
Words of Truth

I Thessalonians 1:4

By: Brian A. Yeager

As Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus wrote of praying for and remembering the brethren in Thessalonica, they then stated what we are going to study in this article. Here are their words: *“Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God”* (I Thessalonians 1:4). There is a lot we can consider from this short sentence. So, we shall dig right into our study.

Think about Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus calling the brethren in Thessalonica *“brethren beloved.”* We can see similar statements throughout various epistles in the New Testament (I Corinthians 15:58, Philippians 4:1, I Timothy 6:2, James 1:16, James 1:19, and James 2:5). The loving relationship among brethren is a command from our Lord. In fact, one thing that tells the world that we are brethren is having the love Jesus commanded that we as His disciples have for one another. Notice: *“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another”* (John 13:34-35). We will later see, in this epistle, that this instruction of loving brethren was not one the saints in Thessalonica needed to learn. Notice: *“But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another. And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more”* (I Thessalonians 4:9-10).

Seeing the relationship that these brethren had with Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus is wonderful. It will help us when we get into chapters two and three to see the concern for each other’s well-being. Christians are supposed to have an “unfeigned” [sincere] love for one another (I Peter 1:22). That love is certain to keep us genuinely concerned for each other. Our love for God requires us to love one another (I John 4:20-21).

When these men used the word translated “knowing”, they were using a Greek word [εἶδω] that was also translated as: “seen” (Matthew 2:2 and Luke 5:26), “saw” (Matthew 2:9-11; 2:16; 3:7, Mark 5:6, Luke 7:39, John 6:24, and John 20:20), “knew” (Matthew 12:25 and Mark 1:34), “perceive” (Matthew 13:14 and Mark 4:12), “know” (Matthew 22:16, Mark 1:24, John 6:42, and Romans 3:19), “see” (Matthew 28:6, Mark 5:32, and John 6:30), “looked on” (Mark 8:33), “beheld” (Mark 9:15), “aware” (Luke 11:44), “behold” (John 20:27 and Romans 11:22), “understandeth” (I Corinthians 14:16), “looked” (Revelation 4:1), etc. That is by no means an exhaustive list. That Greek term appears over six hundred times in the New Testament. My

goal in providing the information above was to allow us to see what these men were meaning when they said “knowing” in regard to the election of the saints in Thessalonica. They understood, saw, looked on, etc. their election of God. This is a vital point for us to understand. Now, let’s talk about their election of God.

The Greek word translated “election” [ἐκλογή] means: “(divine) selection (abstractly or concretely): - chosen, election” (Strong’s # 1589). That Greek word appears seven times in the New Testament. The first is in regard to the Apostle Paul who was “chosen” by the Lord (Acts 9:15). Then four times it is used in the book of Romans and is translated “election” each time (Romans 9:11, Romans 11:5, Romans 11:7, and Romans 11:28). The last time this Greek word appears is in II Peter 1:10. There it is translated “election” as well.

Commonly, it is taught among followers of Calvinism, that the elect are predestined and cannot fall away. If you were to read the context of the passage cited in the paragraph above in this article (II Peter 1:1-11), you would see that is not so. It is upon the believer to make their “*calling and election sure*” so that “*ye shall never fall.*” As we study through the two letters written to the saints in Thessalonica you will see that their salvation was not set in stone. They were instructed to “*walk worthy*” (I Thessalonians 2:12). There was a fear that these elect saints might have been tempted and the work of Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus would have then been in vain (I Thessalonians 3:1-5). They were warned about things that would have brought the vengeance of God upon them (I Thessalonians 4:1-6). There was, among other things we shall study, some who were in that congregation that were not working as they should have been. If they continued to refuse to work, they would have been disciplined (II Thessalonians 3:6-15). Lest one misunderstand that, such an action means a person has been delivered unto Satan and kept from the company of the faithful (I Corinthians 5:1-13).

A person or group of persons being “elect; chosen” under the New Covenant involves two-parties. God did His part. People must do their part as well. In the second letter to the saints in Thessalonica, this was written: “*But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (II Thessalonians 2:13-14). God’s part was in sending them the Gospel. Their part was in the belief of the truth. Both of those statements are simplified, but faithful Christians should understand what is meant.

God did much more than just sending them the Gospel and sanctifying them through the work of the Holy Spirit (Romans 3:24-26, I Peter 1:18-20, I John 4:9-10, etc.) and they had to do much more than just believe it (Matthew 7:21-27, Luke 14:25-33, Acts 3:19, Acts 8:5-39, Acts 18:8, etc.). Remember what happened when the Gospel came to Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-15). The point is, these men taught the people in Thessalonica and therefore saw their election of God first hand. Their election was certainly of God!