



# 1 Thessalonians

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**For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, 1 Thessalonians 1:9**

“They” of this verse is speaking of those noted in verse 8. It includes those in Macedonia and Achaia and “in every place.” Wherever people had come across the believers who were from Thessalonica, Paul says they themselves declared “concerning us what manner of entry we had to you.”

What this means is that Paul and those with him didn't need to speak of anything about their time spent at Thessalonica. Instead, wherever they went, they found that the message which they had originally brought to the Thessalonians had taken root and was effective. This was testified to by any and all who encountered a person who was from Thessalonica. Paul, and those with him, had a most effective entry. The door was opened, and they, along with their gospel message, was heartily received. The evidence was, as he says, “how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.”

There are two parts to this. First, they turned to God from idols. This was a necessary part of the equation, and it is something that they did with zeal. Pagan idolatry is something warned against throughout Scripture. False idols are nothing, and serving such a thing shows a complete disconnect with any notion of there being one true God.

However, this is only one half of the equation. Many people will turn from idols in order to serve “God,” but they do not worship Him in the proper manner. An example of this is Mormonism. Mormons go around the world to make converts. They convert people from pagan idols, but they do not lead them to the truth of God as is revealed in Jesus Christ. But Paul notes next that those in Thessalonica not only turned to God from idols, but they did so in order “to serve the living and true God.”

τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ Θεσσαλονικέων

He will explain this more in the next verse. The conversion of the Thessalonians was away from idolatry, and toward God, and it was done without having been duped into a false idea of what God is like. Their service was to Him as the true God. Salvation had come to them, and then this truth about them became evident to all.

Life application: There is one God, and many believe this, but they do not serve this one true God properly. They fail to come to Him through His Mediator. But this is what God has ordained for us, and this is what is expected of us. No other path will do. We must approach God through Jesus Christ, and it must be Jesus as Scripture reveals Him. There is the true Jesus, and there are false Christs. Let us be sure to trust in the true Christ.

**...and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, *even* Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.** 1 Thessalonians 1:10

This verse is a continuation of the previous one. Together they read –

“For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God,<sup>10</sup> and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, *even* Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.”

The verbs “serve” and “wait” are both infinitive, and thus they reflect the condition in which the Thessalonians stood by turning to God from idols. In particular, Paul will focus on the second coming of Christ in this epistle, and so the condition of waiting is highlighted here now. Even their serving is set in anticipation of His coming again. If Christ were not to come again, and if we were not to be gathered to Him at His coming, then what would be the point of serving Him. This serving in anticipation of His coming is more specifically detailed in chapter 4, just before the magnificent details of the rapture are provided.

This is what Paul now refers to with the words, “and to wait for His Son from heaven.” It is the great and blessed hope of the Christian. We believe that Christ is coming again, and that He will lead us to a new and better life than anything we could ever now imagine. It is also the purpose of taking the Lord’s Supper. As Paul says in 1 Corinthians 11 –

“For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes.” 1 Corinthians 11:26

It is Christ Jesus the Lord, “whom He raised from the dead,” that we remember in this sacrament. We proclaim His death until He comes because He is alive. Otherwise, if He were still dead, He would not be coming. But God raised Him from the dead, “*even* Jesus who

delivers us from the wrath to come.” Rather than “deliver” and “to come,” it should say “is delivering” and “is coming.” The verbs are present participles. Jesus gave His life for us, bearing the wrath that we deserve for the sins of this life. It is His cross which paid the penalty for our sins, and covered them. Because of this, there is no coming wrath for us. For those who reject Him, however, that is all that can be expected. God is righteous, and He must judge sin. It is His judgment upon man which is the wrath to come.

It is an important consideration, though, that Paul is tying in the coming of the Lord for His people with wrath which is coming. It is true that we are individually saved from God’s wrath in judgment. But Paul, in so tying the coming of the Lord with wrath, is pointing to a particular wrath which will be poured out on the world as a whole. He will build on this thought in Chapter 5, and also in 2 Thessalonians. Christ saves us from individual wrath, but He will also deliver us from the collective wrath which is coming upon the whole world at some future point.

Life application: It is rather sad that many Christians claim the rapture will come before war or calamity will occur in their own land. This is especially true in America. They act as if we are exempt from such things. This is naive, and it is harmful. Christians have been butchered for 2000 years, and if the Lord tarries, we may also face great persecution and death. The left, even in America, would like nothing more than to exterminate faithful Bible-believing Christians. If this happens, we must be prepared for it. But there is a time of great wrath, beyond our ability to imagine, which is coming upon the world. Before that time comes, the Lord will return for His people at the rapture. This is our hope, and this is what the Bible promises.