

“*true God.*” And second, that their *false “idols”* are **dead**, in contrast to the “*true God*” who is “*living.*” Now imagine going into a tolerant, pluralistic culture, steeped in the worship of hundreds of gods, who endorse and practice all manner of immoral behavior as a part of their religion, and telling them that **what they worship** are false and dead lifeless idols, and that **how they worship** is an *offense* against the true and living God who calls them to turn from their worthless vain religion in order to serve and worship Him. Furthermore, that for this activity the true God will judge and condemn them to everlasting punishment because their false worship is an abomination in the sight of the true God who is filled with indignation because of it. Here see what arouses the hostility of Greco-Roman people. And not only this, but the Christian message also *excludes* the Jews from whom it originated. The sacrificial system of Judaism has now been fulfilled in Christ and the form of worship practiced in Judaism is now an abomination in the site of God, who gave His only Son in sacrifice to *fulfill* all that Judaism represented for some 1500 years. This message is one that invokes much hostility and rage from devout Jews because being very proud and self-righteous about the own ability to please God through the Law, the Christian Gospel explains that all their self-righteous efforts are an abomination before God, and that the only means for them to be saved from God’s wrath is to “believe” in Jesus the crucified Jewish rabbi, who was murdered at the hands of their own religious leaders. In this matter, devout Jews sinfully reject their own Messiah who came to save them from sins and reconcile them to God. See here then what it is that summons such hostility from both Jews and Greeks, and also what courage the Thessalonians had in publishing their faith in much of the Greco-Roman world. Further, note that this type of pluralistic and immorally tolerant culture is very much like the culture of modern day America. The American moral decline of our day thrusts us deeper and deeper into a kind of pluralistic and pagan idolatry that moves us further and further from our once predominantly Christian culture. As this happens, our culture becomes increasingly hostile to the Christian Gospel as pluralism is always very tolerant of everything except that which restricts personal autonomy, especially in regard to moral issues. The banners that fly over the false gods of pluralism pronounce the message that personal freedom means that every person can do whatever is right in their own eyes, and no one can define right and wrong for us except ourselves or whatever the culture defines as acceptable. When you begin to tell a culture that is [steeped in the worship of Hollywood icons, sexual immorality and divorce, drug addiction and drunkenness, murder and violence, and all the hedonistic pursuits of pleasure that engulf our country] that **what they worship** and **how they worship** is an *offense* against the true and living God who calls them to turn from their worthless vain religion in order to serve and worship Him, you will indeed invoke much hostility and opposition in what you seek to do. So then has the blood of martyrs been spilled, since our Lord and the Apostles first led us to this cross bearing duty of preaching the Gospel. These Thessalonians then were also an example to all believers of preaching the Gospel in every place, (being imitators of both the Lord and the Apostles), regardless of the opposition that it engendered. But consider their testimony of being saved from idolatry. They had turned from their own “*idols*” that are not “*God,*” but rather *false gods* in contrast to the “*true God.*”

**Galatians 4:8** - 8 However at that time, when you did not know God, **you were slaves to those which by nature are no gods.** NASB

**1 Corinthians 12:2** - 2 You know that **when you were pagans, you were led astray to the dumb idols,** however you were led. NASB

**1 Corinthians 10:20-22** - 20 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. 21 You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons;** you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. 22 Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? We are not stronger than He, are we? NASB

Moreover, their *false “idols”* are **dead**, in contrast to the “*true God*” who is “*living.*” Consider

how the Bible describes what an idol actually is and what a worthless and futile enterprise it is to worship and value such a thing.

**Psalm 135:15-18** - 15 The **idols of the nations are but silver and gold, The work of man's hands.** 16 They have mouths, but they do not speak; They have eyes, but they do not see; 17 They have ears, but they do not hear; Nor is there any breath at all in their mouths. 18 **Those who make them will be like them,** Yes, everyone who trusts in them. NASB

In the end those who worship these dead things will become like them, dead things. The Bible portrays this idolatry as a “*stupid*” activity which brings “*no profit*,” but rather in the end they will be “*put to shame*” before the God whom they have denied and replaced with a dumb and lifeless block of wood which is no god at all.

**Isaiah 44:9-11** - 9 Those who fashion a graven image are all of them futile, and **their precious things are of no profit; even their own witnesses fail to see or know, so that they will be put to shame.** 10 Who has fashioned a god or cast an idol **to no profit?** 11 Behold, all his companions will be put to shame, for the craftsmen themselves are mere men. Let them all assemble themselves, let them stand up, **let them tremble, let them together be put to shame.** NASB

These Thessalonians “*turned to God*” from this religion of futility and began “*to serve a living and true God.*” They not only turned their back on idolatry, but they began to “*serve*” God. Consider how they had published their new faith to all the surrounding provinces and what work must have been involved in such an enterprise. This would have required a great sacrifice of time, money and effort in order to accomplish. Therefore, mark their service to God as an “*example*” to us all of how a model church serves the living and true God. They had “*lost their lives*” for the sake of following Christ and in so doing they had found eternal life!

**Matthew 16:24-27** - 24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, **let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.** 25 "For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; **but whoever loses his life for My sake shall find it.** 26 "For what will a man be profited, if he gains the whole world, and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? 27 "For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and **will then recompense every man according to his deeds** NASB

**1 Thessalonians 1:10** - 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. NASU

A. and to wait for His Son from heaven – Notice that the Thessalonian conversion not only included a wholehearted repentance and a working faith, but also a sincere and genuine *hope* in the soon coming of Jesus the “*Son*” of God. They were as Paul instructed them, “*to wait for His Son from heaven.*” See here it is Jesus who is coming and it is Christians who are “*waiting.*” More than this, Jesus is coming “*from heaven.*” He is now ruling at the right hand of God in heaven, with all power and authority, awaiting the timing of God’s perfect plan in history to come to fruition, and the majesty of His power to be displayed to all the nations of mankind.

**Ephesians 1:19-23** - These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might 20 which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and **seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion,** and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come. 22 And **He put all things in subjection under His feet,** and gave Him as head over all things to the church, 23 which is His body, the fulness of Him who fills all in all. NASB

It is no secret that Jesus will come again both “*to deliver us from the wrath to come*” and also to establish His righteous Kingdom upon the earth and bring judgment on the wicked and ungodly people of the earth who have rejected His mercy and provoked His wrath by troubling His people and by millennia of sins and rebellion against Him.

**Revelation - 1:7** - 7 Behold, **He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him,** even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. Even so. Amen. NASB

**2 Thessalonians 1:6-10** - 6 For after all **it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you,** 7 and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well **when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed**

from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, 8 dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, 10 when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed — for our testimony to you was believed. NASB

Matthew 25:31-32 - 31 "But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. 32 "And all the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; NASB

For this day of rescue and mighty deliverance we eagerly “wait” and long for as this is the “blessed hope” of the church, “the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus.” On that day we shall be transformed from mortal to immortal beings, never again being subject to the affects of sin and death, and so shall we live forever in the good presence of God.

Titus 2:11-13 - 11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, 12 instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, 13 looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus; NASB

Hebrews 9:27-28 - 27 And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment, 28 so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him. NASB

Philippians 3:20-21 - 20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; 21 who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself. NASB

B. whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, - Paul is ever mindful to remind us of the great victory over death that our Lord did achieve which was proved positive by His resurrection from the dead. This central tenant of the Christian faith is the very ground of our hope that Jesus Christ has in fact conquered sin and death and can in fact give us immortality and eternal life! Of the facts of this resurrection Paul testifies and Peter reminds us that because of it our faith and hope are in God, who has “caused us to be born again into this living hope.”

1 Corinthians 15:3-9 - 3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. 6 After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; 7 then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; 8 and last of all, as it were to one untimely born, He appeared to me also. NASB

1 Peter 1:3-5 - 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. NASB

1 Peter 1:20-21 - 20 For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you 21 who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. NASB

C. who rescues us from the wrath to come – There are two things of import here. First, we get “rescued,” and second, it is from “the wrath to come.” This rescue in this verse is not from the affliction and tribulation that Christians endure from their persecutors, but specifically from the eschatological wrath of God, His judgment of eternal destruction which will be poured out on those who “do not know God and do not obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus”(2 Thes 1:8). **Wrath** in Paul’s eschatology is always that which proceeds from God, and it is of this wrath that the Gospel warns all mankind to come and find refuge in the atonement of Christ. Specifically that the sacrifice of Christ has propitiated God’s wrath as He took the place of those who believe in Him to pay the penalty of God’s wrath for them as a substitute. This is the doctrine of substitutionary atonement, and it is the primary work of Christ that “rescues us” from God’s eternal wrath which we also call **death** or in the book of Revelation, the “second death.” (Rev

2:11, 20:6, 14, 21:8) Thus when we are “*rescued*,” it is from the hands of an angry God of judgment and wrath. Notice the “*us*” here is those who have repented of sin, placed their faith in Jesus and who are “*waiting for Him*” and “*serving the living and true God.*” Those who are not included in this number will indeed find themselves as sinners in the hands of an angry God.

**Isaiah 63:3-6** - 3 "I have trodden the wine trough alone, And from the peoples there was no man with Me. **I also trod them in My anger, And trampled them in My wrath; And their lifeblood is sprinkled on My garments,** And I stained all My raiment. 4 "For the day of vengeance was in My heart, And My year of redemption has come. 5 "And I looked, and there was no one to help, And I was astonished and there was no one to uphold; So My own arm brought salvation to Me; And My wrath upheld Me. 6 "**And I trod down the peoples in My anger, And made them drunk in My wrath, And I poured out their lifeblood on the earth.**" NASB

**Revelation 14:9-12** - 9 And another angel, a third one, followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or upon his hand, 10 **he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.** 11 "**And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; and they have no rest day and night,** those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name." 12

Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus. NASB  
There are many verses and passages in Scripture that tell us of the coming of God’s wrath upon the earth and its inhabitants. In fact there will come a point in history when the present heavens and earth will be destroyed by God. Ultimately, there will come a day when the entire world and all its inhabitants will be destroyed by God and a New Heavens and Earth will be created by God.

**Isaiah 24:3-6** - 3 The **earth will be completely laid waste and completely despoiled, for the Lord has spoken this word.** 4 The earth mourns and withers, the world fades and withers, the exalted of the people of the earth fade away. 5 The earth is also polluted by its inhabitants, for they transgressed laws, violated statutes, broke the everlasting covenant. 6 Therefore, **a curse devours the earth, and those who live in it are held guilty.** NASB

**Isaiah 24:19-23** - 9 **The earth is broken asunder, The earth is split through, The earth is shaken violently. 20 The earth reels to and fro like a drunkard, And it totters like a shack,** For its transgression is heavy upon it, And it will fall, never to rise again. 21 So **it will happen in that day, That the Lord will punish the host of heaven, on high, And the kings of the earth, on earth.** 22 And they will be gathered together Like prisoners in the dungeon, And will be confined in prison; And after many days they will be punished. 23 Then **the moon will be abashed and the sun ashamed, For the Lord of hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem,** And His glory will be before His elders. NASB

**Zephaniah 1:18** - 18 Neither their silver nor their gold Will be able to deliver them On **the day of the Lord's wrath; And all the earth will be devoured In the fire of His jealousy,** For He will make a complete end, Indeed a terrifying one, Of all the inhabitants of the earth. NASB

**Zephaniah 3:8** - 8 "Therefore, wait for Me," declares the Lord, "For the day when I rise up to the prey. Indeed, **My decision is to gather nations, To assemble kingdoms, To pour out on them My**

**indignation, All My burning anger; For all the earth will be devoured By the fire of My zeal.** NASB

**2 Peter 3:7,10-13** - 7 But **the present heavens and earth by His word are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.**....10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in **which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.** 11 Since all these things are to be destroyed in this

way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, 12 looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, on account of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! 13 But **according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth,** in which righteousness dwells. NASB

It is because of this dreadful day of judgment and wrath that is coming that this deliverance by Christ is so important, “*who delivers us from the wrath to come.*” Of this great truth Calvin comments; “*Christ, it is true, delivered us by His death from the anger of God, but the import of that deliverance will become apparent on that day.*” Therefore let us who name the name of Christ look eagerly to the day of His coming when we will finally be delivered from this fallen world and united to Him forever in heavenly glory, free from sin and death forever.