

PAUL'S TWO EPISTLES TO THE CHURCH AT THESSALONICA (Part 2, the second epistle)



The view of the Arch of Galerius that he built in A.D. 304 to commemorate his victories over the Persians in A.D. 297. View looking northwest. Only the western portion of the arch is preserved. Originally there was a similar structure to the right (east). The two arches supported a dome between them..

A STUDY BY
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INTRODUCTION

Not many months of this period had elapsed when St. Paul found it necessary to write again to the Thessalonians. The excitement which he had endeavoured to allay by his first Epistle was not arrested, and the fanatical portion of the church had availed themselves of the impression produced by St. Paul's personal teaching to increase it. It will be remembered that a subject on which he had especially dwelt while he was at Thessalonica,⁶ and to which he had also alluded in his first Epistle,

For neither at any time did we use flattering words, as you know, nor a cloak for covetousness--God is witness.

1 Thessalonians 2:5 (NKJV)

was the second advent of Our Lord. We know that our Saviour Himself had warned His disciples that 'of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but the Father only;' and we find these words remarkably fulfilled by the fact that the early Church, and even the Apostles themselves, expected their Lord to come again in that very generation. St. Paul himself shared in that expectation, but being under the guidance of the Spirit of Truth, he did not deduce therefrom any erroneous practical conclusions. Some of his disciples, on the other hand, inferred that, if indeed the present world were so soon to come to an end, it was useless to pursue their common earthly employments any longer. They forsook their work, and gave themselves up to dreamy expectations of the future; so that the whole framework of society in the Thessalonian Church was in danger of dissolution. Those who encouraged this delusion, supported it by imaginary revelations of the Spirit: 1 and they even had recourse to forgery, and circulated a letter purporting to be written by St. Paul, in confirmation of their views. To check this evil, St. Paul wrote his second Epistle. In 'this he endeavours to remove their present erroneous expectations of Christ's immediate coming, by reminding them of certain signs which must precede the second advent. He had already told them of these signs when he was with them; and this explains the extreme obscurity of his description of them in the present Epistle; for he was not giving new information, but alluding to facts which he had already explained to them at an earlier period. It would have been well if this had been remembered by all those who have extracted such numerous and discordant prophecies and anathemas from certain passages in the following Epistle.

C&H, Pages 314-315

One last reference relative to the introduction. We noted at the start that we would be using Alford's commentary. So far you haven't seen any references (many of them are in Latin or Greek or German). His introduction to this book, however, is quite good.

SECTION II. FOR WHAT READERS, AND WITH WHAT OBJECT IT WAS WRITTEN.

1. The former particular has been already sufficiently explained in the corresponding section of the Prolegomena to the first Epistle. But inasmuch as the condition of the Thessalonian Church in the mean time bears closely upon the object of the Epistle, I resume here the consideration of their circumstances and state of mind.

2. We have seen that there were those among them, who were too ready to take up and exaggerate the prevalence of the subject of Christ's coming among the topics of the Apostle's teaching. These persons, whether encouraged by the tone of the first Epistle or not, we cannot tell (for we cannot see

any reference to the first Epistle in ch. ii. 2, see note there), were evidently teaching, as an expansion of St. Paul's doctrine, or as under his authority, or even as enjoined in a letter from him (ib. note), the actual presence of the day of the Lord. In consequence of this, their minds had become unsettled: they wanted directing into the love of God and the imitation of Christ's patience (ch. iii.5). Some appear to have left off their daily employments, and to have been taking advantage of the supposed reign of Christ to be walking disorderly.

3. It was this state of things, which furnished the occasion for our Epistle being written. Its object is to make it clear to them that the day of Christ, though a legitimate matter of expectation for every Christian, and a constant stimulus for watchfulness, was not yet come: that a course and development of events must first happen, which he lays forth to them in the spirit of prophecy: sh[ow]ing them that this development has already begun, and that not until it has ripened will the coming of the Lord take place.

4. This being the occasion of writing the Epistle, there are grouped round the central subject two other general topics of solace and confirmation: comfort under their present troubles (ch. i.): exhortation to honesty and diligence. and avoidance of the idle and disorderly (ch. iii.).

ALFORD, Volume III, pages 52-53

(Note that printing from 1880 scans into the computer just as well, if not better, than some new publications!)

With the above introduction, we shall start in with this epistle. Note that it was written only a short while after the first so there was not a lot that happened in between.

2 THESSALONIANS 1

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Thessalonians 1:1-2 (NKJV)

If you wish comments on the introduction to this epistle, refer to those for 1 Thessalonians 1:1-2 - they are exactly the same. As far as an outline is concerned, it is quite simple.

- I. Thanksgiving for Faith and Perseverance (1:1-12)
- II. Man of Lawlessness (2:1-17)
- III. Exhortation (3:1-18)

We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other, so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure, which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer; since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed. Therefore we also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power, that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Thessalonians 1:2-12 (NKJV)

Paul begins the section on thanksgiving with what must be one of the longest sentences in the Bible (148 words, 11 commas). He begins with thanking God for them. The newer translations do not seem to agree as to whether he is “bound to” (KJV, NKJV) or “ought to” (NASB, NIV). The word is ὀφείλω (opheilo). It is “used of a necessity imposed either by law or duty, or by reason or by times, or by the nature of the matter under consideration.”¹ In his first epistle Paul wrote “We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers.” His words here are even stronger, he felt bound to thank God for what He was doing in the Thessalonian church. He felt it was fitting to do so.

Before going into detail on the clauses of this long sentence, let us take a look at what MacArthur says, in general, about this section.

Churches take pride in many things: their large membership roll or attendance, the size of their campus, the design of their buildings, their wealth, their music, the social status of their members, the prominence of their pastor, their political clout, their influence in the community, or their zeal for

¹THAYER, ὀφείλω

a particular theological cause. Others celebrate their creativity and freedom from traditional modes of worship, trading theology for psychology, choirs and organs for rock bands, and replacing sermons with skits, musicals, and other forms of entertainment in an effort to create an inoffensive, nonthreatening atmosphere for the unbelievers and nominal Christians in their congregations. They have become the model churches many seek to emulate. (For a critique of the contemporary church growth movement, see John MacArthur, *Ashamed of the Gospel* [Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 1993].) Judged by the superficial standards mentioned above, the Thessalonian church certainly had little to commend it. It had no buildings (the earliest known church building dates from the third century a.d.), programs, performers, or publications. It was not a large or wealthy church (most of the early Christians were from the lower social classes; cf. 1 Cor. 1:26); the congregation lacked social and political influence (Christians were despised outcasts in Roman society); nor did they have a famous pastor (the names of the elders are not even mentioned). They could not offer prospective converts the comfortable, entertaining, nonthreatening environment of a modern "user-friendly" church but merely "persecutions and afflictions" (1:4). Yet they were a church to which the apostle Paul could write, "We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is only fitting. . . . We ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God" (2 Thess. 1:3–4). The opening verses of this epistle list several reasons for Paul's grateful boasting about this church.

MacARTHUR, 2 Thessalonians 1:1-5

I tend to believe that the long sentence, his great love for the Thessalonians, and the urgency he felt in communicating to them all go together. He felt so compelled to say what he had to say in the 148 words that he just rushed on, the words spewing out of his mind, through his quill (or whatever) and onto the parchment. I have broken the sentence (verses 3-10) into its twelve parts in the box below. The space is where there was a semicolon. My grammar checker says it is ok!

- 1) We are bound to thank God always for you brethren, as it is fitting
- 2) because your faith grows exceedingly
- 3) and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other
- 4) so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure
- 5) which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God
- 6) that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God
- 7) for which you also suffer ;
- 8) since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you
- 9) and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels
- 10) in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God
- 11) and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power
- 12) when He comes
- 13) in that Day
- 14) to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe
- 15) because our testimony among you was believed. 2 Thessalonians 1:3-10 (NKJV)

I rarely got better than a C in English, partly because I was not able to parse English sentences. I

have since improved in this area but a sentence with 148 words in fifteen clauses? Below, I have tried my best to do so. I have broken it down into five main clauses, each with two dependent clauses.

- 1) WE GIVE THANKS
- 2) < FOR FAITH >
- 3) < FOR LOVE >
- 4) THAT WE CAN BOAST
- 5) < GOD IS RIGHTEOUS >
- 6) < GOD COUNTS THEM WORTHY >
- 7) YET YOU SUFFER, WHY?
- 8) < GOD IS RIGHTEOUS AND BRINGS TRIBULATION >
- 9) < GOD IS RIGHTEOUS AND BRINGS REST >
- 10) BUT UNBELIEVERS RECEIVE FLAMING FIRE
- 11) < BECAUSE THEY DID NOT OBEY >
- 12) < BECAUSE HE WILL COME TO DO SO! >
- 13) THIS WILL ALL HAPPEN IN "THAT DAY"
- 14) < HIS SAINTS WILL BE GLORIFIED
- 15) < THAT FAITH IS JUSTIFIED

A reported is schooled in the five "why"s. Who? What? When? Where? and Why?

WHO? "WE" (#1)
 WHAT? "GIVE THANKS" (#4)
 WHY? "DO WE SUFFER" (#7)
 WHERE? "AT THE GREAT WHITE THRONE" (#10)
 WHEN? "THAT DAY" (#13)

Paul thanks God that he can boast, but he realizes he must explain why the righteous suffer and what happens to the unrighteous, and when that will be.

In the first epistle he wrote,

. . . remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father,

1 Thessalonians 1:3 (NKJV)

We discussed the faith, love and hope there. Here, however, Paul goes much beyond the thanks he gave in the first epistle. Now, as to faith, he writes, "*your faith grows exceedingly*" and "*the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other*" but he does not here mention their hope. He goes to great length concerning their "patience" which he associated with hope. He uses the words, "*persecutions, tribulations, and suffering*". In this epistle he expresses thankfulness and love for the Thessalonian Church more than he does for any other church or person in his other epistles, the opening of Philippians coming next (109 words, 13 commas).

In the first letter he thanked God for their work of faith. Now he thanks God because their faith grows "exceedingly." ὑπεραυξάνω (hyperauksano). Paul uses the last half of this word [αυξάνω (auksano)] below.

*in whom the whole building, being joined together, **grows** into a holy temple in the Lord,*
Ephesians 2:21 (NKJV)

The last half of the word means “to grow” or “to enlarge.” Here, Paul in his usual style, makes up a new word by adding the prefix to it. We get “hyper” from this prefix. It is the type of growth that is (supposed to) occur when you use Miracle Grow on something. Do you know that Paul uses over **eight hundred** Greek words that are used by no other New Testament writer? A fair number of these are words he made up himself!

Paul here had to make up a new word to explain how fast their faith was growing. No wonder he was excited. To add to this, he writes, “*the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other.*” How did that happen?

*And may the Lord make you increase and **abound in love** to one another and to all, just as we do to you,*

1 Thessalonians 3:12 (NKJV)

It simply was an answer to his prayer. He prayed that their love would “abound” and it did. God answers prayer! Do you get excited when God answers an important prayer of yours? Paul did!

“we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure.” Paul Boast? While “boast” is often used in a bad sense, it is also used in a good sense. Six times in 2 Corinthians, Paul boasted. 2 Corinthians 9:2; 11:16; 11:18; 11:30; 12:5; 12:9. In these six instances it is the word *καυχάομαι* (*kauchamoi*) which means, of course, to boast. But here, again, Paul has to make up a new word. He adds *εγ* (*en*) to the front of it, giving *εγκαυχάομαι* (*enkauchamoi*) making it emphatic, “I glory in.”

ATR says,

Here he is boasting of Thessalonica in Macedonia to the Corinthians as he did later to the Corinthians about the collection (2 Corinthians 8:1-15) after having first boasted to the Macedonians about the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 9:1-5). There were other churches in Achaia besides Corinth (2 Cor. 1:1).
ATR, 2 Thessalonians 1:4

He boasted about their faith (for which he has praised them already) and for the patience. It is not hard to be patient when things are going well. They, however, were patient amidst “persecutions” and “tribulations.”

Paul knew about persecutions, *διωγμός* (*diogmos*).

Now Saul was consenting to his death. At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

Acts 8:1 (NKJV)

In his earlier years he was the one dishing it out!

*But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and sat down. . . . But the Jews stirred up the devout and prominent women and the chief men of the city, **raised up persecution against Paul and Barnabas**, and expelled them from their region.*

Acts 13:14 & 50 (NKJV)

*And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, **in persecutions**, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

2 Corinthians 12:7-10 (NKJV)

Paul had a thorn in his flesh (I believe it must have been his mother-in-law) which God would not take away. Instead, God gave him the grace to endure persecutions, trials, etc.

Paul continues this very long sentence by saying the faith and love was, "*manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer.*" Dr. McGee is usually very clear, but here he says, "*Our suffering has nothing to do with salvation, but it sure prepares us for our eternal state. When you and I look back to this life on earth, maybe some of us will wish that we had had a little bit more discipline than we got!*"² When I get to heaven, I'll have to ask him what he meant by that!

MacArthur comes closer to the point when he writes,

*Specifically, Paul, Silas, and Timothy were thankful for the saints' **perseverance and faith in the midst of all the persecutions and afflictions which they endured**. Perseverance (hupomone) is not resigned, stoic acquiescence but patient, courageous enduring of trouble. The word literally speaks of "remaining under," or sustaining hope under difficulty. It is not a grim waiting but a joyful hoping. As it does in Romans 3:3, Galatians 5:22, and Titus 2:10, pistis (**faith**) has the sense of "faithfulness." Paul was thankful for and proud of how the church remained faithful to the Lord despite the **persecutions** (hostility from enemies of the gospel) and **afflictions** (suffering resulting from persecution) they endured. They refused to renounce their faith, let their love grow cold, or abandon their hope.*

MacARTHUR, 2 Thessalonians 1:5

The sentence continues.

Since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven,

After this man, Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census, and drew away many people after him. He also perished, and all who obeyed him were dispersed. And now I say to you, keep away

²McGEE, 2 Thessalonians 1:5

*from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing; but **if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it**--lest you even be found to fight against God." And they agreed with him, and when they had called for the apostles and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. So they departed from the presence of the council, **rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name**. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.*
Acts 5:37-42 (NKJV)

When the Jewish Council threatened Peter and the other Disciples (Paul not yet an apostle), A man named Gamaliel, one of the wiser Jewish leaders, made the above statement (the first three verses of it). Even he recognized that if they afflicted God's servants, they would themselves be in big trouble. Note that the final command was "not speak in the name of Jesus," and "they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus." Peter and the others looked forward to the reward that would be theirs when they saw our Lord face-to-face and considered their present suffering to be of little consequence. The Thessalonians were in much the same position.

Paul, in his prayer, gives hope in that they would be given rest. Rest when the Rapture comes. He adds to this, *with His mighty angels in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God*, The wrath of God will be taken out on them by Christ along with His mighty angels. Which angels are these? There will be (at least) seven of them.

The first angel sounded: And hail and fire followed, mingled with blood, and they were thrown to the earth. And a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up. Then the second angel sounded: And something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea, and a third of the sea became blood.

Revelation 8:7-8 (NKJV)

Then the third angel sounded: And a great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water.

Revelation 8:10 (NKJV)

Then the fourth angel sounded: And a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them were darkened. A third of the day did not shine, and likewise the night.

Revelation 8:12 (NKJV)

Then the fifth angel sounded: And I saw a star fallen from heaven to the earth. To him was given the key to the bottomless pit.

Revelation 9:1 (NKJV)

Then the sixth angel sounded: And I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates."

Revelation 9:13-14 (NKJV)

And another angel followed, saying, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication."

Revelation 14:8 (NKJV)

It will, indeed, be a fearful time when these angels release their fury upon this earth and those people who are left. This is what is promised for those who do not know God. Paul adds to this, *“and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes,”* Let me tell you right up front, “those who do not obey the Gospel” are not those of use who live in sinless perfection. It refers to those who do not believe the claims in the Bible about Jesus Christ. If you are a believer, you will be snatched away before this ever lasting destruction comes.

There is a point here that needs to be understood. In his first epistle, Paul focused on the day of the Rapture. Here, however, he is referring to the day of the Lord’s return to earth, His second coming (and the 7 years before). You can see this as we proceed. *“in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe”* In That Day! This phrase is used many times in Zechariah, 3:10; 9:16; 12:3-4; 12:6; 12:8-9; 12:11; 13:1-2; 13:4; 14:4; 14:6; 14:8-9; 14:13; 14:20-21. One such verse is below.

And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives,
Which faces Jerusalem on the east.
And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two,
From east to west,
Making a very large valley;
Half of the mountain shall move toward the north
And half of it toward the south.

Zechariah 14:4 (NKJV)

To get more specific about “that day,” I will let the Lord explain it.

And Jesus answered and said to him, "Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

*Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked Him privately, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?" And Jesus, answering them, began to say: "Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and will deceive many. But when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be troubled; for such things must happen, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be earthquakes in various places, and there will be famines and troubles. **These are the beginnings of sorrows.** But watch out for yourselves, for they will deliver you up to councils, and you will be beaten in the synagogues. You will be brought before rulers and kings for My sake, for a testimony to them. And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations. But when they arrest you and deliver you up, do not worry beforehand, or premeditate what you will speak. But whatever is given you in that hour, speak that; for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. Now brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end shall be saved.*

"So when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not" (let the reader understand), *"then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let him who is on the housetop not go down into the house, nor enter to take anything out of his house. And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! And pray that your flight*

may not be in winter. For in those days there will be tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the creation which God created until this time, nor ever shall be. And unless the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake, whom He chose, He shortened the days. Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'Look, He is there!' do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will rise and show signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. But take heed; see, I have told you all things beforehand.

"But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars of heaven will fall, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. And then He will send His angels, and gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest part of earth to the farthest part of heaven."

"Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender, and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So you also, when you see these things happening, know that it is near--at the doors! Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.

"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is. It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch. Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming--in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning-- lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!"

Mark 13:2-37 (NKJV)

I do not like long citations, but where do you cut the above citation? I have highlighted three portions of the above. **These are the beginnings of sorrows**. These will be the beginning for the Jew, they will be the time of the Rapture for you and I. **"So when you see the 'abomination of desolation** "you" here is, again, the Jew. If you see this "abomination" being setup, I hate to tell you, but you missed the Rapture! As Gentiles, we could "care less" about the temple because (a) we are not Jews, and (b) the temple will not be rebuilt until after the Rapture. The last highlighted portion refers to the day of the Second Coming.

So, there is the answer to the "WHEN" question.

Therefore we also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power, that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Thessalonians 1:11-12 (NKJV)

Paul concludes this chapter with another prayer. ATR says,

Probably purpose with reference to the contents of 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10. We have had the Thanksgiving (2 Thessalonians 1:3-10) in a long, complicated, but rich period or sentence. Now he makes a brief Prayer (2 Thessalonians 1:11-12) that God will fulfil all their hopes and endeavors. Paul and his colleagues can still pray for them though no longer with them (Moffatt).

ATR, 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12

MacArthur writes,

Verses 11 and 12 do not record one of the many prayers that mark Paul's epistles, but rather are a general report of how he habitually prayed. The passage shows that he prayed for the right things with the right motives. It also reveals that for Paul prayer was not a ritual or a routine but a way of life. Beneath the surface of his teaching, preaching, planning, writing, working, exhorting, discipling, traveling, and suffering was the deeper level of Paul's spiritual life. Those external activities demanded his constant attention, but at the same time, he was in unbroken communion with God. Paul's example demonstrates that prayer is the unending preoccupation of those who know God intimately.

MacARTHUR, 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12

J. B. Phillips translated these two verses as below.

In view of this great prospect, we pray for you constantly, that God will think you worthy of this calling, and that he will effect in you all his goodness desires to do, and that your faith makes possible. We pray that the name of our Lord Jesus may become more glorious through you, and that you may share something of his glory—all through the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ

PHILLIPS, 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12

Paul prayed that God would “count them worthy.” This is all one word, ἄξιος (aksios), which is used seven times in the New Testament but this is the only time Paul uses it. Its root meaning is “having the weight of (weighing as much as) another thing, of like value, worth as much.”³ Worth as much as what? That they would behave in a manner fitting for the “elect.” They were, in fact, God’s Elect and Paul prayed that they would live as God’s Elect. That is a prayer that needs to be said for **all** of the Elect, including you and me!

They could do this by “fulfilling the good pleasure of His goodness.” Wuest translates this phrase, “God may count you worthy of the station in life to which He has called you.”⁴ This has to do with the way they (and we) conducted themselves (ourselves). Then he prays regard what we ought to be doing. To this Wuest translates, “every work that finds its source in faith with power.” By doing this they (and we) would be able to share the Gospel, a demonstration of His glory, with others. To summarize, I will cite the complete translations of these two verses from Wuest.

To which end also we are praying always for you, namely, that our God may count you worthy of the station in life to which He has called you, and fulfill every delight [you Thessalonian saints have] in goodness and every work that finds its source in faith with power, in order that the Name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you and you in Him, in accordance with the grace of our God, even the Lord Jesus Christ.

WUEST 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12

³THAYER, ἄξιος

⁴WUEST, 2 Thessalonians 1:11

2 THESSALONIANS 2

Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 (NKJV)

“Brethren.” How Paul loved to use that word when he wrote to this church. They really were his bathers in the Lord and he loved them that way. Do you count the members of your church as “brethren?” He is here going to be sure they understand what is going to happen toward the end. He goes on to tell what is going to take place about the time of our “gathering together” to Him. We now have another word for the “Rapture.” It is ἐπισυναγωγή (epiosynagoge) and, interestingly enough, it is used in only one other place in the Bible.

*Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the **assembling of ourselves together**, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.*

Hebrews 10:23-25 (NKJV)

Today, we need to be gathering together as “brethren” in our local churches. But there comes a day when our gathering together will be in a different place. The word here is interesting in several respects. One is that, since only Paul uses this word and it is used in Hebrews, Paul must have written Hebrews (the same is said about a number of other words to reinforce the argument). While it may be good evidence of his authorship, it in no way proves it. The word itself is a compound of three Greek words (Paul’s word making skill again?) First you have ἀγωγή (agoge) which means “a leading.” It is used in 2 Timothy 3:10 for “manner of life” (i.e. the way one is led). Then you affix to it a preposition to get συναγωγή (synagoge) which makes it “to be led together. You already know this word, it is where the Jews “are led together” to worship - the synagogue. Finally, the entire word with the final prefix means “a bringing together to others already assembled . . . hence to gather together in one place.”⁵ I can not think a better way to describe the departed Christians and use who are still here being gathered together with Christ in one place - in the clouds.

⁵THAYER, ἐπισυναγωγή

Paul asks them to not “be soon shaken in mind.” The opposite of this is in James,

But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

James 1:6-8 (NKJV)

“Shaken” is σαλεύω (saleuo) and is found below.

*"And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of heaven **will be shaken**.*

Luke 21:25-26 (NKJV)

There, you have a very dramatic use of the word. It is used with ταχέως (taxeos) meaning “quickly, shortly [and in this context] with the added suggestion of inconsiderateness (hasty)”⁶ Wuest puts these together in his translation. He does not want them to believe that, somehow, the Lord had already come and they had missed out on it.

. . .not soon to become unsettled, the source of this unsettled state being your minds, neither be thrown into confusion, either by a spirit [a believer in the Christian assembly claiming the authority of divine revelation and claiming to give the saints a word from God], or through a word [received personally] as from us or through a letter falsely alleged to be written by us

WUEST, 2 Thessalonians 2:2

Paul was afraid they might quickly be led in the wrong direction. They were to not become discouraged in their minds (hearts?) Or some evil spirit, or to be led astray by something that they “heard” came from Paul. Paul has a right to be concerned. We still have people to day who go door-to-door with the “Gospel” which they have distorted to make it agree with their teachings. Regardless of what anyone else tells them (or you), “that Day” will not come until certain other things have taken place.

He mentions several things which must first take place. *the falling away comes first, . . .*” There will first be an ἀποστασία (apostasia). The word from which we get “apostasy.” Paul was accused of doing this himself.

*but they have been informed about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles **to forsake** Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs.*

Acts 21:21 (NKJV)

(This is the only other use of the word). They accused Paul of leading the Jews away from the teachings of the prophets. Here Paul is speaking of those who would lead the Thessalonians and us away from a right relationship with and knowledge of Christ. Friends, over the past two centuries,

⁶THAYER, ταχέως

Christianity has flourished. But, you know when things grow too fast there is usually a cancerous growth associate with it. There are today many apostate churches in our own country and also around the world. It is going to get worse, not better!

While, if we are a live at the time of the rapture, we may see part of this apostasy, we will not see what Paul notes next. “and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped.” He is referring to a man (a human) who is known in the Scriptures by many names and Paul uses some of them here:

- The man of sin
- The son of perdition
- The Antichrist

With regards to this last term, you may have come across an an antichrist. Unger tells why.

The Antichrist. From early times the opinion has prevailed that the antichrists referred to were the forerunners of an evil rather than the evil itself. Some individual would arise who, by way of eminence, would be fitly called the Antichrist; and who, before being destroyed by Christ, would utter horrid blasphemies against the Most High and practice great enormities upon the saints. This view is scriptural and came from connecting the passages in John’s epistles with the descriptions in Daniel and the Apocalypse of the great God-opposing power that would persecute the saints of the Most High; and of the apostle Paul’s “man of lawlessness” (2 Thes. 2:3-10).

UNGER, Antichrist

In spite of the fact that there are a number of such people, there will be a specific one that Paul is referring to here. Unger also speaks to that.

John seems to make a distinction between “antichrist” and “antichrists” (1 John 2:18), for he declares that “even now many antichrists have arisen,” but “that antichrist is coming.” An antichrist is one who opposes Christ, whether he opposes the doctrine of His deity or His humanity; or whether he sets himself against Him in respect to His priestly office, by substituting other methods of atoning for sin and finding acceptance with God; His kingly office, by claiming authority to exact laws in His church contrary to His laws or to dispense with His commandments; or His prophetic office, by claiming authority to add to, alter, or take away from the revelation that He has given in His holy Word. This is agreeable to the description of an antichrist (1 John 2:22; 1 John 4:3; 2 John 7). In a general sense an antichrist is a person who is opposed to the authority of Christ as head of the church and creation.

UNGER, Antichrist

Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. What (or who) is currently “restraining” these events?

Before we look at what is “restraining,” look at what Paul says, “Do you not remember...?” Paul had evidently taught them these things when he was with them. But, they must have forgotten. Do you remember the things you have been taught in church, Bible studies, and other such places? It is important that we **learn** and not forget. I’ve already noted the times “you know” has occurred (5 times in 1 Thessalonians). Perhaps he should have written “you ought to know.” We need to know the things we have been taught and remember them.

And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

John 8:32 (NKJV)

Now, returning to the "restrainer" JFB reads as follows and is in agreement with several other commentaries.

"he who now letteth" refers to those who rule that polity by which the great upbursting of godlessness is kept down [Alford]. The "what withholdeth" refers to the general hindrance; "he who now letteth," to the person in whom that hindrance is summed up. Romanism, as a forerunner of Antichrist, was thus kept in check by the Roman emperor (the then representative of the coercive power) until Constantine, having removed the seat of empire to Constantinople, the Roman bishop by degrees first raised himself to precedence, then to primacy, and then to sole empire above the secular power. The historical fact from which Paul starts in his prediction was probably the emperor Claudius' expulsion of the Jews, the representative of the anti-Christian adversary in Paul's day, from Rome, thus "withholding" them in some degree in their attacks on Christianity; this suggested the principle holding good to the end of time, and about to find its final fulfilment in the removal of the withholding person or authority, whereupon Antichrist in his worst shape shall start up.

JFB, 2 Thessalonians 2:6

I have to disagree with the above statement. JFB seem to think that what is restraining the AntiChrist is not the various rulers of the world or of the church. What they say is true, however, in one sense. We have just noted that there is The AntiChrist and Antichrists. What JFB say would certainly apply to the Antichrists but not to the master of them all, The Antichrist! There is only one way The Antichrist is now being restrained - the Holy Spirit. Apparently, at least, Dr. McGee would agree with me.

Mystery Of Lawlessness Working Today, Restrained By The Holy Spirit (2:6-8)

And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time [2Thess. 2:6].

What can withhold evil in the world? The only One I know who can do that is the Holy Spirit. Governments can't do it – they are not doing it. The Roman Empire couldn't do it; it was an evil force itself

McGEE, 2 Thessalonians 2:6

How will the Holy Spirit "who now restrains will do so until He is **taken out** of the way?" We have already studied the rapture of the church, of all true believers. Where is the Holy Spirit.

*Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, who also has sealed us and given us **the Spirit in our hearts** as a guarantee.*

2 Corinthians 1:21-22 (NKJV)

When all Christians are "snatched" up at the time of the Rapture, the Holy Spirit, abiding in them, will be caught up as well - taken out of the way. The entire reason for the Rapture, I believe, is to take the Holy Spirit out of the way so the seven years of tribulation can begin.

Then, "*the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.*" The Lawless One?" According to my thesaurus, he could also be called, "The Anarchical One." He has already been referred to in this epistle as, "*the*

man of sin” and “the son of perdition.” He will be “revealed.” I believe it is important to know the meaning of this word. It is ἀποκαλύπτω (apokalupto) which, if you remove the prefix, becomes καλύπτω (kalupto) which means to “cover up,” or “conceal.”

*And suddenly a great tempest arose on the sea, so that the boat **was covered** with the waves. But He was asleep.*

Matthew 8:24 (NKJV)

*Then they will begin 'to say to the mountains, "Fall on us!" and to the hills, "**Cover us!**" '*

Luke 23:30 (NKJV)

Adding the prefix, ἀπο (apo) which is a preposition meaning “away (from)” gives the meaning “to take away from, to uncover.” Thus “revealed” does not mean he will suddenly appear on the scene. He will be (is?) Already here but, so far, remains concealed.

The Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. There are many anthropomorphisms⁷ in the Scriptures. This is the one that I find least appealing - “the breath of his mouth.” It would sound like God does not use mouth wash, or that he is a “fire breathing dragon.” I suppose this is made more consistent with my view of God when Paul adds, “the brightness of His coming.” Paul uses two synonyms here, “consume” and “destroy.” Perhaps he used these (under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, of course⁸) because of his great knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures. In this case he may have remembered these two terms from Daniel

*He shall speak pompous words against the Most High,
Shall persecute the saints of the Most High,
And shall intend to change times and law.
Then the saints shall be given into his hand
For a time and times and half a time.
'But the court shall be seated,
And they shall take away his dominion,
To consume and destroy it forever.*

Daniel 7:25-26 (NKJV)

Daniel is here speaking of the same “man.” It is important to note that Daniel was an Old Testament writer and, hence, when he refers to the “saints” he is referring to Jews, not Christians which were not in view. This man will be destroyed by the “brightness” of His coming. “Brightness” is ἐπιφάνεια (epiphanea), from which we get the English word, “Epiphany”⁹ Robertson says regarding the use of this term,

⁷OXFORD anthropomorphism >n. the attribution of human characteristics or behavior **to a god**, animal, or object

⁸When we write “Paul said.. “ or “Paul wrote. . . .” it is to be understood that this was all under the direction of the Holy Spirit - 2 Peter 1:21

⁹OXFORD, epiphany >n. (pl. -ies) 1 (Epiphany) the manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles as represented by the Magi (Matthew 2: 1-12). ->the festival commemorating this on 6 January. 2 a moment of sudden and great revelation.

Paul here uses both *epiphaneia* (epiphany, elsewhere in N.T. in the Pastorals, familiar to the Greek mind for a visit of a god) and *parousia* (more familiar to the Jewish mind, but common in the papyri) of the second coming of Christ. "The apparition of Jesus heralds his doom" (Moffatt). The mere appearance of Christ destroys the adversary (Vincent).

ATR, 2 Thessalonians 2:8

Such is the power of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Just his mere appearance is enough to destroy.

This "man of sin," the "*the lawless one is according to the working of Satan,*" I suppose you assumed that Satan was behind this all along, but Paul nails it down for us here. The term "working" is used seven times in the New Testament, twice in this epistle. Elsewhere it is used in the good sense of the "working" of God in man (Ephesians 1:9, 3:7, 4:16, Philippians 3:21, and Colossians 1:29). The other occurrence, the one in this epistle is found two verses down where it is translated "Strong delusion." Satan has a tremendous power, a power only exceeded by God's power. Satan's power is limited. It is limited by God Himself.

*Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them. And the Lord said to Satan, "From where do you come?" So Satan answered the Lord and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it." Then the Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?" So Satan answered the Lord and said, "Does Job fear God for nothing? Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!" And the Lord said to Satan, **"Behold, all that he has is in your power; only do not lay a hand on his person."** So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord.*

Job 1:6-12 (NKJV)

Nothing would have ever happened to Job except for the fact that God allowed him to. This Man of Sin will be given (or allowed to have by God):

- *all power,*
- *signs,*
- *lying wonders,*
- *all unrighteous deception among those who perish*

Before we look at these in detail, not the following.

*"Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by **miracles, wonders, and signs** which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know--*

Acts 2:22 (NKJV)

The first three items on the list are also attributed to our Lord ("power" and "miracles" coming from the same Greek word). This should be no surprise. Satan is always working to counterfeit everything the Lord does - and Satan has the power to do so provided that the Lord lets him.

See Acts 2:22 for the three words for miracles in inverse order (powers, wonders, signs). Each word adds an idea about the (works) of Christ. (wonder) attracts attention, (power) shows God's power, reveals the purpose of God in the miracles.

ATR, 2 Thessalonians 2:9 with reference to Hebrews 2:4

Note one important difference. "Miracles" and "signs" can be either good or bad. But here, Paul adds the "wonders" the word "false." The wonders that Satan performs are not true wonders.

In that day, those who have been left behind after the Rapture will still not believe. One might think, when all the Christians disappear that those left behind would think, "Hey, they must have been right, what can I do to be saved?" Well, they had a chance but, "because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved,." They lost out. To make sure there will be none seeking to be saved, "for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

Robertson says,

Futuristic (prophetic) present of the time when the lawless one is revealed. Here is the definite judicial act of God (Milligan) who gives the wicked over to the evil which they have deliberately chosen (Romans 1:24, 26, 28).

ATR, 2 Thessalonians 2:11

Robertson refers to Romans 1

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man--and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

Romans 1:18-25 (NKJV)

Although this refers to past judgements, it sets the pattern for the judgement to come. "Brethren," if you have not accepted Jesus Christ, there is coming a day, most likely soon, when you, too, will believe a lie and be condemned!

But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle. Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in

every good word and work.

2 Thessalonians 2:13-17 (NKJV)

Paul goes on with, "But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth." The word, αἰρέω (haireo) is used by Paul only here with respect to election. The other two occurrences are in .Philippians 1:22 and Hebrews 11:25. It is found in the LXX as below.

Also today the Lord has proclaimed you to be His special people, just as He promised you, that you should keep all His commandments,

Deuteronomy 26:18 (NKJV)

¹⁶ On this day the Lord thy God charged thee to keep all the ordinances and judgments; and ye shall observe and do them, with all your heart, and with all your soul.¹⁷ **Thou hast chosen God** this day to be thy God, and to walk in all his ways, and to observe his ordinances and judgements, and to hearken to his voice.¹⁸ And the Lord **has chosen thee** this day that thou shouldst be to him a peculiar people, as he said, to keep his commands;¹⁹ and that thou shouldst be above all nations, as he has made thee renowned and a boast, and glorious, that thou shouldst be a holy people to the Lord thy God, as he has spoken.

Deuteronomy 26:16-19 LXX

God "elected" Israel as "His people," just as He has elected us. Note that Israel "elected" (chose) God first!

Recently there has been a rather harsh disagreement about free will and election in our church. I shall not step into that argument here except to say that we do not exactly have free will to do everything. As far as salvation is concerned, Dr. Ironside said it all.

*It has been pictured in this way. Here is a vast host of people hurrying down the broad road with their minds fixed upon their sins, and one stands calling attention to yonder door, the entrance into the narrow way that leads to life eternal. **On it is plainly depicted the text, "Whosoever will, let him come."** Every man is invited, no one need hesitate. Some may say, "Well, I may not be of the elect, and so it would be useless for me to endeavor to come, for the door will not open for me." But God's invitation is absolutely sincere; it is addressed to every man, "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely" (Rev. 22: 17). If men refuse to come, if they pursue their own godless way down to the pit, whom can they blame but themselves for their eternal judgment? The messenger addressed himself to all, the call came to all, the door could be entered by all, but many refused to come and perished in their sins. Such men can never blame God for their eternal destruction. The door was open, the invitation was given, they refused, and He says to them sorrowfully, "Ye will not come unto Me, that ye might have life." But see, as the invitation goes forth, every minute or two some one stops and says, "What is that?" "The way to life," is the reply. "Ah, that I might find the way to life! I have found no satisfaction in this poor world." We read, "She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth." "I should like to know how to be free from my sin, how to be made fit for the presence of God." And such an one draws near and listens, and the Spirit of God impresses the message upon his heart and conscience and he says, "I am going inside: I will accept the invitation; I will enter that door," and he presses his way in and it shuts behind him. As he turns about he finds*

written on the inside of the door the words, "Chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world."

IRONSIDE, "In The Heavens (Ephesians)," pages 27-28

My son Jim put it in a simpler way, "*The Bible teaches free will and predestination [or election]. It is not our job to reconcile the two concepts.*" In passing, one could say the same thing about the Hypostatical Union." (Christ being both God and a man). How do you reconcile that? There are a number of things we can not understand, we have to accept in faith.

*And though I have the gift of prophecy, and **understand all mysteries and all knowledge**, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.*

1 Corinthians 13:2 (NKJV)

***By faith we understand** that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.*

Hebrews 11:3 (NKJV)

Our calling of God is based on two actions, (1) through sanctification by the Spirit, and (2) belief in the truth. The first is the work of the Spirit. The Spirit must work within us to give us the ability to accept Him. Then it is our turn. Have been enabled to accept him, we must "believe the truth" (about our Salvation).

So, both God and we have a part in our salvation (election). There is, however, a third party to this. He called you **by our gospel**, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ That third party is the one who God entrusted to bring us the Good New of salvation. Why send out missionaries? What have evangelistic programs? Because there has to be a third party to bring about our salvation¹⁰

"Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle."

Paul draws here no distinction between oral tradition and written tradition as was done later. The worth of the tradition lies not in the form but in the source and the quality of the content. Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:23 says: "I received from the Lord what I also handed over unto you." He praises them because ye "hold fast the traditions even as I delivered them unto you." The tradition may be merely that of men and so worthless and harmful in place of the word of God (Mark 7:8; Col. 2:6-8). It all depends. It is easy to scoff at truth as mere tradition. But human progress in all fields is made by use of the old, found to be true, in connection with the new if found to be true. In Thessalonica the saints were already the victims of theological charlatans with their half-baked theories about the second coming of Christ and about social duties and relations.

ATR, 2 Thessalonians 2:15

I must comment on two things here. First "traditions" is from παράδοσις (paradosis). Paul uses it

¹⁰It is true that, on occasion, one receives the Lord through reading the Scriptures on his own - who made the Scriptures available to him or her (most likely a Gideon)?

(in this form) here and in 1 Corinthians 11:2 (it is used a number of other places in a different grammatical base). The word is a combination of two Greek words. The base is “to give” and the prefix makes it “to give over to” or “to hand over to.” Hence it is that which is handed on from person to person.

This leads to the second point, the Thessalonians did not have the New Testament. At this point they had Paul’s first epistle to them. And, since this was one of the earliest writings of the New Testament, they had little else to go on - that was written. They had to rely on the spoken Word as delivered by the Apostles and their assistants (i.e. such as Paul with Timothy, etc.).

Today we have the entire Bible and the admonition,

For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

Revelation 22:18-19 (NKJV)

Technically, the admonition applies only to the Book of Revelation. But, as Barnes says,

If any man shall add unto these things. With a view to furnish a more full and complete revelation; or with a profession that new truth had been communicated by inspiration. The reference here is to the book of Revelation only-for at that time the books that now constitute what we call the Bible were not collected into a single volume. This passage, therefore, should not be adduced as referring to the whole of the sacred Scriptures. Still, the principle is one that is thus applicable; for it is obvious that no one has a right to change any part of a revelation which God makes to man; to presume to add to it, or to take from it, or in any way to modify it. Compare Barnes on "2Ti 3:16".

BARNES, Revelation 22:18-19

The Bible is complete today so you should pay no heed to any “oral tradition” someone tries to teach you! But, what we do have in written form (the Bible), we, like the Thessalonians must “hold fast.” Paul admonishes us to “stand fast in the faith” (1 Corinthians 16:13), to stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free (Galatians 5:1), to stand fast in one spirit (Philippians 1:27). And finally, twice, to simply stand fast in the Lord Philippians 4:1 and 1 Thessalonians 3:8).

Now, Paul adds, “*Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.*” This is a common enough closing prayer by Paul - except that he hasn’t finished writing it. We still have another chapter. So why does this come here?

If you can remember that far back, Paul did the same sort of thing in his first epistle. The way he wrote led you to believe he was finished but he went on. The same is true here. Actually, Paul advocated “prayer without ceasing,” and as he exhorted these Thessalonians to stand fast, he must have felt it appropriate to pray right there that this would happen.

Anyway, let us look at the prayer. First, there is either a grammatical problem to solve or a theological one. What is it? Two persons are mentioned here: the Lord Jesus Christ (emphatically spoken by adding “himself” and our “God and Father,” again emphatically spoken. But look at the verbs!

“Loved,” “given,” “comfort,” and “establish” - they are all third person singular! (The first two are Aorist Participles, the last two Optative Aorist). Who is the subject? Linguistically, “God and Father” should be the subject. But, is that what Paul meant and, if so, why mention Christ? MacArthur states,

The pronoun translated **Himself** stands in the emphatic position in the Greek text, which could be translated, "Now may Himself our Lord Jesus Christ and God our Father." The pronoun governs both **Lord Jesus Christ** and **God our Father**, viewing both as the source of comfort. That provides powerful evidence of Christ's deity; He is fully equal with the Father in person, power, and respect
 MacARTHUR, 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17

MacArthur is the only commentator I've found that gives a reasonable explanation for this construction. I might make it a bit clearer by paraphrasing it like this. “May He (that is Jesus Christ and God the Father) . . .” Remember back in Genesis?

*Then God said, "**Let Us** make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."*

Genesis 1:26 (NKJV)

In this passage “said” is in the singular but the words are “let us.” What we are dealing with is the trinity of God. We can not understand it, just as we can not understand free will and election. We just accept it.

Now to the prayer itself. As noted above, there are four verbs. The first two participles, the last two in the Optative mood. In other words,

- *who has loved us*
- *who has given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace*

(The Aorist participles) are the things which God has already done in the past and continues to do now and into the future. Since he has done these two things for us, there is no reason that his wish (Optative Mood) will not be fulfilled as well, namely;

- *comfort your hearts*
- *establish you in every good word and work*

Let me finish this section with a summary from McGee.

It is the Word of God then that will lead you to do the work of God. In chapter 3 we will see that believers should also be established in their walk and in their work down here. You see, it is rather deceitful (to yourself and others) to talk about how much you love the coming of the Lord if you do not study His Word. Then your belief does not manifest itself in your life and it doesn't make you work. If you really believe Christ is coming, you're going to be busy working for Him. You are going to give account to Him someday. If He is going to be here tomorrow, we want to be busy today. We shouldn't have our noses pressed against the window looking for Him to come, or to be always looking up into heaven for Him. Instead, we should be looking around doing the work of the Lord down here. That is the greatest proof that we believe in His coming.

McGEE, 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17

2 THESSALONIANS 3

Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified, just as it is with you, and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith. But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one. And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, both that you do and will do the things we command you. Now may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ.

2 Thessalonians 3:1-5 (NKJV)

Finally, brethren . . . Two words we have noted before. Paul uses the two words together in; 2 Corinthians 13:11; Ephesians 6:10; Philippians 3:1 and 4:8; and in 1 Thessalonians 4:1. Refer to the notes on 1 Thessalonians 4:1 concerning these two words.

He asks for prayer for him and his team. He did so in 1 Thessalonians 5:25 where we discussed the need that Paul had for prayer. These are the only two verses where he asks for prayer (unless he wrote Hebrews, Hebrews 13:18. Why do you suppose these are the only two epistles in which he asks for prayer? I believe we just read the reason, “brethren.” Yes, Paul uses the word a lot, nearly one hundred times in his epistles. But, if you count the number of times he uses it in these two epistles as compared with the others, you will find he uses it more frequently. He uses it over three times as often, on a page for page basis, than in any of his other epistles. In his first epistle, he simply said “pray for us!” This time he is more specific.

I am sure there are many missionaries today that are in the same position as Paul. They have a number of churches supporting them monetarily and, presumably in prayer. I would be willing to guess that most of these missionaries have certain churches they can really rely on for prayer support. The money from the other church is good and needed, but prayer is needed too and that is not as plentiful for missionaries as it ought to be. How is your prayer life with respect to the missionaries in our missions program? Every week we have a “Missionary of the Week” in the Bulletin and while the prayer needs are mentioned, there is never any prayer for them in the service. How much prayer goes on for them in members homes, I have no way of knowing. There should be cooperate prayer for them as well!

The Thessalonians were people Paul could ask for prayer and know they would pray for him. That is why they are the only ones he specially asks for prayer.

Paul uses a rather strange metaphor in his prayer request. He asks that “*the word of the Lord may run swiftly.*” Unfortunately, since I italicize the Scriptures in these studies, you can not see that the word “swiftly” is in italics in the NKJV. The Greek simply says “may run.” *The NASB has “the word of the Lord will *spread rapidly”* with the * referring to a footnote that says “run.” This is, no doubt, the correct interpretation of the word. There is no question about the other part, that it “be glorified.”

They knew how the Gospel spread amongst themselves and now he asks that they pray that it would do the same in other places. Then Paul gets personal with his prayer request. He prays for deliverance from (1) *unreasonable men* and (2) *wicked men*. “Unreasonable” is from an interesting word, ἄτοπος (atopos), coming from τόπος (topos) meaning “*a portion of space viewed in reference to its occupancy, or as appropriated to a thing.*”¹¹ The alpha means “not.” Hence it refers to one who

¹¹THAYER, τόπος and ἄτοπος

is “out of place.” In an ethical sense, “improper” or “wicked). The word is found in Luke 23:41, and Acts 25:5 and 28:6 where it is usually translated “wrong” or “fault.” Here it refers to men who are not, necessarily, “evil” but simply being “cantankerous.” But Paul ties this with a word we found in 1 Thessalonians 5:2, the word from which we get “pornography.” That requires no further explanation. In 1 Thessalonians he said to “abstain from every form of it.” You might not think the great Apostle Paul would have any problems that way, but, who does not? “Not all have the faith.” We are still living in the world and have to contend with it. Someday we will be where everyone around us loves the Lord (after the Rapture) but not now. “This world is not our home, we’re just a passing through!”

If you refer to the word counts in the introduction to 1 Thessalonians, “establish” is used twice there and this is the second time Paul has used it in this epistle. Other than twice in Romans, these are the only places Paul has used this word. Refer to pages 8 and 40 in the study on 1 Thessalonians for details. Again, he is concerned with their being steadfast in the faith.

Even being “steadfast” (established) is not enough, we need some to guard us - “*guard you from the evil one.*” The Greek word is fairly common, φυλάσσω (philasso), the verbal form of the word for prison. The verb is used in this sense in one other Scripture.

*He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world **will keep it** for eternal life.*
John 12:25 (NKJV)

Maintaining the faith is accomplished by not loving this life (above) and by the Lord standing guard over us.

“*We have confidence in the Lord concerning you, both that you do and will do the things we command you.*” This is the first time Paul has used the word “confidence.” It is from πείθω (peitho) which is also translated “persuade.” It is in the perfect tense which indicates a continuing confidence. Not a confidence in them, necessarily, but in God. His confidence is that (a) do and (b) will continue to do, the things Paul has commanded them. He had given them “commands” when he was with them (1 Thessalonians 4:2), and in his first epistle. He has confidence that they will now do the things he is going to command them to do.

Interestingly, he inserts the statement, “*Now may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ.*” before giving them any commands. Without the “labor of love” and the “patience of hope,” they would no doubt floundered in attempting to keep these commands.

But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you; nor did we eat anyone's bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us. For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat. For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies. Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread. But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary in doing good. And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. The word, παραγγέλλω (parangello) is used. If you can remember back to our study in 1 Thessalonians, (page 50) we noted "In this context it has more of the meaning "to command, order, or charge." Paul is not giving them more commands to break. He is giving them instructions to keep. He instructs them that they will "walk and please God." We also noted McGee's comment, "In chapter 5 we will find twenty-two commandments for believers given." Apparently some of the "twenty-two" commands escaped them as Paul now comes back with stronger warnings. McGee points out,

Now we command you, brethren" -- Paul doesn't beat around the bush! The believer is not to walk with the "disorderly." I know men who insist that we should go into the barrooms, sit down with the drunkard and have a beer with him as we witness to him. Unfortunately, I know of a young lady who became an alcoholic by following that procedure. God says that we are to "withdraw" ourselves from the disorderly. Certainly we are to witness to them, but we are not to fraternize on their level.

McGEE, 2 Thessalonians 3:6

and MacArthur states,

*As he so often does in his epistles Paul returns from the lofty heights of theological instruction (chaps. 1 and 2) to the basics of practical Christian living. For Paul, **theology was not merely abstract reasoning, but practical truth to affect daily life.** In this passage, he discusses the universally practical issue of work.*

People from Paul's day to the present have had a wrong view of work. In fact, our society proudly displays its skewed view of work on the back of its cars. "I owe, I owe, so off to work I go," reads one bumper sticker, reflecting the view that work is a necessary evil; nothing more than a way to pay off debts and fund one's lifestyle. Another, extolling the virtue of laziness, proclaims, "Work fascinates me—I can sit and watch it for hours." License plate frames announce that people would rather be fishing, flying, RVing, golfing, skiing, sailing, hiking, camping, four wheeling—anything but working. In our materialistic, self-indulgent society, many people play at their work and work at their play. Others work only to achieve prosperity, success, fame, and early retirement.

Such perspectives rob work of any intrinsic value. In essentially valueless work, people display that disdain for the effort itself in doing only enough to avoid being fired, getting away with whatever cheating they can, considering long hours and hard work to be counterproductive, remaining loyal to their opportunity and employer only until they get what they perceive as a better, more lucrative opportunity, and in general showing utter indifference to the quality of their work.

MacARTHUR, 2 Thessalonians 3:6

(The emphasis is mine). I think the only thing MacArthur left out was, "All work and no play, Make Jack a dull boy."

Paul has three "commands" here. The first is for those who were doing well, the second for those who were not, and the third deals with what the first group should do about the second. The center of the command has to do with working. So, I shall start with that word, "work." What do we mean

by “work.”¹² Basically it means doing something, hopefully something productive. In spite of the commonness of the word, it is hard to really define. I am sure that many would consider writing a Bible study a great deal of work. On the other hand, I consider it a joy and pleasure.

I think “work” involves the expenditure of time and energy for something one is not really interested in - but has to do. I believe this is brought out in the Greek word used here. It is κόπος (kopos), from the verb κόπτω (kopto), meaning “to cut, strike, or smite.”¹³ Hence, the noun means the following: (1) a beating, (2) trouble, (3) intense labor united with trouble.¹⁴

Getting back to the first command, to “withdraw,” στέλλω (stello). Robertson says,

Present middle (direct) infinitive of stello, old verb to place, arrange, make compact or shorten as sails, to move oneself from or to withdraw oneself from (with apo and the ablative).

ATR, 2 Thessalonians 3:6

In plain English = “Stay away from (them)!” This brings us to the second group of people, those who walk disorderly. No! It is a bit more specific than that. It is from the “brethren” who do so. We need not be concerned here with the unsaved who are guided by Satan rather than God. What does it mean to walk “disorderly?” The word, ἀτάκτως (ataktos) can be separated into ἄ (a) and τάκτως (taktos). The second part of the word appears only once in the New Testament.

So **on a set** day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat on his throne and gave an oration to them.

Acts 12:21 (NKJV)

It means “ordered, arranged, fixed, or stated”¹⁵ It is interesting that this word, without the alpha is translated above as “on a set day.” It is interesting because the alpha in front of it means “not” and hence “not on any set day.” We might use the term “mañana.” Why do today what you can put off to another time? The notion is that of laziness or lassitude.

Now we turn from what these were doing to what they were not doing. What they were doing was “*not according to the tradition*” That Paul, Titus, Timothy and others had set for them. “Traditions” is used some eight times in the Gospels referring to the “Traditions of your Elders” or, when speaking to the Elders of Israel, “your traditions.” In these cases, it is used in a bad sense.

We noted the good usage of the term in 2:15 (see page20) Here Paul gets quite specific. “*For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not **disorderly** among you; nor did we eat anyone’s bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you.*” There is the term “disorderly” again - Paul was not disorderly.

¹²work >n. 1 activity involving mental or physical effort done in order to achieve a result, OXFORD, “work”

¹³THAYER, κόπτω

¹⁴THAYER, κόπος

¹⁵THAYER, τάκτως

As we have noted on other occasions, Paul was a tentmaker by trade. This was a skill he would have been taught as he grew up.

Paul's native province of Cilicia was noted for its goats' hair cloth which was exported under the name of cilicium and was used largely for tentmaking. We are told in the passage mentioned that Paul dwelt with Aquila and Priscilla, and worked with them at tent-making

ISBE, "tentmaking"

Do you suppose Paul liked to make tents? I presume he would have rather not do it but he did this for two reasons: (1) in some instances he had to in order to survive and (2) in many cases he chose to for the reason he states above, the he "might not be a burden" to any of them.

He could have put his services on the Visa cards, he says, " *not because we do not have authority.*" He had the right to being provided for. He says so.

*Do you not know that those who minister the holy things eat of the things of the temple, and those who serve at the altar partake of the offerings of the altar? Even so **the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel.** But I have used none of these things, nor have I written these things that it should be done so to me; for it would be better for me to die than that anyone should make my boasting void. For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel! For if I do this willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have been entrusted with a stewardship. What is my reward then? That when I preach the gospel, I may present the gospel of Christ without charge, that I may not abuse my authority in the gospel.*

1 Corinthians 9:13-18 (NKJV)

*Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. For the Scripture says, "**You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain,**" and, "The laborer is worthy of his wages."*

1 Timothy 5:17-18 (NKJV)

Now, I would hate to think of Paul, or Pastors Jim and Randy, as being an ox, but the proverb is pretty clear. Paul worked so as to "make ourselves an example of how you should follow us." See the study on 1 Thessalonians, pages 32-33 for a discussion of "being examples."

For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat. You have all seen people in the market place (as well as others) with signs reading "Will work for food." If they really meant that, it would be ok. The fact is, if you offer most of them some work to do, they will not do it! That is usually why they are out begging, the do not wish to engage in work.

I know of a number of people (not in our church) who are on the Federal or State Welfare roles who have no right to be there. Pardon me, but I feel I mus expound on this a bit. People who have no incomes and need to eat should be treated in one of the following ways:

- If this is really a temporary situation and they will soon get back on their feet, help them.
- If they are physically handicapped, find some work they can do in spite of it. If necessary, supplement their income. This will at least give them some value of worth.
- If they are mentally ill (a lot are), insist that go to mental health facilities if they wish monetary

help.

- If they are simply lazy and do not wish to work, *neither shall they eat!*

Not only were some of the Thessalonians not working, Paul says they are “busybodies”

The word is found twice in Paulinic literature.: 1 Timothy 5:13, "not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies," and 2 Thessalonians 3:11, "work not at all, but are busybodies." It is also found in 1 Peter 4:15 the King James Version (the Revised Version (British and American) "meddler") "or as a busybody in other men's matters." If these passages be coupled with such others as James 3:2-10; James 4:11; Ephesians 4:29, 31; Titus 3:2, it becomes evident that sins against the eighth commandment were as common in the apostolic church as they are today. To this day backbiting is a common trait of oriental peoples. And it is this sin which is so repeatedly warned against by the apostles, as in direct conflict with the ethics of Christianity, and in violation of that spirit of brotherly love and mutual trust which Christ has enjoined on His followers, and which is the very marrow of the outward revelation of the Christian faith (1 Corinthians 13)

ISBE, “Busybody”

I believe I have mentioned it before but it bears repeating, some Christians are “busybodies” when they give prayer requests (some do not realize they are being busybodies). Sometimes it is necessary to give prayer requests in a non-specific way such as (a) not giving the name of the person - God knows who it is, (2) not being specific regarding the problem (God knows what it is) and (3) other ways. Prayer should be as specific as possible but not when it becomes too personal.

So, now, what to do with such people?

- Those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread.
- As for you, brethren, do not grow weary in doing good.
- If anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed.
- Yet do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

First, Paul commands these people to change their ways and do some work. In addition to commanding them, he encourages (exhorts) them to do so.

Second, Paul says to treat it as you would a contagious disease, that is, do not slack off yourself because of them. Continue to do the good that you are doing.

The third part is a bit more complicated. Paul says “stay away from people like that,” “shun them.” In the case of incest at Corinth, Paul goes so far as to say,

*I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with . . . But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner--not even to eat with such a person. For what have I to do with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside? But those who are outside God judges. **Therefore "put away from yourselves the evil person."***

1 Corinthians 5:9-13 (NKJV)

In commenting on the above passage, MacArthur states,

But we do have a responsibility to judge those who are within the church. We must remove the wicked man from among [our]selves.

Discipline is difficult, painful, and often heartrending. It is not that we should not love the offenders, but that we should love Christ, His church, and His Word even more. Our love to the offenders is not to be sentimental tolerance but correcting love (cf. Prov. 27:6).

It is not that everyone in the church must be perfect, for that is impossible. Everyone falls into sin and has imperfections and shortcomings. The church is in some ways a hospital for those who know they are sick. They have trusted in Christ as Savior and they want to follow Him as Lord—to be what God wants them to be. It is not the ones who recognize their sin and hunger for righteousness who are to be put out of fellowship, but those who persistently and unrepentantly continue in a pattern of sin about which they have been counseled and warned. We should continue to love them and pray for them that they repent and return to a pure life. If they do repent we should gladly and joyfully "forgive and comfort" them and welcome them back into fellowship (2 Corinthians 2:7).

MacARTHUR, 1 Corinthians 5:13

(Emphasis is MacArthur's)

In the situation in Thessalonika, the correction was not to be so harsh as excommunicating these people, but to not have fellowship with them.

But there is always hope. In the case in Corinth, Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians to restore the person, who by then had repented, to the membership of the church. Here, he commands them "not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother."

I have been a Christian for almost 60 years. I have been a faithful church member for over 50 years. In all that time (especially as time went on and I got into higher positions in the church), I have never known anyone to be disciplined by the church. We just don't do it even though we are commanded to do so!

Church leaders and members alike are therefore to be disciplined according to Jesus' instructions in Matthew 18. If a believer is warned privately by one person, and then by two or more but refuses to repent, "tell it to the church," He commands; and "if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector" (Matt. 18:15–17).

Church discipline should be administered with total impartiality. Paul admonishes Christians to take special care before accusing a church leader, saying, "Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses" (1 Timothy 5:19). But he then says that, if a leader is found to be guilty and continues in sin, he should be rebuked "in the presence of all, so that the rest also will be fearful of sinning. I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of His chosen angels, to maintain these principles without bias, doing nothing in a spirit of partiality" (vv. 20–21

Therefore, whether it concerns salvation, judgment, discipline of church leaders or ordinary church members, God's standards are the same. He deals entirely with the soul, the inner person, and with total impartiality. Peter affirms that divine impartiality, reminding believers that "it is written, 'You shall

be holy, for I am holy.' And if you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth" (1 Pet. 1:16–17). In other words, if we expect God to be fair and impartial with us, we should be fair and impartial with others, just as we are to forgive others if we expect God to forgive us (Matt. 6:14).

MacARTHUR, James 2:1

The church (any church) should exercise a reasonable amount of discipline. On the one hand, the church should not avoid all discipline (as is usually the case) and, on the other hand, should not be such a disciplinarian as to make its members fearful of doing anything. Paul points out the way to reach a middle ground. *Yet do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.* As an example, I could go to the church board and accuse Pastor Randy of believing in the dichotomy¹⁶ of man where the Bible “clearly” teaches that man is a trichotomy¹⁷. That is not “admonishing as a brother!” What I should do is go to his office and present him with the Scriptures that prove my point and do so as a brother in the Lord. (The only problem is that I did that and he still insists that man is a dichotomy - but it is not a theological issue of great importance so we agreed to each go our own way).

Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always in every way. The Lord be with you all. The salutation of Paul with my own hand, which is a sign in every epistle; so I write. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

2 Thessalonians 3:16-18 (NKJV)

Paul concludes with a final prayer, that God would grant them peace “in every way.” and that He would continue to be with them.

Paul interrupts his benediction for the church, which resumes in verse 18, to deal with another vital issue. He was deeply concerned that they have God's truth. Since he was the agent of that truth, he did not want them confused about which were his authentic writings; therefore, he decided to **write this closing greeting with** his own hand.

As noted in the discussion of 2:2 in chapter 23 of this volume, false teachers had come to Thessalonica claiming that the Day of the Lord had arrived. They produced a forged letter supposedly from Paul to support their lies. They may also have denied the authenticity of his first epistle, since it contradicted their false teaching. Paul normally dictated his letters to an amanuensis (cf. Rom. 16:22), much like a modern business executive dictating a letter to his secretary. But to prevent forgery and affirm their authenticity, he apparently personally signed each of them (cf. 1 Corinthians 16:21; Gal. 6:11; Colossians 4:18; Philem. 19); his distinctive signature became the **distinguishing mark in every letter** he wrote.

MacARTHUR, 2 Thessalonians 3:17

It is thought that the exception to this was his epistle to the Galatian churches where he wrote,

¹⁶Dichotomy treats man as (1) body, and (2) soul and spirit.

¹⁷Trichotomy treats man as (1) body, (2) soul, and (3) spirit.

See with what large letters I have written to you with my own hand!

Galatians 6:11 (NKJV)

The epistle ends with, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen." to which I can only add my Amen to his.

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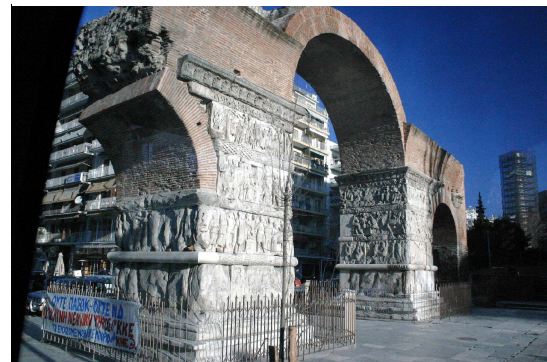
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Arch of Galerius

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