

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.

Paul uses the phrase “word of the Lord” to characterize the whole message of the gospel centered in Yeshua, the promised Messiah through Whom, via His substitutionary death, His triumphant resurrection, His ascension and heavenly intercession, all who have been given to Him would believe, having the penalty for their sins fully paid, be endowed with the indwelling Spirit, become living witnesses of God’s infinite love and grace, and would dwell forever with Him throughout eternity.

The phrase “has sounded forth” utilizes the Greek verb ἐξήχεω (*exēcheō*), found only here in the Apostolic Scriptures, but which may well bring into the picture the sound of a trumpet. The point is that the witness of the Thessalonian believers had become well known, not only in the borders of ancient Greece, but apparently even beyond. Since Greece was a major power in the world of Paul’s day, it may be that the testimony of the Thessalonian communities and their fervent desire to make the glories of God and the message of His salvation known, had extended even beyond to other regions as well.

If by using the Greek verb *exēcheō* Paul intended his readers to picture the sounding of a trumpet, then this may also emphasize that the Thessalonians had not only received the teaching of Paul as the truth regarding God’s gift of salvation, but that they had likewise become a strong voice to others, carefully living out and giving the same message of God’s method of salvation which they had received. This would bring to mind Paul’s teaching on the issue of “tongues” and that true communication requires understandable speech. He then illustrates his point by the analogy of a signal trumpet which was used to announce a gathering, or a warning, or a call to arms.

For if the trumpet (σάλπιγξ, *salpigks*) produces an indistinct sound, who will prepare himself for battle? (1Cor 14:8)

By analogy, it was the clarion call of the gospel that had sounded forth from Thessalonica, a call that correctly announced the glorious and true message of the gospel as centered in the saving work accomplished by Yeshua, fulfilling the will of the Father, and applied through the work of the Ruach to all who received by faith the “good news” of the gospel.

When Paul says that their faith “in every place...has gone forth,” he

must have in mind the regions of the West Bank, Syria, and Asia Minor. This would indicate that the Thessalonian communities were active in giving forth the gospel to many who came through their strategic location.

It should be borne in mind that the populous trading-center, Thessalonica, was so located (on the Egnatian Highway, thus linking the East with the West, and at the head of the Thermaic Gulf, thus connecting it with harbors all over the then-known world) that news could spread very quickly to regions far and near. All the believers at Thessalonica had to do was avail themselves of the opportunities which their strategic location afforded.¹

Here once again the Scriptures teach us the truth regarding the saving work of God. For salvation by faith in Yeshua is first something that is applied to the individual by faith, but what inevitably follows is the transformation of the believer who inevitably becomes more and more conformed to the very person of Yeshua Himself. The pace may differ regarding the progress of a true believer in Yeshua becoming set apart from the world and conformed to the likeness of Yeshua. Yet one thing is certain: all who are truly born from above will progress in sanctification, that is, become more and more set apart to God in all aspects of one's life. Surely this is the message Paul is giving us in his praise for the Thessalonian community and their evident growth in becoming valiant witnesses for Yeshua. Having been "made new" through God's grace in Yeshua, through the work of the Ruach, received by faith, they had progressed to be living witnesses of His saving power and love.

...so that we have no need to say anything. – Here Paul sums up his good report regarding the Thessalonian community and the genuine faith by which these believers were known by making it clear that he and his fellow workers had no need to "fill in the gaps" regarding the reality of their transformation from darkness into light. The transforming work of the Ruach was evident to all.

How wonderful it would be if this could be said of all our local communities of faith! Oh that our lives, even more than our words, gave forth the "sound of the trumpet" calling all who witnessed our community life to be drawn to inquire about what enabled our success and would then be open to hearing the glorious message of the gospel in Yeshua.

1 William Hendricksen, *Commentary on 1Thess.* in *Hendricksen-Kistemaker NT Commentary* (Baker, 1955), p. 54.

9–10 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, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Yeshua, who rescues us from the wrath to come.

As the previous context makes clear, the believing community in Thessalonica had made known their commitment of faith in Yeshua to regions beyond their own country, giving witness of the good work Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy had accomplished among them.

The core message which the community of Thessalonian believers made known was the dramatic change in their lives, which they describe as “turning to God from idols...” Interestingly, Paul normally uses the Greek verb ἐπιστρέφω (*epistrephō*) “to turn,” in a positive sense of “believing in the one true God” (cf. Acts 14:15; 26:18, 20; 2Co 3:16). In our text, however, he uses this word to describe “turning away from idols.” Clearly, this also emphasizes the reality of true saving faith, for when God calls a person to Himself, gifting them with saving faith, the result is leaving a life characterized by sin and being enabled by God’s grace and power to live in a manner that is pleasing to Him.

Thus, in these words of Paul, he once again emphasizes an important reality, and it is this: that when a person turns to God with true faith in Him and is therefore granted by Him eternal salvation, this will always be accompanied by increasingly “turning away” from that which is sinful and “turning toward” that which pleases God. Surely this is a process in the life of the believer, but it is that which continues to be more and more evident in thought, word, and actions. In short, growing in sanctification is the inevitable proof of possessing God’s gift of salvation.

... *turned to God from idols* – It is also interesting to note that in the Greek, the definite article “the” is actually attached to the word “idols” (τῶν εἰδώλων, *tōn eidōlōn*). This would emphasize that Paul has in mind both the image itself of the idols as well as the false gods (demons) the image represented, thus pointing to the utter inability of such paganism to render any assistance to a person in a time of need. Indeed, in Acts 14:15 Paul refers to “idols” as “vain things” (μάταιος, *mataios*), a word that carries the sense “to being of no use, idle, empty, fruitless, useless, powerless, lacking truth.”¹ Indeed, Paul teaches us that idolatry is the worship of demons:

1 BDAG, “μάταιος,” p. 621.

No, but I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God; and I do not want you to become sharers in demons. (1Cor 10:20)

Thus, “to turn to God from idols” means there was no syncretism between their new faith and their old religious loyalties. This is the picture of true repentance, a gift from God. For repentance means to abandon the former manner of life and to be committed to a new life “in Messiah Yeshua.”

...to serve a living and true God – This language reflects the words of Jeremiah:

But the LORD is the true God; He is the living God and the everlasting King. At His wrath the earth quakes, and the nations cannot endure His indignation. (Jer 10:10)

Though fallen mankind may be tricked into believing there are many “gods” who will benefit them in exchange for their worship, the reality is that the “gods” of pagan belief are actually demons who exist and serve Satan and therefore are not “true” but are the source of lies. Being liars, they simply seek to lead people away from the one, true, living God in hopes of securing their eternal damnation. In this sense, then, they are “lifeless” in the sense of unable to endow a person with true, eternal life. But all who are “in Yeshua” are granted a life lived to the glory of God now and a life that will spend an eternity of joy, blessing and unending praise in the very presence of the Almighty. That Paul proclaims the God of Israel to be the “true (ἀληθινός, *alēthinos*) God” means all others are false and not “gods” at all, but impostors.

...and to wait for His Son from heaven – Here we see Paul’s clear emphasis upon the fact that Yeshua is the Son of God, meaning He is Himself God, one with the Father and the Spirit. In fact, Yeshua is regularly called “the Son of God” in the Scriptures.¹ Though this reality is beyond our human ability to fully grasp and explain, we know it to be true, for the Scriptures are clear on this cardinal doctrine.

For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. (Is 9:6)

1 Cf. Mk 1:1; 3:11; Lk 1:35; 22:70; Jn 1:34; 10:36; 11:4; 20:31; 1Jn 5:13.

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. (2Cor 3:17)

See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Messiah. For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, (Col 2:8–9)

No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him. (Jn 1:18)

I and the Father are one. (Jn 10:30)

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you. (Jn 14:26)

When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me, and you will testify also, because you have been with Me from the beginning. (Jn 15:26-27)

The emphasis in the phrase “Son of God” is the obvious reality that a “son” partakes of the same nature as his “father.” Thus, for the Scriptures to clearly state as fact that Yeshua is “the Son of God” is likewise to affirm the glory and mystery of His fully being God in the flesh.”

... *and to wait for His Son from heaven* – What does it mean “to wait for His Son from heaven?” The Greek word translated “to wait” (*ἀναμένειν, anamenēin*)¹ is used only here in the Apostolic Scriptures. The word tends to combine both the concept of “waiting” and “expectation,” thus, “to wait with anticipation.” Paul’s use of the word here, then, emphasizes that the one who has been brought to genuine, saving faith in Yeshua, continues to live and grow in their expectation of Yeshua’s return. For to believe in Yeshua likewise means to fosters a true and growing expectation of His promised return. Indeed, as we will see, Paul regularly continues to emphasize the return of Yeshua in this epistle.²

Thus, in our text Paul gives two primary characteristics of all who have truly believed in Yeshua and are therefore more and more being conformed to His likeness. These two general characteristics are (1) a

1 (present active infinitive of *ἀναμένω, anamenō*).

2 Cf. 2:19; 3:13; 4:13–18; 5:1–11.

life that continues to reject all that is categorized under idolatry and is committed to serving the one and only God, and (2) a growing anticipation of Yeshua's promised return from heaven.

...*whom He raised from the dead, that is Yeshua* – Here, once again, Paul brings us back to the bedrock of our faith, that Yeshua, crucified and laid in the tomb, arose to life on the third day. It was this reality that solidified to Peter and the rest of the disciples that Yeshua was and is the promised Messiah, God in the flesh.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Yeshua Messiah, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Yeshua Messiah from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (1Pet 1:3–5)

And later, Paul likewise proclaimed the same reality in regard to Yeshua's resurrection, having encountered the risen Savior while on the road to Damascus.

As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" And He said, "I am Yeshua whom you are persecuting, but get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do." (Acts 9:3–6)

As much as the unbelievers consider the death and resurrection of Yeshua to be a "religious fiction," the inspired Scriptures speak to the reality of this miraculous and glorious truth, and truth that is ultimately and fully accepted only by those who are given the gift of faith, for faith is "the reality of things hoped for, the very evidence of what is not seen." (Heb 11:1).

...*that is Yeshua, who rescues us from the wrath to come.* – Here we see Paul using the verb *ῥυόμαι* (*ruomai*), "to rescue" while, in a parallel passage (Rom 5:9), he uses the verb *σώζω* (*sōzō*), "to save."

Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. (Rom 5:9)

The two words, *ruomai* “deliver” and *sōzō* “save,” though obviously different words, still have overlapping significance. Though they both mean “to rescue from,” and “to preserve from,” “rescue” is the predominate sense of *ruomai*, and “preservation” the primary sense of *sōzō*. That Paul uses both words in similar contexts would establish the fact that for those who are “in Yeshua,” both concepts are fully in place. In Yeshua we are delivered from the punishment due to us and we are likewise “saved” or “preserved” to enjoy the bountiful love of God for all eternity.

Furthermore, we may note that Paul is writing this epistle to Thessalonica, which may well have included some Jewish people in the diaspora, but which was undoubtedly primarily non-Jewish people. Yet the very love of God is extended to those outside of the people of Israel, who, by faith, are given the promise of eternal life and share in all the promises of God for those who are His. Once again, we see in this wonderful and inspired text, the infinite love of God in fulfilling His covenant promises given to Abraham.

In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.” (Gen 22:18, cf. 12:2–3)

What is “the wrath to come” of which our verse speaks? It is surely the righteous wrath of the infinitely holy God, Who will pour out upon all who have spurned Him and His Son, Yeshua, rejecting the evidence of the Ruach HaKodesh, and who have denied His very existence. All those who teach that a benevolent God would never eternally punish those who reject the work of His Son, Yeshua, fail to reckon with the fact that our God is not only infinite in His love but He is likewise infinite in His holiness. The One Who is “three-times holy” (Is 6:3, Rev 4:8) cannot overlook sin, for sin seeks to diminish His infinite holiness. Such utter holiness, when dealing with the sinfulness of mankind, is demonstrated by God either by paying the price of sin through bringing upon His own Son, Yeshua, the penalty for sin, or by administering the punishment to all those who bear the weight of their own sins.

All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him. (Is 53:6)

...and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. (1Pet 2:24)