
a *Grace Notes* publication

2 Thessalonians

Dr. Grant C. Richison

2 Thessalonians

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Foreword

These lessons in **2 Thessalonians** are compiled from the writings of Dr. Grant C. Richison, which were published on the Internet beginning in 1997 in the Campus Crusades (Canada) daily online devotional Today's Word.

Dr. Richison is a highly experienced pastor, lecturer, and Christian servant who is dedicated to a lifetime of studying and teaching God's Word. Almost immediately after his salvation he began to desire to teach the Word, and he set about a lifelong program of preparation and ministry.

Dr. Richison has a diploma from Detroit Bible Institute, a bachelor's degree in religious education from William Tyndale College (Detroit), a Masters in Theology from Dallas Theological Seminary, and a doctorate in ministries from Luther Rice Seminary in Jacksonville, Florida.

Dr. Richison has been pastor and senior pastor of Baptist churches from 1965 to 1992. His most recent pastorate was at Grant Memorial Baptist Church, Winnipeg, Manitoba, where, over a 20 year period, he had oversight of a ministry that expanded from about 350 to more than 2500 communicants. During the period of his pastorates, Dr. Richison was also a lecturer at Detroit Bible College and Winnipeg Theological Seminary.

From 1993 to 1995, Dr. Richison was Director of Leadership Ministries for Campus Crusade for Christ (Canada). He currently has a world-wide lecture ministry with Campus Crusade.

Dr. Richison is an experienced writer, and he provides materials for three areas on the Internet: Sermon on the Net; Today's Word, and Pastors' Power Points. He has considerable ability to communicate God's Word verse by verse in a relevant, clear, applicable and insightful manner and to communicate vision and establish a philosophy of ministry in the local assembly. .

Dr. Richison has served on the following boards and conferences:

- Lower Michigan Baptist General Conference (district of Baptist General Conference, board member)
 - Great Lakes Baptist Conference (district of Baptist General Conference, chairman)
 - Central Canada Baptist Conference (district of Baptist General Conference, chairman)
 - Child Evangelism Fellowship (Manitoba)
 - Evangelical Fellowship of Canada
 - International Ministries to Israel (Canada)
 - Chairman of Greater Manitoba Sunday School Convention
 - Chairman of Marney Patterson Evangelistic Crusade (city-wide in Winnipeg)
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- Chairman of Terry Winter Evangelistic Crusade (city-wide in Winnipeg)
 - Chairman of the "Why Campaign" (city-wide evangelistic trust in Winnipeg)
 - Chairman of the Board of Regents of Canadian Baptist Seminary (part of consortium of seminaries on Trinity Western University)
 - Baptist General Conference of Canada (board member)
 - Briarcrest Bible College and Seminary, Moose Jaw, Sask.
 - Electronic Bible Society, Dallas Texas
 - President's Cabinet, Campus Crusade for Christ, Canada

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Verse-by-verse courses are available in more than 30 books of the Bible. Some of the courses include word studies (categorical doctrine) or historical articles (isagogics) that are relevant to the passages being discussed. Other courses offered are Bible character studies, comprehensive studies of the Christian Life and Basics of the Christian Life, an extensive series on the Person and Word of Jesus Christ, and a thorough study of the Attributes of God. You are invited to write to the address below, or write by e-mail, to inquire about Grace Notes materials.

Warren Doud, Director

1705 Aggie Lane

Austin, Texas 78757

E-Mail: wdoud@bga.com

Introduction

WRITER

-- Paul (1:1; 3:17)

PLACE OF WRITING

-- Corinth (Acts 18:5)

DATE

-- A.D. 52

OCCASION

-- Paul heard that the Thessalonians were teaching the false idea that the Day of the Lord had come. Some quit their jobs because of this.

PURPOSES

to correct the false error that the Day of the Lord had come

to give proper criteria to recognize that day.

THEME

-- corrections about the Day of the Lord (2:2)

KEY VERSES

-- 1:7-10; 2:3

PECULIARITIES

A. Apocalyptic, 2:1-12

B. Emphasis on the Day of the Lord

C. Adds to the prophetic truths of 1 Thessalonians

D. Contrasts to 1 Thessalonians

1 Thessalonians deals with Christ's coming for the saints in the air while 2 Thessalonians deals with Christ's coming to the earth with the saints.

1 Thessalonians presents the coming of Christ while 2 Thessalonians sets the stage for the coming of the Antichrist.

1 Thessalonians emphasizes the Day of Christ [Rapture] while 2 Thessalonians emphasizes the Day of the Lord [tribulation].

1 Thessalonians concerns itself with the dead while 2 Thessalonians concerns itself with the living.

E. The shortest epistle that Paul ever wrote to any church: 3 chapters, 47 verses and 1,042 words.

F. Tone more formal and rigid than 1 Thessalonians.

G. Turn of events: dynamic outreach church in 1 Thessalonians has become a church turned inward.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO MINISTRY AT THESSALONICA

A. Paul received the Macedonian vision at Troy to go to Europe, Acts 16:8-14.

This was the beginning of spreading the gospel from the continent of Asia to the continent of Europe. Going to Thessalonica transferred the ministry of the gospel to Western civilization. Macedonia was the former kingdom of Alexander the Great (he wanted one-world domination and enlightenment with the culture of Greece. He wanted to marry east and west.)

B. Paul came to minister in Thessalonica for three successive and successful weeks.

The Jews accused Paul's evangelistic team of "turning the world upside down."

Paul fled the city in the face of much opposition.

C. The principal people in the church at Thessalonica were Gentiles (1:9; Acts 17:4).

OUTLINE FOR SECOND THESSALONIANS

A. Greeting (1:1-2)

B. Commendation (1:3-12)

1. Appreciation (1:3-4)

2. Perseverance (1:5-10)

3. Prayer (1:11-12)

C. Correction (2:1-12)

1. Day of the Lord (2:1-5)

2. Mystery of lawlessness (2:6-12)

D. Continuing (2:13-17)

1. Thanksgiving (2:13-15)

2. Prayer (2:16-17)

E. Commandments (3:1-15)

1. To pray (3:1-2)

2. To put confidence in apostles (3:3-5)

3. To correct disorderly (3:6-10)

4. To command the idle (3:11-13)

5. To discipline the disorderly (3:14-15)

F. Conclusion (3:16-18)

2 Thessalonians 1:1

"Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:"

We come now to Paul's shortest epistle.

The first two verses make up the salutation. This greeting is essentially the same as in 1 Thessalonians.

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy,

These are the same three names found in 1 Thessalonians 1:1. This was an effective and powerful team as we saw in our study of 1 Thessalonians. Paul, a leader, scholar and writer determined to spread the gospel throughout the Roman world.

Silvanus, a Hellenistic Jew, held a prominent part of the Council at Jerusalem. The Council asked him to accompany Paul and Barnabas to Antioch to strengthen the church there. He also joined Paul on his second missionary expedition. He facilitated both Paul and Peter in the writing and delivery of their epistles.

Timothy was a vest pocket edition of the apostle Paul and Paul's son in the faith. His father was a Gentile and his mother a Jew. Timothy was a pastor and a troubleshooter for Paul.

To the church of the Thessalonians

Churches in the New Testament often named their churches based on the city or province where they were located (1 Corinthians 16:1; 2 Corinthians 8:1; Galatians 1:22). Paul maintained care for the Thessalonians. He did not "love 'em and leave 'em". People that we influence for the Lord require our maintenance. Everyone goes through development aches and pains. Perfection is progressive, not instant.

in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

The church at Thessalonica was in "God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." The church had its origin in a source, the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. The reason that church existed was due to the ministry of the Father and Son. The Father had a mission for the Son. The Son fulfilled that

mission. The church at Thessalonica was a result. God has a plan for every church.

Principle

Our church is not ours but God's.

Application

Your church belongs to God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Because of this, we are under divine surveillance. We must remember that our church is not ours. When tempted to cause a problem in our church, we need to keep in mind that God keeps surveillance on it. We must keep that in mind when we want to give someone a piece of our mind. Our church is the church of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, not ours.

2 Thessalonians 1:2

"Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ"

Now we come to Paul's standard "Hello" in his epistles: "grace and peace."

Grace to you

Grace is God's provision for the believer without any strings attached. God's provision comes from two persons of the Trinity, the Father and Son.

and peace

Peace also comes from those same two persons of the Trinity. A person with peace is a person with a settled soul. This settled soul comes from God's grace. Grace always precedes peace.

from

The word "from" indicates the source of "grace" and "peace."

God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ

Paul repeats the words "God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." This says something about our strength as believers; grace and peace come from a co-fountain. We have a dynamic duo as a supernatural resource for strength.

Note the emphasis on the lordship of Christ in His role as the source for our strength.

Principle

God sustains believers with no strings attached.

Application

Although we may feel that we do not deserve God's sustaining grace, God gives it anyway. Although we do not feel deserving of peace, God gives it to us because of His grace, that is, His provision for those He loves. We cannot pay for our sins as believers because Christ did all the suffering that was necessary for those sins. We rest on His grace. God does not need our help.

A believer cannot function efficiently without God's grace and peace. Many of us operate on personal drive, not on grace. That is a good way to head into spiritual shipwreck. We cannot operate without God's grace anymore than a plane can fly without fuel. God's grace is our spiritual fuel for flying in the Christian life.

A Christian who rests on God's grace has a settled soul and can sit down on the inside. He knows that God provides for any situation. He has a clear mind in any problem. Is something consuming you? If you keep your mind on the Lord, He will give you composure in the middle of your commotion.

"You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You, Because he trusts in You" (Isaiah 26:3).

2 Thessalonians 1:3

"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..."

Now we turn to the commendation section of 2nd Thessalonians (1:3-12). If Paul could find a reason to thank God for a local church, he always did. He even brought himself to thank God for the carnal Corinthian church. He could not bring himself to thank God for the Galatians, however, because they defected from the principle of the finished work of Christ.

We are bound to thank God

The word "bound" means to owe. This is a word of debt or obligation. Paul owes God a debt of thanks for the Thessalonians. He views thanks as a duty because he prayed that the Thessalonians might "increase and abound in love." God heard his prayers so he owes God his thanks. This is the

subjective side of thanksgiving to God. Paul's team sensed a principled obligation to give thanks.

always

Paul and his team carried a constant sense of thanksgiving to God for the Thessalonians. He found many occasions whereby he could thank God for them.

for you, brethren,

Paul was grateful, not just in some general fashion, but for two very specific things about the Thessalonians: 1) their increasing faith toward God and 2) their expanding love for fellow Christians. In the next verse, he boasts to other churches about other dynamics in the Thessalonian church.

Principle

Churches have reputations just like individual Christians.

Application

Every church has a name just as every Christian has a name. Each church has a testimony. Some churches have little reputation in the non-Christian community. Some have little reputation with the Christian community. What kind of testimony does your church have?

Thanksgiving relates to our capacity of soul. The greater our appreciation for what God is doing in those to whom we minister, the more it is fitting or appropriate to give God thanks. We cannot gain God's approval so that He will do something through us. We acknowledge that what He does, He does through His grace. A thankful heart just responds to God's grace. God is not impressed with who we are or what we do. He is impressed with who Jesus is and what He did. A sense of what God does through His grace is always the basis for our thanks.

as it is fitting,

The word "fitting" carries the ideas of weight, value, worth, befitting, becoming, right on the ground of fitness. Thanking God for fellow believers weighs something. It has some worth, therefore, it is "fitting" or right that one gives thanks. This is proper in correspondence to what God expects. This is the objective side of

thanksgiving to God because it responds to God's concrete answer to prayer. This is thanksgiving based on facts, not potential. The gospel team never took for granted God's work in the lives of the people to whom they ministered. They did not attribute change in the lives of the Thessalonians to themselves.

Principle

Giving God thanks for fellow Christians amounts to something.

Application

Are you "bound" to thank God for what God is doing through you? Are you compelled to launch from your soul appreciation to God for what He is doing?

"For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe" (1 Thessalonians 2:13).

Some Christians respond to the exposition of the Word. They live out the principles of God's Word. They apply it to their lives. They share their faith with believers and unbelievers alike. We cannot help but give God thanks for these churches. Some people respond to God and others do not.

because

Paul now gives the grounds for the gospel team's thanksgiving. He uses two words for the growth of the Thessalonians "grows exceedingly" and "abounds." The essential reason behind Paul's thanks is growth.

your faith grows exceedingly,

The words "grows exceedingly" comes from two words: to increase or grow and beyond measure. This is the only time this word occurs in the New Testament. Our faith can grow internally, as the organic growth of a tree. It also can grow exceedingly. Not only had their faith grown but it flourished. Our faith should never level off at some plateau and become stationary. Our faith is never static; it either grows or shrinks in size. It never remains the same.

"...but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen" (2 Peter 3:18).

"But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit..." (Jude 20).

Principle

The faith of some Christians grows much faster than the faith of others.

Application

There are two aspects to our faith: 1) saving faith 2) dynamic or forceful faith. Each Christian is has saving faith but not every Christian radiates forceful faith.

The amount of faith differs with each believer. Every Christian has the same quality of saving faith but not the same quantity of dynamic faith. The faith of some Christians is the same as when they became Christians. They have not grown in their faith at all. There is little development and modest progress in their faith.

"And the apostles said to the Lord, 'Increase our faith'" (Luke 17:5).

The more we understand the principles of God's Word and apply them to our experience, the greater our faith grows. We should increase our spiritual capacity like we increase our mental capacity. Faith is like a muscle, the more we exercise it the more it develops. If we neglect our faith, it will atrophy and get weaker.

There is such a thing as "great faith." We can have little faith (Matthew 6:28-30), medium faith or great faith.

"When Jesus heard these things, He marveled at him, and turned around and said to the crowd that followed Him, 'I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!'" (Luke 7:9).

There is a great difference between those who believe that God can change their lives and those who do not. Do you believe that God will work to change the members of your family? Do you believe that God will use you to win many for Christ? We need more people like Abraham who was "strong in faith."

"He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform" (Romans 4:20-21).

and the love of every one of you all

The Thessalonians' faith in God grew and their love for each other expanded as well. These are the two levels of their growth.

Note the word "every" and the word "all." There were no exceptions in the Thessalonian church when it came to abounding love toward one another. They all loved each other.

abounds toward each other

The word "abounds" is simply more [in quantity]. Sometimes this word has the idea of "superabundantly." When it comes to loving one another, we should have it in superabundance. We should not put bounds around it. We break the bounds when it comes to love. Not only did the Thessalonians faith grow but also their love grew in quantity.

When we increase the extent of our love to the point of abundance, it will create a momentum of love among the community of believers.

Principle

Biblical love for one another can grow so that we will love everyone in our local church.

Application

Could you classify yourself as a model of someone who loves people in your church superabundantly? How would you stand up to that standard? All of us can love the lovely. Few of us love the unlovely. It is easy to love the people we like but not very easy to love the people we dislike.

"For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?" (Matthew 5:46).

It is difficult to love those who do not treat us fairly. That should not concern us. That is their responsibility. Our responsibility is to love them. We cannot force people to love us. God does not obligate us to make others love us but He does require us to love them.

It is one thing to develop our faith and it's another thing to develop our love to others. Some people have strong faith but weak love. Others have strong love but weak faith. God expects us to reach a point of strong faith and strong love.

2 Thessalonians 1:4

"...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..."

so that

Because of the Thessalonians' two abounding earmarks of faith and love (1:3), Paul boasts of them to other churches.

"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 10:24-25).

Principle

It is legitimate to use other churches as our model for building a local church.

Application

It is legitimate to use other churches as models for your church. This is New Testament truth. First, Paul used the Macedonians as a model to the Corinthians and then he used the Corinthians as an example to the Macedonians.

"Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality. For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing, imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. And not only as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God" (2 Corinthians 8:1-5).

Although the Macedonians were poor, they gave to the Lord liberally even in trial.

"Now concerning the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you; for I know your willingness, about which I boast of you to the Macedonians, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal has stirred up the majority. Yet I have sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this respect, that, as I said, you may be ready; lest if some Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we (not to mention you!) should be ashamed of this confident boasting" (2 Corinthians 9:1-4).

If Paul can use a church in northern Greece as an example for a church in southern Greece and vice versa, should we not look to churches that God blesses as examples for our church? Some churches inspire us to greater things. They cut new ground because they are led by visionary people who look to God to work in unusual ways in their churches.

It amazes me that a church can cut off their nose to spite their face because they are jealous of the church down the street.

and faith

There is no definite article before the word "faith" in the Greek indicating quality of faith. The Thessalonian faith was no dead creed but a living dynamic whereby they applied the reality of Christianity to their experience.

Principle

Quality of faith depends on our understanding and appropriation of God's providence.

Application

We do not need a lot of faith when things are going well. When our health is good, we have a regular income and our family is fine, who needs God? "I can make it on my own. Everything is coming up roses. The road is smooth and straight." However, when everything comes up lemons, we need to exercise a rest in God's providence. Our faith needs to grow when nothing goes right.

"And the apostles said to the Lord, 'Increase our faith'" (Luke 17:5).

When God increases trouble in our lives, we need to increase our faith in His sovereign power.

The growth of our faith should increase in two categories: persecutions and tribulations.

in all your persecutions and tribulations

The word "persecution" means to systematically organize a program to oppress and harass people by religion. This is affliction from without the church.

"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).

"Tribulations" means pressures of any kind. The new believers in Thessalonica underwent severe as well as slight suffering. Trouble comes in all shapes and sizes both large and small. God frees none of us from trouble. Some of our troubles are small compared to others. Some of us have trouble with our husbands or wives. Some have pressures with their children. The doctor informs us that we have cancer. Some turn to alcohol. Others turn to God.

"Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16).

Notice that big little word "all." God does not ask us to exercise our faith in most persecutions and tribulations but in "all" of them.

that you endure

"Endure" signifies to hold up against a thing and so to bear with again and again. Literally, it means to hold up repeatedly. They held up under persecution over and over. This is not a matter of gritting our teeth and toughing it out but a matter of orienting ourselves to God's sovereignty in our situation. A believer who understands God's providence in everything is a person who can tackle any problem. He can hang in there because he knows God processes everything that comes into his life.

Principle

God carefully designs adversity and prosperity so that we will become the kind of people He wants us to be.

Application

There is one thing that we can count on: our circumstances will change. None of us can get through life with hostile humanity without trouble.

"But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra – what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:10-12).

There will come a day when we will face adversity. Life never remains the same. God does not guarantee that our circumstances will remain the same. There will be times of prosperity and times of adversity. God designs a certain amount of adversity and a certain amount of prosperity for every believer. He knows our tolerances. He wants to test us to see what kind of character we have.

Two character qualities are crucial when we enter into duress. 1) We need to develop a tough attitude and 2) we should extend our love to fellow Christians. When we develop these qualities, we do not feel sorry for ourselves or enter into a pity party.

2 Thessalonians 1:5

"...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..."

which is manifest evidence

The Thessalonian' faith and patience under pressure was plainly evident for everyone to see. There was plenty of evidence to give plain proof of their dynamic faith. The fact that the Thessalonians suffered for Christ's kingdom by courageous faith is a proof of the reality of their salvation.

"And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God" (1 Corinthians 2:4-5).

of the righteous judgment of God,

At first appearance, the suffering of the Thessalonians seemed unjust yet their dynamic faith demonstrated very clearly that God is righteous in His dealings with them.

God is righteous in His judgments. He will justly deal with the injustices against the Thessalonians in His future judgment although He might refrain from judgment for the present.

"Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Genesis 18:25).

Principle

How mature believers react to affliction is an obvious sign of God's righteous judgment in their lives.

Application

In righteousness, God designed affliction to come our way. He judges us worthy for this. He metes out a certain measure of suffering designed especially for us. He is too wise to do wrong or to make a mistake in this. He knows our tolerances. He never allows suffering to come without rhyme or reason.

God's character is always 100% consistent. He never compromises his justice. Because of the death of Jesus on the cross, God is now free to deal with us fairly and still keep His character intact. There is a danger in the assumption that God can overlook His righteousness to love His creatures. If God did this, then He would not be consistent with His own attributes.

God has the good sense to know the tolerances of suffering we can endure. He knows when to prosper us and when to send adversity. He mixes both blessing and hardship in proper proportions. God's central interest is what happens to our soul in suffering. When our interest is the suffering itself, we miss the point that God tests our calibre of our souls. God tests the edification of our souls in suffering. If we have not grown sufficiently, then He introduces more pain into our lives so that we can appropriate His promises. What is your capacity of soul?

that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God,

Paul's team judged the Thessalonians worthy of the kingdom of God in the light of their faithfulness to God in their suffering. In comparison to other churches, the team regarded them as worthy of the kingdom.

Endurance of trial does not make the believer worthy of heaven but it does demonstrate the worthiness of one who will rule with Christ in His kingdom (Revelation 3:21; 2:26). God makes us worthy of His kingdom by His grace. God's kingdom is His sovereign rule over all creation.

"If we endure, We shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us" (2 Timothy 2:12).

for which you also suffer

The word "for" means on the behalf of. The Thessalonians suffered on behalf of God's kingdom.

"So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name" (Acts 5:41).

"For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear is in me" (Philippians 1:29-30).

Principle

Children of the King should live worthy of His kingdom.

Application

God reveals that we are worthy of His kingdom by allowing us to suffer. God is righteous in sovereignly arranging affliction for our lives.

Those who react to suffering negatively do not meet God's test. God's test in suffering is to demonstrate His grace for any disaster that may come our way. There will be no opportunity for this in eternity. Time is the only occasion where we can show God's grace in suffering.

Those who suffer in a godly manner demonstrate confidence in God's sustaining grace for that suffering. Adversity can turn into blessing. No

athlete develops muscles without putting his or her body through some suffering!

Adversity makes prosperity more wonderful. Christians who suffer in a godly manner demonstrate God's provisions for inner strength.

The Christian who suffers like a yo-yo, always up and down, does not have the stability that comes from understanding God's providence for his life.

You may suffer today and no one seems to care. It seems that everyone has enough trouble of his own without having any concern for you. However, God cares for you. He providentially cares for you.

"...casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7).

Christians should care for you as well, if they were spiritually minded.

"Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2)

2 Thessalonians 1:6

"...since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you..."

Verse 4 explains that persecution and tribulation were obvious signs of God's righteous judgment. God righteously measures out to each believer a certain amount of affliction while we are here on earth in time but it will get better by and by. The best is yet ahead for the believer.

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:17-18).

The worst is yet ahead for the non-believer. Paul assures the Thessalonians that God will persecute the persecutors (1:6-10). God shows the features of His future justice for both the Christian and the non-Christian. Paul begins with God dealing with the non-Christian in this verse.

since

The word "since" means if indeed. The word "since" defends God's righteous judgment (1:5)

because it assumes as true that God will make things right.

it is a righteous thing with God

We can translate the word "righteous" by the word just. God's absolute righteousness demands justice. He can be nothing but fair and equitable so He will settle the score with those who persecute the saints.

to repay with tribulation

The word "repay" carries the idea of recompense, give back as an equivalent, pay back in kind. God will give back to the persecutors of the Thessalonians the same kind of treatment they gave in return. They get correspondent treatment or retribution for persecution of the saints. Because God is righteous, He incurs an obligation to do this. His retribution is not a matter of personal vengeance but of justice. This is a future retribution whereby God will deal with those who persecuted the saints.

those who trouble you

The Thessalonian persecution proves a coming judgment on the persecutors. God will requite them for their wrongs. God afflicts the afflictors.

"But if you indeed obey His voice and do all that I speak, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries" (Exodus 23:22).

"Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord" (Romans 12:19).

Principle

What goes around will come around.

Application

God is absolutely righteous. He cannot be anything otherwise. Because of this, He always deals justly. He cannot be anything other than just. The seeming prosperity of the wicked will end at the final judgment. God has not yet avenged the wicked. God would be unjust if there was no deferred judgment.

Christians should expect trouble in this life because we march to a different drumbeat – the

drumbeat of Jesus Christ. Christians should not be surprised that they face trouble from those without Christ because people do not like Jesus to show them up for what they are. Because of this, they make the Christian a speckled bird. They ostracize Christians who take a stand. We will be misrepresented, misquoted, misunderstood and misinterpreted.

No Christian wants to be unpopular with people but there is something that transcends popularity. He wants to be popular with Jesus first. That automatically puts him in the minority.

God will recompense those who persecute the saints. They will get theirs one day. In the mean time, man does as he pleases. He defies God, morality, and decency. He calls wrong right and right wrong. He claims that perversion is normal and morality is perversion. They say, "Let your conscience be your guide" but their conscience is like a rubber band that can stretch in any direction anyone wants it to go.

Some people have their heaven here, not hereafter. Do you want your "heaven" here or hereafter?

NOTE: 2 THESS 1:7,8 NOT AVAILABLE

2 Thessalonians 1:9

"These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power..."

These

The word "these" is qualitative, emphasizing the class of those described in verse 8.

shall be punished

The word punished means to pay a price [by way of return], to pay a penalty. God will repay the persecutors of the church at Thessalonica by giving them "eternal destruction" in return for rejecting the gospel and persecuting the messengers of the gospel. They will not escape God's retribution.

with everlasting destruction

"Destruction" means ruin, death. Because a number of evangelicals today reject the idea of eternal punishment, we need to study this word more extensively. Some say that "destruction"

means annihilation. This word does not imply annihilation or temporary retribution.

The New Testament uses this word of the physical death for a believer out of fellowship (1 Corinthians 5:5). Because this person did not repent of living in adultery with his stepmother, Paul gave him over to Satan "for the destruction of his flesh [his physical body] that his spirit may be saved in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ."

In 1 Timothy 6:9, Paul shows the consequences of indulging the flesh. There will be irrevocable physical ruin. Indulging the flesh ruins people.

Paul uses "destruction" in our verse and 1 Thessalonians 5:3 to describe the effect of God's judgments in the Day of the Lord [the Tribulation] and the Second Coming of Christ. The nature of "destruction" in this verse is that it is "everlasting."

In a few passages (Romans 16:25; 2 Timothy 1:9; Titus 1:2) "everlasting" means duration undefined but not necessarily endless. However, we can see the dominant meaning of "everlasting" in 63 other passages, such as 2 Corinthians 4:18 where it is set in contrast to phrases such as "for a season."

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:17-18).

The New Testament uses "everlasting" for persons and things which are in themselves endless: of God (Romans 16:26), God's power (1 Timothy 6:16), God's glory (1 Peter 5:10), the Holy Spirit (Hebrews 9:14), the redemption effected by Christ (Hebrews 9:12), salvation (Hebrew 5:9), Christ's future rule (2 Peter 1:9) which the Bible declares to be without end, the life received when we believe in Christ (John 3:16) ["they shall never perish"], and the resurrection body (2 Corinthians 5:1) [elsewhere said to be "immortal" in 1 Corinthians 15:53].

"Everlasting" is something without beginning (Romans 16:25; 2 Timothy 1:9; Titus 1:2), without beginning or end (Genesis 21:33; Isaiah 26:4; 40:28; Hebrews 9:14), and without end (2 Corinthians 5:1; 2 Thessalonians 2:16; 1 Timothy 6:16; Hebrews 9:12; 13:20; Revelations 14:6).

The use of "everlasting" here shows that God's judgment is final with no appeal (Hebrews 6:2) and is "unquenchable" (Mark 9:43). This is not remedial but retributive justice. It is not temporary but final judgment. It is of unlimited duration of time--eternal, as God's eternal power and divine nature are "everlasting" (Romans 1:20; 16:26).

Note the parallel between "everlasting punishment" and "eternal life." If heaven is to possess eternal life, then hell is everlasting punishment. Everlasting punishment lasts as long as eternal life. If we shorten hell, we shorten heaven.

"And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life" (Matthew 25:46).

"Everlasting destruction" ultimately means that those without Christ will lose everything that gives worth to our existence. We see that worth in the next two clauses.

Principle

Non-Christians incur eternal destruction because of God's justice.

Application

God is always consistent with Himself. He always uses proper legal procedure in passing out judgment.

The idea that there is no everlasting hell attracts men. They love the idea that God annihilates those without Christ from conscious existence because then they would not have to face their liability before Him. Men are not like horses that black out when they die. People go on forever.

The essence behind the idea of hell in the Bible is justice. God is not capricious or cruel. He must be consistent with Himself. He must be true to Himself. If He bends the policy (steps outside His character), He would no longer be consistent with Himself. If He were no longer consistent with Himself, He would no longer be absolute. If He were no longer absolute, He could not be the supreme God of the universe. He would be a fractured being that we could not trust.

Hell is a place we choose. If we choose to reject God's plan of salvation in Christ, then we make ourselves sovereign. We think we know what is

the best way for the universe to operate. The outcome of this is eternal destruction.

Non-Christians love to say, "I want to go to hell because that is where all my friends are." They miss the essence of hell in this. Hell is a place of deep alienation, alienation from God and from other people. It is a place of loneliness.

from the presence of the Lord

We can see the nature of "everlasting destruction" in two "from" clauses. First, everlasting destruction is "from the presence of the Lord." The word "presence" means face. Those who reject Christ will have no fellowship with God for eternity. They will not meet Him in personal relationship. God will drive them far from His presence, the true life of His presence, life as it should be lived. Life wholly devoid of God Himself is life without significance.

and from the glory of His power

The second limitation in everlasting destruction is separation from the majesty of God's visible splendor and power, His majesty.

"Power" here denotes ability, force, strength. This is a strength afforded by power. In this verse, "power" indicates strength afforded by power.

God's power has a "glory." The "glory" of His power signifies the visible expression of Jesus' inherent personal power. Jesus has the exceptional ability to do what He has to do. He has the special personal ability to be the source for true, eternal, quality life. When we separate ourselves from Him, we cannot have the quality of life God wants us to have.

Jesus has not yet manifested His power on earth. He has yet to do that. His glorious power will set things right. He will set up a worldwide kingdom where He will put everything right. His new administration will execute justice as never before in history. He will judge sin instantly by His omniscience. He will not allow judges to miscarry justice. No Philadelphia lawyer will spin things into some convoluted meaning. He will turn no criminal loose to again perpetrate his crimes on others.

"When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He

will sit on the throne of His glory" (Matthew 25:31).

Principle

God will separate non-Christians eternally from the essence of His presence, the quality of the life of God.

Application

It is difficult for fallen man to see the significance of losing fellowship with God because He knows nothing of it. The fall of man alienated him from that understanding. His only hope is to trust Christ's death for his sin and thus receive reconciliation to God's assessment on life.

God will banish those who reject Christ from His presence and majesty. They will forever lose the opportunity to connect to what gives meaning to life. This is their eternal fate.

Non-Christians suffer here and hereafter.

Christians suffer only here. Non-Christians miss fellowship with God now. They will miss it for eternity after death.

"...then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment..." (2 Peter 2:9).

There is a day of reckoning for those without Christ, a day of judgment. It is inexorable and irrevocable. It comes quickly. The only hope is to embrace the death of Christ to pay for our sins. Do not hesitate to embrace the Savior.

2 Thessalonians 1:10

"...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"

Verse 9 declared that Jesus' power will be put on display by His presence.

when He comes,

The time when Jesus will recompense believers will be at His Second Coming. The word "when" is indefinite for we do not know the exact time of this coming.

in that Day,

This coming of the Lord Jesus is the Second Coming, not the Rapture. At this coming, He will fight the battle of Armageddon and then establish His Kingdom on earth for 1000 years (Revelation 19:11-20:4). He will establish justice for the saints then.

to be glorified in His saints

Jesus will be glorified in, not by, the saints. The saints will mirror Jesus in that day. When Jesus comes, He will be the object of great honor because He transformed the lives of His saints. Worldwide glory for Christ is the ultimate purpose of creation. He will rule for 1000 years then He will deliver up the Kingdom to the Father so that God may be all in all (1 Corinthians 15:24). He will establish permanent glory for the Father. God's purpose for our lives is to glorify Christ.

**"The glory of the LORD shall be revealed,
And all flesh shall see it together; For the
mouth of the LORD has spoken" (Isaiah 40:5)**

and to be admired among all those who believe,

Jesus will be honored in the saints and "admired" by all those who believe. The word "admired" signifies to wonder at, marvel. They will be astonished at who He truly is and that He made good on all His promises. Believers will marvel at His Kingdom.

because our testimony among you was believed

The Thessalonians will participate in the glory of the Second Coming because they believed the gospel. We will not share in this because of our morality but because of the work of Christ on the cross. Christians have a marvelous future because we believed the gospel.

Principle

Jesus is the celebrity for the Christian.

Application

The white heat of God's presence will blow away pretense. No superficiality will stand in God's presence. When Jesus comes, we will see the wonder of what He did very clearly. He accrued all of the merit we need for eternity. We could do nothing to gain or earn salvation. He sustains us on earth so He will receive the glory for that as

well. He will overcome the problems of the world by setting up His Kingdom. We will greatly admire His wonderful person and work!

2 Thessalonians 1:11

"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..."

Paul now begins a prayer that the Thessalonians would develop certain qualities consistent with their calling.

Therefore

The "therefore" reaches back to the previous verse. Since the Christian is to reflect Christ's glory and admire his Saviour, Paul prays that the Thessalonians would prepare themselves so that their lives would harmonize with the Lord's character.

we also pray

The thought of the Second Coming of Christ spurs Paul to pray for the Thessalonians in their present spiritual condition so that they may have a testimony of life at the Second Coming.

always

The word "always" occurs in Paul's prayer in 1:3. Paul put great and persistent effort into prayer.

"Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church" (Acts 12:5).

"...praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints – ..."
(Ephesians 6:18).

for you

Praying for others is intercessory prayer. Many of us pray for me and mine. We spend little time in prayer for others. We are quick to pray for our immediate family but slow to pray for someone else's family.

"Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to

pray for you; but I will teach you the good and the right way" (1 Samuel 12:23).

"Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much" (James 5:16).

Principle

We cannot pretend in prayer because God's presence exposes superficiality in our hearts.

Application

Christians should be at their best when they are in prayer. When we enter prayer, we enter the presence of God. We cannot pretend in God's presence for He sees our heart. He is the only being who fully knows our hearts. He exposes all the hypocrisy of our hearts.

It is wonderful to know that we can count on certain people to pray for us in times of trouble. United intercessory prayer is even more powerful. When people mix their prayers together, something more powerful comes of their prayers. Something more happens when people pray together.

"For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20).

Paul prays for four things for the Thessalonians. First, he prays about their walk in relationship to their calling.

that our God would count you worthy of this calling,

The words "count worthy" mean deem it suitable. Paul prays that God would find of the Thessalonians worthy so that He would look on them favourably.

This word does not mean make you worthy. It is a causative word in the Greek. God is the cause of worthiness, not us.

The Christian's walk should suit his salvation. The Christian is headed for heaven. The best is yet ahead but his present life should reflect his future life.

"...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..." (1 Thessalonians 1:5).

Principle

We should live Christian lives in keeping with our eternal destiny.

Application

No Christian is worthy of salvation but we can live lives consistent with our eternal future.

"I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14).

"Does your life reflect 'the upward call of God in Christ Jesus'? When you arrive in heaven, will God be grieved by the way you lived, or will He say, 'Well done. You have walked worthy of me'?"

"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 5:41-42).

"For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God..." (Colossians 1:9-10).

"...that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory" (1 Thessalonians 2:12).

Paul's second petition was that God would enable the Thessalonians to fulfil all the good pleasure of His goodness.

and fulfill

God wants to "fulfil" something in us. He wants to do it to the full. He will complete the job. He will do the most for you, not the least. He wants the best for us, not the worse.

"...being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will

complete it until the day of Jesus Christ..." (Philippians 1:6).

all the good pleasure of His goodness

The Holy Spirit here declares that, through him, the Thessalonians would bring "the good pleasure of goodness" to fruition in their lives. "Goodness" is more than kindness for it can include stern qualities (Matthew 21:12,13; 23:13-29). In every case, it includes the idea of giving or generosity. This is a quality of a person filled with the Spirit.

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law" (Galatians 5:22-23).

All goodness in us comes from God's grace, not from self.

"Good pleasure" means a good desire. Paul prays that their will would line up with their calling.

Principle

The spirit of generosity comes from the filling of the Holy Spirit.

Application

Do you want to fulfil the purpose God has for you? Do you want to be so given to God that you will do anything that He asks? God wants our best. Our best can only come from the filling of the Holy Spirit. God will work in your life if you act in His power, allowing His Spirit to work.

The third thing Paul prays is that the Thessalonians will work their faith with power.

and the work of faith with power

Faith carries power. Do we do the pleasure of God's will by faith with power? We cannot live a life of faith without God's power. We will never reach the potential of our faith without that power.

Principle

Christians should walk worthy of their "work of faith with power."

Application

We engage God by faith. When we do that, we receive a power that is not our own. Sin tugs at our souls. We cannot live the Christian life by logic or reason. We must draw on the resources of God. That brings power.

"Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses [those who lived by faith in chapter 11], let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:1-2).

2 Thessalonians 1:12

"...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"

We come to the fourth and final petition that Paul prays for the Thessalonians.

that

The word "that" is a conjunction expressing purpose. The purpose of Paul's prayer is that the Thessalonians will glorify the name of Jesus with a testimony for Him on earth.

the name of our Lord Jesus Christ

The word "name" here stands for all that the name of Jesus implies: character, majesty, power, excellence. It is all that He is in His person and work, His renown.

"Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2: 9-11).

"Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: 'The Lord knows those who are His,' and, 'Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity'" (2 Timothy 2:19).

may be glorified

The ultimate purpose for each Christian is to glorify the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Christians should yield everything in their life toward this end, even their own happiness.

"Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31).

in you,

We glorify the Lord Jesus in our person and work. If we build our spirits with the edification that comes from applying the principles of God's Word to experience, there is a capacity in us that can glorify Christ.

and you in Him,

If we glorify Christ with our lives, the Lord Jesus Christ will give us glory. When the world recognizes the manifest glory of Christ as the God-man at the Second Coming, we will receive glory in association with Him. There is a glory in becoming a Christian and walking the Christian life.

according to

The words "according to" mean according to the norm and standard of. Grace is our standard for glorifying the Lord Jesus. We glorify Him by who He is and what He did. We do not glorify Him by who we are and what we do, by merit.

"...who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began..." (2 Timothy 1:9).

However, our works can glorify Him but even these works come from God's grace. It is only because God accomplished something in us, do others glorify God in us.

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ

One definite article precedes both "God" and "Lord Jesus Christ" implying that grace comes from both in inseparable unity. No action of ourselves will bring glory to Christ. It is only by the grace of God that we can glorify God. We can trace answered prayer back to God's grace.

Principle

God's ultimate purpose for every Christian is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ.

Application

The ultimate purpose for every Christian is to hold high the glory of Jesus Christ. If we tell the world about the person and work of the Lord Jesus, we hold Him in high honor.

Christians will be held in high honor as well because their holy life glorifies the Saviour. The Christian holds Christ in high honor only by grace.

2 Thessalonians 2:1

"Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you..."

Chapter 2 transitions from more general subjects of prophecy to a specific subject--the Day of the Lord. The Thessalonians misunderstood some things about prophecy so Paul corrects these errors in the first 12 verses. Nowhere else in the Bible can we find a similar consideration of this subject of Scripture.

In 1 Thessalonians Paul taught the Thessalonians that the Day of the Lord would come as "a thief in the night" (5:2). They falsely drew an implication from the imminent coming of Christ that He was coming immediately. Because of their severe persecution, they thought that they were now in the Tribulation. Paul shows in the first five verses how the church will escape the wrath of God's Tribulation on earth.

Now, brethren,

Paul softens his correction of the Thessalonians with the word "brethren."

concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ

Paul shows that the Lord will not come until there first come three events: 1) a falling away of the church in apostasy, 2) the removal of the restrainer of the man of sin, and 3) the manifestation of the man of sin.

Paul used the word "coming" for the Rapture in 1 Thessalonians 2:9 and 4:15 before the coming Tribulation. The New Testament also uses the word "coming" for the Revelation [Second

Coming] of Christ at the end of the Tribulation (Matthew 24:27, 37, 39). Our context indicates that the Rapture is referred to by the clause "our gathering together to Him." Paul is speaking to the church at Thessalonica.

The chapter as a whole deals with the Day of the Lord, that is, the period beginning with the Rapture, including the Tribulation and the Second Coming. The next verse shows that the Thessalonians bought into erroneous doctrine about future events. They concluded that they would have to go through the Tribulation before Christ would come back. Since the Thessalonians were experiencing persecution, they thought that Jesus' coming was near.

and our gathering together to Him,

The "coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" and "our gathering together to Him" are one and the same event because both phrases are governed by the definite article "the".

One day all Christians will come together as a single group at the Rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:17). We will all be one then. There will be no doctrinal differences. Every nuance of truth will be perfectly clear at that time. Jesus is the grand meeting place around whom the church gathers. He is the focal point of our accord.

"Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thessalonians 4:17-18).

The only other occurrence of "gathering together" in the New Testament is in Hebrews 10:25 referring to a church gathered together in assembly worship.

"...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 10:25).

we ask you

Paul corrects the Thessalonians by appealing to their own logic--he "asks" them [entreat]. This is the idiom of grace. He does not use a condescending approach or a stern reprimand.

This is the first approach to people who fall into error. If this does not work, you must use an approach like Paul used with the Galatians [castigation] because they entrenched themselves in error. When it comes to a subject like prophecy, there is room for a more moderate approach to truth.

Principle

The best is yet ahead.

Application

The Bible teaches that there will be an unprecedented period of tribulation on the earth of seven years. Jeremiah calls it "the time of Jacob's trouble" (Jeremiah 30:7). This is a time of trouble for Israel and Gentiles, not the church. Confusing Israel with the church is a great error of interpretation. The Rapture has to do with the church but the Tribulation has to do with bringing Israel back to God (Daniel 12:1).

The best is yet ahead for the church. One day Jesus will come to snatch us into heaven. We call this the Rapture or the translation of the church. This is our "blessed hope" (Titus 2:13).

Note the distinctions between the Rapture and the Second Coming:

Rapture

The Rapture is for the church only Jesus comes in the air Jesus comes for the church He rewards believers Physical body becomes immortal Christ as Bridegroom Comfort Translated to Heaven (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18) Mystery (1 Corinthians 15:50f)

Second Coming

The Second Coming is a worldwide event Jesus comes to the earth Jesus comes with the church He judges unbelievers Environment changed Christ as King and Judge Terror Taken away in judgment (Matthew 24:37f) Known event (Zechariah 14:4)

2 Thessalonians 2:2

"...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"

Verse 2 gives us Paul's occasion for writing chapter 2. The Greek shows that this is a purpose clause--"that you not be shaken in mind."

It is Paul's purpose that the Thessalonians not be shaken in mind or troubled about going through the Tribulation.

not to be soon shaken in mind

The teaching that the Thessalonians were currently in the presence of the Day of the Lord shook the Thessalonians to the core. It destabilized their hope of the Rapture. The Day of Christ [Rapture] would keep them from the Day of the Lord [the Tribulation] because the Lord will translate them to Heaven before the Tribulation begins.

The Thessalonians were like ships in a calm harbor when suddenly violent waves come crashing on them. False teaching can shake our minds as a violent wind shakes a ship tossed with great waves at sea. The word "shaken" can mean to render insecure, stir up, to agitate, unsettle, cause to waver. Some teaching can so shake us up that it undermines our sense of security, composure and happiness (Acts 2:25; Hebrews 12:27).

The Thessalonians developed security in the future by 1 Thessalonians but they lost their settled conviction about the return of Christ before the Day of the Lord due to fakers who changed Paul's teaching. They wavered about their position and this created a deep distress. They needed stability in prophetic truth.

The word "soon" shows the difference between mature and immature believers. Immature believers go into instability very quickly. If they hurriedly latch onto doctrine without careful examination, it will impact their perspective and emotions. All of us have triggers that exaggerate our reactions to truth. Once we experience this, we open ourselves to any faker that may come along. Our emotions dictate our response to a teaching rather than the Word governing our beliefs.

or troubled,

"Troubled" means to make an outcry, be inwardly aroused. The Thessalonians were disturbed inwardly and frightened about the Day of the Lord. Once we leave the sound teaching of God's Word, we emotionally trouble our souls.

either

Three separate sources introduced the false teaching that the Day of the Lord had already come: 1) spirit, 2) word and 3) letter. When false doctrine comes from a number of sources then there is an inclination to believe it. Imposters can come from any angle.

by spirit

First, some people claimed direct disclosure from the Lord by direct prophetic utterance. This was a fake utterance that affirmed that the church was in the Tribulation.

"Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1).

or by word

Secondly, others recounted what they heard from others by some discourse they heard by word of mouth. Some teachers pronounced that the church was in the Tribulation in their public and private meetings.

or by letter,

Finally, someone forged a letter from Paul. They claimed that they received a letter purportedly from Paul's gospel team indicating that the Thessalonians were in the Tribulation. Paul made sure that they knew 2 Thessalonians was a genuine letter in 3:17.

"The salutation of Paul with my own hand [handwriting], which is a sign in every epistle; so I write" (1 Peter 3:17).

as if from us,

False teachers represented their teaching as if it was from Paul's gospel team. This was a forged letter misrepresenting the true teaching about the Day of the Lord. Prophetic fakers were in the church from the very beginning of the church.

Principle

We anchor our souls in the study of prophecy by significant study of God's Word.

Application

False doctrine can disturb our spiritual stability and spark uncertainties in our souls. Are you anchored in your understanding of biblical prophecy? Many fakers are out there today. Some are sensationalists. Others are inept in their understanding of Scriptures. Any of them can make a child of God disheartened and confused. Anchor your soul in the teaching of Scripture rather than in phoney proclamations of men.

Immature Christians are vulnerable to people who prey on untaught Christians. People believe what they want to believe when they operate on their emotions.

as though the day of Christ

Some manuscripts read "the day of the Lord." If the phrase "the day of Christ" were the right text then the meaning would be that the Rapture had already come. If the phrase "the day of the Lord" is the right reading, then the meaning is the Tribulation had already come. In either case, the teaching is false.

The words "as though" point to something alleged. Neither the Rapture nor the Day of the Lord has occurred; it was something alleged.

had come

The Thessalonians knew that the Day of the Lord would come but they did not understand the sequence in which it would occur. They thought that it already had come upon them.

The word "had come" mean to set in, to stand in. The Thessalonians thought that the "day of Christ" was present. The Greek tense indicates that they thought that the "day of Christ" had already come and remains with them. Paul categorically repudiates that the Tribulation has come by this statement. Paul taught a pretribulation rapture of the church (1 Thessalonians 1:10) and that the church would not go through the Tribulation (1 Thessalonians 5:9).

Paul proceeds to show in the following verses that the Rapture [coming of Christ] for His church would launch the Day of the Lord [the Tribulation period, the Second Coming and the Millennium]. In doing so, Paul describes certain features of the Day of the Lord that are obviously not present yet.

Principle

A correct understanding of prophecy prevents phonies from passing on their fake understanding and destabilizing believers.

Application

Many Christians today negate the importance of teaching about end-time events yet the Bible places great emphasis on it. These people make their followers vulnerable to the phonies who come along because they neglect this vast area of God's Word.

Any faker who comes down the pike usually emotionally disturbs those who follow these teachers. Paul went into great detail about the Day of the Lord to explain the sequence of events of the last times. The Bible is our final authority, not some spirit, message or letter.

2 Thessalonians 2:3

"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..."

Paul now turns to warn the Thessalonians against deception by a religious system. The year-old church underwent severe persecution.

Some religionists of that day spread the error that they were in the Tribulation [the Day of the Lord]. They said that the Day of the Lord was already present (2:2).

With this verse, he begins to give the reasons that the Day of the Lord has not come yet. He gives three preconditions for when the Day of the Lord begins: 1) a worldwide apostasy, 2) revelation of the man of sin and 3) the restrainer will be taken away. All three must occur before or at the beginning of the Day of the Lord. The Day of the Lord is a series of events: the Tribulation, Second Coming and the Millennium.

Let no one deceive you

The word "deceive" is a strong term for deception. It is an intense word combining two words: deceive, cheat, beguile and out. The idea is to deceive thoroughly. This is Satan's core methodology.

"But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds

may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:3).

"And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression" (1 Timothy 2:14).

by any means;

The word "means" signifies a turning, a manner, character, way of life. People can deceive us in any number of ways (2:2). Paul lists three of these devices in the previous verse. Here he says, "Do not let anyone deceive you thoroughly in any manner." The word "any" indicates that we are not to allow ourselves to be deceived in anything--no exceptions.

There are many religious systems that appear credible but are nevertheless false. Many people are suckers for flashy personalities. People will pretend that they have some new revelation from God. Others will forge documents giving a formal appearance of credibility.

Principle

Christians should be on their toes when it comes to phoney systems of religion.

Application

Jesus warned against false prophets.

"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves" (Matthew 7:15).

"Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves" (Matthew 10:16).

"Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold" (Matthew 24:11-12).

The Devil is behind all religious deception.

"So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him" (Revelation 12:9).

Paul warns the leaders of the church against false teachers.

"For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves" (Acts 20:29-30).

False teachers like to transform themselves into something that is religious and righteous. Some people have the naive belief that if it is religious, it is right. These people fall into the trap of Satan's religious systems. Many people claim to be Christian while at the same time claiming that the Bible is not inspired or that Jesus is not God.

"For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works" (2 Corinthians 11:13-15).

for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first,

The Rapture is a signless, immanent event; it could occur without any preceding indication of its occurrence. The Day of the Lord has a number of signs indicating its coming. We find two signs in this verse and one in verses 6 and 7.

The first sign of the Day of the Lord is a worldwide, general apostasy of the church from its biblical moorings.

The words "falling away" come from the Greek for apostasy. It means defection, revolt, apostasy. The New Testament always uses this term for some form of religious defection. The idea is to openly defy God's authority and act in complete opposition to His plan. One day a general apostasy will occur in the professing church.

The definite article "the" before "falling away" indicates that this is not just any apostasy but "the apostasy."

Paul's proof in this verse that the Thessalonians are not in the Day of the Lord is that 1) a general apostasy has not occurred yet and 2) the man of sin has not yet been revealed.

Though Paul does not refer to the Rapture per se, he argues for the time of the Rapture ("the coming of the Lord," verse 1). The Rapture must begin by the beginning of the Day of the Lord. The idea that the Thessalonians had missed the Rapture shook them to the core.

The word "first" says something about the order of events in this chapter. The apostasy of Christendom must occur either just before the Day of the Lord or at its beginning.

Principle

One day Christendom will move into acute apostasy.

Application

Some people believe prophetically that the world is going to get better and better. When it gets good enough then Jesus will come back. The Bible teaches the opposite. The church will get worse and worse until finally she goes into profound apostasy.

The apostate church will become a worldwide movement. People will jump on the bandwagon because of the massiveness of the movement.

and the man of sin is revealed,

The second sign of the Day of the Lord is the revelation of the man of sin. A wide-ranging apostasy will take on its rise from the emergence of the man of sin. One day he will put in an appearance. No one knows who he is now.

The man of sin will come on the scene at a decisive moment in time (vv. 6,8). He will come out of hiding and the whole world will acclaim him. He is Satan's key agent in leading the world in rebellion against God.

The word "sin" should be lawlessness because better manuscripts so indicate. The literal meaning is without law for the word "lawlessness" is a Greek word that combines the negative "without" and the word "law." The usual translation is "iniquity." This man of lawlessness will fly in the face of God's authority. His essential characteristic is lawlessness. He operates with complete disregard to God's operating principles. He lives without regard to law (Acts 2:23).

the son of perdition

Paul describes the "man of lawlessness" as "the son of perdition." The word "perdition" indicates loss of well being, not of being. This "man of sin" is here the son of eternal perdition. He is the son of eternal ruin, not annihilation. This is his proper destiny (Romans 9:22; Philippians 1:28; 3:19; Hebrews 10:39; 2 Peter 2:1,3; 3:7,16; Revelation 17:8,11). He is a man doomed to eternal damnation. It is the opposite of a saved person.

The "son of perdition" has complete disregard for God and His values. He will remove the restraint against lawlessness. He will lead a rebellion against God in the professing church (1 Timothy 4:1-3; 2 Timothy 3:1-5; 4:3-4; James 5:1-8; 2 Peter 2:3:3-6; Jude). Saddam Hussein said that he would fight the "mother of all wars." The idea of mother in his statement is equivalent to our word "son." This antichrist is the essence of one who is not a Christian, who represents a person damned to hell.

The son of perdition will make a covenant with Israel at the beginning of the 70th week of Daniel but he will break the covenant three years later (Daniel 9:27). This person is in other places called "the antichrist."

"Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour" (1 John 2:18).

Daniel's other names for this person are the "little horn" (Daniel 7:8), the "prince that shall come" (Daniel 9:26), and the "willful king" (Daniel 11:36). The book of Revelation calls him the "beast out of the sea" (Revelation 13:1-10).

Principle

People not properly established in God's Word tend to be susceptible to false teaching.

Application

Faulty doctrine leads to a weak faith. People who do not have maturity of mind formed from the understanding of the principles of God's Word and the application of those principles to their lives will be vulnerable to deception. Faulty doctrine will lead to a weakened faith. People with

a weakened faith fall prey to further false teaching even to the point of joining the final apostasy.

We live in a day when Christians minimize the Word of God. They do this to their ultimate harm. They make themselves vulnerable to apostasy.

"These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11).

Evangelicals today are bankrupt in knowledge of Scripture. Unless we get back to learning solid Bible exposition and applying its principles to our lives, we will be vulnerable to apostasy and spiritually bankrupt.

2 Thessalonians 2:4

"...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"

Our passage describes the true disposition of the coming world dictator, the antichrist. We saw in verse 3 that he was lawless and headed for hell. This verse shows his purpose to conquer all religion and exalt himself as "God."

who opposes

The man of lawlessness has two distinctive functions: he 1) opposes and 2) exalts himself above all religion.

The man of lawlessness opposes God as an adversary. The word "opposes" means to be set over against, lie opposite [not only in attitude but also in behavior]. The idea is that this person is hostile and wants to show his hostility. He is the last world dictator, the antichrist (1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3). In such a role, he takes a position in opposition to God and all religion.

and exalts himself above all that is called God

One definite article ["the"] occurs in the Greek before both "opposes" and "exalts." He opposes all that is called God because he wants to exalt himself above all religion.

The word "exalts" comes from two words: to raise and over. Here it means to exalt oneself exceedingly over others. The man of lawlessness

wants to climb over all religion. He wants to outflank God by manipulation of people religiously throughout the world. The fact that men exalt themselves is not new but doing it on this scale is revolutionary. He exalts himself above every religion in the world.

or that is worshiped,

The word "worshiped" denotes an object of worship. This man of lawlessness is out to conquer both the true Christianity and pagan places of worship--any kind of worship. No religion will escape his domination.

so that he sits as God in the temple of God,

The man of lawlessness will assume God's place in the innermost sanctuary of God's temple. The antichrist will reign for three and one half years and will sit in the temple in Jerusalem (Daniel 7:25). The Greek word "temple" indicates that he invades the place designed for the very presence of God, in the "Holy of holies." The Bible calls this "the abomination of desolation."

"And forces shall be mustered by him, and they shall defile the sanctuary fortress; then they shall take away the daily sacrifices, and place there the abomination of desolation" (Daniel 11:31).

Jesus spoke of this event.

"Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand)..." (Matthew 24:15).

"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" (Mark 13:14).

There is no temple in Jerusalem today. The Muslim mosque, the Dome of the Rock, sits on the site of Herod's temple, the temple of Jesus' day. Titus destroyed that temple in A.D. 70. Apparently, the man of lawlessness will allow the Jews to build a new temple in the first part of the Tribulation possibly as part of the covenant the man of lawlessness makes with Israel at the beginning of the Tribulation. Imagine the havoc this will cause with the Muslims.

His objective is to neutralize Israel as God's chosen people. The purpose of the Tribulation is to bring Israel to acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah.

"And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; And the people of the prince who is to come Shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, And till the end of the war desolations are determined. Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; But in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, Even until the consummation, which is determined, Is poured out on the desolate" (Daniel 9:26-27).

The man of lawlessness will assume his place in the temple mid-way through the Tribulation (Daniel 9:24-27).

"And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days [3 ½ years]" (Daniel 12:11).

showing himself that he is God

The word "showing" literally means to point out, to exhibit, to show forth, put on display. The man of lawlessness will prove by demonstrating supernatural power (Satan's) that he is "God" and so bring about the approval of his followers (Revelation 13:5-8). This man is a mighty evangelist for his cause. He is in the business of pointing out the worth of worshiping him. He puts on display the credibility of his man-made religion by miracles, argument and reason.

Satan exalted himself as God before the creation of man (Isaiah 14:13-14). Now his surrogate exalts himself over all religions of the world. Satan has not changed his plans. He is still the same old person. He opposes God in order to exalt himself.

Principle

The Christian must stay on his spiritual toes because he has a supernatural adversary.

Application

Christians today need to keep on their spiritual toes because the Devil is on their case. Since God has an adversary, so does the Christian. Because of

the Christian's relationship to God, he attracts supernatural adversity.

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour [gulp down]" (1 Peter 5:8).

2 Thessalonians 2:5

"Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?"

Paul taught prophecy to brand new Christians just one year prior to his writing 2 Thessalonians. He taught them about The Day of the Lord.

Paul did not regard prophetic teaching as controversial, irrelevant or unimportant for new believers. He made sure that he taught it to new believers so that they would be oriented properly to the future. Their spiritual welfare depended on it.

The word "told" is in a tense that indicates that he frequently told the Thessalonians about these elements of prophecy while he was with them a year ago. This is a very different value than in evangelicalism today. We minimize and render prophecy into a void of truth that we cannot understand. Paul put great emphasis on it.

Principle

New Christians should learn prophecy as well as mature Christians.

Application

Prophetic truth has an important place to play in the maturation of the believer. It will make us aware of the strategies of Satan in the world and in our lives in particular. All of us need reminders of prophetic truth.

2 Thessalonians 2:6

"And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time"

In verses 6-12, Paul continues correcting the Thessalonian thinking that the Day of the Lord [the Tribulation] had already come. He shows that the Tribulation could not have come because there is now a restrainer keeping the man of lawlessness from manifesting himself.

This verse continues the third of three arguments to show that the Thessalonians were not in the Tribulation: there had not been 1) a falling away of the church in apostasy, 2) the removal of the restrainer of the man of sin, or 3) the manifestation of the man of lawlessness.

The Day of the Lord cannot come until the man of lawlessness is revealed but the man of lawlessness cannot be revealed until God removes the "restrainer."

And

Paul continues the subject of the man of lawlessness by the word "and." He shifts the emphasis to what is presently restraining the manifestation of the man of lawlessness.

now

The word "now" means that at the time of the writing of 2 Thessalonians God was restraining something.

you know

They "know" something so this is no mere speculation. It is not religious guesswork that the man of lawless is restrained.

what is restraining,

God is currently "restraining" the man of lawlessness. The word "restraining" comes from two words: to hold and down. Acts uses this word for holding a ship on course. The idea here is to hold down or back, to check, restrain, control. In verse 7, Paul uses the term "the restrainer," so this may refer to an individual or a group of people. Someone or something is currently keeping the Day of the Lord from coming.

that he may be revealed in his own time

God will not reveal this restrainer until the proper time and not one minute sooner. He will not allow Satan's activities in the Tribulation to occur until God is ready.

The word "time" does not look at the length of time but the quality of time. It looks at time from the characteristics of time. We cannot know the date of the Tribulation but we can know the characteristics of the Tribulation period, the "mystery of lawlessness." The Old Testament

extensively describes the Day of the Lord, as does the book of Revelation.

Principle

Satan is not completely free to execute his will on Christians today.

Application

By God's providence, He restrains Satan from unleashing lawlessness on the world today. God has not chosen to tell us who or what "the restrainer" is. All we know is that God is presently keeping this from happening and that the restrainer is now working.

Paul does not exclusively aim his correction of prophecy at the Thessalonians; he aims it at believers in the twenty-first century as well. The Lord will come to snatch the church away before the Tribulation begins. He will restrain lawlessness from breaking out in full force until then. After the Lord Jesus takes His church in the Rapture, then God will reveal the man of lawlessness. The Devil will be free to do as he pleases without restraint.

Today, the filling of the Spirit restrains the work of the flesh in the Christian (Galatians 5:16-17). The supernatural power of the Holy Spirit restrains the power of the flesh. Christians can be a mighty force if they would allow the Holy Spirit to control their lives.

2 Thessalonians 2:7

"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"

For

Verse 7 explains verse 6.

the mystery of lawlessness

The word "mystery" does not mean something spooky or an enigma in its New Testament usage. It is a truth not revealed by God up to this point. We cannot know a "mystery" by natural means; we can only know it by divine revelation. In the New Testament, the word "mystery" always refers to some relationship to the church. God never revealed the mystery of the church in the Old Testament (Ephesians 3:1f). We need God's Word to know the content of the "mystery." The

unleashing of the man of lawlessness is not known yet.

The definite article "the" points to a special "mystery of lawlessness." It is not just any lawless outbreak in society. The Tribulation will be a time of tyranny where principles of marriage, government and civility will collapse.

is already at work;

Lawlessness was at work in the first century but it was under control to some extent. The persecution that the Thessalonians faced was not the Tribulation. They suffered persecution because of lawlessness but not the kind of lawlessness in the Tribulation, which will be pervasive.

The New Testament always uses the word "work" for supernatural work. Here it is satanic supernatural work. Present day lawlessness is satanic and it is supernatural. We may be tempted to think that lawlessness is merely a social problem. It is far more than that. It is a satanic problem.

Principle

A pervasive breakdown in law will occur in the Tribulation.

Application

We can get foretastes of the breakdown of law in our society. The lawlessness of our time is the seed for the destruction that will come in the Tribulation.

When God takes the church indwelt by the Holy Spirit in the Rapture, all restraint against law will break down. Children will hate parents and parents hate children. Order and trust in business will break down. Great numbers of people will revolt against government. Anarchy will be the norm. Above all, revolt against Jesus Christ will be the most important value in society. Jesus is the target of Satan. He has been Satan's target since the fall of man (Genesis 3:15). Satan will attack the Word of God and all that it represents.

only He who now restrains will do so

The question as to who does this restraining is difficult to answer. Some argue that it was the Roman Empire that restrained lawlessness from breaking out into full bloom during the day of the Thessalonians. This cannot be true because the

Empire ceased to exist yet God restrains Satan's activities to our day.

The best explanation for the identity of the restrainer is the Holy Spirit because He is the only one powerful enough to restrain the satanic system on earth. One day He will stop restraining lawlessness when He raptures the church. The removal of the presence of the Holy Spirit at the Rapture is a strong case for the church's rapture before the Tribulation.

until

"Until" the Holy Spirit is taken out of the way, the lawless one will not be revealed and the Tribulation will not begin (2:8). Note the word "then" in verse 8 indicating sequence.

"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" (2 Thessalonians 2:8).

He is taken out of the way

Paul argues that the Thessalonians are not in the Tribulation because the Rapture has not occurred and the Holy Spirit still indwells the church. It is not until the Holy Spirit leaves this world that anarchy will become the norm in society.

This phrase literally reads, "until He becomes out of the midst." This does not say "He is taken out of the midst." When God translates the church to Heaven by the Rapture, the Holy Spirit will no longer permanently indwell believers on earth (1 Corinthians 15:51-52).

In one sense, the Holy Spirit will leave with the church. The Holy Spirit cannot leave the world in the sense that He is everywhere present [omnipresent]. He will move out of the midst of the world in that His indwelling presence in the church will leave with the church.

This will free Satan to move unhindered throughout the world. Lawlessness will cause great chaos in the world. God will still maintain His sovereignty but in the Tribulation He sovereignly allows Satan to move in an unrestrained manner. Many Gentiles and Jews will come to Christ in the Tribulation by the sovereign ministry of the Holy Spirit.

One day, rebellion against God will reach an all time high. Rebellion against Him will be worldwide. It will be difficult to make a decision for Him or walk with Him because of enormous pressure from society as a whole.

Principle

Satan is behind all lawlessness.

Application

Satan is at work in all lawlessness today. The Christian's true battle is a spiritual battle.

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:10-12).

Satan deludes people through both real and counterfeit miracles. He uses these means to break down divine institutions such as marriage and government. Drunkenness, drugs, sexual perversion and other collapses in society will become rampant in the last days. Freedom that initially looks great becomes the very thing that destroys people. This lawlessness is already at work in the world today. We see social breakdown everywhere.

The foundational reason for social breakdown in our society is the satanic system. We try to correct social problems with psychology and sociology. This will never resolve the problem because it does not deal with the true root of the problem.

Why do Christians fly in the face of God's Word? Why do they do what they know is wrong? Satanic-inspired lawlessness. The spirit of lawlessness is still at work even in Christians. On an individual basis, the Christian's answer lies in the filling of the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18). The word "filling" means control. Unless the Holy Spirit controls us, we will revert to type--someone autonomous from God. We will use the satanic system as our source for life.

2 Thessalonians 2:8

"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"

With this verse, Paul returns to a discussion about the career of the "lawless one" [the antichrist]. This one verse embraces his entire career and its total destruction. We find both the unveiling of "the lawless one" and the Lord Jesus destroying him and his career in this one verse. Verses 9-12 develop the theme of his career further.

And then

After God removes the restrainer [the Holy Spirit indwelling the church], then "the lawless one" will come on the scene (Daniel 9:26-27; 11:36-12:1). The Day of the Lord [beginning with the Tribulation] will start closely after the Rapture of the church.

the lawless one will be revealed,

The "mystery of lawlessness" will manifest itself in the "lawless one." The world will know him by his spirit of lawlessness. When God raptures the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the church, the "lawless one" will come on the world scene.

The church itself restrains evil in the world. When Jesus raptures the church, this leaves a great vacuum in the world. The "lawless one" will come to fill that vacuum. This "lawless one" is Satan's superman of the Tribulation.

whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth

The Lord Jesus will "consume" the "lawless one with the breath of His mouth." The idea of "consume" is to condemn, abolish, kill or slay. Jesus will condemn this man with a word. The Lamb moves into His role of the Lion. Jesus condemns this man to eternal damnation.

"And I saw the beast [the lawless one], the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the

lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh" (Revelation 19: 19-21).

and destroy

The word "destroy" means to render inoperative. Not only will Jesus kill the "lawless one" but also He will render inoperative his agenda for the world.

with the brightness of His coming

We get our English word "epiphany" from the Greek word for "brightness." Literally, it means shining upon. The New Testament uses this word for the coming of Christ in a number of passages with the idea of a splendid appearing. The shining forth of the presence of Jesus will manifest the gleam of His wonderful person.

"I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom..." (2 Timothy 4:1).

"...looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13).

Christians should acquire a love for the appearing of Christ.

"Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing" (2 Timothy 4:8).

Principle

The influence of the church in the world puts a lid on lawlessness.

Application

The church's influence extends far beyond its work of evangelism for it reaches into society itself. We should never undervalue this. Hospitals, the rise of the status of women, education and free enterprise all stem from Christianity.

The presence of the church also puts a monitor on lawlessness. If it were not for Judeo-Christian values in society, the world would break out in anarchy. Today, the central value of democracies

is liberty. Liberty in itself is not adequate for society. Societies and nations must hold transcended values if they are going to carry on with order.

When the church wins significant numbers of people to Christ, it makes a further impact on society. These new believers will live changed lives.

2 Thessalonians 2:9

"The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders..."

The coming of the lawless one

Satan will submit a substitute for the coming of Christ in the Tribulation, a parody of Christ's coming--the "coming" of the "lawless one"--the superman of the Tribulation.

is according to the working of Satan,

When the superman of the Tribulation comes, he will come as an agent and with the power of the spirit of Satan. The word "working" in the phrase "the working of Satan" means energizing operation. The superman will come with the energizing operation of Satan, with demon-possession powers.

Those who follow this superman will engage in satanic activity and function, operating with his energy and force (Revelation 13:11-18). This may mean that the superman and his followers will operate under demon possession.

with all

The word "all" indicates that the "lawless one" uses many different kinds of supernatural methods. Satan has a big bag of tricks by which he will deceive the world.

power, signs, and lying wonders

The world will buy into Satan's bogus systems by three schemes of imitation: 1) "power" [miracle], 2) "signs" [a miracle that makes some specific point] and 3) "lying wonders" [the impact of awe upon the world as they see these miracles].

It will be obvious to the world that the superman operates under the supernatural power of Satan. This power transmits falsehood at its heart (John 8:44).

Many people do not recognize that Satan can execute miracles. He does it today by religious miracles. The only thing that will save people from his deceptive miracles is the bald, plain, unvarnished Word of God. People who depend on their feelings to determine truth are vulnerable to his trickery. Just as we are subject to optical illusion, so we are at risk to the illusions of the Devil if we depend on our own resources.

The New Testament always combines "signs and wonders" because these miracles make people marvel at their spectacle. The design of all this is satanic deception so that the world will buy into his program.

We might wonder why the world en masse would follow a world dictator. The answer is in his satanic deceptive power. He has a great spin machine. His propaganda will be powerful and extensive because it will be religious and with spiritual emphasis. This power will convince nations throughout the world to follow him and his system of government.

"And all the world marveled and followed the beast. So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, 'Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?'" (Revelation 13:3-4).

God established the credentials of Christianity by power, signs and wonders. Satan subtly uses the very same means to deceive the world. The restraining power of the church indwelt by the Holy Spirit is gone in the Tribulation so satanic powers have free reign in the world.

Principle

In our fallen nature, error draws itself to us quicker than the truth.

Application

People have a proclivity to believe a lie quicker than the truth. Error draws people for the insidious reason that it appeals to their fallen nature. That is why many people today fall for heresy.

"And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (John 3:19).

2 Thessalonians 2:10

"...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 with all

The lawless one will not only use some but "all" "unrighteous deception," deception that comes from unrighteousness. Satan will employ many forms of deception some of which are propaganda, spin, portraying himself as religious, etc. These things appeal to people but they will destroy their eternal future.

unrighteous deception

The word "unrighteous" means injustice or a falsehood. Everything that the "lawless one" does misrepresents the truth. He will have every appearance of God. He is a religious fraud making him even more dangerous. Paul characterizes religious fraud as "unrighteous deception."

"But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:3).

"So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him" (Revelation 12:9).

Principle

Unrighteousness always begins with some falsehood or injustice.

Application

Unrighteousness always begins with a falsehood or injustice. A person who loves truth inevitably always has a sense of fairness, of truth. Unjust people always inevitably reject the gospel. Injustice always has an element of tyranny.

among those who perish,

The idea of "perish" is not extinction but ruin, not loss of being but loss of well-being. We can see this from the parables of the lost items in Luke 15 that the idea is not extinction but ruin. The phrase "among those who perish" refers to the condition

of those without Christ. If we do not embrace Jesus' work on the cross, we lose everything. False religion always trashes the cross as the only way of salvation.

"For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (1 Corinthians 1:18).

"But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them" (2 Corinthians 4:3-4).

because

The word "because" means in requital for. They will get just retribution for rejecting God's truth as it exists in Christ.

they did not receive

The word "receive" in the Greek is the word welcome. They did not welcome the love of the truth. They were not cordial to truth but treated it roughly. They were more interested in lies than truth. Negative volition, choosing against God, makes it harder to receive the truth.

the love of the truth,

The reason people perish is that they do not "love the truth." Some will believe the lies of the man of lawlessness and some will believe God. They heard the truth but they did not embrace it. They view the Word of God as so much drivel.

"For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:3-4).

that they might be saved

The main reason people do not come to Christ for salvation is that they do not love the truth. They have vested reasons for not believing it.

"He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. "And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their

deeds were evil. "For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. "But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God" (John 3:18-21).

Millions will come to Christ in the Tribulation but it will be very difficult because of the dissemination of lies throughout the world. Negative volition opens people to lies and deception.

It is difficult to persuade a person that they are headed for hell. When a person is religious and moral, they do not deem that they need salvation. Only the Holy Spirit can convince them of this.

Principle

The best defense against error is the love of the truth.

Application

No one ever comes to God without a love for the truth. No one can become a Christian without first understanding the claims of Christ. The foundational claim is that He died on the cross to pay for our sins. When we trust His work on the cross as our only hope for eternal life, we have eternal life.

There is no such thing as being a little lost. Either we are lost or we are not. Either we are completely saved or we are completely lost. There is no middle position. If you are almost a Christian, you are totally lost.

"Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:8-10).

Are you "saved?" Have you come to the place in your life where you embrace Jesus' death on the cross as your only hope of salvation?

2 Thessalonians 2:11

"And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie..."

And for this reason

Because people did not love the truth that God might save them (2:10), God sends them a "strong delusion." God will not send them a "strong delusion" until they make it clear that they have gone into negative volition toward the gospel. The choice of error over truth is serious business because it leads to deep delusion.

God will send them strong delusion,

The word "delusion" means wandering. These people wander off the right path of truth into paths of religious invention. The people led astray roam all over the place in religion.

"Delusion" is stronger than deception. Deception means that a person can be fooled about something. Delusion is a way of life in which one is perpetually deceived. People under delusion harden their heart permanently.

The word "strong" is the same word we found in 2:9 in the phrase "the working of Satan." The New Testament always uses this word for supernatural working.

that they should believe the lie

When people "believe the lie," God consigns them to a state of delusion. This is the lie of verse 4 that the man of lawlessness is God. People in the Tribulation cannot take a neutral stand. Either they believe God or they believe the lie. God will ultimately give people in the Tribulation exactly what they want--to believe the lie. "The lie" is the opposite of the truth of Jesus and His death on the cross.

Principle

Ultimately, God will give non-believers what they want.

Application

People given over to lies will enter strong delusion. God will give them over to their volition, their heart's desire of believing the lies of Satan. People say they want truth but they really want

Satan's lies. They have a vested interest in believing lies.

God gave Pharaoh what he wanted (Exodus 7:14; 9:12). God will give us over to what we truly want (Romans 1:18-32). If we truly want hell, God will give it to us.

2 Thessalonians 2:12

"...that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness"

that they all may be condemned

The word "that" indicates result. God will execute justice on those who do not believe the truth but have pleasure in unrighteousness.

Paul does not indicate the nature of this judgment in this passage.

who did not believe the truth

There is a great accountability in freedom. Non-believers in the Tribulation will pay a heavy price for their unbelief. They will have no excuse.

but

The word "but" in the Greek indicates strong contrast. In strong contrast to believing the truth, their true motive is pleasure in unrighteousness.

had pleasure in unrighteousness

The antithesis of believing the truth is having pleasure in unrighteousness. "Unrighteousness" is literally "unrightness." There is an outcome of not believing the truth. Non-belief leads to paying a price for our thinking and attitude. It ends in something that is not right, an unjust

system of thinking. Rejection of truth is a precursor of injustice and taking pleasure in unrighteousness. This is the unjust system of the lawless one in the Tribulation.

Principle

A great obstacle to believing the truth is love of unrighteousness.

Application

A central reason for unbelief is pleasure in unrighteousness. God places responsibility on everyone because He gives everyone the freedom

to accept or reject Christ. Those who reject Christ will spend eternity in the Lake of Fire (Revelation 20:11-15).

People go to hell because they reject God's remedy for sin—the death of Christ on the cross as a substitute payment for sin. If people reject that provision for salvation, then there is no hope for them. They consign themselves to the Lake of Fire.

People love unrighteousness over the truth. There is no sense rationalizing as to why people reject the gospel for it is not because they do not understand, were born in a different religion, are confused, etc. It is because of the bald fact that they take "pleasure in unrighteousness." They love their life and they do not want anyone to change it.

2 Thessalonians 2:13

"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..."

With this verse, Paul shifts from dealing with the Day of the Lord to a prayer of thanksgiving (2:13-15) followed by exhortations to walk with the Lord because of the teaching of the first two chapters.

But

In contrast to the unbelievers of the previous verse, Paul carries a sense of thanksgiving for the Thessalonians because they have a radically different future than non-Christians do.

We are bound to give thanks to God always for you,

Paul is "bound" to give thanks to God for the Thessalonians. He views himself as under a sense of obligation to do this because of the dynamics in their faith. Paul had a sense of duty to thank God for His work among the Thessalonians. He knew that his ministry there was not due to his intelligence, determination or strategy. It was due to the unadulterated grace of God at work among them.

"...giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light" (Colossians 1:12).

Principle

The function of our thanksgiving depends on our capacity to appreciate God's grace.

Application

Have you considered it your duty to thank God for your fellow Christians? God brought the blessing of their lives into your life. He deserves the credit. If God did the doing, then He deserves the glory.

Brethren beloved by the Lord,

The Thessalonians possess an undying, unadulterated, undiminished love from God. They did not earn or deserve this love because God chose them from eternity. The Greek tense of the word "beloved" indicates that God loved them in the past with the result that He persists in loving them (Romans 5:8; 8:39). He never gives up loving His own.

Principle

God loves us with an undying, unadulterated, undiminished love.

Application

Many people find it difficult to believe that anyone could love them. We hide our sin from ourselves, and from others. "How could God love me since I do not even respect myself?" This misses the point that God loves me because of who He is, not because of who I am (John 3:16).

Would you rather be loved by God more than the apostle Paul? Would you rather be loved by God above fellow Christians? No human being can love us as well, as persistently and as indefatigably as God can. You cannot be better loved or more extensively loved than you are. No one on planet earth can love you this much.

"Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you" (Jeremiah 31:3).

"Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end" (John 13:1).

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or

persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:35-39).

"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

"...to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God" (Ephesians 3:19).

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her..." (Ephesians 5:25).

"...and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood..." (Revelation 1:5).

because

The word "because" indicates the incentive for Paul's thanksgiving: God chose the Thessalonians for salvation. Paul is thankful that God takes the initiative in salvation. His thanksgiving centres on what God does, not man.

God from the beginning

The word "beginning," primarily, denotes an offering of firstfruits—"God chose you as firstfruits." This referred to setting aside the first portion of something and offering it to God before using the rest. The "firstfruits" were the first of a set. The New Testament uses this word for foretaste, pledge and pledge of blessing to come. Our salvation has an eternal date. God chose us from eternity. The origin of our salvation began in eternity past.

chose you

God chose us for Himself. The word "chose" means to take or pick. God picked the Thessalonians, not because of any merit on their part, but because of His sheer, unadulterated grace. We do not initiate salvation. God does all the initiating. He loved the Thessalonians based on His character. He loved them because of who He was, not who they were.

The New Testament uses this Greek word for "chose" only three times in the New Testament (Philippians 1:22; Hebrews 11:25). The other two times, it is a person who does the choosing. This is the only usage whereby God is the chooser. God selects certain people for Himself; they are God's aristocracy. These are His privileged people.

Principle

God chose us for a reason known only to Himself.

Application

Why did God select you? Why are you so special? He could have selected someone smarter and with better qualities of character but He didn't. He chose you. God chose a rascal like you. As God went over the list of those whom He would choose, He did not bypass you; He picked you out from a number of people.

God never explains why He chooses some and not others. This is especially difficult when we think of some of the scoundrels He does choose. "Why did God spare my life in that accident? He spared me because He wanted to save my soul." God takes great interest in you. He shows enormous concern for you.

God did not choose us because He knew beforehand that we would receive Christ. He chose us then He foreknew. As human beings, we cannot know that something is going to happen unless we make a choice that it is going to happen.

"...just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love..." (Ephesians 1:4).

"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:44).

for salvation

This phrase states the purpose of God's choosing us—eternal salvation. He saves us from the penalty, power and, ultimately, from the presence of sin. We do not have to pay the penalty for our sin because Jesus paid that price for us.

Principle

Salvation is a present possession.

Application

Either we have salvation or we do not. There is no in-between state. God will give it to you as a present possession. You can know now that you have life with God eternally.

It is impossible to be married and not know it. If you have salvation, you will know it and show it.

God cannot wink at your sin. If He did, He would not be just. Because God must maintain His integrity, He must deal with the sin issue. He chose to deal with it by the death of Christ. He chose to accept Christ's death as our substitute for hell. Jesus took our hell and gave us His heaven. We do not have to reform ourselves; we simply accept the regeneration of Christ. He is the Author of our salvation. The only thing we offer Him is our sin; He offers salvation in Christ.

"For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures..." (1 Corinthians 15:3).

"He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Hebrews 9:26).

"...who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness – by whose stripes you were healed" (1 Peter 2:24).

"For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit..." (1 Peter 3:18).

If you operate under the delusion that you do not commit gross sins, this could cost you your soul. The standard for salvation is the "glory of God" (Romans 3:23). None of us measures up to being as

good as God is good. Therefore, there is no hope in ourselves. Our only hope is that Christ's death on the cross is sufficient for our salvation.

"So they said, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household'" (Acts 16:31).

through sanctification

Paul now shows how God chose us by two dynamics: the divine and the human, the dynamic of the sanctification of the Spirit and the dynamic of trust in God's provision through Christ's death on the cross.

First the divine side, God set us apart from others for salvation by the Holy Spirit (John 16:8-11; Acts 1:8; 16:14; 1 Peter 1:2). This is the Divine responsibility in salvation.

The basic idea behind the word "sanctification" is set apart, separation. God sets us apart for a special purpose. The Holy Spirit separated the Thessalonians unto God by their belief in the truth.

Sanctification is the eternal state God predetermined for believers (1 Corinthians 1:30; 1 Peter 1:2). He calls people so designated "saints" [separated ones unto God]. As saints, Christians are to live a course of life befitting those separated unto God (Romans 6:19, 22; 1Thessalonians 4:3, 4, 7; 1 Timothy 2:15; Hebrews 12:14).

by the Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the agent of sanctification (Romans 15:16; 1 Corinthians 6:11; 1 Peter 1:2). The sanctification of the Spirit both elects us to salvation and progressively sanctifies us.

"And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:11).

"...elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ..." (1 Peter 1:2).

Principle

The Holy Spirit sanctifies us eternally and thereby seals our salvation.

Application

There is both a positional, progressive and ultimate sanctification. Positional sanctification is our eternal position of being set apart unto God. This is the idea in our verse. Progressive sanctification is the daily-dealing-with-sin issue. One day, God will completely set us apart from the presence of sin in the eternal state.

Because Christians hold the unchanging position before God of being completely set apart for Christ, they should sanctify themselves. It is God's will (1 Thessalonians 4:3) and the purpose of their calling by the gospel (1 Thessalonians 4:7). The Christian is to pursue sanctification earnestly with undeviating determination (1 Timothy 2:15; Hebrew 12:14).

The Holy Spirit seals the Christian's salvation until the day of redemption.

"And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption" (Ephesians 4:30).

and belief in the truth

The second way whereby God chose us for salvation is "belief in the truth." This is the human side of salvation. However, God ordained even the human side of salvation by giving us the capacity of faith. It takes two simultaneous actions for salvation to occur: 1) the ministry of the Holy Spirit and 2) the execution of our faith in the finished work of Christ.

We enter into the state of sanctification by faith in Christ (Acts 26:18; 1 Corinthians 6:11). Our sole entitlement to sanctification is through faith in the cross of Christ (Ephesians 5:25,26; Colossians 1:22; Hebrews 10:10,29; 13:12).

We see in this passage both the responsibility of God and the responsibility of man in salvation. While Paul's team preached the gospel, the Holy Spirit convicted the hearts of the Thessalonians that the cross of Christ is the only means of salvation. That work of the Holy Spirit launched their faith.

Principle

God places responsibility on the individual to believe in the death of Christ to forgive sins.

Application

The Bible offers salvation to "whomever." Although God elects certain people for salvation, He extends the offer of salvation to everyone.

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

Dwight L. Moody, the founder of Moody Bible Institute used to say, "The whosoever wills are the elect and whosoever won'ts are the non-elect."

"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

"...who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began..." (2 Timothy 1:9).

If you make a decision to receive Christ death as your only hope of salvation, you will know that you are elect! Why not come to Christ now? Settle the issue once for all. God has allowed you to continue to live for this moment, the decision to receive Christ as your Saviour. God from eternity providentially brought you to this point. What will you do with this decision? You have everything to gain from embracing Jesus as Saviour.

2 Thessalonians 2:14

"...to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ"

to which

The "which" here refers to the word "salvation" of the previous verse.

He called you

Verse 13 says that God "chose" us. This verse says that He "called" us (Romans 8:28-30; 1 Corinthians 1:9, 23,24; Galatians 1:15,16; Philippians 3:13,14; Hebrews 13:1; 1 Peter 2:9; 5:10). God "called" us [past tense].

The gospel flies in the face of the prevailing philosophy of the world. It does not make any

sense to those without Christ. They cannot understand why people need salvation.

"...but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks [Gentiles] foolishness..." (1 Corinthians 1:23).

God has a purpose and program for each child of His. He providentially organized His program from eternity. He has not overlooked any detail of your life. He arranged every thing that happens to you and every person you meet.

"...who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began..." (2 Timothy 1:9).

Principle

Christians hold the high privilege of representing King Jesus on earth, so they should carry the dignity of being children of God.

Application

The Christian has a high and heavenly calling. It is a high privilege to represent the King, to be a child of the King. That is why we do not think or act like those who do not know Christ. We hold a high privilege. We carry a dignity by our association with King Jesus.

Some things are beneath the dignity of the child of the King. We choose not to indulge in certain things, not because they are wrong, but because they are simply beneath the dignity of someone who represents the Lord of lords.

by our gospel,

God calls the Thessalonians to Himself by the gospel that Paul's team preached to them over a year ago. The gospel in essence is that Christ died for our sins, that He was buried and rose again (1 Corinthians 15:1-5). Verse 13 speaks of God's election and this verse speaks to how God brings His election into reality in time.

Principle

God calls people to Himself by the gospel.

Application

Every time people hear the gospel, he hears the voice of God calling them to Himself. Satan tries to

blind them to the truth. He says, "Don't believe that. You are a good person; you go to church." There is always supernatural opposition to the gospel.

"But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them" (2 Corinthians 4:3-4).

God calls people to Himself by the gospel. If people land in hell, it is because they ran every red light God put in their path. God calls us by the gospel. God wants each and every person to have eternal life.

"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

The word "gospel" means good news. The worse the sinner, the better the news! God will save you whether you are religious or not, whether you are a good person or not, whether you are cultured or not.

for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ

The third basis of Paul's prayer of thanksgiving is that Christians will share in the eternal glory of Christ. The word "obtaining" is literally a making around. It denotes obtaining our salvation in its completeness by God's call through the gospel. Since Jesus acquired our salvation, He gets the glory. He acquired our salvation at great cost. This is why He should receive great glory.

The gospel obtains eternal glory for the Christian as well. Christians will obtain that glory through Christ. It is by God's grace that we get glory. We will share in the glory of Christ's victory in His Second Coming [not the Rapture].

"The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs – heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared

with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:16-18).

"Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2).

Principle

Believers have a grand and glorious future because God will bathe them in His very own glory.

Application

The Christian has a glory in time and a glory in eternity. The glory in time is in progressively becoming more like the Lord Jesus.

"But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory [progressive sanctification], just as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

The glory in eternity never fades. It is eternal (1 Peter 5:10). God will clothe us with the wonder of His character, plan and actions. This glory transcends the glory of time.

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:17-18).

In the eternal glory, God will take away believers' sin capacity. They will never face temptation again. Our bodies will never submit to cancer or any other illness. No one will ever enter depression again.

2 Thessalonians 2:15

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

Therefore,

The "therefore" draws an inference from Paul's arguments for stability throughout this chapter (2:2). This is the punch line—"stand fast and hold the traditions." Both of these terms relate to stability. The doctrines of future things do not cause Christians to become inert in their Christian lives. Far from it. Prophecy always leads to practical incentives for Christian living.

The word "therefore" is very strong in the Greek, drawn from two Greek words. There is both inference and exhortation implied in this word. Although the Thessalonians are not in the Day of the Lord, they are nonetheless living under the possibility of satanic deception. The only thing that gives us stability against supernatural deception is the Word of God.

brethren,

Paul once again uses the term "brethren." He wants to remind them of their common heritage in Christ because of their tendency to move to instability. If they stick with their commonality in the Word, they will maintain their stability.

stand fast

The idea of "stand fast" is to take a firm stand on something (1 Corinthians 16:13; 1 Thessalonians 3:8), to be steadfast. Here it is to take a firm stand on the Word of God. Without spiritual stability, Christians will sink into the quicksand of the prevailing human philosophy.

Paul argued from verse 2 the importance of spiritual stability. He shows them how not to be "shaken in mind or troubled."

"Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong" (1 Corinthians 16:13).

"Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage" (Galatians 5:1).

Principle

Christians are to take their stand on the Bible so they will not yield to the prevailing philosophies around them.

Application

Christians today live in a very unstable environment. In Christian circles, people pass off their ideas as God's thoughts. This is satanic deception. Thousands of true believers have bought into satanic lies. Many pseudo pressures lead them into these ideas. Just because many other Christians fall for this, why should you?

"Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ" (Colossians 2:8).

and hold

The word "hold" carries the ideas of to be strong or mighty, to prevail, to hold on to something. Our context indicates that "hold" refers to holding on to the transmission of truth from the apostles.

Principle

It is not enough to know truth; we must hold on to it.

Application

When it comes to the teaching of God's Word, it is not enough to put it into our minds. We must hold on to it. "Don't let truth go," Paul says. The idea is that we hold on to the teaching of truth to such an extent that it possesses or apprehends us. We must master the Word if we are going to be strong in the faith.

"But hold fast what you have till I come" (Revelation 2:25).

"Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown" (Revelation 3:11).

Few Christians take stands on truth today. The reason is that they probably have little stability in the Word themselves (Ephesians 4:14). Those with greater convictions about God's Word take greater stands. They can be firm about what they believe.

the traditions

The word "traditions" is something handed down or over. The idea is transmission of truth, the institutions of truth, the teaching of the apostles (1 Corinthians 11:2,23; 15:3; 2 Thessalonians 3:6). This is not the tradition of men but the content that

Paul and his gospel team taught when they were in Thessalonica. The team handed over divine truth to the Thessalonians for their possession and protection.

"Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions [instructions] just as I delivered them to you" (1 Corinthians 11:2).

Principle

Christians should be diligent to keep their spiritual moorings.

Application

Are you getting looser with your theology? Is syncretism taking hold of you? Has the idea of tolerance-at-all-costs seized your soul as an all-encompassing approach to life? If it has, then you are headed for spiritual doom, not eternal doom, but spiritual destruction in your life.

The principle of this verse demands that we stand fast and hold fast to God's Word, not loosen our grasp of it. If you abandon your Bible-based beliefs, you will head into spiritual distortion or at least spiritual immaturity. Dr. Harry Ironside, pastor of Moody Church, years ago used to make this statement about interpretations about the Bible, "If it's new, it's not true, and if it's true, it's not new."

"...holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict" (Titus 1:9).

"Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 1:13).

which you were taught,

Christians will remain spiritual babies if they do not submit to the sound teaching of God's Word. Spiritual pigmies fill churches today because 1) they do not get solid teaching in the pulpit or 2) they have little interest in what God says to them through His Word.

"And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers [one gift in the Greek], for the equipping of the saints for the work

of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ..." (Ephesians 4:11-12).

"As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving" (Colossians 2:6-7)

"A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach..." (1 Timothy 3:2).

"Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine [teaching]" (1 Timothy 5:17).

"But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife. And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will" (2 Timothy 2:23-26).

Principle

Christians suffer arrested spiritual development because they do not present themselves to solid Bible teaching.

Application

Many Christians suffer arrested spiritual development. They do not apply the principles of God's Word to their experience. Whether your problems are spiritual, domestic or financial, you can address them by God's Word. It may take time. It will take growth in maturity. If you expose yourself to God's Word, it will change your attitude and actions.

Growth in God's principles for life cannot be hit and miss. You must daily expose yourself to the line-upon-line, precept-upon-precept study of the unadulterated Word of God.

"...as newborn babes, desire the pure [unadulterated] milk of the word, that you may grow thereby..." (1 Peter 2:2).

The Word of God will give us an apparatus for living. However, if we try to grow by a "do-it-yourself-kit," we will never mature in Christ. We may develop some skills in life but these will not enable us to deal with spiritual battles.

"How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word. With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments! Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You!" (Psalm 119:9-11).

It is not enough to learn facts about the Bible. It is critical to learn the principles of the Word. If we learn principles, we will be able to apply them to our experiences. Principles transcend isolated information. Only the Holy Spirit can impress these principles on our hearts.

Principles come from teaching, not from exhortation. An exhortation is a challenge to do a specific thing. Principles show you how to appropriate God's way of handling that specific thing.

We get these principles from sitting under a pastor who faithfully exposes God's Word for what it actually says. This kind of pastor understands overarching principles of life that will govern the spiritual life of the people in his congregation. God wrote three books to pastors [1 and 2 Timothy and Titus (the pastorals)]. The key word in all three of those epistles is "teach," sometimes translated "doctrine." It is doctrine that forms solid principles for living.

One of the reasons why there are so many spiritual pigmies in evangelicalism today is that Christians do not know doctrine. If they do not know doctrine, they will lack discernment. The lack of discernment gets many people into spiritual hot water. They fall for much of the cultic teaching in evangelical circles today. They cannot identify error because they do not recognize truth! Everything sounds good to everyone.

We live in a day of syncretism where all truth is one big glob of grease. We cannot distinguish truth from error. "It sounds good to me. What's wrong with that teaching? It's spiritual isn't it?"

whether by word or our epistle

The Word of God is something transmitted to Christians whether by oral or written means.

Christians get stability and perseverance in their faith either from the teaching of Scripture or from reading the Scriptures themselves. Whether it is sitting in church receiving oral teaching from your pastor or at home reading the Word, hold onto these practices.

Before the Holy Spirit completed the canon [the list of books that belong in the Bible], God gave certain prophets the ability to know the contents of Scripture before it was written. Before the New Testament was completed, certain prophets communicated the truth of the New Testament orally. People could confirm their authenticity by the miracles they performed. When the Holy Spirit completed the canon, there was no need for any further oral transmission of New Testament revelation.

Many cults and distortions of genuine Christianity have come on the scene today because of not holding on to the unadulterated Word of God. The only trustworthy teaching that we can trust is the Word of God. We cannot trust modern day prophets or anyone who speaks from their own authority.

"Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3).

Principle

There is an onus upon the believer to rightly divide the Word of God.

Application

Christians who are serious about the Word of God uphold apostolic tradition. No Christian is able to stand in his Christian life without constant application of the principles of Scripture to experience. Christians who leave the principles of the Word of God head for instability in their convictions and in their walk with the Lord. They will be weak in their Christian life.

"You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me" (John 5:39).

Many formerly stable Christians fall for satanic lies. There are more fakers in religion than in

business. God's people are so naive and gullible that they are susceptible to every spiritual disease that spreads across Christendom. Satan quickly sweeps them into error and they are lost to the cause of Christ.

All cultic fakers use the Bible. They quote the Bible but they take it out of context. They do not rightly divide the Word making the distinctions necessary to correctly understand it. We must study the Bible in its context, line upon line, to be faithful to what it says.

"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15).

God holds us accountable for what we hear. He also holds us accountable for what we believe. God expects us to rightly discern the truth after having heard the faithful exposition of His Word.

All of us know more than we convert into our lives. Our lives are always in the process of catching up to what we know. There is a danger in simply learning principles without translating truth into experience. Either error is wrong.

2 Thessalonians 2:16

"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..."

Paul breaks forth in a benediction in verses 16 and 17. He prays that the Thessalonians would have sustaining grace during their troubles.

Now may our Lord Jesus Christ

Paul addresses his prayer to two members of the Trinity.

Himself,

The word "Himself" is emphatic in the Greek. The Lord Jesus Christ [full title] will guarantee by His very own might, as contrasted to our frailty, the effectiveness of our prayer.

and our God and Father,

Paul views both the Lord Jesus Christ and God the Father operating as one in sustaining the Thessalonians.

Principle

The Son and the Father team up to answer prayer.

Application

Both the Son and the Father answer prayer. The Lord Jesus Christ and God the Father personally guarantee to answer prayer.

No one can know "God" as "Father" unless he is born into God's family. Otherwise, he is an outsider. God is our Creator by physical birth but not our Father. When we are born the second time by spiritual birth, He then becomes our Father.

"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12-13).

"For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:26).

The universal brotherhood of man is a lie. There are two supernatural fathers. One is God the Father and the other is "your father the devil."

"You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it. "But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me" (John 8:44-45).

Have you been born into the family of God?

"Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again'" (John 3:7).

Who has loved us

The love of both the Son and the Father is the motivation behind our consolation and hope. Jesus loved us enough to go to the cross for us (Galatians 2:20). God the Father loved us to the extent that He sent His Son to the cross (John 3:16). God loves us whether we are carnal or spiritual. He loves us when we're discouraged.

Paul wanted the Thessalonians to know that God loved them. They may not feel loved due to their persecution but it is true nevertheless. It is a

matter of belief in God's Word, not an issue of feeling. We know God loves us because God says it in His Word. We know it, no matter how defeated, how discouraged or how handicapped we might be. Trust in God's Word in the face of difficulty shows spiritual maturity.

Principle

We know God loves us because the Bible says so.

Application

How do we know that God loves us? Because He said it in His Word. Trusting in what God says in His Word is what separates men from boys spiritually. People who operate strictly by their feelings will end up dreadfully bewildered because they will never know for sure if God loves them. They measure everything by their emotions. The only sure way we can know whether God loves us is by faith.

"For we walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7).

Neither can we know that God loves us by our intelligence or reason. If we look at the world around us, there is very little evidence that God is a God of love. There is pain, confusion and mystery everywhere. The only way we can know God loves us is that He says it in His Word. God knows what you are bearing right now and He cares (1 Peter 5:7).

and given us

God is a giver. Paul has the capacity to recognize God's gifts to him and others.

"For the LORD God is a sun and shield; The LORD will give grace and glory; No good thing will He withhold From those who walk uprightly. O LORD of hosts, Blessed is the man who trusts in You!" (Psalm 84:11-12).

"He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:32).

everlasting consolation

Temporal consolation is one thing but everlasting consolation is something else. God's consolation does not diminish or die. Man operates on

transitory consolation; God operates on everlasting consolation. God's consolation begins in time and moves into eternity (Romans 15:4; 2 Corinthians 1:3-7). His capacity for consoling us is eternal but it functions in time.

The word "consolation" is the word comfort. Literally, it means to call to one's side. The idea is encouragement. God gives "everlasting encouragement." God calls us along side Himself to encourage us.

Principle

God specializes in consolation.

Application

We do not always need encouragement but God will supply it when we need it. He is a great specialist in encouragement. He knows exactly how to give it if we are open to receive it.

"Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus..." (Romans 15:5).

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God" (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).

Life is not always a big plus; sometimes minuses come into our lives. If lemons come into our lives, we do not make lemonade but we draw on God's consolation. God providentially provides that consolation exactly at the time we need it.

"Nevertheless God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, and not only by his coming, but also by the consolation with which he was comforted in you, when he told us of your earnest desire, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced even more" (2 Corinthians 7:6-7).

God's consolation is not like a mother who consoles her child. God never says, "Now, there, there, it will be alright," for God's consolation has content. He consoles us with His promises.

and good hope

God is the source of hope. Hope in the New Testament is not a "wish"--"I hope it doesn't rain tomorrow." There is uncertainty in a wish. The Greek word carries the idea of confident prospect. The Christian is confident of God providentially working in time and eternity.

Our hope is "good." The word "good" is the good of intrinsic value, of practical value. Some people promise things that will never happen. God always comes through with His promises. The Christian's future is invincible.

Principle

The Christian has confidence in time and eternity because of God's promises.

Application

Not only does God give us consolation but He also gives us "hope." He not only gives us hope but He gives "good" hope. God is always true to His promises. He never goes back on them. We draw on them from His Word.

"Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit" (Romans 15:13).

"We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints; because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel..." (Colossians 1:3-5).

"...in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began..." (Titus 1:2).

"Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus,

having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek" (Hebrews 6:17-20).

by grace

Grace is what God provides for us without strings attached. It is what God gives without our merit or desert. God gives to us because of the work of Christ. God saves us by grace (Romans 3:24; Ephesians 2:8,9; Titus 3:7), not by good works or by belonging to a church denomination.

Grace depends on who Christ is and what He did for us on the cross. It is all of His works, not ours. All we merit under God's standards is eternal hell. The only thing we contribute to our salvation is our sin so we can take no acclaim for our salvation.

Principle

God provides for us because of who Jesus is and what He did on the cross.

Application

Everything that the Christian is and has is by grace. We do not earn or deserve anything from God. We cannot merit eternal salvation. We do not receive God's consolation in time because of what we do. The Christian can have confidence in God because our consolation and hope do not depend upon us but upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

The greatest resource for the believer is God Himself and what He did in Christ. When Christians are under duress, they know God superintends and providentially manages everything in their life. Christians have power to do what they have to do. There is no excuse for plunging into addictions. Addictions imply that we are trying to control our situation. When we turn our problems over to God, we trust in His providential care.

There is a persistent problem with man: we believe that we accomplish salvation by "Christ plus me." God's system of salvation is Christ plus nothing. He gives eternal life to us because of Christ's death on the cross. Our built-in desire is to take the credit for salvation (Ephesians 2:8,9).

2 Thessalonians 2:17

"...comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work"

Paul's desire in this verse is to comfort and establish the Thessalonians.

comfort your hearts

Prophecy always settles the heart. The Thessalonians were worried that they were already in the Tribulation but Paul prays that the writing of 2 Thessalonians will comfort their hearts. The word of God always encourages our heart. When Christians are down and defeated, they ought to get into the Word.

"Therefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thessalonians 4:18).

and establish you

The word "establish" means to fix, make fast, to set. Paul wants to make the Thessalonians stable in the Word so that their hearts will be firm in the faith (1 Thessalonians 3:13). Saints need strength and support. Some wavered in the faith and were unstable so they needed to fasten their soul to the Word. Those not solid in the Word go off on tangents. The children of God are of little use to Him when they wander off into the blue.

"As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving" (Corinthians 2:6-7).

in every good word and work

The area where Paul wants to comfort and establish the Thessalonians is in the sphere of "every good word and work." A lot of us are good at talking but not good at walking. Paul wants our walk to match our talk. May no one say of us, "He talks a good game but his life does not match his mouth."

Principle

Our walk must match our talk; we need encouragement and stability in both.

Application

Christians need comfort and stability in their talk and walk. God can do this for us but it will take mature believers willing to make it happen. There is a lot of loose talk among the Christian community. Loose talk is usually the source of great harm.

We need to pray that God will "comfort and strengthen" Christians in our church so that their talk and walk would match what Christianity is all about. Our lip and life, talk and walk, "word and work" must match each other. There needs to be consistency between them otherwise people will think that we are out of sync with what we believe. "What you are speaks so loudly that I cannot hear what you say."

We preach a sermon each day with our lives. As others observe us, they know us well. They watch how we react to problems. They want to know if we live consistently with what we believe.

"Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart Be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer" (Psalm 19:14).

I could write a check for \$50,000 but if I do not have money in the bank to back it up, then I have a problem. It would be better to write a check for \$1,000 if I had the money in the bank. Most of us are more talk than walk. We need more walk than talk.

Paul writes both 1 and 2 Thessalonians from Corinth, a major port city in southern Greece. It was the Paris of antiquity. Paul went there with his gospel artillery (Acts 17,18). His team needed prayer for such a daunting task. He needed intercessory prayer to penetrate that pleasure-loving city. God answered the prayer of the Thessalonians.

"Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household. And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized" (Acts 18: 8).

The Thessalonians get some of the credit for the Corinthians coming to Christ. With little fanfare, they went to prayer for their native Greeks, the Corinthians. Satan could not bind God's Word in that wild city for some of them came to Christ.

Principle

God wants us to run with the gospel, not walk.

Application

It is one thing for the gospel to walk and it is another for it to run. We should each have a burden to spread the gospel widely.

"So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it" (Isaiah 55:11).

The Word of God is effective when we communicate it to those without Christ. The gospel is not effective if we do not share it. The Word and the gospel do not function like a religious rabbit's foot. They are not magic. If we preach the gospel and share the Bible, it will dash, not jog or trot, toward its end.

2 Thessalonians 3:1

"Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified, just as it is with you..."

The first five verses are a prayer for stability in the lives of the Thessalonians.

Finally,

Paul now begins his closing remarks for 2 Thessalonians.

brethren, pray for us,

The word "finally" introduces the last major section of the letter. Paul asked the Thessalonians to pray for his gospel team. He knew his need for prayer. He asks for prayer in two categories: 1) the advance of the gospel (v.1) and 2) protection from evil men (v.2).

Paul asks for prayer at the close of five of his epistles (Romans 15:30; Colossians 4:2,3; Ephesians 6:18,19; 1 Thessalonians 5:25).

that

The purpose of the Thessalonians prayer is that Paul's gospel team might advance the gospel in two ways: 1) that the "word of the Lord may run swiftly" and 2) that it might be "glorified."

the word of the Lord may run swiftly

Paul's primary concern in prayer was for the expansion of the gospel. This is a prayer that the word of the Lord would advance unhindered and without obstacles.

The word "run" means to proceed quickly and without hindrance. To describe the free and rapid progress of "the word of the Lord," Paul sets forth the metaphor of a runner in a race, implying swiftness or effort to attain an end. (1 Corinthians 9:24-27; Galatians 5:7; Philippians 2:16).

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preach the gospel and share the Bible, it will dash, not jog or trot, toward its end.

and be glorified,

Glorification of the Word of God builds on the previous phrase on the dissemination of the gospel ["run"].

Paul prays secondly that God would glorify His Word in Corinth, the vilest city in the first century. There was a saying throughout the world at that time for debauchery - "You are Corinthized" [You are debauched]. Corinth was a city rotten to the core, the world's playground.

When people embrace the gospel, they glorify God's Word. It is one thing for the gospel to spread quickly but it is something more for the Word of God to be glorified. The Word of the Lord is glorified when the character of its message is clearly welcomed by those without Christ.

"Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord was being spread throughout all the region" (Acts 13:48-49).

Principle

We can cultivate an appetite for the Word of God.

Application

When people accept the message of the gospel, it adorns their lives and thus adorns the God of the gospel. This exalts the word of the Lord. We cannot make too much of the Bible. There is no other book like it.

"For You have magnified Your word above all Your name" (Psalm 138:2).

We can cultivate an appetite for the Bible. The more we learn the principles of the Word and apply them to our lives, the Bible will become more vibrant, vital and interesting.

Before we come to Christ, the Bible is a closed book to us because we do not know the Author personally. Once we embrace Jesus as our Savior, we want to know Him better. We can have greater intimacy with Him if we keep His commandments.

"If you love Me, keep My commandments...
 "He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him...."
 Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. "He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me...." "You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.
 "No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you" (John 14:15,21-24, 15:14-15).

Our attitude toward the Bible reflects our attitude towards the Lord Jesus because it is His message to us.

just as it is with you

Paul wanted the gospel to advance in Corinth, as it had in Thessalonica. Paul stayed in Corinth approximately two years preaching the gospel.

The Thessalonians glorified the Word when they embraced it for themselves (1 Thessalonians 1:5-6; 2:13; 4:10; 5:11). With them, God's Word ran with freedom and they held it in high regard when it came to Thessalonica. It transformed their lives from pagan to Christian.

Principle

It is imperative to pray for the progress of the gospel.

Application

The focus of prayer should be on the content rather than the communicator. Federal Express cannot take credit for the wonderful gift someone sends us. It is the message that blesses people, not the messenger.

A supernatural person called Satan is out to hinder the message so there is need for God's supernatural intervention in spreading the gospel.

"Therefore we wanted to come to you – even I, Paul, time and again – but Satan hindered us" (1 Thessalonians 2:18).

Many people today have lost sight of the unadulterated force of the Word of God.

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek" (Romans 1:16).

"For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.... I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God" (1 Corinthians 1:21-25, 2:3-5).

2 Thessalonians 3:2

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

First, Paul requests prayer for the advancement of the gospel (verse 1). Next he requests prayer for deliverance from those who would like to undermine the gospel team.

The word "delivered" means to be rescued from, preserved from. Paul asks for prayer for the personal protection of his gospel team while they spread the gospel.

"Unreasonable" literally means out of place but denotes unbecoming, not befitting. The idea in this passage is outrageous belief. They were perverse, belligerent scoundrels. They diverted people away from truth into absurd false doctrine.

"Wicked" means active wickedness. These malignant people had a serious flaw. They were degenerates theologically because they tended to corrupt others.

Paul's enemies act against the principles of reason and are responsible for absurdity and irreverence toward the gospel.

for not all have faith

The word "for" gives the reason these men were perverse: they did not have "the faith" [Greek]. Not everyone embraces the gospel. It divides people into two classes – those who personally trust Christ to forgive their sins and those who do not.

Principle

One of God's roles is to protect those who spread the gospel.

Application

Those interested in advancing the cause of Christ throughout the world must come to grips with the fact that they will face opposition. God is in the business of delivering us from the opponents of the gospel.

"Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in prayers to God for me, that I may be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints..." (Romans 15:30-31).

2 Thessalonians 3:3

"But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one"

Now Paul changes the subject from praying for the gospel team to praying for the Thessalonians.

But the Lord is faithful,

God is true to His promises. He cannot lie or pull any punches. What He promises, He delivers.

who will establish you

Paul describes two characteristics of God's faithfulness. He will establish us and guard us

from the evil one. The word "establish" means to fix, make fast, set, confirm, establish, strengthen. God will establish or confirm the Thessalonians in their belief (Luke 22:32; Acts 14:22; 16:5).

and guard you

God will also "guard" the Thessalonians. The idea is stand guard. God is our defender. He stands guard for us.

from the evil one

Paul has confidence that God will establish and guard the Thessalonians against any problem they might face.

Principle

The more truth we have in our souls, the more stable we become because God is faithful to us.

Application

God's faithfulness toward us inspires trust. Trust in God's faithfulness gives us stability because we know that He will be true to His Word (Numbers 23:19). We have His support in any situation we face.

"Through the LORD's mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness" (Lamentations 3:22-23).

"God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:9).

"No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it" (1 Corinthians 10:13).

"He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it" (1 Thessalonians 5:24).

"If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself" (2 Timothy 2:13).

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

2 Thessalonians 3:4

"And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, both that you do and will do the things we command you"

A further basis for confidence is that God will enable them to do what Paul commanded them.

And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you,

The word "confidence" shows Paul had complete trust in and reliance upon God's ability to work in their lives. Paul in the previous verse lauded the faithfulness of God; now he demonstrates his trust in God's faithfulness in working in the lives of the Thessalonians.

Note that Paul does not say, "I have confidence in you Thessalonians." He has confidence in what God will do through the Thessalonians. Paul did not put his confidence in people. If we do, we will be terribly disillusioned.

"It is better to trust in the Lord Than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the Lord Than to put confidence in princes" (Psalm 118:8-9).

both that you do and will do the things we command you

The basis for Paul's confidence in the Thessalonians is in the previous phrase, "in the Lord." He described the nature of the Lord in verse three as "faithful."

The Thessalonians "do," that is, were in the process of doing, the things that the gospel team taught them about the Christian life (1 Thessalonians 3:6; 2 Thessalonians 1:3; 3:11).

"Will do" indicates the confidence of the gospel team that the Thessalonians will continue with their discipleship.

Principle

We do what we do because of God's work in our lives.

Application

The church is God's church; we can rest in what God is doing with His church. What God begins, He finishes.

"...being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ..." (Philippians 1:6).

Our faithlessness does not nullify God's faithfulness to us. God's faithfulness does not depend on our faithfulness to Him.

"If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself" (2 Timothy 2:13).

God cannot go back on His Word no matter how unfaithful we might be to Him. He cannot change His character. That is why we can place our trust in Him. We cannot place that kind of trust in our doctor or preacher. We need to trust them but not with the kind of trust we place in God.

Sometimes those we love the most let us down. Your loved one will let you down. Key people in your congregation will let you down. Your best friends will let you down. God will never let us down. You will never be disappointed in Him.

Have you been wounded by fellow Christians? You will never live long enough to straighten them out. We think everyone else needs straightening out, except us, of course. If we designate ourselves as experts, we set ourselves up for correction.

2 Thessalonians 3:5

"Now may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ"

Now may the Lord direct your hearts

God will "direct" the hearts of the Thessalonians. The word "direct" comes from two words: to make straight and down. The idea is to clear away any obstacle in their hearts toward loving God or steadfastly enduring trial.

into the love of God

The "love of God" is our love to God. Paul prays that God would direct the hearts of the Thessalonians to love God.

and into the patience of Christ.

Paul prays that the hearts of the Thessalonians will follow the "patience of Christ." The word "patience" means endurance. They were to persevere in their persecutions as Christ did in

His. They faced political and social pressure from their community. They needed to follow the example of Christ in suffering.

"...looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2).

Principle

When we pray for others, we can make a difference in their lives.

Application

Do we pray for the hearts of fellow Christians? We need to pray that 1) fellow believers will direct their hearts into love for God and 2) they will develop a steadfast character like that of Christ.

2 Thessalonians 3:6

"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"

Paul now turns to admonishing the disorderly (vv. 6-15).

But we command you, brethren,

The word "command" means to announce beside. This is a "command," not a suggestion. Paul is not addressing a debatable issue. It is a divine directive.

No one today has the authority of the apostle. The apostle had special rights of authority to found the church and write Scripture. Our only apostolic authority today is in the Word of God.

in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,

Paul's plea is to the person of Christ, to General Jesus, Commander-in-Chief of the head of the church. The command of the gospel team did not come from their authority but from the authority of Christ.

We do not find authority in pontifical decrees of church leadership or in fail-safe fiats but in the authority of the Bible. Our authority is vested in the Bible.

that you withdraw

Paul commands that the Thessalonians "withdraw" from certain Christians. We are to avoid certain types of Christians. "Withdraw" means literally to furl the sails. In essence, he's saying, "steer clear of certain types of people." This is a form of excommunication. In addition to "withdraw," the additional idea of "have no company with" occurs in verse 14.

from every brother

We are to withdraw ourselves from any brother who walks disorderly. We should not show partiality. There is a temptation in the church to make allowance for the wealthy and the popular. Such partiality weakens the church.

who walks disorderly

Paul isolates the particular predicament -- some people are renegades in the church.

The word "walk" means to walk around as a course of life. The issue here is not an occurrence of disobedience, but disobedience as a way of life.

A "disorderly" person is someone who consistently falls out of rank, somewhat like soldiers in a march (3:7,11). This person is out of step with the church. They deviate from the prescribed order for the church. The church will fall into confusion if it does not live by biblical principles.

"For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints....Let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Corinthians 14:33,40).

"For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ" (Colossians 2:5).

Principle

We are to break fellowship with those who reject the principles of the Word as a course of life.

Application

We do not fellowship with those who reject the authority of the Word of God. The Bible is the base for fellowship. We get in step with other Christians when we accept the authority of the Bible in our lives.

and not according to the tradition

A "tradition" is something handed down. "Tradition" here means the oral and written teaching the gospel team passed down to the Thessalonians (1 Corinthians 11:2).

which he received from us

The word "received" carries the idea of receiving from another person. The Thessalonians received both written and oral information from Paul's team (i.e. 1 or 2 Thessalonians).

Principle

Christians are to reject people who show contempt toward Scripture.

Application

Some Christians will wound us more than help us. We may be fine on our own, but the moment we are with these people there is trouble.

Church discipline must be handled biblically. This includes having adequate evidence of the fault, and giving the person warning ahead of time. As well, the person should be confronted privately, in accordance with Matthew 18:15. The next step involves public rebuke and banishment from the church.

The purpose of such church discipline is not punishment, but restoration to fellowship. It is an attempt to get the offender's attention so that he/she will repent and stop rebelling against the Word of God.

2 Thessalonians 3:7

"For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you..."

The gospel team set an example. They practiced what they preached. They were the models for Christianity.

Paul expected others to follow him. We get our word "mimic" from the Greek word for "follow." The idea is that of a model. Paul says, "Use me as your model of conduct."

The word "ought" is an imperative. Paul wanted the Thessalonians to follow his example since the

gospel team was in their obedient attitude and actions towards the Word.

"Disorderly" suggests being out of rank, out of one's place, undisciplined, behaving disorderly. In the military sense, it means to break rank. Paul's team did not live off or mooch off the new Christians at Thessalonica (v.8). The team worked for their meals and keep.

Principle

It is not enough simply to believe something; we should strive to exemplify those beliefs.

Application

As Christians, we should be concerned about our testimony (1 Thessalonians 1:5-6; 2:1f; 2:10). This is an imperative of the Christian life.

Small children mimic their parents. Older children mimic athletes. Children mimic both bad and good examples. When they get older, they watch people cheat on their taxes.

As Christians, we follow those whose lives are in accord with the Bible. It is not enough to simply believe something; we must behave something. Likewise, we must be an example to others. The things we do and say will come back to haunt or bless us. When our lives are in agreement with the Word, others can follow us.

2 Thessalonians 3:8

"...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..."

nor did we eat anyone's bread free of charge,

The gospel team did not live off the new Christians at Thessalonica when they came to establish the church there. The Thessalonians were brand new Christians saved out of paganism with little understanding of Christian values so the gospel team waived their rights of financial support from the church there.

but worked with labor and toil night and day,

The team maintained themselves by hard manual labor night and day. They worked hard to bring the gospel to the Thessalonians.

that we might not be a burden to any of you

Paul did not want to be a heavy burden (Greek) to the Thessalonians. He did not want to load them down with an unnecessary financial burden (2 Corinthians 11:9). He was not a parasite on the Thessalonian church although he had the right to receive support from them. Paul waved that right in the light of the situation at that church. Even as Paul wrote this epistle, he worked at tent-making in Corinth (Acts 18:3).

The Philippian church sent money to Paul while he was in Thessalonica (Acts 16:15,34,40). Paul did receive financial help from others but not from the Thessalonians themselves.

Principle

Christians should wave their rights for the sake of others.

Application

Are you willing to wave your rights for others? Is the spiritual life of someone else more important to you than your spiritual rights? Mature Christians wave their rights for others. They set the pace for others.

2 Thessalonians 3:9

"...not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us"

not because we do not have authority,

The gospel team had the right to receive financial support from the new church at Thessalonica (1 Corinthians 9:4-6, 14; Galatians 6:6).

but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us

Paul worked as a tent maker and exemplified a positive work ethic for the Thessalonians.

The gospel team was an example of sacrificial giving. The word "example" means type. They had the right to receive financial support from the Thessalonian church (1 Corinthians 9:3-14; 1 Timothy 5:18) but they chose to give up that right for the sake of a new church. The team did this to set an example about work.

Principle

Christians are to be individual examples of Christianity.

Application

God expects Christians to view themselves as examples or types to the Christian life. We are to set the pace for others. We are to walk the talk. A reliable walk is of more worth than a barrel of words.

"Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Timothy 4:12).

2 Thessalonians 3:10

"For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat"

For even when we were with you,

Paul reminded the Thessalonians of a principle he taught them while he was in Thessalonica: "If any will not work, neither shall he eat." His gospel team did not receive any gifts without first working for their livelihood.

we commanded you this:

The Greek indicates that Paul's team continually commanded the Thessalonians that working for meals is a biblical principle.

If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat

The Greek emphasizes the phrase "will not." The issue is their obstinate attitude toward the subject of working for food. Laziness goes against many biblical principles. The question here is not refusing to give aid to those who cannot help themselves. He is not talking about people who cannot find a job or people who do not have the physical ability to work. The problem is exclusively living off the graciousness of other people.

The rationale some Thessalonians gave for not working was that Paul taught the imminent return of Christ and that He might come back momentarily. When they ran out of financial resources, they started sponging off their fellow

Christians causing relational problems in the church.

Principle

To be tough about the principle of work is to be kind to individuals and to the church.

Application

Many people today do not think in terms of principle. They hear an emotional story and respond, unknowingly fostering a parasite mentality in the church.

The problem here regards discernment. It appears that the only criterion for some in determining what we should do is "feeling." If it feels right, do it.

God provides resources through our work. A principle of God's creation is to work for our welfare. The only exception are people who cannot work for themselves.

2 Thessalonians 3:11

"For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies"

For we hear that there are some who walk among you

Paul receives a report of three problems in the church at Thessalonica: 1) they are out of step with a biblical principle, 2) they quit their jobs and sold their businesses and 3) they are busybodies.

in a disorderly manner,

We already considered the word "disorderly" (vv. 6,7). Someone who is "disorderly" is someone out of step with the church. They do not have a sense of order. They do not accept biblical principles because they have their own set of norms for the Christian life. They feel that it is proper to live like a parasite off fellow Christians and that sponging off other Christians was a good idea. They have the idea that "the world owes me a living." In the case of the Thessalonian church, some members felt that the other believers owed them a living.

not working at all,

Some people in Thessalonica quit their jobs and others sold their businesses because they

mistakenly thought that the immanent return of Christ meant the immediate return of Christ.

"Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labour, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need" (Ephesians 4:28).

but are busybodies

"Busybodies" carries the idea of not minding one's own business. Literally, it means to be working around with the idea of meddling in other people's business. There is a play on words in the Greek -- they are not busy in their own business but busy in the business of others. These people bustle about, trifling needlessly in matters not their own. They are busy all right but not busy in business! They are busy in everyone's business but their own.

People with too much time on their hands usually become gossips and intrude into the lives of others.

Principle

Laziness always creates a vacuum, creating the opportunity for idlers to meddle in other people's business.

Application

Nature abhors a vacuum. When people have too much time on their hands, they stick their noses in other people's business.

Being tough on the principle of work prevents the development of a parasite problem.. By insisting that people work for their own food, we correct the problem of busybodies who meddle in other people's affairs. These people always cause big problems in the church.

"And besides they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house, and not only idle but also gossips and busybodies, saying things which they ought not" (1 Timothy 5:13).

"But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters" (1 Peter 4:15).

Some people assign to themselves the prerogative of religious cops. They love to tell other people how to run their lives. They know how to run every other family better than their own. They

know how to run the church better than anyone else does. This is a great problem in many churches today. We need to deal with it like the apostle Paul did.

2 Thessalonians 3:12

"Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread"

Now those who are such we command and exhort

In the next two verses, Paul will reveal further insights about the "disorderly" by giving four commands to those who walk orderly (vv. 13-15). These commands show the obedient how to deal with the disobedient.

The word "command" appeared in verses four, six and ten. This is the fourth time Paul uses this word. Now he adds another word -- "exhort." Christians not only need commands, but they need exhortation. It is not enough to simply command. Christians need encouragement.

through our Lord Jesus Christ

The sphere of authority for the four following commands is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

that they work in quietness

"Quietness" means silence. The idea is that this person should not meddle in the affairs of others. We are not to meddle in other people's business, but to quietly mind our own business.

and eat their own bread

"Stay out of the business of others and work to provide for your own needs." "Mind your own business!"

Principle

Privacy is a Christian value.

Application

Work is a way of giving a testimony for the Lord. When we mind our own business and not meddle in other people's business, we show a true Christian testimony.

2 Thessalonians 3:13

"But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary in doing good"

Should the slothful not follow Paul's instructions, those who follow the order of biblical Christianity by working for a living should do four things. First, they are not to grow weary in "doing good" and working for a living.

"Weary" means to be utterly spiritless, to be wearied out, exhausted. A weary person loses his or her motivation to accomplish God's will. He or she quits and gives up. God's will in this case is to never lose heart in working at our job.

Principle

We should never lose our motivation for daily work.

Application

Christians who do not provide for their family financially when they are able to do so are worse than infidels.

"But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Timothy 5:8)

We should never allow ourselves to become discouraged in providing for our family through our employment. The Devil wants to discourage us in the daily mundane. He will do anything to discourage us along the way.

2 Thessalonians 3:14

"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"

And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle,

The second thing that those who walk orderly should do is to "note that person." Do not avoid conflict. Single out people who leech off others.

note that person

Paul says, "Mark that person. Single them out." These people need to be singled out. Do not hope

that the problem will just go away. Identify them and deal with them.

and do not keep company with him,

"Keep company with" literally means to mix up with (1 Corinthians 5:9). Don't do joint things together. Break close fellowship with this person. Do not show approval of their sin by your friendly fellowship with them.

that he may be ashamed

The third thing that the church should do about a person with a recalcitrant attitude toward work is to make these people feel ashamed about themselves. Literally, "may be ashamed," means to turn in, that is, to turn one upon himself and so produce a feeling of shame. This is an objective shame that changes conduct (1 Corinthians 4:14; Titus 2:8). Idlers thus feel shunned by godly people.

Principle

Breaking fellowship is sometimes necessary for the sake of the church.

Application

Separation from certain believers under certain conditions is a biblical principle. God separates the sheep and the goats. He even separates the ox and the ass (Deuteronomy 22:10).

In a day when unity becomes the all-encompassing principle that governs all Christian thought, this sounds very strange. Ecumenism always carries the danger of syncretism and distortion of the truth. It does not allow for God's distinctions. People want to reduce God's truth down to something more simple. God's Word is too big and too diverse for that.

The church should warn the disobedient members twice (1 Thessalonians 4:11; 5:14). If they still do not respond, then they should be singled him out as troublemakers and cut from fellowship (Matthew 18:15-17).

Shame is an effective means of correcting aberrant behavior in the local church.

2 Thessalonians 3:15

"Yet do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother"

The fourth thing to consider in disciplining lazy people is to not make them feel like enemies. Discipline shouldn't be taken too far. This is a declaration of prudence (2 Corinthians 2:7). Paul uses this statement to qualify the previous injunction of "do not keep company with."

The church should not count recalcitrant believers as adversaries. The word "count" carries the idea of consider. The idea here is regard. We are not to regard carnal believers as non-believers or enemies.

"Admonish" means to put in mind, warn. The idea is to provide instruction so as to correct behavior or belief. It is our role as Christians to advise others of dangerous consequences of their behavior.

"Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come" (1 Corinthians 10:11).

Lest the Thessalonians go overboard with admonishing others, Paul urges them to admonish others as relatives and not as adversaries. Although a church member's behavior might be aberrant, he is still our brother in Christ.

Principle

It is important to use prudence and judgment in the discipline of fellow Christians.

Application

Some people execute church discipline with a sense of hostility toward the offenders. This passage warns against that. We are not to develop an attitude of antagonism toward offending Christians but an attitude of kinship.

The purpose of church discipline is not to administer punishment but to restore the believer to fellowship (1 Corinthians 5:5). That is why we do not use excessive discipline. When we go beyond the appropriate bounds of correction, we do not show love but unnecessary harshness. We must keep the welfare of carnal Christians in mind at all times. However, we do show love through admonition.

2 Thessalonians 3:16

"Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always in every way. The Lord be with you all"

Paul concludes the epistle with a prayer, a greeting and a blessing (16-18). This verse gives his fourth and final prayer for the Thessalonians (2 Thessalonians 1:11-12; 2:16-17; 3:5).

Now may the Lord of peace Himself

God is the source of peace. The best peace is the peace that comes from the Lord. God is the God of peace (Romans 15:33; 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:11). Paul uses this title for God because the church is vulnerable to conflict caused by people leeching off each other. The Thessalonian church needed the Author of peace to sustain them through this turbulent time. They will never have peace among themselves without Him.

"Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

give you peace

"Peace" here refers to unity in the church at Thessalonica. Peace comes from the God of peace. At the heart of our relationship with each other is a God of peace. This epistle begins and ends with "peace."

always

Paul prays that they will have peace all of the time, not just most of the time. The fact that some believers cause problems should not change the local church's heart for peace.

in every way.

The word "way" indicates a turning, a manner. God wants to give us peace in such a fashion that it affects our customary way of life. Paul prays that they might have peace by all means. Whatever it takes to get peace in the church, we should do it.

The Lord be with you all

Paul does not infer that there are times the Lord is not with us. It is a prayer expressing his desire that the Thessalonians would embrace companionship with the Lord in the whole matter before them. It takes the Lord's presence to sustain peace within the local church (Matthew 28:20).

Principle

The Lord will enable your church to have peace within.

Application

If God does not answer prayer, all exhortation would be futile. If God does not restrain unruly people, then the church will head for turbulent times.

God promises His presence to help us have peace in the local church. Are you drawing on that peace? Is your local church appropriating that peace? God specializes in peace. That is why He calls Himself "the God of peace." The God of peace wants His church to be a church of peace.

2 Thessalonians 3:17

"The salutation of Paul with my own hand, which is a sign in every epistle; so I write"

Paul concludes his second epistle with a formal and personal greeting (2 Thessalonians 3:17,18).

The salutation of Paul

The word "salutation" means greeting. He embraces them as his own.

with my own hand,

Paul dictated 2 Thessalonians to a secretary (amanuensis), who wrote the epistle for him. However, he wrote the final greeting with his own hand. This was a precaution against attempts to forge his epistles (2 Thessalonians 2:2).

which is a sign in every epistle;

Paul's own hand writing in the final greeting indicates the letter's authenticity. The Thessalonians could distinguish his handwriting from his secretary's handwriting.

so I write

This "sign" was his autograph, a specimen of his handwriting.

Principle

We must test the authenticity of a document before we believe it's content. All doctrine stands or falls by testing it against Scripture.

Application

Today Christians are careless about where they get their ideas about God. The only authentic way to know God with specificity is in the Word of God. We can know God through creation and conscience, but the most accurate way to know Him is through His Word.

2 Thessalonians 3:18

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen"

Paul concludes 2 Thessalonians with a blessing.

As Paul began 2 Thessalonians with peace and grace, so he also ends the epistle. He closes each of his letters by praying that God's grace would be the portion of his readers.

Paul prays that "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ" would be with the Thessalonians in sustaining power.

The blessing of 2 Thessalonians adds one word to the benediction of 1 Thessalonians – the word "all." The word "all" may be a plea for unity in the church. All of us need the "grace of our Lord Jesus Christ" for this.

The word "amen" means so be it. It is a word of faith. He prays that the Thessalonians would receive peace and grace to God.

Principle

God saves us and sustains us by grace.

Application

God's grace works on us to bring us to Christ (Ephesians 2:8,9) and the grace of God sustains us as Christians.

"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9).

"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen" (2 Corinthians 13:14).