

**passed away**, and there is no longer any sea. 2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and **He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them**, 4 and **He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away**." 5 And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." And He said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true." NASB

This is the motivation of Christian **"hope,"** and the amazing catalyst to patiently wait for our Lord, even in the midst of **"much tribulation"** v-6. This we see clearly in the Thessalonian Church as we recall that they were in a very hostile environment to their new found faith and being troubled regularly by many in their city. But they not only stood strong in their faith, but **"sounded it forth,"** v-8, **"not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place."** The Thessalonians had great resolve in their faith because they were **"in the presence of our God and Father."** They were living in God and He was living in them! Even though they were vehemently opposed by many, they were busy **"working and laboring"** in the faith, waiting with a **"steadfast"** resolve, being driven by the great **"hope"** they had in the soon coming Kingdom of our Lord. They were **"laying up treasures in Heaven"** knowing that our Lord would come and His reward for their service and obedience to Him would be with eternal treasures that would never fade away.

Matthew 6:19-22 - 19 "**Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth**, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 "**But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal**;" 21 for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. NASB

The Thessalonians then, had a **"faith"** that works, a **"love"** that labors, and a **"hope"** that was steadfast. All of these they lived out in the presence of God the Father.

**1 Thessalonians 1:4** - 4 knowing, brethren beloved by God, His choice of you; NASU

A. knowing, brethren beloved by God – The word **"knowing"** here is understood in the sense of "seeing" or "perceiving" and points the phrase **"His choice of you."** It reveals Paul's assurance of the divine election of the Thessalonians believers. Because of the evidence presented in verses 1-3 and also verses 5-10, Paul is convinced that God has chosen them unto salvation being witnessed by the amazing fruit born in their lives through the Gospel. The testimony of the Thessalonians' faith was so great that the reality of their regeneration was not in question but **"known"** not only by Paul, Silas, and Timothy but also **"in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth."** It was an amazing tribute to the mighty power of God's Spirit at work in the young Church. But also note here an amazing statement expressing the warm affection that the proud Pharisee Paul has for these despised Gentiles. In these two epistles Paul uses the term **"brethren"** twenty-one times to refer to them. See here how the insurmountable barrier that existed between Jew and Gentile has been done away in Christ! The enmity that existed between Jew and Gentile has been **"put to death"** by Christ whereas now we are **"brethren"** together in one family in Christ, God Himself claiming us both together as Father. Paul speaks with much clarity of this issue in Ephesians 2.

**Ephesians 2:11-16** - 11 Therefore remember, that formerly you, **the Gentiles in the flesh**, who are called "Uncircumcision" by the so-called "Circumcision," which is performed in the flesh by human hands — 12 remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, **having no hope and without God in the world**. 13 But now in Christ Jesus **you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ**. 14 **For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall**, 15 by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, that in Himself He might **make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace**. 16 and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. NASB

Paul not only acknowledges their state of being his “*brethren*” now, but also and greater God’s own divine love for them as he states they are “*beloved by God.*” What more reassuring and comforting words could be spoken to anyone that they are “*beloved by God?*” And so it is with every individual Christian, they are “*beloved by God.*” More than this, every individual Christian is “*chosen*” by God, from eternity past, to be the object of His saving love. In Christ and through the Gospel we have been seen (by the powerful effects of faith), to be the objects of God’s own divine and sovereign love, having been called out of the darkness of this world and chosen by God for salvation from the beginning, through the Gospel of our blessed Lord.

**2 Thessalonians 2:13-14** - 13 But we should always give thanks to God for you, **brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation** through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. 14 And **it was for this He called you through our gospel**, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. NASB

B. **His choice of you** – And so then why is Paul’s “*knowing*” about “*His choice of you*” with such confidence? It is because these are no common marks of God’s power upon this infant church. Indeed they had a “*working faith*” and a “*laboring love*” coupled with a “*steadfast hope*” fixed surely on the coming of our Lord in Glory. Their salvation was obvious, but consider that Paul does not commend their wisdom in choosing to follow Christ but rather thanks God for their faith. This is because saving faith is granted by God, bequeathed to those whom He chooses to save, which is an act of His free grace and not a human response to the Gospel but rather a supernatural working of the Spirit of God effectually calling those whom He has predestined before time began. Paul here, points to God as the primary source of their saving faith. GK Beale states this so clearly.... “*The main point of 1:4-5 must not be lost from sight. The primary point of thanksgiving in 1:2-3 continues on into 1:4-5: recognition of the evidence of one’s election is the ground from which thanks to God swells up; since God is the one who elects and ultimately inspires good works in people (Phil 2:13), He, not they is the one deserving to be thanked.*” Christians are chosen by God. Divine election is a constant theme in Paul’s epistles (1 Cor 1:2, 18-30, Eph 1:3-11, Col 3:12, Titus 1:1-2, 2 Tim 2:10), including a lengthy discourse on it in the book of Romans chapters 8-11.

**Romans 8:28-34** - 28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to **those who are called according to His purpose**. 29 For whom **He foreknew, He also predestined** to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren; 30 and **whom He predestined**, these He also called; and **whom He called**, these He also justified; and **whom He justified**, these **He also glorified**. 31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? 33 **Who will bring a charge against God's elect?** God is the one who justifies; NASB

In fact the truth of this matter is so crystal clear in Paul’s teaching that it must be ignored in order to overlook it. Not only this, but it is a major theme in the teaching of our Lord in Matt 11:27, 13:10-17, 24:22-24, 31, John 6:37-40, 44, 60-71, 15:16, 17:9-17, and also in the teaching of Peter (1 Peter 1:1-5, 2:9-10, 2 Peter 1:10). As John MacArthur so aptly states it, “*Christians are the elect, chosen of God solely by His sovereign, loving purpose, apart from any human merit or wisdom. God in eternity past Sovereignly chose all believers to salvation, drawing them to Himself in time, by the work of the Holy Spirit.*” As controversial as the topic may be, it nevertheless is clearly taught in Scripture and can be difficult to grasp. For further study on this matter see this link to my website;

[http://www.heavenslight.org/theology/The\\_Sovereignty\\_of\\_God\\_Series\\_Part\\_4\\_In\\_Salvation.pdf](http://www.heavenslight.org/theology/The_Sovereignty_of_God_Series_Part_4_In_Salvation.pdf)

Or additional resources at

<http://www.gty.org/Resources/Sermon+Series/189>

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<http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/Sermons/ByTopic/84/>