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Volume 2 – 2009

**Salvation’s Five-Tier Irrevocable Call:
The Soteriology of 1 Thessalonians**

published in Testamentum Imperium July 2014 to replace previously author

Dr. Michael Chung, Ph.D.
Adjunct Professor of N.T., Fuller Theological Seminary, Texas
Adjunct Professor of Bible, Houston Baptist University¹

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Introduction

When Paul’s first letter to the Thessalonians is thought of theologically, the first topic that comes to mind would likely be Eschatology. Every chapter of the missive makes reference to the

¹ See www.Fuller.edu and www.HBU.edu.

eschaton—1 Thess. 1:10; 2:12, 19-20; 3:13; 4:13-18; 5:1-11, 23-24— but the letter has more to teach the ecclesial body, with Eschatology² comes other doctrines like Soteriology. In this article, the nature of Soteriology in 1 Thessalonians with the eschatological backdrop of the letter will be explored. Within the epistle, one finds that Thessalonian Soteriology involves being: Changed, Chosen, Cherished, Channeled, and Choate. It is these five aspects that will give Soteriology's essence in 1 Thessalonians and make God's call of salvation an irrevocable call to the believer.

1. Changed

Right away, Paul makes reference to his disciples' changed life. The triad of faith, hope, and love is common in Paul's letters, often referencing a believer's full life in Christ, is introduced in 1 Thess. 1:3.³ The triad is in the genitive case (*τοῦ ἔργου τῆς πίστεως καὶ τοῦ κόπου τῆς ἀγάπης καὶ τῆς ὑπομονῆς τῆς ἐλπίδος τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ*) and denotes the subject of the action forming a verbal clause with their nouns of action: their faith produces works, their love produces labor and their hope makes them steadfast.⁴ There is not a big difference between the meaning and nature of the words used for work and labor but they do serve to link faith and love together. Paul here links faith and love as he does in 3:6-8.

The triad reappears in 5:8; faith and love are again linked as a breastplate along with the confidence of hope as a helmet. Paul clearly has faith, hope, and love serving as a measure of maturation and as the evidence of a life that is growing.

For Paul, a real faith will produce action and his reference to his disciples' "work produced by faith" is his exhortation to a life that is bringing glory to God. *πίστις* is used eight times in 1 Thessalonians. The first appearance of *πίστις* is in 1:3. Work of faith (*τοῦ ἔργου τῆς πίστεως*) begins the triad with faith denoting the subject of the action: their work is a product of their faith. The converts' faith is producing

² Much of Eschatology is thought of in terms of the "already and not yet:" much of Old Testament prophecy was fulfilled during Christ's first coming but many areas will not be culminated until Christ's second coming.

³ See also 1 Thessalonians 5:8; Romans 5:2-5; 1 Corinthians 13:13; Galatians 5:5-6; Colossians 1:4-5

⁴ Beale (2003) p. 44 writes, "Paul begins to address this overall concern in 1:2-5 by thanking God for the Thessalonians because they display the latter-day marks of God's elect people."

action, offering proof of their commitment to Christ. The actual nature of the work done is unknown. Malherbe thinks the nature of the work has to do with the preaching of the gospel.⁵ This is certainly a possibility; the context of the pericope is how the gospel has impacted the converts' lives and how it is impacting others from their witness, but the exact nature of the "work of faith" is unknown at this point in the letter.⁶ It could have been manual labor, ministerial works, works of charity like helping the poor and visiting the sick.⁷

This faith is beyond just an intellectual assent, it also involves volitional and emotive aspects where the converts exhibit a true-life change or genuine works after believing the gospel (1 Thess. 1:5-6; 2:13). This acceptance brought about a change in their lives where they turned from idols as a result of their faith in God and became a visible witness to those who were around them (1:4-10).⁸

But not only is their faith producing action, so is their love, 1:3 continues to describe their lives as changed from their old self as their love has labor. Love denotes the character of their labor (τοῦ κόπου τῆς ἀγάπης). The specific type of labor is uncertain.

So we have a similar issue here as we did with the "work of faith." Paul talks about their hospitality in 1:9 toward him and his associates and how this hospitality was an example to those who were hearing the word of God throughout the region and beyond.⁹ Their rejection of idols and turning to God is also an example of their newfound love for God. Could hospitality and serving God be what Paul meant by "labor of love"? In 3:12 Paul desires his converts' love to grow for one another and for all people. In 3:6 their continuing in faith and **love** brought relief to Paul and the missionaries as they were

⁵ Malherbe (2000) p.108. Malherbe writes, "The context here . . . deals with the preaching and reception of the word, and the three terms stressing the effort of the Thessalonians describe the strenuousness with which they preached . . . The three terms thus describe the preaching of the gospel in an ascending order of intensity, culminating in *hypomone*."

⁶ See also Martin (1995) p.56.

⁷ See also Green (2002) pp.89-91

⁸ It also brought a confirmation of their election by God. *ἐκλογή*, is used four other times by Paul in Romans (Rom.9:11; 11:5, 7, 28) all with the aspect of His electing people. Nicholl (2004) p.86 writes, "There is no reason to deny that here also Paul is referring to the pre- (or a-) temporal election of God, inferring that from the events of the mission (1:3, 5-10)."

⁹ Green (2002) pp.90-91 writes, "Paul and his associates also remembered the Thessalonians' *labor prompted by love* . . . most likely refers to any kind of self-sacrificing labor the believers engaged in as they served those both inside and outside the community."

concerned about whether or not their converts would continue to believe.

Love served as a confirmation of possessing a genuine faith. Their love may have been expressed toward Timothy when he was there as the converts were described as longing to see the missionaries and thinking kindly of them. Timothy may have also observed them continuing in love of each other, seeing them serve one another and doing good deeds toward each other and those outside the community.

Paul has a similar emphasis here, as the object of love is *εἰς ἀλλήλους καὶ εἰς πάντας*, a focus on the community, and those outside the community. In 3:12-13, Paul prays for their love for each other and all people to grow, linking it with having a blameless heart before the Lord at the Parousia.¹⁰ To grow in love is to grow in holiness. Like faith, love can grow and Paul's goal is to see the converts' love grow. This fuels his use of the incorporeal instrument¹¹ of prayer in an appeal to the divine agency for a growth in love.¹² Not only does Paul challenge the community to love everyone in 3:12; in 4:9 he also challenges them to specifically love those in the community. *φιλαδελφία* is a specific emphasis on loving those in the community of believers. *φιλαδελφία* is narrower than *ἀγάπη*. *φιλαδελφία* has a connotation of love of a brother/sister while *ἀγάπη* continues to all of humankind. So by using *φιλαδελφία*, Paul appeals to a love among the community and in 3:12, the scope for Paul's commandment to love is not just those in the community but all people.¹³

Why the emphasis here on the community and the emphasis on all people in 3:12? It is possible that Paul wants the community to be balanced, loving each other and loving those outside? There may have been a concern that they would be too focused on the community and neglect those outside it or the opposite of being too focused on others outside that the community is neglected. But within

¹⁰ There is some uncertainty whether 3:11 begins a new prayer or is a continuation of the prayer in 3:10, see Beale (2003) p.107ff

¹¹ Incorporeal instruments would be: prayer, word of God, and suffering. List is not exhaustive.

¹² Beale (2003) p 108, "Paul believes that his prayer in 3:12-13 will be answered in part by God enabling him to return and strengthen the people by means of God's power."

¹³ See Marshall (1983) p. 101.

the letter, Paul is balanced, encouraging both love of those in the community and those outside it.

In 1 Thess. 5:8, faith, love and hope are linked as pieces of armor that will protect against the attack of evil. Used together, they are to protect the heart. Love here is defensive against the challenges a believer must face. In 5:13, Paul wants the converts to love their leaders. Paul here highlights a specific group of people to love, the leaders. He was more general in 4:9 but specific here.

Love is important to Paul in the letter and he stresses this importance by referring to it seven times (1:3; 3:6; 3:12; 4:9-10; 5:8; 5:13).¹⁴ It is linked with faith, expressed toward others, and can increase. Paul desires them to love each other as love will strengthen their community but to also have a focus of loving all people. Paul associates a growth in love with a growth in character; therefore, love can be used as a measure for progress in the converts' goal towards maturing.

The third aspect of the Pauline triad has hope as the foundation and driving force behind their faith and love.¹⁵ This hope is very clear from the letter that the driving force behind the disciples' hope is the confident return of Jesus Christ: his person and eschaton. The evidence of the Pauline triad in the Thessalonian converts is evidence that they are changed from their former unbelieving life. This hope provides stability, rooted in Jesus Christ and his return. It is also this hope that fuels the changed life, enabling the believers to be an example to those around them of a changed life.¹⁶ It is not a surprise that Paul would end the list with hope instead of love as he does in 1 Corinthians 13. The trials and afflictions of the Thessalonian converts' new found faith probably required some encouragement to endure the trials. Hope, for Paul, was the foundation for enduring these trials.

¹⁴ Bruce (1982) 12 writes, "love is the present (and continuing) relationship between God and his people through Christ."

¹⁵ Ibid, "hope is bound up with the conviction that 'he who has begun a good work' in them 'will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ' (Phil 1:6).

¹⁶ Ibid, "Perhaps 'hope' has the emphatic position at the end of the triad here because of the eschatological note of the whole letter."

More insight into their former lives is offered in 1 Thessalonians 1:6-10. In 1:6, Paul uses the word *imitation* (μιμητής).¹⁷ Though μιμητής and its cognates only appear eleven times in the whole of the New Testament, there is much literature on how Paul viewed it.¹⁸ From 1 Thessalonians, another mark of the change in the believers' lives is their imitation of Paul, Silas, and Timothy—true believers—and of the Lord. The second tier of imitation is imitating believers in the surrounding regions of Macedonia and Achaia (1:7) in the same manner they imitated the churches in Judea (2:14).¹⁹ Paul's most famous statement on imitation is found in 1 Cor 11:1 where he charges his Corinthian disciples to imitate himself as Paul imitates Christ, the Thessalonian converts seem to be ahead as Paul does not charge them but encourages them for imitating believers and Christ. Despite severe suffering, the Thessalonian converts did not apostatize their faith but continued on, in so doing, their changed life became evident to believers around them in Macedonia and Achaia (1:7). Insight into the converts lives is found in 1:9-10. Their old life involved idol worship. This again is evidence of their changed life. The converts' first turned from idols: their previous religion; second, served God, and third, were waiting for Christ to return.

Despite their changed lives, Paul exhorted them to live lives that were worthy of God (2:12). He worried about their faith surviving the rough circumstances and persecution, so much so, that he sent Timothy to try to encourage and exhort them in case they slip away from the faith (3:1-5). Timothy brought back a good report that the Thessalonian converts were indeed continuing in their faith (3:6-7). This good report likely formed Paul's opening exhortation and encouraging remarks about their faith (1:3).

Paul's prayer in 3:10-13 highlights his desire to see the change in the Thessalonians' lives continue. Their appears to be added challenge in the area of sexuality in Thessalonica so Paul gives a special exhortation in 4:1-12 to continue in holiness and love.

¹⁷ 1 Thess. 1:6; Phil.3:17;1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1; Gal.4:12; Phil 4:9.

¹⁸ Martin (1999) pp.40-41 and Fowl (1993) pp.428.

¹⁹ See also Samra (2006) pp.125-126

2. Chosen

Because of the great change in their life, Paul could assert that this change was due to God's choosing of them.²⁰ Paul uses the noun ἐκλογή here in 1:4 to communicate to his Thessalonian disciples that they are chosen by God.²¹ The only other time Paul uses ἐκλογή is in the book of Romans: 9:11; 11:5, 7, 28. Romans uses ἐκλογή entirely to communicate election: the election of Jacob (9:11), the election of a remnant in Israel (11:5, 7), the election of Israel based on God's love (11:28). In 1 Thessalonians 1:4, there is also a strong communication and interrelationship between God's love and his election. The change in the converts' lives from idol worshippers to believers are examples to the church in surrounding Macedonia and Achaia is proof of their ἐκλογή by God. Justification marks the beginning of the journey²² of Christian formation so the divine agency's supremacy in justification contributes to Paul's view of the supremacy of the divine agency in sanctification. 1:5 explains the dynamics of the election by stating that the Holy Spirit works together with the preaching of the gospel to bring about change in the converts.

A related word to ἐκλογή is found in 1 Thessalonians 2:12; 4:7; 5:24—καλέω—which communicates call, an invitation, a summons, call in. In 2:12,²³ God καλέω the converts in his kingdom and glory.²⁴ Paul uses καλέω 33 times in his letters (disputed and undisputed) often referencing election. Paul's great ordo salutis is found in Romans 8:29-30 in which καλέω appears two times in Romans 8:30. The order in Romans 8:30 goes foreknowledge, predestination, calling (καλέω), and justification. καλέω is associated by Paul in Romans 8:30 with the foreknowledge and predestination of God leading to justification.²⁵

²⁰ See Lightfoot (reprint) p.12

²¹ Witherington (2006) 64 writes, "ἐκλογῆ is not used in the NT of election to "final salvation." It refers rather to conversion . . . God desired them to be saved."

²² Ibid.

²³ On Paul as the "teaching father," see Bridges (2008) 54.

²⁴ Wanamaker (1990) 107 writes, ". . . Paul commonly refers to God's call in reference to the conversion experience . . . Christians are continually called into God's own dominion and glory, just as they must continually strive to live their lives as servants of God.

²⁵ Ibid., "a dialect exists between call and response, which gives Christian experience a dynamic rather than static character."

Paul talks in 1 Thessalonians 2:12 that the καλέω is into God's kingdom and glory. Paul does not teach too much on kingdom, the concept is much more common in the gospel writers.²⁶ While βασιλεία appears about fifty times just in the Gospel of Matthew alone, it appears only fourteen times in Paul's letters as a whole (both disputed and undisputed). When Paul uses βασιλεία it is often in summary of his preaching message and not a major topic like Jesus teaches in the Gospels. Related to βασιλεία is the word for glory: δόξα. Both kingdom and glory share the definite article τὴν, based on Granville Sharp's Rule, this would communicate conceptual unity between the two, making them synonymous. With such an emphasis on the eschaton in 1 Thessalonians, Paul is likely using the word glory to represent the grandeur and magnificence of God at the consummation of the kingdom, the eschaton.

Not only does Paul use καλέω to describe how God ushers people into his kingdom and glory, in 1 Thessalonian 4:7, it is used to exhort his converts into holy living, specifically, sexual purity.²⁷ Paul says that God has called his disciples into lives of purity/holiness.²⁸ The theme of sanctification continues in Paul's last use of καλέω in 1 Thessalonians 5:24 where Paul is confident in the providence of sovereignty of God to bring about complete sanctification in the lives of his Thessalonian disciples. The essence of καλέω in two of three instances in 1Thessalonians revolves around the sovereign ability of God to bring about his purpose in the lives of Paul's Thessalonian disciples.

In 1 Thessalonians 3:3, Paul informs his disciples that they are "destined" (κεῖμαι) to suffer. This is the only instance of κεῖμαι in 1 Thessalonians and it is only used four other times in the Pauline corpus (1 Cor. 3:11; 2 Cor. 3:15; Phil. 1:16; 1 Tim. 1:9). Only in Phil 1:16 is there an aspect of "chosen" found in the verb usage of κεῖμαι. The verb is also in the passive mood, which communicates the subject

²⁶ Beker (1980) 146 believes that Paul's sparse usage of kingdom is due to the apostle seeing the coming kingdom very much related to the older one.

²⁷ Malherbe (2000) 233 writes, "The call of God of which Paul speaks took place through his preaching of the gospel . . . and is viewed from a negative and positive side, once more formulated antithetically, with the stress in the second, positive member of the antithesis.

²⁸ Ibid 234 writes, "It is God's call that they are sanctified . . . that they became . . . saints by calling."

is receiving the action, in this instance, κείμεθα is a divine passive communicating that God is doing the appointing/destining.²⁹

So, τίθημι is used in 1 Thess. 5:9, a much often used verb in the New Testament with many different meanings in context, here, the writer uses it to communicate how God has not chosen his people to experience wrath. Some regard this wrath to be the final judgment while others believe it is a future period known as the “tribulation.” Not only did God not appoint/destine/chose believers to experience his wrath but to receive salvation, completed when Jesus returns. This affirms that salvation is an irrevocable call in Paul’s thought.

3. Cherished

When the issue of election and soteriology are discussed in a reformed context, words like predestination, limited atonement, total depravity, unconditional election, irresistible grace, and perseverance of the saints are common discussion points, but the word cherished is not always linked with chosen.³⁰ In 1 Thessalonians 1:4, Paul links the participle cherished (ἀγαπάω) which can also be translated as beloved or loved with the noun for chosen (ἐκλογή) linking the idea of God’s choice with God cherishing.³¹ Bridges will state that ἐκλογή communicates “close ties of friendship that Paul is forming with this community. This term clearly belongs to Paul’s linguistic world—the language of belonging. The Thessalonian believers belong to God (and) . . . Paul. Solidarity between writer and reader is formed with the world of relationship is affirmed.”³² For Bridges, God’s choosing of the Thessalonians draws them into a committed relationship between the divine and Paul. Love involves choice. ἀγαπάω is a perfect passive participle—ἠγαπημένοι—in 1:4. The perfect tense communicates that God’s love/cherishing is completed but continues on in the present while the passive mood is a divine passive communicating to the reader that it is God cherishing his chosen. Paul

²⁹ Malherbe (2000) 193 writes, “Paul thought of his suffering as divinely determined and his frequent references to it show how intrinsic it was to his self-understanding.

³⁰ Beale (2003) 50 writes, “The statement that they had been loved by God emphasizes either the idea of election or gives the divine motivation of it.”

³¹ Beale (2003) 49 writes, “Forms of the verb “to love” (agapaō) sometimes occur with a synonymous sense (Rom 9:13; Eph 1:4-6; Col 3:12; 2 Thess 2:13).

³² Bridges (2008) 22.

uses ἀγαπάω again in 1 Thess 4:9 but in this context, he exhorts the Thessalonian converts to love one another with this ἀγαπάω love.³³

The notion of being chosen and cherished—biblically— is not unique to 1 Thessalonians, in Deuteronomy 4:37-38 the writer describes Israel as the beloved and chosen of God. The writer of Ephesians lays out this chosen love most vividly, God chosens (Eph 1:4, 5, 11), then in love God chose his people before the world was created to be holy and blameless.

4. Channeled

Soteriology must have a mechanism. In 1 Thessalonians 1:5, the mechanism by which soteriology is channeled to the Thessalonian disciples are: the gospel message, the Holy Spirit, the convicted receiver, and the trustworthy messenger.³⁴

The Gospel Message

The message Paul preached to the Thessalonians would be Christ risen and crucified. Wanamaker writes, “Gospel” . . . occurs some 60 times in the Pauline corpus and is the apostle’s favorite term for describing the message that he proclaimed.”³⁵ This message was preached to the Thessalonians. Gordon Fee writes, “the message of the gospel is truth accompanied by experienced reality. It did indeed come “in word,” meaning in the form of proclaimed truth, as a message from God himself . . . Thus God verified the truthfulness of the message by a display of his power through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.”³⁶

The Holy Spirit

Salvation is a spiritual event and in this case the channel of the Holy Spirit coupled with the gospel message being preached to receiving hearers produces converts to Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit brings the power of the gospel and allows for the hearer to be changed

³³ Fee (2009) 159 writes on *philadelphia*, “ a word that was used throughout the Greco-Roman world for love between actual siblings. But in its first appearance in the New Testament it has already assumed the familial relationship with God’s newly formed people had with each other because of their common relationship to God through Christ.”

³⁴ Fee (2009) 31-32 writes, “he reminds the Thessalonians of the experiential, thus evidential, nature of their election, as how it came about.”

³⁵ Wanamaker (1990) 78.

³⁶ Fee (2009) 32-33.

when the Holy Spirit channels the changing message of the gospel to the convert. The source of power for Paul is the Holy Spirit.³⁷ A significant channel of soteriology is the spiritual dimension of the Holy Spirit changing a soul/spirit in a faithful response to the gospel message.³⁸

The Convicted Receiver

Though the message is preached, the hearer must respond and in this case, the Thessalonian converts responded with full conviction to the message Paul and his companions preached to them. The power of the Holy Spirit channeled the message of the gospel to hearers who, aided by the Spirit, were able to accept the gospel message and respond to the Holy Spirit's effectual call. The Thessalonians received the word in much affliction (1:6; 2:14) but did not renounce or reject the gospel message knowing that they would experience persecution from their former life. Fee writes, "What strikes one here is what he recalls for them as the evidence of their genuine conversion: Their experience of joy, resulting from the Holy Spirit's invasion of their lives."³⁹

The Trustworthy Messenger

Another channel of salvation is through the messenger. One reason Paul is so certain that the Thessalonian disciples are indeed sincere in their faith and chosen by God is the fact that he and his companions bring and legitimacy and influence of the preachers, appealing to the fact that the Thessalonians knew what type of men they were.⁴⁰ Wanamaker writes, "while the content of preaching can never be divorced fully from the act of preaching, this verse (1:5) seems to refer to the manner in which Paul and his fellow missionaries preached among the readers. . . 'our gospel' should be understood as meaning 'our gospel preaching.'"⁴¹

³⁷ See Wanamaker (1990) 79.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Fee (2009) 39

⁴⁰ Ibid 36

⁴¹ Wanamaker (1990) 78.

5. Choate

Soteriology culminates in glorification. Until the eschaton, the believer must engage in the cleansing process known as sanctification.⁴² But salvation will have a completeness/perfection and Paul writes about how the Thessalonians will become choate at the eschaton. 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 talks about how the Thessalonians' entire being—spirit, soul, and body—will be entirely sanctified/choate at the second coming of Jesus: Αὐτὸς δὲ ὁ θεὸς τῆς εἰρήνης ἀγιάσαι ὑμᾶς ὀλοτελεῖς, καὶ ὀλόκληρον ὑμῶν τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ ἡ ψυχὴ καὶ τὸ σῶμα ἀμέμπτως ἐν τῇ παρουσίᾳ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τηρηθεῖη. πιστὸς ὁ καλῶν ὑμᾶς, ὃς καὶ ποιήσει.

So Αὐτὸς is an adjectival intensive⁴³ modifying and giving emphasis to ὁ θεός.⁴⁴ The phrase means “God **himself**.” The apostle is stressing to his converts how God will bring about sanctification to give them encouragement and understanding, since spiritual growth cannot be achieved purely by one's own efforts. Paul brings reassurance that God is the one bringing about the growth.

Paul goes on to express this desire to them with ἀγιάσαι and τηρηθεῖη. The two verbs are in the optative mood expressing Paul's desire in the prayer to see his converts sanctified by God. The optative mood is used to denote possibility. The mood “may be used to appeal to the volition.”⁴⁵ When the optative mood is used without ἄν, a wish is indicated. So it is used to express an “obtainable wish or a prayer” and is often “an appeal to the will.”⁴⁶ This clearly expressed Paul's desire to see his converts sanctified wholly and his confidence in God.

The totality of the sanctification is also expressed by ὀλόκληρον ὑμῶν τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ ἡ ψυχὴ καὶ τὸ σῶμα ἀμέμπτως ἐν τῇ παρουσίᾳ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τηρηθεῖη. By using spirit, soul, and body, Paul is communicating to his converts the entirety of the

⁴² Fee (2009) writes, “Paul concludes his letter by emphasizing his two major concerns in writing: that the Thessalonian believers continue on a course of holy living; and that they do so until the Parousia itself.”

⁴³ See Mounce, (2003) 102 for a discussion on the adjectival intensive. “Adjectival intensive” is not the standard term used but it is the term used by *Gramcord*. It is usually just referred to as an intensive pronoun or an emphasizing pronoun.

⁴⁴ See also Fee (2009) 226-231.

⁴⁵ Wallace, (1996) 480.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 481.

process, how his desire is for a complete and thorough growth on all levels — physical and metaphysical.

This complete sanctification also is expressed by the similar roots and similar meanings of the words *ὀλοτελείς*, meaning complete in every way, and *ὀλόκληρον*, meaning whole and complete. Paul has placed the cognates in close proximity as an alliteration to emphasize his desire for their sanctification to be complete, wholly throughout their being, and not partial. He wants his converts to view growing into holiness as crucial in their life and that it will be complete at the Parousia. We already discussed earlier the eschatological aspect of the letter. Here, Paul connects holiness with eschatology.

Πιστὸς ὁ καλῶν ὑμᾶς, ὃς καὶ ποιήσει. Paul ends the section by repeating the essence of the prayer and placing the emphasis on God and assuring his converts that this process will be finished by Him in the future.

It is clear that the heart of the prayer is for the convert's growth and maturation. The phrase in 1 Thess. 5:23, καὶ ὀλόκληρον ὑμῶν τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ ἡ ψυχὴ καὶ τὸ σῶμα.⁴⁷ *σῶμα* can also have a metaphysical aspect⁴⁸ along with the physical, but as was discussed before, used with soul and spirit, Paul is communicating a totality, physical and meta-physical.

Paul uses *αὐτὸς* in the predicate position as an emphasizing pronoun drawing attention to *ὁ θεός* as the one who is doing the forming. God is described as the God of peace (also in Rom 15:33; 16:20; 2 Cor 13:11; Phil 4:9). Wanamaker writes, “For Paul divine peace ultimately refers to eschatological salvation, as is indicated by such passages as Rom. 2:10; 5:1; 8:6; 14:17; Phil 4:7. To describe God as the God of peace as 1 Thes. 5:23 does is to view God as the source of well-being for the people of God.”⁴⁹ Paul appeals to this source of well-being to help the converts in the maturation process. It is not just physical (τὸ σῶμα), or meta-physical (τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ ἡ ψυχὴ). Paul is indicating that the totality of growth influences and

⁴⁷ On the issue of Pauline letter closings being a summary of Paul's main themes in the letter see Weima (1994).

⁴⁸ Bultmann (1952) pp.202-203 writes, “man is soma when he is objectivized in relation to himself by becoming the object of his own thought, attitude, or conduct; he is soma in that he can separate from himself and come under the domination of outside powers.”

⁴⁹ Wanamaker (1990) 205.

forms the whole person. And the totality of maturation culminates at the eschaton; ἀμέμπτως ἐν τῇ παρουσίᾳ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τηρηθείη shows that Paul clearly desires the Lord Jesus to find his disciples complete and blameless in the totality of their being at the eschaton. Hence, Paul makes his appeal to the Lord to accomplish this.

Conclusion

From the above discussion, we see that Paul’s doctrine of salvation involves a call that is irrevocable to the believer and manifests itself in a visibly changed life, spiritually chosen by God for salvation, with being chosen also comes being spiritually cherished by God, channeled via— the gospel message, the Holy Spirit, the convicted receiver, and the trustworthy messenger—and choate or perfected via the Holy Spirit and the eschaton.

Because of this fivefold soteriological process, there is a “blessed assurance” of a future dwelling with God at the eschaton.

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