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Love and Longing in 1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:13
Expanding Robert Funk's Exclusive-Authority View of the
Apostolic Parousia

By
Cary Smith

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Covenant Theological Seminary
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Theology in Exegetical Theology

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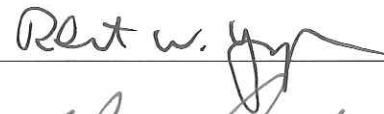
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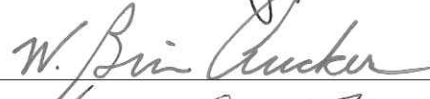
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ABSTRACT

In his influential 1967 essay, Robert Funk coined the term “apostolic parousia” to describe Pauline passages where the apostle groups material related to his presence into one section of the letter. Funk argued that such material manifests the apostle’s presence within the letter, exclusively seeking to convey Paul’s apostolic authority and power to the readers. Funk’s essay and proposal have significantly impacted NT studies and continue to influence scholarly discourse.

While affirming much of Funk’s proposal, this thesis offers an expanded perspective of the apostolic parousia convention that corrects an unnecessarily restrictive view of its literary function. The study examines 1 Thess 2:17-3:13 and demonstrates that Paul literarily manifests his presence in that passage primarily to convey personal affection and a desire to see the readers.

The first part of the argument focuses on 1 Thessalonians as a whole and establishes that expressions of affection and affirmation as well as Paul’s minimization of authority characterize the entire letter, particularly the first three chapters. Such factors indicate no need for the apostle to emphasize his authority in the apostolic parousia section. An exegetical examination of 1 Thess 2:17-3:13 then demonstrates that Paul seeks to convey love and longing more than authority in this section.

The evidence confirms that 1 Thess 2:17-3:13 does not function exclusively or primarily to convey Paul’s authority and power, as Funk’s unqualified approach suggests. Pauline studies will consequently benefit from clear qualifications about the limits of Funk’s work in this area and also from further exploration and clarification of the multiple functions apostolic parousia passages exhibit in the apostle’s letters.

To my daughter, Charissa, whom we love and long for

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AP	apostolic parousia
ANTC	Abingdon New Testament Commentaries
BDAG	Danker, Frederick W., Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich. <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> . 3 rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.
BDF	Blass, F., and A. Debrunner. <i>A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> . Translated by Robert W. Funk. Revised ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961.
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentaries
ca.	<i>circa</i> , around, near
CBR	<i>Currents in Biblical Research</i>
CEB	Common English Bible
cf.	<i>confer</i> , compare
ch(s).	chapter(s)
CTJ	<i>Calvin Theological Journal</i>
e.g.	<i>exempli gratia</i> , for example
ed(s).	editor(s) or edition(s)
ESV	English Standard Version
et al.	<i>et alii</i> , and others
etc.	<i>et cetera</i> , and so forth, and the rest
GE	Montanari, Franco. <i>Brill Dictionary of Ancient Greek</i> . Boston: Brill, 2015
HCSB	Holman Christian Standard Bible
i.e.	<i>id est</i> , that is

ibid.	<i>ibidem</i> , in the same place
ICC	International Critical Commentary
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JSNT	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
καὶ λ	καὶ τὰ λοιπά, and the rest, etc.
L&N	Louw, J. P. and Eugene A. Nida, eds. <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains</i> . 2nd ed. New York: United Bible Societies, 1999.
lit.	literally
LS	Louvain Studies
LSJ	Liddle, Henry George, Robert Scott, Henry Stuart Jones. <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> . 9th ed. Oxford: Clarendon, 1996.
LXX	Septuagint (the Greek Old Testament)
ms(s)	manuscript(s)
NA ²⁸	<i>Novum Testamentum Graece</i> , Nestle-Aland, 28th ed.
NAC	New American Commentary
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NEB	New English Bible
NET	New English Translation
NETS	New English Translation of the Septuagint
NIBC	New International Biblical Commentary
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIDNTTE	<i>New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis</i> . Rev. ed. edited by Moisés Silva. 4 vols. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014.

NIDOTTE	<i>New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis.</i> Edited by Willem A. VanGemeren. 5 vols. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997.
NIGTC	The New International Greek Testament Commentary
NIV	New International Version
NKJV	New King James Version
NLT	New Living Translation
NovT	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NT	New Testament
NTC	New Testament Commentary
NTL	New Testament Library
OT	Old Testament
rev.	revised
s.v.	<i>sub verbo</i> , under the word
SHBC	Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary
TDNT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament.</i> Edited by Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1964-1976.
TLNT	<i>Theological Lexicon of the New Testament.</i> C. Spicq. Translated and edited by J.D. Ernest. 3 vols. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997.
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
UBS ⁵	<i>The Greek New Testament</i> , United Bible Societies, 5th ed.
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION WITH LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1. Overview of Thesis

This thesis responds to past and present scholarly use of a technical term introduced by Robert Funk in 1967. Funk coined the now-common expression “apostolic parousia” (AP¹) to describe several passages in which Paul groups material related to his presence “into one more or less discrete section” of the letter.² Funk argues that Paul intentionally makes his presence felt to the readers through references to his purpose in writing, his sending of emissaries, and his desires and/or plans to visit the readers in person. According to Funk, “apostolic authority and power are made effective” through the concentration of such material.³ Funk clearly sees the conveyance of authority and power as the sole purpose of AP passages.

While affirming much of Funk’s proposal, this thesis will offer an expanded perspective of the AP that corrects an unnecessarily restrictive view of the AP’s literary function. Specifically, I will examine 1 Thess 2:17-3:13 and demonstrate that Paul literarily manifested his presence through the AP in this passage primarily to convey personal affection for the readers. I concede that Paul likely intended to convey more than just his affection through the AP in 1 Thessalonians, but that is beside the point of the thesis. Presenting one clear instance where Paul sought to convey *more than* his

¹ I use my own abbreviation “AP” throughout this paper in reference to the “apostolic parousia.”

² Robert W. Funk, “The Apostolic Parousia: Form and Significance,” in *Christian History and Interpretation: Studies Presented to John Knox*, ed. W. R. Farmer, C. F. D. Moule, and R. R. Niebuhr (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 266.

³ Ibid.

apostolic authority and power through the literary convention justifies the need to revise Funk's exclusive-authority⁴ proposal and the subsequent interpretive trends it has influenced.

1.2. Literature Review

1.2.1. Introduction to Robert Funk and the Apostolic Parousia

In 1966, Funk published an essay on the form and style of NT letters in his book *Language, Hermeneutic, and Word of God*.⁵ Within the essay, Funk discusses “travel sections” or “travelogues” of Pauline epistles and their role in the letter bodies. Funk seems to limit the travelogue to Paul's words about making a personal visit to the readers.

The following year, Funk published an essay in which he expands his perspective on the Pauline travelogue.⁶ Funk begins by noting that “Paul often indicates his reason for or disposition in writing, his intention or hope to dispatch an emissary, and his intention or hope to pay the congregation a personal visit,” and that these three items “tend to converge in one more or less discrete section of the letter.”⁷ Further reflection about Paul's travel-related material clarified for Funk that Paul conveys his apostolic presence to his readers by grouping these aspects together. Funk uses the term “apostolic parousia”

⁴ I present evidence below that Funk saw Paul's presence in AP passages as exclusively conveying a sense of the apostle's authority and power. I use various designations to capture this aspect of his work.

⁵ Robert W. Funk, *Language, Hermeneutic, and Word of God: The Problem of Language in the New Testament and Contemporary Theology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 250–274.

⁶ Funk, “The Apostolic Parousia,” 249–268. Funk subsequently published a slightly revised version of the essay in his book *Parables and Presence: Forms of the New Testament Tradition* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 81–102.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 249.

to describe this phenomenon – what he sees as a “structural element in the Pauline letter.”⁸

Funk identifies the AP primarily in the following passages: Rom 15:14-33 (with a parallel in 1:8-15); 1 Cor 4:14-21; Gal 4:12-20; Phil 2:19-24; 1 Thess 2:17-3:13; and Phlm 21-22. With qualifications, he also references 1 Cor 16:1-11, 2 Cor 8:16-23, 2 Cor 9:1-5, and 2 Cor 12:14-13:10. Lastly, Funk mentions Phil 2:25-30 and 1 Cor 16:12 as “secondary but related passages.”⁹ Funk’s essay explores the form and function of the AP in Paul’s epistles, emphasizing the structural aspect in line with his form-critical approach.

Funk bases his analysis of the AP’s form on Rom 15:14-33 as “the most elaborate and formally structured of these passages.”¹⁰ He presents a complex breakdown of what he sees as the formal units of the AP. Weima offers the following simplified summary of Funk’s five proposed major units, though Funk includes subunits for each:

- Reference to Paul’s letter-writing activity, his disposition and purpose
- Reference to Paul’s relationship with his letter recipients
- Reference to plans for paying a visit (desire to visit, delays in coming, sending of an emissary, announcement of a visit)
- Invocation of divine approval and support for the visit
- Benefits of the impending visit¹¹

Funk examines the Romans AP passage in detail, treating each of these units with their associated subunits.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., 250.

¹⁰ Ibid., 251.

¹¹ Jeffrey A. D. Weima, “Preaching the Gospel in Rome: A Study of the Epistolary Framework of Romans,” in *Gospel in Paul: Studies on Corinthians Galatians & Romans for Richard N. Longenecker*, ed. L. Ann Jervis and Peter Richardson, *Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 108* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 353.

Funk then discusses the three ways Paul manifests his presence. He states that Paul's physical presence is the "primary medium by which he makes his apostolic authority effective."¹² Letters and emissaries are substitutes for the apostle's physical presence, "less effective perhaps, but sometimes necessary."¹³ Funk sees the three media in descending order of strength from physical presence to the sending of an emissary to the sending of a letter.

Funk also provides several reflections on the significance of the AP (including its function or purpose). Funk addresses the concepts of presence and authority. With regard to presence, Funk appeals to the "ground-breaking study" of Koskenniemi¹⁴ who showed the *philophronesis*, *parousia*, and *homilia* are basic motifs of the ancient Greek letter.¹⁵ Funk mentions several aspects of Koskenniemi's work that highlight the role of ancient Greek letters in extending the possibility of friendship by creating a sense of presence despite physical separation.¹⁶ Funk also appeals to Karlsson's work¹⁷ that connected the theme "absent in body, but present through letter" to "well-known technical formulae of Greek epistolography."¹⁸ According to Funk, Koskenniemi presents "compelling evidence from the language of the letter itself and from the theoreticians" that such conceptions regarding the letter as a medium of surrogate presence were "nearly

¹² Funk, "The Apostolic Parousia," 258.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Heikki Koskenniemi, *Studien zur Idee und Phraseologie des griechischen Briefes bis 400 n. Chr* (Helsinki, Finland: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Kirjapaino Oy Helsinki, 1956).

¹⁵ Funk, "The Apostolic Parousia," 263.

¹⁶ Ibid., 263–264.

¹⁷ Gustav Karlsson, "Formelhaftes in Paulusbriefen," *Eranos* 54 (1956): 138–141.

¹⁸ Funk, "The Apostolic Parousia," 264.

universally presupposed” among Greek letter writers.¹⁹ Funk implies that, through the AP, this motif came to expression “as a structural element in the composition of the letter itself.”²⁰

Of all the material in Funk’s essay, his comments about authority relate most directly to the present study. Funk states plainly that Paul “makes his authority effective in the churches” by mentioning his purpose or disposition in writing, his plan or desire to send an emissary, and his plan or desire to visit the readers in person.²¹ Again, “Through these media [Paul’s] apostolic authority and power are made effective.”²² He defines the AP as “the presence of apostolic authority and power.”²³ Along these lines, Funk describes the purpose of his paper as follows:

It is proposed here to advance the analysis of the apostolic parousia another step, first, by setting out the formal structure of the apostolic parousia, and, secondly, *by considering its significance in relation to Paul’s understanding of his own apostolic authority.* The appropriateness of the designation will emerge in connexion with the latter.²⁴

For Funk, the significance and the very name of the AP are tied to Paul’s self-understanding as one imbued with authority and power as an apostle of Christ.

Discussing multiple passages from the Corinthian correspondence, Funk says, “Paul must have thought of his presence as the bearer of charismatic, one might even say,

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., 249.

²² Ibid., 266.

²³ Ibid., 249.

²⁴ Ibid. Emphasis added.

eschatological power.”²⁵ Funk refers to the apostolic authority and power reflected in the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5:1-11 and to “the threatening character of the promise to come in the letters to the seven churches” in Rev 2-3.²⁶ When Funk uses such examples, he illustrates his view of Paul’s apostolic presence. Funk primarily sees conveying such presence as a foreboding warning. He conceives of the Pauline AP as a convention through which Paul exclusively conveys authority and power to ensure compliance with his apostolic teaching.

I do not contest Funk’s assertion that Paul understood himself as possessing divinely ordained authority and power in his apostolic office, nor that Paul used the AP and other conventions to express this reality. I only contest that Paul employed the AP exclusively or primarily to convey authority and power in all instances.

Funk does distinguish between the differing tones and relational contexts of Paul’s letters and how such dynamics inform our interpretations of various AP passages. He says, “The presence of Paul in person will therefore be the primary medium by which he makes his apostolic authority effective, *whether for negative* (1 Cor 4:19) *or positive* (Phil 1:24ff.) reasons.”²⁷ Here Funk acknowledges that not all manifestations of Paul’s authority carry a threatening connotation. He refers to the Philippians passage where Paul decides that he will remain in the flesh because it is more necessary for the readers’ “progress and joy in the faith” (Phil 1:25). Funk also notes how patterns in AP passages differ depending on whether the visit “constitutes a threat” or reflects “a friendlier

²⁵ Ibid., 265.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid., 258. Emphasis added.

invocation.”²⁸ Despite such qualifications, Funk clearly sees the effectiveness of Paul’s *authority* as the only result of literarily manifesting his presence. I affirm that Paul sees his authority and power as beneficial for his readers in Philippians and elsewhere, but I will argue that references to his presence can effect *more than* authority and power, something for which Funk’s language does not leave room.

1.2.2. Influence of Funk’s Apostolic Parousia on Biblical Scholarship

Funk’s insights and vocabulary have significantly impacted the field of biblical studies, especially considering the brevity of his essay. Johnson wrote in 2006 that Funk’s AP “has survived until the present with broad acceptance by biblical scholars.”²⁹ Despite debate regarding a few aspects of his proposal, “Funk’s terminology and interpretation persist as the primary interpretive tool for Paul’s epistolary travel remarks.”³⁰ This section of the paper will demonstrate that Funk’s proposal has made an enduring impression in biblical scholarship, that scholars continue to deliberate about elements of Funk’s proposal or related topics, and that much room remains for further clarification about the nature of Pauline AP passages.

1.2.2.1. Focused and Substantive Scholarly Responses to Funk’s Essay

While scholars frequently cite Funk, only a few have undertaken focused and substantive responses to his essay. In 1973, Mullins critiqued Funk’s designation of Paul’s travel-related material as a structural element of a specific letter form. Funk’s

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 261.

²⁹ Lee A. Johnson, “Paul’s Epistolary Presence in Corinth: A New Look at Robert Funk’s Apostolic Parousia,” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 68, no. 3 (July 2006): 481.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 481–482.

entire discussion about the AP phenomenon emerged from his form critical interests and attempts to delineate a standard structure in Paul's letters. Mullins argues that "visit talk is a theme rather than a form or formula" and that "analysis by theme is different from but supplementary to analysis by form."³¹ Mullins notes several problems with Funk's attempt to identify a typical structure to AP passages. He argues, for example, that when Paul speaks of visiting a congregation, "he does not always say the same thing about visiting and what he says is not always said in a similar way."³² Mullins lists Funk's five "major units"³³ and notes that only one of the units appears in all 13 of Funk's suggested AP passages.³⁴ Mullins suggests that a form or formula would contain at least three elements across all examples. He also notes that Funk's units appear in no set order.

Mullins goes on to show how visitation language is a broad theme inside and outside the NT, not limited to the AP passages Funk treats. He gives numerous examples of nonformulaic "visit talk" from the non-literary papyri.³⁵ Mullins concludes by distinguishing between analyzing biblical data by form and by theme, which he considers supplementary but "distinctly different approaches."³⁶

³¹ Terence Y. Mullins, "Visit Talk in New Testament Letters," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 35, no. 3 (July 1973): 350.

³² *Ibid.*, 352.

³³ I described these units above in my review of Funk's essay.

³⁴ Mullins, "Visit Talk in New Testament Letters," 351. Mullins identifies Funk's third major unit as the one consistent element. This unit refers to visit plans, whether Paul's expressed desire or plan to visit, delays to his coming, or his sending of an emissary. Mullins also argues that "there is no consistent repetition of concept or language" among the six subunits Funk lists under the one consistent major unit. "Indeed, the only reason we can say there is a pervading item number three is because the subdivisions have been selected so that they include every kind of reference which Paul makes to a visit by him or his representative."

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 352–354.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 357.

Mullins rightly identifies visitation language as a common theme throughout ancient epistolary literature and the NT. Mullins also rightly critiques Funk's designation of the AP as an essential structural element of the standard Pauline letter form. As a result of Mullins' critique and suggested revision in terminology, many scholars focus their discussion about AP passages on whether the content reflects an epistolary *topos* or a form.

When scholars follow Mullins and conclude that AP passages primarily reflect a common theme in personal correspondence, the discussion often ends there with little comment about the significance of such material to the interpretation of the passage or to Paul's purpose for including it. Weima notes, however, that Mullins and others wrongly focus only on references to visits that Paul himself plans to make. Funk designates such references as "travelogue" material and considers them only a subset of material found in AP sections.³⁷ AP passages, on the other hand, refer more broadly "to the presence of Paul, whether this is experienced by means of a future visit from the apostle, the arrival of his emissary, or the letter itself."³⁸ Paul focuses not so much on travel as on the conveyance of apostolic presence in any form. AP passages group together *numerous elements* related to Paul's presence in ways that distinguish them from much briefer visit-related references made by Paul and appearing throughout the NT letters and other ancient correspondence.³⁹ In this way, AP passages convey a special sense of Paul's

³⁷ Funk, "The Apostolic Parousia," 249.

³⁸ Jeffrey A. D. Weima, *Paul the Ancient Letter Writer: An Introduction to Epistolary Analysis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016), 114.

³⁹ Though the specific elements included in any given AP passage differ widely depending on context, every AP passage includes several of the following elements identified by Funk throughout his essay: (1) the purpose for writing of the letter, (2) the disposition in writing the letter, (3) the basis of Paul's apostolic relationship to the recipients, (4) expressed desire or eagerness to visit, (5) expressed hope or

presence that is not as powerfully conveyed by other visitation and travel references. I therefore follow Weima in describing the AP as a “distinct literary convention that exhibits a rather loose form or structure in which certain words and expressions are often found.”⁴⁰ Paul freely adapts the location of AP passages within his letters as well as the individual structure and makeup of each one. Nonetheless, the repeated grouping of such specific elements suggests that Paul seeks to accomplish more than is suggested by a *topos* designation. The AP does not function as part of a strict Pauline letter form, but it does function as a tool to accomplish a specific goal – manifesting a special sense of presence within the letter.

Some recent scholars maintain Funk’s form-critical view of AP passages. In her monograph on Romans, Jervis devotes a chapter to Pauline APs that affirms much of Funk’s original proposal and offers her own revised and simplified understanding of the AP structure.⁴¹ Jervis proposes that AP passages have only three functional units:

- Reference to writing of the letter
- Reference to the sending of an emissary
- The announcement of or expressed desire for a visit.

intention to visit, (6) mention of hindrances or delays, (7) desire to be sent on from the readers’ location, (8) dispatching of an emissary, (9) credentials of the emissary, (10) purpose of sending the emissary, (11) announcement of or plan to visit, (12) prayer (or request for prayer) that a visit would be made possible, (13) description of benefits a visit would offer to Paul, to the readers, or both.

⁴⁰ Weima, *Paul the Ancient Letter Writer*, 114–115. Weima distinguishes “literary convention” from “literary form” in the following way: “This means that, in contrast to a comparative analysis of the more formally consistent sections of Paul’s letters (i.e., the opening, thanksgiving, and closing), less significance ought to be attached to any variations in form between the various apostolic parousias.”

⁴¹ L. Ann Jervis, *The Purpose of Romans: A Comparative Letter Structure Investigation*, *Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series* 55 (Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1991), 114–131.

As Jervis notes, Funk acknowledged these three elements as “items that tend to converge” in AP passages.⁴² She suggests that Funk’s focused analysis of Rom 15:14-33 led him to propose a more elaborate structure that does not account for all AP passages.

Mitchell and Johnson have produced focused and substantive responses to Funk’s article that relate to one another. Mitchell challenges Funk’s assertion that Paul considered his physical presence as the “most desired and effective means of presence to his congregations.”⁴³ Mitchell examines the role of Paul’s envoys in 1 Thessalonians 3 and 2 Corinthians 7 in light of Greco-Roman diplomatic and epistolary conventions. “Hardly mere substitutes for the universally preferable Pauline presence, these envoys were consciously sent by Paul to play a complex and crucial intermediary role that he could not play, even if present himself.”⁴⁴ Johnson expands on Mitchell’s challenge, questioning “the traditional views of the third-class status of letters in antiquity” as they are applied to the Corinthian correspondence.⁴⁵ Mitchell and Johnson offer many helpful insights, but I suggest Paul prioritizes envoys and letters over his physical presence only in exceptional circumstances that make a personal visit impossible or *temporarily* less preferable.⁴⁶

⁴² Funk, “The Apostolic Parousia,” 249.

⁴³ Margaret M. Mitchell, “New Testament Envoys in the Context of Greco-Roman Diplomatic and Epistolary Conventions: The Example of Timothy and Titus,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 111, no. 4 (1992): 641.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 662.

⁴⁵ Johnson, “Paul’s Epistolary Presence in Corinth,” 484.

⁴⁶ E.g., Paul preferred to visit Corinth “in love and a spirit of gentleness” instead of with a disciplinary “rod” (1 Cor 4:21). Timothy’s presence might have been preferable to Paul’s during the prior visit (1 Cor 4:17), but likely only because of the relational tension caused by the Corinthians’ behavior. Paul sends Epaphroditus with a letter to Philippi because the Philippians had heard of his near-terminal illness (Phil 2:25-28) and appears to send Timothy only because of the apostle’s imprisonment (Phil 2:19, 23-24).

Mitchell and others also rightly critique Funk's assertion that AP sections tend to appear at the end of letters.⁴⁷ Viewing the AP strictly as a structural element, Funk associated it with the final section of his proposed Pauline letter structure.⁴⁸ Funk's conclusions about the AP's standard location lead him to question the structural integrity of 1 Thessalonians.

Topics addressed by the scholars mentioned in this subsection only loosely relate to my thesis. This survey confirms, however, that *no scholarly work that presents a focused and substantive response to Funk's essay engages with his exclusive-authority view of the AP*. Scholarly comments more closely related to my thesis appear rather as isolated reflections or brief treatments within works that address broader topics. I examine many of those comments below.

1.2.2.2. Explicit Affirmations of Funk's Apostolic Parousia as a Tool that Exclusively or Primarily Conveys Authoritative Presence

Several scholars have explicitly affirmed Funk's proposal that AP passages function exclusively or primarily to convey a sense of *authoritative* presence. In his entry for "Apostolic Parousia" in the *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, Trebilco summarizes the basic elements of Funk's original proposal. He affirms (without qualification) Funk's view that the AP sections "remind the readers of Paul's apostolic authority by making his presence felt The presence of Paul in person was the primary medium by which he made his apostolic authority effective" Citing 1 Cor 4:19-21, Trebilco adds that the

⁴⁷ Margaret M. Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation: An Exegetical Investigation of the Language and Composition of 1 Corinthians* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1991), 198.

⁴⁸ Funk, "The Apostolic Parousia," 263.

apostle also speaks about his presence in terms of power.⁴⁹ Trebilco's treatment seems to leave no room for the AP to serve as a means of manifesting Paul's presence in a letter primarily or even partially for the sake of conveying affection. Note that Trebilco, unlike many other authors described below, is not citing Funk to support his own argument or interpretation. As a contributor to a standard reference volume, he presents the current scholarly understanding of the AP. Instead of merely describing Funk's view, however, he clearly adopts it in his own words. Trebilco does mention scholarly debate surrounding multiple facets of Funk's proposal, but none of the issues relate to Funk's exclusive-authority AP perspective.

In his work on Paul as an ancient letter writer, Weima devotes a section to the AP as a Pauline literary convention. Weima states clearly that the AP functions as "a literary device that Paul uses to exert authority over his readers."⁵⁰ Weima cites Funk's work without qualification in these particular comments and approvingly quotes Funk's description of the AP as "the presence of apostolic authority and power."⁵¹ Later in the same work and also in his Thessalonians commentary, Weima qualifies Funk's language when discussing Paul's use of the AP in 1 Thessalonians.⁵² His other unqualified comments, however, clearly endorse Funk's overall perspective that the AP functions

⁴⁹ Paul Trebilco, "Itineraries, Travel Plans, Journeys, Apostolic Parousia," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1993), 449.

⁵⁰ Weima, *Paul the Ancient Letter Writer*, 115.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*, 118. See also Jeffrey A. D. Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, BECNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014), 189–191. I discuss these helpful qualifications below.

solely to convey authority and power and implying that such dynamics characterize the convention wherever used.⁵³

When interacting with Funk's material, Doty rightly affirms Paul's apostolic self-conception: "Paul thought of his presence with the groups he addressed as conveying not just personal authority, but *apostolic* authority and hence power"⁵⁴ But in discussing the role of the AP in Paul's letters, Doty specifically emphasizes authority and power as *the* "underlying theme of such sections."⁵⁵ Doty clearly affirms the exclusive-authority view of Funk's AP proposal. Ironically, Doty later acknowledges how Paul's letters differ from Hellenistic letters in the complexity of the relational dynamics at play between the apostle and his readers:

While there are many times when the Pauline letters do function to maintain friendly relationships, their purpose goes beyond that; Paul sought to bring his addressees into richer experiences of the new religion, to move them to new heights of action and response, not merely to improve or maintain relationships to himself.⁵⁶

I affirm Doty's assertion that Paul's purposes "go beyond" maintaining friendly relationships, especially because he acknowledges that the apostle's letters often reveal his relational sensitivities. Though I disagree with Doty's narrow conclusion regarding the function of AP passages, I affirm the balanced perspective reflected in this latter

⁵³ Weima has discussed the AP in multiple places. In addition to the works already cited, see also: Weima, "Preaching the Gospel in Rome," 353. Jeffrey A. D. Weima, "Paul's Persuasive Prose: An Epistolary Analysis of the Letter to Philemon," in *Philemon in Perspective: Interpreting a Pauline Letter*, ed. D. Francois Tolmie (New York: De Gruyter, 2010), 56–57. Jeffrey A. D. Weima, "The Function of 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12 and the Use of Rhetorical Criticism: A Response to Otto Mark," in *The Thessalonians Debate: Methodological Discord or Methodological Synthesis*, ed. Karl P. Donfried and Johannes Beulter (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2000), 117–118.

⁵⁴ William G. Doty, *Letters in Primitive Christianity*, Guides to Biblical Scholarship (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1973), 36. Emphasis his.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 42.

statement. I hold it as an example of the type of qualification needed when considering the role of visitation language in AP passages. Yes, Paul often intended to emphasize his apostolic authority by referring to impending or potential visits as means of encouraging his readers' faith. But the apostle often (perhaps always) had interpersonal intentions, some of which he emphasizes more strongly than his authority in AP passages such as 1 Thess 2:17-3:13.

A handful of scholars have affirmed Funk's exclusive-authority AP perspective specifically in reference to the AP in 1 Thess 2:17-3:13, and others express similar conclusions about passages whose contexts similarly do not support such an emphasis (e.g., Phil 2:19-30). These remarks often employ the following logic: (1) This section is an AP, (2) the purpose of AP passages is to convey apostolic authority/power (usually citing Funk), (3) therefore, Paul's purpose in this passage is to convey authority. I include several examples below.

Martin describes 1 Thess 2:17-3:5 as "an excellent example of what R. W. Funk has called the implementation of the apostolic parousia."⁵⁷ Martin says Funk's study shows how passages some might see as mere groupings of travel details are actually "expressions of Paul's apostolic authority."⁵⁸ The quotations just mentioned interestingly appear in a footnote on the following summary, which seems somewhat at odds with what Martin says about Funk: "Paul's comments in these verses were intended to detail the feelings and actions of his missionary team in an effort to assure the Thessalonians of

⁵⁷ D. Michael Martin, *1, 2 Thessalonians*, New American Commentary 33 (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 1995), 96.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

the genuineness of his love and reinforce the good relationship reported by Timothy.”⁵⁹ Martin suggests two purposes. Paul apparently intends to reassure his readers of the genuineness of his care and also exert his authority. Such a dual purpose is certainly possible, but Martin does not address this duality. He seems to assume Funk’s exclusive-authority perspective about all AP passages, while simultaneously offering an interpretation for which Funk’s proposal does not account. An example such as this indicates the need for clarification about the role of AP passages in Paul’s letters.

Luckensmeyer devotes a section to Funk’s AP and its relevance for understanding 1 Thess 2:17-3:10. He concludes that the passage “is of crucial importance for the establishment of Paul’s apostolic authority in the community.”⁶⁰ Since Luckensmeyer mentions authority, cites Funk’s work, and adds no qualification regarding Funk’s exclusive view of authority, I conclude the author sees authority as the primary dynamic in the 1 Thessalonians AP.

Commenting on Phil 2:19-30, Hansen asserts, “The underlying purpose of these travelogues is to display [quoting Funk] ‘the presence of apostolic authority and power.’”⁶¹ Hansen continues, “Paul added weight to the apostolic authority of the letter by promising that he would visit the congregation soon in person to make sure that the imperatives in his letter were implemented.”⁶² In similar words, “Unable to be present in

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ David Luckensmeyer, *The Eschatology of First Thessalonians*, *Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus/Studien zur Umwelt des Neuen Testaments* 71 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009), 61.

⁶¹ G. Walter Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians*, *Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2009), 191–192. In this passage, Hansen cites Funk, “The Apostolic Parousia,” 249.

⁶² Ibid., 192.

person, Paul backs up the authority and power of his letter with the promise of a personal visit.”⁶³ Funk’s proposal, particularly the emphasis on authority and power, plays a central role in Hansen’s interpretation of the AP passage. Such perspective seems to skew Hansen’s interpretation of the affectionate language in 2:19. He says, “This emphasis on [Timothy’s] deep concern for the welfare of the church puts pressure on the church to cheer [Paul] up by following his directive to be one in spirit and of one mind (2:2).”⁶⁴ I do not question or minimize the fact that Paul references his presence to motivate the Philippian readers toward Christlike unity in 2:19-30 (see also 1:24-26 and 2:12-13). I do question Hansen’s conclusion (based largely on Funk’s proposal) that Paul emphasizes his presence in such passages *exclusively* to ensure the readers’ compliance with his instructions. Such readings can lead commentators and others not only to miss the warm tone of Paul’s language but also to misinterpret such manifestations of affection as mere tools of persuasion (as with Hansen) or even less-than-admirable manipulation.

To be fair, Hansen clearly acknowledges the sincere care of Paul and Timothy. Referring to 2:20, Hansen says, “Timothy will have a familial concern for the Philippians; he will genuinely care for them just as much as Paul does.”⁶⁵ I do not contend that Hansen completely misses Paul’s positive disposition toward his readers throughout the passage, but rather that he specifically misses the affection bound up in Paul’s literary manifestation of his presence by referencing Timothy’s visit and his own

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 194.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

hoped-for visit in this AP passage. The most important aspect of this oversight is that it stems from his presupposition of Funk's exclusively authoritative view of the AP.

In his monograph on discourse analysis in Philippians, Reed appeals to Funk's work to argue that in Phil 1:8 Paul "brings to bear his apostolic presence so that he may persuade the recipients to pursue certain courses of action."⁶⁶ According to Reed, Paul tells the Philippians that he longs for them as a way of influencing their behavior. In this section, Reed provides the following footnoted quote about Hellenistic letters from John White: "The request or demand for the recipient's presence or the sender's own anticipated visit sometimes conveyed a threatening nuance . . . [and] served to frighten the recipient into responsible and immediate action."⁶⁷ The reader can only conclude that Reed offers this fact as evidence of what he sees transpiring in Phil 1:8, an interpretation that appeals to Funk's AP approach. Reed fails to mention, however, that Paul writes how he longs for the readers ἐν σπλάγχνοις Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ. Such language does not convey a "threatening nuance." While the apostle was deeply concerned about the Philippians' spiritual growth, the verse reads much more as an exclamation of affection. Whatever else Paul may have intended in his expression, a judicious treatment of it calls for an acknowledgement of the affectionate tone. As evidenced by Reed, Funk's overly narrow proposal contributes to such imbalanced conclusions.

In the realm of postmodern hermeneutics, Curkpatrick compares Paul's visit language to a dynamic present in Derrida's *Envois*. Curkpatrick incorporates Funk's

⁶⁶ Jeffrey T. Reed, *A Discourse Analysis of Philippians: Method and Rhetoric in the Debate over Literary Integrity*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 136 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 205.

⁶⁷ Ibid. Reed cites John L. White, *Light from Ancient Letters* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 202.

proposal into his analysis and clearly affirms the exclusive association between presence and authority in AP passages. “This parousia to his congregations is inseparable from a desire to be their father . . . and install his paternal authority among the addressees.”⁶⁸ He goes on, “Paul’s apostrophic *parousia* is invariably about apostolic *exousia* – authority, and certain ‘property’ (*ousia*) rights over his congregations.”⁶⁹ Note the universality of Curkpatrick’s comments. With Funk, he applies an exclusive-authority perspective universally to Paul’s visitation language.

Thatcher provides an example of Funk’s influence outside Pauline studies. The closing section of 2 John begins, “Though I have much to write to you, I would rather not use paper and ink. Instead I hope to come to you and talk face to face, so that our joy may be complete” (2 John 12). Without naming Funk, Thatcher calls this verse a “notable example” of the AP, which he describes as “a rhetorical technique typical of Paul’s epistles.” Thatcher acknowledges that, at the surface level, John “appears to express a warm desire to visit the readers and enjoy their fellowship.” He then asserts that the early church viewed the apostles and their associates as “spiritual patrons of local congregations and the church at large” and that public censure from such leaders would disgrace and disrupt the status of members among their churches. Thatcher says Paul frequently “capitalizes on this fact” by issuing subtle warnings against disobedience, “appearing on the surface to express a genuine desire for the fellowship of the readers, but at a deeper level warning that he expects to find that they have followed his

⁶⁸ Stephen Curkpatrick, “Apostrophic Desire and Parousia in the Apostle Paul’s Epistles: A Derridean Proposal for Textual Interpretation,” *Biblical Interpretation* 10, no. 2 (2002): 180.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* Emphasis original.

instructions.” Thatcher briefly cites 1 Cor 16:5-7 and 2 Cor 13:10⁷⁰ as examples of this tendency, then examines Phlm 21-22 as possibly “Paul’s most skillful use” of the AP. Paul says there, “Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say. At the same time, prepare a guest room for me, for I am hoping that through your prayers I will be graciously given to you.” Thatcher affirms that Philemon would surely rejoice at news of the potential visit, but “he could not fail to see this announcement as a veiled threat that Paul intends to determine exactly how ‘obedient’ his friend has been.”⁷¹

Thatcher states plainly that the intent of the AP in 2 John 12 is “similar to the Pauline usage” in that two levels of meaning are present. “While John seems hopeful that his readers will remain loyal to him, he subtly warns them of his intention to come and see just how loyal they are.” He sees the warning, of course, as the “deeper” meaning and the primary focus of his comments. Thatcher considers the AP in Paul’s writings and here in John chiefly as a tool to exert apostolic authority and foster obedience.⁷²

Thatcher’s assessment of 2 John 12 seems based on three assumptions: (1) That early church leaders and members saw themselves in a patron/client relationship and that

⁷⁰Though Paul does seem to issue subtle admonitions in some passages (e.g., Phlm 22), I suggest that 2 Cor 13:10 does not support Thatcher’s point here because Paul quite plainly says in that verse that he writes the letter so he will not have to be severe in his use of the authority the Lord has given him. The warning is not veiled in any way. This is significant, because it demonstrates how Paul speaks about his visits differently, depending on the occasion. Paul sometimes refers to his presence as an explicit warning, sometimes as a subtle warning, and sometimes, as I will argue, with little-to-no apparent warning in mind.

⁷¹ Tom Thatcher, “2 John,” in *Hebrews - Revelation*, ed. David E. Garland and Tremper Longman, III, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* 13 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 523. While I do not disagree that Paul most likely intends the announcement of his visit to serve as a subtle encouragement for Philemon to consider carefully his course of action, the words “veiled threat” along with the tone of Thatcher’s comment seem overstated. As I say elsewhere in this paper, Paul certainly has the capacity for harsh warnings; but the tone of his letters comprises a remarkably broad emotive spectrum.

⁷² *Ibid.*

the leaders regularly used the fear of public shaming to encourage compliance with their teachings, (2) That Paul uses the AP in accord with this patron/client dynamic primarily as a subtle warning that his visit will expose whether or not the readers have truly complied, and (3) That John strongly warns his readers against receiving false teachers in the preceding verses (2 John 7-11).⁷³ Noting these assumptions supports my claim that Funk's exclusive-authority view of the AP has had far reaching effects. Funk's narrow view has influenced recent studies even beyond his original Pauline scope.

Space does not allow a full critique of Thatcher's argument, but I offer a few observations: (1) John explicitly specifies the intent of his desire to visit the readers with the purpose clause ἵνα ἡ χαρὰ ἡμῶν πεπληρωμένη ᾖ. Mutual joy is John's only explicit motivation. (2) The Pauline AP examples Thatcher cites all come from letters with clear evidence of relational or situational complexity not present in 2 John. (3) Thatcher primarily bases his conclusion on two assumptions – the presence of patronage dynamics and an authority-focused view of the AP. Neither of these assumptions is based on evidence within the letter itself.⁷⁴ Such interpretive tendencies reflect one of the greatest dangers of Funk's unqualified proposal. Because of Funk's influence, scholars such as Thatcher approach AP texts with a limited concept of what the author must intend when he expresses a desire to visit. Such scholars then confidently read this meaning into the passage and classify clear evidence of more positive relational dynamics as “surface level” meaning or even a manipulative guise.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ I suggest that, in this regard, 2 John differs from Philemon where Paul provides evidence of clever subtlety. The apostle clearly seeks to influence Philemon's decision about Onesimus but attempts to do so without directly commanding him to do so. Such dynamics do not characterize 2 John.

*1.2.2.3. Implicit Affirmations of Funk's Apostolic Parousia as a Tool
that Exclusively or Primarily Conveys Authoritative Presence*

Implicit endorsements often appear in treatments of AP passages where the literary convention does, in fact, seem to convey authority and power above other themes. The fact that Paul uses the AP primarily to convey authority and power *in some passages*, however, does not mean that he does so in every instance. Because Funk so clearly saw authority and power as the sole purpose of AP passages, unqualified references to his proposal implicitly endorse an exclusive-authority view. Even if the authors do not endorse Funk's view of authority, appealing to Funk without qualification creates the perception of endorsement for Funk's exclusive-authority view because exclusive authority was a central tenet of his original proposal.

Implicit affirmations of Funk's view appear frequently in treatments of AP passages in Romans and 1 Corinthians, because Paul does manifest his authoritative presence through the AP passages more in those letters than in others. I discuss select examples below.

Longenecker titles his section on Rom 15:14-32 "An 'Apostolic Parousia.'"⁷⁵ He states, "Funk coined the term 'apostolic parousia' to designate a section of a Pauline letter that was particularly concerned with Paul's apostolic presence. And that expression has become common today as an appropriate term for the body closing of Romans."⁷⁶ Without explanation, Longenecker lists the other passages treated by Funk as examples of the AP, including the passages in 1 Thessalonians. Such AP references suggest: (1) an

⁷⁵ Richard N. Longenecker, *Introducing Romans: Critical Issues in Paul's Most Famous Letter* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2011), 438.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 439.

endorsement of at least the primary elements of Funk’s overall proposal for the passage being treated, (2) a scholarly consensus of such endorsement, and (3) that such consensus exists regarding all of Funk’s AP passages.

Fee describes Funk’s main treatment of the AP as “an extremely helpful analysis of the form and significance of the ‘apostolic parousia’.”⁷⁷ In line with the purpose of his article, he suggests that Funk did not properly distinguish between two types of Pauline visits – visits where Paul plans to minister to a church in some way and visits where the apostle stopped en route to another location. Fee’s one qualification to Funk’s work actually reinforces the need for further clarification regarding the AP in scholarly writing, for Fee’s delineation does not allow for the possibility that Paul’s affectionate desire for relational reunion might also have served as a significant motivation in some cases.

1.2.2.4. References to Funk’s Apostolic Parousia that Qualify Its Exclusive Association of Presence with Authority and Power

Few scholars have questioned the exclusive-authority aspect of Funk’s proposal or qualified their citations or endorsements to specify that they take exception to that element. The limited examples below, however, show that scholarly discussion about the topic has persisted over multiple decades and that others have questioned Funk’s conclusions about authority (or at least offered their own more balanced perspectives).

As mentioned above, Mullins critiqued several aspects of Funk’s approach. He responded briefly to Funk’s claim that Paul indicates his apostolic authority to his recipients through the AP. He gives examples of how Paul indicates “a less apostolic and

⁷⁷ Gordon D. Fee, “ΧΑΡΙΣ in II Corinthians I. 15: Apostolic Parousia and Paul-Corinth Chronology,” *New Testament Studies* 24, no. 4 (July 1978): 537.

more affectionate relationship” in Romans and 1 Corinthians, the letters from which Funk draws examples of Paul establishing the basis of his apostolic relationship.⁷⁸ Mullins’ comments from 1973 show that some scholars quickly noticed problems with Funk’s overemphasis on authority. Funk’s AP was not telling the whole story. If Paul’s affection needed more acknowledgement in Romans and 1 Corinthians, how much more so in 1 Thessalonians?

Cousar uses “travelogue” language in his comments on Phil 2:19-30, a passage where Paul manifests his presence through the AP (at least in part) to convey affection. Cousar references Funk’s writing without directly mentioning the AP. He states that Paul’s mention of plans to visit his readers sometimes functions as a “carrot or a stick to prod” the readers to action (he cites Phlm 22; 2 Cor 13:10). At other times, such words “simply provide information” about the apostle’s planned itinerary or “hopes and fears” about future events (Rom 15:22-33; 1 Cor 16:5-9).⁷⁹ Cousar rightly points out that visitation language can function to influence readers’ behavior, and he rightly qualifies that such an intent is not always present. Cousar’s comments, however, fail to mention the possibility that Paul sought to convey affection to his readers through such travel remarks. Examples like this reflect ongoing scholarly interest in the purpose of Pauline visitation language, the relevance of Funk’s work in such discussions, and the lack of interpretive consensus in treating such passages.

In his commentary on 1 Thessalonians, Wanamaker describes the basic elements of Funk’s AP and affirms, “Funk is clearly correct that [Paul’s disposition in writing, his

⁷⁸ Mullins, “Visit Talk in New Testament Letters,” 352–353.

⁷⁹ Charles B. Cousar, *Philippians and Philemon: A Commentary*, The New Testament Library (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 64.

dispatching of an emissary, and his hope to visit the congregation] come together in 2:17-3:10 and were media used by Paul to maintain his authority and control over the congregations that he had established.”⁸⁰ Wanamaker implies that while Paul elsewhere uses elements of the AP to maintain authority and control, the apostle does not do so in this particular passage. He sees Funk’s form-critical observations as insufficient for identifying Paul’s rhetorical goals in 2:17-3:10. Wanamaker instead highlights aspects of ancient friendship letters present in the passage and concludes that they “prepare the way for the explicit parenthesis” in chs. 4-5. He cites Plutarch who recommends that a true friend will commend the behavior of one they need to reprove in order to “create a situation in which frankness can be used to correct the friend’s behavior.”⁸¹ Interestingly, Wanamaker seems to recognize that Funk’s AP proposal does not account for the affectionate language in 2:17-3:10. But he concludes that the primary (perhaps sole?) function of the positive relational wording is to correct and influence the Thessalonians’ behavior, a similar destination to which Funk arrived.

In a 1991 monograph, Jervis compared the structure of various Pauline letters to illuminate the purpose of Romans. Jervis’s form-critical study devotes substantial space to Funk’s AP. Her comments on 1 Thessalonians implicitly qualify the exclusive-authority aspect of Funk’s proposal. Jervis argues that the affectionate language in 1 Thess 3:9-10 suggests “that a desire to express his love and gratitude, and so to encourage the Thessalonians, is the primary function of the ‘desire to visit’ unit in

⁸⁰ Charles A. Wanamaker, *The Epistle to the Thessalonians*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1990), 119.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 119–120.

1 Thessalonians.”⁸² Similarly, “The ‘emissary’ unit is largely concerned with Timothy’s happy report of the Thessalonians’ steadfast faith, and so it too serves to express Paul’s love for his readers.”⁸³ Such observations lead Jervis to conclude that “the dominant function of the apostolic parousia of 1 Thessalonians is to express Paul’s love for his Thessalonian converts and to encourage them in their faith.”⁸⁴ According to Jervis, each of the two AP units present in this passage (i.e., Paul’s desire to visit and his reference to sending an emissary) functions to express the apostle’s love as they manifest his presence to the readers within the letter. She adds, “The apostolic parousia of 1 Thessalonians, in fact, establishes Paul’s apostolic presence in the community *by* articulating his love and gratitude and concern for the spiritual health of his readers.”⁸⁵ So for Jervis, the expressions of love and other positive emotions serve both as the purpose of the AP in this section and also as the media through which the purpose is fulfilled. They act as both the end and the means. Paul’s affectionate words, as they are intricately associated with both AP units, literarily manifest the apostle’s presence to the readers to convey experientially the very affection of which Paul speaks.

Though Jervis does not explicitly disagree with Funk’s exclusive-authority view of the AP, she does present an expanded view of the authority aspect of Funk’s AP. Jervis implicitly takes exception to Funk’s perspective by arguing that the AP in 1 Thessalonians has a different “primary function”⁸⁶ than the function Funk ascribed to

⁸² Jervis, *The Purpose of Romans*, 115.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 116.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* Emphasis added.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 115.

all AP passages. Jervis's language shows balance in leaving room for multiple possible functions while also correctly specifying the main emphasis of 1 Thess 2:17-3:13.

While maintaining Funk's contention that Paul manifests his presence to the readers through the AP, Jervis does not affirm that Paul always and only does so to manifest his apostolic authority. She allows context to determine each AP's probable nuance and purpose. My research so far suggests she is the first scholar to affirm Funk's overall approach while also qualifying that Paul does not exclusively convey authority and power in every AP passage.

As mentioned above, Weima has discussed Funk's AP in multiple places. With regard to the function of the AP in 1 Thessalonians, he adopts a similar perspective to Jervis and affirmingly cites her comments. Speaking on 1 Thess 2:17-3:10, Weima says:

The intended function of this apostolic parousia, however, differs from that found elsewhere in Paul's letters. Here the apostle makes his presence more strongly felt among the Thessalonian believers not so much to exert his authority as to reassure them of his continued love and care for them.⁸⁷

Weima certainly sees the exertion of authority as the primary function of the typical Pauline AP,⁸⁸ but he does not see it as the only function or as the primary function in every AP passage.

Jervis and Weima are the only two scholars identified so far who apply Funk's term "apostolic parousia" to 1 Thess 2:17-3:13 but also argue that the passage emphasizes affection and desire over authority and power. They do not reflect the scholarly trend. Neither of the authors directly name and respond to the imbalance with

⁸⁷ Weima, *Paul the Ancient Letter Writer*, 118.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 113–118. Discussed above. I differ with Weima here.

Funk's original proposal and they do not consequently supply much evidence to support their alternate views. Several scholars have addressed other issues with Funk directly (multiple examples given above), but no one has completed a focused response to his exclusive-authority view. These facts show current scholarly interest in this topic while also demonstrating a remaining need for further investigation.

Before moving on, I will look at two more loosely related scholarly discussions that question Funk's AP or the type of reasoning that stems from his work. First, Johnson closely examines AP material found in the Corinthian correspondence. He argues that Funk articulated an overly uniform view of the AP, and that Funk's downplaying of exceptions to his basic principles "overlooked the insight they might provide regarding the interaction between Paul and a particular community."⁸⁹ Johnson shows how certain elements Funk identified with the AP are completely missing in Paul's letters to Corinth.

Because the elements that are missing are more congenial in nature and the elements that persist are generally more threatening in tone, I suggest that the pattern of content of Paul's apostolic parousia in the Corinthian letters reveals his literary adaptation to his problematic relationship with that community.⁹⁰

Johnson's argument resembles my thesis, but from a different angle. He demonstrates how expanding certain overly restrictive aspects of Funk's article (without dismissing Funk's helpful insights) illuminates Paul's situationally distinct *agitation* with the Corinthian church. Similarly, I will show how expanding certain overly restrictive aspects of Funk's article illuminates Paul's situationally distinct *affection* for the church

⁸⁹ Johnson, "Paul's Epistolary Presence in Corinth," 482.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 489.

in Thessalonica. Johnson’s area of focus differs from mine, but his study shows the value of pursuing such a project.

Second, Stirewalt makes an observation about Philippians that relates to the present review, even though he does not mention Funk or the AP. Stirewalt compares and contrasts Philippians to a letter from Antiochus to Erythrae to support his proposal that Paul appropriates “the forms and settings of the official letter” when writing to the church at Philippi.⁹¹ He seeks to show that ancient Greco-Roman official letters “sometimes included expressions of closeness.” Stirewalt’s overall argument is not relevant to this study, but he draws an intriguing conclusion based on his analysis of the two letters: “For Antiochus, goodwill (*eunoia*) is secondary, intended for clothing an authoritative decree. For Paul, authority is secondary, even incidental, to the expression of affection (*agape*), the major purpose of his writing.”⁹² Stirewalt’s observation about the letter from Antiochus reflects currently scholarly interest in subtle interpersonal undercurrents that influence the interpretation of a given passage. Examining the weight of emphasis on relational dynamics such as affection and authority influences interpretive conclusions about a given piece of correspondence.

1.2.2.5. *Studies of 1 Thessalonians*

A study of this nature requires extensive interaction with literature related to the interpretation of 1 Thessalonians. I will engage with these resources further in chs. 2-3, arguing that my thesis can be supported from multiple popular interpretive approaches.

⁹¹ M. Luther Stirewalt, Jr., *Paul, the Letter Writer* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2003), 82.

⁹² *Ibid.* I should note that Stirewalt is addressing the entire letter to the Philippians and not speaking directly to the AP verses in 2:19-30. His words seem relevant nonetheless.

Scholars have undertaken the study of Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians from numerous angles.⁹³ Discussions about the epistle in the past 50 years have tended to focus on applying principles from various literary approaches. Such studies typically fall under the label "epistolary analysis." Much of the work in this area focuses on the structure of the Pauline letter form and attempts to delineate the typical parts and subparts of Paul's epistles, their relationship to each other, and the implications of such structural proposals on interpreting Pauline texts. Because Funk's form-critical essay falls in this category, later epistolary studies tend to include discussions about the AP.⁹⁴ John White,⁹⁵ William Doty,⁹⁶ David Aune,⁹⁷ Stanley Stowers,⁹⁸ and Jerome Murphy-O'Connor⁹⁹ made significant contributions to this general area of study. More recent epistolary studies have

⁹³ Much of the content in this section was informed and influenced by Adams' helpful survey: Sean A. Adams, "Evaluating 1 Thessalonians: An Outline of Holistic Approaches to 1 Thessalonians in the Last 25 Years," *Currents in Biblical Research* 8, no. 1 (2009): 51–70.

⁹⁴ I already interacted with several above.

⁹⁵ John L. White, *The Form and Function of the Body of the Greek Letter: A Study of the Letter-Body in the Non-Literary Papyri and in Paul the Apostle*, SBL Dissertation Series 2 (Society of Biblical Literature, 1972). Also John L. White, *Light from Ancient Letters* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986). Funk supervised White's dissertation.

⁹⁶ Doty, *Letters in Primitive Christianity*.

⁹⁷ David E. Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment*, Library of Early Christianity (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox Press, 1985).

⁹⁸ Stanley K. Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, Library of Early Christianity 5 (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox Press, 1986).

⁹⁹ Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul the Letter-Writer: His World, His Options, His Skills*, Good News Studies 41 (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1995).

come from Luther Stirewalt,¹⁰⁰ Hans-Josef Klauck,¹⁰¹ Jeffery Weima,¹⁰² and contributors to a volume edited by Stanley Porter and Sean Adams.¹⁰³

Prominent twentieth-century treatments of 1 Thessalonians largely influenced by the epistolary approach include commentaries by F. F. Bruce,¹⁰⁴ Leon Morris,¹⁰⁵ and Ernst Best.¹⁰⁶ More recent commentaries include Beverly Gaventa,¹⁰⁷ Gene Green,¹⁰⁸ Abraham Malherbe,¹⁰⁹ Earl Richard,¹¹⁰ and Jefferey Weima.¹¹¹ Little consensus exists regarding the numbers and names of parts within Paul's letters and 1 Thessalonians in particular, but proposals often include three-to-five of the following parts: opening, thanksgiving, body, parenthesis, and closing. Such studies differ in whether and how they see the AP functioning in 1 Thessalonians. Many provide helpful insights into ancient epistolary conventions and other literary considerations that have enhanced my argument, but the

¹⁰⁰ Stirewalt, Jr., *Paul, the Letter Writer*.

¹⁰¹ Hans-Josef Klauck, *Ancient Letters and the New Testament: A Guide to Context and Exegesis* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2006).

¹⁰² Weima, *Paul the Ancient Letter Writer*.

¹⁰³ Stanley E. Porter and Sean A. Adams, eds., *Paul and the Ancient Letter Form* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2010).

¹⁰⁴ F. F. Bruce, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, WBC (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1982).

¹⁰⁵ Leon Morris, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, TNTC (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1984).

¹⁰⁶ Ernest Best, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, BNTC (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1986).

¹⁰⁷ Beverly Roberts Gaventa, *First and Second Thessalonians*, Interpretation (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1998).

¹⁰⁸ Gene L. Green, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2002).

¹⁰⁹ Abraham J. Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, Anchor Yale Bible Commentaries (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004).

¹¹⁰ Earl J. Richard, *First and Second Thessalonians*, SP 11 (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2007).

¹¹¹ Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*.

approach must be supplemented to provide more detailed insights within the proposed macro structures.

The epistolary approach has also come to describe studies that attempt to situate 1 Thessalonians and other Pauline letters within certain ancient epistolary “types.” Such research often relies on letter-type categories discussed by Greco-Roman epistolary theorists such as Pseudo-Demetrius and Pseudo-Libanius. Abraham Malherbe did significant work in this area,¹¹² though his approach to 1 Thessalonians puts more emphasis on sociological background studies. Proponents of this approach have applied several letter types to 1 Thessalonians, including friendship (Johannes Schoon-Janssen¹¹³), parenesis (Stanley Stowers¹¹⁴), and consolation (Abraham Smith¹¹⁵). Some examinations of 1 Thessalonians that consider ancient epistolary categories have helped identify elements of affection and emotion in the letter and in my focal passage. The approach has significant limitations, however, as an isolated perspective.¹¹⁶

¹¹² Abraham J. Malherbe, *Ancient Epistolary Theorists*, Society of Biblical Literature Sources for Biblical Study 19 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1988).

¹¹³ Johannes Schoon-Janssen, “On the Use of Elements of Ancient Epistolography in 1 Thessalonians,” in *The Thessalonians Debate: Methodological Discord or Methodological Synthesis?*, ed. Karl P. Donfried and Johannes Beulter (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2000), 189.

¹¹⁴ Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, 96.

¹¹⁵ Abraham Smith, *Comfort One Another: Reconstructing the Rhetoric and Audience of 1 Thessalonians*, Literary Currents in Biblical Interpretation (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995).

¹¹⁶ Adams notes the categories developed in the handbooks often do not describe letters as large and complex as those written by Paul. Adams, “Evaluating 1 Thessalonians: An Outline of Holistic Approaches to 1 Thessalonians in the Last 25 Years,” 56. Others have noted how epistolary handbooks lack consensus among their proposed categories and how personal correspondence in the papyri do not easily fit into narrow types. I find the handbooks most helpful for identifying common epistolary themes and associated language.

Rhetorical analysis has emerged as one of the primary approaches to 1 Thessalonians in current scholarship.¹¹⁷ According to the most narrow forms of this approach (e.g., George Kennedy¹¹⁸), Paul's letters are "effectively speeches with minimal epistolary framework."¹¹⁹ Some rhetorical approaches classify 1 Thessalonians within one of Aristotle's three designated classes of speech (judicial/forensic, deliberative, and epideictic).¹²⁰ The letter is often designated as epideictic, but no consensus exists and some say it defies classification.¹²¹ Rhetorical studies often structure 1 Thessalonians according to traditional Latin rhetorical categories: *exordium*, *narratio*, *partitio* or *propositio*, *probatio*, and *peroratio*.¹²² Such categories form an interpretive lens through which to identify the purpose and flow of 1 Thessalonians and its sections. Scholars who adopt this approach typically consider 1 Thess 2:17-3:13 (sometimes only through 3:10) as part of the *narratio* section because of its recounting of past events. I see most strictly rhetorical approaches as attempting to shape Paul's content into overly restrictive

¹¹⁷ Steve Walton, "Rhetorical Criticism: An Introduction," *Themelios* 21, no. 2 (January 1996): 4–9.

¹¹⁸ George A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation Through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill, NC: UNC Press Books, 2014).

¹¹⁹ Adams, "Evaluating 1 Thessalonians: An Outline of Holistic Approaches to 1 Thessalonians in the Last 25 Years," 57.

¹²⁰ Frank W. Hughes, "The Rhetoric of Letters," in *The Thessalonians Debate: Methodological Discord or Methodological Synthesis?*, ed. Karl P. Donfried and Johannes Beulter (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2000), 215–218.

¹²¹ Steve Walton, "What Has Aristotle to Do with Paul? Rhetorical Criticism and 1 Thessalonians," *Tyndale Bulletin* 46, no. 2 (November 1995): 233–239.

¹²² Hughes, "The Rhetoric of Letters," 218–231.

preconceived categories.¹²³ Gleaning from those who have examined the text through such lenses, however, has still provided valuable insights relevant to this study.

Many scholars attempt to integrate epistolary and rhetorical theories, seeing them as “equally viable but working on different discourse levels, which makes them more compatible.”¹²⁴ Karl Donfried and Johannes Beutler compiled a work devoted to exploring the viability of such synthesis.¹²⁵ Raymond Collins argues that a historical-critical reading of 1 Thessalonians “suggests that [Paul’s] text ought to be read from a rhetorical-epistolary point of view,” which Collins distinguishes from reading the text using either approach or both in a separate way.¹²⁶ Robert Jewett¹²⁷ and Charles Wanamaker¹²⁸ both published works attempting a synthesis of the two approaches while emphasizing rhetorical features of 1 Thessalonians.

Several other works adopt an even more integrated approach, drawing from epistolary and rhetorical approaches but not depending too heavily on either. Major

¹²³ Jeffrey T. Reed, “Using Ancient Rhetorical Categories to Interpret Paul’s Letters: A Question of Genre,” in *Rhetoric and the New Testament: Essays from the 1992 Heidelberg Conference*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Thomas H. Olbricht, JSNTSup 90 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 314.

¹²⁴ Adams, “Evaluating 1 Thessalonians: An Outline of Holistic Approaches to 1 Thessalonians in the Last 25 Years,” 57.

¹²⁵ Karl P. Donfried and Johannes Beutler, eds., *The Thessalonians Debate: Methodological Discord or Methodological Synthesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2000).

¹²⁶ Raymond F. Collins, “‘I Command That This Letter Be Read’: Writing as a Manner of Speaking,” in *The Thessalonians Debate: Methodological Discord or Methodological Synthesis*, ed. Karl P. Donfried and Johannes Beutler (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2000), 319.

¹²⁷ Robert Jewett, *The Thessalonian Correspondence: Pauline Rhetoric and Millenarian Piety*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986).

¹²⁸ Wanamaker, *The Epistle to the Thessalonians*.

works included recent commentaries by Paul Furnish,¹²⁹ Gordon Fee,¹³⁰ and Eugene Boring.¹³¹

Multiple studies on 1 Thessalonians cover broad territory related to the book. Works by Raymond Collins¹³² and Karl Donfried¹³³ both contributed significantly to the field and to this thesis. Several specialized studies have proved helpful as well. These include works by Trevor Burke¹³⁴ and Abraham Malherbe.¹³⁵

1.2.2.6. Conclusion to Literature Review

The following conclusions emerge from the review of literature above: (1) Funk makes a clear and unqualified claim in his 1967 essay that AP passages function to manifest a sense of Paul's presence within the respective letters exclusively to convey his apostolic authority and power in order to influence the readers to comply with his message. (2) Funk's proposal has significantly impacted the field of NT studies, and scholarly discourse about it continues. Many scholars have adopted Funk's exclusive-authority view or refer to his essay without qualification in ways that imply wholesale

¹²⁹ Victor Paul Furnish, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, ANTC (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007).

¹³⁰ Gordon D. Fee, *The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2009).

¹³¹ M. Eugene Boring, *I and II Thessalonians: A Commentary*, NTL (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015).

¹³² Raymond F. Collins, *Studies on the First Letter to the Thessalonians*, BETL 66 (Leuven, Belgium: Leuven University Press, 1984). See also Collins' edited work: Raymond F. Collins, ed., *The Thessalonian Correspondence*, BETL 87 (Leuven, Belgium: Leuven University Press, 1990).

¹³³ Karl P. Donfried, *Paul, Thessalonica, and Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2002).

¹³⁴ Trevor J. Burke, *Family Matters: A Socio-Historical Study of Kinship Metaphors in 1 Thessalonians*, JSNTSup 247 (New York: T&T Clark, 2004).

¹³⁵ Abraham J. Malherbe, *Paul and the Thessalonians: The Philosophic Tradition of Pastoral Care* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2011).

endorsement of his perspective. (3) Some scholars have critiqued various aspects of Funk's proposal, but few have responded directly to his exclusive-authority view of the AP. Those who have critiqued this view have not extensively treated the subject. No one has done a targeted analysis of 1 Thess 2:17-3:13 in order to challenge Funk's overall approach to AP passages. (4) My research includes past and current literature related to interpreting Paul's letters and 1 Thessalonians in particular. I have drawn evidence for my thesis from many interpretative approaches.

1.3. Methodology and Structure

This study mostly comprises an exegetical study of 1 Thess 2:17-3:13. I selected this unit for several reasons. First, Funk lists it as one example of an AP passage.¹³⁶ Funk does not treat the passage in depth but refers to it several places. Second, the passage clearly functions to express Paul's deep personal affection for the readers. Weima describes Paul's level of interpersonal pathos in 1 Thessalonians as "unique in his letters" and suggests that this church was particularly dear to the apostle.¹³⁷ The letter contains some of the apostle's most affectionate language, and the most intense expressions of such language are directly connected to the passage's primary AP elements (i.e., Paul's desires and plans to visit the readers and his sending of Timothy as an emissary).

I will begin the body of the thesis by examining the context of 1 Thess 2:17-3:13, analyzing three themes throughout the letter as a whole to better understand Paul's purposes and tone in the focal passage. I will then exegetically examine the AP passage,

¹³⁶ Funk, "The Apostolic Parousia," 250.

¹³⁷ Jeffrey A. D. Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014), 123.

providing evidence to support my thesis. I will apply principles of grammatical-historical exegesis to identify elements of affection within the passage's four pericopes and demonstrate their close association with aspects of the AP. Elements of affection will include Paul's word choice, grammatical constructions, use of metaphors, vocative titles, and other literary conventions. The analysis will incorporate detailed lexical studies, syntactical examination, and various forms of literary analysis. Greco-Roman background studies will enhance the investigation throughout chs. 2-3, particularly ancient epistolography. The final chapter will summarize findings from the context and exegetical chapters, discuss implications for NT studies, and suggest areas for further research.

1.4. Presuppositions and Parameters

In order to keep a reasonable scope, I must adopt several presuppositions and parameters. I described above multiple elements of Funk's proposal with which I agree and which I will assume throughout this study. For example, I believe Funk rightly identified the AP as a literary feature¹³⁸ of Paul's writings and that Funk correctly recognizes several consistent elements in such passages. I also affirm Funk's suggestion that Paul groups such elements together to manifest his presence to the readers through the letters he sends them.¹³⁹ While I described some of Funk's arguments in the literature

¹³⁸ Though I disagree with Funk's designation of the AP as a standard "form."

¹³⁹ For more detailed discussions about the ancient Greek conception of a letter as a surrogate for physical presence, see White, *Light from Ancient Letters*, 190–191, 219–220. For numerous references to ancient examples of this perspective, see Samuel Byrskog, "Epistolography, Rhetoric and Letter Prescript: Romans 1:1-7 as a Test Case," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 65 (1997): 30–31. For a discussion about the ancient Greek emphasis on finding tangible substitutes for separated loved ones, see Paul A. Holloway, "Alius Paulus: Paul's Promise to Send Timothy at Philippians 2.19–24," *New Testament Studies* 54, no. 4 (October 2008): 542–556.

review above, I do not have space to provide thorough arguments for these and other conclusions I share with Funk. I assume them throughout.

This study will suggest that Funk's conception of AP passages needs nuanced expansion, but it will not progress beyond that point. I will provide one example that demonstrates the inadequacy of Funk's exclusive-authority perspective, but I will not offer a thorough suggested revision of this Pauline convention. That would require more extensive research both within 1 Thessalonians and throughout Paul's writings. In the conclusion, I suggest that a revised comprehensive analysis of the AP phenomenon would make a worthwhile topic for future study.

Throughout the study, I assume the structural integrity of 1 Thessalonians. Some of the scholars with whom I interact (including Funk) do not hold such an assumption.¹⁴⁰

The nature of this study requires discussion about Paul's emotional, volitional, and teleological realities when writing the Thessalonians. Throughout the study, I will focus on what Paul *states* about his feelings toward the Thessalonians, his desire to visit them and find out about their affairs, and his apparent intentions for writing about such things in the context of the letter. I will not attempt a psychological analysis of Paul's inaccessible inner world *behind the text*, but I will start with a hermeneutical presupposition that evidence of any author's intent and state-of-mind is crucial to making interpretive decisions.¹⁴¹ As I

¹⁴⁰ As Gupta notes, Earl Richard alone argues for a division theory among contemporary academic commentators. Nijay K. Gupta, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, Zondervan Critical Introductions to the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2019), 24. For Richard's argument in favor of the composite nature of 1 Thessalonians, see Richard, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 11–17. The only interpolation theory relevant to this study focuses on 2:13-16. For a thorough review of the issues involved and an argument against interpolation, see Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 41–46. As Gupta notes, no Greek mss. omit any of the verses in the passage. Gupta, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 25.

¹⁴¹ Vanhoozer argues that meaning in a text can be found by understanding the communicative acts of communicative agents. He devotes a chapter to this proposal, in which he extensively defends the role of examining authorial intention in any hermeneutical endeavor. See Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning*

approach Paul's emotions, aspirations, and motivations, I begin with the understanding that students of scripture can (and, in fact, have to) make *prima facie* observations about what an author indicates *within the text* regarding their feelings, desires, and purposes.¹⁴² Considering such stated evidence is consistent with the traditional emphasis on authorial intent in historical-grammatical hermeneutics.

I will also assume that what Paul wrote is an accurate depiction of what he thought and felt. I accept Paul's descriptions of his internal experiences as they relate to his purposes for writing. Without evidence to the contrary, I assume the sincerity of Paul's affection and other positive feelings. Paul understood that itinerant religious and philosophic proponents often engaged in surreptitious ploys to flatter those they influenced for illicit gain or power, but he specifically disavows such flattery and impure motives (e.g., 1 Thess 2:5-6; 2 Cor 2:17).

in This Text?: The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2009), 201–280.

¹⁴² This is especially true for deeply personal correspondence such as Galatians, the Corinthian epistles, Philippians, the Thessalonian correspondence, the Pastorals, Philemon, James, 3 John, *et al.* It is not as significant in less personal writings.

CHAPTER 2

SITUATIONAL CONTEXT, EPISTOLARY PURPOSE, AND THEMATIC ANALYSES OF 1 THESSALONIANS 2:17-3:13

2.1. Introduction

This chapter begins with a brief presentation of background material related to 1 Thessalonians, offers a discussion of the letter’s purpose, and conducts an extended analysis of three epistolary themes.

2.2. Situational Context: Authorship, Occasion, and Date

The names Paul, Silvanus,¹⁴³ and Timothy open the letter greeting in 1 Thess 1:1. With occasional exceptions (2:18; 3:5; 5:27), the first-person plural “we” dominates the epistle. Consequently, I take most of the letter’s contents as reflecting all three authors. While I consider Paul to be the primary author, I understand the first person plurals as his attempt to represent his coauthors and not as epistolary plurals.¹⁴⁴ Pauline authorship of the letter is almost universally acknowledged.

The letter is addressed “to the church of the Thessalonians” (1:1). Luke recounts the founding of the Thessalonian church in Acts 17:1-9.¹⁴⁵ The letter arose after a dramatic series of events detailed in Acts 17:5-10 and the first three chapters of

¹⁴³ For simplicity and space, I use the shortened Greek form “Silas” in place of Silvanus.

¹⁴⁴ I often refer to the author as “Paul” for shorthand. I do so understanding that he speaks for the others when he uses the plural. I interchangeably use “Paul” or “Paul and his companions” (or similar terminology). The issue is inconsequential for my thesis because Paul is represented in both cases. For an argument in favor of genuine plurals in 1 Thessalonians, see Murphy-O’Connor, *Paul the Letter-Writer*, 19–20. See also Raymond F. Collins, “Paul as Seen through His Own Eyes: A Reflection on the First Letter to the Thessalonians,” *Louvain Studies* 8 (1980): 350–352.

¹⁴⁵ I assume the historicity of Acts. For a defense of the book’s historical reliability, see I. Howard Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1998).

1 Thessalonians. After spending a brief period of time in Thessalonica on their initial visit,¹⁴⁶ Paul and Silas were forced to escape hostile Jewish opponents by night. The untimely separation deeply distressed Paul and his companions, so they eagerly sought to return (1 Thess 2:17-18). When Satan disrupted their attempts, Paul and Silas sent Timothy from Athens “to establish and encourage the young church” (3:1-2). Paul went from Athens to Corinth (Acts 18:1) and likely composed 1 Thessalonians after Timothy returned to him there (1 Thess 3:6).¹⁴⁷ In light of this chronology and some historical factors, most date the letter about 50 CE, making it one of Paul’s earliest extant compositions.¹⁴⁸

2.3. Purpose(s) of 1 Thessalonians

Identifying the primary purpose of 1 Thessalonians remains one of the greatest aims of scholarly discourse regarding the letter. Donfried laments, “While the exegetical labors have been intense, little consensus has been reached with regard to the purpose and intention of this writing.”¹⁴⁹ As in most (possibly all) of his letters, Paul has multiple intents.¹⁵⁰ In chs. 4-5, the apostle clearly seeks to offer helpful instruction, encouragement, and admonition to address general matters of maturity and a few specific

¹⁴⁶ Acts 17:2 clarifies that the team ministered in the city at least three Sabbath days, but the account does not limit their stay to only three weeks. The intimate language and historical details of 1 Thessalonians suggest they remained at least a couple months.

¹⁴⁷ Fee, *The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians*, 5.

¹⁴⁸ Bruce, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 34–35.

¹⁴⁹ Karl P. Donfried, “The Scope and Nature of the Debate: An Introduction to Some Question,” in *The Thessalonians Debate: Methodological Discord or Methodological Synthesis*, ed. Karl P. Donfried and Johannes Beulter (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2000), 3.

¹⁵⁰ Larry R. Helyer, *The Witness of Jesus, Paul and John: An Exploration in Biblical Theology* (InterVarsity Press, 2010), 216–217.

needs of the church. Determining Paul's implicit purpose in the first three chapters, however, remains the letter's greatest hermeneutical dilemma. Paul does not explicitly state the purpose or hoped for outcome of this section, so the interpreter must deduce the apostle's intents.

Donfried concludes, "Thus, one's overall understanding of 1 Thessalonians will depend largely on which methodological approach one gives priority and how one applies it."¹⁵¹ Interpreters tend to adopt one of two primary views about chs. 1-3. The traditional view held that "Paul was in some real sense defending himself" by describing in 2:1-12 "what sort of men" he and his coauthors were among the Thessalonians (1:5) and emphasizing his love and longing despite an extended absence from them (2:17-3:10).¹⁵² Hendricksen comments that the material preceding 2:17 has been called Paul's *apologia pro vita sua* while the material that follows has been called *apologia pro absentia sua*.¹⁵³

A 1970 article by Malherbe significantly influenced what was only a subtle trend at that point.¹⁵⁴ Malherbe argued that 2:1-12 should be viewed not apologetically (as defense), but paranetically (as implicit, example-based, moral/spiritual persuasion). Since then, the parenetic view has curiously found a home among many who adopt rhetorical criticism as an approach to understanding Paul's letters.¹⁵⁵ Whether based on rhetorical

¹⁵¹ Donfried, "The Scope and Nature of the Debate," 4.

¹⁵² See Weima for an extended argument in favor of the apologetic approach. Jeffrey A. D. Weima, "An Apology for the Apologetic Function of I Thessalonians 2:1-12," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 20, no. 68 (April 1998): 73-99.

¹⁵³ William Hendricksen, *Exposition of I and II Thessalonians*, NTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1955), 74.

¹⁵⁴ Abraham J. Malherbe, "'Gentle as a Nurse': The Cynic Background to 1 Thess 2," *Novum Testamentum* 12, no. 2 (April 1970): 203-217.

¹⁵⁵ See Walton for an application of rhetorical criticism to 1 Thessalonians that adopts a parenetic conclusion. Walton, "What Has Aristotle to Do with Paul?" Malherbe himself did not arrive at his

criticism or not, the parenetic approach has become the most prevalent in current literature.

Either approach can support my thesis because scholars in both camps tend to affirm that love and longing (among other things) characterize both the letter and the AP passage.¹⁵⁶ The camps disagree primarily on whether Paul intended the display of love and longing to answer accusations or to present a model for the readers to follow.¹⁵⁷

Weima builds a convincing case that Paul seeks to accomplish more in 1 Thessalonians than present himself and his companions as exemplars for further imitation, though I believe Weima goes too far in assuming the presence of specific opponents outside the church. At this point, I prefer to say, “Paul felt a strong need to reassure the readers about himself and his relationship with them that may have stemmed from concerns within the church reported by Timothy or possible external accusations.” This concern certainly seems to drive much of the material in the AP passage.

conclusion through rhetorical criticism, and, as far as I can tell, nothing about the approach requires a parenetic interpretation of 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12. Some elements of the approach could actually support an apologetic conclusion. But the trend emerged nonetheless.

¹⁵⁶ See Malherbe whose work originally bolstered the parenetic view. Malherbe speaks of Paul’s “great warmth” and “anguish of separation.” Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, 186–187. See Lyons’ work, which is often cited in support of a parenetic interpretation. Lyons speaks of “Paul’s intense and sustained yearning to visit his orphaned children” and “true friends yearn to be together.” George Lyons, *Pauline Autobiography: Toward a New Understanding*, SBL Dissertation Series 73 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1985), 208–218. See Jewett who applies rhetorical criticism to 1 Thessalonians and describes Paul’s “‘affectionate desire’ for the well-being of the congregation.” Jewett, *The Thessalonian Correspondence*, 152. See Wanamaker, who maintains a parenetic approach and applies rhetorical criticism to the letter. He points out Paul’s “philophrenetic intention” as the apostle expresses “affection for the Thessalonians and his own longing to return to them.” Wanamaker, *The Epistle to the Thessalonians*, 133.

¹⁵⁷ Some parenetic approaches see Paul not as modeling love and longing but rather as maintaining the personal relationship between Paul and the readers so that they will respond favorably to the parenesis. Insights from all of these perspectives can enhance my thesis, because they all acknowledge that Paul emphasizes affection and desire over authority in 1 Thessalonians.

An apologetic approach, however, does not explain all elements in chs. 1-3. Several of Paul's emphases about his own behavior relate closely to specific issues apparently facing the church.¹⁵⁸ Paul certainly intended his excessive use of imitation language to accomplish more than apologetic defense. Multiple theological statements in the first three chapters also seem connected to the readers' situation.¹⁵⁹ I therefore affirm the possibility that parenetic and instructive material appears throughout chs. 1-3. I will not focus extensively on these aspects in any given passage, because they do not relate directly to my thesis. Regardless of the number and nature of Paul's various intentions in 1 Thessalonians, the apostle clearly seeks to convey his love and longing to the readers in chs. 1-3.

2.4. Select Thematic Analyses

This section will examine the content of 1 Thessalonians from three perspectives. I will survey expressions of affection, affirming language, and Paul's minimization of authority throughout the letter. These analyses will demonstrate how the tone of the entire letter supports my thesis regarding the function of the AP passage.

2.4.1. Affectionately Emotive Tenor Outside of 1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:13

Paul's expressions of affection toward the Thessalonian readers permeate the first three chapters of the letter and suggest an exceedingly positive past and present

¹⁵⁸ E.g., working with their own hands and having need of no one in 5:11-12, references to the church's afflictions and enemies, et al.

¹⁵⁹ For example, Paul emphasizes eschatological elements of salvation in 1:10; 2:20; and 3:13. The eschatological material in 4:13-5:11 shows the readers' significant personal concern with related matters.

relationship with the readers. Such a distinct tone reinforces my thesis that Paul primarily seeks to convey affection and not authority in the climactic AP passage.

Within the opening thanksgiving section, Paul addresses the readers with the vocative title “brothers” (1:4).¹⁶⁰ Weima argues the designation should be taken “not merely as an epistolary convention to mark transition but also as an important expression of the deep affection that the apostle still has for his Thessalonian converts.”¹⁶¹ In his study of kinship metaphors in 1 Thessalonians, Burke discusses the ancient association of intimacy with such familial language. Both Jewish and non-Jewish sources describe the relationship between brothers as characterized by φιλαδελφία.¹⁶² Burke cites a letter in which Minucius Felix critiques Christians who “indiscriminately call each other brothers and sisters” (*Octavius* 9.2).¹⁶³ In context, the statement suggests a high-level of intimacy associated with kinship metaphors in Greco-Roman culture. In Pauline literature, ἀγαπητός and ἀδελφός become interchangeable terms.¹⁶⁴ Burke notes that the frequency

¹⁶⁰ It is well established that ἀδελφοί characteristically refers to male and female readers throughout the NT. See Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 90.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 196.

¹⁶² Burke, *Family Matters*, 126. See also Burke’s section titled “Paul and the Thessalonian Brotherhood,” 163-175.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 174. *The Octavius of Minucius Felix* is typically dated to the late second or early third century.

¹⁶⁴ Ethelbert Stauffer, “ἀγαπάω κτλ,” *TDNT* 1:51. Stauffer cites 1 Thess 2:8 and Phlm 16. Not every use of the vocative ἀδελφοί carries the same affectionate emphasis in 1 Thessalonians or elsewhere. The term often functions as a discourse marker. See Steven E. Runge and Sean Boisen, “‘So, Brothers’: Pauline Use of the Vocative,” *Society of Biblical Literature 2007 Seminar Papers*, SBLSPS 46 (San Diego, CA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007). Nevertheless, the affectionate tone of 1 Thessalonians combined with the distinct prevalence of the vocative title suggest a particularly intimate and tender nuance in several instances. Paul employs the title ἀδελφοί in some of the most affectionate and affirming passages (e.g., 1:4; 2:9, 14, 17; 3:7).

of ἀδελφοί in 1 Thessalonians exceeds all of Paul’s other letters in proportion to the number of verses, suggesting a distinctly intimate tone to the letter.¹⁶⁵

Paul addresses the church not merely as “brothers” in 1:4 but as ἀδελφοὶ ἠγαπημένοι ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ. Such a title sets the tone for Paul’s affectionate declarations throughout the book. Spicq suggests that the ascription echoes the title often used to describe Israel.¹⁶⁶ The perfective passive participle form “shows the immovable permanence of the love of God.”¹⁶⁷ Such a form also highlights “beloved” as a permanent fixture of the readers’ identity, which carries more force than other expressions of God’s love might carry. Collins notes, “The loving God manifests his love in the fact of election.”¹⁶⁸ Paul’s knowledge of this election serves as one of the primary reasons for the thanksgiving section.¹⁶⁹ The adjectival participle modifies the vocative ἀδελφοί, which shows Paul’s intent to declare that the Thessalonians were the object of his affection as well as God’s.

In a discussion related to 1:4, Meeks acknowledges that ancient writers commonly included some philoprenetic language in the opening portions of their letters. He notes, however, that the number and intensity of affective phrases in the Pauline letters are

¹⁶⁵ Burke, *Family Matters*, 4.

¹⁶⁶ E.g., Ps 60:5; 108:6; Jer 11:15.

¹⁶⁷ Ceslaus Spicq, *Agape in the New Testament: Agape in the Epistles of St. Paul, the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles of St. James, St. Peter, and St. Jude*, vol. 2 (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2006), 16.

¹⁶⁸ Collins, *Studies on the First Letter to the Thessalonians*, 322.

¹⁶⁹ The causal participle in the phrase εἰδότες, ἀδελφοὶ ἠγαπημένοι ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ, τὴν ἐκλογὴν ὑμῶν modifies Εὐχαριστοῦμεν in 1:2, providing another reason for Paul’s prayerful expression of gratitude.

extremely unusual.¹⁷⁰ This tendency is particularly significant because the number and intensity of such language in 1 Thessalonians exceeds most, if not all, of the Pauline corpus.

After stating that the missionary team did not seek glory among the Thessalonians even though they could have acted with the weight of apostles, Paul offers a positive contrast in the rest of 2:7. Instead of demanding something from the church, the group became among the readers as a nursing mother caring for her own children – ἀλλὰ ἐγενήθημεν νήπιοι ἐν μέσῳ ὑμῶν ὡς ἐὰν τροφὸς θάλπη τὰ ἑαυτῆς τέκνα. This phrase has remarkably complex challenges with regard to text, punctuation, and interpretation. A study of this size cannot do justice to the issues involved. I will identify the most significant issues, state my conclusions regarding the relevant questions, offer some supportive evidence, and discuss the relevance to my thesis.

The first and most significant question relates to the text. NA²⁸ and UBS⁵ both adopt the reading νήπιοι (“children” or “infants”) over the variant reading ἥπιοι (“gentle”).¹⁷¹ No one disputes that the external evidence largely favors νήπιοι. The major texts and several scholars (e.g., Gaventa,¹⁷² Weima,¹⁷³ Fowl¹⁷⁴) favor this reading. Either

¹⁷⁰ Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul*, 2nd ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 86.

¹⁷¹ Both textual possibilities lead to readings and interpretations that support my thesis. I am not aware of any proposed understanding of this passage that would not in its own way express Paul’s deep and gentle affection for the readers.

¹⁷² Beverly Roberts Gaventa, “Apostles As Babes and Nurses in 1 Thessalonians 2:7,” in *Faith and History: Essays in Honor of Paul W. Meyer*, ed. John T. Carroll, Charles H. Cosgrove, and E. Elizabeth Johnson (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1990), 193–207.

¹⁷³ Jeffrey A. D. Weima, “‘But We Became Infants Among You’: The Case for NHIIIIOI in 1 Thess 2.7,” *New Testament Studies* 46, no. 4 (October 2000): 547–564.

¹⁷⁴ Stephen Fowl, “A Metaphor in Distress: A Reading of NHIIIIOI in 1 Thessalonians 2.7,” *New Testament Studies* 36, no. 3 (July 1990): 469–473.

option could have emerged as easily as the other.¹⁷⁵ For internal reasons, however, several major translations (e.g., ESV, NASB, NRSV) and commentators (e.g., Wanamaker,¹⁷⁶ Malherbe,¹⁷⁷ Bruce¹⁷⁸) use the variant reading. Those who adopt the variant ἡπιοι primarily argue that νήπιοι does not make sense in the context, because the term contrasts sharply with the following metaphor that apparently illustrates it (the “nurse” caring for her own children). Those who adopt the best-attested reading νήπιοι offer multiple interpretations attempting to understand the enigmatic wording. I choose the νήπιοι (“children/infants”) reading because of the overwhelming manuscript support,¹⁷⁹ because νήπιοι is the *lectio difficilior*, and because multiple potential interpretive options provide sufficient alternatives to interpret the complex phrase.¹⁸⁰

Gaventa notes that establishing νήπιοι as the preferred reading makes the verse “more rather than less confusing.”¹⁸¹ Potential renderings and interpretations abound, including various proposals for understanding the punctuation of the clause and its

¹⁷⁵ The νήπιοι reading could have arisen by dittography after the preceding -v and ἡπιοι could have arisen by haplography. See Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart, Germany: German Bible Societies, 1994), 561–562. Metzger offers a dissenting comment in favor of ἡπιοι, which was not adopted by the committee.

¹⁷⁶ Wanamaker, *The Epistle to the Thessalonians*, 100.

¹⁷⁷ Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, 145.

¹⁷⁸ Bruce, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 31.

¹⁷⁹ Aland and Aland consider the external evidence for νήπιοι “unequivocal.” Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, *The Text of the New Testament: An Introduction to the Critical Editions and to the Theory and Practice of Modern Textual Criticism*, trans. Erroll F. Rhodes (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1995), 284–285.

¹⁸⁰ I describe multiple alternatives and my preferred understanding below. For a brief but clear and helpful summary of the textual issue and an argument in favor of the established reading νήπιοι, see Gary Shogren, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 99–103.

¹⁸¹ Gaventa, “Apostles As Babes and Nurses,” 198.

relation to the following clause. Gaventa argues that νήπιοι refers to the apostles and leads to a mixed metaphor – “But we became babes among you, as if a nurse taking care of her own children.”¹⁸² Gaventa sees Paul as struggling to identify two aspects of apostleship.¹⁸³ In one sense, Paul has the innocence of a child compared to the characteristics of a travelling charlatan described in 2:5-7a. In another sense, the apostle bears the responsibility of a caring and affectionate mother.

Crawford similarly sees 2:7b-8 as a continuous sentence, but attempts to resolve the metaphor tension by taking νήπιοι as a vocative address.¹⁸⁴ The Thessalonians, therefore, would function as the children in view. Crawford bases his study on a brief proposal by Whitby in the early eighteenth century: “But we, O Children, were among you as a Nurse that cherisheth her Children.”¹⁸⁵

Though Gaventa and Crawford come to differing interpretative conclusions, both suggestions require that ὡς ἐὰν τροφὸς θάλαπυ τὰ ἑαυτῆς τέκνα completes the clause ἀλλὰ ἐγενήθημεν νήπιοι ἐν μέσῳ ὑμῶν.¹⁸⁶ Weima contends, however, that a full stop belongs between the two clauses.¹⁸⁷ He argues that ἀλλὰ cannot begin a new sentence at 2:7b,

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 206.

¹⁸⁴ Charles Crawford, “The ‘Tiny’ Problem of 1 Thessalonians 2,7: The Case of the Curious Vocative,” *Biblica* 54, no. 1 (1973): 69–72.

¹⁸⁵ Daniel Whitby, *A Paraphrase and Commentary on the New Testament*, vol. 2 (London: W. Bowyer, 1703), 378. Cited in Crawford, “The Case of the Curious Vocative,” 71.

¹⁸⁶ Gaventa argues against a full stop because the ἀλλὰ in 2:7b runs parallel to the ἀλλὰ in 2:4a. Just as the ἀλλὰ in 2:4a introduced a positive alternative to the negative assertions in 2:3, so the ἀλλὰ in 2:7b introduces a positive alternative to the negative assertions in 2:5-7a. A full stop after ἀλλὰ ἐγενήθημεν νήπιοι ἐν μέσῳ ὑμῶν would disrupt the parallel structure, apparently by cutting Paul’s response short. See Gaventa, “Apostles As Babes and Nurses,” 198.

¹⁸⁷ Sailors comes to a similar grammatical conclusion, seeing the nurse image as a “peculiar adjacent metaphor” instead of a “mixed metaphor.” Timothy B. Sailors, “Wedding Textual and Rhetorical Criticism

because it functions to contrast the negative portion of an antithetical statement begun in 2:5.¹⁸⁸ He adds that ὡς in 2:7c must introduce a correlative clause (i.e., “as *x*, so *y*”) that οὕτως in 2:8 concludes.¹⁸⁹ If 2:7c-8 reflects a ὡς . . . οὕτως correlative clause, then a full stop would be required before the clause.¹⁹⁰ Weima sees ἀλλὰ ἐγενήθημεν νήπιοι ἐν μέσῳ ὑμῶν as the climactic antithetical contrast to all negative assertions in 2:5-7b.¹⁹¹ Weima, therefore, alleviates the tension of a mixed metaphor in that his grammatical construction results in two proximate but distinct images.¹⁹² He also addresses the problem of a rapidly shifting metaphor by showing how the phenomenon appears repeatedly in Paul’s writings.¹⁹³ Weima interprets νήπιοι as a brief but remarkable counterclaim to all three negative assertions in 2:5-7a. “Little babies are not capable of using deceptive speech, having ulterior motives, and being concerned with receiving honour; in all these things,

to Understand the Text of 1 Thessalonians 2:7,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 23, no. 80 (March 2001): 97.

¹⁸⁸ Weima, ““But We Became Infants Among You,”” 555–556. Weima points out the series of antithetical statements that comprise ch. 2, each of which introduces the antithesis with ἀλλὰ.

¹⁸⁹ Chapman notes Paul’s use of this pattern in Rom 5:18 and 2 Cor 7:14. David Chapman, “1-2 Thessalonians,” in *ESV Expository Commentary: Ephesians-Philemon*, ed. Iain M. Duguid, James M. Hamilton, Jr., and Jay Sklar (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2018), 276.

¹⁹⁰ Weima, ““But We Became Infants Among You,”” 556. Weima points out that the phrase ὡς ἐὰν τροφὸς θάλπη τὰ ἐαυτῆς τέκνα cannot grammatically end one clause and begin another. Weima claims most translations violate the ὡς . . . οὕτως pattern by introducing a new clause at 2:8 and rendering οὕτως adverbially (e.g., NRSV and NIV).

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 559–563. Weima provides an excellent analysis of structural elements in 1 Thess 2:1-12.

¹⁹² Fowl, “A Metaphor in Distress,” 469–473.

¹⁹³ E.g., Gal 4:19 and 2 Cor 2:14. Most convincingly, Weima notes the rapidly shifting metaphor in 1 Thess 2:7-17. See Weima, ““But We Became Infants Among You,”” 557–558.

they are innocent.”¹⁹⁴ Based on grammatical and structural factors, I adopt Weima’s approach.¹⁹⁵

This investigation relates to my thesis in that it attempts to clarify the nature of the nurse metaphor that begins in 2:8. According to Weima’s reading, the infant metaphor primarily answers the potential accusations in 2:5-7b, and consequently has more to do with the apostolic group’s innocent integrity than with their affection. Fowl proposes such a metaphor created distress or confusion for Paul because infants (especially in ancient Greco-Roman culture) could also be understood as dependent and demanding. Fowl argues that Paul consequently shifts quickly to the metaphor of a nurse to resolve the supposed tension because the nurse image evokes a sense of care and self-giving. Such a quick transition may indicate the gravity Paul felt in wanting to clarify another aspect of his team’s ministry. The missionary group was innocent, but not needy and demanding. Instead, they gave themselves completely to the Thessalonians as a nurse with her own children.

The term τροφός generally refers to a nurse or caretaker of children but can refer to a mother.¹⁹⁶ In 2:8, the term likely retains its more common meaning. Gaventa surveys the wide usage of τροφός in ancient literature to determine how people generally

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 563.

¹⁹⁵ Proctor argues that ἀλλὰ ἐγενήθημεν νήπιοι ἐν μέσῳ ὑμῶν reflects an unmarked rhetorical question that expects a negative response. Proctor’s proposal aligns with Weima’s grammatical and structural concerns, but it sees the metaphorical infants as needy and demanding (something of which Paul is absolving his team by asking the question rhetorically). Proctor offers a compelling argument but acknowledges the primary weakness – adopting his approach would mean the ἀλλὰ in 2:7b does not function in parallel with the previous antithetical statements in the chapter by introducing a positive response to the negative assertions in 2:5-7a. See Mark Proctor, “‘Were We Infants among You?’ Punctuating 1 Thessalonians 2:7b Properly,” *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 45, no. 1 (Spring 2018): 313–326.

¹⁹⁶ BDAG, s.v. “τροφός.”

perceived nurses and what roles they played.¹⁹⁷ Gaventa observes that nurses cared for children of various ages, often assumed significant domestic responsibility, and are typically portrayed as “generous and kind” figures.¹⁹⁸

Applied to Paul and his companions, τροφός becomes, as Gaventa states, a “highly evocative image.”¹⁹⁹ She notes how “references to the anguish of labor, to childbirth, and to nursing assume a profound intimacy between parties.”²⁰⁰ Such is certainly the case in 2:8. Maternal imagery in Paul speaks to the “nurture and growth of believers,”²⁰¹ evident here as Paul describes their role among the readers as θάλπη τὰ ἑαυτῆς τέκνα. The verb θάλπω indicates “cherishing, comforting, or caring for.”²⁰² Paul adds a reflexive pronoun for emphasis, most likely conjuring the image of a paid caretaker tending to her own children whom she loves. In this way, “Paul strengthens the connotation of love and affection even further.”²⁰³ Plutarch advised against hiring wet nurses because natural mothers “will feed them with a livelier affection and greater care, as loving them inwardly” (*Moralia* 3c-d). “However warm the connection between the nurse and her charges, children of another woman, that between the nurse and her own

¹⁹⁷ Beverly Roberts Gaventa, *Our Mother Saint Paul* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 21–25. Gaventa concludes that Paul’s use of τροφός does not derive from a philosophic *topos*, as proposed by Malherbe. See Malherbe, “Gentle as a Nurse.”

¹⁹⁸ Gaventa, *Our Mother Saint Paul*, 23.

¹⁹⁹ Gaventa, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 27.

²⁰⁰ Gaventa, *Our Mother Saint Paul*, 13.

²⁰¹ Gaventa, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 33.

²⁰² BDAG, s.v. “θάλπω.” As BADG notes, the term is used in Eph 5:29 of a wife whom her husband is to care for as his own flesh.

²⁰³ Jennifer Houston McNeel, *Paul as Infant and Nursing Mother: Metaphor, Rhetoric, and Identity in 1 Thessalonians 2:5–8*, SBL Early Christianity and Its Literature (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2014), 136. The phrase could have a mother with her children in view, but the reflexive pronoun intensifies the metaphor regardless. See Gaventa, *Our Mother Saint Paul*, 26–27.

children would be even more intense.”²⁰⁴ As caregivers, then, Paul and his coworkers brought the skills of a professional nurse and the heart of a loving mother as they nurtured the Thessalonians.

In 2:8, Paul makes the implications of the nurse metaphor more explicit. A causal participle (ὁμειρόμενοι ὑμῶν) opens the apodosis of the comparative statement and clarifies Paul’s intention in appealing to a nurse with her own children. Paul and his team imparted their gifts because they “yearned for”²⁰⁵ the readers. The term likely expresses deep longing and desire. Paul curiously applies this term to the time when he was among the church already.²⁰⁶ Fee suggests this serves as a double entendre, grammatically reminding them of the past desire that is still true at the time of writing.²⁰⁷ The yearning would then serve as a way to express both the love Paul felt in Thessalonica while alluding to the longing he currently feels.

As a result of this yearning, the missionary group gladly determined²⁰⁸ to impart two distinct gifts – the gospel of God and their very lives. Paul use of οὐ μόνον creates a dramatic emphasis on the apostles’ self-offering. As if the gospel of God were not

²⁰⁴ Gaventa, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 27–28.

²⁰⁵ BDAG, s.v. “ὁμείρομαι.”

²⁰⁶ Weima notes the rarity of the *hapax* even outside of the NT. LSJ suggest “have warm affection” (s.v. “ὁμείρομαι”), which would resolve the awkwardness. Weima, however, provides several reasons why the term likely denotes desire. See Jeffrey A. D. Weima, “Infants, Nursing Mothers, and Father: Paul’s Portrayal of a Pastor,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 37 (2002): 222.

²⁰⁷ Fee, *The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians*, 75.

²⁰⁸ Though εὐδοκοῦμεν often indicates an act of resolve when followed by an infinitive (as here), it can also have a sense of pleasure or delight even when an infinitive. Green argues for the former. See Green, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, 128. Fee argues for the latter. See Fee, *The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians*, 75. While the infinitive suggests that resolve is in view, the verb conveys a sense of resolve with a nuance of pleasure. Best probably captures the sense with “gladly determined,” which I use here. Best, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 102. The idea of resolve does not diminish the affection in view, but strengthens it because it reflects the decisive response to the yearning just mentioned.

enough of a gift, Paul and the others imparted their own selves. With τὰς ἑαυτῶν ψυχάς, Paul seems to have in mind the sharing of all life encompasses (e.g., time, energy, health).²⁰⁹ He likely uses such vague language to capture the breadth of his emotive declaration.²¹⁰ As Marshall concludes, the language reflects the type of love “in which a lover wants to share his life with the beloved in an act of self-giving and union.”²¹¹ The all-encompassing ψυχή expresses that they held nothing back from the readers. “Paul not only gives what he has, the gospel, but what he is, himself.”²¹²

Paul had no need to clarify the motivation for offering over his entire self to the Thessalonians, but he does so anyway. The apostle had already specified his motives through the nurse metaphor and the causal participle at the beginning of the verse. With no purpose besides emphasis,²¹³ Paul states directly “because you became beloved to us.” The “beloved of God” (1:4) become here the beloved of Paul and his companions.²¹⁴

In 2:9, Paul explains the outworking of his deep affection. He and his coworkers labored and toiled. They proclaimed the gospel while²¹⁵ working day and night so as not to burden any of the Thessalonians financially. Such emphases on tangible external

²⁰⁹ Eduard Sweitzer, “ψυχή,” *TDNT* 9:648.

²¹⁰ Furnish mentions a helpful related thought from 2 Cor 12:14-15 where Paul declares he will gladly spend and be spent for the Corinthians’ souls and will not be a burden to them because children are not obligated to save for their parents. Paul connects his love (ἀγαπάω) to this idea of working so his “children” do not have to provide for him, a concept introduced in 1 Thess 2:9. Furnish, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 59.

²¹¹ I. Howard Marshall, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1983), 71.

²¹² Best, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 102.

²¹³ Weima, “Infants, Nursing Mothers, and Father,” 223.

²¹⁴ Collins, “Paul as Seen through His Own Eyes,” 377.

²¹⁵ The participle ἐργαζόμενοι functions temporally. See Wanamaker, *The Epistle to the Thessalonians*, 103–104.

responses to internal realities pervade the letter. Paul does not depict these labors as distinct from his affection, but as the practical effects and, even more so, the concrete demonstration of his love.²¹⁶

Paul's affectionate language leading up to 1 Thess 2:17-3:13 sets the tone for the AP passage that follows. Such language implies mutual intimacy and care. The manner in which Paul recounts his time in Thessalonica shows how the context of the AP passage emphasizes affection over authority.

2.4.2. Strong Affirmation of Readers' Active Faith Outside of 1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:13

Throughout the letter, Paul consistently affirms the readers' diligent and progressive response to his original gospel proclamation. Such affirmations show little situational need for Paul to exert, impose, or emphasize his authoritative presence in the letter as Funk's view requires.

Paul's opening thanksgiving section focuses extensively on affirming the Thessalonians' response to the initial gospel proclamation brought by the apostle and his team. Paul and his co-laborers thank God continually for all the readers because²¹⁷ they remember the Thessalonians' "work of faith and labor and love and steadfastness of hope" in the Lord Jesus (1:2-3). Each element of Paul's familiar trilogy functions as the genitive of a noun that reflects the readers' respective efforts.²¹⁸ Paul affirms that they excelled in working out their faith, love, and hope. The gratitude of Paul and his

²¹⁶ Note the explanatory γάρ that signifies 2:9 as an illustration of the love previously described. See *Ibid.*, 102–103.

²¹⁷ I take μνημονεύοντες as a causal participle. See Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 82–84.

²¹⁸ Paul remembers how the readers lived out activities that confirmed the inner changes they experienced. See Shogren, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 59.

coworkers stems²¹⁹ in part from the Thessalonians' election (1:4). Paul and the others associate²²⁰ this election with the fact that the gospel came to the readers not only in word, but rather also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full certainty (1:5).²²¹ The readers' response to the powerful message also confirms the Thessalonians' election.²²² They received the word with Spirit-infused joy²²³ amid great affliction so that they became imitators of Paul and his coworkers and also of the Lord (1:6). Multiple elements elevate Paul's affirmation here. First, Paul double-qualifies how the readers received the word. They received it not only with joy but with joy from the Holy Spirit. Second, the Thessalonians received the message not just amid affliction but amid *great* affliction. The mention of affliction intensifies Paul's affirmation of the readers' joy, for joy becomes more noteworthy when experienced during painful trials. Listing Paul as the readers' model for imitation also elevates the apostle's affirmation,²²⁴ but not nearly as much as claiming that they imitated Jesus. Through these elements, Paul amplifies his approval about the Thessalonians' reception of his gospel message.

²¹⁹ The causal participle εἰδότες provides additional reasons for giving thanks.

²²⁰ Since ὅτι in 1:5 follows the accusative after a verb of knowing, it likely functions epexegetically denoting the content of the knowledge. See Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 93.

²²¹ The exact nature of these three realities is not relevant. They obviously refer at least in large part to Paul's activities because of the following phrase: "just as you know what sort of men we were toward you for your sake" (1:5). See *Ibid.*, 92.

²²² I take καί at the beginning of 1:6 as a coordinating conjunction after the epexegetical ὅτι at the beginning of 1:5. I therefore contest the hard stop placed by NA²⁸ at the end of 1:5. See *Ibid.*, 97. Paul's clear affirmation stands regardless of how καί functions here. With or without the hard stop, the new element of knowledge further demonstrates the Thessalonians' election.

²²³ With Shogren, I take πνεύματος ἁγίου as a genitive of source for the head noun χαρᾶς. See Shogren, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 67. Shogren notes how the Holy Spirit functions as the source of the fruit listed in Gal 5:22-23, the second of which is χαρά.

²²⁴ Mimesis language is prevalent and significant in Paul's letters, so Paul's recounting of their successful emulation (of the missionary team and of Jesus!) probably suggests particular approval on his part. Andrew D. Clarke, "Be Imitators of Me: Paul's Model of Leadership," *Tyndale Bulletin* 49, no. 2 (1998): 329–360.

As a result²²⁵ of this joyful and persevering gospel-message reception, the Thessalonians became a model (τύπον) for all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia (1:7). Here, the mimesis theme expands. The readers' reflection of the models set by Paul's team and by Jesus resembled the originals so closely that the Thessalonians became sources of emulation themselves. Paul emphasizes and magnifies his affirmation of the Thessalonians' expanding influence by clarifying that the word of the Lord sounded forth from them not only in their own Macedonian region and the adjacent Achaia, but also that their faith toward God has also gone out in every place (ἐν παντί τόπῳ). Consequently, Paul and his team have no need to say anything to anyone about their faith (1:8).²²⁶ The apostle uses multiple all-pervasive terms to affirm the readers' actions and reputation. Their faith toward God went out in *every* place. Paul has *no* need to say *anything* to *anyone*. The apostle explains that, instead of him sharing how the Thessalonians responded to the gospel, those among the various regions themselves report to the apostle how the readers turned to God from idols in order to serve a living and true God (1:9) and to await his risen and rescuing son from heaven (1:10). While Paul often includes affirming words in his opening thanksgivings, in no other such section does he belabor his praise so profusely and focus so extensively on his readers' admirable conduct.²²⁷

²²⁵ The construction ὥστε γενέσθαι ὑμᾶς obviously expresses the result of either the indicative verb from 1:6 (καὶ ὑμεῖς μιμηταὶ ἡμῶν ἐγενήθητε) or the closer participle of means that modifies it (δεξάμενοι τὸν λόγον). The meaning would not differ either way, since the two verbs capture a single idea.

²²⁶ Wanamaker suggests that affirming the Thessalonians' standing among other churches rhetorically creates *pathos* in the readers, a positive emotional reaction. Wanamaker, *The Epistle to the Thessalonians*, 83.

²²⁷ E.g., explicit affirmation characterizes six out of eight verses in 1 Thess 1:2-10, while other strongly affirming opening thanksgiving sections have less – two out of eight verses in Rom 1:8-15; three out of six verses in 1 Cor 1:4-9; three out of nine verses in Phil 1:3-11; two out of two verses in 2 Thess 1:3-4.

Paul resumes his affirming thanksgiving in 2:13. Similar to the thanksgiving in ch. 1, Paul focuses on the readers' response to the message brought by the apostle and his team. As in ch. 1, Paul affirms both their reception/acceptance of God's word and also the way in which the message worked itself out among them (ὅς καὶ ἐνεργεῖται ἐν ὑμῖν τοῖς πιστεύουσιν). He offers an affirming example by reminding them how they became imitators of the Judean churches because they suffered the same things from their Thessalonian countrymen as the churches in Judea did from theirs. Again, the language closely resembles Paul's affirmation in ch. 1 where he mentioned how the readers imitated the missionary team and Jesus himself by receiving the word in much affliction. This repeated acknowledgement of the readers' faith and faithfulness immediately precedes the AP passage, which illustrates Paul's disposition toward the church as he transitioned to that section. It suggests confidence and approval toward the readers. Nothing leading up to the AP passage indicates any need for correction or authoritative direction.

Parenetic material characterizes most of chs. 4-5 after the AP passage. Even in his instruction and exhortation, Paul affirms the Thessalonians immensely. In his initial appeal for the readers to walk and please God, the apostle acknowledges "just as you are indeed walking" (4:1). As Paul speaks directly to brotherly love, he clarifies that the readers do not need him to write to them about it for they themselves are taught by God to love one another (4:9). The apostle provides an example of their brotherly love by mentioning how they indeed do this with all the brothers in all Macedonia.²²⁸ When the apostle directs the church to encourage one another and build one another up in 5:11, he

²²⁸ Note Paul's use of πᾶς to specify all the brothers and ὅλος to describe the whole Macedonian region.

adds, “just as you are indeed doing.” Nowhere in this section does Paul explicitly correct the Thessalonians’ behavior,²²⁹ and several times he affirms them by specifying that they are already complying with his instructions. Even in the instructive and hortatory material, Paul indicates no circumstantial need that would require distinct exertion of authority.

2.4.3. Minimal Emphasis on Authority/Power Outside of 1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:13

Throughout the letter, Paul puts minimal emphasis on his apostolic calling, authority, and power as he encourages the Thessalonians’ continued growth. Such pervasive dynamics outside 1 Thess 2:17-3:13 provide evidence that Paul did not primarily seek to convey a sense of his apostolic authority and power within the AP passage.

Before proceeding, I acknowledge Paul’s sense and exercise of authority over the Thessalonian church. “Paul’s founding of a local church implied a profound, life-transforming, and permanent influence on a group of people. This influence transformed every aspect of their existence.”²³⁰ Paul entered Thessalonica assuming the right to call whoever would believe out of their existing lifestyles into a new realm of worship, knowledge, morality, and social engagement. Within the letter, Paul affirms the readers’ imitation of him and his companions with all the accompanying suffering it has brought.²³¹ The apostle applies hierarchical metaphors such as “mother” and “father” to

²²⁹ Some need for specific instruction, however, can likely be implied in select pericopes (e.g., 4:2-8; 11-12).

²³⁰ Bengt Holmberg, *Paul and Power: Structure of Authority in the Primitive Church as Reflected in the Pauline Epistles* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), 70.

²³¹ Castelli, Moore, Shaw, and others have severely critiqued Paul’s sense of authority and specifically his use of mimesis terminology in light of postmodern thinkers such as Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida.

himself and to those with him. He also assumes the right to instruct and exhort the readers. While these things are true, Paul also minimizes his divinely established authority in several ways throughout the letter.

The letter opens with a simple list of three names – “Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy” (1:1). “It is, nonetheless, what Paul failed to say about himself which makes a strong first impression.”²³² Paul uncharacteristically omits any self-designating titles. The opening of 2 Thessalonians represents the only other place in all the apostle’s letters (contested and uncontested) that such a glaring omission occurs.²³³ In all but two of his other letters, Paul refers to himself as an apostle, often with a descriptor such as “by the will of God” (1 Cor 1:1; 2 Cor 1:1; Eph 1:1; Col 1:1) or something more elaborate (Rom 1:1-6, Gal 1:1).²³⁴ In Philippians and Philemon, Paul respectively describes himself as a “servant” and “prisoner” of Christ Jesus. The context and contents of Philippians and Philemon provide clues as to why Paul would opt for these titles over his more typical apostolic designation.²³⁵ Such factors suggest intentionality on Paul’s part to include, adapt, or omit

See the following: Elizabeth A. Castelli, *Imitating Paul: A Discourse of Power* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1991). Stephen D. Moore, *Poststructuralism and the New Testament: Derrida and Foucault at the Foot of the Cross* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1994). Graham Shaw, *The Cost of Authority: Manipulation and Freedom in the New Testament* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1983). Carson offers a brief, but helpful response to such critiques focused on 1 Thessalonians: Marion Carson, “For Now We Live: A Study of Paul’s Pastoral Leadership in 1 Thessalonians,” *Themelios* 30, no. 3 (Summer 2005): 23–41. See also M. Bruce Button, “Paul’s Method of Influence in 1 Thessalonians,” *In die Skriflig / In Luce Verbi* 50, no. 2 (2016): 1–9. For an excellent book-length response to Castelli’s work based on Philippians, see Sydney Park, *Submission within the Godhead and the Church in the Epistle to the Philippians: An Exegetical and Theological Examination of the Concept of Submission in Philippians 2 and 3*, Library of New Testament Studies (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2007).

²³² Collins, “Paul as Seen through His Own Eyes,” 349.

²³³ The opening in 2 Thess 1:1 is identical to 1 Thess 1:1.

²³⁴ Paul’s apostolic self-designation occurs in multiple letters that, similar to 1 Thessalonians, list co-authors alongside the apostle (1 Cor 1:1; 2 Cor 1:1; Col 1:1), so the presence of co-authors in the Thessalonian correspondence does not account for the omission of Paul’s standard title.

²³⁵ In Philippians, for example, Paul emphasizes the “servant form” assumed by Jesus in the climactic Christ Hymn (Phil 2:7) and implores the readers to follow his example of humble service. In Philemon,

the title “apostle.” The affirming and affectionate tone of 1 Thessalonians, striking among Paul’s letters,²³⁶ probably explains the title’s absence. Paul saw no need to specify or exert his apostolic authority because of his exceedingly positive history with the readers.

Paul uses the term “apostle” only once in 1 Thessalonians, and it appears in the plural. Paul’s purpose in applying the term apostle to himself and his team members requires some consideration. When recounting the nature of his first visit to Thessalonica and the pure motives of his missionary team, Paul specifies that they never came with flattering speech nor in a “cloak of selfishness” (2:5) nor seeking glory from men, whether from the Thessalonians or others (2:6). Here, Paul specifies *δυνάμενοι ἐν βάρει εἶναι ὡς Χριστοῦ ἀπόστολοι* (2:7).²³⁷ Rendered woodenly, the phrase reads something like, “although being able to be in weight²³⁸ as apostles of Christ.” The concessive participial phrase clarifies that Paul saw himself and his coworkers as having had the ability to avail themselves of certain rights or privileges due the apostolic office while in Thessalonica and implies that they did not do so.

The rights or privileges in view probably fall into one of two categories, depending on the particular nuance of *ἐν βάρει*: (1) Paul might refer here to the weight of financial burden owed to those acting as apostles. Strelan argues for this reading largely

Paul appeals on behalf of Onesimus whose “father” he became in prison and who has become valuable to Paul, the aged prisoner (Phlm 8-13).

²³⁶ Note that “apostle” is also absent in Philippians, another letter distinguished by its affirming and affectionate tone.

²³⁷ English versions tend to include *δυνάμενοι ἐν βάρει εἶναι ὡς Χριστοῦ ἀπόστολοι* at the end of 2:6, instead of the beginning of 2:7 as in NA²⁸ and UBS⁵.

²³⁸ BDAG, s.v. “βάρος.”

based on references to βάρος in the papyri related to the “burden” of taxes.²³⁹ Strelan also points out Paul’s use of the cognate verb ἐπιβαρέω in 2:9, which clearly refers to financial burden,²⁴⁰ as does the cognate adjective ἀβαρής in 2 Cor 11:9.²⁴¹ These latter examples are especially worthy of consideration.²⁴² (2) The phrase ἐν βάρει might also refer to the “claim of importance”²⁴³ due to the apostolic office. BDAG assigns the use in 2:7 to this category and suggests for this verse the idea of “wielding authority” the way we might use the English colloquialism to “throw one’s weight around.” Wanamaker argues for this usage based on the immediate context.²⁴⁴ He notes how the participial phrase directly contrasts with 2:6 – “not seeking glory from men, neither from you nor from others.” Wanamaker also notes how the idea of wielding authority contrasts better with the metaphor that follows than would the idea of financial burden.²⁴⁵ With ἀλλά in 2:7, Paul contrasts seeking glory from men in the previous verse by claiming that the apostles were rather infants among the Thessalonians.²⁴⁶ According to this reading, the

²³⁹ John G. Strelan, “Burden-Bearing and the Law of Christ: A Re-Examination of Galatians 6:2,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 94, no. 2 (June 1975): 267–268.

²⁴⁰ Bruce notes Paul’s similar use of ἐπιβαρέω in 2 Thess 3:8 referring to financial burden. Bruce, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 31.

²⁴¹ Strelan, “Burden-Bearing and the Law of Christ,” 268.

²⁴² Bruce also argues for this interpretation. See Bruce, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 30–31. Bruce clarifies that this right to financial maintenance was conferred by Jesus (Mark 6:7-13; Matt 10:5-15; Luke 9:1-6; 10:1-12). Bruce also lists instances where Paul mentions his choice not to exercise this right (2 Thess 3:7-9; 1 Cor 9:3-18; 2 Cor 11:7-11).

²⁴³ BDAG, s.v. “βάρος.”

²⁴⁴ Wanamaker, *The Epistle to the Thessalonians*, 99.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Wanamaker mentions contrast with the nurse metaphor because of his textual conclusion in favor of reading ἡπιτοι (“gentle”) in 2:7. He therefore sees only one metaphor in 2:7. Because I favor the reading νήπιοι (“infants”), I see Paul’s contrast of claiming importance or authority with the metaphor that the apostles acted as infants (i.e., not authoritatively) among the readers. I find this contrast even stronger than the nurse metaphor would be. If Paul had been speaking of a nurse in contrast to being a financial burden,

infant metaphor indicates an absolute lack of claim to authority. Instead of claiming their rightful honor or dignity among the Thessalonians, the apostles became the smallest and least authoritative members of society. I adopt this second option because it seems to fit most naturally in the immediate context.²⁴⁷ While Paul applies the title apostle to himself and to his colleagues, he only does so for the purpose of illustrating the extent to which he did not seek glory from anyone. He mentions the title only to demonstrate how he *did not* claim the status that naturally accompanies it.

Paul uses the genitive Χριστοῦ in 2:7 to specify that the apostles belong to Christ. This added detail probably serves to elevate the status of the ἀπόστολοι. The modifier appears before the head noun – an uncommon vernacular genitive. Fee argues that this construction “deliberately puts emphasis on the possessor,” which is Christ in this instance.²⁴⁸ If so, the construction serves to elevate the apostles’ status even further by stressing their association with the exalted Lord. Such stress evokes a sense of irony. Paul downplays his own unique apostleship by using the plural “apostles,” but then elevates

one could imagine Paul contrasting the idea of the Thessalonians caring financially for the apostles with the idea of the apostles caring spiritually for the Thessalonians. On the other hand, it is extremely difficult to see how the infant metaphor would effectively contrast the idea of being a financial burden, since infants are inherently needy. The νήπιοι reading (discussed above), therefore, creates an even stronger argument than would the nurse metaphor by itself.

²⁴⁷ As Strelan notes, the two ideas are not incompatible. Strelan, “Burden-Bearing and the Law of Christ,” 268. Paul and his coworkers forsook both their claim to significance and their claim to financial provision, which Paul makes clear in 2:9. As noted above, the apostle uses a cognate verb of βάρος to describe how the team provided for themselves to avoid financially burdening the readers. His comment in 2:9, however, appears to introduce a different nuance of the term rather than continuing a financial reference from 2:7. See Wanamaker, *The Epistle to the Thessalonians*, 99. As Weima notes, the explanatory γάρ in 2:9 most likely introduces an illustration of the immediately preceding assertion about Paul’s nursing-mother-like care (and not a continuation of apostolic motives in 2:5-7a, where ἐν βάρει appears). Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 149.

²⁴⁸ Fee, *The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians*, 64. Fee shows how Paul uses vernacular possessives to emphasize a divine possessor multiple times in 1 Cor 1:24 (“*God’s wisdom, God’s power*”) and 1 Cor 3:9 (“*God’s field, God’s building*”).

the status of the group's office by emphasizing its association with Christ. But he does so in order to show the extent to which they all refused to seek the glory that their exalted office would have afforded them. So elevating their status displays the extent of their humility and not the extent of their authority or power.

I see Paul as likely minimizing his authority and power by discreetly avoiding a direct ascription of the apostolic title to himself and his companions. Translations tend to render the participial phrase in 2:7 as directly claiming apostolic status. For example, the NASB reads "even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority." Such readings take ἐν βάρει as the object of the infinitive εἶναι with ὡς Χριστοῦ ἀπόστολοι adverbially modifying δυνάμενοι. Rendered more woodenly, it would read something like "although as apostles of Christ being able to be weighty/significant." The word order and grammar, however, can be taken in a slightly different sense. If ὡς Χριστοῦ ἀπόστολοι functions as the object of εἶναι, then a wooden rendering might read something like "although being able to be like apostles of Christ in weight/significance." The difference is subtle, but possibly significant. The first option includes a direct statement of their apostolic identity, but the second option merely claims that they possessed the ability to exist as apostles in their significance among the Thessalonians. The second reading does not question the group's actual apostleship; it only reflects Paul's possible attempt to distance himself and the others linguistically from the authoritative identity.²⁴⁹ They could have acted as/like apostles (because they were), but they chose not to do so. This interpretation seems to make better sense of the grammar,

²⁴⁹ Steven E. Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament: A Practical Introduction for Teaching and Exegesis*, Lexham Bible Reference Series (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2010), 7–8.

because ὡς has a well-established use introducing predicate adjective clauses after εἶναι.²⁵⁰ On the contrary, ἐν followed by a dative does not function this way nearly as often. The reality of Paul's apostleship remains the same in both interpretations, as does the way Paul forsook his apostolic rights in Thessalonica. The second option, however, seems linguistically to distance Paul even further from such rights, because it shows him avoiding an explicit declaration of his apostleship (though its unmistakably implied by the wording).

A final minimization of authority appears with Paul's repeated use of παρακαλοῦμεν ὑμᾶς or related terms and formulae to describe the team's past ministry among the Thessalonians (2:12; 3:2) or to issue a present admonition in parenthetic portions of the letter (4:1, 10; 5:14). Bjerkelund's study concluded that παρακαλέω has neither a sense of commanding nor a sense of entreating. Instead, Paul uses the verb "when the question of authority is unproblematical and the apostle can address the members of the congregation as his brothers knowing that they will acknowledge him as apostle."²⁵¹ Appealing to this study, Collins suggests that, because the παρακαλέω-formula "belonged to the world of the statesmen and the language of diplomats," it reflects "an authority which has chosen to make its demands in the form of a request."²⁵² The formula, according to Collins, reflects the apostle's legitimate authority but also the sensitivity with which Paul exercised such authority.

²⁵⁰ BDAG, s.v. "ὡς" §2.c.β.

²⁵¹ Carl J. Bjerkelund, *Parakalô: Form, Funktion Und Sinn Der Parakalô-Sätze in Den Paulinischen Briefen*, Bibliotheca theologia norvegica (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1967), 188. Cited and translated in Holmberg, *Paul and Power*, 83.

²⁵² Collins, "Paul as Seen through His Own Eyes," 369.

In 2:11-12, Paul could be interpreted as expressing a stronger sense of authority by expressing his ministry to the Thessalonians with three different participles. Paul and his companions brought up²⁵³ the readers παρακαλοῦντες ὑμᾶς καὶ παραμυθούμενοι καὶ μαρτυρόμενοι εἰς τὸ περιπατεῖν ὑμᾶς ἀξίως τοῦ θεοῦ. A translation such as the ESV could give a more harsh or weighty impression than the terms denote. It reads that he “exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God” (2:12 ESV). The first participle (παρακαλοῦντες) can refer to appeal or exhortation,²⁵⁴ but it often refers to a softer form of encouragement or comfort.²⁵⁵ In light of the insights from the previous paragraph, I suggest “encouraging” or “comforting” would fit the immediate context of 2:11-12 and the broad context of the tender letter. The next participle in line suggests this tone all the more. The verb παραμυθέομαι has no stronger connotation than comforting, consoling, or encouraging.²⁵⁶ In 5:14 Paul asked the readers to comfort the “fainthearted” (ὀλιγόψυχος).²⁵⁷ The final verb (μαρτύρομαι) reflects a shift in tone and indicates a stronger form of appeal, such as charging or imploring.²⁵⁸ This force fits well with the clause that follows it – εἰς τὸ περιπατεῖν ὑμᾶς ἀξίως τοῦ θεοῦ. So at least two, possibly three, ideas are in mind. Paul comforted, encouraged, and also charged the readers to walk in manner worthy of God. In describing

²⁵³ Weima describes the grammatical awkwardness of this verse as stemming from anacoluthon according in which cases the verb is implied from context. Weima suggests a child-rearing verb in light of the paternal metaphor. See Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 153.

²⁵⁴ BDAG, s.v. “παρακαλέω.”

²⁵⁵ E.g, 2 Cor 1:4, 6; 2:7-8; 7:6-7, 13; 13:1.

²⁵⁶ BDAG, s.v. “παραμυθέομαι.”

²⁵⁷ The verb is used of comforting the bereaved in John 11:19, 31.

²⁵⁸ BDAG, s.v. “μαρτύρομαι.”

his ministry among them, only one verb has significant authoritative force. Paul also situates all three verbs within a paternal metaphorical context, stating that he exercised all these activities ὡς πατήρ τέκνα ἑαυτοῦ. In keeping with the first two verbs, Clarke gives examples of tender and affectionate ancient language from fathers to their wives and/or children.²⁵⁹ Paul obviously sees the father as one who comforts and encourages “his own children”²⁶⁰ as the apostle and his companions sought to do. An ancient Greco-Roman father also bore responsibility for the socialization of his children,²⁶¹ so Paul also associates the father image with authoritatively imploring his children in the faith how to live out their new allegiance to God.²⁶² So while authority is certainly in view, preconceived notions about the authority of *paterfamilias* should not limit our understanding of the metaphor portrayed here. Paul, as father, portrays himself as one who comforts and encourages.

This survey shows at the very least that Paul did not emphasize his apostolic authority and power and possibly also that he intentionally minimized such aspects of his apostleship. In 1 Thessalonians, as Best points out, “love, not authority, is the mainspring of his apostolic actions.”²⁶³ And the authority Paul does exercise, he exercises in a very

²⁵⁹ Andrew D. Clarke, *Serve the Community of the Church: Christians as Leaders and Ministers*, First-Century Christians in the Graeco-Roman World (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2000), 87–90.

²⁶⁰ Paul again uses the reflexive pronoun with τέκνα as in 2:7. Here, as there, it likely intends to add a sense of parental love and belonging.

²⁶¹ Trevor J. Burke, “Pauline Paternity in 1 Thessalonians,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 51, no. 1 (2000): 70.

²⁶² Weima, “Infants, Nursing Mothers, and Father,” 227.

²⁶³ Best, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 100.

“gentle fashion.”²⁶⁴ These factors reduce the likelihood that Paul would seek exclusively to manifest his authority and power through the AP passage in 2:17-3:13.

2.5. Conclusion

When viewed together with the lack of emphasis on his authority and power and his consistent affirmation of the readers, Paul’s tenderly affectionate tone stands out all the more. “He does not write as a powerful apostle wielding his personal authority with autocratic words in order to command respect from the new believers. Rather, Paul communicates to the members of the fellowship with words of friendship, words carefully crafted by a personal friend who genuinely cares for the wellbeing of the recipients.”²⁶⁵ The content above demonstrated that this tone characterizes the letter as a whole, which places a burden of proof on those who hold that the AP passage in 2:17-3:13 functions exclusively to convey something different. The following chapter will show that such a burden of proof cannot be met.

²⁶⁴ Collins, “Paul as Seen through His Own Eyes,” 380.

²⁶⁵ Linda McKinnish Bridges, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, Smith & Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2008), 65.

CHAPTER 3

EXEGESIS OF 1 THESSALONIANS 2:17-3:13

3.1. Introduction

The AP passage in 1 Thessalonians contains some of the most intensely affectionate expressions in Pauline literature. In this section, I will use grammatical-historical exegesis and other approaches to show how Paul uses the AP literary convention in 1 Thess 2:17-3:13 to convey a distinct sense of his apostolic affection toward the readers. I will identify what I call “affectionately emotive elements” – literary features of the text that convey affection to the readers in emotionally elevated ways.

I will demonstrate how many of these affectionately emotive elements directly connect to aspects of the AP identified by Funk, particularly Paul’s past and present desires/plans to visit his readers and his choice to send Timothy as an envoy. I will conclude that this AP functions primarily to reassure the Thessalonians about his disposition toward them after his abrupt departure and sustained absence from them. Consequently, the passage does not function exclusively to convey Paul’s apostolic authority as Funk’s proposal implies.

3.2. Exegesis of 1 Thessalonians 2:17-20

^{2:17} Ἡμεῖς δέ, ἀδελφοί, ἀπορφανισθέντες ἀφ’ ὑμῶν πρὸς καιρὸν ὥρας, προσώπῳ οὐ καρδία, περισσοτέρως ἐσπουδάσαμεν τὸ πρόσωπον ὑμῶν ἰδεῖν ἐν πολλῇ ἐπιθυμίᾳ. ^{2:18} διότι ἠηλήσαμεν ἐλθεῖν πρὸς ὑμᾶς, ἐγὼ μὲν Παῦλος καὶ ἄπαξ καὶ δῖς, καὶ ἐνέκοψεν ἡμᾶς ὁ σατανᾶς. ^{2:19} τίς γὰρ ἡμῶν ἐλπίς ἢ χαρὰ ἢ στέφανος καυχήσεως – ἡ²⁶⁶ οὐχὶ καὶ ὑμεῖς–

²⁶⁶ In 2:19, the rare adverb ἡ reflects my decision to reaccentuate the particle ἡ present in both NA²⁸ and UBS⁵ texts. I discuss this decision below.

ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ ἐν τῇ αὐτοῦ παρουσίᾳ; ^{2:20} ὑμεῖς γάρ ἐστε ἡ δόξα ἡμῶν καὶ ἡ χαρά.²⁶⁷

^{2:17} *But we, brothers, after we were orphaned from you for a brief time, in person not in heart, exceedingly endeavored with great desire to see your face.* ^{2:18} *For this reason, we resolved to come to you – indeed, I, Paul, more than once – but Satan hindered us.* ^{2:19} *For who will be our hope and joy and crown of boasting – Truly, is it not even you? – in the presence of our Lord Jesus at his coming?* ^{2:20} *Yes, you are our glory and joy.*

3.2.1. Summary of 1 Thessalonians 2:17-20

Paul opens the AP passage in 2:17 by returning after a brief excursus in 2:14-16 to his survey of the relationship between the readers and his apostolic ministry team that began in 1:3. The apostle expresses deep affection for the church by poignantly describing the unplanned and unavoidable departure from Thessalonica as an “orphaning” from them and using intimate terms to clarify both that the separation was merely physical and that the readers remained in his heart. Paul also expresses his intense longing for the church by stacking multiple intense terms together to describe the depth of yearning he feels. The apostle affirms that the team resolved to return (and that he specifically did so multiple times), but Satan prevented them. Paul then creatively exclaims that the readers will be his hope, and joy, and crown of boasting in Jesus’ presence when the Lord comes.

²⁶⁷ Unless otherwise noted, all exegesis in this thesis is based on the NA²⁸ text and the translations are my own. I predominantly use a formal equivalent approach, but I adopt dynamic equivalent wording in several places to convey what I see as the sense of the Greek text. I discuss exegetical decisions underlying my translations as I treat each verse throughout this chapter.

3.2.2. 1 Thessalonians 2:17

The pronoun ἡμεῖς refers to those who had preached in Thessalonica and been sent away because of local opposition (Acts 17:5-10).²⁶⁸ I consider this to include Paul and Silvanus/Silas who are both listed as authors of the letter in 1:1, and who are mentioned in the Thessalonian account in Acts 17:1-10.²⁶⁹ The pronoun may include Timothy as well, who is also listed as one of the authors in 1:1.²⁷⁰ The use of the adversative conjunction δέ with ἡμεῖς in the emphatic position (“but *we*”) may serve a contrastive or resumptive role. A contrastive function would sharply distinguish Paul and his companions from the Thessalonians’ antagonistic countrymen described in the preceding paragraph.²⁷¹ Paul’s team had sincerely and selflessly offered both the gospel and their very selves to the readers (2:1-12), but an aggressive local contingent had opposed this gospel and persecuted the Thessalonians since receiving it (2:14-16). A resumptive function of δέ would reflect Paul’s return to his previous chronicling of the ministry team’s intimate relationship with the Thessalonians that left off at 2:13.²⁷² I take ἡμεῖς δέ as primarily contrastive in nature in light of the contextual focus on the character of Paul and his companions throughout the letters first three chapters, the

²⁶⁸ As mentioned in ch. 2, I assume the historicity of Acts. The historical details found in the Acts account of missionary activity in Thessalonica and those found in 1 Thessalonians are fully compatible. See Bruce, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, xxi. For a helpful synthesis of the data, see Green, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, 47–54.

²⁶⁹ As discussed in the previous chapter, I do not read the plural pronouns in 2:17-3:13 as epistolary plurals.

²⁷⁰ Interestingly, Timothy’s name does not appear in the Thessalonian account in Acts. He had joined the ministry team in Acts 16:1-3 and is mentioned again in Berea just after the Thessalonian exodus (Acts 17:14). Timothy might have had other duties while Paul and Silas preached in Thessalonica, which could explain why he was subsequently able to act as emissary to the Thessalonian church while Paul and Silas were unable to visit (3:1-6). The local opponents would not have recognized him.

²⁷¹ Weima favors a contrastive sense. See Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 191.

²⁷² Wanamaker favors a resumptive sense. See Wanamaker, *The Epistle to the Thessalonians*, 120.

immediately preceding climactic denigration of local opponents, and Paul’s use of the emphatic ἡμεῖς.²⁷³ Paul begins, “But we [i.e., the ones who uprightly cared for you, not the ones who mistreated you]” The apostle consequently sets the intimate relational tone of this new section with his two opening words.

The relational tone continues with the vocative address ἀδελφοί. I discussed the probable intimacy associated with this title in ch. 2.

The opening participial clause – ἀπορφανισθέντες ἀφ’ ὑμῶν πρὸς καιρὸν ὥρας – continues to illustrate the close connection Paul and his team feel to the Thessalonian church. Commentators disagree on how to understand the *hapax legomenon* ἀπορφανίζω. BDAG provides only one definition – “to make an orphan of.”²⁷⁴ In the passive voice, the most straightforward reading would be, “We were orphaned from you.” The NRSV and NIV retain the orphan imagery in their wording, both seeing Paul and company as orphaned children. Several commentators suggest that the verb could also refer to parents losing their children and should be taken in this sense, especially in light of the parental metaphors in 2:7 and 2:11 (e.g., Bruce,²⁷⁵ Marshall,²⁷⁶ Wanamaker,²⁷⁷ and Richard²⁷⁸). Others conclude that this occurrence depicts Paul and his companions as the bereft children but acknowledge that the verb could possibly refer to parents who had lost

²⁷³ Though I see Ἡμεῖς δέ as emphasizing contrast with the preceding verse, 2:17 certainly does resume a clear line of thought in 1:3-3:10 (from which Paul temporarily digressed in 2:14-16) that recounts the apostolic team’s relationship with the readers from the original εἰσοδος (2:1) up to the writing of the letter.

²⁷⁴ BDAG, s.v. “ἀπορφανίζω.”

²⁷⁵ Bruce, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 54.

²⁷⁶ Marshall, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 85.

²⁷⁷ Wanamaker, *The Epistle to the Thessalonians*, 120.

²⁷⁸ Richard, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 128–129.

children or even carry a more general sense of separation (e.g., Lightfoot,²⁷⁹ Frame,²⁸⁰ Shogren,²⁸¹ Best,²⁸² Beale,²⁸³ Morris,²⁸⁴ and Fee²⁸⁵). Many translations convey this more general sense through expressions such as “torn away” (ESV), “taken away” (NASB, NKJV), or “separated” (NET, NLT).

Weima argues, however, that the uncommon ἀπορφανίζω refers exclusively to bereft children in extrabiblical literature and sees “no ambiguity” with the orphan metaphor in 2:17.²⁸⁶ Weima and others suggest that seeing Paul and his companions as orphaned children does not contradict his parental metaphors, as evidenced by his use of νήπιοι (infants, small children) in reference to himself and his co-laborers in 2:7.²⁸⁷ Fee suggests that the metaphor works because Paul and Silas were the ones “away from home” in terms of their relationship to the Thessalonians.²⁸⁸

²⁷⁹ J. B. Lightfoot, *Notes on the Epistles of St. Paul (I and II Thessalonians, I Corinthians 1-7, Romans 1-7, Ephesians 1:1-14): Based on the Greek Text from Previously Unpublished Commentaries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1957), 36.

²⁸⁰ James Everett Frame, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Paul to the Thessalonians*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1912), 118.

²⁸¹ Shogren, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 130.

²⁸² Best, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 124.

²⁸³ G. K. Beale, *1-2 Thessalonians*, IVP New Testament Commentary 13 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010), 90–91.

²⁸⁴ Leon Morris, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1959), 93.

²⁸⁵ Fee, *The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians*, 105.

²⁸⁶ Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 196–197.

²⁸⁷ In ch. 2, I discussed the textual issue in 2:7 regarding ἤπιοι (“gentle”) versus νήπιοι (“infants”).

²⁸⁸ Fee, *The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians*, 105.

I tentatively adopt this latter reading (Paul and company as metaphorical orphans).²⁸⁹ Paul and his companions view themselves as those whose displacement had left them void of a needed relationship. Malherbe concludes:

The image of an orphan describes Paul in the most poignant way possible as in need. One could have expected Paul to say that his separation had made him bereft of his Thessalonian children or that the Thessalonians had been orphaned by his absence, but Paul wrenches the metaphor to extract the most emotion possible from it.²⁹⁰

If taken in this sense, the metaphor seems less intuitive to many readers than viewing Paul and his team as parents, which may indicate (as Malherbe argues in the quote above) Paul's intention to select the most striking imagery available. Regardless of whether Paul sees his team as children or parents, the language of family bereavement remains deeply emotive. Chrysostom interestingly lists several words Paul could have chosen to describe separation and concludes, "He sought for a word that might fitly indicate his mental anguish" (*Epistle to Olympias* 8.12.37-47).²⁹¹ The emotional intensity of loss cannot be fully appreciated apart from the orphan imagery.

Paul qualifies ἀπορφανισθέντες ἀφ' ὑμῶν with the prepositional phrase πρὸς καιρὸν ὥρας (lit., "for a period of time"²⁹²). The idiomatic phrase typically refers to a relatively short period of time. Shogren suggests not more than a few weeks.²⁹³ Weima

²⁸⁹ I do, however, disagree with Weima's conclusion that the issue is fixed. For one, I assume other commentators draw their assertion about the flexibility of ἀπορφανίζω from the cognate noun ὀρφανός, which did occasionally refer to parents separated from their children, or more rarely, to a more general separation or abandonment. See Heinrich Seesemann, "ὀρφανός," *TDNT* 5:487-488. Since ἀπορφανίζω technically meant "to make an ὀρφανός," which could refer to children or parents, it seems rash to rule out firmly the childless-parent reading based on limited occurrences of the verb.

²⁹⁰ Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, 187.

²⁹¹ Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 196.

²⁹² While ὥρα can mean "hour," it often refers to an indefinite period of time. E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible Explained and Illustrated* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1968), 656.

²⁹³ Shogren, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 130.

proposes that the uncommon phrase reflects a combination of two common expressions: (1) πρὸς καιρὸν (1 Cor 7:5; Luke 8:13), and (2) πρὸς ὄραν (2 Cor 7:8; Gal 2:5; Phlm 15). Paul employs this “striking phrase” (which occurs nowhere else in the NT or LXX) to stress the limited time in view.²⁹⁴ The exegetical significance of the phrase is seen in light of the main clause that follows it – περισσοτέρως ἐσπουδάσαμεν τὸ πρόσωπον ὑμῶν ἰδεῖν ἐν πολλῇ ἐπιθυμίᾳ. Paul apparently seeks to demonstrate how quickly he and his companions felt the intense sting of separation. As Calvin concludes, “It is not to be wondered, if length of time should occasion weariness or sadness; but we must have a strong feeling of attachment when we find it difficult to wait even [a small space of time].”²⁹⁵ Paul elevates the intensity of his team’s longing to return by demonstrating how quickly such strong desires welled up in them.

The aorist participial phrase can be taken temporally²⁹⁶ (“after”) or causally²⁹⁷ (“because”).²⁹⁸ I adopt a temporal sense for the following reasons: (1) Based on comments by Von Dobschütz, Best concludes that the aorist tense of the participle makes more sense temporally, where a causal sense would more likely have accompanied a perfect tense verb with its emphasis on abiding implications of the event.²⁹⁹ (2) The

²⁹⁴ Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 197.

²⁹⁵ John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians*, trans. Pringle John, Reprint., vol. 21, Calvin’s Commentaries (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 262.

²⁹⁶ Best, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 124–125; Bruce, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 53; Fee, *The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians*, 104; and Boring, *I and II Thessalonians*, 109.

²⁹⁷ Shogren, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 130.

²⁹⁸ Richard translates the phrase concessively, but this seems unlikely in light of the other two options. See Richard, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 128.

²⁹⁹ Best, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 124–125.

temporal reading makes more sense in light of the qualifying prepositional phrase πρὸς καιρὸν ὥρας (idiomatically, “for a brief time”). Unless this prepositional phrase is somehow taken parenthetically, a causal sense of the participle would read, “Because we were orphaned from you *for a brief time . . .*” The apostolic team’s eager desire, however, was in no way caused by the *brevity* of separation. A temporal reading presents no such complication. After Paul and his co-laborers were separated for a brief time, they excessively endeavored with great desire to see the Thessalonian church again.

Before beginning the main clause, Paul adds a brief parenthetical statement with two datives of respect – προσώπῳ οὐ καρδίᾳ (lit., “with respect to face, not heart”). The idiomatic phrase resembles English expressions such as “in person, not in spirit” or “out of sight, but not out of mind.” Lightfoot briefly references 1 Cor 5:3 – ἀπὸν τῷ σώματι παρὸν δὲ τῷ πνεύματι (“being absent in body, but present in spirit”).³⁰⁰ Paul’s word choice seems significant in light of how he often uses πρόσωπον and καρδία with intimate and/or emotive connotations.

The term πρόσωπον often refers idiomatically to physical presence.³⁰¹ Paul uses it three times in this sense in 1 Thessalonians (including this first usage in 2:17), all of which have a personal and affectionate connotation. Later in 2:17, the apostle speaks of how deeply he longs to see the readers’ face with exceedingly intense language and grammar (treated below). Paul uses it again in 3:10 as he describes pleading with God night and day with incomparable earnestness so he might see their face. Paul also uses this sense of the term with intimate connotations in 1 Cor 13:12, where he speaks of one day seeing the Lord

³⁰⁰ Lightfoot, *Notes on the Epistles of St. Paul*, 37. Cf. Col 2:5.

³⁰¹ BDAG, s.v. “πρόσωπον.”

πρόσωπον πρὸς πρόσωπον. In 2 Cor 10:1, he urges the readers using πρόσωπον in another idiom, “by the meekness and gentleness of Christ – I who am humble when among according to face (ὄς κατὰ πρόσωπον μὲν ταπεινὸς ἐν ὑμῖν).”

With regard to καρδιά, ancient Greek speakers conceived of the heart generally as the complete inner person and seat of thoughts, knowledge, feelings, desires/passions, will, conscience, etc.³⁰² Paul frequently uses καρδιά in highly emotive contexts that emphasize it as the place of deep feeling. In 2 Cor 6:11, for example, Paul declares to the Corinthians that his heart (καρδιά) is wide open to them and urges them to widen their hearts as well.³⁰³ After calling them “beloved” in the next chapter (7:1), Paul asks them to make room for him in their hearts (7:2) and affirms that they are in his heart (7:3).³⁰⁴

Without pressing the point too far, it seems likely that Paul intentionally selected the idiom προσώπῳ οὐ καρδίᾳ because of the intimate terminology in order to express his abiding remote presence with the readers.³⁰⁵ Paul repeatedly uses πρόσωπον and καρδιά in intimate ways (some within this section of the 1 Thessalonians), and the idiom here appears in the context of a highly emotive and relational section of a highly emotive and relational letter. Tarazi probably captures the nuance with “an absence of faces, not a cleavage of

³⁰² NIDNTTE, s.v. “καρδιά.” See also “GE, s.v. “καρδιά” and BDAG, s.v. “καρδιά.”

³⁰³ Paul uses the first-person plural in 2 Cor 6:11. He may have employed the epistolary plural or possibly had his coauthor Timothy in mind. For a discussion of the first-person plural in 2 Corinthians, see David E. Garland, *2 Corinthians: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 1999), 74.

³⁰⁴ See other emotional or intimate uses of καρδιά in Rom 9:2; 2 Cor 2:4; 8:16; Phil 1:7; see also Eph 6:22; Col 2:2; 4:8.

³⁰⁵ Paul certainly uses the idiom to express his ongoing affection for the readers. The only question relates to the extent of intentional intimacy.

hearts.”³⁰⁶ Many commentators underemphasize or fail to mention this potential intimate nuance.

The main clause describes the response of Paul and his companions to their untimely departure from Thessalonica – περισσοτέρως ἐσπουδάσαμεν τὸ πρόσωπον ὑμῶν ἰδεῖν ἐν πολλῇ ἐπιθυμίᾳ. The language here, according to Weima, “continues the highly emotional, almost hyperbolic, language that Paul uses to express his love and longing for the Thessalonians.”³⁰⁷ The clause has a strong verb with an intensifying adverb and adverbial prepositional phrase.³⁰⁸

The root verbal idea of the main verb σπουδάζω is to hasten or hurry,³⁰⁹ but the word in 2:17 means “to be especially conscientious in discharging an obligation.”³¹⁰ This idea can emphasize intent (i.e., “be eager/zealous”) or action (i.e., “endeavor/make effort”). While some commentators and translations emphasize intent (e.g., Frame: “became anxious;”³¹¹ NRSV: “longed;” NASB and NET: “wanted”), Wanamaker³¹² and Weima³¹³ argue that intent in this case cannot be separated from action (cf., Shogren³¹⁴ and NIV: “made every effort;” ESV: “endeavored;” NLT: “tried very hard”). Procksch

³⁰⁶ Paul Nadim Tarazi, *1 Thessalonians: A Commentary*, Orthodox Biblical Studies (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1982), 115. See also the NET’s “in presence, not in affection.”

³⁰⁷ Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 198.

³⁰⁸ Shogren, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 130.

³⁰⁹ Ceslas Spicq, “σπουδάζω,” *TLNT* 2:276.

³¹⁰ BDAG, s.v. “σπουδάζω.”

³¹¹ Frame, *The Epistles of St. Paul to the Thessalonians*, 119.

³¹² Wanamaker, *The Epistle to the Thessalonians*, 121.

³¹³ Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 198.

³¹⁴ Shogren, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 130.

also adopts the sense of effort in 2:17.³¹⁵ The emphasis on exerted effort would make the prepositional phrase ἐν πολλῇ ἐπιθυμίᾳ less redundant – “We endeavored with great desire,” as opposed to, “We were eager with great desire.”³¹⁶ Whether the emphasis falls on intent or action, σπουδάζω reflects the intense drive Paul and his co-laborers experienced to see the Thessalonians again.

The expression “to see your face”³¹⁷ personalizes the verbal construction. Paul used πρόσωπον in this way earlier in the verse.³¹⁸ The apostle could have used ὑμᾶς as the object of the infinitive, which he does elsewhere (e.g., Rom 1:11; 1 Cor 16:7). Instead, he chooses more intimate wording.

The adverb περισσοτέρως modifies ἐσπουδάσαμεν . . . ἰδεῖν. The intensifying adverb can be taken comparatively (“more earnestly endeavored”) or elatively (“exceedingly endeavored”). Frame points out how those who adopt a comparative sense must answer the question, “More earnestly compare to what?”³¹⁹ Lightfoot suggests the untimely nature of the separation made the ministry team’s desire more than it might otherwise have been.³²⁰ Marshall also affirms that possibility,³²¹ which would seem more

³¹⁵ Otto Procksch, “ἀγιάζω/ἀγιωσύνη,” *TDNT* 1:111-115.

³¹⁶ Granted such redundancy is common in constructions such as cognate datives, which ἐσπουδάσαμεν . . . ἐν πολλῇ ἐπιθυμίᾳ resembles.

³¹⁷ The singular πρόσωπον takes a plural possessive genitive ὑμῶν. The disagreement in number is a common convention when addressing a plural audience. The same construction with πρόσωπον and ὑμῶν occurs again in 3:10. In addition to these instances, ὑμῶν in 1 Thessalonians alone modifies singular forms of ἔργον, κόπος, and ὑπομονή (1:3), singular forms of πίστις (1:8; 3:2, 5, 6, 7, 10), a singular form of ἀγιασμός (4:3), and singular forms of πνεῦμα, ψυχή, and σῶμα (5:23).

³¹⁸ I discussed Paul’s use of πρόσωπον with intimate and relational connotations above when treating the idiom προσώπῳ οὐ καρδίᾳ earlier in this verse.

³¹⁹ Frame, *The Epistles of St. Paul to the Thessalonians*, 119.

³²⁰ Lightfoot, *Notes on the Epistles of St. Paul*, 37.

³²¹ Marshall, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 85.

plausible if the participle were taken causally – “because we were orphaned, we more earnestly desired.” Frame³²² and Wanamaker³²³ both adopt the elative sense, which I do as well. I nonetheless agree with Weima’s final assessment, “More important than the difficult choice between these two options, however, is the rhetorical effect that the addition of this adverb has in the sentence: it intensifies the expressed attempt of Paul to visit his converts once again.”³²⁴ Whether comparative or elative, *περισσότερος* heightens the level of effort expressed in the verbal idea and also increases the emotive tone of the passage.

The first verse of the pericope closes with the prepositional phrase *ἐν πολλῇ ἐπιθυμίᾳ* (lit., “with much desire”), which also modifies the verb.³²⁵ The phrase indicates what accompanies the extreme efforts of the apostolic missionaries to see the readers once again, namely, a substantial inner drive. Malherbe notes that this is one of the few instances where *ἐπιθυμία* is viewed positively in the NT (cf. Phil 1:23).³²⁶ The term (often translated “lust”) is often seen as unhealthy in its excessiveness. This may indicate Paul’s attempt to use every tool at his disposal to communicate his tremendous desire as forcefully as possible.

Paul (representing his companions) could hardly do more to express the intensity of anguish he experienced after being driven away from the young Thessalonian believers

³²² Frame, *The Epistles of St. Paul to the Thessalonians*, 119.

³²³ Wanamaker, *The Epistle to the Thessalonians*, 121.

³²⁴ Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 198.

³²⁵ This seems to reflect the attendant circumstances use of the flexible pronoun *ἐν*. See Murray Harris, *Prepositions and Theology in the Greek New Testament: An Essential Reference Resource for Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 120.

³²⁶ Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, 183.

and the yearning they felt to return. As Bruce concludes, “The piling up of words expressing eager longing emphasizes their ardent desire.”³²⁷ As discussed in ch. 2, Paul likely intends to clarify the care he and his co-laborers continued to feel for the Thessalonians during their absence. Frame, for example, says, “Far from not caring for them, the missionaries insist, in language broken with emotion, on their eagerness to return.”³²⁸ Malherbe argues that the conventional nature of expressing desire to see the recipient of a letter “dismisses the notion that Paul is here making an apology for his absence.”³²⁹ Malherbe’s case, however, does not account for the strength of language used in this verse (though elsewhere Malherbe affirms the passion present in this passage).

3.2.3. 1 Thessalonians 2:18

Having expressed how intensely the ministry team longed to see the Thessalonians, Paul then describes in 2:18 the co-laborers’ consequent resolve to return. Paul interrupts himself to specify that he attempted to return multiple times but was hindered by Satan.

The causal conjunction *διότι* opens 2:18 and clarifies that the thought here is based on the previous clause. I translate it, “For this reason” Paul wants to visit his readers because of the great desire with which he sought to see “their face.” The main ideas of the two verses are essentially parallel. Both verses use verbs of desire or intent combined with complementary infinitives that express virtually identical sentiments. No

³²⁷ Bruce, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 54.

³²⁸ James E. Frame, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Paul to the Thessalonians*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1912), 117.

³²⁹ Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, 187.

new information is provided, but the repetition conveys “the magnitude of the apostle’s feelings for his readers.”³³⁰

Commentators differ in how they take the nuance of the main verb θέλω. In this context, the verb could be understood as expressing “desire” or the stronger “resolve.” Morris thinks it probably emphasizes feelings rather than will in this case, which strengthens “the emotional element which is so marked a feature of this section of the Epistle.”³³¹ Malherbe prefers “resolved” because of the parallel connection to the stronger ἐσπουδάσαμεν in 2:17.³³² BDAG also puts this occurrence under the description “to have something in mind for oneself, of purpose, resolve.”³³³ I opt for this stronger sense (“resolved, purposed”) for the following reasons: (1) It seems awkward to say that one excessively endeavored with great desire to do something, and for that very reason, one (merely) wished/wanted to do the same thing. (2) The phrase that follows the verbal clause – ἐγὼ μὲν Παῦλος καὶ ἅπαξ καὶ δίς – inherently implies intent. It makes slightly more sense to say one *resolved* to do something more than once, but was hindered, than to say one *wanted* to do something more than once, but was hindered.

The phrase just mentioned – ἐγὼ μὲν Παῦλος καὶ ἅπαξ καὶ δίς – reveals Paul’s fervent attempts to reconnect. “Here the intense personal feeling breaks through, and we have the emphatic singular reinforced by the personal name.”³³⁴ Either convention would add emphasis, but taken together (especially with the emphatic μὲν and what I will argue is an

³³⁰ Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 199.

³³¹ Morris, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 94.

³³² Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, 183.

³³³ BDAG, s.v. “θέλω.”

³³⁴ Morris, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 95.

ascensive use of καί before the temporal idiom), the phrase could hardly stress Paul's point more poignantly.

Though often used in a contrasting μέν-δέ construction, the solitary μέν retained its emphatic nature without necessarily implying a contrast.³³⁵ Paul is therefore not setting himself against Silas or Timothy. When μέν occurs in the singular, it can draw focus to the speaker's emotional state, as it does here (cf. Rom 10:1).³³⁶

The first person singular pronoun emphasizes the fact that Paul in particular, not just as part of the missionary team, made efforts to visit. This use of ἐγὼ seems comparative (as opposed to contrastive) in nature, which conveys the thought that Paul, of all the companions, “especially” wanted to visit.³³⁷ Not only does the pronoun provide emphasis, but the switch in number from the preceding plural verbs does so as well. The plural is used more proportionally in 1-2 Thessalonians than most other Pauline letters. “This makes the singular more significant when it does occur.”³³⁸ Paul distinctly wants his readers to know that he, the head of the team, had great concern for them and resolved to return.³³⁹

The use of Paul's personal name also elevates the intensity of his comment. The apostle typically uses his name in the body of a letter in order to heighten emotion (e.g.,

³³⁵ Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, 183–184.

³³⁶ Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 199. See also BDAG, s.v. “μέν.”

³³⁷ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 322.

³³⁸ Morris, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 94.

³³⁹ Collins wisely disregards speculation that “the desire of Silvanus and Timothy was any less intense than that of Paul” or that Paul planned to return alone. Collins, “Paul as Seen through His Own Eyes,” 351. As discussed above in this section, the interjection creates emphasis. The point is to elevate Paul's resolve as the figurehead of the team, not to diminish the resolve of the others.

2 Cor 10:1; Phlm 22).³⁴⁰ Collins sees the parenthetical expression as serving “to underscore the intensity of his personal frustration.”³⁴¹ Paul almost seems to plead with the Thessalonians to understand how deeply he desired to see them and how diligently he directed his affairs toward that goal.

Paul’s diligence is reflected in the temporal adverbial idiom: ἅπαξ καὶ δις (lit., “once and twice”). Commentators agree that the phrase indicates an indefinite (but relatively small) number. It is probably best to understand the idea as “more than once” (NASB) or even “several times,” but not “again and again” as most major translations adopt (e.g., ESV, NRSV, NIV, NET). Based on usage in the LXX, Morris argues that the idiom is probably restricted to ἅπαξ καὶ δις and that the initial καὶ in 2:18 has an ascensive force (“indeed”).³⁴² The idiom expresses that Paul’s efforts were not fleeting thoughts or halfhearted attempts, but that he persisted in his purpose. Clarifying this, once again, serves to heighten the passage’s emotional intensity by tangibly illustrating the longings Paul just described.³⁴³

Despite the apostle’s desire and determination, an enemy deterred his efforts. The name “Satan” transliterates the Hebrew שָׂטָן (“accuser” or “adversary”).³⁴⁴ In this verse, the placement of Satan’s name (the subject of the clause) at the end the phrase seems to

³⁴⁰ Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, 184.

³⁴¹ Collins, “Paul as Seen through His Own Eyes,” 351.

³⁴² Morris, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 95.

³⁴³ Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, 184.

³⁴⁴ Bruce Baloian, “שָׂטָן,” *NIDOTTE* 3:1231.

reflect a level of emphasis. Shogren suggests something like: “and he blocked us . . . Satan!”³⁴⁵

Paul says Satan hindered the apostolic team from coming. Malherbe notes how the apostle frequently appeals to being deterred, but none of the other instances ascribe responsibility to Satan (Rom 1:10-13; 15:22-23; cf. 1 Cor 16:5-7; Acts 16:6-10).³⁴⁶ This rare description of Satan’s opposition to travel efforts³⁴⁷ marks a further attempt by Paul to demonstrate how desperately he desired to see the Thessalonians. Paul and his companions did not remain absent by choice. Forces beyond their control prevented the reunion. Only Satan could keep the apostle away from Thessalonica. Such clarification by Paul provides evidence of the team’s genuine and abiding concern for their converts, even if experienced from a distance.

Malherbe points out how Paul elevates the separation experienced to a supernatural level.³⁴⁸ Richard says more specifically that “the difficulties of the missionaries and those of the community are given an apocalyptic nuance when Paul speaks of ‘Satan hindering’ the mission or of ‘the Tempter enticing’ the community (2:18; 3:5).”³⁴⁹ Paul frames his inability to visit the readers as part of a cosmic spiritual drama in which the chief adversary sabotages his repeated attempts to reach those for

³⁴⁵ Shogren, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 132.

³⁴⁶ Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, 184.

³⁴⁷ Paul, of course, frequently refers to Satan by several names and speaks to his general opposition of God’s work. My point is that Paul speaks of being deterred in his attempts to visit others on several occasions, but only here does he ascribe his delay to Satan.

³⁴⁸ Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, 184.

³⁴⁹ Earl Richard, “Early Pauline Thought: An Analysis of 1 Thessalonians,” in *Pauline Theology I: Thessalonians, Philippians, Galatians, Philemon*, vol. 1 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 45.

whom he longs. Paul’s brief mention of Satan further heightens the emotive tone of the passage and illustrates Paul’s deep desire to see his converts again.

3.2.4. 1 Thessalonians 2:19

In 2:19, Paul erupts with an affirming exclamation in the form of a rhetorical question. He asks who will be the hope and joy and crown of boasting in the presence of the Lord Jesus at his παρουσία. Paul interrupts himself for the second time in two verses to rhetorically ask, “Truly, is it not even you?” The affirming exclamation, affectionate titles, double use of rhetorical questions, and disjointed syntax all point to an emotionally elevated expression of delight in the readers.

The postpositive γάρ often serves as a standard introduction to interrogative clauses, as here in 2:19.³⁵⁰ The particle seems also to have its typical connective force here,³⁵¹ explaining “the reason for [Paul’s] repeated resolve to return.”³⁵² The readers’ exalted status in Paul’s heart explain intensity of the apostle’s efforts to see them.

Paul uses a nominal clause to ask his readers a rhetorical question, the first of two in this verse: “For who is our hope and joy and crown of boasting . . . ?”³⁵³ Bullinger notes how such questions can convey senses of “rapture or exultation.”³⁵⁴ The first question in 2:19 most likely falls in this category, for Paul exults in the Thessalonians by interrogatively applying these lofty titles to them.

³⁵⁰ BDF §446.

³⁵¹ Bruce, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 56.

³⁵² Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, 184.

³⁵³ The three terms are separated by ἢ. Though normally considered disjunctive in nature, ἢ almost carries the force of a copulative conjunction (e.g., καί) in negative interrogative sentences. BDF §446.

³⁵⁴ Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible Explained and Illustrated*, 952.

Before discussing the three terms used, I will establish their eschatological context. The verse concludes ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ ἐν τῇ αὐτοῦ παρουσίᾳ. Whatever hope, joy, and crown Paul has in mind, he sees them all coming to fulfillment in the presence of the Lord Jesus at his coming.

The preposition ἐν appears to have a temporal sense – “at [the time of] his coming.”³⁵⁵ Luckensmeyer notes that none of Paul’s other letters reference the Lord’s coming “with such striking recurrence.”³⁵⁶ The apostle’s reference to the event is exegetically significant in at least two ways: (1) It clarifies what Paul means when he refers to his readers as his hope and joy and crown of boasting. These terms are clearly set in an eschatological context. (2) Appealing to the παρουσία probably reflects Paul’s final effort in this pericope to stir his readers’ emotions as he attempts to confirm how prominent a place they hold in his heart. This reference to the advent of Christ, then, brings the passage to a rousing crescendo by associating the joy and pride felt by Paul and his companions with an event of utmost importance to the Thessalonian believers.

I take Paul’s use of hope in this verse in the sense suggested by L&N – “that which constitutes the cause or reason for hoping.”³⁵⁷ The Thessalonians give Paul and his companions a reason to look forward to standing ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ. I see

³⁵⁵ BDAG, s.v. “ἐν.” BDAG places this use under 10.b in reference to “a point in time when something occurs.” So also Shogren, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 135. As Shogren notes, Paul uses the preposition ἐν to describe the παρουσία of Christ with a parallel temporal sense in 1 Thess 3:13 and 1 Cor 15:23. The preposition could possibly refer to the “circumstance or condition under which something takes place” (BDAG 7 s.v. ἐν). BDAG notes there that “circumstantial and temporal uses are so intermingled that it is difficult to decide between them.” Either way, “at” renders the preposition sufficiently.

³⁵⁶ Luckensmeyer, *The Eschatology of First Thessalonians*, 30–31. In addition to 2:19, Paul uses παρουσία in 1 Thess 3:13; 4:15; 5:23; 2 Thess 1:10; 2:1. Outside of the Thessalonian Correspondence, Paul uses παρουσία in this sense only in 1 Cor 15:23. Paul does, of course, refer to the concept of Christ’s return in many other places using different terminology.

³⁵⁷ L&N, s.v. “ἐλπίς.”

ἐλπίς as a lead word in the construction, upon which the following two words build. They expound the nature of such hope. The hope of Paul’s team will come to fruition because the readers will serve as a source of joy³⁵⁸ and as grounds for boasting. Paul anticipates “the positive pride and pleasure that the Thessalonians will give him at the return of Jesus,”³⁵⁹ and he expresses such sentiment to his readers to confirm his *present* devotion to them.

In using the image of a crown, Paul probably has in mind the type of wreath or garland bestowed on the victor of Greek athletic games. The apostle frequently appeals to such contest imagery and looks forward to the prize he will receive (cf. στέφανος/crown in 1 Cor 9:24-27 and 2 Tim 4:8³⁶⁰ and βραβεῖον/prize in Phil 3:14). Paul modifies στέφανος with the descriptive genitive καυχίσεως (“of boasting”). Fitting with the contest/victor metaphor, this prize is something in which the recipient can take pride, as Paul will take pride in his converts before Jesus.³⁶¹ The faithful Thessalonians provide Paul with “proof that he has faithfully fulfilled his apostolic commission.”³⁶²

Paul applies these same titles (χαρά and στέφανος) to the Philippians in an explicit expression of love and longing. In Phil 4:1, Paul prefaces his description of the Philippians as his joy and crown with the vocative ἀδελφοί μου ἀγαπητοὶ καὶ ἐπιπόθητοι – “my beloved and longed-for brothers.” The titles χαρά and στέφανος appear

³⁵⁸ L&N, s.v. “χαρά.”

³⁵⁹ Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 123.

³⁶⁰ I assume Pauline authorship of 2 Timothy. For an argument in favor of this position, see George W. Knight, III, *The Pastoral Epistles*, *The New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1992), 21–52. Even if pseudonymous, 2 Timothy reflects one stream of thought heavily influenced by Paul.

³⁶¹ See NET “crown to boast of.”

³⁶² Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 202. Cf. 1 Thess 3:5 with Phil 2:16. See also 1 Cor 9:2 where Paul describes the Corinthians as his “seal of apostleship.”

together nowhere in Paul’s writings outside of these two instances. In both Philippians and 1 Thessalonians, the titles appear in contexts where Paul expresses his affection and his desires to be with the readers.

The interjection ἦ οὐχὶ καὶ ὑμεῖς implicitly answers the rhetorical question, “Who is our hope and joy and crown of boasting?”³⁶³ Apparently overcome in the middle of this “affectionate cry from the heart,”³⁶⁴ Paul interrupts himself and answers his own question with another rhetorical question before he has even finished asking the first.³⁶⁵ The interjection creates “a rhetorical climax so passionate that it fractures his syntax.”³⁶⁶ The construction leads the readers to conclude, “Yes, we will be your hope and joy and crown of boasting.”³⁶⁷

I accept Bruce’s suggestion that the ἦ in the parenthetical reply should be re-accented to ἦ̃,³⁶⁸ a rare adverb and synonym of ἄρα.³⁶⁹ According to this reading, the adverb heightens the passion of Paul’s affirmative response and most likely requires an ascensive sense of καί with additional emphasis – “Truly, is it not even you?”

³⁶³ Ibid., 205.

³⁶⁴ Shogren, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 134.

³⁶⁵ Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 203.

³⁶⁶ Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, 184. The syntax is fractured because Paul’s question is grammatically incomplete until he adds the prepositional phrase at the end of 2:19. Most translations do not reflect the interruption, but rather include the question after ἐμπροσθεν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ.

³⁶⁷ The use of οὐχὶ indicates that the question is rhetorical in nature and that it anticipates an affirmative response (BDF §427.2).

³⁶⁸ Bruce, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 53. The following recent commentators have also adopted Bruce’s position: Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 204; Wanamaker, *The Epistle to the Thessalonians*, 124; and Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, 185.

³⁶⁹ Wanamaker, *The Epistle to the Thessalonians*, 124. The term has few occurrences in the NT or LXX, most of which are debatable (BDF §440.3).

3.2.5. 1 Thessalonians 2:20

Paul then affirmatively answers the interjected question in 2:20. He restates emphatically that, indeed, the Thessalonians are the glory and joy of the apostle and his coworkers.

Most translations use the standard explanatory “for” to render γάρ in 2:20. The syntactic function of the particle, however, affirms what has just been asked rhetorically. After such questions, γάρ often supplies the reason for tacit approval,³⁷⁰ and is sometimes translated with affirming words such as “yes” (NRSV, NLT) or “indeed” (NIV).

The pronoun ὑμεῖς is in the emphatic position,³⁷¹ which restores focus on and highlights the Thessalonians after reference to the coming of the Lord Jesus in 2:19.

I take the present tense of the copula verb ἐστέ as contrasting with the implied future tense of the previous verse. I believe the thought to run as follows: “You *will be* our hope and joy and crown of boasting in the presence of our Lord Jesus his coming. Yes, you *are now* our glory and joy.”³⁷²

I understand ἡ δόξα ἡμῶν καὶ ἡ χαρά as an inverted repetition of the ideas reflected in χαρὰ ἢ στέφανος καυχήσεως from the previous verse. I suggest Paul only repeated two concepts (and not the third concept of “hope”), because they represent the content of ἐλπὶς in 2:19. The possible change in tense from future to present may indicate why Paul switches terms from “crown of boasting” to “glory.” The Thessalonians comprise the *present* glory of Paul and his team but will one day comprise the *future* crown of boasting

³⁷⁰ BDF §452.2.

³⁷¹ Wanamaker, *The Epistle to the Thessalonians*, 126.

³⁷² This temporal contrast is debated. See Frame, *The Epistles of St. Paul to the Thessalonians*, 123.

to be awarded at the παρουσία.³⁷³ “The Thessalonian church will be evidence of the faithful fulfillment of Paul’s apostolic calling at the return of Jesus because they are already now . . . the source of his pride and joy.”³⁷⁴ By referring to the readers as his “glory,” Paul most likely means, “that in which one takes pride”³⁷⁵ or possibly “that which brings renown.”³⁷⁶

The repetition between 2:19 and 2:20 “serves to convey even further the apostle’s strong feelings for his readers.”³⁷⁷ After the climactic forward-looking proclamation of 2:19, Paul adds here that the readers presently offer ample reason for confident celebration. He reiterates his team’s assurance and delight in the Thessalonian church and personalizes the eschatological declaration from 2:19 by restating the same sentiment in present terms.

3.3. Exegesis of 1 Thessalonians 3:1-5

^{3:1} Διὸ μηκέτι στέγοντες εὐδοκήσαμεν καταλειφθῆναι ἐν Ἀθήναις μόνοι ^{3:2} καὶ ἐπέμψαμεν Τιμόθεον, τὸν ἀδελφὸν ἡμῶν καὶ συνεργὸν τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ, εἰς τὸ στηρίξαι ὑμᾶς καὶ παρακαλέσαι ὑπὲρ τῆς πίστεως ὑμῶν ^{3:3} τὸ μηδένα σαίνεσθαι ἐν ταῖς θλίψεσιν ταύταις, αὐτοὶ γὰρ οἴδατε ὅτι εἰς τοῦτο κείμεθα• ^{3:4} καὶ γὰρ ὅτε πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἦμεν, προελέγομεν ὑμῖν ὅτι, μέλλομεν θλίβεσθαι, καθὼς καὶ ἐγένετο καὶ οἴδατε. ^{3:5} διὰ τοῦτο καὶ γὰρ μηκέτι στέγων ἐπέμψα εἰς τὸ γνῶναι τὴν πίστιν ὑμῶν, μὴ πως ἐπέιρασεν ὑμᾶς ὁ πειράζων καὶ εἰς κενὸν γένηται ὁ κόπος ἡμῶν.

^{3:1} *Consequently, when we could bear it no longer, we thought it best to be left behind in Athens alone, ^{3:2} and we sent Timothy, our brother and coworker with God in the gospel of Christ, in order to establish and encourage you concerning your faith, ^{3:3} so that no one might be shaken by these afflictions. For you yourselves know we have been appointed for this. ^{3:4} For when we were with you, we kept telling you beforehand – “We must suffer*

³⁷³ Fee, *The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians*, 111.

³⁷⁴ Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 205.

³⁷⁵ Bruce, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 57.

³⁷⁶ BDAG, s.v. “δόξα.”

³⁷⁷ Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 206.

affliction.” – just as it also came about and you know. ^{3:5} Because of this, when I could bear it no longer, I also sent to find out about your faith, for fear that perhaps the Tempter had tempted you and our work would come to nothing.

3.3.1. Summary of 1 Thessalonians 3:1-5

In 3:1-5, Paul describes how the apostle and his ministry partners decided to send Timothy to establish and encourage the church with regard to their faith. They were willing to go without their faithful companion because they could not bear the weight of (presumably) not knowing how the readers fared. The apostolic team commissioned Timothy to help the church remain steady amid afflictions. Paul affirms the readers’ awareness that believers are destined for such afflictions because his team had repeatedly told them such things would happen (just as they did, in fact, come to pass). Paul also sent to find out about their faith because he was afraid that the Tempter might have succeeded in tempting them and the apostolic work would prove futile.

3.3.2. 1 Thessalonians 3:1

As an inferential conjunction, *διό* indicates a logical connection between 3:1-5 and 2:17-20.³⁷⁸ In light of the ministry team’s untimely departure from Thessalonica (2:17), subsequent frustrated attempts to return (2:18), and deep affection for the church (2:19-20), Paul and Silas *consequently* sent Timothy to Thessalonica, leaving them alone in Athens.³⁷⁹ This connection to 2:17-20 clarifies the meaning of the participial phrase

³⁷⁸ Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 673.

³⁷⁹ Paul might have had in mind only one or two of these elements from 2:17-20, but taking them all together explains both the need for Timothy to “strengthen and encourage” (in light of the others’ sustained absence – 2:17-18) as well as the sense of emotional urgency in the participial phrase *μηκέτι στέγοντες* (which stems from the Thessalonians’ intimate status as the apostolic team’s hope, joy, crown, and glory – 2:19-20).

that opens 3:1 – μηκέτι στέγοντες. The verb στέγω has several senses but, in this instance, clearly means to “bear up against.”³⁸⁰ Josephus employed the term in this way to describe pillars bearing the weight of a roof. Another first-century writer used it to describe ice that withstood the weight of marching soldiers.³⁸¹ The figurative use here and in 3:5 has an emotional force – Paul (with Silas in at least 3:1) could no longer endure some form of internal distress. Though Paul does not specify what precisely they could no longer bear, the implication is clear.³⁸² The angst provokes Timothy’s commission to “establish and encourage” the Thessalonians’ in their faith (3:2).³⁸³ When the same phrase appears in 3:5, Paul responds by sending “to learn about” their faith.³⁸⁴ So the ministry partners could no longer endure a separation that (1) left them ignorant of the Thessalonians’ spiritual state, and (2) left those in Thessalonica void of support. Such concerns both stem from the intimate relationship and undesired absence described in 2:17-20. The intense emotional nature of 2:17-20 and the strength of στέγω mark a continuation of heightened emotional tone.

The phrase καταλειφθῆναι ἐν Ἀθήναις μόνοι emphasizes Paul’s extreme concern for the Thessalonians. Three factors suggest this reading: (1) In addition to “leave

³⁸⁰ BDAG, s.v. “στέγω.”

³⁸¹ Wilhelm, Kasch, “στέγω,” *TDNT* 7:585-587.

³⁸² Bullinger classifies this as an ellipsis where the accusative must be supplied. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible Explained and Illustrated*, 14. Weima suggests the preceding διό shows that Paul had 2:17-20 in mind (Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 206).

³⁸³ Malherbe reads the participial phrase μηκέτι στέγοντες as causal rather than temporal. Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, 189. I agree, but chose to translate the phrase temporally. The temporal sense reads smoother in English with the negative temporal adverb μηκέτι, and a temporal translation implies causation in this context.

³⁸⁴ I see 3:1 and 3:5 as referring to different “sendings,” but the experiences that Paul could not bear stemmed from the same concern in both cases – the church’s spiritual wellbeing. I discuss this below under 3:5.

behind,” the passive form of καταλείπω can mean “abandon” or “forsake.”³⁸⁵ Even if the full strength of that nuance does not appear in 3:1, the passive form of such a word suggests some elevation of emotional tenor, especially when contrasted with a common word like μένω. “We were left” has a different air than “we remained behind.” Paul uses μένω much more often than καταλείπω. In 2 Tim 4:20, for example, Paul uses μένω in a similar construction as the one here to say simply that Erastus “remained in Corinth.” Paul’s use of καταλείπω, in contrast, may show intentional emphasis on the loss Paul felt by sending Timothy. (2) The position of μόνοι as the final word of the clause seems emphatic as well.³⁸⁶ Malherbe concludes that the passive καταλειφθῆναι and emphatic nature of the construction with μόνοι convey “a feeling of solitariness approximating that of someone abandoned.”³⁸⁷ (3) A few verses earlier, Paul used the rare passive ἀπορφανισθέντες (“to be orphaned”) to describe his separation from the Thessalonians. As discussed above under 2:17, the figurative use of this term has highly emotional connotations. I suggest a similar, if less dramatic, tone characterizes καταλειφθῆναι ἐν Ἀθήναις μόνοι. Paul intended the cost of losing Timothy to serve as further evidence of the concern he and Silas shared for the readers. When they could not bear it any longer, they sent Timothy, even though it left them bereft of their valuable friend and coworker.

³⁸⁵ LSJ, s.v. “καταλείπω.”

³⁸⁶ Best, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 130.

³⁸⁷ Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, 190. Malherbe provides examples where Aristotle used the word to describe abandoning a child or “leaving a friend in a lurch.”

3.3.3. 1 Thessalonians 3:2

Paul validates Timothy in 3:2 with two remarkably honorable titles. Paul designates him a brother and coworker with God.³⁸⁸ The titles serve to convey the extent of loss Paul endured in sending him, which expresses the apostle's care for the community.³⁸⁹ Paul had relinquished his most beloved and trusted co-laborer in order to strengthen and encourage the Thessalonians. The weight of concern for their spiritual health prompted Paul's release of his most intimate and faithful companion.

In 3:2, Paul discloses the purpose of Timothy's visit – to establish and encourage the church concerning their faith (ὕπερ τῆς πίστεως ὑμῶν). The word πίστις here likely comprises both the Thessalonians' trust/confidence in the gospel as well as their

³⁸⁸ The title συνεργὸν τοῦ θεοῦ carries some textual uncertainty. Though several variant readings developed, the main issues center around whether or not διάκονον should replace (or perhaps be added before) συνεργὸν and whether or not τοῦ θεοῦ should be retained. Weima provides a clear and helpful list of the five main variants and their external support. See Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 230. External evidence heavily favors the reading διάκονον τοῦ θεοῦ, but the following factors lead most modern commentators and translations to accept the NA²⁸ text: (1) The title συνεργὸν τοῦ θεοῦ is the *lectio difficilior* because the natural reading “coworker *with* God” would likely have led scribes who wanted to preserve God's exalted status to emend the text. (2) Other variant readings are best explained by taking συνεργὸν τοῦ θεοῦ as original. See Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 563. I add that Paul designates his associates with the term συνεργός more than any other term. See E. Earle Ellis, “Paul and His Co-Workers,” *New Testament Studies* 17, no. 4 (July 1971): 440. Ellis does, however, list διάκονος as one of Paul's other favored titles. For the following reasons, I read τοῦ θεοῦ as a genitive of association (“with God”): (1) Compound nouns with συν- prefixes lend themselves to association. See Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 128–129. The fact that scribes altered the text suggests they at least considered association with God a natural reading (even if not preferred by them). (2) When συνεργός is followed by a genitive elsewhere in Paul, the genitive generally serves to designate the one alongside whom the work is performed. See Bruce, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 61. (3) Some object to this associative idea based on theological rationale, suggesting Paul would not elevate Timothy to the status of God's coworker. I acknowledge the danger of not distinguishing God's role in ministry from ours (the concern in 1 Cor 1-4), but I suggest with others that 2 Cor 6:1 fills out the picture. Paul describes his ministry with a participle of συνεργέω, which implies he (and Timothy?) are working together with God. But the preceding verses set the appropriate perspective: “We are ambassadors on behalf of Christ, as God appeals through us. We plead on behalf of Christ . . .” (2 Cor 5:20). They work together with God, but in a subservient sense, which falls within normal usage of the συνεργ- word group.

³⁸⁹ Paul probably also sought to endorse Timothy by using the titles, but it should be noted that the apostle does not specify that Timothy is being sent back with the present letter. Quickly assuming Timothy's titles only serve as letter-carrying emissary endorsements may cause the interpreter to miss this other possible function.

faithfulness lived out in response.³⁹⁰ Paul assumes his apostolic authority in making such a comment, as he does elsewhere in the letter and throughout this AP passage. Such assumptions do not weaken my primary argument, because I merely propose that Paul does not *exclusively* seek to convey a sense of presence in order to make his apostolic authority felt among the readers. As discussed in ch. 2 above, authority and affection throughout 1 Thessalonians are not mutually exclusive but rather complimentary.

3.3.4. 1 Thessalonians 3:3

Paul discloses in 3:3 the specific reason the readers needed strengthening and encouragement – so that none of them would be shaken by their afflictions (i.e., external hostility³⁹¹). The apostle returns to a prominent affliction theme here (see 1:6; 2:2, 14) and briefly digresses from recounting the events since his departure from Thessalonica. He states emphatically that believers (including the readers and Paul’s team) have been appointed for such trials (implicitly by God). Even more emphatically, he adds a disclosure formula asserting that they themselves should already know of this appointment. The passage’s tone seems to shift here. Paul may be responding to news from Timothy that some in the community are confused about or weary in their suffering,

³⁹⁰ Faith functions as a *leitwort*, appearing five times in 3:1-10. These two aspects reflect two of the three main senses listed in BDAG (s.v. “πίστις”). The Thessalonians’ faith as referenced by Paul multiple times throughout the letter cannot be limited to affirmation of a particular kerygma, but rather it must “establish itself constantly against assaults as an attitude that controls all life.” See Rudolf Bultmann, “πιστεύω κτλ.,” *TDNT* 6:174-228. The widespread reports of the Thessalonians’ “faith in God” (1:8) included how they “turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God” (1:9). They did not merely exhibit faith in God, they became faithful to him.

³⁹¹ Contra Malherbe who argues not only that ταῖς θλίψεσιν refers to emotional distress in this chapter, but also that this use of it refers to *Paul’s* desolation over the separation mentioned in 2:17. Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, 193. For a defense of the more traditional persecutory suffering view, see Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 212.

though it does not indicate any compromise on their part. Only affirmation follows Paul's straightforward comments.

3.3.5. 1 Thessalonians 3:4

The explanatory γὰρ that opens 3:4 clarifies why the readers should know of their appointment to affliction. Paul and his co-laborers had repeatedly warned the Thessalonians that afflictions would occur. Paul states plainly that the Thessalonians' subsequent suffering confirmed the team's initial warning.

The first-person plurals in both κείμεθα (3:3) and μέλλομεν³⁹² (3:4) reflect the inclusive "we." No other explanation of the first person would make sense of the fact that Paul is describing a message intended to prepare the readers for their own impending afflictions. Weima argues that the inclusive language attempts to express Paul's "solidarity with the suffering readers."³⁹³ The apostle already did so in 1:6 when he illustrated the Thessalonians' imitation of the apostolic team by explaining how they "received the word in much affliction." Emphasizing solidarity with the readers in several areas characterizes much of 3:6-10, which I discuss below.

3.3.6. 1 Thessalonians 3:5

In the closing verse of 3:1-5, Paul creates an inclusio³⁹⁴ that marks the subsection off by repeating words from 3:1-2. When Paul could not bear it any longer, he sends to learn about the Thessalonians' faith. Whether or not 3:5 refers to the same sending

³⁹² My translation of μέλλομεν as "we must" reflects the nuance of inevitability. See L&N, s.v. "μέλλω." This is supported especially by the word's close association here with κείμαι in the previous verse.

³⁹³ Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 214.

³⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 193.

mentioned in 3:2 or to a subsequent sending,³⁹⁵ the point remains the same. Paul could not wait any longer. A causal prepositional phrase at the beginning of 3:5 and a negative subjunctive construction at the end clarify that fear prompted Paul's decision to send for news. He worried that Satan might have used the afflictions to tempt the readers, which would have meant that all his team's work on their behalf would come to nothing. The mention of Paul's fear and inability to wait contrasts sharply with the relief expressed in 3:6, the following pericope.

The μή πως construction in the middle of 3:5 governs two concepts. Paul sent a messenger for fear that the Tempter had tempted the readers and consequently that the missionaries labor would come to nothing (καὶ εἰς κενὸν γένηται ὁ κόπος ἡμῶν). As reflected in my translation, μή πως indicates apprehension on Paul's part.³⁹⁶ The first verb after μή πως (ἐπέiraσεν) is aorist indicative. The indicative is expected in such a μή πως construction, because it describes something that has already taken place (or *not* taken

³⁹⁵ Best alludes to the fact that some have suggested Paul sent a second messenger in 3:5. Best, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 137. Most commentators do not mention this possibility. They typically propose that Paul returns here to his original line of reasoning and chooses to emphasize his personal anxiety and role in Timothy's commission. I propose, instead, that Paul refers to a second, subsequent "sending" in 3:5 in order to secure a report about the Thessalonians from an anonymous messenger while Timothy was occupied with ministry in Thessalonica (or possibly to request that Timothy return with a report). The phrasing in 3:1-2 and 3:5 is thus parallel, but the content not synonymous. Though I hold this view tentatively, I offer the following factors for consideration: (1) Such a reading resolves the tension between the plural in 3:1-2 and singular in 3:5. Silas had possibly been dispatched elsewhere, so Paul was alone, or perhaps Paul sent Silas to retrieve a report. The second option accords well with the timeline of Acts, which records Silas and Timothy arriving from Macedonia to Corinth together (Acts 18:5). (2) This reading easily resolves tension between the separate motivations offered for each sending. The first sending was prompted by the desire Paul and Silas had to establish and encourage the readers' faith. The second sending was prompted by Paul's desire to know of their progress. Since Timothy's assignment involved such lofty goals, it makes sense that Paul would grow anxious waiting to hear word back. (3) This reading better accounts for the emphatic ἐγὼ in 3:5. Paul, by himself, *also* sent a messenger out. (4) The passage's ambiguity presents no problem for this reading because the Thessalonians would have understood the sequence of events.

³⁹⁶ BDF §370. See ESV and NASB "for fear" and NRSV and NIV "I was afraid."

place, in this case).³⁹⁷ The English pluperfect translation conveys that Paul’s fear existed prior to Timothy’s report – “for fear that perhaps the Tempter *had* tempted you” The burdensome concern expressed here continues to illustrate the weight of Paul’s deep personal care for the Thessalonians, which bore down on him to such a great extent that he sent to find out about the their faith.

The second verb after μή πως (γένηται) expresses the avoided result that would have characterized the community in Thessalonica had the Tempter, in fact, succeeded. Here Paul uses the subjunctive mood because, at the time to which he refers, the futility of his laborers still hinged on whether or not the readers had succumbed to the Tempter.

The literal sense of the term κενός is “empty,” but it came to represent a sense of futility.³⁹⁸ Paul’s use of the term in construction with εις (as here) is often translated with the English expression “to work in vain.”³⁹⁹ Robertson clarifies that εις κενόν γένηται ὁ κόπος ἡμῶν reflects an idiomatic usage of εις plus the accusative with a copula verb, which resembles a predicate nominative construction.⁴⁰⁰ This demonstrates the close association between labor and emptiness here. Had Satan prevailed, the conflict-ridden, labor-intensive, and tenderhearted ministry in Thessalonica (2:1-12) would lack any positive result. Since γίνομαι often conveys a sense of emerging into a certain existence⁴⁰¹ (more than εἶμι), I translate the phrase: “and our work would come to nothing.”

³⁹⁷ Ibid.

³⁹⁸ Albrecht Oepke, “κενός κτλ.,” *TDNT* 3:659-660.

³⁹⁹ E.g., Gal 2:2 where Paul says he went to Jerusalem “to make sure I was not running or had not run in vain (εις κενόν).”

⁴⁰⁰ A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1934), 457–458.

⁴⁰¹ BDAG, s.v. “γίνομαι.”

Paul's fear regarding the potential vanity of his work might appear to some as a selfish focus on the productivity and efficiency of his ministry. As discussed in ch. 2, Paul has demonstrated throughout the letter a sincere and selfless approach to his gospel work among the Thessalonian church. The flourishing of Paul's "work" (κόπος) meant the flourishing of his readers. Paul's work "coming to nothing" (εἰς κενὸν γένηται) would have meant the spiritual collapse of his readers in response to the Tempter's testing. The apostle's affection for the church and concern that his work among them "come to something" are not at odds or mutually exclusive. I argue that they are not even entirely distinct from each other. In one of Paul's most affectionate expressions, he spoke of the church as his "crown of boasting" (2:18). Paul cares about the status of their faith precisely because he has heartfelt affection for them (2:8).

3.4. Exegesis of 1 Thessalonians 3:6-10

^{3:6} Ἄρτι δὲ ἐλθόντος Τιμοθέου πρὸς ἡμᾶς ἀφ' ὑμῶν καὶ εὐαγγελισαμένου ἡμῖν τὴν πίστιν καὶ τὴν ἀγάπην ὑμῶν καὶ ὅτι ἔχετε μνησίαν ἡμῶν ἀγαθὴν πάντοτε, ἐπιποθοῦντες ἡμᾶς ἰδεῖν καθάπερ καὶ ἡμεῖς ὑμᾶς, ^{3:7} διὰ τοῦτο παρεκλήθημεν, ἀδελφοί, ἐφ' ὑμῖν ἐπὶ πάσῃ τῇ ἀνάγκῃ καὶ θλίψει ἡμῶν διὰ τῆς ὑμῶν πίστεως, ^{3:8} ὅτι νῦν ζῶμεν ἐὰν ὑμεῖς στήκετε ἐν κυρίῳ. ^{3:9} τίνα γὰρ εὐχαριστίαν δυνάμεθα τῷ θεῷ ἀνταποδοῦναι περὶ ὑμῶν ἐπὶ πάσῃ τῇ χαρᾷ ἣν χαίρομεν δι' ὑμᾶς ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν, ^{3:10} νυκτὸς καὶ ἡμέρας ὑπερεκπερισσοῦ δεόμενοι εἰς τὸ ἰδεῖν ὑμῶν τὸ πρόσωπον καὶ καταρτίσαι τὰ ὑστερήματα τῆς πίστεως ὑμῶν;

^{3:6} *But now Timothy has come to us from you and brought us good news about your faith and love and told us that you always have good remembrance of us, longing to see us just as we also long to see you.* ^{3:7} *Because of this report, brothers, we were encouraged on account of you (by your faith) in all our distress and affliction.* ^{3:8} *For now we truly live, since you are standing firm in the things of the Lord.* ^{3:9} *For what thanks can we possibly pay back to God concerning you on account of all the joy with which we rejoice in the presence of our God because of you,* ^{3:10} *as we plead with him night and day with incomparable earnestness so we might see your face and complete what remains with regard to your faith?*

3.4.1. Summary of 1 Thessalonians 3:6-10

Several elements indicate a significant shift in content and tone that distinguishes 3:6-10 from the previous pericope. In 3:1-5, Paul could not bear the separation and consequent uncertainty about the Thessalonians' spiritual devotion amid afflictions. The apostle now celebrates Timothy's report of their spiritual wellbeing and the affirmation of their enduring affection. Paul revels in his readers' faith and love and in the fact that they remember his team fondly and share a deep desire to reunite. The apostle highlights several points of connection with the readers that depict a reciprocal relationship with them. Paul expresses his gratitude to God for the joy he feels for the Thessalonians and describes the ardent and repeated prayers offered by him and his companions to see the readers again.

3.4.2. 1 Thessalonians 3:6

Fronting 3:6 with the genitive absolute participles (both temporal here) has the effect of framing this new section in terms of "good news." This marks Paul's only use of εὐαγγελίζομαι that does not explicitly refer to gospel proclamation.⁴⁰² The variance from Paul's typical usage is noteworthy and likely reflects an intentional play on words to convey the positive impact on Paul and Silas.⁴⁰³ Just as Paul and his team brought the gospel to Thessalonica, Timothy brought a "gospel" from Thessalonica to the ministry team.⁴⁰⁴

⁴⁰² Fee, *The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians*, 122. Malherbe concludes that Paul "must have used it to convey more than another verb" such as λέγω or ἀναγγέλλω. See Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, 200–201.

⁴⁰³ Wanamaker, *The Epistle to the Thessalonians*, 133.

⁴⁰⁴ In addition to typical Pauline usage, εὐαγγελίζομαι had a well-attested nonreligious sense. Paul's use of it to describe a positive personal update is only exceptional within the apostle's own writings. The probable

The back-to-back prepositional phrases πρὸς ἡμᾶς ἀφ’ ὑμῶν highlight Timothy’s role as a mediator of personal relationship. Either phrase would have sufficed, but the two together emphasize the pathway to Paul from the Thessalonians via Timothy. While Paul has numerous ministry associates⁴⁰⁵ and even ascribes the title συνεργός to over a dozen individuals,⁴⁰⁶ Timothy occupies a distinct role as Paul’s envoy – one sent in Paul’s place to conduct affairs on his behalf and return to provide a personal account of the visit. Mitchell argues that 1 Thessalonians 3 and 2 Corinthians 7 resemble Graeco-Roman diplomatic correspondence, particularly in the retrospective narrative about the envoys’ visits.⁴⁰⁷ As Mitchell demonstrates with multiple examples, such a recounting reflects the dual role of an ancient envoy – not merely to deliver a message, but also to bring a message/report back to the sender (3:5-6).⁴⁰⁸ Such dynamics highlight the mutual nature of Paul’s relationship with the readers, which is apparent throughout the entire AP passage.

Timothy’s report brought reassurance about the readers’ faith and love (τὴν πίστιν καὶ τὴν ἀγάπην ὑμῶν). The latter term has particular significance for this study. Weima notes that Paul specifies no explicit object of the readers’ love, leaving most commentators to conclude that the apostle refers to the love they have toward each other

play on words is notable, but its force should not be overstated. See Gerhard Friedrich, “εὐαγγελίζομαι κτλ.,” *TDNT* 2:707-721.

⁴⁰⁵ Redlich provides brief descriptions of about 100 associates of Paul in the NT. E. Basil Redlich, *S. Paul and His Companions* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1913), 200–286.

⁴⁰⁶ As Harrington notes, Paul applies the term συνεργός to at least 14 individuals, not to mention the unnamed “others” in Phil 4:3 and several more with related ascriptions that emphasize their work in the Lord (e.g. Rom 16:6, 12). D. J. Harrington, “Paul and Collaborative Ministry,” *New Theology Review* 3, no. 1 (1990): 66.

⁴⁰⁷ Mitchell, “New Testament Envoys,” 654–655.

⁴⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 653–654.

(and possibly beyond their community) as an outworking of their faith.⁴⁰⁹ Paul calls the Thessalonians to such love a few verses later in 3:12⁴¹⁰ and strongly affirms this type of love among the community in 4:9-10.⁴¹¹ This outwardly active form of love is probably what the apostle had in mind when describing their “labor of love” in 1:3.⁴¹² Paul had used πίστις and ἀγάπη together there in constructions that emphasized the exertion aspect of both terms – μνημονεύοντες ὑμῶν τοῦ ἔργου τῆς πίστεως καὶ τοῦ κόπου τῆς ἀγάπης.⁴¹³ Wannamaker takes ἀγάπη this way, seeing it as a catch-term for the Thessalonians’ “Christian conduct.”⁴¹⁴

The term ἀγάπη in 3:6 could also refer to the Thessalonians’ affection for Paul and his companions, which would support my thesis by offering another example of Paul’s emphasis on the mutual affection between his team and the readers. Malherbe understands the term this way, seeing both the report about the readers’ love and their “good remembrance” of Paul together as an “expansion” of the expected report regarding

⁴⁰⁹ Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 220.

⁴¹⁰ Chapman, “1-2 Thessalonians,” 287.

⁴¹¹ Paul uses the noun φιλαδελφία and an infinitive of ἀγαπάω to characterize the community’s existing ethos toward one another (4:9) and other “brothers” throughout Macedonia before urging the Thessalonians to continue such love in increasing measure (4:10). Paul then clarifies that such loves includes specific outward actions, such as tending to their own affairs and working with their hands so they will “have need of nothing” (4:11).

⁴¹² Bruce, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 66. Bruce notes the similarity of language and concepts in Gal 5:6 where Paul describes πίστις δι’ ἀγάπης ἐνεργουμένη (“faith working through love”).

⁴¹³ Gordon P. Wiles, *Paul’s Intercessory Prayers: The Significance of the Intercessory Prayer Passages in the Letters of St. Paul*, Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 24 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 178. Wiles states, “The stress in the prayer passage lies where the apostle will place it throughout the epistle, not directly on the graces of faith, love, hope (important as these are in this and in the other letters), but on the costly day-to-day activity that gives expression to them.”

⁴¹⁴ Wannamaker, *The Epistle to the Thessalonians*, 134.

their faith.⁴¹⁵ Weima draws the same conclusion, taking πίστις as answering Paul’s concern about the readers’ faith in 3:1-5 and ἀγάπη as “almost certainly” answering his concern in 2:17-20 about whether the extended absence caused the readers to question the sincerity of the apostle’s affection.⁴¹⁶ Fee wonders why so few see ἀγάπη “as related to the immediate situation,” but take it rather as describing a more general love among their community “as though Paul were suddenly spiritualizing.”⁴¹⁷ I suggest that the interpretation Fee critiques just as easily fits the immediate context, since Paul repeatedly mentions such general love throughout the letter, including a few verses later in 3:12 and also 4:9-10 (mentioned above).⁴¹⁸ Fee considers καὶ ὅτι ἔχετε μνησὶν ἡμῶν ἀγαθὴν πάντοτε as “elaborating on” the readers’ love for Paul.⁴¹⁹ If so, ἀγάπη would surely encompass the Thessalonians’ affection for Paul. By adding καὶ ὅτι plus an indicative verb, however, the clause seems less like an expansion of ἀγάπη than would have been indicated by other possible grammatical constructions.⁴²⁰ Introducing ἔχετε μνησὶν ἡμῶν ἀγαθὴν πάντοτε with καὶ ὅτι, then, presents an *additional* aspect of Timothy’s report and

⁴¹⁵ Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, 201.

⁴¹⁶ Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 220.

⁴¹⁷ Fee, *The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians*, 123.

⁴¹⁸ When Paul formulaically refers to πίστις and ἀγάπη together (twice in this letter outside of 3:6 and multiple places elsewhere), he sometimes has in a mind a personal affection directed to a specific person or group. See 2 Cor 8:7 where Paul speaks of the readers excelling “in our love for you” (some mss have “in your love for us,” but the personal sense is the same). More often, however, the apostle refers to a general ethic characterized by love for unspecified groups (frequently “the saints”). E.g., 1 Cor 13:2, 13; 1 Thess 1:3; 5:8; Phlm 5.

⁴¹⁹ Fee, *The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians*, 122–123.

⁴²⁰ E.g., omitting the καὶ or replacing καὶ ὅτι with the particle ὡς would have created clear expegetical association with ἀγάπη. As Muraoka notes, a clear Pauline use of such a construction appears in 2 Cor 7:15 (see also Lk 22:16; Acts 10:38; 11:16). See Takamitsu Muraoka, “The Use of ΩΣ in the Greek Bible,” *Novum Testamentum* 7, no. 1 (1964): 60–61.

not a clarification or expansion of ἀγάπη. Many translations make this clear by supplying the implied verbal idea (e.g., ESV “has brought us the good news of your faith and love and reported⁴²¹ that you always remember us”).

Reaching a firm conclusion about the object of the readers’ ἀγάπη in 3:6 proves challenging. For the reasons described above, I take it as a reference to the Thessalonians’ broad manifestation of love toward each other (and perhaps outsiders) – a demonstration of their steadfastness in Christ of particular interest to Paul throughout the letter.

As mentioned above, Timothy’s report that the readers “continually have good remembrance”⁴²² of the missionary team (ἔχετε μνήαν ἡμῶν ἀγαθὴν πάντοτε) reflects a second and separate aspect of their wellbeing. They flourish in faith and love and also in their relationship with Paul and his companions. The ministry team’s untimely departure and present absence has not tainted the readers’ memory of them.

Malherbe rightly questions translations that render ἀγαθός in 3:6 with words such as “kindly” (RSV, NASB, NAB, NEB) or “pleasant” (NIV).⁴²³ While the affectionate context of 2:17-3:13 would certainly support such a nuance, other factors suggest against it here. The rare expression ἔχετε μνήαν focuses on the nature of the memory in mind.⁴²⁴

The remembrance is a good one. The adjective ἀγαθός rarely (if ever) bears an

⁴²¹ Emphasis added.

⁴²² KJV and ASV render the phrase woodenly, but accurately, “have good remembrance.” Most other translations select terms with a more explicit positive relational connotation.

⁴²³ Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, 201. Malherbe would certainly object to the NET’s translation “always think of us with affection.”

⁴²⁴ The noun μνήα appears more commonly in construction with ποιέομαι, typically in the context of prayer with obvious emphasis on active calling to mind (e.g., Rom 1:9; Phil 1:3; 1 Thess 1:2; Phlm 4).

affectionate tone in and of itself. BDAG provides numerous examples where ἀγαθός describes things “with social significance” and even renders its use in 1 Thess 3:6 as “kindly.”⁴²⁵ I suggest, however, that ἀγαθός in each of the listed examples still emphasizes the essential “goodness” of things, just in a relational context. The nuances never stretch out to more specific relational aspects such as affection or fondness.⁴²⁶ An identical construction of ἀγαθός with μνεία appears in 2 Maccabees 7:20. The writer there speaks of a mother who was “especially marvelous and worthy of good remembrance (μνήμης ἀγαθῆς ἀξία).” The mother is worthy of having her memory characterized by positive associations.⁴²⁷

Based on the semantic range of ἀγαθός, I suggest Fee rightly understands ἔχετε μνείαν ἡμῶν ἀγαθὴν as conveying “the fact that their memory of Paul is a good one, not clouded with doubts and misgivings – which of course has been part of the concern right along.”⁴²⁸ Fee apparently refers to Paul’s apologetic tone throughout his reaffirmation in 2:1-12 of what type of men the missionary team proved to be when with the Thessalonians. He may also have in mind the apologetic nature of 2:17-3:5 as Paul clarifies the reason for the team’s sustained absence and their love and longing for the Thessalonians since then. Paul finds relief that the readers think positively (not poorly or

⁴²⁵ BDAG, s.v. “ἀγαθός.”

⁴²⁶ The one instance where a nuance like “kind” or “caring” might fit would be Luke 11:13 speaking of “evil” parents who give their children “good” gifts. Even there, the focus seems to be on the nature of the gift and not on the motive of the parents.

⁴²⁷ The NETS and NRSV both render ἀγαθός as “honorable” in 2 Maccabees 7:20.

⁴²⁸ Fee, *The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians*, 123.

suspiciously) about his team and the team’s history with them.⁴²⁹ The combination of the present tense ἔχετε with the adverb πάντοτε highlights the enduring (or possibly repetitious) quality of the readers’ positive regard.⁴³⁰ Even as Paul looks back on Timothy’s past report, he expresses the readers’ “good remembrance” as a present and persistent reality.

The personal nature of ἔχετε μνησιν ἡμῶν ἀγαθῶν is confirmed by the participial phrase that modifies it – ἐπιποθοῦντες ἡμᾶς ἰδεῖν καθάπερ καὶ ἡμεῖς ὑμᾶς. Paul associates having positive remembrance – seeing his team in a positive light – with the readers’ longing to see the team again. The participle seems to express the inevitable result of such positive regard. The Thessalonians’ untainted memories of Paul’s team naturally lead them to long for the apostle and his companions. They not only have positive memories of the past, but they also look to the future of the relationship.⁴³¹

The strength of ἐπιποθοῦντες suggests a deeply personal desire,⁴³² especially in light of Paul’s striking association with his own team’s longing for the readers – καθάπερ καὶ ἡμεῖς ὑμᾶς. Paul could hardly have expressed his longing more explicitly and intensely than he did in 2:17-18 and 3:10-13. Associating such longing with that of the Thessalonians here confirms that Paul understands their desire as a strong and intimate

⁴²⁹ “Remembrance” in 3:6 could refer to the specific memories associated with the team’s prior visit or more generally to the positive tone experienced by the readers whenever Paul and the others come to mind, encompassing all their past and present interactions and interpersonal dynamics.

⁴³⁰ Granted, it is difficult to determine whether πάντοτε modifies ἔχετε μνησιν that precedes it or ἐπιποθοῦντες ἡμᾶς ἰδεῖν that follows it. See Best, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 140.

⁴³¹ Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, 201.

⁴³² Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 220. Weima acknowledges the inability to know whether or not the participle’s ἐπι- prefix adds emphasis since Hellenistic writers have a penchant for compound forms and neither Paul nor other NT authors employ the non-prefixed verb form. Weima rightly adds that, regardless, Paul’s use of the word to convey an intense longing is beyond dispute.

yearning. Malherbe suggests that Paul heightens emotion even more by juxtaposing the plural pronouns ἡμεῖς ὑμᾶς in the elliptical phrase.

Timothy's report played a key role in maintaining Paul's relationship with the readers.⁴³³ Mitchell notes that the language of good remembrance and longing results in "assurance of the mutual goodwill of the two parties involved."⁴³⁴ She goes on, "The exchange of 'goodwill affirmations can be a normal part of maintaining a relationship at a distance or can be intensified when the relationship itself suffers from some alienation or disruption."⁴³⁵ Mentioning Timothy's report of good remembrance and consequent longing of the readers both serve a distinct interpersonal function, as does Paul's affirmation that his missionary team shares the same longing. The sending of an envoy is seen by Funk as a key element of exclusively conveying the authoritative aspect of apostolic presence, but Timothy's role encompassed more than establishing and reporting about the Thessalonians' faith. The faithful emissary played a vital role in conveying the Thessalonians' reciprocal affectionate longing to see Paul. The apostle's celebratory depiction of receiving that report and his added affirmation of mutual longing in 3:6 all serve as affectionately emotive elements. They convey Paul's continued fondness for the readers and his unceasing desire to see them.

⁴³³ Mitchell notes that Greco-Roman diplomatic and personal correspondence describe the dual role of envoys who "not only bring messages to the absent party but also bring return messages and personal attestation of what they have witnessed." See Mitchell, "New Testament Envoys," 653–654.

⁴³⁴ *Ibid.*, 660–661.

⁴³⁵ *Ibid.*, 661. Mitchell considers such an alienation or disruption a possible aspect of Paul's relationship with the readers in 1 Thessalonians.

3.4.3. 1 Thessalonians 3:7

In light of Timothy's report, Paul finds encouragement in 3:7 because of his readers (with a parenthetical focus on their faith). Such encouragement prevails in the midst of the distress and affliction faced by the apostle and his team. Here again, Paul highlights how their progress in faith *affects him personally and emotionally*.

The ministry team's comfort stemmed from Timothy's report, but Paul adds special emphasis on the readers themselves by adding ἐφ' ὑμῖν. The phrase is unnecessary and redundant because the initial διὰ τοῦτο clarifies the reason for comfort. It seems to personalize Paul's exclamation and may emphasize how intimately the apostle associates the readers' faith (mentioned later in the verse as a third reason for comfort) with their personal identity.

Paul once again addresses the readers as "brothers," another affectionately emotive element. I discussed the significance of this vocative address throughout the letter in the ch. 2.

The apostle specifies the circumstances during which his team has received this comfort – ἐπὶ πάσῃ τῇ ἀνάγκῃ καὶ θλίψει ἡμῶν.⁴³⁶ The phrase highlights the significance of receiving such an encouraging report. The missionary team found comfort in the midst of their distress and affliction.

Paul uses διὰ instrumentally⁴³⁷ with the genitive τῆς ὑμῶν πίστεως to narrow the focus from Timothy's broad report to one specific element – the church's faith. Their fidelity in the Lord evoked encouragement in some distinct way. This aligns with Paul's repeated focus on their faith in this passage and his broader desire for their holistic growth

⁴³⁶ BDF (§235.5) lists this use of ἐπί in a "predominantly temporal" category.

⁴³⁷ Wanamaker, *The Epistle to the Thessalonians*, 135.

in holiness. It also demonstrates the intimate tie between Paul’s team and the readers, whose spiritual progress deeply affects the three authors.

3.4.4. 1 Thessalonians 3:8

Having expressed the nature and result of Timothy’s report, Paul erupts with an affirming proclamation in 3:8. The apostle and his team “now truly live” upon hearing how the readers are standing firm in the Lord. Affirmation and affection overflow simultaneously. Because Paul and his companions care so deeply, the Thessalonians’ steadfastness in Christ figuratively brings them life.

Many interpreters understand the ὅτι that opens 3:8 as functioning causally.⁴³⁸ If causal, Paul here names a reason for the comfort mentioned in 3:7. Because the apostle and his co-laborers “truly live” as the readers stand firm in faith, the ministry team therefore was encouraged by their faith. The causal function seems less likely, however, in light of the multiple additional reasons for comfort supplied in 3:7. Paul already stated that the encouragement came because of (διὰ τοῦτο) Timothy’s report and on account of the Thessalonians (ἐφ’ ὑμῖν) by means of their faith (διὰ τῆς ὑμῶν πίστεως).⁴³⁹ As Wanamaker notes, a sense of loose subordination probably fits the context of 3:8 better.⁴⁴⁰ In such instances, ὅτι is often translated “for”⁴⁴¹ and serves as an explanatory marker. In

⁴³⁸ The following commentators all favor a causal sense of ὅτι: Bruce, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 67; Shogren, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 141; Boring, *I and II Thessalonians*, 120.

⁴³⁹ While ὅτι sometimes completes a thought began by a preceding διὰ τοῦτο (“for this reason . . . namely because . . .”), the cluster of prepositional phrases modifying παρεκλήθημεν suggests against it here. I also give reasons above (under my treatment of 3:7) for taking διὰ τοῦτο as referring to Timothy’s report (not proleptically).

⁴⁴⁰ Wanamaker, *The Epistle to the Thessalonians*, 136.

⁴⁴¹ BDF §456.1.

3:8, the conjunction seems to expand on the nature of the comfort mentioned in 3:7 by illustrating its outworking. The readers' faith has comforted Paul and his companions in such a way that the ministry team truly lives in response to news about it.

The apostle employs an idiomatic use of ζάω in 3:8 to describe how the readers' steadfastness affects him. BDAG groups this occurrence of the verb with verses related to the physical recovery of a sick person (1.a.γ), describing this instance as the "removal of anxiety."⁴⁴² I suggest this use of ζάω better fits BDAG's designation "to live in a transcendent sense" in the present world (2.a). For the following reasons, I take the term as conveying that Paul and his coworkers "truly live" in some transcendent, emotional sense as the Thessalonians stand firm in the Lord: (1) Under the designation related to recovery, all other BDAG examples clearly depict healing from a life-threatening physical illness (e.g., Mark 5:23; John 4:50). Without other examples, grouping relief from anxious concern with these examples seems to stretch the semantic range of that category. (2) My survey of Paul's use of ζάω did not indicate any reference to recovery from physical illness, unless 3:8 falls in this category. (3) Paul's use of ζάω in 3:8 better aligns with the description and examples of those described by BDAG under the transcendent sense. BDAG, for example, cites the following Greek epitaph: "Here lies Similis, existing for so many years, but living for only seven."⁴⁴³ The epitaph captures a figurative sense of life similar to the sense in English expressions such as "truly live."⁴⁴⁴ The deceased Similis lived physically ("existed") for many years, but he only truly lived

⁴⁴² BDAG, s.v. "ζάω."

⁴⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁴ See 3:8 in NIV and NASB: "Now, we really live."

for seven. Paul’s use of ζάω in 3:8 describes a life-above-normal-life experience prompted by news of the Thessalonians’ standing firm.⁴⁴⁵ (4) Though Paul does not seem to use ζάω with this precise emotive sense elsewhere, he applies the word in spiritually transcendent ways (e.g., Rom 6:11; Gal 5:25) that align with this emotive sense much better than does the sense of physical recovery from life-threatening illness. However ζάω is understood in the passage, the verb certainly conveys Paul’s exceedingly positive emotional response to news about the readers’ standing firm.

The protasis in 3:8 (ἐὰν ὑμεῖς στήκετε ἐν κυρίῳ) apparently provides a condition for Paul’s transcendent experience of life. The conditional conjunction ἐάν normally precedes a subjunctive verb, but στήκετε in 3:8 is indicative. As Weima notes, this construction became more prevalent in post-NT writings, as ἐάν and εἰ began to be used more interchangeably.⁴⁴⁶ Some interpreters consequently understand ἐάν as standing for εἰ and, thus, a first-class conditional clause reflecting Paul’s conclusion that the Thessalonians are, in fact, remaining steadfast.⁴⁴⁷ Other interpreters see Paul’s word choice as intentionally a “hypothetical and thus hortatory quality.”⁴⁴⁸ Weima concludes that, while Timothy’s positive report led Paul to use the indicative στήκετε, the apostle substituted the conditional ἐάν for the expected εἰ as a subtle exhortation to continue

⁴⁴⁵ Best probably captures the sense when he describes it as “life given a new sense of strength and joy, a life renewed in vigour.” See Best, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 142.

⁴⁴⁶ Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 224. Weima cites Nigel Turner, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek: Syntax*, vol. 3 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1963), 115–116.

⁴⁴⁷ E.g., Best suggests “if, as indeed you do.” See Best, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 143. Fee agrees with the TNIV’s “since you are standing firm.” See Fee, *The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians*, 125.

⁴⁴⁸ Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 224–225. Weima notes that such substitution of ἐάν for εἰ never occurs elsewhere in Pauline writings.

standing fast.⁴⁴⁹ Paul’s specific intent remains elusive, but I adopt the first option (ἐάν as a substitute for εἰ marking a first-class condition). I choose this reading for the following reasons: (1) Scholars agree that ἐάν eventually became regularly used in place of εἰ. (2) No proponents of the second option provided evidence that any other writer had ever used ἐάν with an indicative for the proposed subtle purpose. (3) While Paul understands the readers have room to grow (see comments below on “what remains” in 3:10 and the wish-prayer in 3:12-13), he expresses overwhelming affirmation in regard to Timothy’s report about the readers’ faith. Both options affirm Paul’s affirmation of the Thessalonians’ past and present steadfastness (evident in 3:7) and the apostle’s intimate concern for the state of their faith.

In 3:7 and throughout this pericope, the apostle does not depict a unilateral relationship through which only he exerts influence and the readers comply. He rather shows the readers how deeply they influence him, primarily in emotional ways. Paul conveys to them how his experience of “living” in some sense hinges on their enduring faith. Boring notes how, throughout this section, Paul describes deeply personal “we-you connections” that emphasize mutuality and reciprocity “without diminishing the apostolic character of the faith.” He observes that Paul and the readers “both endure θλίψις [3:3, 7], both receive παράκλησις [3:2, 7] . . . both are embraced in the same ἀγάπη [3:6, 12].” Boring also points out how both received a gospel from the other (see comments above on εὐαγγελίζω in 3:6).⁴⁵⁰ To Boring’s list, I add the shared longing experienced and

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid. Weima suggests evidence for this in Paul’s mention of the things lacking in the Thessalonians’ faith in 3:10. Weima and others mention W. Grundmann (“στήκω,” *TDNT* 7:637) who proposed that the conditional clause had a “hidden hortatory meaning.” So also Wanamaker, *The Epistle to the Thessalonians*, 136.

⁴⁵⁰ Boring, *I and II Thessalonians*, 120–121.

expressed by both Paul and the Thessalonians (3:6). The concentration of parallels in this section between Paul and his beloved converts suggests fervent effort to reinforce their intimate bond.

3.4.5. 1 Thessalonians 3:9

A rhetorical question begins in 3:9 and closes the paragraph. Paul expresses thanksgiving by asking how he and his companions could possibly repay God with gratitude for all the joy God gives them through the Thessalonians. This question begins a distinctly affectionate climax to the pericope, the larger section (2:17-3:10), and the first three chapters. The readers fill the authors with gratitude and joy.

An explanatory γάρ opens the rhetorical question posed in 3:9-10. The particle expounds on the previous main verb ζῶμεν. To illustrate what type of life he and his companions experience in response to the Thessalonians' perseverance, Paul asks what thanks they can offer back for the joy the readers evoke in them.

The complementary infinitive ἀνταποδοῦναι means to repay.⁴⁵¹ As Green describes, the word frequently appears in Greek literature in the context of returning thanks. Seneca used the word in this way when he instructed those who receive a significant gift to reply: "I shall never be able to repay you my gratitude, but, at any rate, I shall not cease from declaring everywhere that I am unable to repay it!"⁴⁵² Such a sense of futility captures Paul's sentiment here. The implied answer is, "No thanks could possibility pay God back for the joy we experience because of you Thessalonians." The

⁴⁵¹ See Lk 14:14 for a quite literal economic usage.

⁴⁵² Green, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, 172.

idiomatic phrase expresses a significant depth of gratitude for the joy evoked by remembering the readers.

Paul specifies God as the object (τῷ θεῷ) of this inexpressible thanksgiving. By doing so, he names God as the source of the gift. God himself has accomplished everything about which Paul rejoices concerning the Thessalonian church. Paul continues to associate his faithful readers with the One in whom they remain steadfast. The apostle's repeated thanksgivings to God for them (see 1:2-3; 2:13-14) continues to express the exalted status they hold in his heart.

The prepositional phrase ἐπὶ πάσῃ τῇ χαρᾷ ἣν χαίρομεν in 3:9 contains a cognate dative construction, where a verb is used in conjunction with a dative noun from the same root. Such constructions most often have an intensifying function,⁴⁵³ as is likely here in light of Paul's effusive language throughout the pericope. The adjective πάσῃ adds further emphasis, clearly "expressing intensity rather than variety or completeness."⁴⁵⁴ The phrase powerfully clarifies what has indebted Paul and his partners to God – their exceeding joy in the Thessalonian church.⁴⁵⁵

⁴⁵³ Andreas J. Köstenberger, Benjamin L. Merkle, and Robert L. Plummer, *Going Deeper with New Testament Greek: An Intermediate Study of the Grammar and Syntax of the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2017), 135–136.

⁴⁵⁴ Best, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 144.

⁴⁵⁵ The preposition ἐπὶ probably designates cause, as Wanamaker suggests. See Wanamaker, *The Epistle to the Thessalonians*, 137–138. Best, however, emphasizes the parallel with 3:7 (ἐφ' ὑμῖν ἐπὶ πάσῃ τῇ ἀνάγκῃ καὶ θλίψει ἡμῶν) and reads 3:9 "in all the joy." See Best, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 144. The similar constructions provide a striking contrast, perhaps an intentional one. But as Wanamaker concludes, ἐπὶ more naturally and consistently supplies the reason for gratitude after an expression of thanks. Richard notes more specifically how 1 Cor 1:4 has a parallel construction in which περί with a genitive introduces the object of thanksgiving and ἐπὶ with a dative clearly supplies the reason. See Richard, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 163.

Abundant emphasis continues as Paul recounts that his team experiences such joy ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν.⁴⁵⁶ The apostle’s active delight takes place in “the divine sphere.”⁴⁵⁷ Such locating of Paul’s feelings drastically elevates their significance. Just as the apostle will one day exult in the readers as his hope and joy and crown of boasting at the coming of the Lord Jesus (2:19), so he even now rejoices about them in God’s presence.⁴⁵⁸

3.4.6. 1 Thessalonians 3:10

Grammatically, 3:10 continues as part of the rhetorical question. A temporal participle specifies that the authors’ gratitude and joy in God’s presence is accompanied by repeated requests to see the readers’ face and complete what remains with regard to their faith.

The participial phrase that opens 3:10 continues the prayer language from 3:9. As Paul rejoices in God’s presence, he also petitions God so that he might see his readers and continue to bolster their faith.⁴⁵⁹ A contemporaneous temporal sense for the participle best fits the context because Paul is describing additional elements of his prayers – the readers rejoice *as* they also plead.⁴⁶⁰ While the verb δέομαι can signify simple requests to

⁴⁵⁶ The prepositional phrase almost certainly modifies χαίρομεν and not δυνάμεθα τῷ θεῷ ἀνταποδοῦναι, because the latter phrase already includes the divine reference τῷ θεῷ. Richard, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 170.

⁴⁵⁷ Best, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 144.

⁴⁵⁸ Richard, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 170.

⁴⁵⁹ Weima notes that some older commentators (e.g. Ellicott, Lenski, and Kelcy) take δεόμενοι as modifying the main verbal phrase of this sentence: τίνα γὰρ εὐχαριστίαν δυνάμεθα τῷ θεῷ ἀνταποδοῦναι. See Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 227. The participle δεόμενοι, however, more likely modifies the closer indicative in ἐπὶ πάσῃ τῇ χαρᾷ ἣ χαίρομεν, as modern commentators tend to affirm.

⁴⁶⁰ Weima suggests 3:9-10 should be understood in light of Paul’s tendency to follow a verb of thanksgiving with a participle to express the manner of giving thanks (usually a participle related to prayer). Ibid. I disagree for the following reasons: (1) This is not a standard Pauline opening thanksgiving

a person (Acts 8:34) or generic prayer to God (Acts 10:2), it often carries a sense of emotional desperation (e.g., 2 Cor 5:20; 8:4; 10:2; Gal 4:12; outside of Paul, see Luke 5:12; 9:38; 21:36).⁴⁶¹ Based on the adverbial modifiers in 3:10 (νυκτὸς καὶ ἡμέρας ὑπερεκπερισσοῦ), the term here reflects this heightened sense of begging or pleading,⁴⁶² the most prevalent sense in Paul’s writings.

Though νυκτὸς καὶ ἡμέρας may reflect hyperbole here,⁴⁶³ Wallace states that such genitives of time do not express duration (e.g., “all night and all day”), but rather the *kind* of time – that the prayers occurred during both evening and daytime hours.⁴⁶⁴ Shogren probably captures the sense with “by night, by day.”⁴⁶⁵ However the expression is understood, Paul employs it to convey the repeated nature of the petition. Such repetition highlights the effort Paul and the others exercised to prompt God’s intervention.

The prayers not only take place multiple times per day, but they are offered “with incomparable earnestness” (ὑπερεκπερισσοῦ). The περισσ- root has the sense of

to which all Weima’s examples belong (1 Thess 1:2b; Rom 1:9-10; Eph 1:16; Phil 1:4; Col 1:13; Phlm 4). (2) Weima seems inconsistent here. He appeals, on the one hand, to Paul’s pattern of following a verb of thanksgiving with a participle of manner that modifies it. On the other hand, he sees δέομαι as modifying χαίρομεν, and not τίνα γὰρ εὐχαριστίαν δυνάμεθα τῷ θεῷ ἀνταποδοῦναι, which is the only form of expressing thanks here. Weima states his preferred reading clearly: “we rejoice . . . by pleading.” I agree with Weima that δέομαι modifies χαίρομεν, but this reading does not actually follow the pattern to which he appeals. Even if Weima did see δέομαι as modifying τίνα γὰρ εὐχαριστίαν δυνάμεθα τῷ θεῷ ἀνταποδοῦναι, the resemblance to Paul’s standard use of εὐχαριστέω plus a nearby participle of prayer would be loose. The expression of gratitude in 3:9 comes through a rhetorical question with the participle δέομαι much farther removed. (3) The idea of rejoicing in a manner of pleading does not make logical sense. Thanksgiving, rejoicing, and pleading are related-but-separate ideas here.

⁴⁶¹ As Malherbe states, δέομαι is certainly stronger than προσεύχομαι. Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, 204.

⁴⁶² BDAG, s.v. “δέομαι.”

⁴⁶³ Boring, *I and II Thessalonians*, 123.

⁴⁶⁴ Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 124.

⁴⁶⁵ Shogren, *I and 2 Thessalonians*, 141.

something extraordinary or more than usual.⁴⁶⁶ The double prefixes of the form in 3:10 (ὕπερ + ἐκ) create a remarkably intense superlative⁴⁶⁷ that gives the sense “quite beyond all measure,” which conveys “the highest form of comparison imaginable.”⁴⁶⁸ Paul’s heightening of both the frequency and intensity of his team’s prayers reflects how fervently he desires to return to Thessalonica.

Paul’s emphasis on personal presence continues as he expresses the purpose of his petitions. The apostle’s desire to see the readers is the first aspect of the εἰς τό purpose clause.⁴⁶⁹ Sending Timothy and receiving a positive report did not quell Paul’s determination to see his readers again. The apostle personalizes the prominent theme of presence by saying that he wants to see their “face.” The apostle could have used ὕμᾱς as the object of the infinitive as he does elsewhere (e.g., Rom 1:11), but he chose more intimate wording. Such word choice reflects the personal nature of Paul’s resolve to return.⁴⁷⁰

⁴⁶⁶ Friedrich Hauck, “περισσεύω κτλ.,” *TDNT* 6:58-63.

⁴⁶⁷ Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 227.

⁴⁶⁸ BDAG, s.v. “ὑπερεκπερισσοῦ.”

⁴⁶⁹ Bruce notes that a simple infinitive would suffice to convey the nature of the request after a verb of prayer, so the addition of εἰς τό ἰδεῖν marks purpose – the construction reflects *both* the content and intent of Paul’s request. See Bruce, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 69. The εἰς τό construction frequently plays this adverbial role. See Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, 1071. Robertson cites εἰς τό γινῶναι in 1 Thess 3:5. He also notes (among others): Rom 1:11; 3:26; 7:4; 8:29; Phil 1:10. Burton, however, claims that εἰς τό ἰδεῖν in 1 Thess 3:10 serves as the direct object of δεόμενοι. See Ernest De Witt Burton, *Syntax of the Moods & Tenses in New Testament Greek*, 3rd ed. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1898), 162. In this vein, Robertson observes how εἰς τό with an infinitive can serve as the object of verbs of command or entreaty, supplying the content of the verb. He also designates 3:10 as an example of this usage. See Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, 1072. Robertson lists the following additional examples: 1 Thess 2:12; 2 Thess 2:2; 1 Cor 8:10. In light of this trend to supply the content for verbs of command and entreaty, I agree with Burton and Robertson.

⁴⁷⁰ Paul uses πρόσωπον in similar ways in 2:17, discussed above under that verse.

Paul's desire "to complete what remains" comprises the second aspect of the purpose clause in 3:10.⁴⁷¹ The use of *καί* between the two infinitives in 3:10 makes *ιδεῖν* and *καταρτίσαι* coordinate. Paul begs God to see their face *and* complete what remains. He does not say "to see your face *in order to* complete what remains." As in the rest of this AP passage, Paul's desire to visit stems from both an affectionate longing for his readers *and* a desire to help them grow.

In this verse, the infinitive *καταρτίσαι* carries the basic meaning "to put into proper condition" or "complete."⁴⁷² The word can refer to the restoration of someone who committed obvious transgression (Gal 6:1), but such a negative view does not capture the tone here. Delling provides several examples that illustrate the positive sense *καταρτίζω* can express.⁴⁷³ The term certainly implies a sense of incompleteness, but does not necessarily imply culpability for a failing.

The term *ὑστέρημα* refers to a "lack" or "shortcoming" that must be removed to attain perfection. The following reasons suggest *τὰ ὑστερήματα* refers here to incomplete aspects of the readers' faith, but not glaring deficiencies in any moral or spiritual sense: (1) All NT uses besides 3:10 describe physical/financial needs (e.g., 2 Cor 9:9; Phil 2:30) with no moral or evaluative overtones. Though the rare term can refer to moral shortcomings, the pattern of usage in the NT leads Spicq to conclude of 3:10 that "this would be needs, not deficiencies."⁴⁷⁴ (2) Paul strongly affirmed the Thessalonians' faith

⁴⁷¹ Malherbe may claim too much when he sees a contrast between Timothy's mission to establish the readers' faith in 3:2 and Paul's goal to enhance their faith. Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, 205.

⁴⁷² BDAG, s.v. "καταρτίζω."

⁴⁷³ E.g., 1 Cor 1:10. Cf. Eph 4:12; Heb 13:21; Luke 6:40. Gerhard Delling, "ἄρτιος κτλ," *TDNT* 1:475-476.

⁴⁷⁴ Ceslas Spicq, "ὑστέρημα," *TLNT* 3:431.

in 1:3-10 and in the verses just prior to this use (3:6-8). Such language leaves room for growth,⁴⁷⁵ but shows no sign of significant defection. Consequently, 3:10 does not indicate failure with regard to the Thessalonians' faith, but merely Paul's desire to see their faith further strengthened.⁴⁷⁶

3.5. Exegesis of 1 Thessalonians 3:11-13

^{3:11} Αὐτὸς δὲ ὁ θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ ἡμῶν καὶ ὁ κύριος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦς κατευθύναι τὴν ὁδὸν ἡμῶν πρὸς ὑμᾶς· ^{3:12} ὑμᾶς δὲ ὁ κύριος πλεονάσαι καὶ περισσεύσαι τῇ ἀγάπῃ εἰς ἀλλήλους καὶ εἰς πάντας καθάπερ καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς ὑμᾶς, ^{3:13} εἰς τὸ στηρίζαι ὑμῶν τὰς καρδίας ἀμέμπτους ἐν ἀγιωσύνῃ ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ πατρὸς ἡμῶν ἐν τῇ παρουσίᾳ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ μετὰ πάντων τῶν ἁγίων αὐτοῦ, [ἀμήν].

^{3:11} Now may God our Father himself and our Lord Jesus direct our path to you. ^{3:12} And may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love toward one another and toward everyone, just as our love also abounds toward you, ^{3:13} so that your hearts may be established blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his holy ones. Amen.

3.5.1. Summary of 1 Thessalonians 3:11-13

The two brief elements of prayer in 3:10 lead naturally to the climactic and transitional “wish-prayer”⁴⁷⁷ of 3:11-13. The pericope contains two elements of particular importance to this thesis: (1) Paul’s prayerfully expressed desire for God the Father and the Lord Jesus to clear his path to Thessalonica. (2) Paul’s affirmation of love toward the readers as he indirectly asks the Lord to cause them to increase and abound with such love toward one another and toward all.

⁴⁷⁵ As Fee points out, evidence of such room for growth appears throughout the paraenesis in 4:1-5:28. Fee, *The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians*, 127.

⁴⁷⁶ Richard, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 171.

⁴⁷⁷ The term “wish-prayer” reflects Paul’s use of optative mood verbs instead of direct petition. Wiles, *Paul’s Intercessory Prayers*, 52. Bruce implies that Wiles introduced “wish-prayer” terminology. See Bruce, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 70–71.

3.5.2. 1 Thessalonians 3:11

The first petition asks that God would direct the path of Paul and his co-laborers to visit the Thessalonians (κατευθύναι τὴν ὁδὸν ἡμῶν πρὸς ὑμᾶς). This petition is especially significant in light of Paul’s repeated failures to visit Thessalonica despite several attempts that had been thwarted by Satan (2:18).⁴⁷⁸

The history of such obstacles and opposition may explain Paul’s opening of the prayer with what some commentators see as a “striking”⁴⁷⁹ reflexive pronoun in an adversative construction – Αὐτὸς δὲ. Taken this way, Paul exclaims in contrast to past unsuccessful attempts, “May God our Father *himself* . . . direct our path to you.” Paul appeals to God, who has power and authority to overcome Satan where human effort had been powerless to do so. Wiles concludes, however, that the pronominal construction reflects the influence of liturgical practice in Jewish and Hellenistic backgrounds (instead of indicating contrast with 2:18).⁴⁸⁰ Bruce similarly suggests that it may echo the synagogue liturgy, which followed the Psalms in commonly addressing God directly with a second person pronoun (e.g., Ps 22:20 LXX σύ δέ, κύριε).⁴⁸¹ The third-person pronoun, then, replaces the traditional second-person pronoun in order to fit the wish-prayer style. This explanation seems likely, especially since the same construction is found in other Thessalonian wish-prayers (1 Thess 5:23; 2 Thess 2:16-17; 3:16). The likely liturgical influence may diminish the contrastive force understood in the opening construction of

⁴⁷⁸ In light of 2:18, Weima renders the verbal phrase “clear the way for us.” Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 237. Cf. NIV “clear our path.”

⁴⁷⁹ Richard, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 167.

⁴⁸⁰ Wiles, *Paul’s Intercessory Prayers*, 30–31. See also Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, 212.

⁴⁸¹ Bruce, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 71.

3:11, but it should not diminish the force such vocative appeals carried in the original liturgy. Similar to the liturgical second-person vocatives, the adapted construction in 3:11 emphasizes the divine object of appeal – God himself. It “underlines the earnestness of the petition to God personally to hear and respond powerfully to prayer.”⁴⁸² Paul calls on God himself to fulfill his persistent and passionate resolve to return to the readers.

Paul’s initial petition includes a “striking invocation of Jesus along with God.”⁴⁸³ The apostle’s wish-prayer indirectly calls both on “God our Father and our Lord Jesus.” While Paul often *mentions* both God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ in his prayers and thanksgivings (e.g., Rom 1:8; 1 Cor 1:4; 2 Cor 1:3; 2:14), the apostle very rarely designates both of them together as *objects* of the same prayerful appeal or expression of gratitude.⁴⁸⁴ Such double address for a single petition, therefore, likely indicates the elevated fervor with which Paul expresses his longing.

3.5.3. 1 Thessalonians 3:12

In 3:12, Paul adds a second element to the wish-prayer. Paul asks indirectly that the Lord would cause his readers to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all people, just as Paul and his co-laborers abound in love for them.

Paul asks that Jesus would cause the Thessalonians to “increase and abound in love toward one another and toward everyone.” As the specific objects of love, Paul likely has in mind the community in Thessalonica and local unbelievers outside the

⁴⁸² Marshall, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 99.

⁴⁸³ Furnish, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 83.

⁴⁸⁴ The only exception besides 1 Thess 3:11 of which I know is 2 Thess 2:16 where Paul says “Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father . . . comfort and establish your hearts in every good work and word.”

church.⁴⁸⁵ Weima rightly notes that the prayer for increased love “is not a generic request but one that specifically arises out of the Thessalonians’ situation.”⁴⁸⁶ The love in view (ἀγάπη) likely encompasses an internal reality that works itself out in tangible ways.⁴⁸⁷ While ἀγάπη is often used to describe such active love, none of its NT usages can be understood apart from its essential sense of “warm regard for and interest in another.”⁴⁸⁸

The two optative verbs (πλεονάζω and περισσεύω) depict an incalculable level of love. Malherbe comments that the verbs are synonymous and used together here for emphasis.⁴⁸⁹ Delling considers the two terms parallel in the NT. He uses “superabound” to describe πλεονάζω, adding that the term has a comparative sense of “increasing” when used of “love” as here in 3:12.⁴⁹⁰ The two verbs, according to Furnish, “suggest an exceeding or overflowing of ordinary limits or boundaries.”⁴⁹¹ Paul invokes God to produce a level of love not unattainable from any lesser source.

The significance of such excessive language to this thesis does not lie in what it says about the Thessalonians but rather in what it says about Paul’s missionary team. For the apostle interjects the elliptical phrase καθάπερ καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς ὑμᾶς – “just as we also [do] toward you.” The immeasurable love for which Paul prays, he and his companions

⁴⁸⁵ Wanamaker, *The Epistle to the Thessalonians*, 143. Paul expresses similar concern for outsiders (τοὺς ἕξω) in 4:12. See also 5:15 when he instructs the Thessalonians to do good “to one another and to everyone.” Cf. Gal 6:10.

⁴⁸⁶ Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 239.

⁴⁸⁷ See discussion about ἀγάπη in 3:6 above. See also 4:9-12; 5:12-15.

⁴⁸⁸ BDAG, s.v. “ἀγάπη.”

⁴⁸⁹ Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, 212.

⁴⁹⁰ Gerhard Delling, “πλεονάζω, ὑπερπλεονάζω,” *TDNT* 10:263-266.

⁴⁹¹ Furnish, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 83.

have already poured forth. Richard notes that the phrase refers not to the noun “love” but rather “to the abundance of their love for the community.”⁴⁹² The adverb *καθάπερ* points back to the verbal idea. Such a connection is missed in the NIV’s “just as ours does for you.” The NRSV supplies the implicit verb – “just as we abound in love for you.”⁴⁹³ Recognizing the connection clarifies the force with which Paul conveys his love.

The phrase *καθάπερ καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς ὑμᾶς* is “no merely accidental aside,”⁴⁹⁴ but its primary function is not entirely clear. Interpreters who understand chs. 2-3 of the letter as primarily parenetic in nature tend to take *καθάπερ καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς ὑμᾶς* along this same line. Wanamaker, for example, says, “By alluding to his love for them as an example, he interrupts the wish-prayer and implicitly exhorts them to love and act toward one another as he loved and acted.”⁴⁹⁵ Collins also sees Paul as offering himself “as an example of the love with which the Thessalonians ought to love one another.”⁴⁹⁶ Paul frequently offers himself as an example to his readers and imitation language pervades this letter specifically,⁴⁹⁷ so a mimetic function is certainly plausible.

Whether or not Paul intended *καθάπερ καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς ὑμᾶς* to serve as a model for the readers (I suspect he did), the following factors suggest the apostle *primarily* mentions his love in 3:12 as reassurance of his affection for them:⁴⁹⁸ (1) As previously

⁴⁹² Richard, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 166.

⁴⁹³ The NLT likewise supplies a verb to convey the sense – “just as our love for you overflows.”

⁴⁹⁴ Wiles, *Paul’s Intercessory Prayers*, 59.

⁴⁹⁵ Wanamaker, *The Epistle to the Thessalonians*, 143.

⁴⁹⁶ Collins, “Paul as Seen through His Own Eyes,” 381.

⁴⁹⁷ Willis P. De Boer, *The Imitation of Paul: An Exegetical Study* (Kampen, Netherlands: J. H. Kok, 1962), 92–138. Cf. 1 Thess 1:5-7; 2:7; 2 Thess 3:7-9. See chapter 2.

⁴⁹⁸ I acknowledge, of course, that most other aspects of the wish-prayer primarily serve parenetic functions fitting for its transitional role between the largely narrative material in chs. 1-3 and the hortatory material

demonstrated, Paul's concern in chs. 2-3 is relational reassurance. Parenetic aspects play a subsidiary role. (2) With regard to *καθάπερ καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς ὑμᾶς* specifically, Paul used the same phrase almost verbatim in 3:6 with reference to the longing he and his team share in common with the Thessalonians. Just as the readers long to see Paul, so he longs to see them. Just as God will empower the readers with abundant love, so Paul has abundantly loved them. The apostle specifies that his love abounds *εἰς ὑμᾶς*, even though the prayer asks that Jesus would help the Thessalonians' love abound among themselves and beyond. Paul uses language parallel to the phrase in 3:6 to specify his particular love only for the Thessalonian believers. In 3:6, *καθάπερ καὶ ἡμεῖς ὑμᾶς* served no parenetic or mimetic role, for interpersonal longing is not a matter of morality. The phrase simply highlighted Paul's desire as reassurance of his continued connection to the church. I suggest the parallel phrase a few verses later in 3:12 has the same function. "Thus, the mutual affection and longing for a visit are emphasized even further by Paul's assumption that the missionaries' love for the Thessalonian community is so great that it can serve as an adequate analogy for the Lord's bountiful gift."⁴⁹⁹ Together, the parallel phrases poignantly reflect the apostle's dual concern to convey his love and longing.⁵⁰⁰

chs. 4-5. The implicitly parenetic material in 3:11-13 includes Paul's prayer that Christ would cause the readers to increase and abound in love *for the purpose of establishing their hearts blameless in holiness.*

⁴⁹⁹ Richard, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 175.

⁵⁰⁰ Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 239.

3.5.4. 1 Thessalonians 3:13

Paul follows the petition with a result clause in 3:13. The apostle specifies his hope that the Thessalonians' divinely empowered growth in love would establish them blameless at Christ's παρουσία.

Paul's petition for God to increase his readers' love is followed by an εἰς τό construction with an infinitive of either purpose⁵⁰¹ or result⁵⁰² “so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness.” Wannamaker rightly notes how acting in love “fulfilled the ultimate ethical norm against which Christians were to be judged.”⁵⁰³ Increasing love, then, is the *means by which* the Thessalonians will have their hearts established blameless in holiness. Such elaboration continues to highlight the significance of Paul's comparative clause in the previous verse. The love with which Paul and his co-laborers love the readers is the type of love that results in eschatological holy blamelessness before God.

3.6. Conclusion

Having conveyed throughout the AP passage a reassuring sense of his apostolic presence by passionately recounting his deep affection and sincere longing for the Christians in Thessalonica, Paul transitions to the explicitly parenetic material in chs. 4-5.

In the following final chapter of this thesis, I will summarize and reflect on the most significant observations from this exegetical study as well as insights from ch. 2.

⁵⁰¹ Wannamaker, *The Epistle to the Thessalonians*, 143.

⁵⁰² Shogren, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 144.

⁵⁰³ Wannamaker, *The Epistle to the Thessalonians*, 144.

CHAPTER 4

SUMMARY AND REFLECTIONS

4.1. Introduction

This section presents a summary of data from the first three chapters, offers implications of this analysis for NT studies, and makes recommendations for further study.

4.2. Summary of Data

This thesis set out to offer an expanded perspective of the Pauline AP that corrects an unnecessarily restrictive view of the convention's literary function. The literature review summarized Robert Funk's essay in which he initially coined the term "apostolic parousia," defined it as "the presence of apostolic authority and power,"⁵⁰⁴ and argued that Paul groups items related to his presence together exclusively to make "his authority effective in the churches."⁵⁰⁵ I described this as Funk's "exclusive-authority view" throughout the thesis.

The literature review demonstrated that Funk's essay and proposal have significantly impacted the field of NT studies and continue to influence scholarly discourse. I gave examples of scholars who have adopted Funk's exclusive-authority view or who refer to his essay without qualification in ways that imply wholesale endorsement of his perspective. I also discussed scholars who have critiqued various aspects of Funk's proposal, observing how few of them respond directly to his exclusive-

⁵⁰⁴ Funk, "The Apostolic Parousia," 249.

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid.

authority view of the AP. I proposed that 1 Thess 2:17-3:13 represents one clear exception to Funk's approach because it functions primarily to reaffirm Paul's relationship with his readers by expressing the apostle's love and longing for them. I indicated the need for this study since those who have critiqued Funk's view have not extensively treated the subject, and no one has done a targeted analysis of 1 Thess 2:17-3:13 from this perspective.

I presented evidence for my argument from two angles. First, I examined the background and epistolary context of 1 Thess 2:17-3:13. While much debate surrounds the ultimate purpose(s) of chs. 1-3, scholars who adopt various interpretive approaches agree that Paul emphasizes his affection for the Thessalonians and his desire to see them throughout the letter (and particularly in the AP passage). Thematic analyses confirmed that expressions of affection, affirmation, and minimization of authority characterize 1 Thessalonians – particularly the content leading up to the AP passage. Such factors show little reason for Paul to emphasize his authority in the letter.

Paul's focus on his presence in 1 Thess 2:17-3:13 admittedly conveys a sense of authority, but the affection and yearning conveyed by that same sense of presence far outweighs it in significance. Taken in context of the first three chapters of the letter, the predominance of affectionately emotive elements in the AP passage confirms my proposal that Paul primarily seeks to convey love and longing in this section. The following table sorts the most prominent affectionately emotive elements in the AP passage into numerous categories:

Table 4.2a. Affectionately Emotive Elements in 1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:13

Highly emotive metaphorical language	“we were orphaned from you” (2:17) “crown of boasting” (2:19)
Repeated fictive kinship vocative titles	“brothers” (2:17; 3:7)
Emphatic stacking of terms and repetition of ideas to express extent of affection and/or longing	“exceedingly endeavored with great desire” (2:17) “resolved to come to you” (2:18) “just as we long to see you” (3:6) “as we plead with him... with incomparable earnestness” (3:10) “may God... direct our path to you” (3:11) “just as our love also abounds toward you” (3:12)
Inclusion of details to express extent of affection and/or longing	“for a brief time” (2:17) “more than once” (2:18) “to us from you” (3:6) “night and day” (3:10)
More tender wording than necessary	“in face, not in heart” (2:17) “to see your face” (2:17) “so we might see your face” (3:10)
Specifying past attempt to visit readers	“we resolved to come to you” (2:18)
Explaining obstacles preventing Paul’s visit	“Satan hindered us” (2:18)
Emphatic interjections	“indeed, I, Paul, more than once” (2:18) “Truly, is it not even you?” (2:19)
Situating circumstances within a theological, eschatological, and apocalyptic meta-narrative	“but Satan hindered us” (2:18) “in the presence of our Lord Jesus at his coming” (2:19) “for fear that the Tempter had tempted you” (3:5) “in God’s presence” (3:9) “may God our Father himself and our Lord Jesus Christ” (3:11) “may the Lord cause you” (3:12) “before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his holy ones” (3:13)
Rhetorical questions	“For who will be our hope . . . ?” (2:19) “Truly, is it not even you?” (2:19) “For what thanks can we possibly repay back to God . . . ?” (3:9)
Repetition of affectionate titles	“our hope and joy and crown of boasting” (2:19) “you are our glory and joy” (2:20)
Repeated references to past concern	“when we could bear it no longer” (3:1) “when I could bear it no longer” (3:5) “I also sent to find out about your faith” (3:5) “for fear that the Tempter had tempted you” (3:5)
Specifying the costly past attempt to help readers despite Paul’s absence	“left behind in Athens <i>alone</i> ” (3:1) “we sent Timothy” (3:2) “our brother and coworker with God” (3:2)
Emphatic affirmations of readers’ faith and love and expressions of how it affects Paul and others	“brought us good news (εὐαγγελισαμένου) of your faith and love” (3:6) “we were encouraged . . . by your faith” (3:7) “in all our distress and affliction” (3:7) “we truly live since you are standing firm” (3:8) “on account of all the joy with which we rejoice . . . because of you” (3:9)
References to the readers’ disposition toward Paul and the others	“always have good remembrance of us” (3:6) “longing to see us” (3:6)
Emphasis on mutuality, reciprocity, and identification between the ministry team and the readers	“love” (3:6, 12) “longing” (3:6) “encouragement” (3:2, 7) “afflictions” (3:3, 7) “gospel” (1:5; 3:6)
Invoking God’s help to visit	“may God . . . direct our path to you” (3:11)

In 2:17-20, Paul reaffirms the relationship between his missionary team and the Thessalonian church after their dramatic nighttime exodus and prolonged absence. Referring to his readers as brothers, the apostle uses extreme metaphorical language to describe the painful separation from them. With tender and intense language layered for compounding effect, Paul expresses how fervently his team desired to see the church's face, even though they had only been apart for a brief time (2:17). Paul recounts the team's resolve to return, then interrupts himself to specify that he attempted to make his way back multiple times. The apostle clarifies that he only remained away because of Satan's intervention, which elevates the readers' significance to Paul by showing how his effort to see them is part of a spiritual drama (2:18). Paul continues such elevation by expressing the eschatological implications of their relationship to him. His rhetorical questioning and broken syntax reveal the heightened emotion of the declaration (2:19). In the presence of Jesus at the Lord's second coming, Paul will revel in the Thessalonians as his hope, and joy, and crown of boasting (2:20).

Paul demonstrates the purity of his team's intentions toward the readers in 3:1-5 by highlighting the distress about them that prompted Timothy's dispatch and indicating the cost at which he sent his faithful young companion. When Paul was hindered from visiting the readers himself, his weight of concern compelled him to commission a surrogate who was a brother and God's coworker. Timothy's departure left Paul and Silas alone without their trusted companion (3:1, 5). Paul clarifies Timothy's mission to establish and encourage the faith of the young church in the face of suffering about which Paul had warned them, signifying the team's positive regard for the afflicted readers (3:2-3a).

Paul further strengthens his relational bond with the Thessalonians in 3:6-10 through his enthusiastic response to the “good news” Timothy brought back. Paul affirms the Thessalonians’ progress in faith and love, and he emphasizes the importance of the relationship by celebrating how the Thessalonians have a positive remembrance of the missionary team. The apostle draws special attention to the longing for face-to-face contact he shares with the readers (3:6). Paul emphasizes how the report has affected him and his companions. They find encouragement from the readers despite presently enduring distress and affliction. Paul and the others find particular comfort from news about the Thessalonians’ persevering faith (3:7). Hearing about the readers’ steadfastness of faith allows Paul and his companions to “truly live” (3:8). The apostle emphasizes the team’s gratitude by rhetorically asking how they could possibly repay God for all the joy with which they rejoice in God’s presence because of the Thessalonian church (3:9). With remarkably intense language, Paul shares with them how he and his co-laborers plead with God day and night with incomparable earnestness to see their face and to complete all that their faith still lacks (3:10).

Paul’s mention of their repeated, longing-filled prayer leads him to invoke God’s help through a wish-prayer with two distinct elements in 3:11-13. Paul elicits God’s help to direct the missionary team’s path back to the readers. He uncharacteristically appeals both to God the Father and the Lord Jesus, which may indicate his elevated passion for the request (3:11). The apostle also elicits the help of the Lord Jesus to cause an increasing abundance of love among the Thessalonians for one another and for all. Paul compares this divinely empowered super-abundance of love to his love for the readers, which similarly abounds (3:12). Paul indicates his hoped-for result that such a work of

God would establish the Thessalonian church blameless in holiness in God's presence when Jesus comes with his holy multitude (3:13).

4.3. Implications for New Testament Studies

According to Funk, the AP functions to create a sense of Paul's presence within the respective letters exclusively to convey the apostle's authority and power. Funk makes no qualification to this proposal, and neither do most interpreters who reference his work.

By analyzing 1 Thess 2:17-3:13, this thesis demonstrated that at least one particular AP passage does not function exclusively to convey Paul's authority and power. In this passage, the apostle clearly seeks to reaffirm his relationship with the Thessalonians primarily by emphasizing his love and longing for them. Paul ties his love and longing specifically to the two major AP elements present in this passage – the apostle's desire/intention to visit the Thessalonians and his sending of Timothy as an envoy in his place. Paul certainly assumes his apostolic office with its associated authority and power. The apostle speaks throughout the passage of the Thessalonians' faith and of the role he and his co-laborers have played (and hope to play) in bolstering such faith. Paul nevertheless prioritizes relational concerns within the AP passage and within the context of the letter's first three chapters. Paul does not group aspects related to his presence primarily to ensure the Thessalonians' compliance with his instruction (the focus of Funk's exclusive-authority view), but rather to convey his heartfelt yearning to see the readers. This yearning, of course, is bound to his desire to continue building up their faith, but Paul's affectionate language reveals that it reflects much more than that. Paul intently focuses on the relational and emotional implications of his absence and

presence, not merely on how such absence and presence affect the readers' faith (though that reflects an additional emphasis).

In 1 Thess 2:17-3:13, Paul's expressed hope to visit and his mention of sending Timothy do not exhibit a threatening connotation. His words about presence rather focus on his past and present longing to see the readers and his emotional response to the sustained absence. The apostle mentions his dismay at having been separated, his persistent desire to see the readers, his past efforts to visit, his concern over the readers' welfare, and his encouragement that they have good remembrance of him and long to see him. When referencing the visit of his envoy Timothy, Paul focuses on his personal concern that prompted the visit and on Timothy's report about the Thessalonians. He does not mention a future visit from Timothy or another representative. The apostle does not even mention a potential visit on his part until 3:10. Paul does focus on the church's faith and the team's role in helping the readers remain steadfast and grow to full maturity, but this is an additional emphasis within a highly affectionate context.

The analysis presented in this study confirms the need for more nuanced discussions among NT scholars about Funk's helpful-but-insufficient proposal. Such discussions will benefit by qualifying general references to Funk's insights and terminology. I suggest wording such as, "Robert Funk coined the term 'apostolic parousia' to describe passages where Paul intentionally groups material related to his presence. Such passages manifest Paul's presence to the readers often to convey a sense of his apostolic authority and power, though other emphases are sometimes prioritized and multiple emphases are possible depending on the context."

Qualifications and more nuanced language will help prevent the multiple errors that currently characterize some Pauline studies. First, *carte blanche* acceptance of Funk's exclusive-authority proposal (even implied acceptance) will inevitably skew interpretations of AP passages such as 1 Thess 2:17-3:13 that do not emphasize authority and power.⁵⁰⁶ Exegetes who acknowledge the significance of the AP convention must let context determine the role of Paul's presence in these passages. Wholesale adoption of Funk's view does not allow for such flexibility.

Second, if interpreters assume (with Funk) that AP passages exclusively convey apostolic authority and power, they will likely miss other dynamics at play (even in AP passages where authority and power occupy the central role). When emphasizing his presence in 1 Cor 4:14-21, for example, Paul clearly focuses on the threat of his planned visit: "Now some are puffed up, as if I were not coming to you. But I will soon come to you, if the Lord wills, and I will learn not the word of those puffed up but rather the power" (4:18-19). While directing this threat at an arrogant contingent, Paul simultaneously emphasizes his affection for the readers and his desire to come with a tender disposition. He begins the passage, "I write these things not to shame you, but rather to admonish you as my beloved children" (4:14). The he close the passage, "Should I come to you with a rod or with love in a spirit of gentleness?" (4:21). The AP is actually framed by language that appeals to Paul's affectionate relationship with the Corinthians and to his desire to visit them in a much milder manner. Multiple emphases exist in such AP passages, and a more nuanced view of the AP will help scholars and others to identify them and explore their significance.

⁵⁰⁶ I suggest Phil 2:19-30 as another AP passage that does not emphasize authority and power.

4.4. Suggestions for Further Study

This present study necessarily maintained a narrow scope. I examined only one of several potential AP passages. Focused studies on each of these other passages would produce fruitful results. While many have treated such passages and consequently engaged with various aspects of Funk's proposal, I am not aware of substantive studies that ask whether or not Funk's exclusive-authority view bears out across the broad swath of AP passages. I am also not aware of any comprehensive dissertation- or book-length analysis of the AP as a literary convention.

Pauline studies would also benefit from more focused treatments of Paul's expressed affection for his readers. Many studies touch on such dynamics, of course, but the topic has much room for growth.⁵⁰⁷ Deeper and more narrow explorations, however, would particularly benefit the field.

Lastly, I recommend exploring the significance of Paul's presence, affection, longing, and other relational dynamics from a pastoral perspective and applying such concepts to current ministry contexts.

4.5. Conclusion

The evidence presented confirms my thesis that the AP passage in 1 Thessalonians does not function exclusively or primarily to convey Paul's authority and power, as Funk's unqualified approach suggests. Instead, "Paul intended to let the Thessalonians know that it was not only in the exercise of his official, representative

⁵⁰⁷ See the following studies: F. F. Bruce, *Paul and His Converts: How Paul Nurtured the Churches He Planted* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985). Ernest Best, *Paul and His Converts: The Sprunt Lectures 1985* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988).

function that he was bound to them; he was also bound to them by intense ties of a very personal love.”⁵⁰⁸ Pauline studies will benefit from clear qualifications about the limits of Funk’s work in this area and also from further exploration and clarification about the multiple functions AP passages exhibit in the apostle’s letters.

⁵⁰⁸ Collins, “Paul as Seen through His Own Eyes,” 377.

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