

To the Thessalonians A

Asp's Suggested Paraphrase (ASP)

Chapter 1

⁽¹⁾ From: Paul, Silas, and Timothy.

To: the Church in Thessalonica, a part of the family of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

We wish you guys grace and peace.

⁽²⁾ We give thanks to God all the time for all of you guys. You're in our prayers constantly, ⁽³⁾ and whenever we're in the presence of our God and Father, we remember all the ways you guys worked by faith, labored in love, and steadfastly hoped in our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁽⁴⁾ We know, our dear family of faith, that you guys are loved by God and that you've been chosen ⁽⁵⁾ to receive the Good News we shared with you guys — not just through words, but also through power, and in the Holy Spirit, and with a sense of absolute certainty. You guys know the ways we lived with you all, among you all. ⁽⁶⁾ And just like us, you guys followed in faith. You guys received the word and stuck with it through struggles, full of the joy of the Holy Spirit.

⁽⁷⁾ As a result, you guys have become an example to all the believers in northern Greece and in southern Greece. ⁽⁸⁾ So the word of the Lord is ringing out — not just throughout all of Greece, but all over the place. Your faith has gone viral; we're not the ones controlling the message any more. ⁽⁹⁾ *Other* people are telling *us* about the legendary hospitality you extended to us. They're telling *us* about the way you all changed your ways: serving the true and living God now, instead of idols. ⁽¹⁰⁾ And they're telling us to wait expectantly for the Son of God from the heavens — Jesus — whom he raised from the dead to bring deliverance from the coming Day of Judgment.

Chapter 2

⁽¹⁾ Because you guys know, our dear family of faith, that the time we had together was not for nothing. ⁽²⁾ On the contrary, you guys know that we suffered and were mercilessly mocked in Philippi; still, we boldly dared to share the Good News with you guys through the struggles. ⁽³⁾ You see, our appeal doesn't come from any act of deception, or impure motives, or sneaky sabotage. ⁽⁴⁾ But just as God has cleared us to believe the Good News, we speak this same truth to others. We're not schmoozing people; we're entrusting ourselves to God, to allow him to clear our hearts. ⁽⁵⁾ We never relied on flattery. You guys know us. Neither did we set anyone up to line our pockets. God is our witness.

⁽⁶⁾ We also didn't pursue praise from people — neither from you guys, nor from anyone else — ⁽⁷⁾ even though we were empowered to throw our weight around, as a team sent by Christ. Instead, we became like innocent and vulnerable babies, at your mercy. Or maybe like a mother cuddling her own children. ⁽⁸⁾ We loved you guys so much that we made a decision to share with you guys — not only the Good News, but our *lives*. That's how we became a loving family.

⁽⁹⁾ I mean, you guys remember — our family of faith — our blood, sweat, and tears. Night and day, we worked hard to avoid being a burden to any of you guys as we shared the Good News of God with you all. ⁽¹⁰⁾ You guys are witnesses, along with God, that we were holy, righteous, and totally above board in our behavior toward you guys as believers. ⁽¹¹⁾ You guys know we were just like a father with his children: ⁽¹²⁾ appealing, encouraging, and standing by your side to watch you walk in the ways of our God who has called you into his kingdom and glory.

⁽¹³⁾ And through these things, we find another reason to continuously give thanks to God — to think that you guys received the word we brought to you, grabbing onto it not as a human message but as the true word of God. That's what's at work inside you guys as believers. ⁽¹⁴⁾ Because you guys started doing the same things as us, our dear family of faith, joining the churches of God in Judea by suffering for the sake of Christ Jesus. They suffered at the hands of their own people, ⁽¹⁵⁾ who also killed Jesus and persecuted the prophets. They persecuted us, too. They oppose God, and they oppose God's people, ⁽¹⁶⁾ trying to choke out our voices, even as we're trying to share the message of salvation with the world. Their sins are always stacking up against them. And God's judgment has caught up with them in full.

⁽¹⁷⁾ But at that God-ordained hour, we were torn away from you guys, our dear family of faith — physically separated, but not emotionally separated — and we firmly resolved even more strongly to see your faces. ⁽¹⁸⁾ We wanted to come to you guys — especially me, Paul, trying again and again — but Satan thwarted us. ⁽¹⁹⁾ I mean, what is our hope, or joy, or crowning achievement as we stand in the presence of our Lord Jesus? It's you guys! ⁽²⁰⁾ You are our glory and our joy.

Chapter 3

⁽¹⁾ As a result, when we couldn't take it anymore, we thought it was best to stay in Athens by ourselves, ⁽²⁾ and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's coworker in sharing the Good News of Christ. We sent him to support you guys and to bolster your faith — ⁽³⁾ so that nobody would be unsettled by these pressures. For you guys know that we are destined for this ⁽⁴⁾ because when we were with you guys we told you all that such a tight squeeze was inevitable. And you guys know that it ended up happening, too. ⁽⁵⁾ As a result, when I couldn't put up with it any longer, I had to know how your faith was holding up. I couldn't bear the thought that the tempter had somehow squeezed you dry, and that all our work amounted to nothing.

⁽⁶⁾ But now that Timothy has come to us after being with you guys — and he's brought good news about your faith and your love, saying that you guys think so fondly of us all the time — it sounds like you guys long to see us just as much as we long to see you guys. ⁽⁷⁾ This brings us so much comfort, our dear family of faith — to get through all our struggles and distress — knowing that you guys are holding onto faith. ⁽⁸⁾ Standing *strong* in the Lord, even! This breathes new life into us. ⁽⁹⁾ How can we thank God enough to repay him for all the joy you guys have given us? Before our God, we passionately plead — ⁽¹⁰⁾ night and day — to see you guys face-to-face and fill any gaps in your faith.

⁽¹¹⁾ May God our Father and our Lord Jesus guide us to you guys! ⁽¹²⁾ And may the Lord intensify and increase your love for one another, just as our love for you guys has multiplied.

⁽¹³⁾ May he strengthen your hearts — blameless in holiness before our God and Father — as we come into the presence of our Lord Jesus, with all his holy people. [Amen.]

Chapter 4

⁽¹⁾ Furthermore, my dear family of faith, we're asking and appealing in the name of the Lord Jesus for you guys to walk in a way that pleases God, just like we showed you. Keep doing this, more and more. ⁽²⁾ For you guys know how we taught you all, through the Lord Jesus.

⁽³⁾ The will of God, of course, is for you guys to be holy, keeping your distance from sexual immorality. ⁽⁴⁾ He wants each of you to know how to control your own body, with holiness and honor — ⁽⁵⁾ not overpowered with lust like the heathens who don't know God.

⁽⁶⁾ Don't do wrong. Don't exploit others from the family of faith, acting despicably in these things. Because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just like we told you guys ahead of time and urged you to keep in mind. ⁽⁷⁾ See: God has not called us to indecency, but to holiness. ⁽⁸⁾ So rejection of this calling amounts not just to a rejection of man, but a rejection of God and his offer of the Holy Spirit to you guys.

⁽⁹⁾ But when it comes to loving each other like a family, we don't need to waste our ink because you guys have been taught by God how to love one another. ⁽¹⁰⁾ I mean, you guys are already doing this for the family of faith throughout northern Greece. But we encourage you guys to let that love keep growing and expanding, as a family of faith. ⁽¹¹⁾ We encourage you to set your sights on keeping calm and carrying on with your own day-to-day business, working with your hands, just like we instructed you guys. ⁽¹²⁾ That way, you guys could have everything you need to walk in a way that's healthy and impactful for outsiders.

⁽¹³⁾ But we don't want you guys to be ignorant, my dear family of faith, about those who have "fallen asleep," so that you wouldn't grieve like those who have no hope. ⁽¹⁴⁾ For if we believe that Jesus died and was brought back to life, we also believe that, through Jesus, God will bring along those "sleepers." ⁽¹⁵⁾ For we're telling you guys the word of the Lord. Those of us who are still living on earth at the coming of the Lord will *not* go before the ones who have "fallen asleep." ⁽¹⁶⁾ The Lord himself will give the signal with the sound of an arch-angel and the blast of God's trumpet. He will come down from heaven and the dead in Christ will be the first to rise. ⁽¹⁷⁾ Then we who are still living on earth will be caught up together with them in the clouds, and we will all meet the Lord together in the air. We will always be together with the Lord after that. ⁽¹⁸⁾ So keep encouraging each other with these words.

Chapter 5

⁽¹⁾ But about the timelines and trigger-points for God to act, our dear family of faith, you guys don't really need any written memorandum ⁽²⁾ because you guys know very well that the Day of the Lord will come like a burglar in the night. ⁽³⁾ People might be talking all about "Peace" and "Security" — right when complete destruction comes barreling in out of nowhere, like a sucker-punch to the gut. They won't be able to get out of it. ⁽⁴⁾ But you guys aren't in the dark about these things, our dear family of faith. You're all ready for that "burglar in the night." ⁽⁵⁾ In

fact, you guys are children of the light. You guys are children of the day. We don't have anything to do with the darkness or the night.

⁽⁶⁾ So seriously, let's not let ourselves drift off to sleep like everybody else — but let's keep alert with our eyes open and sharp. ⁽⁷⁾ For sleepy people like to sleep at night, and boozy people like to booze at night. ⁽⁸⁾ But those of us who belong to the day ought to stay alert, wearing the armor of faith and love and the helmet of hope in salvation. ⁽⁹⁾ We know that God has a vested interest in us — not for the sake of his fury, but for the sake of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁽¹⁰⁾ He died for our sake, so that whether awake or asleep, we might live together with him. ⁽¹¹⁾ So: Encourage one another. Build each other up, as one. Just like you guys are already doing.

⁽¹²⁾ Our dear family of faith, we need you guys to look out for those who are struggling to provide leadership and instruction in the Lord in your midst and for your benefit. ⁽¹³⁾ Give them the utmost respect and love for all their efforts. Live at peace among yourselves. ⁽¹⁴⁾ We're urging you guys, our dear family of faith: Call out the undisciplined, encourage the faint-hearted, support the weak, be patient with everybody. ⁽¹⁵⁾ Look out for anyone repaying evil for evil, but always pursue goodness — toward one another, and toward everyone.

⁽¹⁶⁾ You guys must always rejoice. ⁽¹⁷⁾ Never stop praying. ⁽¹⁸⁾ Give thanks in all circumstances: for this is God's will in Christ Jesus among you guys. ⁽¹⁹⁾ You guys must not suppress the Holy Spirit; ⁽²⁰⁾ don't disregard prophecies. ⁽²¹⁾ But you guys must examine everything. Hold onto the good stuff. ⁽²²⁾ Steer clear from every sort of evil.

⁽²³⁾ And may the God of peace sanctify you guys through and through — and may your spirit, soul, and body be perfectly preserved throughout every area of your lives, in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁽²⁴⁾ He who called you guys is faithful, so he will accomplish this.

⁽²⁵⁾ Our dear family of faith: we need you guys to pray for us.

⁽²⁶⁾ Greet the whole family of faith with a holy kiss.

⁽²⁷⁾ I'm swearing you guys in, before the Lord, to read this letter out loud to the whole family of faith.

⁽²⁸⁾ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is with you guys.