***1 Thessalonians***

***Chapter 2***

*Paul’s Ministry in Thessalonica*

**You know, brothers, that our visit to you was not a failure.  2 We had previously suffered and been insulted in Philippi, as you know, but with the help of our God we dared to tell you his gospel in spite of strong opposition.  3 For the appeal we make does not spring from error or impure motives, nor are we trying to trick you.  4 On the contrary, we speak as men approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please men but God, who tests our hearts.  5 You know we never used flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed—God is our witness.  6 We were not looking for praise from men, not from you or anyone else. As apostles of Christ we could have been a burden to you,  7 but we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children.  8 We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us.  9 Surely you remember, brothers, our toil and hardship; we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you. 10 You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed.  11 For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children,  12 encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory. 13 And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.  14 For you, brothers, became imitators of God’s churches in Judea, which are in Christ Jesus: You suffered from your own countrymen the same things those churches suffered from the Jews,  15 who killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets and also drove us out. They displease God and are hostile to all men  16 in their effort to keep us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved. In this way they always heap up their sins to the limit. The wrath of God has come upon them at last.**

**2:1–12** A “manual” for a minister: 1. His message is God’s good news (“gospel,” v. 2). 2. His motive is not impurity (v. 3), pleasing people (v. 4), greed (v. 5) or seeking praise from people (v. 6), but pleasing God (v. 4). 3. His manner is not one of trickery (v. 3), flattery (v. 5) or a cover-up (v. 5), but of courage (v. 2), gentleness (v. 7), love (vv. 8, 11), toil (v. 9) and holiness (v. 10). (CSB)

**2:1** *You know.* The local church could refute the accusation of insincerity that evidently had been leveled against Paul (v. 3). (CSB)

Paul visited the Thessalonians during his second missionary journey. (TLSB)

The apostle here takes up the thought which he had broached in chap. 1, 9, of his first coming to Thessalonica: For yourselves know, brethren, our entrance to you, that it was not vain. He had, in the first chapter, spoken of the voluntary testimony which he heard from others as he continued his work in Achaia. Here he appeals to their knowledge of the situation, at the same time forestalling or removing any doubts that may meanwhile have arisen in the minds of the Thessalonians as to the soundness of the teaching which they had accepted and as to the wisdom of their having accepted the new doctrine so quickly. The thought may have been suggested to them that, after all, the name, the faith, the hope of the Christians was a thing of vanity, and that they, therefore, were suffering for it to no purpose. So Paul emphasizes that his visit to them was not a matter of foolishness and vanity, but a mission of vital success. (Kretzmann)

**2:2** *insulted.* Paul was deeply hurt by the way he had been treated in the city of Philippi (see Ac 16:19–40). (CSB)

Paul and Silas narrowly escaped the search made for them in Thessalonica. Instead, their host and some of the Christian brothers were mistreated. (TLSB)

To drive this thought home, Paul n would ow goes into historical details: But having before suffered and been insulted, as you know, in Philippi, we took bold confidence in our God to speak to you the Gospel of God with intense earnestness. These words of Paul substantiate the account of Luke in Acts 16. Paul and Silas, although Roman citizens, had been grossly ill-treated by the rulers at Philippi, the so-called praetors, being both scourged and thrown into prison in opposition to Roman law. Of this insulting treatment the Thessalonians knew, the wounds of Paul and Silas having probably not yet been healed when they reached their city. In spite of this outrage, however, Paul had pushed forward, according to the command of the Lord, Matt. 10, 23, bringing the Gospel to other cities and to Thessalonica first of all. In doing so, Paul had made use of all boldness and courage in proclaiming the Gospel, relying, as he did, upon the power of God, not upon his own natural talents and fearlessness. With the most intense earnestness and zeal had he labored among them, even at the peril of his life. This is the spirit which should at all times actuate the ministers of the Gospel, making them willing to do all and bear all for the sake of the Master and His precious news of salvation. (Kretzmann)

**2:3** *trick.* The Greek for this word was originally used of a lure for catching fish; it came to be used of any sort of cunning used for profit. (CSB)

There were many false teachers of religion and philosophy in the Greek world of the time who deceived people and made great claims for personal gains. Paul distances himself from such deceivers. (TLSB)

There had not been so much as a tinge of selfishness in Paul’s ministry: For our appeal is not from fraud, nor out of uncleanness, nor in guile, but even as we have been tested by God to be entrusted with the Gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God, who proves our hearts. Paul’s appeal to men in the work of his ministry, his exhortation, his admonition, was free from impure, sinister motives. He himself was not the victim of fraud and error; he had not been deceived into becoming a servant of Christ; he was not the victim of a superstition, of a delusion. He was, moreover, not engaged in the work of the ministry from foul, impure motives, including covetousness and selfishness. Nor had he, in turn, made use of guile and cunning with the object of deceiving his hearers; all dishonest tricks of cheating and ensnaring were far from him. His mission was very emphatically not the outcome of self-seeking. (Kretzmann)

**2:4** APPROVED BY GOD – This was the result after a test. God tested Paul and then entrusted the preaching of the Gospel to him. (TLSB)

 *our hearts.* Not simply our emotions, but also our intellects and wills. (CSB)

Paul preached in constant awareness of his accountability before God for his works. (TLSB)

The situation was this: As God, who tests the hearts, had attested his fitness to be entrusted with the Gospel, so he was speaking the news of salvation, so he was preaching sin and grace, with no thought of pleasing men. It was God, who knows the hearts of men, that had chosen the apostle for his office. Paul did not assume any worthiness of his own, but he exalted the authority of God. Cp. 1 Tim. 1, 12. By reason of this commission he considered himself under obligations not to engage men’s minds by flattering proposals nor to adapt his preaching to their tastes, but to consult only the pleasure of God, who, as the Judge of hearts, would soon expose and judge impure motives and selfish objects. (Kretzmann)

**2:5** *mask.* Personal profit was never Paul’s aim. (CSB)

Paul’s opponents conducted themselves for flattery and praise. Paul, however, as the Lord’s true servant, wanted to please God, who searches the heart (unlike people, who see only what is outside). (TLSB)

The apostle enlarges upon this thought still more fully: For neither at any time did we indulge in talk of flattery, as you know, nor in pretense of self-seeking, God is witness, nor seeking praise from men, neither from you nor from others, although we might have been burdensome as the apostles of Christ. Flattering talk invariably indicates selfishness and a striving to gain private ends. In this respect he called upon the Thessalonians as witnesses; they knew that he had not used flattery, that he had not attempted to please them by such methods. For the other fact, in turn, that he made use of no pretense for the purpose of self-seeking, that he had no selfish aims in his heart, he calls upon God as witness, appealing to Him who tests hearts and minds. (Kretzmann)

**2:6** *burden.* Apostles were entitled to be supported by the church (see 1Co 9:3–14; 2Co 11:7–11). Paul did not always take advantage of the right, but insisted that he had it. (CSB)

Though Paul and his fellow workers could request pay, thanks, and greater public recognition, they did not seek these but focused on the service to which God called the. (TLSB)

That there was no selfish ambition in his heart appeared finally from the fact that he did not seek praise and honor from men, as he pointedly says, neither from the Thessalonians nor from anybody else. This disinterestedness stands out all the more strongly, since Paul might well have been burdensome to the Thessalonians, he might have used his authority, he might have assumed the dignity which was his as the apostle of Christ, and demanded honoring recognition of his position, and that of Silas, from them. Note: All persons that hold positions of authority in the Church will do well to pattern after St. Paul in this respect, since it is only in exceptional cases that the dignity of their office receives the recognition which it deserves in the estimation of men. (K)

**2:7** MOTHER CARING – ESV has “nursing mother.” Paul characterizes the care he has rendered to the Thessalonians with a most intimate, human example. (TLSB)

The apostle is still carrying out the thought of v.1. that his coming to Thessalonica had not been in vain, that his ministry in that city had been in accordance with the will of God, with an entire absence of selfishness: But we were lenient in the midst of you, as when a nursing mother fondles her own children. Lenience, gentleness, kindness, that had been the key-note of Paul’s behavior in his apostolic work at all times. All was tenderness and devotion, fostering and protecting care, in his relation to the Thessalonian Christians. He knows of no better and more striking comparison than that of a mother in her tender care for the children of her bosom. Also, Paul was not the strict disciplinarian and stern taskmaster, but he was mild, kind, loving in the midst of them; he was among them, surrounded by them, as a mother by her children, as a teacher by his pupils. (Kretzmann)

**2:8** OUR LIVES – Cf John 15:13. Paul was willing to risk his life to preach the Gospel in hostile environments. (TLSB)

In agreement with this disposition, Paul could truthfully write of himself: So, with our yearning desire for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the Gospel of God, but also our own souls, because you have become beloved to us. So great was Paul’s affection for the Thessalonians that he yearned over them with loving desire, that he was perfectly willing, gladly desirous, not only to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ to them, but also to lay down, with Silas, his very life for their sakes, such a firm place had they gained in his affections. Such utter selflessness, such willing self-sacrifice, was bound to convince the Thessalonians of the purity of Paul’s affectionate attachment for them and repel any, even distant, insinuation and imputation of covetousness and false ambition. (Kretzmann)

**2:9** *toil and hardship.* Greeks despised manual labor and viewed it as fit only for slaves, but Paul was not ashamed of doing any sort of work that would help further the gospel. He did not want to be unduly dependent on others. (CSB)

Paul did not wait for the support of others but did receive offerings when given. (TLSB)

The apostle furthermore reminds the Thessalonians of his actual ministerial labors in their midst: For you remember, brethren, our toil and travail; night and day laboring not to be burdensome to any of you, we proclaimed to you the Gospel of God. Paul’s ministry in Thessalonica had been performed in the sight of all men, and it was not so long ago that they could not readily recollect his strenuous labor, connected with various disagreeable features, while he was living in their city. It is probable from this passage that Paul, also in Thessalonica, worked at his trade and supported himself, receiving help only twice, from the congregation at Philippi, Phil. 4, 16. It was a rather strenuous life which he led, rising before dawn to work at his handicraft, taking the best hours of the day and evening to proclaim the precious Gospel of God, the news of the salvation of all men which had been entrusted to him by the Lord Himself. All this Paul cheerfully took upon himself in order not to burden the Thessalonians with his support; not even the necessaries of life he sought from them, in order that his intercourse with them might be one of continual giving on his part. (Kretzmann)

**2:10** RIGHTEOUS AND BLAMESLESS…AMONG YOU – Paul was not claiming perfection in himself, but that he was made righteous and blameless in Christ, who enabled him to set a good example. (TLSB)

At the same time the apostle was conscious of his own integrity: You are witnesses, and God, that our behavior was holy and just and irreproachable before you that believe. Two classes of witnesses Paul calls upon, men, to testify to his actions and behavior, God, to bear witness of the purity of his disposition and motives. He could calmly state that his behavior, his conduct, had been holy, in the sight of God, with regard to his reverence toward God, just and fair in his relation to his fellowmen, without reproach in his whole deportment before men, in his capacity of God’s ambassador to proclaim sin and grace. Thus had Paul comported himself before the Thessalonians, with reference to them, thus offering a fine example and pattern to all pastors and teachers to live a life of true sanctification before men. (Kretzmann)

**2:11** FATHER…OWN CHILDREN – See maternal example in verse 7. Here Paul uses a paternal example to describe his warnings and instruction. (TLSB)

**2:12** *live lives worthy of God.* See Eph 4:1. (CSB)

This comes from the Greek word peripateo and is used in the ethical sense to mean “conduct yourself.” The Thessalonians are admonished to demonstrate a character compatible with God’s will, i.e., the revealed Word of God. (TLSB)

While leading such a life, however, Paul had not for a moment omitted the work of his calling: Even as you know how we treated each and every one of you as a father does his own children, beseeching you and consoling and testifying that you should walk worthy of God, who called you to His own kingdom and glory. Paul’s pastoral work was both general and special; he addressed his teaching to the entire congregation as well as to every individual member; and it was done with all the loving care of a father interested in the highest welfare of his children. Note the excellent pedagogical hint which lies in this sentence. He had earnestly exhorted or admonished them when faintness threatened to take hold of their hearts; he had encouraged and strengthened them when their hearts were in need of consolation; he had testified to them, he had adjured them to lead their lives in such a way as to be worthy of God, since it was to Him that they owed their call into His kingdom and to participation in His glory. Thus Paul combined the sweetness of evangelical preaching with the earnestness of evangelical admonition, thus he prepared the Christians in his charge for the continuous coming of Christ into their hearts and for the final coming of Christ in glory. (Kreztmann)

 *calls.*† See note on Eph 1:4 – (Divine election is a constant theme in Paul’s letters (Ro 8:29–33; 9:6–26; 11:5, 7, 28; 16:13; Col 3:12; 1Th 1:4; 2Th 2:13; Tit 1:1). In this chapter it is emphasized in the following ways: (1) “he chose us” (here); (2) “he predestined us” (v. 5); (3) “we were also chosen” (v. 11); (4) “having been predestined” (v. 11). (CSB)

 *kingdom.* The chief subject of Jesus’ teaching. Paul did not use this term often, but used it once to sum up the message of his preaching (Ac 20:25). (CSB)

Manifestation of the age to come. It will come in its fullness when all people of God will be resurrected and Christ will hand over the kingdom to God (1 Cor 15:23-28). Cf Rm. 8:18. God’s kingdom, however, is not limited to the future (Rm 14:17). (TLSB)

**2:13-16** 1 Thessalonians 2:16 is another brief eschatological summary; the verses that precede it, however, are necessary for context: 0n account of this we also give thanks to God without ceasing, that when you received the word which you heard from us, you received it not as the word of men but-just as it truly is-the word of God, that is also at work in you who are believing. For you became imitators, brothers, of God's churches, the ones in Judea that are in Christ Jesus, because you suffered the same things by your own countrymen, just as they also did by the Jews, the ones who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, also persecuting us, not being pleasing to God, and

opposing all men, 16because they are hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles in order to save them, *with the result that they heap up [to capacity] their sins continually [Bie;* 'to uvanATJpOOaat alnoov 'tae; ullap't{ae; 1tIlv'to'tE]. *But wrath came upon them to the uttermost* [l3<pSaaEv OE En' auwue; it 0PYl't]. Here Paul alludes to the passion narrative of the arrest of Jesus by Jewish authorities and their role in his death by crucifixion. He also alludes to the Jews being responsible for a significant amount of the affliction he and the Christian congregation faced in Thessalonica, which is confirmed

by Luke's account of Jews from the synagogue inciting legal action against Jason and other Christians at Thessalonica after some significant conversions from the synagogue and "God-fearing Gentiles, including some leading women" (Acts 17:4). Paul uses a judgment expression to signal the result of the rejection of the gospel and persecution by fellow Jews: "they heap up [to capacity] their sins continually" (my translation), which the ESV renders, "so as always to fill up the measure of their sins." Jesus used a similar expression in his critique of the Pharisees: "Do you, then fill up the measure of your fathers" (Matt 23:32). Then Paul mentions "the wrath came upon them to the uttermost." "The wrath" here appears to be the same "wrath that is to come" mentioned in 1:10. What is striking here, however, is Paul's use of the aorist tense rather than the future. Through the use of the aorist, Paul is stressing that these unbelieving Jews *already*

stand under God's judgment as those who will experience his end-time wrath. The evangelist John conveys a similar idea: "He who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God" (John 3:18). (Gieschen – CTQ, 76 – 2012)

**2:13** *not as the word of men.* Not tailored to fit the popular knowledge of the day. (CSB)

The Gospel Paul preaches is not his own creation. He received it from the Lord to pass on to faithful persons who are able to preserve and teach it (1 Cor 15:3; Gal 1:11; 2 Tim 2:2). (TLSB)

The apostle had just mentioned the fact that God had called the Thessalonian Christians into the kingdom of His grace. This fact causes him to launch forth into another thanksgiving: And on this account also we give thanks to God without ceasing, namely, that, receiving from us the Word of preaching, which is of God, you accepted it not as the word of men, but, as it truly is, the Word of God, who also works effectively in you that believe. Paul had come to Thessalonica as the avowed messenger of God, claiming for the Gospel which he preached divine origin. It was therefore a matter of much gratification and of sincere thanksgiving to him that the Thessalonians received the Word which he brought in the same spirit; they not only heard the preaching with the ears of their body, but they also acknowledged God as the Author and Sender of the message. (Kretzmann)

 AT WORK IN YOU – The Greek word is energetai which could also be translated “working effectively.” The Lord’s Word will produce visible fruit among those who listen and believe (Is 55:10-11). Such life-changing effect cannot be produced by mere human words. (TLSB)

Paul had not come in his own name, but as the agent and ambassador of God, and in this sense they had accepted his message and call, not as the mere word of men, but for that which it is in truth, the Word of God. This fact was further impressed upon them by the fact that they could not deny the effective working of God through the medium of the Word; they felt His power in the Word. The Thessalonian Christians were effectively and continuously confirmed in their faith by the Word of Grace which was proclaimed to them. (Kretzmann)

 WHO BELIEVE – The acceptance of the Gospel as the Word of God, as the divine message for man’s salvation, is essential for faith; it is this confidence which must precede and accompany the certainty of salvation. (Kretzmann)

**2:14** *imitators*. Gk *mimetai*, source of Eng “mimic.” The Thessalonians had passed through an experience of persecution like the churches of Judea (2Tm 3:12). (TLSB)

 *Judea*. Refers to the original churches in Jerusalem. The believers were dispersed after the martyrdom of St Stephen and subsequent persecution (Ac 8:1). However, there is no mention of martyrdom at Thessalonica (Ac 17:1–9). (TLSB)

 *You suffered from your own countrymen.* At the time of Paul’s initial visit to Thessalonica, persecution instigated by the Jews apparently was carried out by Gentiles (see Ac 17:5–9). (CSB)

Paul now explains why he felt justified in drawing these conclusions: For you became imitators, brethren, of the congregations of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus, for the same things suffered also you from your own countrymen, as also they from the Jews. If the Word of the Gospel had not gotten such an effective hold on the Thessalonian Christians, if they had not had the firm conviction that the Gospel was the Word of God, they would hardly have been willing to bear its burdens. But now Paul says in their praise that they have followed in the footsteps of the congregations in Judea, that they were having the same experiences in the interest of the Gospel which the brethren had that had heard the Gospel-message first. The Christians in Judea had suffered persecution at the hands of the Jews; the Christians of Thessalonica were meeting with the same treatment at the hands of their countrymen. In both cases the congregations were in Christ Jesus, united with Him in the most intimate fellowship, not only deriving their spiritual life from Him, but having their life in His sphere; in both cases, therefore, they suffered persecution, 2 Tim. 3, 12. That is the lot of all Christians, but it is incidentally a pretty fair indication of the faith which lives in them. (Kretzmann)

 *Jews.* Although Paul had great love and deep concern for the salvation of those of his own race (see Ro 9:1–3; 10:1), he did not fail to rebuke harshly Jews who persecuted the church. (CSB)

**2:15** *prophets.* Throughout OT history, Israelites had persecuted their prophets (cf. Ac 7:52). (CSB)

In a passage some of whose thoughts remind one of the speech of Stephen, Acts 7, Paul now arraigns the Jews for their stubborn opposition and hatred of the true Church: Who killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets as well as they persecuted us, and please not God, and are opposed to all men, hindering us to preach to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins always; but the wrath was manifested upon them to the end. It may have been that this thought was suggested to the apostle by the fact that detractors might allege his having been denounced and persecuted by his own countrymen as a point against him. But Paul shows that the hatred of the unbelieving Jews had been directed even against the Lord Jesus. They had killed the Lord Jesus Himself as well as their own prophets, 1 Cor. 2, 8; Acts 7, 52; small wonder, then, that they were persecuting His servant. It was evident, therefore, that their actions could not possibly be well pleasing to the Lord, that they were an abomination in his sight, that they were proving hostile to all men by their behavior. (Kretzmann)

**2:16** KEEP US… GENTLES – They had a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge, for they hindered the apostle from bringing the Gospel to the Gentiles, lest the latter should have an advantage over them in being heirs to the salvation which they rejected. By this entire list of hostile acts, moreover, they were heading toward a terrible result and end: they were filling up the measure of their sins to the very top: with every new transgression they were approaching nearer to the limit of God’s forbearance. (Kretzmann)

 *measure of their sins*. Exhausting God’s long-suffering patience. (TLSB)

 *wrath of God has come.* The eschatological wrath, the final outpouring of God’s anger upon sinful mankind (see 1:10). It is spoken of as already present, either because it had been partially experienced by the Jews or because of its absolute certainty. (CSB)

Some scholars have tried to connect this “wrath” with certain historical events that were about to happen, such as the destruction of Jerusalem (AD 70). The verb’s past tense stresses certainty of wrath in the future. Therefore, it can be considered as complete. Besides the sure and future judgment, everyone who is not in Christ and opposes His Gospel of grace is under God’s wrath (Jn 3:18). (TLSB)

And so the wrath of God must now discharge itself; the Jews are ripe for the judgment of God, it was even then imminent, and His wrath was poured out upon them at the destruction of Jerusalem. Cp. Matt. 23, 37-39; 24, 16 ff.; Dan. 9, 24 ff. Note: The fate of the Jews is a warning example for all times, bidding all men to refrain from all enmity to the Word of God. (Kretzmann)

**2:1–16** Paul’s experience, inner being, motives, and love toward the Christians is laid bare. He speaks about how he conducted himself (vv 9–12). He commends the Thessalonians for receiving the Gospel preached by him as the Word of God and for enduring persecution for its sake (vv 13–16). The Lord wants us to share His Gospel boldly, even if there is suffering or conflict in our path. We should please God and be faithful to His message rather than speak what is pleasing for people to hear. Let us not make lack of financial resources an excuse. The Lord who commanded His disciples to preach the Gospel to all nations will be with us according to His promise and will enable us to pass through any hardship we may face. The Gospel’s truth and power will not change despite our feebleness (2Co 4:7). • Help us, Lord, to confess the Gospel of Christ faithfully. May our life also shine before the world so that the preaching of the Gospel may not be eclipsed by the darkness in our life. Amen. (TLSB)

*Paul’s Longing to See the Thessalonians*

**17 But, brothers, when we were torn away from you for a short time (in person, not in thought), out of our intense longing we made every effort to see you.  18 For we wanted to come to you—certainly I, Paul, did, again and again—but Satan stopped us.  19 For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you?  20 Indeed, you are our glory and joy.**

**2:17-19** The next text is another brief eschatological summary in the sentences that immediately follow those just discussed: As for us, brothers, after we were separated from you for a short time-in person, not in thought-we endeavored with much longing

to see your faces. 0n account of this, we desired to come to you-I, Paul, did many times-but Satan hindered us. *For what is aliI' hope or joy or crown of which we boast before aliI' Lord Jesus in his triumphal coming? It is certainly you, is it /Jot?* [tie; yap ~~lG)V BAnie; *i\* xapa 11 atecpayoe; Kaux~aEOJe; *i\* ouxl Kai uwt(e; 8/-lnpoa8EY tOD KUpiou ~!-l<'OY 'ITjaoD BY tn autoD napouail1;] 2°Indeed, you are our glory and joy.

Although many in Paul's audience probably did not understand his allusion, he is alluding to how some Jews thought that they would "boast" (d. Kaux~aEOJe; in 2:19) before the Lord about some of their own accomplishments in the afterlife.Even before Paul gets to his discussion of those who have fallen asleep in Christ, he is offering assurance here that the source of his boasting on the last day will not be his obedience to *Torah,* but the Holy Spirit's work through the gospel that has not only brought the Thessalonian church from idolatry to serving the living God, but also will present them in risen glory alive before our Lord Jesus at his *parousia.* The technical Greco-Roman understanding of *parousia,* namely the public ceremonial arrival of a ruling dignitary, is important for how this term would have been understood by Paul's original audience. I have translated it as "triumphal coming" in order to capture some of this sense of the

word. One of the idolatries that these Christians had turned from is the veneration of the Roman emperor through the imperial cultic sites and ceremonies in Thessalonica. The implication here is that Paul and the Thessalonians will be present before their true and only Lord and King, who is none other than the crucified and risen Jesus, at his very public appearance on the last day. (Gieschen – CTQ, 76 – 2012)

**2:17** *torn away.* Lit. “orphaned.” Paul is like a mother (v. 7), a father (v. 11) and now an orphan. (CSB)

Paul’s separation from the Thessalonians and the resultant deprivation. The past tense may point to a sudden separation due to persecution (Ac 17:10). (TLSB)

Here the apostle returns once more to the declaration of the cordial affection which he felt for the Thessalonian Christians: But we, brethren, bereft of you for a little while, in presence, not in heart, strove all the more to see your face with great desire. With great emphasis Paul places himself at the head of the sentence, in order once more to indicate to the Thessalonians the sincerity of his affection for them. He had been bereft of them, of their company, of their loving intercourse, for some little time. But he hastens to add that this was in presence only, not in heart, for in his heart he was just as closely connected with them as ever. But even this short absence had resulted in bringing out a homesick longing for them, which made him desire to be with them more than ever. It was not a case of leaving his disciples in the lurch, not a matter of “out of sight, out of mind”; on the contrary, his absence had been unavoidable, and his longing to see them could not be fulfilled. (Kretzmann)

 *for a short time*. Paul returned to Greece (Ac 20:2). (TLSB)

**2:18** COME TO YOU – He had also tried to get back to Thessalonica: Wherefore we craved to come to you, even I, Paul, once and a second time, and Satan hindered us. The apostle was not indulging in cheap phrases in assuring the Thessalonians of his continued interest in them and their welfare, but he had honestly attempted to visit them, just as had Silas and Timothy. He had, for his own person, tried time and again, but the obstacle was of a nature which effectually prevented his coming. Just in what this hindrance consisted which Paul ascribes to the agency of Satan does not appear from the context. It may have been an illness of some kind, or it may have been the fact that Jason and other Christians of Thessalonica had been bound over by the politarchs of Thessalonica to keep the peace by preventing Paul’s return. At any rate, Paul had done all in his power to visit them again. (Kretzmann)

Satan uses human agents to bring obstacles before God’s people. This may refer to the governing authorities of Thessalonica who sought to imprison Paul and Silas so they would not preach the Word. However, the ultimate authority belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ and not to Satan (Mt 28:18). (TLSB)

**2:19** *crown.* Not a royal crown, but a wreath used on festive occasions or as the prize in the Greek games. (CSB)

Just as an athlete rejoices and boasts in a prize, so Paul will rejoice when he sees the Thessalonians before the Lord. (TLSB)

 *when he comes.* The expression was used regarding the arrival of a great person, as on a royal visit. (CSB)

And yet another thought the apostle commends to their consideration: For who is our hope or joy or crown or glorying if not you in the presence of our Lord Jesus in His royal visit? For you are our glory and joy. This is an appeal which was bound to have some influence upon the Thessalonian Christians that mere inclined to doubt the sincerity of the apostle. For, he asks, who could possibly hope to take their place in his affections which they are now holding. (Kretzmann)

**2:20** *you are our glory and joy.* True both now (cf. Php 4:1) and when Christ returns. (CSB)

Gk *doxa*, refers here to someone in whom one can take pride (see imagery in 2:7, 11). (TLSB)

They were the subject of his hope: he was sure that they would remain steadfast in the Word and faith until the end: they were the object of his joy, he was happy that they had accepted the Gospel of their salvation with such willing hearts: they were the crown of his glorying, they were his pride and delight, like the garland which crowns the victor at the end of a race of which he may boast. To this experience Paul is looking forward at the coming of Christ, when He makes His final, royal visit to the earth on the last great day. The Thessalonian Christians were verily the glory and joy of the apostle in this respect; the glory of their eternal salvation would reflect upon him and thus, at least in part, add to the bliss of his eternal salvation. (Kretzmann)