

STEADFAST TO THE FINAL BELL

A Devotional Commentary on the Book of 2 Thessalonians

by Paul G. Apple, April 2004

AS BELIEVERS ANTICIPATE THE SECOND COMING THEY MUST REMAIN STEADFAST DESPITE:

- AFFLICTION AND SUFFERING
- APOSTASY AND DECEPTION
- EVIL ANTAGONISTS AND
UNDISCIPLINED BROTHERS

“so then brethren, stand firm” (2:15)

For each section:

- Thesis statement ... to focus on the big idea
- Analytical outline ... to guide the understanding
- Devotional questions ... to encourage life application
- Representative quotations ... to stimulate deeper insight

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BACKGROUND OF THE BOOK OF 2 THESSALONIANS

Wil Pounds:

“Thessalonica, the capital of Macedonia, occupied a strategic location in the first-century missiology and world evangelism. There was an ancient saying that ‘So long as nature does not change, Thessalonica will remain wealthy and prosperous.’

She was a wealthy city with fertile soil, forest and mineral deposits in the area. Thessalonica was located on the Thermaic Gulf and was Macedonia’s chief outlet to the sea. Her seaport was situated at the junction of the northern trade route to the Danube and the Egnatian Way running across the Balkans and linking the East to the Adriatic Sea and Rome.

During Paul’s day, Thessalonica was a free city. The proconsul of Macedonia had official residence there, however he did not interfere with the local government unless some Roman law was violated. Rome respected the rights of these free cities, so long as no disorder and rebellion erupted. Self-government, within limits, was allowed through a city council and board of magistrates.

Paul seized the unique opportunity to reach this mobile, cosmopolitan population on his second missionary journey.

AUTHOR: Paul the apostle is the stated author (1:1; 3:17). The vocabulary, style and doctrinal content supports this claim. The external evidence for the second letter is even stronger than the first one.

DATE: Paul writes his second letter a few months after sending the first letter to the Thessalonians in A. D. 50-51 from Corinth. These two letters are among the earliest of Paul’s writings and the New Testament books.

PURPOSE: Paul’s first letter to the church at Thessalonica did not settle all the differences in the church there. This second letter is written to correct misunderstandings regarding the Second Coming of Christ which were not corrected with the first letter. The ‘day of the Lord’ had not already come, and it will not come until after ‘the man of lawlessness’ has appeared (2:9-10). With some of the members it had precisely the opposite result. There was some opposition to Paul’s authority and even defiance toward him. Therefore, Paul repeats his ‘command’ for discipline (II Thess. 3:6, 10, 14). There were deceivers who falsified letters in Paul’s name to carry their point in the church (2:1f). A. T. Robertson strongly asserts,

Paul’s keen resentment against the practice should make us slow to accept the pseudepigraphic theory about other Pauline Epistles. He calls attention to his own signature at the close of each genuine letter. As a rule he dictated the epistle, but signed it with his own hand (3:17).

Paul’s central concern is to correct their mistaken view regarding the day of the Lord and to rebuke their idleness.

STYLE: The second letter is sharper in tone than the first. It is also briefer, almost like a quick memo shot off from the pen of a busy pastor, or mission executive. It may be with some annoyance because of their meddling idleness.

THEME: The day of the Lord will not arrive until after the man of sin has appeared. Second Thessalonians is the theological sequel to the first letter. It is a letter of encouragement, explanation and exhortation to a persecuted church.

Dr. Merrill C. Tenney points out that every major doctrine of the Christian faith is touched upon in these two letters of Paul.

Paul and those who received his epistles believed in one living God (I 1:9), the Father (II 1:2), who has loved men and has chosen them to enjoy his salvation (II 2:16; I 1:4). He has sent deliverance from wrath through Jesus Christ, his Son (I 1:10), and has revealed this deliverance through the message of the gospel (I 1:5; 2:9; II 2:14). This message has been confirmed and has been made real by the power of the Holy Spirit (I 1:5; 4:8). The gospel concerns the Lord Jesus Christ, who was killed by the Jews (I 2:15). He rose from the dead (I 1:10; 4:14; 5:10). He is now in heaven (I 1:10), but he will come again (I 2:19; 4:15; 5:23; II 2:1). To him is ascribed deity, for he is called Lord (I 1:6), God's Son (I 1:10), and the Lord Jesus Christ (I 1:1, 3; 5:28; II 1:1). Believers receiving the word of God (I 1:6), turn from idols, serve God and wait for the return of Christ (I 1:9, 10). Their normal growth is sanctification (I 4:3, 7; II 2:13). In personal life they are to be clean (I 4:4-6), industrious (I 4:11, 12), prayerful (I 5:17), cheerful (I 5:16). Theoretically and practically the Thessalonian letters embody all the essentials of Christian truth.

The major emphasis of Second Thessalonians is eschatological. There will be a future time of judgment coming when God will settle His accounts (1:5-10). Paul corrects their misunderstanding about the Day of the Lord (2:1). Some in the church had fallen into the error of thinking that the day had already arrived, however Paul instructs them that certain things must occur first. Before the day commences there will be an all-out rebellion against God (2:3). Many will revolt on a world-wide scale against their Creator. There will be the revealing of the man of lawlessness (2:3b). As Christ shall be revealed in His "time" even so shall the antichrist. He is a mystery to be unfolded and made manifest. The terrible judgment which is to come upon him and all those who follow him is sharply contrasted by the glory of Christ in which all the elect shall share."

Daniel B. Wallace: Outline:

I. Salutation (1:1-2)

II. Comfort in Affliction (1:3-12)

A. Perseverance in the Midst of Persecutions (1:3-10)

1. The Perseverance of the Saints (1:3-4)

2. The Vindication of God's Righteousness (1:5-10)

- B. Preparation of the Saints for the Kingdom (1:11-12)
- III. Correction Concerning the Day of the Lord (2:1-12)
 - A. Summary: Doctrinal Correction (2:1-2)
 - B. Day of the Lord Yet Future (2:3-5)
 - C. The Unveiling of the Antichrist (2:6-12)
- IV. Reminder Concerning their Destiny (2:13-17)
 - A. Standing Firm in Light of this Destiny (2:13-15)
 - B. Benediction: Encouraged Hearts (2:16-17)
- V. Exhortations Concerning Practical Matters (3:1-15)
 - A. Request for Prayer (3:1-5)
 - B. Rebuke of the Idle (3:6-15)
- VI. Final Greetings (3:16-18)

J. Hampton Keathley III

Theme and Purpose

Second Thessalonians was evidently prompted by three main developments in the report Paul received from an unknown source. He wrote: (1) to encourage them in view of the report of the increasing persecution which they were facing (1:4-5); (2) to deal with the reports of a pseudo-Pauline letter and other misrepresentations of his teaching regarding the day of the Lord and the rapture of the church (2:1f); and (3) to deal with the way some were responding to belief in the imminent return of the Lord. This belief was still being used as a basis for shirking their vocational responsibilities. So the apostle wrote to deal with the condition of idleness or disorderliness which had increased (3:5-15).

To meet the needs that occasioned this epistle, the apostle wrote to comfort and correct. In doing so he pursued three broad purposes. He wrote: (1) to give an incentive for the Thessalonians to persevere by describing the reward and retribution that will occur in the future judgment of God (1:3-10); (2) to clarify the prominent events belonging to the day of the Lord in order to prove the falsity of the claims that the day had already arrived (2:1-2); and (3) to give detailed instructions covering the disciplinary steps the church should take to correct those who refused to work (3:6-15).

Swindoll: “Woven by the careful hands of a tentmaker, 2 Thessalonians adorns the New Testament like a literary tapestry. Looked at from the earthward side, we find the believers suffering in chapter 1, shaken from their composure in chapter 2, and slackening in their responsibilities in chapter 3. The underside of the tapestry seems to be a hodgepodge of dark, tangled, and loose threads. But Paul displays the heavenward side

of the tapestry in 2 Thessalonians 1:5-12. As we look at it from that vantage point, we gain not only perspective but encouragement to persevere—to walk through the furnace of persecution, over the seas of prophetic error, and around the pitfalls in practical living. Paul’s letter helps us make sense of our suffering, gain stability in doctrinal uncertainty, and become steadfast in principles of responsible living...

Apparently, either through a revelation someone claimed to have had or a sermon preached or by a forged document that was reputedly Paul’s, word had begun to spread in this church that the ‘day of the Lord’ had already come. This false message produced two extreme results. Some were ‘shaken’ and ‘disturbed’ (2:2); others began to shirk their responsibilities, waiting in their porch swings for the Lord’s return as they whittled away their time (3:10-12) ...

Chapter 1: Affirmation: persevering through affliction develops maturity

Chapter 2: Explanation: trusting amidst confusion produces stability

Chapter 3: Exhortation: waiting with discipline cultivates responsibility.”

Hiebert: “It is asserted that Paul could not have written 2 Thessalonians since its eschatology is contradictory to that in 1 Thessalonians; in 1 Thessalonians the second coming is thought of as being imminent and occurring suddenly while in 2 Thessalonians it is preceded by definite signs. It is generally admitted today that this objection has no real weight. It is common in apocalyptic literature to find the elements of suddenness and signs occurring side by side. Wikenhauser points out that ‘even in the eschatological discourse of Jesus we find harbingers of the *parousia* mentioned (Mk 13, 6 sq.), alongside the warning to be vigilant because the day is uncertain (Mk 13, 33 sq.)’ ...

The epistle reflects favorable as well as unfavorable features of the report from Thessalonica. Paul took the occasion to commend his converts for their remarkable growth in faith and love (1:3) and to encourage them to steadfastness under persecution with the assurance that their afflictions would be justly recompensed when the Lord returned in judgment (1:5-12).

But the real purpose in writing was to deal with the doctrinal error concerning the day of the Lord and to rebuke the disorderly conduct of certain members.”

Jensen: Presents a chart (borrowed in part from **Pentecost**, *Things to Come*) showing dispensational distinctions between the emphasis in 1 Thessalonians on the Rapture and in 2 Thessalonians on Revelation:

FIRST PHASE (RAPTURE)

- Christ comes to claim His bride, the church
- Christ comes to the air
- the tribulation begins
- translation is imminent

SECOND PHASE (REVELATION)

- Christ returns with the bride
- Christ returns to the earth
- the millennial kingdom is established
- a multitude of signs precede

- | | |
|--|--|
| - a message of comfort is given | - a message of judgment is given |
| - the program for the church is emphasized | - the program for Israel and the world is emphasized |
| - translation is a mystery | - revelation is predicted in both Testaments |
| - believers are judged | - Gentiles and Israel are judged |
| - Israel's covenants are not yet fulfilled | - all of Israel's covenants are fulfilled |
| - believers only are affected | - all people are affected |
| - the church is taken into the Lord's presence | - Israel is brought into the kingdom |

Theme: "He has not come yet" / 3 Main Divisions

Chap1. Persecution

"we give thanks"

"don't be disturbed"

Tone: Commendation

Manifestation of the Lord in Glory

a comfort to the persecuted / a terror to the unconverted

Chap 2. Prophecy

"we beseech" ... "we give thanks"

"Stand firm"

Tone: Correction

Revelation of the Man of Sin

a revelation and consummation of the lawless one

Chap 3. Practice

"we command"

"pray ... keep aloof ... work"

Tone: Exhortation

Action of the Word of the Lord

demands a severance of fellowship with evil and idle men

Hubbard: "Grateful for the believers' faith, love, and endurance in persecution, Paul explains the purpose of this persecution, which refines believers for future glory and seals the doom of God's enemies. Christ's coming will reverse the present situation, bringing rest to the afflicted, and separation from God to their troublers.

Despite contrary reports, the Day of the Lord has not yet come (ch. 2). The rebellion and the man of lawlessness will appear first. All forms of worship, true and false, will be replaced by the worship of this lawless one. His day will be short in spite of his deceitful Satanic power. As darkness is dissolved by light, he will be slain at Christ's coming, when his deluded followers also will be judged.

The believers' destiny is different because God has called them to salvation. This sense of calling, coupled with the Spirit's ministry, will hold them firm in troubled times. Paul,

too, faces opposition in his ministry and comforts himself and his friends with a reminder of God's loving faithfulness and Christ's patient steadfastness (ch. 3).

Industry, not sloth, is the hallmark of Christian conduct, as Paul had taught by instruction and example. Where there prevailed misinterpretation of the imminence of Christ's advent, or spiritual pride that disdained manual labor, firm but loving pressure should be brought to bear on the unruly."

Baxter: "In chapter i. the great hope of the Lord's second coming is set before the Thessalonians as their great *consolation* amid the tribulations which they were having to endure for Christ's sake. Next, in chapter ii. The apostle furnishes them with authoritative *correction* concerning the time and the way of Christ's return. Finally, in chapter iii. There is the apostle's *counteraction* of practical error concerning present duty in the waiting-time till Christ returns."

Travis Moore: The Outline to the Book

A. Pastoral Encouragement - Ch. 1

1. Of Praise (vv. 1-4)
2. Of Promise (vv. 5-10)
3. Of Prayer (vv. 11-12)

B. Prophetic Enlightenment - Ch. 2

1. The Rapture of Believers (vv. 1, 6-7)
2. The Revelation of the Anti-Christ (vv. 3-5, 8)
3. The Return of Jesus (vv. 8-12)
4. The Readiness of Believers (vv. 13-17)

C. Practical Exhortation - Ch. 3

1. Wait (vv. 1-5)
2. Walk (vv. 6-7)
3. Work (vv. 8-18)

Stedman: "There are three chapters in this little letter, and each one is a correction of a very common attitude that many people still have about disturbing times. The first chapter is devoted to a correction of the attitude of discouragement in the face of difficulty. These Christians were undergoing 'persecutions' and 'afflictions' and although they were bearing up with good grace, nevertheless, many of them were getting discouraged. 'Why try any more?' they were saying; 'There's no justice. Everything is always against us.'

And to counteract that attitude, the apostle reminds them that the day when God would repay them for the difficulties they were going through was coming. ...

In chapter 2 you have another reaction to disturbing times -- fear. We read in these opening words (verses 1-2):

Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our assembling to meet him, we beg you, brethren, not to be quickly shaken in mind or excited, [really the word is troubled] either by spirit or by

word, or by letter purporting to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. {2 Th 2:1-2 RSV}

These people had evidently received a letter from somebody signing Paul's name, telling them that in this terrible time of trouble all they had to look forward to was worse times. But Paul says, 'don't be shaken in your mind.' Literally, don't be shaken out of your wits by what's happening. I think many of our young people today are fearful, and striking out against society, because they don't know that God is in control of events. ...

Chapter 3 deals, finally, with the conduct of these believers in the face of difficulty and pressure. Paul was correcting here a third very widespread attitude that many have in times of difficulty -- what we might call 'fanaticism.' There were certain people in Thessalonica who were saying, 'Why not just wait until he comes? Why should we concern ourselves about making a living? Let's just live and enjoy ourselves, and wait for his coming.'"

Copeland:

OUTLINE:

INTRODUCTION (1:1-2)

1. Salutation (1)
2. Greetings (2)

I. ENCOURAGEMENT IN PERSECUTIONS (1:3-12)

A. THANKFUL FOR THEIR SPIRITUAL GROWTH (1:3-4)

1. Thanking God for their growing faith and abounding love (1:3)
2. Boasting to others of their patience and faith in all their persecutions (1:4)

B. ENCOURAGEMENT IN TRIALS IN VIEW OF THE LORD'S RETURN (1:5-10)

1. Suffering will make them worthy of the kingdom of God (1:5)
2. God will repay those who trouble them (1:6)
3. This will occur when Jesus is revealed from heaven (1:7-10)

C. HIS PRAYER FOR THEM (1:11-12)

1. That God would count them worthy of their calling (1:11a)
2. That God would fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power (1:11b)
3. That the name of Jesus might be glorified in them, and they in Him, according to the grace of God and Christ (1:12)

II. ENLIGHTENMENT ABOUT THE COMING OF THE LORD (2:1-17)

A. DO NOT BE TROUBLED (2:1-2)

1. Concerning the coming of the Lord and our gathering to Him (2:1)
2. By false reports, as though the day had come (2:2)

B. THE APOSTASY MUST COME FIRST (2:3-12)

1. A falling away must occur, and the man of sin revealed (2:3-5)
2. The man of sin is being restrained, though the mystery of lawlessness is already at work (2:6-7)

3. When the lawless one is revealed, the Lord will destroy him with His coming (2:8)
4. The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, and will mislead those who do not have a love for the truth (2:9-12)

C. STEADFASTNESS ENCOURAGED (2:13-17)

1. Thankful to God for their election through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in truth, having been called by the gospel to obtain glory (2:13-14)
2. A call to stand fast and hold to the traditions taught by word or epistle (2:15)
3. Prayer for their comfort and establishment in every good word and work (2:16-17)

III. EXHORTATIONS TO CHRISTIAN LIVING (3:1-15)

A. A REQUEST FOR PRAYER, AND A PRAYER FOR THEM (3:1-5)

1. Asking them to pray that the word of the Lord might have free course, and he be delivered from evil men (1-2)
2. Expressions of confidence in the Lord, and in their obedience (3-4)
3. Praying that the Lord will direct their hearts into the love of God and patience of Christ (3:5)

B. A CHARGE TO DISCIPLINE THE DISORDERLY (3:6-15)

1. To withdraw from those who do not follow apostolic tradition and example (3:6-9)
2. Especially those who will not work (3:10-12)
3. Don't grow weary in doing good, and avoid those who do not obey the words of the epistle (3:13-15)

CONCLUDING REMARKS (3:16-18)

1. A prayer that the Lord bless them with His peace and presence (3:16)
2. A confirmation of his authorship of this epistle (3:17)
3. A benediction of grace from the Lord Jesus Christ (3:18)

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WRITER: The Apostle Paul

DATE A.D. 52-53 (The 2nd epistle followed shortly after the 1st).

OCCASION:

The first letter to the Thessalonians had given rise to further questions, and Paul is attempting to answer them. There was circulating in the Thessalonian church a letter or report, purported to have come from Paul, which was inclined to disturb the Christians. This false report claimed that Christ had already come and had already gathered out the

church to Himself and that the world was then living in the judgments of the "day of the Lord." Their present persecutions confirmed this false report. Paul attempts to allay their fears by stating definitely that "our gathering together unto him" is yet future (2:1) and that "the day of the Lord" has certain forerunners which must first come, The apostasy and the "man of sin" must come first: the removal of the remnant of believers at "our gathering together unto him" makes the apostasy in the professing church 100% (Luke 18:8).

Every era of persecution or trouble has given rise to the false impression that the church is going through the time of judgment which Christ identified as the "great tribulation" (Matt. 24:21) This period has been so clearly identified by Christ that there is no reason for getting panicky or being stampeded into an unwarranted position. Christ said that there is coming a small interval which will be blocked off by "such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor shall ever be." Nothing like it has taken place before, and nothing like it will ever take place afterward. Has there ever been such a period of unparalleled trouble? The answer is obvious.

THEME

The first epistle to the Thessalonians deals with the Rapture. Christ's coming for believers. The second epistle relates the return of Christ to that phase where He returns to the earth in judgment and where one of the accomplishments is in connection with the "man of sin," whom He "shall destroy with the brightness of his coming" These two aspects are clearly delineated. The interval between these two phases is the Great Tribulation, which can be further identified with the 70th week of Daniel 9 as a period of seven years.

THE DAY OF THE LORD:

This is the phrase which occurs in 2:2 (incorrectly translated "the day of Christ" in the Authorized Version). It is an Old Testament phrase with definite connotations. It occurs in the writings of the Old Testament prophets where it relates to the future kingdom promised in the Old Testament. The day of Christ is a New Testament expression (1 Cor. 1:8); it relates here to the future of the church. The day of the Lord is connected with the coming of Christ as it relates to the setting up of the kingdom. The day of Christ is connected with the coming of Christ for the church. Whatever else is implied in these two statements certainly this is basic.

The teaching in 1 Thessalonians is that the saints who have died will have part in Christ's coming for His living saints; in 2 Thessalonians it is that the saints who are alive will not have part in the Great Tribulation. The return of Christ has a peculiar and precious meaning for His saints.

OUTLINE:

I. PERSECUTION of Believers Now - Judgment of Unbelievers Hereafter (at Coming of Christ), 1:1-12

1. **Introduction, 1:1,2**

The greeting is Paul's usual friendly greeting to a church that is spiritually sound.

2. **Persecution of Believers and Fruits of It, 1:3-7**

v.3 In the midst of severe persecution which the church in Thessalonica was enduring, they were growing and abounding, increasing in faith and love. Paul will encourage them in the hope of believers.

v.4 The Thessalonian believers were an example to other churches in patience and faith. Persecution produced these fruits. "Tribulation [trouble] worketh patience" (Romans 5:3), See also Romans 12:12.

v.5 (See Romans 8:17; 2 Corinthians 4:8; 7:5.)

v.6 God is righteous in sending the Great Tribulation. It is a judgment of Sinners.

v.7 "Vengeance is mine; I will repay; saith the Lord" (Romans 12:19).

3. **Judgment of Wicked at Coming of Christ, 1:8-12**

v.8 Very little is said in the Scriptures about the condition of the lost - nothing to satisfy a morbid curiosity or to incite revenge. Christ said more about hell than did anyone else. There is a restrained reticence in Scripture.

The lost are those who:

(1) "Know not God." Jesus said,

And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent (John 17:3).

(2) "Obey not the gospel"

Jesus answered, and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom he hath sent (John 6:29).

v.9 Countless numbers of folk are plunging into an awful eternity; Soft music, colorful flowers, and eulogistic words cannot destroy the rough reality of hell.

v.10 The coming of Christ to the earth in judgment will justify the believers and glorify the Savior.

v.11 God had a purpose and plan in the lives of the Thessalonian believers.

v.12 The coming of Christ to the earth will bring glory both to Christ and the church.

II. PROGRAM for World in Connection with Coming of Christ, 2:1-12

1. Rapture Occurs First, 2:1

v 1 "The coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" and "our gathering together unto him" is the Rapture.

2. Day of Lord Follows;

Introduced by Total Apostasy & Appearance of Man of Sin, 2:2-5

v.2 "Day of Christ" is an unfortunate translation - it should be "day of the Lord" The "day of Christ" is this present age of grace, the church age (see 1 Cor.1:8; Phil. 1:6,10; 2:16).

"The day of the Lord" is a technical phrase that speaks of the period beginning with the Great Tribulation and continuing through the Millennium (see Acts 2:20; 2 Pet. 3:10; Rev. 6:17).

The day of the Lord begins when the day of Christ ends. The day of the Lord begins after the Rapture.

The Thessalonians had a false report (which supposedly had originated with Paul) that the day of the Lord had already come, which would have meant, of course, that they had missed the Rapture.

v.3 Paul puts down 2 signs of the day of the Lord:

- (1) "A falling away" which is apostasy (Heb. 3:12)
- (2) The revelation of the "man of sin" (the lawless one v.8).

v.4 The lawless one is the final representative of man in his open opposition and rebellion against God. He actually assumes the place of God Himself (Isa. 14:12-15; Rev. 13:5,6,15-18). This is the "little horn" of Daniel 7.

v.5 Paul had taught the Thessalonian believers these eschatological truths in the brief interval covering 3 sabbaths that he was with them.

3. Mystery of Lawlessness Working Today; Restrained by Holy Spirit 2:6-8

v.6 The one who "withholdeth" is the Holy Spirit

v.7 "Let" means *hinder* The Holy Spirit alone can hinder the development of evil since it is satanic and supernatural.

v.8 "Wicked" is more accurately lawless. The lawless one will be revealed in the Great Tribulation. Christ will destroy him when He comes to the earth (Rev.9:20).

4. **Lawless One to Appear in Great Tribulation Period, 2:9-12**

v.9 The lawless one will be a miracle worker.

"Power" is *dunamis* - physical power whose source is supernatural.
"Signs" - tokens, the purpose of which is to appeal to the understanding
"Lying wonders" produce an effect upon observers.

vv. 10,11 God sends strong delusion to believe a lie only to those who heard but would not have the truth.

v.12 These will be judged because they rejected the truth.

III. PRACTICALITY of Coming of Christ, 2:13-3:18

In light of the knowledge of future events, the believer should live a life that demonstrates that he believes in the coming of Christ.

1. **Believers should Be Established in Word, 2:13-17**

vv. 13,14 The total spectrum of salvation is in these 2 verses:

- (1) "Chosen to salvation,"
- (2) "Sanctification of the Spirit"
- (3) "Belief of the truth" - growth is through the study of the Word,
- (4) "Glory" (Col. 1:27) - this refers to the Rapture (1 John 8:2).

V?. 15-17 The Word enables a believer to stand and be stable. The Word brings consolation and comfort. The Word and work are interrelated. The study of the Word leads to the work of the Lord.

2. **Believers Should Be Established in Walk, 3:1-7**

vv 1-4 The Word enables the believer to walk before the wicked The Word establishes a believer in his walk.

v.5 The believer is to walk in the love of God and in a patient waiting for the coming of Christ,

v.6 The believer is not to walk with the disorderly.

v.7 The believer is to walk as a follower of the apostles.

3. Believers Should Be Established in Work, 3:8-18

v.8 Christian workers earned their own bread and paid their own way.

v. 9 They did this as an example to the believers Thessalonica.

v.10 A believer who is looking for the Lord to come is not a dreamer, but a worker "No work - no food" is the rule laid down by the apostle.

v-11 Some are working in the wrong way - they are busybodies.

v.12 They are commanded to work for their own bread.

v.13 A believer who holds the blessed hope should not grow weary in working for the Lord.

v.14 A believer who holds the blessed hope is obedient to the Word if he is not, he is to be avoided.

v.15 An attempt should be made to win the wayward brother.

vv. 16-18 Paul's benediction. The study of prophecy brings peace to the heart. It does not lead to fanaticism or laziness.

OUTLINE OF 2 THESSALONIANS

STEADFAST TO THE FINAL BELL

“so then brethren, stand firm” (2:15)

AS BELIEVERS ANTICIPATE THE SECOND COMING
THEY MUST REMAIN STEADFAST DESPITE:

- AFFLICTION AND SUFFERING
- APOSTASY AND DECEPTION
- EVIL ANTAGONISTS AND
UNDISCIPLINED BROTHERS

(1:1-2) INTRODUCTION / SALUTATION

A. Author and Associates – Examples of Steadfastness

1. Paul
2. Silvanus
3. Timothy

B. Recipients --

1. Local Identity: *“church of the Thessalonians”*
2. Universal Identity
 - a. *“in God our Father”*
 - b. *“and the Lord Jesus Christ”*

C. Salutation – Resources for Steadfastness

1. What?
 - a. *“Grace to you”*
 - b. *“ and peace”*
2. From Whom?
 - a. *“ from God the Father”*
 - b. *“ and the Lord Jesus Christ”*

I. (1:3-12) STEADFAST DESPITE AFFLICTION AND SUFFERING –

**BELIEVERS MUST SHOW THEMSELVES WORTHY OF THEIR CHRISTIAN
IDENTITY BY REMAINING STEADFAST IN THE FACE OF PERSECUTION
UNTIL CHRIST RETURNS**

- **STEADFAST IN CHRISTIAN GROWTH AS OBSERVED BY OTHERS**
= *“may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which*

indeed you are suffering”
**- STEADFAST IN BEARING FRUIT TO THE GLORY OF GOD AS
EVALUATED BY GOD HIMSELF**
= “that our God may count you worthy of your calling”

A. (1:3-5) SPIRITUAL GROWTH IN THE MIDST OF PERSECUTION MERITS A GOOD REPUTATION

1. (:3b) Observable Spiritual Growth

a. In Faith

“because your faith is greatly enlarged”

b. In Love

“and the love of each one of you toward one another grows ever greater.”

2. Encouragement from a Good Reputation

a. (:3a) Encouragement from the Thanksgiving of Others to God

1) Ongoing Thanksgiving

“We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren”

2) Appropriate Thanksgiving

“as is only fitting”

b. (:4) Encouragement from the Praise of Others – Testifying to your Good Example among the Churches

1) Source of Praise

“therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you”

2) Sphere of Praise – *“among the churches of God”*

3) Focus of Praise

a) *“for your perseverance”*

b) *“and faith”*

4) Degree of Difficulty

“ in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure.”

c. (:5) Encouragement from the Conviction of the World

1) Perseverance and Faith Speak Loudly

“This is a plain indication of God’s righteous judgment”

2) Our Conduct Should Measure up to Our Calling

“so that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God”

- 3) Suffering is Painful but Passing
“for which indeed you are suffering.”

B. (1:6-10) THE SECOND COMING SPELLS RELIEF FOR THE AFFLICTED BUT RETRIBUTION FOR OUR ANTAGONISTS

1. (:6-7) The Righteous Judgment of God
“For after all it is only just for God”
 - a. Retribution for Our Antagonists
“to repay with affliction those who afflict you”
 - b. Relief for the Afflicted
 - 1) Persecuted Believers in Thessalonica
“and to give relief to you who are afflicted”
 - 2) Apostolic Missionary Team
“and to us as well”
 - c. Timeframe = The Second Coming / Transition
“when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire”
2. (:8-9) The Penalty of Eternal Destruction
 - a. Characterized as Payback – Expression: “Paybacks are Hell”
“dealing out retribution”
 - b. Who Has to Pay the Piper?
 - 1). Unbelievers
“to those who do not know God”
 - 2). Disobedient
“and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus”
 - c. Eternal Consequences for Unbelief and Disobedience
 - 1). Eternal Destruction
“And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction”
 - 2). Eternal Separation
 - a) *“away from the presence of the Lord’*
 - b) *“and from the glory of His power”*

3. (:10) The Goal of the Second Coming
 - a. Its Certainty
“when He comes”
 - b. Its Glory
“to be glorified in His saints on that day”
 - c. Its Awe
“and to be marveled at among all who have believed”
 - d. Its Vindication
“for our testimony to you was believed”

C. (1:11-12) SPIRITUAL FRUIT BRINGS GLORY TO GOD RIGHT NOW

1. Need for Intercessory Prayer
“To this end also we pray for you always”
2. Need to Measure Up to the Standard
“that our God may count you worthy of your calling”
3. Two Aspects of Spiritual Fruit
 - a. Its Intrinsic Character
“and fulfill every desire for goodness”
 - b. Its Powerful Dynamic
“and the work of faith with power”
4. Ultimate Goal = Glory to God
 - a. *“in order that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you”*
 - b. *“and you in Him”*
5. Superabundant Resource
“according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ”

II. (2:1-17) STEADFAST DESPITE APOSTASY AND DECEPTION –

BELIEVERS MUST WITHSTAND THE DECEPTION REGARDING THE COMING APOSTASY AND THE OPERATION OF THE ANTICHRIST BY REMAINING STEADFAST IN THEIR LOVE OF THE TRUTH AND SECURE IN GOD’S PROVIDENTIAL CARE

(INITIATED IN ELECTION, CARRIED OUT THROUGH SANCTIFICATION AND CULMINATING IN THE GLORY OF FINAL SALVATION)

A. (2:1-5) HOW DO YOU KNOW YOU HAVEN'T BEEN LEFT BEHIND?
THE REVEALING OF THE ANTICHRIST MUST PRECEDE THE DAY OF THE LORD.

Missed the boat?

1. (:1-3a) Don't Be Deceived about the Order of Events.

a. Subject Under Discussion

"Now we request you, brethren, with regard to":

1) Second Coming

"the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ"

2) Rapture

"and our gathering together to Him"

b. Need to Stay Level-Headed

1) *"that you may not be quickly shaken from your composure"*

2) *"or be disturbed"*

c. Error to Watch out for

"to the effect that the day of the Lord has come"

d. Possible Delivery Methods

1) *"either by a spirit"*

2) *"or a message"*

3) *"or a letter as if from us"*

e. Summary Warning

"Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first ..."

2. (:3b-4) The Revelation of the Antichrist Will Be a Blatant Display of
Apostasy = Impossible to miss it

a. Rebellious Character of the Apostasy Will Be Blatantly Obvious

1) *"the apostasy"*

2) *"the man of lawlessness is revealed"*

3) *"the son of destruction"*

b. Sacrilegious Actions of the Antichrist Will Be Blatantly Obvious

1) General Description of Usurption of Worship

"who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called"

god or object of worship”

2) Ultimate Display of Sacrilegious Blasphemy
“so that he takes his seat in the temple of God”

3) Primary Objective
“displaying himself as being God”

3. (:5) Don't Be Forgetful about Your Former Course in Eschatology.
“Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things?”

B. (2:6-12) FOUR MODES OF OPERATION FOR THE ANTICHRIST

1. (:6-7) Mystery Mode of Operation – Presently Active during this Church Age but Restrained

a. Presently restrained by the Holy Spirit
“And you know what restrains him now”

b. Awaiting Future Revelation and Intense Activity
“so that in his time he may be revealed”

c. Active Behind the Scenes Right Now
“For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work”

d. Restraining Influence of the Holy Spirit Will Be Removed
“only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way”

2. (:8) Revealed Mode of Operation – Revealed for a Brief Rampage during the Tribulation Period ... Then Terminated (marked for extinction)

a. Revealed for a Brief Rampage
“And then that lawless one will be revealed”

b. Terminated at the Second Coming

1) *“whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth”*

2) *“and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming”*

3. (:9-10a) Satanic Mode of Operation – What is Satan trying to Accomplish?
“that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan”

a. Outwardly Impressive – Supernatural WOW Impact

1) *“with all power”*

2) *“and signs”*

3) *“and false wonders”*

- b. Inwardly Deceptive and Destructive
 - 1) Inwardly Deceptive
“and with all the deception of wickedness”
 - 2) Destructive
“for those who perish”

4. (:11-12) Divine Mode Of Operation – What is the Bigger Picture?
What is God Actually Accomplishing?

- a. (:11) Deception Reinforcing Unbelief and False Worship
“And for this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false”
- b. (:12) Guilt Validating Final Judgment for Unbelief and Wickedness
“in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness”

C. (2:13-17) PERILOUS END TIMES CALL FOR STEADFASTNESS ON THE PART OF THE ELECT (WHOM GOD LOVES AND STRENGTHENS)

- 1. (:13) Appreciating the Process of Divine Election
 - a. Obligated to Give Thanks
“But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren”
 - b. Rooted in God’s Initiating Love
“beloved by the Lord”
 - c. Ordained by God’s Sovereign (and Unfathomable) Selection
“because God has chosen you”
 - c. Predating any Human Involvement
“from the beginning”
 - e. Destined for God’s Ultimate Blessing
“for salvation”
 - f. Dependent Upon a Process that Combines Divine Preservation and Human Perseverance
 - 1) Divine Preservation and Purifying
“through sanctification by the Spirit”
 - 2) Human Perseverance and Responsibility
“and faith in the truth”

2. (:14) Understanding the Purpose of God's Calling
"And it was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."
3. (:15) Standing Firm in the Tradition of Truth
"So then, brethren, stand firm, and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us."
4. (:16-17) Resting in the Comfort and Encouragement of God's Loving Care
"Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace, comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word."

III. (3:1 - 3:16) STEADFAST DESPITE EVIL ANTAGONISTS AND UNDISCIPLINED BROTHERS – BELIEVERS MUST REMAIN STEADFAST IN THEIR MISSIONARY OUTREACH (DESPITE EVIL ANTAGONISTS) AND BALANCED IN THEIR EXAMPLE OF UNSELFISH, DISCIPLINED LABOR (DESPITE MISGUIDED AND UNRULY BRETHREN)

A. (3:1-5) MISSIONARIES AND THEIR DISCIPLE CHURCHES (SUPPORTING CHURCHES) PURSUE A PATH OF STEADFASTNESS (DESPITE THE PERIL OF EVIL) WITH THE CONFIDENCE IN THE LORD THAT COMES FROM MUTUAL PRAYER

1. (:1) Prayer for Continued Missionary Success –
 Based on the Effectiveness of the Word of God
 (Key = Power of God's Word as Previously Demonstrated)

"Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord may spread rapidly and be glorified, just as it did also with you"
2. (:2-3) Prayer for Continued Missionary Safety –
 In a Climate of Persecution
 (Key = Faithfulness of the Lord according to His Promises)
 - a. (:2) Climate of Wicked Opposition
"and that we may be delivered from perverse and evil men; for not all have faith."
 - b. (:3) Confidence in the Lord's Faithfulness and Protection
"But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one."

3. (:4) Confidence in the Steadfastness of the Disciple Churches –
To Continue to Obey the Lord’s Commands

“And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, that you are doing and will continue to do what we command.”

4. (:5) Prayer for the Steadfastness of the Disciple Churches –
Rooted in the Love of God

“And may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the steadfastness of Christ.”

B. (3:6-16) CHURCH DISCIPLINE MAY BE NECESSARY TO REINFORCE THE NEED FOR A DISCIPLINED LIFE OF RESPONSIBLE WORK

- TO SUPPORT YOUR OWN FAMILY
- AND TO PROVIDE FOR THE NEEDS OF OTHERS

1. (:6a) Apostolic Command: An Unruly Life Requires Church Discipline
“Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep aloof from every brother who leads an unruly life.”

2. (:6b-10) Apostolic Tradition (Reinforcing Apostolic Commandment)
Exemplifies a Disciplined Life of Responsible Work

- a. (:6b-8) Apostolic Example = Sacrificial Diligent Work

- 1) There was a Consistent Apostolic Tradition

“and not according to the tradition which you received from us”

- 2) This Apostolic Tradition Required Imitation

“For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example”

- 3) Negative Example

- a) Not Undisciplined

“because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you”

- b) Not Out for a Free Ride

“nor did we eat anyone’s bread without paying for it”

- 4) Positive Example

- a) Sacrificial ... Diligent... Sustained Effort

“but with labor and hardship we kept working night and day”

b) Unselfish Motivation

“ so that we might not be a burden to any of you ”

b. (:9) Forsaking the Right to Financial Support to Reinforce the Necessary Example

“not because we do not have the right to this, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, that you might follow our example.”

c. (:10) Corresponding ... Clear... Consistent ... Apostolic Commandment

“For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: If anyone will not work, neither let him eat.”

3. (:11-12) Apostolic Correction (for the Busybodies): Get to Work!

“For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread.”

4. (:13) Apostolic Encouragement (for the Responsible Brethren): Keep up the Good Work!

“But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary of doing good.”

5. (:14-15) Apostolic Summary Warning: Carry out the Discipline if Necessary -- But with Brotherly Love

“And if anyone does not obey our instruction in the letter, take special note of that man and do not associate with him, so that he may be put to shame. And yet do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.”

6. (:16) Apostolic Benediction: Seek Peace and Pursue It

“Now may the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance. The Lord be with you all!”

(3:17-18) AUTHENTICITY / CLOSING BENEDICTION

A. (3:17) AUTHENTICITY -- AUTOGRAPHIC ATTESTATION

“I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand, and this is a distinguishing mark in every letter: this is the way I write.”

B. (3:18) CLOSING BENEDICTION

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all”

TEXT: 2 Thessalonians 1: 1-2

TITLE: INTRODUCTION / SALUTATION

BIG IDEA:

GOD'S MINISTERS DESIRE GOD'S RESOURCES FOR GOD'S PEOPLE

I. AUTHOR AND ASSOCIATES

- A. Paul
- B. Silvanus
- C. Timothy

What was the nature of their relationship?

Why are all 3 included in the Greeting if Paul wrote the letter?

How were their backgrounds different, yet their mission so unified?

II. RECIPIENTS

- A. Local Identity: *“church of the Thessalonians”*
- B. Universal Identity
 - 1. *“in God our Father”*

2. *“and the Lord Jesus Christ”*

Juxtaposing these two references is a strong argument for the deity of Christ.

III. SALUTATION

- A. What Resources?
 - 1. *“Grace to you”*
 - 2. *“ and peace”*
- B. From Whom?
 - 1. *“from God the Father”*
 - 2. *“ and the Lord Jesus Christ”*

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How is this greeting alike / different from the greeting in 1 Thessalonians?
- 2) Why does Paul bother even to mention *Silvanus* and *Timothy*?
- 3) Do we find our lives to be content with the sufficiency of the divine resources of *grace* and *peace*?
- 4) Why such an emphasis on the *Fatherhood of God* in this opening?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Neil: “These opening words remind us, as we need constantly to be reminded, that Thessalonians is, like the other Pauline epistles, neither a theological treatise nor a sermon, but a real letter, written at a specific time to meet a specific situation. For this is precisely the way in which any private letter of the times would begin, with the name of the writer, followed by the name of the addressee, and a polite greeting...

So he greets them, not just with good wishes, but with a prayer that *grace* may be granted them – that unmerited gift of God’s love to men through Christ, forgiving, strengthening, uplifting them; making them at one with Him, and thereby giving them the *peace* that passes all understanding, the inward tranquility, health, and soundness of life in harmony with God.”

Hiebert: “In our materialistic age, believers need to be reminded again that all our blessings have their origin in God the Father whom we have come to know through the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Ryrie: “The position of these believers, while locally in Thessalonica and circumstantially in persecution, was spiritually in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. The oneness of the Father and the Son as well as the oneness of believers with the Godhead is affirmed.”

Piper: “He wants the Christians to read the truths of this letter as shared truths, and he wants them to hear the concerns of the letter not merely as his own but also as the concerns and burdens of Silvanus (another spelling for Silas) and Timothy -- the men who were with Paul when the church in Thessalonica was started (Acts 17). Since God had used all three of them to start the church, it's fitting that God's ongoing ministry come to them in the name of these three men....

In other words, Paul greets the church in such a way as to remind them that they are a family (in the care of a Father) and that they are servants (in the charge of a Lord). These two descriptions of God as Father and Lord, and thus of the church as family and

servants, corresponds to two of our deepest needs. Paul is not just throwing words away here. He is already encouraging and strengthening us as Christians if we will slow down and listen.

The two needs that everyone of us has are the need for rescue and help and the need for purpose and meaning. We need a heavenly Father to pity us and rescue us from sin and misery. We need his help at every step of the way because we are so weak and vulnerable. But we also need a heavenly Lord to guide us in life and tell us what is wise and give us a great and meaningful charge to fulfill. We don't just want to be safe in the care of a Father. We want a glorious cause to live for. We want a merciful Father to be our Protector; and we want an omnipotent Lord to be our Champion and our Commander and our Leader.”

Ritchie: “What a team--Paul, Silas and Timothy! Paul, the converted Jew, called by God on the Damascus road some twenty years earlier to become, as our Lord said, ‘A chosen instrument of mine, to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel, for I will show him how much he must suffer for my name s sake’ (Acts 9:15-16). Then there was Silas, a Hellenistic Jew, a prominent member of the Council of Jerusalem. Silas had the gift of prophecy, and was asked by the Council to accompany Paul and Barnabas to Antioch in order to encourage the growing church there. After Paul and Barnabas had a falling-out over Mark, Barnabas 'nephew, Paul asked Silas to accompany him on his second missionary journey. Then there was Timothy, whom Paul would later call his ‘beloved son’ His father was a Greek, and his mother and grandmother were God-fearing Jews. They, together with Timothy, may have become Christians during Paul's first visit to Lystra (Acts 14:6, II Timothy 1:2, 5). Spiritually blessed with the gifts of encouragement and teaching, Timothy was asked by the apostle to join the teams for the upcoming missionary journey.”

Hocking:

- (1) He refers to their relationship to God as a church
- (2) He refers to their resources from God

TEXT: 2 Thessalonians 1: 3-5

TITLE: *ATTABOY! WAY TO GO!*

BIG IDEA:

SPIRITUAL GROWTH IN THE MIDST OF PERSECUTION MERITS A GOOD REPUTATION

I. (:3b) OBSERVABLE SPIRITUAL GROWTH

A. In Faith – Growing in their relationship to God

“because your faith is greatly enlarged”

B. In Love – Growing in their relationship to one another

“and the love of each one of you toward one another grows ever greater.”

Piper: “He does not say that he thanks God simply because they have faith and love, but because their faith is growing abundantly and their love for each other is increasing. It's the beauty of growth and progress that fill him with joy.”

II. ENCOURAGEMENT FROM A GOOD REPUTATION

A. (:3a) Encouragement from the Thanksgiving of Others to God

1. Ongoing Thanksgiving

“We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren”

2. Appropriate Thanksgiving

“as is only fitting”

B. (:4) Encouragement from the Praise of Others – Testifying to your Good Example among the Churches

1. Source of Praise

“therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you”

2. Sphere of Praise – *“among the churches of God”*

3. Focus of Praise

a. *“for your perseverance”*

b. *“and faith”*

4. Degree of Difficulty

“in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure.”

Hiebert: “*Persecutions* designates the hostile actions of the enemies of the gospel, while *afflictions* relates to the varied pressures and painful experiences they have endured because of their faith.”

Transition to the eschatological emphasis of the epistle:

C. (:5) Encouragement from the Conviction of the World

1. Perseverance and Faith Speak Loudly

“*This is a plain indication of God’s righteous judgment*”

2. Our Conduct Should Measure up to Our Calling

“*so that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God*”

Piper: “God's design in the suffering of his persecuted people is that they be found worthy of the kingdom at the last day. This doesn't mean that we become deserving of the kingdom. It means we become fit for it. There is a holiness (though not a perfection) without which we will not see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14) and God works that holiness in us (Hebrews 13:21) largely through the discipline of suffering (Hebrews 12:3-11).”

3. Suffering is Painful but Passing

“*for which indeed you are suffering.*”

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Why does Paul try to start his epistles with *thanksgiving*? Is thanksgiving for other brethren a dominant tone in our lives? Are we quick to express our appreciation for others?

2) Should a *growing faith and love* be extraordinary or part of the “Normal Christian Life”? What types of positive reports did Paul receive that led him to this conclusion? Where have we had opportunity recently to demonstrate a growing faith? If faith as small as a mustard seed can move mountains, what is the significance of a growing faith?

3) What churches can we point to as a positive role model for imitation? What is there that strikes us as special about those churches?

4) In what sense are Christians to demonstrate their *worthiness* for the kingdom of God if worthiness plays no part of earning salvation?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Timothy Peck: “But they were also growing in their love, which is their self-less sacrifice for each other. In the Bible, love’s not a sentimental feeling or a romantic attraction, but it’s a willful choice to give of ourselves for the best interests of others. And this Christ-like love was growing. The word Paul chooses here paints the picture of a river overflowing its banks. The river bank marks the boundary where our love stops, but when our love overflows the boundaries, that means we’re stretching ourselves to love more and more people. So a flourishing faith in Jesus and an overflowing love for others is what leads Paul to such confidence.”

Ritchie: “Faith does not end at the moment of salvation, but continues to grow as one begins to trust God for the joys and temptations of daily living. Jesus demonstrated his faith by trusting in his Father for every word, action and direction of his life. His will, he said, was to do the will of his Father in heaven. He was, as Hebrews says, *‘the pioneer and the perfecter of our faith.’* As a result of the terrible trials Paul had suffered, he promised in his letter to the Corinthians to *‘no longer trust in himself but in God who raises the dead.’*

Faith not only saves us, but gives us confidence in God for all that life throws our way. *‘Without faith,’* Hebrews says, *‘it is impossible to please God.’* So the believer not only trusts God for his salvation, and leans upon God's power to cope with present realities, his heart is also filled with confidence that Jesus is coming again. According to Paul, that is the kind of faith the Thessalonians were exhibiting: *‘your faith is greatly enlarged,’* he said of them.”

Hocking:

1A. PAUL PRAISES THEM FOR THEIR GROWTH IN THE MIDST OF DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES - 3-5

1B. The EXCELLENCE of that growth - 3

1C. In terms of Faith

2C. In terms of Love

2B. The ENDURANCE in that growth - 4

3B. The EVIDENCE of that growth - 5

- NASB - *“plain indication”* - refers to their patience and faith

- *“counted worthy”* - Greek: *kataxioo* - fitness, not merit

Piper: “First, faith and love are the essence and sum of the Christian life. This is what Paul focuses on in verse 3 as cause for great rejoicing: “Your faith is growing abundantly and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing.”

Faith is the vertical response to grace, namely, confidence in God's care. And love is the horizontal response to grace, namely, freedom for God's command. Do you think it's coincidental that these two human responses correspond to the two descriptions of God in verses 1 and 2? The care of God the Father is to be trusted in faith; and the charge of Jesus the Lord is to be obeyed in love. As Father we trust him to meet all our needs, and as Lord we follow him in the paths of love. ‘

Neil: Re vs. 5 – “Paul wants to comfort them both with reference to the present and the future, and he points out how the equity (righteous judgment) of God shows itself in two ways: (1) they must recognize that the very fact that their faith has been strengthened rather than weakened by adversity, that they have been given power to endure all the ills that befall them, is the surest indication that there is a just God who cares for His people. He does not leave them comfortless. He is nearer to them in affliction than in prosperity, thus giving them proof of where His final judgment will fall between them and their persecutors. So it had been with Paul and Silvanus themselves as they sang praises to God in their prison cell, and with Stephen as he faced his murderers. God had given them a pledge that, however evil seemed to triumph, the real victory would be theirs. (2) Further, it is by these very hardships that they are being fitted to take their place in the full citizenship of the redeemed saints of Christ in His Kingdom. When the Day of the Lord comes, the humble and faithful who have borne the assaults of the world will find that worldly judgments are overturned, and that God’s justice, of which even now they have proof, will vindicate those who have kept faith. This world is ruled by the power of darkness, therefore the righteous suffer. In the New World of Light – in which men in Christ already live and which is soon in all its splendour to break in upon the old world – the rule of darkness will be reversed. The wicked will suffer and the righteous will reap their reward.”

Hiebert: “Paul was well aware of the shortcomings of the Thessalonian believers, but he did not allow their faults to blind him to their strong points. He was deeply appreciative of the transforming change that had been wrought in them... He will faithfully deal with their failings but first he is eager to give praise where praise is due...”

The fact that hope is not now mentioned with faith and love (cf. 1 Th 1:3) does not imply that their hope has died. Its presence is implied in the *patience* mentioned in the next verse. Yet it may well be that Paul does not now speak of their hope because an unwarranted interpretation of the Christian hope was creating confusion in their midst, and for this he could not give thanks. In this thanksgiving the matters that needed correction are wisely kept in the background.”

TEXT: 2 Thessalonians 1: 6-10

TITLE: THE SECOND COMING: RELIEF OR RETRIBUTION?

BIG IDEA:

**THE SECOND COMING SPELLS RELIEF FOR THE AFFLICTED BUT
RETRIBUTION FOR OUR ANTAGONISTS**

I. (:6-7) THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT OF GOD

“For after all it is only just for God”

Context: verse 5 – The Second Coming and its execution of the righteous judgment of God and introduction of the victorious kingdom of God.

A. Retribution for Our Antagonists

“to repay with affliction those who afflict you”

Vengeance belongs to the Lord; there will be a final and accurate accounting. The record will be set straight.

B. Relief for the Afflicted

1. Persecuted Believers in Thessalonica

“and to give relief to you who are afflicted”

not minimizing their pain and suffering, but putting it into perspective

2. Apostolic Missionary Team

“and to us as well”

Paul and his missionary team are not detached observers, but are intimately involved in the same struggles and experiencing the same persecutions.

C. Timeframe = The Second Coming / Transition

“when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire”

Morris: “Some commentators prefer to take ‘*in flaming fire*’ with what follows as indicating the manner in which the vengeance spoken of will be visited on the wicked. It seems preferable to take it with the preceding, and as being the third in the series of prepositional phrases describing the Lord’s revelation. In that case the majesty of the appearance of the Lord who is revealed is brought out by comparing it to that of flaming fire. This comparison is to be found in other places as Exod. 3:2, Isa. 66:15, Rev. 1:13 f. On outstanding occasions, like the giving of the law on Mt. Sinai or the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, fire is the symbol of the divine presence.”

II. (:8-9) THE PENALTY OF ETERNAL DESTRUCTION

A. Characterized as Payback – Expression: “Paybacks are Hell”
“dealing out retribution”

B. Who Has to Pay the Piper?

1. Unbelievers

“to those who do not know God”

2. Disobedient

“and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus”

Hubbard: “Some have suggested that two groups – Gentiles (cf. I Thess 4:5) and Jews – are indicated. More likely this is a blanket reference to all who refuse to act on what they know about God and who more specifically, reject his revelation in Christ.”

C. Eternal Consequences for Unbelief and Disobedience

1. Eternal Destruction

“And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction”

2. Eternal Separation

a. *“away from the presence of the Lord”*

b. *“and from the glory of His power”*

III. (:10) THE GOAL OF THE SECOND COMING

A. Its Certainty

“when He comes”

B. Its Glory

“to be glorified in His saints on that day”

C. Its Awe

“and to be marveled at among all who have believed”

Piper: “One of the most exhilarating experiences in life is to see a wonder or a marvel so great and so glorious that we are utterly amazed, speechless before beauty. That's how it will be when we see Jesus coming in His glory.”

D. Its Vindication

“for our testimony to you was believed”

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What are all the points of comparison or the differences between those who suffer affliction and those who are causing the suffering or the persecution?
- 2) Why is it righteous for God to take vengeance and execute retribution but wrong for us to do so?
- 3) How does the language in this passage compare to the language in 1 Thess. 4:16-17? Is Paul describing the same event or different events?
- 4) How is Hell described in this passage?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Timothy Peck: (Summarizing 1:1-12) - "When you're feeling uncertain about your relationship with God, where do you look to regain your confidence? The Thessalonians had lost their confidence, and they were frantically looking around them for assurance from God that he was still pleased with them. We regain our confidence by looking for signs of spiritual life, responding to our problems with spiritual stamina, anticipating God's future vindication, and striving to reflect Jesus in the way we live."

Wil Pounds: We can summarize by giving God thanksgiving because:

- We re growing steadfast in faith
- We are growing in greater love for one another
- We are persevering in troubling times
- We are secure in Christ's coming day of judgment
- We have a day of rejoicing and glorious future in the presence of our heavenly Father.

Hocking:

2A. PAUL PROMISES THEM THAT ALL THINGS WILL ONE DAY BE MADE RIGHT - 6-10

1B. The RIGHTEOUSNESS of God will see to it - 6

Cf. Galatians 6:7 - cf. Psalm 74:22-23; 79:10-12; 94:20-23;

Revelation 6:9-10; 11:18; 15:4; 16:5-6; 18:20; 19:2

2B. The REST of God will come to the believers - 7a

'And to you who are troubled - rest with us' - Revelation 14:13

3B. The REVELATION of our Lord will come - 7b

Cf. Matt. 16:27; 25:31 - cf. Jude 14-15; Rev. 1:7

4B. The REVENGE of God will come upon those who don't obey the gospel – 8-9

1C. The People who will experience this “*vengeance*” of God

2C. The Punishment will last forever - 9a

3C. The Power of the Lord will accomplish this - 9b

5B. The REWARD of God will come upon all who believe – 10

Stedman: Re vs 9 -- “Exclusion! Banishment! Separation! But not annihilation! Some claim that what these verses mean is that when people die their existence also ends; that they go out like the light of a candle and they are no more. But Scripture never describes it in those terms; rather, it speaks here of ‘eternal destruction.’ The word is ‘ruin,’ the loss of everything that makes life worthwhile; the trashing of life.”

Hiebert: “This principle of just requital lies at the basis of our belief in a moral universe. Our sense of justice demands such a requital. Not good but evil creates a moral problem for us. In the face of present injustices our conscience tells us that there must be a future retribution. A world in which justice was not done at last would not be God’s world at all.”

Hendriksen: “Paul is fond of this word *revelation* (*apokalupsis*, literally *uncovering, the removal of the veil*). Often he uses it in the sense of a disclosure of divine truth (Rom. 2:5; 16:25; I Cor. 14:6, 26; II Cor. 12:1, 7; Gal. 1:12; Eph. 3:5). In the present instance, however, the term has reference to the glorious manifestation of the Lord at his second coming. So also in I Cor. 1:7. Then the veil which now hides him from our view will be taken away for we shall see him in his majestic descent from heaven ... The expression ‘*at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven*’ means ‘when the Lord Jesus will be revealed, coming from heaven.’ This is the Parousia ... **With the angels of his power in flaming fire** ... That the Lord at his coming will be accompanied by the angels (in whom his power is made manifest) had been proclaimed by Jesus himself (Matt. 13:41, 42; 25:31; cf. Jude 15; Rev. 14:19). Their function will be twofold: ‘*first, to gather the weeds, binding them in bundles to be burned,*’ and also ‘*to gather the wheat into my (the Lord’s) barn.*’ The addition of the phrase ‘*in flaming fire*’ indicates the Lord’s holiness manifested in judgment (cf. Ex. 3:2; 19:16-20; Is. 29:6; 66:15, 16; Ps. 50:3; 97:3). The passage which must have been vividly present to Paul’s consciousness when he wrote this in Is. 66:15, 16.”

Ryrie: “Christians are stated to be the ones who bring admiration to the Lord on the part of those who witness His return. The spectators of His coming will marvel greatly at the Lord because they will then see fully displayed His grace in the completely changed

lives of His people. The world today should see the same thing to some measure at least in the lives of Christians as they reflect the grace and glory of Christ.”

TEXT: 2 Thessalonians 1: 11-12

TITLE: *DON'T LET HARD TIMES DISCOURAGE YOU FROM GOOD WORKS*

BIG IDEA:

SPIRITUAL FRUIT BRINGS GLORY TO GOD RIGHT NOW

Hiebert: “The eschatological picture just held before the readers to encourage them in their affliction now furnishes motivation to pray for them. It is characteristic of Paul thus to turn his teaching into prayer. His teaching was given in a spirit of prayer. He felt no inconsistency between the assurance of the divine working in them (1 Th 2:13; 4:9) and fervent prayer for them (1 Th 5:23-24). He regarded such intercessions for the elect (1 Th 1:4) as necessary links in the chain of salvation stretching from eternity past to eternity future.”

I. NEED FOR INTERCESSORY PRAYER

“To this end also we pray for you always”

II. NEED TO MEASURE UP TO THE STANDARD

“that our God may count you worthy of your calling”

III. TWO ASPECTS OF SPIRITUAL FRUIT

A. Its Intrinsic Character – Providing the Motivation

“and fulfill every desire for goodness”

B. Its Powerful Dynamic – Providing the Execution

“and the work of faith with power”

IV. ULTIMATE GOAL = GLORY TO GOD

A. *“in order that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you”*

B. *“and you in Him”*

Hubbard: “... points up the intimacy of union between Christ and his Church. As Christ reveals his glory in the Church, so the only glory the Church can claim is in him. That such a sharing of glory can take place is due to (*according to*) divine grace.”

V. SUPERABUNDANT RESOURCE

“according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ”

Morris: “Paul is not seeking for some merely human reformation, nor for some pious thinking. He wants to see that fruit of goodness that can come about only when the power of God is operative in men’s lives.”

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How could Paul and his companions be *actively praying* for so many different groups of believers? Did he make specific requests or just overall general intercession?
- 2) Is the “*desire of goodness*” mentioned here on the part of God or on the part of the Thessalonian believers?
- 3) Why is “*work of faith*” singular instead of plural” What is the significance? Are there ways in which Christians can seek to live moral lives apart from the power of God and thereby negate giving God His due glory?
- 4) Is verse 12 talking about something that will only happen on that day when Christ returns or something that should be happening on an ongoing basis?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Hocking:

3A. PAUL PRAYS FOR THEM AS THEY SEEK TO GLORIFY GOD - 11-12

1B. God’s PLAN - “*calling*” - 11a

“*that our God would count you worthy of this calling*”

Cf. 2 Timothy 1:9-10; 2 Thess. 2:14

2B. God’s PLEASURE - 11b

“*and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness*”

Cf. Lk. 12:32; Eph. 1:5, 9; Phil. 2:13

3B. God’s POWER - 11c

“*and the work of faith with power*”

Cf. John 6:27-29; Eph. 1:19-20; 1 Thess. 2:13

4B. God’s PURPOSE - 12a

“*that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in Him*” - cf. 1 Cor. 10:31

5B. God’s PROVISION - 12b

“*according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ*”

Piper: “The doctrine that I would like to develop from these verses is this: IT IS THE DUTY OF CHRISTIANS TO SEEK GOD’S POWER TO FULFILL GOOD RESOLVES. You can see that clearly in verse 11 at the end. Paul prays that God ‘*may fulfill every good resolve and work of faith by his power*’...”

Now what verse 11 says is that there is a way of life that is worthy of that call. ‘*Worthy*’ doesn’t mean deserving or meritorious. It means fitting, proper, appropriate...

It’s no inconsistency for God to establish an infallible connection between being called and being glorified, and then to require as a prerequisite of glorification that those whom he called walk worthy of his call. And this text shows why there is no inconsistency -- namely, because God is the one who by his power enables the fulfillment of good resolves which lead to glory. God calls. God promises glory to the called. God establishes prerequisites for glory. And he fulfills them by his power. If we are willing to let God really be God, ‘*from whom and through whom and to whom are all things,*’ then the necessity of obedience will not be a contradiction to our assurance of glorification..

The first point is that seeking the power of God to fulfill our good resolves does NOT mean that we don’t really resolve or that we don’t really use will-power. The engagement of God’s power never takes the place of the engagement of our will! The power of God in sanctification never makes us passive! The power of God engages itself beneath or behind and within our will, not in place of our will. The evidence of God’s power in our lives is not the absence of our willing but the strength of our willing.”

Swindoll: “Prayer: An Invaluable Discipline –

As **Edith Schaeffer** says: ‘Prayer is as natural as breathing, as necessary as oxygen.’ In short, it is an invaluable discipline.

What is it? Prayer is making deliberate contact with God in word or in thought. It is the voice of faith, whose whisper can be felt across the street or across the world. It is what pries us from our seats as spectators and places us as participants with God in matters of destiny. Through spending time in His presence, His thoughts gradually become our thoughts and His ways, our ways. Through prayer we become transformed. Prayer expresses itself in many ways: as an act of praise, a confession of wrong, a request for help, a declaration of need, a statement of thanks, or an intercession for others. It is drawing near to God with confidence (Heb. 4:16); it is asking, seeking, and knocking (Matt. 7:7-8); it is releasing anxiety (Phil. 4:6-7); it is gaining wisdom by asking for it (James 1:5); it is the discipline of mind that is always appropriate for our needs (Eph. 6:18). Prayer is, in fact, such an invaluable discipline that we are commanded to pray ‘*without ceasing*’ (1 Thess. 5:17). Obviously, this can’t be nonstop verbal praying but, rather, an attitude of prayer. It is a preoccupation with the Lord . . . to live with Christ in such a way that you can talk with Him or listen to Him at any moment. It is an atmosphere in which there is no impediment between your soul and the Savior.

Why is it important? First, prayer is important because it refocuses our perspective. Without prayer we see only the visible; with prayer we see the hidden dimension of the invisible. Second, prayer quiets our fears and calms our nerves. We may come to

prayer fearful and anxious, but when we give our worries to the Lord, we come away calmed and assured (Phil 4:6-7). Third, prayer transfers our burdens. It takes the big load we've been carrying and shifts it to the shoulders that can handle its weight (Matt. 11:28-29). Fourth, prayer upholds others in need. It is the way we help bear one another's burdens."

Ryrie: "All of this is ascribed to the grace of God. It is not within the power of man to glorify God by his good works; yet in His grace He condescends to use and empower men so that he may perform good works and glorify his Heavenly Father. This is what Paul prays God will do through these believers so that they may walk worthy of their calling particularly in times of trial."

Hendriksen: "Moreover, the missionaries are interested in something else besides the salvation of the Thessalonians. They desire that every resolve prompted by goodness and every work resulting from faith be brought to fulfillment and that the readers may finally be counted worthy of entering the state of ultimate perfection in order that an even higher goal may be attained, as is expressed in verse 12."

TEXT: 2 Thessalonians 2:1-5

TITLE: LEFT BEHIND?

BIG IDEA:

**HOW DO YOU KNOW YOU HAVEN'T BEEN LEFT BEHIND?
THE REVEALING OF THE ANTICHRIST MUST PRECEDE THE DAY OF
THE LORD.**

INTRODUCTION:

Have we missed the boat? Are we as believers somehow already in the Day of the Lord and experiencing that special time of intensified wrath of God? Certainly we are experiencing a high level of suffering and persecution (in the early church). What are we to make of these difficult times?

I. (:1-3a) DON'T BE DECEIVED ABOUT THE ORDER OF EVENTS

A. Subject Under Discussion

"Now we request you, brethren, with regard to":

1. Second Coming (general designation of whole series of events kicked off by the rapture)
"the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ"

2. Rapture (subset isolating one event that initiates the Second Coming)
"and our gathering together to Him"

B. Need to Stay Level-Headed

1. *"that you may not be quickly shaken from your composure"*

2. *"or be disturbed"*

C. Error to Watch out for

"to the effect that the day of the Lord has come"

Refers to that aspect of the Second Coming that is characterized by divine wrath and judgment

D. Possible Delivery Methods

1. *"either by a spirit"*

Someone claiming to be passing along a prophetic word from the spirit

2. *"or a message"*

3. *"or a letter as if from us"*

E. Summary Warning

“Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first ...”

1. “It” = “*day of the Lord*” will not come
2. unless the “*departure*” / “*apostasy*” comes first – 2 possibilities:
 - a. Reference to the rapture as discussed in 1 Thess 4 (see Hocking in Notes below)
 - b. Reference to a general falling away from the faith – Preferred view

II. (:3b-4) THE REVELATION OF THE ANTICHRIST WILL BE A BLATANT DISPLAY OF APOSTASY – IMPOSSIBLE TO MISS IT

A. Rebellious Character of the Apostasy Will Be Blatantly Obvious

1. “*the apostasy*”
2. “*the man of lawlessness is revealed*”
3. “*the son of destruction*”

MacArthur: Human history has had its share of evil leaders ... But one is coming who will surpass them all, both in the extent of his power and the evil of his person. He will be the most fiendish, wicked, powerful man ever to walk the earth. He is known in Scripture by many names; he is “Gog of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal” (Ezek. 38:2); the little horn of Daniel 7:8, 24; 8:9; the “prince who is to come” (Dan. 9:26); the king who does as he pleases (Dan. 1:36); the foolish, worthless shepherd (Zech. 11:15-17); the beast (Rev. 11:7; 13:1; 14:9; 19:20; etc.).

B. Sacrilegious Actions of the Antichrist Will Be Blatantly Obvious

1. General Description of Usurpation of Worship

“who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship”
2. Ultimate Display of Sacrilegious Blasphemy

“so that he takes his seat in the temple of God”
3. Primary Objective

“displaying himself as being God”

III. (:5) DON'T BE FORGETFUL ABOUT YOUR FORMER COURSE IN ESCHATOLOGY

“Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things?”

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) For those who believe in a pre-trib rapture, Why does Paul describe in detail the person of the *AntiChrist* to prepare believers to recognize him if we are taken up in the Rapture before he even appears?
- 2) How does false teaching get promoted? How does it gain such a foothold and spread so quickly? How can we prepared so that we do not become unsettled by every wind of strange doctrine that blows by?
- 3) What present signs of apostasy do we see in our generation that are precursors or foreshadowings of the coming great apostasy referred to here?
- 4) Must there be a physical temple in Israel present in order for the fulfillment of this prophecy regarding the AntiChrist taking his seat “in the temple of God”? What type of temple could this be? How long would it take to construct such a temple? What does this passage imply about the possible imminency of the return of Christ?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Hocking:

- 1A. THE DAY OF THE LORD IS THE TIME OF HIS REVELATION - 1-2
 - 1B. The RAPTURE is the basis for this word of exhortation from Paul - 1
“by the coming (Greek: parousia) of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto Him.”
 - 2B. The immediate REASON was the reaction of these believers to reports that the day of the Lord was already here - 2
“that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us”
- 2A. THE DEPARTURE OF CHURCH-AGE BELIEVERS WILL COME FIRST - 3
“a falling away first” - Greek: *apostasia* - used twice in its noun form (cf. Acts 21:21), and 15 times in its verb form, *aphistemi*. It is translated “depart” in 11 places.
Once in Luke 8:13 it is translated “fall away”; it is found in Acts 5:37 where it is translated *drew away*,” and in 5:38 as “Refrain from these men.”
It is used in 1 Timothy 4:1 as a religious apostasy or departure from the faith.
The very qualifying words “from the faith” are needed to describe what kind of “departure” it is - nothing like this is in our text. The definite article is used with the word which implies a specific departure, just mentioned in 2 Thess. 2:1, and in 1 Thess. 4:13-18.

The Antichrist will not be known until after the “departure” or the Rapture of The Church.

3A. THE DESCRIPTION OF THE ANTICHRIST THAT REVEALS HIS REAL IDENTITY - 3-4

“that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition” - modern translations follow the MSS evidence that reads “lawlessness” instead of “sin” (primarily in Vaticanus & Sinaiticus - not in the majority of texts).

1B. His DEPRAVITY will go unchecked

“man of sin” - cf. Daniel 11:37-38

2B. His DESTINY is already settled

“son of perdition” - cf. Rev. 19:20; 20:10

Cf. John 17:12 - Judas: *“son of perdition”*

3B. His DETERMINATION to be honored above every one and every thing –
4a

“Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped.” - cf. Daniel 7:8, 11, 20, 25; 11:36-37

4B. His DECISION to sit in the temple of God will be the final evidence of his real identity - 4b

“so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God” - cf. Matthew 24:15

Piper: “So Paul's aim is very practical in this passage: he wants to help Christians experience peace and calm and stability and clarity of mind -- Christians who don't get all ‘shook up’ and agitated and anxious and fretful and confused and off-balance when crises come to the world.

Stedman: “We come to a passage now where we must confront the question of whether the church will go through the great tribulation. Does the Lord come for his church before the great time of trouble that is coming; does he come in the middle of it; or does the church in fact go through the tribulation and Jesus comes at the end. That is a much debated and controversial question. The Scriptures are at times hard to understand concerning these issues; that is why there are differences of opinion among believers regarding them. All evangelicals agree, however, that only these three possibilities exist: a pre, mid, or post tribulational coming...”

I must also point out that there is considerable evidence that the word that is translated ‘rebellion,’ or ‘apostasy’ (as some versions have it), should more properly be translated ‘the departure.’ Read that way the apostle is clearly saying that the Day of the Lord cannot come until the departure of the church has first taken place...

Wuest: “ The words *‘falling away’* are the Authorized Version rendering of *apostasia*. The verbal form *afistamai* from which it comes is present middle of *afisthmi*, the root verb, which we will study. The simple verb *Jisthmi* in its intransitive sense means ‘to stand,’ the prefixed preposition means ‘off, away from,’ and the compound verb, ‘to stand off from.’ The word does

not mean 'to fall.' The Greeks had a word for that, *piptw. Afisthmi*, in its various uses, is reported by Thayer as follows: 'to make stand off, cause to withdraw, to stand off, stand aloof, to desert, to withdraw from one'; in contexts where a defection from the faith is in view, it means 'to fall away, become faithless.' The verb is rendered by the translators of the Authorized Version 'to depart,' in Luke 2:32; Luke 4:13; Luke 13:27; Acts 12:10; Acts 15:38; Acts 19:9; Acts 22:29; 2 Corinthians 12:8; 1 Timothy 4:1; 2 Timothy 2:19; Hebrews 3:12. In Luke 8:13 it is translated 'fall away,' in Acts 5:37, 'drew away,' and in Acts 5:38, 'refrain.' Had they translated the word here instead of interpreting it, they would have rendered it by the word 'departure.' The reader will observe that the predominant translation of the verbal form is 'to depart,' also, that where it is translated 'fall away,' the context adds the idea of 'falling away' to the verb, which action is still a departure.

E. Schuyler English, to whom this present writer is deeply indebted for calling his attention to the word 'departure' as the correct rendering of *apostasia* in this context, also informs us that the following translators understood the Greek word to mean 'a departure' in this context: Tyndale (1534), Coverdale (1535), the Geneva Bible (1537), Cranmer (1539), and Beza (1565), and so used it in their translations. *Apostasia* is used once more in the New Testament and is translated 'to forsake' (AV), signifying a departure. The neuter noun *apostasion* in Matthew 5:31; Matthew 19:7; and Mark 10:4 is rendered by the Authorized Version, 'divorcement,' which word also signifies a departure, here, from antecedent relations.

The writer is well aware of the fact that *apostasia* was used at times both in classical and koine Greek in the sense of a defection, a revolt in a religious sense, a rebellion against God, and of the act of apostasy. Liddell and Scott in their classical lexicon give the above as the first definition of the word. Moulton and Milligan quote a papyrus fragment where the word means 'a rebel.' But these are acquired meanings of the word gotten from the context in which it is used, not the original, basic, literal meaning, and should not be imposed upon the word when the context does not qualify the word by these meanings, as in the case of our Thessalonians passage, where the context in which *apostasia* is embedded does not refer to a defection from the truth but to the rapture of the church. The fact that our word 'apostasy' means a defection from the truth is entirely beside the point since we do not interpret Scripture upon the basis of a transliterated word to which a certain meaning has been given, but upon the basis of what the Greek word mean to the first century reader. The fact that Paul in 1 Timothy 4:1 uses this verb in the words 'some shall depart from the faith' and finds it necessary to qualify its meaning by the phrase 'from the faith' indicates that the word itself has no such connotation. The translators of the Authorized Version did not translate the word, but offered their interpretation of it. They should have translated it and allowed the student to interpret it in its context.

With the translation of the word before us, the next step is to ascertain

from the context that to which this departure refers. We note the presence of the Greek definite article before *apostasia*, of which the translation takes no notice. A Greek word is definite in itself, and when the article is used the exegete must pay particular attention to it. The basal function of the article is to point out individual identity. It does more than mark the object as definitely conceived, for a substantive in Greek is definite without the article. This departure, whatever it is, is a particular one, one differentiated from all others. Another function of the article is 'to denote previous reference.' Here the article points out an object the identity of which is defined by some previous reference made to it in the context. Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2:1 has just spoken of the coming of the Lord. This coming is defined by the words 'our gathering together unto him,' not as the second advent, but as the rapture. The Greek word rendered 'and' can also be translated 'even,' and the translation reads, 'the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, even our gathering together unto him.' The article before *apostasia* defines that word by pointing to 'the gathering together unto him' as that departure. This article determines the context which defines *apostasia*. The translators took the context of 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12 as deciding the significance of the word, but they went too far afield, not grasping the function of the definite article preceding *apostasia* which points back to the rapture of 2 Thessalonians 2:2, not ahead to the refusal to believe the truth of 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12. The article is all-important here, as in many instances of its use in the Greek New Testament. In 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, Paul had given these saints teaching on the rapture, and the Greek article here points to that which was well known to both the reader and the writer, which is another use of the Greek definite article. Thus, the departure of the church from earth to heaven must precede the great tribulation period. And we have answered our questions again. It might be added that the reason why Paul merely speaks of a pretribulation rapture rather than a pre-seventieth week rapture is that he is addressing himself to the needs of the Thessalonian saints and is not explaining the particular place of the rapture in the prophetic program of God."

Jensen: Study other OT passages about the Antichrist:

Eze 38-39; Dan 7:8, 20; 8:24; 11:28-12:3; Zec 12-14; Mt 24:15; 1 Jn 2:18, 22; 4:3; 2 Jn 7; Rev 13:1-10; 17:8.

Swindoll: Re Identification of the Antichrist --

"People who have stood watch over the prophetic horizon throughout the centuries have tried to identify this man. Their guesses crop up in every century, from a first-century Nero to a twentieth-century Hitler. Paul's point, however, is that this man is yet to be revealed and won't be until the dark age of apostasy engulfs the world. This man will emerge after the Rapture, probably to calm the chaotic waters troubled by the unexplained departure of so many Christians. He will be primed and ready to speak. He will stand before not only a nation but a world and will win their approval. Like Hitler, he will emerge on a scene of such political and economic chaos that the people will see him as a man of vision, with pragmatic answers and power to unite the world. Verses

5-7 form a parentheses to Paul's discussion, where he gives the reason for the delay of this man entering the political spotlight."

MacArthur: The apostle wrote this section to deal with the Thessalonians' loss of hope and joy through confusion about the end times. He had already given them explicit instruction about both the Rapture (1 Thess. 4:13-18) and the Day of the Lord (1 Thess. 5:1-11). Yet only a few months later, they had become confused, again fearing that they had missed the Rapture and were in the Day of the Lord. They knew that the Day of the Lord is God's final judgment on the sinful world ... Apparently, even with the apostle's correctives in the first letter, the intensity of the persecution they were undergoing made them unable to shake the possibility that it had arrived. They were also directly assaulted by the deception of some false teachers. Playing off their confusion, they deceived the believers into thinking that Paul actually taught that the Day of the Lord had come and sought to prove it by producing a forged letter purporting to be from him in support of their teaching. Paul had explained in his first epistle why they could not be in the Day of the Lord (the Day of the Lord is for unbelievers; cf. 1 Thess 5:4-9). Here, recognizing that due to the efforts of false teachers the truth does not yet prevail, he adds strong evidence to prove that they are not in the Day of the Lord: Antichrist had not appeared, and his coming will occur just before that Day comes.

TEXT: 2 Thessalonians 2:6-12

TITLE: *THE UNLEASHING OF THE ANTICHRIST*

BIG IDEA:

FOUR MODES OF OPERATION FOR THE ANTICHRIST

I. (:6-7) MYSTERY MODE OF OPERATION – Presently Active during this Church Age ... but Restrained

- A. Presently restrained by the Holy Spirit
“And you know what restrains him now”
- B. Awaiting Future Revelation and Intense Activity
“so that in his time he may be revealed”
- C. Active Behind the Scenes Right Now
“For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work”

Stedman: “Paul goes on to say there is a mystery of evil at work in our world. He calls it *‘the mystery of lawlessness’* which is already at work. It is the strange secret of universal evil. Even secular prophets are puzzled by it. What is it about our race that makes it so difficult to correct the conditions that destroy it? Why is drug trafficking so impossible to stop when it is clearly evident what terrible things it does to people? Why is it that alcoholics will return again and again to their habit when they see that it is destroying their homes and families, and even their own lives? It is a mystery; the mystery of lawlessness; the strange secret of human evil. Why is it that as the centuries go by we have made zero progress in curing human wickedness? We are still wrestling with the problem just as people wrestled with it five thousand years before Christ. We do not make any progress in this area.”

- C. Restraining Influence of the XXX (Holy Spirit ??) Will Be Removed
“only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way”
This could be a reference to the rapture of the church

Life Application Bible Commentary:

Commentators have considered three possibilities for the identity of this “*restrainer*”: (1) government and law, which help to curb evil; (2) the ministry and activity of the church and the effects of the gospel; (3) the Holy Spirit

Stott argues for Rome and the power of the state (God’s agent for the punishment of evil). 4 arguments in favor of this view:

- 1) It makes good sense. As Plummer wrote, “the natural restrainer of lawlessness is the law, and in the first century the great organizer and executor of the law was the Roman Empire.”

- 2) It tallies with Paul's known view and experience of the state.
- 3) The combination of the neuter and the masculine is easily explained. "Think", wrote Hendriksen, "of the empire and the emperor, of justice and the judge, of law and the one who enforces it."
- 4) The enigmatic reference would be explicable, since there were obvious prudential reasons for not openly and explicitly predicting that the state would be "taken out of the way" or "removed from the scene" (REB). . .

Were it not for some remaining restraints (which preserve a measure of justice, freedom, order and decency) these things would break out much more virulently. And one day they will. For when the restraint is removed, then secret subversion will become open rebellion under the unscrupulous leadership of the lawless one who will be revealed (8a). Then we can expect a period (mercifully short) of political, social and moral chaos, in which both God and Law are impudently flouted, until suddenly the Lord Jesus will come and overthrow him with the breath of his mouth and destroy him by the splendour of his come (8).

II. (:8) REVEALED MODE OF OPERATION – Revealed for a Brief Rampage during Daniel's 70th Week ... Then Terminated (marked for extinction)

- A. Revealed for a Brief Rampage
 1. *"And then that lawless one will be revealed"*
- B. Terminated at the Second Coming
 1. *"whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth"*

MacArthur: Isaiah 11:4 says that the Lord "will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked." Isaiah 30:33 adds, "For Topheth has long been ready, indeed, it has been prepared for the king. He has made it deep and large, a pyre of fire with plenty of wood; the breath of the Lord, like a torrent of brimstone, sets it afire" (cf. Hos. 6:5). Revelation uses the similar picture of a sword coming out of the Lord's mouth to destroy His enemies (1:16; 2:16; 19:15, 21).

2. *"and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming"*

III. (:9-10a) SATANIC MODE OF OPERATION – What is Satan trying to Accomplish?

"that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan"

- A. Outwardly Impressive – Supernatural WOW Impact
 1. *"with all power"*

2. *“and signs”*
3. *“and false wonders”*

Piper: “The man of lawlessness is not Satan, but comes in the energy and power of Satan with supernatural signs and wonders. This is a warning not to make signs and wonders the ground of your faith or the criterion of truth. All these signs and wonders are counterfeit not because they aren't miraculous -- they have Satanic power -- but because they don't point to truth. They lie. They are no more to be trusted than the spirit of prophecy in verse 2 that said the day of the Lord had come.”

B. Inwardly Deceptive and Destructive

1. Inwardly Deceptive

“and with all the deception of wickedness”

2. Destructive

“for those who perish”

**IV. (:11-12) DIVINE MODE OF OPERATION – What is the Bigger Picture?
What is God Actually Accomplishing?**

A. (:11) Deception Reinforcing Unbelief and False Worship

“And for this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false”

B. (:12) Guilt Validating Final Judgment for Unbelief and Wickedness

“in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness”

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) In what ways do we see the Antichrist restrained in these times of the Gentiles?
- 2) How difficult is it for God to defeat this supreme enemy?
- 3) How are we to view miracles and powerful signs since this passage clearly teaches that God is not the only source for such special events? How can we distinguish between the working of God and the activity inspired by evil spiritual forces?
- 4) Are we characterized by a love of the truth or a pursuit of the pleasures of this wicked world? Are we characterized by insight into the truth or deception and delusion?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Hocking:

4A. THE DAY OF HIS REVELATION IS IMPOSSIBLE UNTIL THE RESTRAINT IS REMOVED - 5-8A

v. 6 - *“that he might be revealed in his time”*

v. 7-8 - *“until HE be taken out of the way...and then shall that Wicked be revealed”*

All Greek MSS read “lawless One” not “Wicked.”

5A. HIS DESTRUCTION WILL COME WHEN OUR LORD RETURNS IN ALL HIS GLORY – 8

“whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming” - cf. Rev. 19:19-20

6A. HIS DEEDS WILL BE INSPIRED BY SATAN HIMSELF – 9

“whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders” - NIV - *“displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles”*

Cf. Rev. 13:4, 12-14

7A. HIS DECEPTION WILL AFFECT THOSE THAT PERISH – 10

“with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish”

Cf. Rev. 13:8; 17:8 - cf. 1 Timothy 4:1-3; 2 Timothy 3:1-5, 13

8A. THE DELUSION WILL COME FROM GOD HIMSELF – 11

“and for this cause (cf. v. 10b) God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a (literally - “the”) lie.”

9A. THE DAMNATION OF ALL THOSE WHO ARE DECEIVED WILL COME - 12

“that they all might be damned”

two reasons:

1B. Because they did not believe the truth!

2B. Because they delighted in unrighteousness!

MacArthur: 4 Aspects of Antichrist’s career:

1) His Revelation

The change in gender from the neuter participle translated *“what restrains”* in verse 6 to the masculine participle rendered *he who . . . restrains* is significant. The sovereign, divine force that currently restrains Antichrist is exerted by a person – the Holy Spirit (cf. John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13 where Jesus used a masculine pronoun with the neuter noun translated *“Spirit”*). Only He has the supernatural power to hold Satan in check. The Holy Spirit has always battled wickedness in the world. . .

2) His Destruction

At the height of his power, when he seems invincible, he will meet his end.

Daniel 7:26 says, *“his dominion will be taken away, annihilated and destroyed forever”*;

Daniel 11:45 notes that *“he will come to his end, and no one will help him.”*

Revelation 17:11 declares that Antichrist *“goes to destruction,”* and that destruction is graphically described in Revelation 19:20: *“And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone.”*

3) His Power

Antichrist’s miracles will reveal his supernatural power and create wonder, shock, and astonishment. *Pseudos (false)* modifies all three terms; Antichrist’s miracles, signs, and wonders are false not in the sense that they are fakery but that they lead to false conclusions about who he is. They will cause people to believe the lie that he is a divine being and worship him.

4) His Influence

Antichrist’s malevolent, deceptive, deadly influence will extend to all *those who perish*. Only God’s elect will not be taken in (Matt. 24:24). The unregenerate, being children of the arch-liar Satan (John 8:44), will inevitably fall for the lies of his emissary (cf. 1 Cor. 2:14; 2 Cor. 4:3-4).

Life Application Bible Commentary: Warning Signs of Developing Hardness

Hardening is like a callus or like the tough bone fibers that bridge a fracture. Spiritual hardening begins with self-sufficiency, security in oneself, and self-satisfaction. The real danger is that at some point, repeated resistance to God will yield an actual inability to respond, which the Bible describes as a hardened heart. Insensitivity indicates advanced hardening. Here are some of the warning signs:

Disobeying – Pharaoh’s willful disobedience led to his hardened heart. Exod. 4:21

Having wealth and prosperity – Taking God’s blessings for granted can cause us to feel as if they were owed to us. Deut. 8:6-14

Rebelling and being discontented – Suffering or discomfort can create an attitude that blames God. Psalm 95:8

Rejecting a deserved rebuke – Rejecting God’s gift makes our neck stiff and our heart hard. Prov. 29:1

Refusing to listen – Refusing to listen leads to a loss of spiritual hearing. Zech. 7:11-13

Failing to respond – Listening to God with no intention of obeying produces an inability to obey. Matt. 13:11-15

Ryrie: These verses reflect the O.T. concept that God is sovereign even in the activities of the powers of evil (cf. Ex. 4:21; Josh. 11:20; 1 Kings 22:19-23; 1 Chron. 21:1; cf. 2 Sam. 24:1).

Mayhue: Paul implies that he had repeatedly taught them these truths which they really should not have forgotten. If they had only used what they knew to be true to evaluate this teaching, they would have judged it to be false and, thus, would not have been shaken and troubled (2:2). Paul appealed to previously revealed Scripture (Daniel) so that he could not be accused by the heretics of making this material up under the guise of being an apostle.

TEXT: 2 Thessalonians 2:13-17

TITLE: CHRISTIAN STABILITY

BIG IDEA:

PERILOUS END TIMES CALL FOR STEADFASTNESS ON THE PART OF THE ELECT (WHOM GOD LOVES AND STRENGTHENS)

INTRODUCTION:

Hendriksen: In dividing the material of II Thessalonians into sections or thought units it is therefore not an error either to consider 2:13-16 along with the preceding twelve verses of chapter 2, or along with the contents of chapter 3. There is overlapping here.

Stott: Stability is a coveted quality in every sphere of human life. Governments talk about stabilizing the economy. Builders endeavour to construct stable houses, and carpenters stable furniture. Aircraft and ships have “stabilizers,” to counteract turbulence and the ocean swell. And we admire people who have a stable personality, character and convictions.

The New Testament says much about Christian stability. In Paul’s first Thessalonian letter he declared: “*now we really live, since you are standing firm in the Lord*” (3:8). And here in his second letter, having urged them not to become “*easily unsettled*” (2:2), he is about to issue the exhortation, *So then, brothers, stand firm . . .* “ (15). In the words of Jesus we are not to be “*like reeds shaken by the wind*”, but rather be rock-like and immovable. Moreover, the New Testament identifies the winds which threaten our stability, and against which we are to take our stand. The first is opposition or persecution (1 Thess. 1:4-6; 3:2-4), the second is false teaching (e.g. 2 Thess. 2:2-3), and the third is temptation. Temptations are like strong gusts of wind which threaten to blow us over. That is why Paul prays that God will “*establish*” the Thessalonians, so that they will be holy in God’s presence (1 Thess. 3:13, RSV).

I. (:13) APPRECIATING THE PROCESS OF DIVINE ELECTION

A. Obligated to Give Thanks

“But we should always give thanks to God for you”

Bruce: Resumption of the introductory thanksgiving of 1:3

B. Election Rooted in God’s Initiating Family Love

“brethren beloved by the Lord”

Hiebert: That “*Lord*” here means “*the Lord Jesus Christ*” is clear from the following verses where He is distinguished from the Father. This change in the person said to love them is evidence that for Paul the two designations were equivalent. The reference to the Lord Jesus (2:8) here as the one loving them seems due to the foregoing picture of Him as the invincible Judge of evil men. Men may hate and persecute them, but they

can take courage from the fact that they are the objects of the love of the Lord who will triumph over all evil.

C. Election Ordained by God's Sovereign (and Unfathomable) Selection
"because God has chosen you"

D. Election Predating any Human Involvement
"from the beginning"

Ryrie: a reference to the beginning of all things; i.e., from before the world began. This is an idea which is regularly found in Paul's writings (1 Cor. 2:7; Eph. 1:4). God had the choice of His people in mind in eternity past.

E. Election Destined for God's Ultimate Blessing
"for salvation"

F. Election Dependent Upon a Process that Combines
Divine Preservation and Human Perseverance

1. Divine Preservation and Purifying
"through sanctification by the Spirit"

2. Human Perseverance and Responsibility
"and faith in the truth"

II. (:14) UNDERSTANDING THE PURPOSE OF GOD'S CALLING

"And it was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Hiebert: Their call did not immediately transport them to glory but set them on the way to the obtaining of *"the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."* "Glory" is the splendor and honor which now belong to our Lord as exalted at the right hand of God. That glory will be shared with His saints at His return (1:10-12).

III. (:15) STANDING FIRM IN THE TRADITION OF TRUTH

"So then, brethren, stand firm, and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us."

Bruce: Other kinds of tradition are referred to with disapproval in the NT. Jesus rebuked some of his contemporaries because, as he said to them, *"you leave the commandment of God, and hold fast the tradition of men"* (Mark 7:8). Similarly, the false philosophy against which the Colossian Christians are put on their guard is described by Paul as *"the tradition of men"* (Col 2:8). But it is not tradition as such, but false, inadequate or outmoded tradition, that is deprecated. The tradition of Christ shares his truth, his adequacy and his abiding vitality.

IV. (:16-17) RESTING IN THE COMFORT AND ENCOURAGEMENT OF GOD'S LOVING CARE

“Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace, comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word.”

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How many interpersonal conflicts between believers could be alleviated by an attitude of *thanksgiving* for one another as we contemplate God's plan of election and His ultimate purpose to bring us all to glory?
- 2) What is the initiating factor in God's plan of Election?
- 3) What attacks are being made on the “*traditions*” of truth that Paul has communicated to us in the Scriptures?
- 4) Are we finding that *encouragement* that God wants to give us to help us press on to fulfill every good work He has planned for us?

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Hocking:

1A. THE REASONS FOR THIS EXHORTATION - 13-17

“*But*” - Greek: *de* - in contrast to those who will believe the lie of the Antichrist.
“*brethren beloved of the Lord*” – tremendous encouragement from Paul to these new converts!

“*because*” - Greek: *hoti* - he gives the reasons why he feels so compelled to thank God for them.

1B. The CHOICE of God - 13

Greek: *heilato* - aorist middle - “*to take for one's self*”

1C. When He chose us

“*from the beginning*” cf. Eph. 1:4; 2 Tim. 1:9

2C. Why He chose us

“*to salvation*” Greek: *eis*

3C. How He chose us

“*through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth*”

Cf. 1 Peter 1:2, 18-25

Cf. Acts 13:48

2B. The CALLING of God - 14

Romans 8:28-30; 1 Cor. 1:9

Cf. John 17:22, 24; Romans 8:17-18

3B. The COMMANDMENTS of God - 15

“hold the traditions which ye have been taught”

Greek: *paradosis* and *paradidomi*

Cf. 1 Cor. 11:2 (*“keep the ordinances as I delivered them, to you”*),

11:23 - *“that which also I delivered unto you”* - cf. 2 Thess. 3:6 -

“tradition”

4B. The COMFORT of God - 16-17

1C. The Explanation of this comfort

“which hath loved us”

2C. The Extent of this comfort

“everlasting consolation”

3C. The Essence of this comfort

“good hope through grace”

We all need hope, but good hope

It through or by God’s grace, giving us what we do not deserve!

4C. The Effect of this comfort

“stablish you in every good word and work”

Greek: *sterizo* - used 14 times – in 2 Thess. 3:3 as well as 1 Peter 5:10

Piper: ‘Now let's sum up the steps of our salvation that give us eternal comfort and good hope. First, God chose us from the beginning to be saved. Second, God called us through the gospel. Third and fourth -- let's keep them together now -- the Spirit is sanctifying us and we are believing the truth of God. And fifth, all this is leading us to obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ...

Let me close with this one exhortation. Why are you downcast, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God. For he is a God of matchless grace. He elects by grace. He calls by grace. He sanctifies by grace. He sustains faith by grace. And he will glorify you by grace. You cannot earn it or deserve it or merit it. It is free. Believe it. Rest in it. Delight in it. And it is yours.”

Stedman: “The love of God gives us security, and the patience of Christ give us consistency, the quality that this age needs more than anything else. Christians should be the same day in and day out. They should refuse to become upset and thrown off by circumstances so that they end up responding like the world around. Stand fast! And hold fast! God will see you through to the day when you will share the glory of Christ.”

Swindoll:

Five Reasons Why We Suffer:

A) Personally – to develop your faith

As the saying goes, No pain, no gain. As endurance is developed in a long-distance runner through strenuous exercise, so faith grows through testing

(James 1:2-4).

B) Doctrinally – to expose error if it exists

Heat has a way of bringing impurities to the surface, whether they are doctrinal or moral (1 Cor. 11:17-32, also James 5:13-16).

C) Vertically – to learn obedience

It is by falling and scrapping our knees that we learn to walk safely (Heb. 5:8).

D) Horizontally – to cultivate humility

Our thorns in the flesh have a way of piercing pride and deflating an overblown estimation of ourselves (2 Cor. 12:7).

E) Ultimately – to glorify God

Four Ways We Can Encourage the Sufferer:

A) Compassion

B) Instruction

C) Exhortation

D) Intercession

Three Benefits We Can Gain From Suffering:

A) the ability to comfort others

B) a dependence upon God

C) learning to give thanks in everything

Hiebert: Imbedded in the basic meaning of the word *tradition* lies the thought of the derivative nature of the gospel message. It was a message which Paul had received from the Lord and passed on to his converts (1 Cor. 15:1-3). The gospel was not the product of his own fertile imagination but was a divine revelation to him. It was the origin of the message they had received that assured its validity. Because the message given them came from God they must cling to it and not allow any other teaching to displace it.

Ryrie: Therefore – since believers were included in the pre-temporal purpose of God and are guaranteed ultimately the glory of God, and since believers cannot be overcome by Satan or his Man of Sin – therefore, stand fast in the midst of opposition from the enemies of Christ and in the face of uncertainty of the time of the return of Christ.

Life Application Bible Commentary:

How do we “*stand firm and keep a strong grip*”? We should hold on to the truth of Christ’s teachings because our lives depend on it.

To believe in Jesus and stand firm will take perseverance because our faith will be challenged and opposed. Severe trials will sift true Christians from fair-weather believers. Enduring to the end does not earn salvation for us but marks us as already saved. The assurance of our salvation will keep us going through times of persecution.

Because Christ lives in us, we can remain courageous and hopeful to the end. Without this enduring faithfulness, we could easily be blown away by the winds of temptation, false teaching, or persecution.

TEXT: 2 Thessalonians 3:1-5

TITLE: PRAYER CONNECTS GOD'S FAITHFULNESS TO OUR CONFIDENCE

BIG IDEA:

MISSIONARIES AND THEIR DISCIPLE CHURCHES (SUPPORTING CHURCHES) PURSUE A PATH OF STEADFASTNESS (DESPITE THE PERIL OF EVIL) WITH THE CONFIDENCE IN THE LORD THAT COMES FROM MUTUAL PRAYER

I. (:1) SUCCESS -- PRAYER FOR CONTINUED MISSIONARY SUCCESS -- BASED ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE WORD OF GOD

(Key = Power of God's Word as Previously Demonstrated)

"Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord may spread rapidly and be glorified, just as it did also with you"

Ritchie: When the word of the Lord is "*glorified*," it means that its hidden character is revealed as the word of life, righteousness and truth. As soon as the word is accepted by faith, it begins to adorn the life of the believer. That is what the apostle wants prayer for.

II. (:2-3) SAFETY -- PRAYER FOR CONTINUED MISSIONARY SAFETY -- IN A CLIMATE OF PERSECUTION

(Key = Faithfulness of the Lord according to His Promises)

A. (:2) Climate of Wicked Opposition

"and that we may be delivered from perverse and evil men; for not all have faith."

MacArthur: The apostle was not concerned merely about self-preservation or personal comfort and safety (2 Cor. 4:7-12; 11:22-33; Phil. 1:19-30; 3:7-14; Col. 1:24-29); but he did desire that God would protect him as he ministered (cf. 2 Cor. 1:8-10); otherwise people would not hear his message.

B. (:3) Confidence of God's Faithfulness and Protection

"But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one."

Hendriksen: By a very natural transition Paul, having dwelt for a moment upon the theme of his own conflict at Corinth, returns to the very similar battle which the Thessalonians are waging. Inwardly the young, struggling church is in need of strengthening. Outwardly – for Satan is surely an outsider! – it needs to be guarded. Paul now assures the readers that what he had wished with respect to them ... will also come to pass.

III. (:4) SUBMISSION -- CONFIDENCE IN THE STEADFASTNESS OF THE DISCIPLE CHURCHES – TO CONTINUE TO OBEY THE LORD’S COMMANDS

(Key = Ongoing Obedience)

“And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, that you are doing and will continue to do what we command.”

Military tone of commanding and expanding obedience

Hiebert: This authoritative tone is softened by the gracious acknowledgment *“that ye both do and will do”* these things. It gives them full credit for their present performance and notes that they confidently expect this to continue. The writers have no occasion to question the loyal obedience of their converts and have no reason to doubt their ready compliance in the future.

IV. (:5) SECURITY -- PRAYER FOR THE STEADFASTNESS OF THE DISCIPLE CHURCHES – ROOTED IN THE LOVE OF GOD

(Key = Spiritual Maturity)

“And may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the steadfastness of Christ.”

Two models of spirituality to emulate: (subjective genitives)

A. The Love of God for His people

B. The Steadfastness of Christ in the face of Severe Suffering and Opposition
(Heb. 12:1-14)

Hiebert: The verb *direct* conveys the picture of opening up the way by the removal of obstacles so that the desired goal may be reached. Its New Testament usage implies that this is brought about by the divine providential controlling of human action.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How faithful are we in our prayer support for the front line missionary troops? Are they praying for their supporting churches on a mutual basis?
- 2) Do we still have a confidence that the *Word of the Lord may spread rapidly* today even as it did in the early church? How powerful do we estimate the Word to be?
- 3) Notice the connection between unbelief and perversity and wickedness. Does our faith translate into manifest godliness and righteousness?

4) Are we taking encouragement from the model of the *steadfastness of Christ* and are we resting securely in *God's love* for us?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Hocking:

2A. THE RESPONSE TO THIS EXHORTATION - 3:1-5

1B. To PRAY for God's servants - 1-2

1C. For the Spread of God's Word - 1

"free course" - NIV/NASB - *"spread rapidly"*

Cf; 13:49; 19:20;

2 Tim. 2:9 - cf. 1 Thess. 1:5; 2:13

2C. For the Safety of God's workers - 2

1 Cor. 16:9; 2 Cor. 1:8-10 – cf. 2 Tim. 4:17-18

2B. To TRUST in God's faithfulness - 3

1 Cor. 1:9; 10:13 - *"God is faithful"* - cf. 1 Thess. 5:24

1C. For personal Stability

"who shall stablish you" - cf. 2 Thess. 2:17

2C. For spiritual Security

"and keep you from evil (the evil one)" - cf. Psalm 121:7;

Matt. 6:13; John 17:15; Jude 24

3B. To OBEY God's commandments - 4

Romans 1:5; 15:18; 16:26; 2 Cor. 2:9; Philipians 2:13; 1 Thess. 4:1-2

4B. To PURSUE God's love - 5a

"the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God" - cf. 1 Cor. 14:1

5B. To WAIT patiently for His return - 5b

"and into the patient waiting for Christ" NIV - *"Christ's perseverance"*

NASB - *"steadfastness of Christ"* - cf. 1 Thess. 1:10 and Romans 8:24-25

MacArthur: So in this passage, the apostle Paul provides an excellent example of genuine pastoral concern that his people prosper spiritually and thereby contribute to the edification and glorification of Christ's church. No shepherd of a local congregation could ask more from his flock than that they pray for him, trust in the Lord, obey what is taught from the Word, and grow spiritually.

Stott: So then, whether Paul is referring to *"the word"* . . . or to *"the tradition"* (2 Thess 3:6), namely the teaching of the apostles, it is divine revelation to which he is alluding. He sees the present period before the parousia of Christ as the era of the word, and that in two senses. First, the church must spread the word throughout the world. Secondly, the church must itself obey the word, conforming its own life to the teaching of the apostles. Paul's two longings, which he expresses in this chapter, are that the word of the Lord may be "honoured" both in the world (1) and in the church (4-15). Both are aspects of "church growth", which is a fine expression so long as we remember that it

has these two dimensions. God wants his church to grow both extensively (by its spread of the gospel) and intensively (by its own obedience to the gospel). Each is incomplete and unbalanced without the other.

Keathley: In verses 1-2, we have seen how the apostolic team humbly turned to their students for prayer for their ministry. Though requesting prayer for deliverance from evil men who have no faith in the gospel, the focus was not so much for personal deliverance as it was for the ministry of the Word of the Lord, that it might have speedy and unhindered progress as men honor it by responding in faith and obedience to its message.

But the Lord is faithful and so there follows an emphasis that comes out of this vital truth. There is, then, an intimate connection, somewhat like cause and effect, between the key thoughts in verses 3, 4, and 5. In verse 3, the emphasis is on “the faithfulness” of the Lord in contrast to the unbelief and persecution of evil men. In verse 4, the focus is on human obedience to this glorious message, but such obedience must come from the believer’s relationship with the Lord (“in the Lord”), and thus in verse 5, the focus is on their growth in the love of God and endurance of Christ which is always the root of obedience to the Word. In the background of all of this is the confident expectation of the sure return of the Savior, which we must all anticipate.

TEXT: 2 Thessalonians 3:6-18

TITLE: CHURCH DISCIPLINE: RESPONSIBLE WORK IS NOT OPTIONAL FOR THE BELIEVER

BIG IDEA:

CHURCH DISCIPLINE MAY BE NECESSARY TO REINFORCE THE NEED FOR A DISCIPLINED LIFE OF RESPONSIBLE WORK

- TO SUPPORT YOUR OWN FAMILY
- AND TO PROVIDE FOR THE NEEDS OF OTHERS

INTRODUCTION:

MacArthur: Now I want to know if you have ever seen a sign on the back of a speed boat that said, "I'd rather be working?" Or a license plate that said, "Thank God it's Monday?" Not likely. We really do have a warped perspective on the matter of work. Our materialistic self-indulgent adolescent infantile child-like culture has a warped view of the place and role of work.

I. (:6a) APOSTOLIC COMMAND: AN UNRULY LIFE REQUIRES CHURCH DISCIPLINE

“Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep aloof from every brother who leads an unruly life.”

II. (:6b-10) APOSTOLIC TRADITION: REINFORCING APOSTOLIC COMMAND – EXEMPLIFIES A DISCIPLINED LIFE OF RESPONSIBLE WORK

A. (:6b-8) Apostolic Example = Sacrificial Diligent Work

1. There was a Consistent Apostolic Tradition

“and not according to the tradition which you received from us”

2. This Apostolic Tradition Required Imitation

“For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example”

3. Negative Example

a. Not Undisciplined

“because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you”

b. Not Out for a Free Ride

“nor did we eat anyone’s bread without paying for it”

4. Positive Example

a. Sacrificial ... Diligent... Sustained Effort
“but with labor and hardship we kept working night and day”

b. Unselfish Motivation
“ so that we might not be a burden to any of you”

B. (:9) Forsaking the Right to Financial Support to Reinforce the Necessary Example
“not because we do not have the right to this, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, that you might follow our example.”

C. (:10) Corresponding ... Clear... Consistent ... Apostolic Commandment
“For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: If anyone will not work, neither let him eat.”

III. (:11-12) APOSTOLIC CORRECTION (FOR THE BUSYBODIES): GET TO WORK!

A. Negative Report

1. Verbal Report
“For we hear”

2. Limited Scope
“that some among you”

3. General Indictment
“are leading an undisciplined life”

4. Specific Charges
a. *“doing no work at all”*
b. *“but acting like busybodies”*

B. Apostolic Correction

1. Tone of Authority
a. By way of Command
“Now such persons we command”

b. By way of Exhortation
“and exhort”

c. By way of Delegated Authority
“in the Lord Jesus Christ”

2. Mantra of Personal Responsibility

- a. *“to work in quiet fashion”*
- b. *“and eat their own bread”*

IV. (:13) APOSTOLIC ENCOURAGEMENT (FOR THE RESPONSIBLE BRETHREN): KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK!

“But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary of doing good.”

V. (:14-15) APOSTOLIC SUMMARY WARNING: CARRY OUT THE DISCIPLINE IF NECESSARY – BUT WITH BROTHERLY LOVE

“And if anyone does not obey our instruction in the letter, take special note of that man and do not associate with him, so that he may be put to shame. And yet do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.”

(3:16) APOSTOLIC BLESSING: SEEK PEACE AND PURSUE IT!

“Now may the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance. The Lord be with you all!”

(3:17) AUTHENTICITY -- AUTOGRAPHIC ATTESTATION

“I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand, and this is a distinguishing mark in every letter: this is the way I write.”

(3:18) CLOSING BLESSING

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all”

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What are some of the practical ways that church members should *“keep aloof”* from the offending brother in their exercise of church discipline?
- 2) Should church leaders today provide the same type of model and example as the apostles were careful to maintain?
- 3) In what contexts could our society benefit from the application of the general principle: *“If anyone will not work, neither let him eat”*?

4) What are some of the characteristics of “busybodies”? Who have we known that fit into this category? How did we respond to them?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Hocking:

1A. THE PROBLEM WHICH EXISTED AMONG THE THESSALONIAN BELIEVERS - 6, 7, 11

“walketh disorderly” - Greek: *ataktos* – combines the word “to set in order” with the negative “not” - comes to mean “neglectful of duties”.

The verb *atakteo* means “to break the ranks (soldiers)” or to “behave irregularly”

antonyms are “to obey” or “to submit to authority.” Translated “unruly” 1 Thess. 5:14. AMPLIFIED - “slack in the performance of duty” or “living as a shirker”.

NIV - “idle” NASB - “leads an unruly life” or as in verses 7&11 - “undisciplined life” Not working because the Lord is coming soon!

2A. THE PRINCIPLE THAT AFFECTS THIS PROBLEM – 10

“that if any would not work, neither should he eat” - the issue is willingness, not ability! cf. Deut. 15:7-8; James 2:15-17; 1 John 3:17-18 - Ecc. 2:24-26; 5:18-19. Exodus 20:9 - “Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work”.

3A. THE PRACTICE OF OTHER BELIEVERS TOWARD THOSE WITH THIS PROBLEM – 6

“that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly” v. 14 - “note that man, and have no company with him”

Greek word *stellesthai* from the verb *stello* means “to set in place” or “appoint to a position.” When used in the middle voice as our text, followed by the *apo* it means “to avoid” or “withdraw yourself” - cf. 2 Cor. 8:20.

WHEN DO WE WITHDRAW?

1B. In the case of DOCTRINAL errors - Rom. 16:17-18

2B. In the case of DIVISIVE attitudes - Titus 3:9-11

3B. In the case of DELIBERATE immorality - 1 Cor. 5:9-13

The caution of Galatians 6:1-2.

4B. In the case of determined rebellion - Matt. 18:15-17

5B. In the case of DISORDERLY conduct - 2 Thess. 3:6

clear refusal to respond to authority and the command of the Lord!

4A. THE PURPOSE OF THIS PRACTICE - 14-15

“that he may be ashamed - Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother”

- 1B. Your REASON for withdrawing is to restore him
“that he may be ashamed”
- 2B. Your RELATIONSHIP to him must not change
“not as an enemy...but...as a brother”
- 3B. Your RESPONSE to him is critical
“admonish” - cf. Romans 15:14; 1 Cor. 4:14-16; Col. 1:28.

5A. THE PEACE THAT IS NEEDED - 16

“Now the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always by all means. The Lord be with you all.”

- 1B. The SOURCE of peace in the body of Christ
“the Lord of peace Himself”
- 2B. The SCOPE of that peace
“always by all means” - continually in every circumstance!

Stedman: “It is helpful to remember that God had ordained work before the Fall of man. Adam, when he was created, was given a job to do right from the beginning. God gave him a commission to till and to keep the garden, also to name the animals. He had to work to do that. God gave man a beautiful earth filled with wonderful resources which we have been using up rapidly through all the centuries since. But we are still discovering new things that he has hidden in his cupboard for man to live on. One of the blessings was that man should work. *‘Six days shalt thou labor,’* God had said, *‘and on the seventh shall be a day of rest,’* {cf, Exod 20:9-10 KJV}. Work, then, is part of what the Scripture calls the image of God in man. God is a worker. He has devised marvelous things in a universe that is filled with mysteries and marvels; intricate, involved complexities that we are only now beginning to unravel. With all our modern technological advance, we are merely dabbling in the shallows of the great wonders that God has packed into the universe around us, all designed by the working mind of the Creator. Since man is made in the image of God, it means there are abilities, resources, and possibilities within him that need to be put to work. In doing so, man will find a sense of fulfillment for himself.”

Jensen: “‘Stop fussing, stop idling, stop sponging, and stop meddling’ are the red lights of this chapter.”

Keathley: This is a sad illustration of either wrong interpretation or wrong application of biblical truth. The New Testament does teach the imminent, any-moment possibility of the return of the Savior for His church; it is imminent, but no one know when He will return. It could be today, but it might not be, as has been the case for hundreds of years. The principle is that we are to live as though it will be today while working and continuing on in life as though it won't be for years to come. We must hold both truths in proper balance. As seen previously, the coming of the Lord with all that it means to believers is to be a strong motivation to godliness and obedience to the directives of God's Word through the power of the Holy Spirit.

What does the Bible teach about manual (or mental) labor? For one thing, labor was a part of man's life before sin entered the scene. God gave Adam the job of dressing and guarding the Garden (Gen. 2:15). Although sin turned labor into almost hopeless toil (Gen. 3:17-19), it must never be thought that the necessity for work is a result of sin. Man needs work for the fulfillment of his own person. God created him to work.

Have you noticed that God called people who were busy at work? Moses was caring for sheep (Ex. 3). Joshua was Moses' servant before he became Moses' successor (Ex. 33:11). Gideon was threshing wheat when God called him (Jud. 6:11ff), and David was caring for his father's sheep (1 Sam. 16:11ff). Our Lord called four fishermen to serve

as His disciples, and He Himself had worked as a carpenter. Paul was a tentmaker (Acts 18:1-3) and used his trade to support his own ministry.

The Jews honored honest labor and required all their rabbis to have a trade. But the Greeks despised manual labor and left it to their slaves. This Greek influence, plus their wrong ideas about the doctrine of the Lord's return, led these believers into an unchristian way of life

MacArthur: Some of you think about work as a sort of a drudgery that you have to do, whether it's your work at a job that you possess or whether it's domestic work in the home, it's just something that's necessary and you do it and it isn't particularly joyous but it's there and it has to be done. Some of you think about work in relationship to money. You think about work as a way in which you can purchase your pleasures, if you will, purchase the life style that you're after. Some of you think about work as a way to fulfill your ego and achieve what you feel you need to achieve so that you can gain some accolades from the people around you. Some of you think about work as a way to fulfill your ambition, a way to fulfill your gifts and skills, a way to accomplish some meaningful purposeful thing with your life. Some of you think about work as a way to serve people, as a way to make life easier for some folks, as offering a service rendered to them that can be a source of pleasure or enjoyment to them.

There are a lot of ways you can look at work. But I guess if we were to really to sort of sum them up, it might be a long time before we ever heard anybody say..."I look at my work as a way to serve God." That doesn't seem to be a fairly popular perspective on work, even among Christians, and in fact it should be. In spite of what most people might think, in spite of what most people might feel, work is one of the most honorable and noble things a Christian can do. In fact, in the very beginning God established that man would earn his bread by the sweat of his brow, Genesis 3:19. Right after the Fall God said you're going to work, you're going to earn your sustenance. . .

Work is sacred in the sense that it is done to the Lord...whether you're washing dishes, scrubbing floors, taking care of children at home and maintaining the house, or whether you're in the financial marketplace doing accounting and bookkeeping for a company, or whether you're delivering mail or teaching school or driving a truck, or whether you're operating a business, or whether you're working in sales, whether you're developing strategy for marketing, or whether you're some kind of an expert who acts

as a consultant in a unique field...whatever it is that you're doing it is a service rendered to the Lord. He has gifted you. He has granted you talent. He has given you the power to get wealth, as it says in Deuteronomy, through means of that. And He has allowed you the opportunity to provide your sustenance through that talent, ability and experience and capability that you have. But it is to be done as if you were serving Him, the one who gave you that as the means by which you can earn your living...particularly is this not true for Christians. Everything you do is a sacred trust. . .

Six motivations, six compulsions to get these believers who won't work to go to work. Here are the six...disfellowship, example, survival, harmony, shame and love. . .

You know, the interesting thing about this little list I've given you...disfellowship, example, survival, harmony, shame and love...those motivations to the person who won't work should also motivate anyone in any sinful behavior. It's very generic in that sense. No matter what the sin is it's the same things that should motivate. The threat of losing the fellowship with other believers...the fact that you have not followed the holy example of those who have walked before you...even the issue of survival because you can die from continued sins, some Corinthians did...and certainly the idea of harmony, you're disrupting and ripping and tearing the unity of the church...and certainly shame, you should feel guilt and shame...and certainly love should call you back as those who are in the body of Christ and are your brothers and sisters woo you. And so, this is how we deal with any believer in any pattern of sin.

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