a very early "mission to Macedonia" (ca. 40–42 CE) where Paul went to Philippi, Thessalonica, Achaia, and then Corinth. During this period, he would have written 1–2 Thessalonians. Thus Campbell's chronology pushes 1 Thessalonians up several years. Time will tell whether other scholars find Campbell's approach appealing and compelling.

24. Gallio's time in office lasted at least from July of 51 CE through June of 52 CE.

25. For a discussion from a nonbiblical ancient historian, see D. J. Kyrtatas, "Early Christianity in Macedonia," in *Brill's Companion to Ancient Macedon*, ed. R. J. L. Fox (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 585–99.

26. See A. J. Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, AB (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 72–73. He offers this sketch: one week of travel from Thessalonica to Beroea, three weeks from Beroea to Athens, another three weeks before Paul's companions return to Beroea from Athens (see Acts 17:15), six weeks to account for Timothy's journey to Athens and return to Thessalonica (1 Thess 3:1–3), four weeks for Timothy's journey from Thessalonica to Corinth.

LETTER FEATURES

We now turn our attention to various textual features of 1 Thessalonians, including scholarly discussion of genre, Paul's Greek writing style, proposals regarding the structure of the letter, and possible sources and influences for the letter.

Genre

Obviously 1 Thessalonians is a *letter*, and thus it has been studied *as a letter*. But there has been much debate for generations about *how* it should be studied as a letter. Thus, George Milligan's comments are apt: "It must be clear that they are in no sense literary documents, still less theological treatises, but genuine letters intended to meet passing needs, and with no thought of any wider audience than those to whom they were originally addressed."²⁷ Yet Milligan goes on to note that just because Paul's words are directed at particular problems does not preclude the possibility of understanding his theological thinking in a broader sense (perhaps here anticipating Beker's famous contingency/coherence discussion).²⁸

As Stanley Porter reminds us, the interest in reading Paul's writings *as letters* boomed with the discovery of the Greek documentary papyri from Oxyrhynchus (Egypt).²⁹ Especially in the later twentieth century, epistolary analysis pushed toward differentiating various *types* of letters in the Greco-Roman world and then considering where Paul's letters fit on a letter-by-letter examination. Objectively distinguishing letter types is a tricky matter; Stanley Stowers has advocated drawing from the work of Pseudo-Libanius and Pseudo-Demetrius.³⁰ Pseudo-Demetrius

27. G. Milligan, *St. Paul's Epistles to the Thessalonians* (London: Macmillan 1908), xli.

28. *Thessalonians*, xli; see J. C. Beker, *Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984).

29. See S. E. Porter and S. A. Adams, "Pauline Epistolography: An Introduction," in *Paul and the Ancient Letter Form*, ed. S. E. Porter and S. A. Adams, *PAST* 6 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 1; Porter rightly notes the influence of A. Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East: The New Testament Illustrated by Recently Discovered Texts of the Graeco-Roman World*, 4th ed., trans. L. R. M. Strachan (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1927); cf. also L. H. Blumell, *Lettered Christians: Christians, Letters, and Late Antique Oxyrhynchus*, *NTTSD* 39 (Leiden: Brill, 2012); L. Doering, *Ancient Jewish Letters and the Beginnings of Christian Epistolography*, *WUNT* 298 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012).

30. See S. K. Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), 51–57; cf. H.-J. Klauck, *Ancient Letters and the New Testament* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1986), 202–3; C. Poster, "A Conversation Halved: Epistolary Theory in Greco-Roman Antiquity," in *Letter-Writing Manuals and Instructions from Antiquity to the Present: Historical and Bibliographic Studies*, ed. C. Poster and L. C. Mitchell, *Studies in Rhetoric/Communication* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2007), 21–51.

distinguishes twenty-one types: friendly, commendatory, reproachful, censorious, threatening, praising, supplicatory, responding, accounting, apologetic, ironic, blaming, consoling, admonishing, vituperative, advisory, inquiring, allegorical, accusing, congratulatory, and thankful.³¹ Pseudo-Libanius's list is much longer, and he includes a category of "mixed" (μικτή), identifying that there are cases where forms and styles of letters are combined.

When it comes to the study of 1 Thessalonians, broadly speaking there are two directions in which scholars go vis-à-vis an epistolary label. Some prefer to identify 1 Thessalonians as a consoling letter (i.e., paracletic), including Karl Donfried,³² Abraham Smith,³³ and Donald Hagner.³⁴ Other scholars urge that it is better to identify 1 Thessalonians as paraenetic, emphasizing moral exhortation. Such proponents of this view include Abraham Malherbe,³⁵ Stanley Stowers,³⁶ David Aune,³⁷ and Luke Timothy Johnson.³⁸ For my part, I am skeptical about the usefulness of assigning 1 Thessalonians to a specific epistolary letter-type. If I had to choose, I might prefer the "mixed" type because I think the reader ought not to be forced to decide between "consoling" and "paraenetic."

31. See J. Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul the Letter-Writer* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1995), 97. Note that different Anglophone scholars may translate the Greek words a bit differently, so there is no standard English terminology for these types.

32. K. P. Donfried, "The Theology of 1 Thessalonians as a Reflection of Its Purpose," in *To Touch the Text*, ed. M. P. Horgan and P. J. Kobelski (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 243–60. Note the pushback against Donfried's interpretation by J. Chapa, "Is First Thessalonians a Letter of Consolation?" *NTS* 40 (1994): 150–60; cf. also idem, "Consolatory Patterns? 1 Thes 4,13–18; 5,11," in Collins, *Thessalonian Correspondence*, 220–28.

33. A. Smith, *The Social and Ethical Implications of the Pauline Rhetoric in 1 Thessalonians* (PhD diss., Vanderbilt University, 1989).

34. See D. A. Hagner, *The New Testament: A Historical and Theological Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012), 457–75. Probably B. R. Gaventa falls into this category as well: "In common with the crafters of love letters, Paul does not write to convey data, but to express his affection and communicate his concern" (*First and Second Thessalonians*, IBC [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998], 40).

35. A. Malherbe, "Exhortation in First Thessalonians," in *Light from the Gentiles: Hellenistic Philosophy and Early Christianity: Collected Essays, 1959–2012*, by Abraham J. Malherbe, ed. C. R. Holladay et al., 2 vols. (Boston: Brill, 2013), 1:167–86; cf. idem, *Letters to the Thessalonians*, 81–86. Malherbe takes his reading of 1 Thessalonians a step further than most scholars by bringing the Paul of 1 Thessalonians into conversation with the moral philosophers of his age; Malherbe reads 1 Thessalonians from this viewpoint not only as a hortatory letter but as a *pastoral* one, as the apostle sought to give assurance to the unsure and encouragement to those walking in truth and love; see idem, *Paul and the Thessalonians: The Philosophic Tradition of Pastoral Care* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987).

36. Stowers, *Letter Writing*, 96.

37. See D. Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1987), 206; Aune points especially to the lengthy hortatory section (1 Thess 4:1–5:22) as a clear indicator of the centrality of this paraenesis for the letter's purpose as a whole.

38. L. T. Johnson, *Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation*, rev. ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 282.

In the last thirty years, we have seen a swell of interest in turning the discussion of genre away from letter analysis toward the study of ancient rhetoric.³⁹ Steve Walton has provided a succinct “state of the discussion” regarding rhetorical criticism and 1 Thessalonians.⁴⁰ It is widely understood that there were three species of rhetoric—deliberative, judicial, and epideictic. Kennedy reasons that 1 Thessalonians is *deliberative* because it has the aim of convincing the audience to follow a particular path (1 Thess 3:8; chs. 4–5). Walton places Bruce Johanson in this category as well, particularly as Johanson puts emphasis on the consolatory purpose of the letter.⁴¹ The *deliberative* view has not gained wide approval.

Much more attractive is the position that 1 Thessalonians fits an epideictic rhetorical category.⁴² Here the idea is that Paul was not concerned with getting the Thessalonians to evaluate something in the past particularly (i.e., judicial/forensic), nor to make a specific decision in the future (i.e., deliberative), but rather to reinforce certain values and to offer affirmation and encouragement. Duane Watson represents this majority opinion and defends the epideictic interpretation on these grounds:

Paul is trying to persuade the Thessalonians to reaffirm or adhere more closely to received values and theology. With the choice of epideictic rhetoric Paul functions as a consoling pastor addressing congregational concerns, with no adversaries in mind.⁴³

According to Watson (and I deeply resonate with his analysis), the disturbance created by the death of Thessalonian believers—along with the ongoing persecution—rattled the community significantly.

39. For an accessible overview, see B. Witherington III, *New Testament Rhetoric: An Introductory Guide to the Art of Persuasion in and of the New Testament* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2009); note the importance of the work of G. A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984); idem, *Classical Rhetoric and Its Christian and Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times*, 2nd ed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); cf. C. C. Black and D. F. Watson, eds., *Words Well Spoken: George Kennedy's Rhetoric of the New Testament*, Studies in Rhetoric and Religion 8 (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008).

40. S. Walton, “What Has Aristotle to Do with Paul? Rhetorical Criticism and 1 Thessalonians,” *TynBul* 46.2 (1995): 229–50. On the history of the study of 1 Thessalonians, Walton underscores the ground-breaking work of Malherbe and Jewett.

41. B. Johanson, *To All the Brethren: A Text-Linguistic and Rhetorical Approach to 1 Thessalonians*, ConBNT 16 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1987), 165–66.

42. See Jewett, *Thessalonian Correspondence*, 71–72; cf. G. Lyons, *Pauline Autobiography: Toward A New Understanding*, SBLDS 73 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1985), 219–21.

43. D. F. Watson, “The Three Species of Rhetoric and the Study of the Pauline Epistles,” in *Paul and Rhetoric*, ed. J. P. Sampley and P. Lampe (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 30; cf. the similar conclusion by Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, 47.

Paul's "apostolic perspective" offered guidance through a refashioned "symbolic world" that would enable the Thessalonians to imagine their situation as part of "Satan's forces arrayed against God and God's righteous followers in an end-time battle."⁴⁴ Paul's goal was not (merely?) to move the Thessalonians to take a particular course of action but rather to "adhere to values they have already come to hold."⁴⁵

Ben Witherington bolsters his own case for reading 1 Thessalonians as epideictic by noting that the text does not offer intense logical arguments (e.g., as in Galatians and Romans), but more so we see *pastoral* language in the letter, words of encouragement from "one who loves his new converts and is anxious about them since they are under fire."⁴⁶

Giving some pushback against interpreting 1 Thessalonians as epideictic (especially Jewett's reading), Margaret Mitchell notes that "praise and blame" (and the desire to comfort and reinforce values) appear in all the rhetorical categories (not just epideictic). Furthermore, epideictic itself tends to be more *present*-oriented, while 1 Thessalonians is clearly *future*-oriented.⁴⁷

Ultimately, the discussion about genre raises the question regarding whether Paul's texts are meant to be analyzed as *letters* (fitting into ancient letter-writing conventions) or as textualized *speeches* (that would draw from rhetorical conventions).⁴⁸ One can easily see the folly of making this an *either-or* matter. Judith Lieu reminds us that Paul's letters are peculiar because while, on the one hand, they are personal letters such as we find in the Oxyrhynchus collection, on the other hand his letters are unusually long.⁴⁹ Lieu also encourages caution when focusing solely on rhetorical categorization because Paul does not come to us through recorded speeches, but letters.⁵⁰ She rightly asks, "Is it possible to retain

44. Watson, "Three Species," 31.

45. Watson, "Three Species," 31.

46. B. Witherington III, *1 and 2 Thessalonians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 29. Witherington adds here a comment that 1 Thessalonians may relate to the subcategory of epideictic rhetoric that he calls the "consolatory speech" (for funerals). He notes that Menander urges that such speeches ought to direct attention to the hope of the next life.

47. See M. M. Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation: An Exegetical Investigation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1991), 12n41.

48. See M. F. Bird, "Reassessing a Rhetorical Approach to Paul's Letters," *ExpTim* 119.8 (2008): 374–79.

49. See J. Lieu, "Letters," in *The Oxford Handbook of Biblical Studies*, ed. Judith M. Lieu and J. W. Rogerson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 449; cf. E. R. Richards, *Paul and First-Century Letter Writing: Secretaries, Composition and Collection* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004).

50. See Lieu, "Letters," 449.

an awareness of Paul's letters as letters while also analyzing them as rhetorical artefacts?"⁵¹

Not too far from this is the perspective of Wanamaker: "The two systems [epistolary and rhetoric] have in common that they both help us to assess the literary intention of the author. This in turn sheds light on the socio-historical situation that the author addressed."⁵² Wanamaker is saying that both approaches end up offering approximately the same level of satisfaction in terms of using genre to properly read and interpret 1 Thessalonians.

Style

At a different time in history (about a century ago), probably because NT scholars were more classically trained, it was more common to see discussions of Paul's Greek writing style. It has become extremely rare to see such comments today. George Milligan was one of these early twentieth-century commentators who noted the style of 1 Thessalonians. He remarks that Paul had a comfortable, though not sophisticated, handle on the Greek language. His Greek is smooth enough to imply that he constructed his thoughts in Greek, and probably did not actively "translate" into Greek (from Aramaic).⁵³ First Thessalonians has a tendency toward drawn-out sentences (e.g., 1:2ff.; 2:14ff.) and ellipses (e.g., 1:8; 2:2; 4:4, 14). This communicated to Milligan that Paul wrote the letter out of the gushing fountain of his love and regard for the Thessalonians that sometimes came across as spontaneous and terse.⁵⁴

In Malherbe's commentary, he also gives attention to the style of 1 Thessalonians. He observes that the "constituent" parts of a traditional Greco-Roman letter are present, but Paul shapes the letter toward his audience and his communicative purposes. Thus, we see a "creative adaptability of epistolary conventions."⁵⁵ In terms of the Greek style of 1 Thessalonians, Malherbe offers these observations:

51. Lieu, "Letters," 449; cf. D. Kremendahl, *Die Botschaft der Form: Zum Verhältnis von antiker Epistolographie und Rhetorik im Galaterbrief* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000). The debate on this matter is ongoing; see F. W. Hughes, "The Rhetoric of Letters," in *The Thessalonians Debate: Methodological Discord or Methodological Synthesis?*, ed. K. P. Donfried and J. Beutler (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 194–240; cf. idem, *Early Christian Rhetoric and 2 Thessalonians*, JSNTSup 30 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1989), 19–50.

52. Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, 47.

53. Milligan, *Thessalonians*, lv.

54. Milligan, *Thessalonians*, lvi.

55. Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 90–91.

- Paul liked to play with prepositions as in 1:5;
- there are several occurrences of asyndeta (2:11; 5:14–22);
- Paul tends to front-load imperatives;
- there is a heavy use of personal pronouns⁵⁶;
- there is a repeated use of disjunctive/adversative conjunctions⁵⁷;
- there are regular uses of rhetorical questions (e.g., 2:19; 3:9);
- there are emphatic uses of *καί* (e.g., 2:19; 4:14);
- there is the presence of interjections (e.g., 4:10).⁵⁸

Structure

Weima helpfully identifies three approaches to outlining the structure of 1 Thessalonians: thematic, rhetorical, and epistolary.⁵⁹ That is, some choose to follow, for example, a classical rhetorical arrangement (e.g., Jewett, Wanamaker, Witherington) where various categories are identified such as *exordium*, *narratio*, *probatio*, and *peroratio*.⁶⁰ There is also the natural consideration of epistolary conventions in terms of structure. Thus, it is common to see the partitioning of a prescript and greeting, introductory thanksgiving, body (middle), and closing statement.⁶¹ Scholars tend to gravitate toward either analyzing structure/arrangement according to an epistolary framework or a rhetorical one, though some opt for a combination.

Moreover, there are those who use neither (at least in a thoroughgoing fashion), but opt for a “thematic” approach, looking for logical-discourse breaks. Those who prefer a thematic approach are reluctant to assign to Paul (for 1 Thessalonians) the limitation of “following” a particular genre convention for structure and arrangement.

Weima himself prefers the epistolary structural analysis. He expresses his conviction that the fact that Paul wrote *letters* should guide the process of examining structure.⁶² Wanamaker and Jewett follow a rhetorical

56. He notes, “The personal pronouns have the effect of making the letter more personal” (Thessalonians, 91).

57. See also N. K. Gupta, “The ‘Not . . . But’ (*ou . . . alla*) New Testament Rhetorical Pattern,” *Ashland Theological Journal* 42 (2010): 13–24.

58. See, for all these, Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 90–91.

59. See Weima, *1–2 Thessalonians*, 55; cf. Jewett, *Thessalonian Correspondence*, 71–85.

60. See Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric*, 4–5.

61. See Porter and Adams, *Paul and the Ancient Letter Form*, passim; L. A. Jervis, *The Purpose of Romans: A Comparative Letter Structure Investigation*, JSNTSup 55 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1991), 29–68; cf. J. A. D. Weima, *Paul the Ancient Letter Writer: An Introduction to Epistolary Analysis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016).

62. Weima, *1–2 Thessalonians*, 55–56. For Weima, though, this does not preclude the possibility of Paul using rhetorical devices.

arrangement.⁶³ Fee appears to follow a more thematic approach.⁶⁴ Jewett is rather critical of the thematic approach, urging that outlining in this way tends to be rather arbitrary: "In the case of the Thessalonian letters, there is very little discussion in the commentaries as to why one outline is preferred over another, which indicates the unmethodical quality of the research up to this point [1986]."⁶⁵

For my own part, I am not convinced that a rhetorical-arrangement approach is beneficial. Perhaps it depends on *why* one is outlining the structure. If it is simply to make sense of the arguments of the letter and how they fit together as a whole, I think that a "thematic" approach (with attention to conventional epistolary-framing features) is sufficient; thus, I am more drawn to Fee's approach. If one wants to consider how ancient genre elements may have shaped, inspired, and limited Paul's discourse, then giving more attention to macro-rhetorical arrangement might prove useful.

When it comes to the "seams" of the structure of 1 Thessalonians, there is widespread agreement among Thessalonian scholars on most of the major divisions. First Thessalonians 1:1 tends to be treated on its own as the address/opening/prescript. The rest of chapter one is treated as some form of thanksgiving (vv. 2–10). Next, 2:1–12 is generally recognized as a discrete section of personal narrative or autobiography for Paul. Verses 13–16 tend to be partitioned off, seeming to be a kind of digression (depending on how it is interpreted). Next, 2:17–3:10 is treated as another narrative section emphasizing the ongoing relationship between Paul (and his team) and the Thessalonians. There is then another break, where 3:11–13 is treated as a liturgical pause or transition to the next section. Without exception, scholars agree that chapter four begins a whole new section (largely partitioned as 4:1–5:22). Most scholars label this section as "exhortation" broadly speaking, but those who are inclined toward rhetorical structures label this as *probatio* (proof). The last section (5:23–28) is considered some form of "concluding matters" or *peroratio*.⁶⁶

63. Jewett argues against an epistolary analysis of structure, positing that such an approach tells us very little about how the letter parts actually relate to one another. Moreover, Jewett reasons that if one were to assume epistolary structure, the majority of the first few chapters would relate to a "thanksgiving section," and the so-called letter "body" would not appear until chapter four, "which leads to a misconstrual of the main argument of the letter" (*Thessalonian Correspondence*, 68).

64. Fee, *Thessalonians*, 111.

65. Jewett, *Thessalonian Correspondence*, 68.

66. See the appendix at the end of this chapter for a visual presentation of the outlines of several scholars.

Sources and Influences

The matter of considering the possible sources behind 1 Thessalonians is complicated. Traditionally nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholarship considered the Old Testament (and other Jewish texts) and the Jesus tradition as potential sources (and we will consider the relationship between 1 Thessalonians and these below), but it is far less common in the twenty-first century to see discussion of sources. The concept of sources tends to presume Paul was sitting at his writing desk with his “Bible” (i.e., the Greek-language Jewish Scriptures) open on his left and some kind of “Jesus document” open on his right, and as he wrote his letter to the Thessalonians, he purposefully included excerpts from such “sources.” Because there are no explicit quotations from Scripture in 1 Thessalonians, nor from Jesus tradition, it would be difficult to accept such a scenario.⁶⁷ Instead of thinking in terms of sources, it is preferable in the case of 1 Thessalonians to employ the language of “influences.”

Milligan’s commentary makes the classic case for the dual influences of “the Greek O.T. and certain Sayings of Jesus.”⁶⁸ Milligan makes special note that, despite Paul’s text being written in Greek to gentiles, he does *not* cite pagan texts at all.⁶⁹ Milligan urges that the influence of the LXX is pervasive, as demonstrated in Paul’s vocabulary (ἀγάπη, ἀγιασμός, ἐκκλησία, δόξα, etc.).⁷⁰ He explains, “So minute was his acquaintance with its phraseology, so completely had it passed *in sucum et sanguinem*, that, though in these alone of all his Epistles there is no direct quotation from the O.T., there are whole passages which are little more than a mosaic of O.T. words and expressions.”⁷¹

I begin with Milligan (from well over a century ago!) because most commentaries today and much Pauline scholarship in general have dis-

67. S. E. Porter offers an insightful essay on Paul’s life and his access and use of Scripture entitled “Paul and His Bible: His Education and Access to the Scriptures of Israel,” in *As It Is Written: Studying Paul’s Use of the Old Testament*, ed. S. E. Porter and C. D. Stanley (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2008), 97–124. Leonard Greenspoon offers a thoughtful discussion of how Paul went about citing Scripture, and particularly what role his own memorization of Scripture played in how he used Scripture in his writings (“By the Letter? Word for Word? Scriptural Citation in Paul,” in *Paul and Scripture: Extending the Conversation*, ed. C. D. Stanley [Atlanta: SBL Press, 2012], 9–24); see also C. D. Stanley, *Arguing with Scripture: The Rhetoric of Quotations in the Letters of Paul* (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 41–43; J. D. H. Norton, *Contours in the Text: Textual Variation in the Writings of Paul, Josephus, and the Yahad*, LNTS 430 (London: T&T Clark, 2011), 1–38 (see esp. 31–34).

68. Milligan, *Thessalonians*, xviii.

69. Milligan, *Thessalonians*, xlv.

70. Milligan, *Thessalonians*, lii.

71. Milligan, *Thessalonians*, lviii.

counted OT influence on 1 Thessalonians because it ostensibly does not quote Scripture verbatim. Milligan underscores, rightly I believe, that it is suffused with scriptural language and imagery. So why did Paul *not* quote Scripture in 1 Thessalonians the way he does in, say, 1 Corinthians and Romans? The answer to this question is complex and contested—and falls beyond the purview of our discussion here—but suffice it to say that it is unquestionable that Jewish Scripture strongly influenced how and what Paul communicated to the Thessalonians. In the late twentieth century, Richard Hays made a strong case for the presence and importance of “echoes of Scripture” in Paul, and in more recent years there has been more attention paid to scriptural echoes and allusions in 1 Thessalonians.⁷² It is difficult to make a case that a *particular* Old Testament text or texts served as specific influences for 1 Thessalonians, so we will not speculate here.⁷³

There have been much more concrete and fruitful discussions about the possibility of the use of Jesus material or tradition in 1 Thessalonians.⁷⁴ As for Milligan, he mentioned a number of possible influences (see table below).

Milligan's List of Possible Influences of Jesus Material in 1 Thessalonians

2:14–16	(influenced by) Matthew 23:31–34
4:8	Luke 10:16
5:2	Matthew 24:43; Luke 12:39 (he found the Lukan connection more convincing)
5:3	Luke 21:34
5:5	Luke 16:8
5:6	Matthew 24:42
5:7	Matthew 24:48–49

72. See R. B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); on 1 Thessalonians in particular see S. C. Keesmaat, “In the Face of the Empire: Paul’s Use of Scripture in the Shorter Epistles,” in *Hearing the Old Testament in the New Testament*, ed. S. E. Porter (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 182–213 (esp. 204–8); J. Weima, “1–2 Thessalonians,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 871–90; E. E. Johnson, “Paul’s Reliance on Scripture in 1 Thessalonians,” in Stanley, *Paul and Scripture*, 143–62.

73. One can see suggestions for OT allusions in the NA²⁸ Greek text margins.

74. For a general discussion, see J. D. G. Dunn, “Jesus Tradition in Paul,” in *Studying the Historical Jesus*, ed. B. Chilton and C. A. Evans, NTTS 19 (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 155–78.

We will reserve the examination of 1 Thessalonians 2:(13+)14–16 for another occasion, and the possible influence on 4:8 is unconvincing to most scholars. That leaves us with 1 Thessalonians 5:1–7, and one might also include 4:15–17 (Matt 24:3–42).

There is almost no doubt that Paul would have received the “thief in the night” language from early Christian tradition.⁷⁵ It is difficult to know *how* Paul received such a tradition. It is facile to imagine that Paul carried around a copy of Q or copies of notes from (pre-)Matthew or (pre-)Luke. I think it best to recognize the point that Victor Furnish makes regarding the connection (especially from a literary perspective) between Jesus and Paul. Furnish notes the problem of trying to directly link “the individual, Jesus of Nazareth, to the individual, Paul of Tarsus.” Following Schweitzer, Furnish directs attention to that great mediating factor, “primitive Christianity.”⁷⁶ It was about a couple of decades between the death of Jesus and the writing of 1 Thessalonians; Paul would have undoubtedly absorbed some of the language, imagery, traditions, and liturgy that were developing out of Jesus’s following. We will return to the influence of “primitive Christianity” in a moment.

What about 1 Thessalonians 4:15 where Paul refers to a teaching that came to him “by the word of the Lord” (related to the raising of dead believers before those still alive)? This is a major debate in the study of 1 Thessalonians, and at least one monograph is entirely dedicated to this subject.⁷⁷ There is a segment of scholarship that is very much open to the possibility that “the word of the Lord” means a saying of Jesus.⁷⁸ Obviously what Paul refers to as this “word” does not clearly match any known saying of Jesus in the Gospels. Thus, either it is an *agraphon*⁷⁹ or a loose reference to something from the Gospels. David Wenham tries to make such a case

75. See T. Holtz, “Paul and the Oral Gospel Tradition,” in *Jesus and the Oral Gospel Tradition*, ed. Henry Wansbrough (London: Bloomsbury, 2004), 380–93; cf. C.-P. März, “Das Gleichnis vom Dieb: Überlegungen zur Verbindung von Lk 12,39 par Mt 24,43 und 1 Thess 5,2,4,” in *The Four Gospels: Festschrift for Franz Neirynck*, ed. F. van Segbroeck, 3 vols., BETL 100 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992), 1:633–49. For a more skeptical perspective see C. Tuckett, “Synoptic Tradition in 1 Thessalonians,” in *From the Sayings to the Gospels* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 316–39.

76. See V. P. Furnish, “The Jesus-Paul Debate: From Baur to Bultmann,” in *Paul and Jesus: Collected Essays*, ed. A. J. M. Wedderburn (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), 45.

77. M. W. Pahl, *Discerning the “Word of the Lord”: The “Word of the Lord” in 1 Thessalonians 4:15*, LNTS 389 (London: T&T Clark, 2009).

78. See, e.g., J. Jeremias, *Unknown Sayings of Jesus*, 2nd ed. (London: SPCK, 1964), 81–83.

79. See C. R. Nicholl, *From Hope to Despair in Thessalonica: Situating 1 and 2 Thessalonians*, SNTSMS 126 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 38–41, for an argument in favor of this view.

for the latter by observing that Paul refers to his previous eschatological teaching based on “traditions” he passed on to them (e.g., 1 Thess 5:1–2). Wenham believes that it makes perfect sense that some of this Christian tradition related to teachings of the earthly Jesus.⁸⁰ He goes on then to underscore the similarities and resonances between Paul’s eschatological teaching and the “synoptic eschatological traditions” (e.g., Matt 24:40, 41/Luke 17:34, 35). Specifically on the matter of the return of Jesus, Wenham points to the saying, “Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom” (Matt 16:28/Mark 9:1/Luke 9:27). Perhaps it was about the Son of Man gathering the elect (Mark 13:27), Wenham wonders. He is open to a link to Johannine tradition as well: “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die” (John 11:25–26).⁸¹ Nevertheless, I find links to sayings from the Jesus tradition tenuous; the *agraphon* theory is more attractive, though in the end I believe the saying is best understood as “new” prophetic insight.

We have considered the matter enough to say that Paul probably did not work with concrete Jesus tradition *sources*, but certainly we can detect influence from the stream of Jesus’s teachings passed down. And that brings us to a third area of “influences”—primitive or earliest Christianity.

Because 1 Thessalonians is probably the very earliest extant piece of literature from early Christianity, it is difficult to know what is *Pauline* (marks of Paul’s unique vocabulary and imagination) and what is *pre-Pauline* (what language and concepts he received from those before him).⁸² Nevertheless, *because* Paul makes reference to traditions, we know he was influenced by and passed on such. Probably the safest bet is to recognize that certain terminology and titles he used came from that tradition, such as “brothers and sisters” (ἀδελφοί), “believers” (πιστεύω), “church(es)” (ἐκκλησία), and also perhaps παρουσία.⁸³

80. See D. Wenham, *Paul: Follower of Jesus or Founder of Christianity?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 305–6.

81. Wenham, *Paul*, 332–33.

82. Interestingly, in Rom 16:7 Paul commends Andronicus and Junia whom he specifically mentions as those who “were in Christ before I was”—*those with a longer history of following Jesus than he*.

83. On the first three items, see P. R. Trebilco, *Self-Designations and Group Identity in the New Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 16–120, 164–205.

RECOMMENDED READING

Textual Criticism and 1 Thessalonians

- Comfort, P. W. *A Commentary on Textual Additions to the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2017.
- . *A Commentary on the Manuscripts and Text of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2015.
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APPENDIX A

	JEWETT	WANAMAKER	MALHERBE	FEE	WEIMA	GUPTA*
1:1	Exordium (1:1–5) [includes Epistolary	Epistolary Prescript (1:1)	Address (1:1)	Thanksgiving, Narrative, and Prayer (1:1–3:13): Salutation (1:1)	Letter opening (1:1)	Prescript (1:1)
1:2–3	prescript + Thanksgiving]	Exordium (1:2–10)	Autobiography (1:2–3:13): Thanksgiving (1:2–3:10): The Conversion of the Thessalonians (1:2–10)	Thanksgiving, Narrative, and Prayer (1:1–3:13): Thanksgiving (1:2–3)	Thanksgiving (1:2–10)	Thanksgiving for the Thessalonians' praiseworthy trust (1:2–10)
1:4–7	Narratio of Grounds for Thanksgiving (1:6–3:13): Congregational imitation (1:6–10)			Thanksgiving, Narrative, and Prayer (1:1–3:13): Narrative Part I: The Thessalonians' Conversion and Following (1:4–10): Paul Reminds the Thessalonians of Their Experience of Conversion (1:4–7)		
1:8–10				Thanksgiving, Narrative, and Prayer (1:1–3:13): Narrative Part I: The Thessalonians' Conversion and Following (1:4–10): The Thessalonians' Following Christ Had Become Well Known to Others (1:8–10)		

* See Nijay K. Gupta, *1–2 Thessalonians*, NCCS (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2016).

	JEWETT	WANAMAKER	MALHERBE	FEE	WEIMA	GUPTA
2:1-7b	Narratio of Grounds for Thanksgiving (1:6-3:13): Clarification of apostolic example (2:1-12)	Narratio (2:1-3:10): Paul's Missionary Style among the Thessalonians (2:1-12)	Autobiography (1:2-3:13): Thanksgiving (1:2-3:10): Paul's Ministry in Thessalonica (2:1-12)	Thanksgiving, Narrative, and Prayer (1:1-3:13): Narrative Part 2: Paul's Conduct in Thessalonica (2:1-12): What Paul was NOT like among the Thessalonians (2:1-7b)	Defense of Apostolic Actions and Absence (2:1-3:13): Defense of Paul's actions in Thessalonica (2:1-16)	Paul's blameless ministry (2:1-12)
2:7b-12				Thanksgiving, Narrative, and Prayer (1:1-3:13): Narrative Part 2: Paul's Conduct in Thessalonica (2:1-12): What Paul WAS like among the Thessalonians (2:7b-12)		
2:13	Narratio of Grounds for Thanksgiving (1:6-3:13): Clarification of Judean example (2:13-16)	Narratio (2:1-3:10): Digression within the <i>Narratio</i> (2:13-16)	Autobiography (1:2-3:13): Thanksgiving (1:2-3:10): The Word under Persecution (2:13-16)	Thanksgiving, Narrative, and Prayer (1:1-3:13): The Thanksgiving Renewed (2:13)		Praiseworthy endurance amid persecution (2:13-16)
2:14-16				Thanksgiving, Narrative, and Prayer (1:1-3:13): Narrative Part 3: The Thessalonians' (and Paul's) Ill Treatment (2:14-16)		

	JEWETT	WANAMAKER	MALHERBE	FEE	WEIMA	GUPTA
2:17–20	Narratio of Grounds for Thanksgiving (1:6–3:13): Paul's desire for apostolic visit (2:17–3:10)	Narratio (2:1–3:10): Paul's Continuing Relationship with His Persecuted Converts at Thessalonica (2:17–3:10): His Desire to See the Thessalonians and Attempts to Revisit Them (2:17–20)	Autobiography (1:2–3:13): Thanksgiving (1:2–3:10): Reestablishing Contact (2:17–3:10)	Thanksgiving, Narrative, and Prayer (1:1–3:13): Narrative Part 4: In the Meantime (2:17–3:10): Paul Had Been Thwarted from Returning (2:17–20)	Defense of Apostolic Actions and Absence (2:1–3:13): Defense of present absence from Thessalonica (2:17–3:10)	Paul's love, pride, and concern (2:17–3:13)
3:1–5		Narratio (2:1–3:10): Paul's Continuing Relation with His Persecuted Converts at Thessalonica (2:17–3:10): The Sending of Timothy (3:1–5)		Thanksgiving, Narrative, and Prayer (1:1–3:13): Narrative Part 4: In the Meantime (2:17–3:10): The Sending of Timothy (3:1–5)		
3:6–10		Narratio (2:1–3:10): Paul's Continuing Relationship with His Persecuted Converts at Thessalonica (2:17–3:10): Timothy's Return (3:6–10)		Thanksgiving, Narrative, and Prayer (1:1–3:13): Narrative Part 4: In the Meantime (2:17–3:10): The Return of Timothy (3:6–10)		

(cont.)

	JEWETT	WANAMAKER	MALHERBE	FEE	WEIMA	GUPTA
3:11–13	Narratio of Grounds for Thanksgiving (1:6–3:13): Transitus in benedictory style (3:11–13)	<i>Transitus</i> from <i>Narratio</i> to <i>Probatio</i> (3:11–13)	Autobiography (1:2–3:13): Concluding Prayer (3:11–13)	Thanksgiving, Narrative, and Prayer (1:1–3:13): The Prayer Report (3:11–13)	Defense of Apostolic Actions and Absence (2:1–3:13): Transition-al Prayer (3:11–13)	Paul's love, pride, and concern (2:17–3:13)
4:1–2	Probatio (4:1–5:22): The proof concerning the marriage ethic (4:1–8)	Probatio (4:1–5:22): Ethical Exhortation (4:1–12): Exhortation to Continue in Current Behavior (4:1–2)	Exhortation (4:1–5:22): Introduction (4:1–2)	Supplying What is Lacking (4:1–5:11): Introduction (4:1–2)	Exhortations to the Thesalonians (4:1–5:22): Increasing in conduct that pleases God (4:1–12)	Exhortation to persevere and grow in holiness, love, and integrity (4:1–12)
4:3–8		Probatio (4:1–5:22): Ethical Exhortation (4:1–12): Reinforcement of Sexual Norms (4:3–8)	Exhortation (4:1–5:22): On Marriage (4:3–8)	Supplying What is Lacking (4:1–5:11): Avoiding Sexual Immorality (4:3–8)		
4:9–12		Probatio (4:1–5:22): Ethical Exhortation (4:1–12): Familial Love and the Quiet Life (4:9–12)	Exhortation (4:1–5:22): On Brotherly Love and Self-Sufficiency (4:9–12)	Supplying What is Lacking (4:1–5:11): Loving Others by Working with One's Own Hands (4:9–12)		

	JEWETT	WANAMAKER	MALHERBE	FEE	WEIMA	GUPTA
4:13–18	Probatio (4:1–5:22): The third proof concerning the dead in Christ (4:13–18)	Probatio (4:1–5:22): Instruction concerning the Parousia and Assumption (4:13–18)	Exhortation (4:1–5:22): Eschatological Exhortation (4:13–5:11)	Supplying What is Lacking (4:1–5:11): About the Believers Who Have Died (4:13–18)	Exhortations to the Thesalonians (4:1–5:22): Comfort concerning deceased Christians at Christ’s return (4:13–18)	The hopeful fate of the Christian dead (4:13–18)
5:1–3	Probatio (4:1–5:22): The fourth proof concerning the eschaton (5:1–11)	Probatio (4:1–5:22): Eschatological Expectation and Parenesis (5:1–11)		Supplying What is Lacking (4:1–5:11): About the Day of the Lord (5:1–11): The Day of the Lord and Unbelievers (5:1–3)	Exhortations to the Thesalonians (4:1–5:22): Comfort concerning living Christians at Christ’s return (5:1–11)	The day of the Lord: preparedness and perseverance, not prediction (5:1–11)
5:4–11				Supplying What is Lacking (4:1–5:11): About the Day of the Lord (5:1–11): The Day of the Lord and the Thessalonian Believers (5:4–11)		

	JEWETT	WANAMAKER	MALHERBE	FEE	WEIMA	GUPTA
5:12–13	Probatio (4:1–5:22): The fifth proof concerning congregational life (5:12–22)	General Exhortations (5:12–22) [W. separates 5:19–22 as a unique section he calls “The Unity and Purpose of 5:19–22]	Exhortation (4:1–5:22): Intracommunal Relations (5:12–22)	Concluding Matters (5:12–28): Summary Exhortations (5:12–22): Attitude toward Their Leaders (5:12–13)	Exhortations to the Thessalonians (4:1–5:22): Exhortations on congregational life and worship (5:12–22)	Final instructions (5:12–28)
5:14–15				Concluding Matters (5:12–28): Summary Exhortations (5:12–22): Imperative Summation of the Letter (5:14–15)		
5:16–18				Concluding Matters (5:12–28): Summary Exhortations (5:12–22): Exhortation to Continue Basic Christian Piety (5:16–18)		
5:19–22				Concluding Matters (5:12–28): Summary Exhortations (5:12–22): About Christian Prophecy (5:19–22)		
5:23–24	Peroratio (5:23–28)	Peroratio and Epistolary Closing (5:23–28)	Conclusion (5:23–28)	Concluding Matters (5:12–28): Benediction (5:23–24)	Letter Closing (5:23–28)	
5:25–28				Concluding Matters (5:12–28): Closing Greetings and Final Grace (5:25–28)		