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THE GRACE BIBLE

1-2 THESSALONIANS

SAMPLE CHAPTER

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What is The Grace Bible?

My only aim is to complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God’s grace.

(Acts 20:24)

The good news of God’s grace declares that God is not mad at you, he’s mad about you. The One who sits on a throne of grace blesses you, not because you are good, but because he is good and he longs to be good to you.

Grace declares that God is for us and with us, and he freely gives us everything we need for life and godliness. Grace invites you to come in from the cold, rest from your labors, and feast at the table of his abundance. Grace is what makes the new covenant new and the good news *good news*.

If you have ever asked, “How do I read this scripture through a new covenant lens?” *The Grace Bible* is for you.

This book is not a law Bible with rules to follow, nor is it a works Bible that tells you what to do. It is not a judgment Bible to fear, or a guilt Bible to make you feel bad. It is a *grace* Bible that reveals the good news found on every page of scripture.

In this study Bible, you will find no guilt or condemnation and none of the usual calls for blood, sweat, and tears. Our focus will be on Jesus Christ—who he is, what he has done, and what you can do because of what he has done.

The Grace Bible is for the weary and those tired of pretending. It’s for the burned out, the fed up, and the knocked down. It’s for those who are in distress, or debt, or are discontented.

It’s for all of us who need grace.

1 Thessalonians 1

1 Thessalonians 1:1

¹ Paul and Silvanus and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace.

1:1 **Paul.** The author of the first epistle to the Thessalonians was the Apostle Paul. On his second missionary journey, Paul and his companions, Silas and Timothy, visited the busy seaport of Thessalonica. Paul preached in the Thessalonian synagogue for three Sabbaths. Then, jealous Jews became hostile, forcing him and Silas to leave the city (Acts 17:1–10). His stay in Thessalonica was brief, but in that short time he planted a church (Acts 17:4). The visit to Thessalonica probably took place around A.D. 50, and this letter was written a few months later while Paul was in Corinth.

Paul's letters to the Thessalonians were written for believers who faced opposition, uncertainty, and anxiety about the future. They needed reassurance, encouragement, and hope. What they got from Paul was a powerful reminder of God's faithfulness, the transforming power of his grace, and the certainty of Christ's return.

Paul is the most famous letter writer in history, and 1 Thessalonians may be the earliest of his surviving letters. If so, it is one of the oldest book in the New Testament. (The Gospels were written about twenty years later.)

Silvanus was the Romanized name of Silas, Paul's colleague and friend. After being imprisoned and surviving an earthquake in Philippi, Silas traveled with Paul to Thessalonica. Together they planted the church in the face of strong opposition.

Timothy, Paul's spiritual son and co-worker, was with Paul and Silas when they visited Thessalonica. Paul first met Timothy in Lystra (Acts 16:1). It appears that Timothy joined

their missionary team there, for he was with them in Berea, the city they visited after Thessalonica (Acts 17:14).

Timothy was well-known to the Thessalonians. Sometime after being driven out of the city, Paul sent Timothy back to check on the health of the new church (1 Th. 3:2). Like Silas, Timothy was with Paul when he wrote this letter, hence his inclusion in the greeting.

The church. The original noun *ekklēsia* means “an assembly” or “a gathering”. We might say “community” for short. The word is translated as “church” about 100 times in the New Testament, and occasionally as “congregation” (Acts 7:38, Heb. 2:12) or “assembly” (Acts 19:32, 39, 41, Heb. 12:23). Since the original word has a broad meaning, Paul distinguishes this as “the community in God.” There are many types of community, but only one is *in God*, and that is the community we know as the church. In the next chapter, he will refer to the church *in Christ Jesus* (1 Th. 2:14).

Thessalonians. The Thessalonian believers lived in Thessalonica—modern Thessaloniki—a prosperous seaport in Macedonia. Thessalonica, like Philippi, was on the Via Egnatia. This was the main east-west road in Macedonia and part of the key route from Rome to the East.

In God. The church is “in God and the Lord Jesus Christ” in the same way a branch is in the vine. We are not *down here* while God is *up there*. God is with us and in us, and we are in him (Matt. 1:23, John 14:20). We are the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16).

The Father; see entry for 1 Th. 1:3.

The Lord Jesus Christ. Paul and Silas were run out of Thessalonica for saying there was another king—Jesus (Acts 17:7). Proclaiming allegiance to a new king led to trouble for Paul, yet here he calls Jesus more than a king. He calls him Lord. (The Greek noun *kyrios* is related to *kuros*, which means “supreme in authority.”) For Paul, Jesus was the One who is supreme above all.

When Paul wrote his letter, the three most powerful people in the world were Claudius in the Roman west, Guangwu in the

Chinese east, and Gotarzes in the Parthian middle. Paul was impressed by none of them. As far as he was concerned, Jesus was “the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords” (1 Tim. 6:15).

Paul introduces the Lord Jesus Christ at the start of all his letters. He also encourages his readers to confess Jesus as Lord (Rom. 10:9, Php. 2:11). True preachers reveal Jesus as Lord of all. Jesus is not merely a teacher or historical figure. He is the risen Son of God. Before the cross, Jesus was known as the Christ or anointed one. But after the cross, God exalted him and gave him a name above every name: Lord (Php. 2:9-11). Paul refers to Jesus as Lord 40 times in his two letters to the Thessalonians (1 Th. 1:1, 3, 8, 2:15, 19, 3:12-13, 4:1, 2, 6, 16-17, 5:2, 9, 12, 23, 27-28, 2 Th. 1:1, 2, 7-9, 12, 2:1-2, 8, 14, 16, 3:1, 3-6, 12, 16, 18).

Grace to you and peace. The unwritten motto of the violent Roman Empire was “conquer and enslave,” but a new king meant a new kingdom and a new message of “grace and peace.” This was more than a greeting; it was a countercultural statement and a declaration of loyalty to the new King. When we wish one another grace and peace, we are declaring that King Jesus has come and that he’s coming again. Why grace and peace? Grace encompasses all God’s blessings, while peace is the fruit of receiving his grace.

Paul is the earliest known writer to use the “grace and peace” greeting and most of his letters begin with it or a variation of it (Rom. 1:7, 1 Cor. 1:3, 2 Cor. 1:2, Gal. 1:3, Eph. 1:2, Php. 1:2, Col. 1:2, 1 Th. 1:1, 2 Th. 1:2, 1 Tim. 1:2, 2 Tim. 1:2, Tit. 1:4, Phm. 1:3). He does not adopt the standard greeting found in the letters of James (Acts 15:23, Jas. 1:1), nor does he write, “I pray that you are in good health” (3 John 1:2). His salutation was later adopted by both Peter (1 Pet. 1:2, 2 Pet. 1:2) and John (2 John 1:3, Rev. 1:4).

1 Thessalonians 1:2–3

² We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers; ³ constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father,

1:2 **We give thanks.** Paul could have been bitter and twisted about the way he had been forced out of Thessalonica. But rather than focus on the rejection of some, he thanks God for the acceptance of others. The Thessalonians who received his message became like family to him (1 Th. 2:7–8, 11).

This is one of seven prayers mentioned in the two letters to the Thessalonians. The others are 1 Th. 3:11–13, 5:23–24, 2 Th. 1:11–12, 2:16–17, 3:5, 16.

Making mention of you in our prayers. Paul, Silas, and Timothy were often praying for the churches they had planted.

1:3 **Your work of faith.** The work or action of faith is believing in the Lord Jesus. It may seem strange to think of believing as a work, but believing in Jesus is *the* work of God (John 6:29). Everything else we do flows from this. The Thessalonians abandoned their idols and shared the good news because they believed in Jesus. Jewish and Gentile Christians ate together because they believed in Jesus. Apostles like Paul and Silas took the gospel to foreign and often hostile cultures because they believed in Jesus.

Some may dismiss “believing in Jesus” as hardly a work. There is no greater work! There is nothing on this earth more important than trusting in the risen Lord. To work out in your life what Christ has done for you and wants to do through you is the epitome of what it means to be human.

The singular work of faith can be contrasted with the endless works of law or self-improvement. The work of faith leads to righteousness, while dead works lead to self-righteousness (Rom. 9:32, Gal. 3:2). There are a thousand things we might do for God and call them “faith,” but they all count for nothing if we fail to do the one thing that matters: believe in Jesus.

Labor of love. Despite opposition, the Thessalonians were sharing the good news of God’s transforming love with others. “The word of the Lord has sounded forth from you” (1 Th. 1:8).

Steadfastness of hope. The Thessalonian church was a young church, but it was standing firm in the face of persecution (see verse 6 below). They were able to stand because their hope was fixed on Jesus. Steadfastness or endurance is a fruit of resting in the love of God that endures all things (1 Cor. 13:7).

God and Father. God is not a cold and demanding judge but a heavenly Father who cares for us, acts for us, and is with us in every trial we face.

The Jews occasionally referred to God as “Father” in a father-of-us-all sense (e.g., Mal. 2:10), but like Jesus before him, Paul portrayed God as a kind and loving Father. The God we read about in these two letters loves us and chooses us (1 Th. 1:4). He saves and sanctifies us (1 Th. 5:9, 23). He comforts and strengthens us and gives us his Holy Spirit (1 Th. 4:8, 2 Th. 2:16–17). He calls and guides us and remains faithful to us (1 Th. 2:12, 3:11, 5:24).

Humans are naturally anxious because we think we are alone and nobody cares. How wonderful to learn that the Creator of heaven and earth is our heavenly Father, who loves us and has not abandoned us. This was a stunning revelation when Jesus proclaimed it in the Sermon on the Mount, and it remains shocking to many today. God is not a harsh and distant deity. He is our Father who cares for us, adopts us, and teaches us to cry, “Abba, Father!” (Rom. 8:15, Gal. 4:6).

In the Gospels, Jesus refers to God as Father more than 150 times, and in his letters, Paul does the same more than 40 times. In 1–2 Thessalonians alone, Paul refers to God as Father seven times (1 Th. 1:1, 3, 3:11, 13, 2 Th. 1:1–2, 2:16). Knowing God is your Father who cares for you and holds you securely in the palm of his hand (see John 10:29) changes everything. This revelation gives us a good hope and a confident expectation for all our tomorrows. This is the good news an orphaned world most needs to hear.

1 Thessalonians 1:4–5

⁴ knowing, brethren beloved by God, his choice of you; ⁵ for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.

1:4 **Brethren.** The word “brethren,” which appears 25 times in the two Thessalonian letters, can be read as “my dear brothers and sisters in Thessalonica.” In the New Testament, “brethren” usually refers to members of God’s family rather than biological siblings.

Although Paul planted the church in Thessalonica, he does not refer to the Thessalonians as his acolytes or disciples. (The word “disciple” does not appear in any New Testament epistle. Christians are much more than mere followers.) Instead, he calls them family. They are his brothers and sisters in the Lord.

Today we believers take it for granted that we are part of God’s family, but this was a radical idea in the time of Paul. When Jewish and Greek believers sat down to eat together or partake of the Lord’s Table as members of one new family, they were doing something that had never been done before.

Beloved. The original verb *agapaō* means “to love” or “to cherish.” This word captures God’s heart for you. Your heavenly Father is fond of you. You are his esteemed favorite, and he is well pleased with you. He looks at you with deepest affection, because you are his own. Your primary identity is not “lover of God” but “beloved of God.” You cannot fully love God until you have experienced his limitless love for you (see 1 John 4:19).

His choice of you. God chose you to be part of his family (Eph. 1:4). From the very beginning, you were included in his salvation plan (2 Th. 2:13). There was never a time in your life, and never will be, when God changes his mind and rejects you. This is not to suggest that all are saved, for some reject

God. But those who respond to his call are known as the elect or chosen of God (Rom. 8:33, Col. 3:12, Tit. 1:1).

- 1:5 **Our gospel.** Alternatively, “the gospel that we preach.” In his two letters to the Thessalonians, Paul refers to his gospel as “the gospel of God,” the “gospel of Christ,” and the “gospel of our Lord” (1 Th. 2:2, 3:2, 2 Th. 1:8). Elsewhere in Scripture, the gospel is known as the gospel of the blessed God (1 Tim. 1:11), the gospel of his Son (Rom 1:9), and the gospel of the kingdom (Matt. 4:23, 9:35, 24:14, Luke 16:16). These are different labels for the one and only gospel of the grace of God (Acts 20:24).

The original word for gospel, *euangelion*, means “good news.” It does not mean bad news. Any message that leaves you fearful of an angry and judgmental God is no gospel at all. The good news reveals the love and power of God. It does this by proclaiming Jesus Christ, God’s Son, who conquered death and now lives to intercede for you (Rom. 8:34). Because Christ lives, you can have peace and joy and need have no fear of death (Heb. 2:14–15). The gospel Paul proclaims in this letter has an eschatological aspect, meaning it is concerned with “the last things.” It reveals both God’s kingdom (1 Th. 2:12) and a King who has come and is coming again (1 Th. 1:10).

In word only. The gospel message was not just proclaimed but also demonstrated through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Power. The gospel of the kingdom is a show and tell gospel (Matt. 4:23). When we preach the good news, the Holy Spirit confirms the word with supernatural signs (Mark 16:20). “My message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power” (1 Cor. 2:4). Signs and wonders are divine proof of the power of the gospel.

What powerful signs took place in Thessalonica? Although Dr. Luke does not record any specific miracles in Acts, we could expect that the sick were healed and the oppressed were set free, much as they were in other places where Paul preached the gospel (e.g., Acts 14:8–10, 19:11–12). However, one notable miracle was recorded. In just a few weeks, some

of the Jews and “a large number” of the God-fearing Greeks were persuaded by Paul’s preaching that Jesus is the risen Christ (Acts 17:4–5). In other words, the power of the gospel was demonstrated in calling people out of darkness and into God’s marvelous light.

The Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Trinity. The Holy Spirit is the One who exercises the power of the Father and Son in creation and who gives new life to those who put their faith in Christ. He empowers the preaching of the gospel and gives new life to those who put their faith in Christ.

The Holy Spirit is also known as the Spirit of God (Matt. 3:16, 12:28, Rom. 8:9, 14, 1 Cor. 2:11, 14, 3:16, 6:11, 7:40, 12:3, 2 Cor. 3:3, Eph. 4:30, Php. 3:3, 1 Pet. 4:14, 1 John 4:2), the Spirit of Christ (Rom. 8:9, Php. 1:19, 1 Pet. 1:11), the Spirit of the Lord (2 Cor. 3:17), the Spirit of truth (John 14:17, 15:26, 16:13, 1 John 4:6), the Spirit of holiness (Rom. 1:4), the Spirit of glory (1 Pet. 4:14), the Spirit of grace (Heb. 10:29), and the Helper (John 14:16, 26, 16:7).

With full conviction. The Thessalonians were fully convinced by Paul’s preaching of the gospel.

What kind of men we proved to be. “You saw how we conducted ourselves while we were with you.” Paul is reminding the Thessalonians that he came to them as an apostle and herald of the good news. Everything about Paul’s conduct testified to the truth of the gospel.

1 Thessalonians 1:6–7

⁶ You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit, ⁷ so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.

1:6 **Imitators.** The original noun *mimētēs* is related to the Greek verb *mimeomai*, a word associated with mimics and actors.

Imitators of us. The Thessalonians followed Paul's example by joyfully embracing the gospel message despite opposition. In doing this, they set an example for others to follow (see next verse).

And of the Lord. Filled with the Spirit of Christ, the Thessalonians began to walk and talk like Jesus. They carried the fragrant aroma of Christ and shone like beacons in a dark and idolatrous world.

Received the word. The Thessalonians allowed themselves to be persuaded that the gospel of Christ was true.

The word "receive" appears five times in these two letters. The Thessalonians didn't just hear the message; they received and accepted it in their hearts as the word of God (1 Th. 2:13), and like good seed it bore good fruit.

The word "receive" is one of the most important words in the new covenant vocabulary. Under the old covenant, you *gave*, but under the new covenant, we *receive*. We receive the word (Mark 4:16), love (1 John 4:19), grace (Rom. 5:17), faith (2 Pet. 1:1), and salvation (Rom. 6:23). We receive Christ (Col. 2:6), the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38), righteousness (Rom. 5:17), peace (John 14:27), and wisdom (Jas. 1:5). We receive the crown of life (Jas. 1:12), the reward of our inheritance (Col. 3:24), and the rest from our labors (Matt. 11:28-29, Heb. 4:10). Every blessing comes to us as a free gift from God (Eph. 1:3, Jas. 1:17).

Tribulation with joy. The Thessalonians received the gospel joyfully, but trouble soon followed. The city's Jews stirred up trouble against Paul and Silas, forcing them to leave town (Acts 17:10). Opposition to the gospel did not stop after Paul and Silas left. Although no details are recorded, the Thessalonian believers continued to face opposition from their idol-worshipping neighbors (1 Th. 2:14). Some may have lost their jobs. Others may have been kicked out of trade guilds or even families.

Many of the new believers were God-fearing Gentiles associated with the synagogue, so we can understand why the Jews were jealous of Paul (Acts 17:5). They were jealous, in part,

because he was offering people a way to God that did not run through Judaism. The message that God accepts both Jews and Gentiles did not go down well with people who had long believed they were God's treasured nation.

Joy is the pure and holy delight of knowing we are secure in our Father's love. In contrast with happiness, which is circumstantial, joy flows from our union with the Lord and is unaffected by external troubles. The supernatural joy of the Lord is a source of strength for the believer (Neh. 8:10).

The joy of the Holy Spirit. The Thessalonians' joy did not come from their testing circumstances; it came from the Lord. The gospel of grace that Paul preached elicited two strong reactions: joy among those who received it and hostility from the religious (Acts 13:52). In contrast to happiness, which is circumstantial, joy flows from our union with the Lord and is unaffected by external troubles. Joy is the fruit of believing the good news and knowing that we are dearly loved and precious in his sight (Luke 2:10).

1:7 **An example.** In receiving the gospel with joy in the face of opposition, the Thessalonians became an example to others. The other churches in Macedonia and Achaia surely felt encouraged when they heard about the Thessalonians' strong hope in the Lord Jesus.

The Thessalonians are often held up as a model church. What made them a model church was their love for one another and other believers in the region (1 Th. 4:9–10). In this world, communities and organizations are held together by all sorts of bonds, but the church is bound together with love. It's the one quality that separates the church from other human institutions.

Believers are those who trust in the Savior God sent. They believe that Jesus died and rose again (1 Th. 4:14). In most of his letters, Paul refers to Christians as saints (e.g., Eph. 1:1). But in letters to the Thessalonians and Timothy, he calls them believers (1 Th. 1:7, 2:10, 1 Tim. 4:10, 6:2).

The original verb *pisteuō* translates to “believers” but literally means “those believing.” It is related to the word for faith,

pistis, which means “persuasion” or “conviction” (see the next verse). If faith is the noun, then believing is the verb, or activity, that flows from our persuasions and convictions. It’s being convinced that Jesus is the risen Lord of all creation (Rom. 4:24, 10:9).

Macedonia was a Roman province in northern Greece. After receiving a vision of a Macedonian man calling him to for help (Acts 16:9), Paul visited several cities in the region. He went to Neapolis, Philippi, Amphipolis, Apollonia, Thessalonica, and Berea (Acts 16:11–12, 17:1, 10).

Achaia was a Roman province covering southern Greece. Thessalonica was in Macedonia (northern Greece), yet Paul said the Thessalonians were examples for all who lived in Greece.

1 Thessalonians 1:8–10

⁸ For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything. ⁹ For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, ¹⁰ and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.

1:8 **The word of the Lord**, which is synonymous with the word of God (1 Th. 2:13), is the gospel of Jesus. Jesus is the Word of God made flesh (John 1:14, Rev. 19:13), and the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation his nature (Heb. 1:3). See also the entry for 1 Th. 2:13.

Sounded forth. The Thessalonians’ testimony had spread throughout Greece.

The story of what God had done among the Thessalonians spread like wildfire, and what a story it was! Men who supposedly had “turned the world upside down” (Acts 17:6)

arrived in their city preaching the good news of a risen Savior. Many people abandoned their idols and turned to God in faith. Then a riot broke out, the city authorities were alarmed, and Paul and Silas, the so-called “troublemakers,” left town. By then the gospel had taken root, and the infant church stood firm in the face of continued opposition. The idol-worshiping Greeks had never seen anything like it. Wherever Paul went, this story preceded him. It was as though God was using the Thessalonian revival to prepare the way for the gospel. Before Paul arrived, people had already heard what God could do.

Also in every place. “Reports about you have spread far and wide.” Some scholars speculate that the whole Roman world had heard about the Thessalonians’ conversion to Christ, but it is unlikely that the news had traveled so far and returned to Paul in such a short time. More likely, it had spread along the roads and sea routes connecting Thessalonica to the surrounding region.

Your faith. Your convictions. The Greek noun *pistis* means “persuasion” or “conviction.” It is derived from the verb *peitho*, which means to convince, win over, or persuade.

Faith toward God. Faith is being persuaded that God loves you and that he will do what he has promised to do. Abraham, the believer and father of all who believe, “was fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised” (Rom 4:21). Faith is not a work but a rest. Faith is resting in the persuasion that God is good and trustworthy.

We have no need to say anything because everyone is talking about you.

1:9 **They themselves report about us.** “Wherever we go—to Athens and Corinth—people tell us the stories they have heard about how the gospel came to Thessalonica. Everybody has heard what God has done.”

You turned to God. “You repented and came to God in faith.”

In the old covenant, repentance was often framed as a turning away from sin (e.g., 2 Chr. 7:14). But in the new covenant, repentance is described as a return or turning to God (Matt.

13:15, Mark 4:12, Acts 3:19, 9:35, 11:21, 14:15, 20:21, 26:17-18, 20, 2 Cor. 3:16). *Turning from* versus *turning to* may seem like splitting hairs, but it's the difference between life and death. Someone who turns to God in faith automatically turns from sin and dead works, but someone who turns from sin does not automatically turn to God. Consider the religious Pharisees. They turned from sin regularly, yet they did not recognize the Son of God even as he stood among them.

From idols. Idols were pervasive in Greco-Roman culture. Major life events and business activities revolved around the worship of local deities. Public meetings opened with prayers and offerings to the patron god of the town, while trade guilds and farmers made sacrifices at shrines and temples. Idol worship was not just one aspect of life, but a chain wrapped around all.

Some of the Thessalonian Christians were Jews (see Acts 17:4), but most had been idol-worshiping Gentiles. Before they came to God, they were “slaves to those which by nature are not gods” (Gal. 4:8). They worshiped Greek and Roman gods such as Zeus and Apollo, along with local deities, and many participated in the imperial cult by burning incense to Caesar. These practices may seem quaint to modern eyes, but little has changed. Today, people worship wealth, power, and pleasure. In their desire for security, they make sacrifices at the temples of commerce and learning. The gods may have changed, but those who reject the living God remain enslaved. Only the living and true God can meet our deepest needs.

To serve. How do we serve a God who has no need for servants? We do not serve him through law-keeping and making sacrifices. We serve him by believing in the One he sent and by sharing his love with others (John 6:29, Gal. 5:13).

A living and true God stands in contrast to the lifeless idols worshiped by the pagans and the modern idols of celebrity, status, and money.

1:10 **Wait for his Son.** Like every believer, the Thessalonians were waiting for the Lord's return from heaven.

Jesus told the original apostles that they would not be around to see his return (Luke 17:22). He also told stories of masters, noblemen, and bridegrooms being gone a long time (Matt. 24:48, 25:5, 25:19). For this reason, Jesus and the epistle writers all spoke of the need to wait patiently yet eagerly for the Lord's return (Luke 12:36, Rom. 8:23, 25, 1 Cor. 1:7, 4:5, Php. 3:20, Jas. 5:7, Jude 1:21).

His Son from heaven. Jesus was no mere man descended from fallen Adam; he was a man from heaven and the true Son of the living God.

During Paul's lifetime, the Roman emperors cultivated the habit of deifying their dead predecessors. Augustus honored his adopted father, Julius Caesar, as the Divine Julius, which made him the *divi filius*, or "son of the divine one." Tiberius and later emperors claimed similar honors. Countering these imposters were those like Paul who proclaimed Jesus Christ as the true Son of God and the Lord of all.

He raised from the dead. The resurrection of Jesus Christ lay at the heart of Paul's gospel. The resurrection is the very heart of the gospel, for if Jesus has not been raised, your faith is worthless and you are still in your sins (1 Cor. 15:17). Paul did not preach a dead martyr, but a living King. Jesus is not in the tomb but on the throne!

Who rescues us. Jesus delivers us from death row and rescues us from the destruction to come (John 11:26, Rom. 5:9).

The wrath to come refers to Judgment Day when the Lord will visit everlasting destruction upon all that is opposed to him and his rule (2 Th. 1:9, 2 Pet. 2:9, 3:7). It is the day when God cries "Enough!" and ends all wickedness and everything that harms.

END OF SAMPLE

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