

## Preface

To say that researching for and writing this commentary was a delight would be an understatement. It was an act of joyful sanctification to bathe myself in the Greek and English texts of 1–2 Thessalonians on nearly a daily basis for a couple of years. Sometimes it is questioned whether yet another commentary is needed, not least on 1–2 Thessalonians where there are already a number of good works on the shelves. My perspective is that it is an ongoing exercise of hearing the Word of God afresh. I was eager to write this commentary for the joy of my own learning, and doing “theological reasoning” about what these letters mean for us today. As I have had opportunities to share some of my research and findings with students, I have become more and more convinced that 1–2 Thessalonians are too-often-overlooked gems in Scripture. We glimpse some of the most striking moments of Paul as vulnerable, humble pastor and friend. We get a sense for how Paul calls believers to respond to suffering. We learn about the dignity and worth of good, honest labor as productive work as well as public witness to the gospel. First and Second Thessalonians have a unique ability to speak to us, not in spite of the fact that they do not instruct in a general and generic manner, but because they are so heavily contextualized. We are privileged to catch a glimpse of Paul’s “real life,” “real relationships,” and “real struggles.” And we see an Apostle, his apostolic companions, and his fellow believers come together as a household of faith under God the Father and through the unique Son, Messiah Jesus, to encourage one another. It is a beautiful display of the church.

My thanks go to the series editors, Michael Bird and Craig Keener, for the invitation to be involved in this series. I am especially grateful for their vision to acquire a globally diverse set of authors, and for their being mindful about including voices of women and ethnic minorities. There were a number of scholars who were kind enough to share with me unpublished materials on the Thessalonian Correspondence; my gratitude goes to them: Karl Donfried, Gene Boring, Todd Still, John Byron, Andy Johnson, Steve Walton, and Michael Gorman.

I presented some of my research findings to the Biblical Ethics group of the Society of Biblical Literature, and my appreciation goes to them for creating an opportunity for helpful feedback. Also, two students at George Fox Seminary—Evan Simmons and Daniel Bela—journeyed with me through the Greek text of 1–2 Thessalonians over the course of the 2014–15 year contributing many insights into these texts and stimulating my own curiosity. I would also like to thank the George Fox University and Seminary Faculty Development Committee for awarding me a period of research leave to complete this book (Grant GFU2015L05).

This commentary is dedicated to my family: my wife, Amy, for her patience when I was working intensely on this book, and her Christian model as “loyalty that works . . . love that labors . . . and endurance driven by hope in our Lord Messiah Jesus” (1 Thess 1:3); for my children (Simryn, Aidan, and Libby) for the play-filled delight they bring to my life. They are my “glory and joy” (1 Thess 2:20)!

(NB: In the commentary, we have preferred to use “Messiah” instead of “Christ.” Secondly, all biblical quotations are from the NRSV except for 1-2 Thessalonians where I have supplied my own translation. When there are any exceptions, they are marked.)