

## II THESSALONIANS

### Chapter One

#### I. ADDRESS AND SALUTATION (1:1-2).

##### 1. The writer and the church (v. 1).

- (1) Compare with I Thessalonians 1:1.
- (2) This is addressed to a local assembly of baptized believers. This church was in God and Christ. They were in God and Christ and a part of them.
- (3) "Our Father" denotes His relationship to His people.

- A. He is the Nourisher, Provider, and Protector.
- B. The Thessalonians knew God as their covenant Father.

##### 2. Grace and peace have their source in God and Christ (v. 2).

#### II. THANKSGIVING FOR THEIR GROWTH AND PERSEVERANCE (1:3-4).

##### 1. Their faith and love had experienced growth (v. 3).

###### (1) "We are bound to thank God."

- A. Paul recognized the deep obligation to be constantly grateful (I Thess. 5:18). "Bound" (*opheilo*) expresses a deep sense of obligation like our Anglo-Saxon word "ought."
- B. We should thank God for our fellow Christians.

###### (2) "Your faith groweth exceedingly."

- A. Where there is life there is growth.
- B. A living faith feeds on living truth.
- C. We are ruled by our beliefs; if they are wrong, our life is a mistake, our energies wasted.
- D. The doom of a church is sealed when its creed is dead---a museum of dry, bony, musty remains.
- E. "Groweth exceedingly" (*hyperauxano*) meaning "beyond measure" (Luke 17:5).

###### (3) "The charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth."

- A. This is brotherly love---"toward each other."
- B. This love comes from a divine source (II Pet. 1:7). Pretended love, often accompanied by backbiting and criticisms, is no substitute for it.
- C. The verb "aboundeth" means "to become more, increase, be present in abundance." Their love was continually increasing, overflowing its normal limits like a river.

- D. Every member was a radiating center of love throughout the church.
- E. The growing faith and the increasing love was a direct answer to the prayers of the missionaries (I Thess. 3:10,12).
- F. Where faith grows love will abound, for faith works by love (Gal. 5:6).

2. Their faithfulness under suffering (v. 4).

- (1) "In the churches of God"---probably the church at Corinth and the churches of Achaia.
- (2) Their trials began with the first planting of the gospel in Thessalonica and continued without cessation.
- (3) Their faith triumphed over persecutions. Suffering tests faith.
- (4) Patience without faith is simply dull, stupid, stoical endurance. Faith makes the soul invincible.
- (5) Suffering is not a sign of divine displeasure, but often a means of spiritual prosperity.
- (6) Patience and faith go together (Heb. 6:12; Jas. 1:3; Rev. 13:10).
- (7) To be a Christian in a time of peace is great, but to be one in time of persecution is greater.
- (8) "That endure"---means to hold out against pressure, not to give in (I Cor. 4:12).

III. ENCOURAGEMENT IN VIEW OF CHRIST'S RETURN (1:5-10).

1. Suffering for the truth will be divinely recompensed (v. 5).

- (1) Their suffering proved God's justice.
- (2) This is not true of the present state, but it is true of future judgment at Christ's coming.
- (3) If true religion is worth anything, it is worth everything. At the judgment seat of Christ their present suffering will be seen to be beneficial.
- (4) "That ye may be worthy of the kingdom of God."
  - A. We cannot merit Heaven by suffering or service. Heaven is ours by the merit mediation of Jesus Christ.
  - B. To be counted worthy means, not to make worthy, but to be reckoned worthy, to be considered deserving.
  - C. Their suffering were the outcome of having been saved by faith in Christ.
  - D. Their present suffering reveals they have a moral fitness for the kingdom.
  - E. Only to suffering believers is the kingdom promised (Matt. 5:10-12; Acts 14:22; II Tim. 2:12).
  - F. God's justice already accounts them worthy of His kingdom.

2. A righteous God will punish persecutors (v. 6).

- (1) God's righteousness is balanced in that persecutors will receive their recompense (Ps. 7:9-11; Phil. 1:28).
- (2) "God to recompense tribulation" means the afflicter will be arraigned before

God.

- (3) "Recompense" means "to repay" (Rom. 2:5,9).
- (4) This is why we are not to revenge ourselves (Rom. 12:19).

3. The revelation of the righteous Judge (v. 7).

(1) "And to you that are troubled rest with us."

- A. "Rest" means release from present affliction.
- B. This would be a reversal of their present experience.
- C. The ultimate abolition of tensions in this world for true believers awaits Christ's return to reign on earth.
- D. "With us" means Paul, Timothy and Silas. It also implies reunion and recognition of the saints in glory.

(2) "When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven."

- A. This is Christ's post-trib coming in power and great glory (Zech. 14; Matt. 24:27; 26:64; Rev. 19:11-16). It is not the coming in the air for the saints.
- B. This appearing will bring rest and relief to the tribulation saints.
- C. "Revelation" (*apokalupsis*) means "an unveiling."
- D. The first advent of Christ on earth was one of humiliation and suffering. The second advent will be with an outburst of divine glory.
- E. This coming is like the coming of Jehovah in Old Testament (Ex. 13:21; Deut. 4:24; Isa. 10:16-17).
- F. Christ shall be revealed as the supreme Ruler and Judge of the earth.
- G. The heavens now retain and conceal Christ, but then He will be revealed and made manifest without disguise or veil.

(3) "With his mighty angels."

- A. It could read: "with the angels of his might," meaning the angels who are the ministers of His power.
- B. Angels are concerned with God's judgment (Matt. 13:41-42; 25:31).
- C. Angels have great power (Ps. 103:20; II Kings 19:35).

4. The subjects of this righteous judgment (v. 8).

(1) "In flaming fire."

- A. This is the visible manifestation of divine glory.
- B. This is like the fiery appearances of Jehovah in the Old Testament (Ps. 97:1-3; Isa. 29:6; 30:30; 66:15; Dan. 7:9-10; Mal. 4:1). This is clear proof of the deity of Jesus Christ.
- C. God's wrath is expressed in Scripture by fire (Ex. 3:2; 19:18; Deut. 32:22; Heb. 10:27).

D. I take this to be material fire, not metaphorical fire. It was water in Noah's day.

(2) "Taking vengeance on them that know not God."

A. "Vengeance" means full justice on a criminal, giving him what his guilt deserves.

B. Vengeance is the prerogative of Jehovah (Deut. 32:35; Ps. 94:1). Jesus is Jehovah (John 5:22).

C. The Gentiles knew not God (I Thess. 4:5; Rom. 1:18; 11:30).

(3) "And that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."

A. Men are commanded to obey the gospel (Mark 1:15; Acts 17:30).

B. This includes Jews and Gentiles who hear the gospel. To obey the gospel is to believe it (Rom. 10:16; 16:26).

C. Not all who hear the gospel obey it (Matt. 11:20-24).

5. The character of the punishment (v. 9).

(1) "Destruction" (*olethros*) has no thought of annihilation or cessation of being. If destruction means annihilation, how can it be everlasting?

(2) It means not the destruction of being but of well-being. It is ruin so far as the purpose of existence is concerned.

(3) It means separation from God, the Source of life and all good---an undying death.

(4) "Shall be punished" is literally "who shall pay the right," or "pay the penalty."

(5) "Everlasting" means eternal punishment of the wicked (Isa. 30:33; Matt. 25:46; Mark 9:43-44).

(6) "From the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."

A. This punishment is irrevocable banishment from the presence of the Lord (I Tim. 6:16; Matt. 25:30,46).

B. This judgment comes immediately from God Himself (Matt. 10:28).

C. Not only the justice of God, but His almighty power, will be glorified in the destruction of sinners.

6. A life of faith leads to a life of glory (v. 10).

(1) When he shall come to be glorified in his saints."

A. Christ will come not only as Judge to recompense evildoers, but also to be glorified in His saints (John 17:10).

B. Greek reads: "When he shall have come" (*hotan elthe*), showing His coming is a definite event, but it indicates the time is left undetermined.

C. God is glorified in the punishment of the wicked (Ex. 14:4,17; Ezek. 28:22)

LXX).

- D. But He is equally glorified (not by) but in His saints (I Cor. 15:49; Col. 3:4; I John 3:2).
- E. They will have a glorified body like His (Rom. 8:19,23,29; Phil. 3:21).
- F. They will reflect as in a mirror the glory of the Lord (John 17:23).
- G. God is glorified in His people now (Isa. 44:23; I Cor. 10:31).
- H. When Christ comes in His glory we will be in our glory (Matt. 16:27; 25:31).

(2) "And to be admired in all them that believe."

- A. This means surprise and admiration evoked in the spectators. Christ and His saints will be the objects of wonder and amazement.
- B. The spectators are angels (I Pet. 1:12) and the unbelieving world (Acts 13:41). Believers themselves may be included in this.
- C. "All them that believe" parallels with the "saints," for believers are all saints (Acts 26:18).
- D. This looks back to their conversion (I Thess. 1:9).
- E. What wonder to take a poor, sinful, despicable worm out of the dust to share with Christ a throne of glory in a glorified body!
- F. Presently the saints are looked upon as vile and worthless by the world.

(3) "(Because our testimony among you that believe) in that day."

- A. The missionaries not only proclaimed the gospel, but they also bore personal testimony to the reality of its power.
- B. "Among you" might better be rendered "unto you" or "to you."
- C. Faith comes by hearing the gospel (Rom. 10:17). Their belief proved they would be included in the great display of the Lord's glory.
- D. "In that day" refers to the glorious appearing of Jesus Christ on earth to reign.

#### IV. A PRAYER FOR COMPLETENESS OF MORAL CHARACTER (1:11-12).

1. The nature and substance of this prayer (v. 11).

(1) "Wherefore also we pray always for you."

- A. "Wherefore" means with a view to the coming glorification of Christ and His saints.
- B. "Always" underlines the regularity of their prayers. They prayed for their converts every day. Do we do the same?
- C. Missionaries and ministers are to preach and pray.
- D. The certainty of God's plan does not make prayer presumptuous or unnecessary (Phil. 1:6; 2:13; I Thess. 5:24; Matt. 6:10).

(2) "That our God may count you worthy of this calling."

- A. Compare with II Thessalonians 1:5.

- B. "Calling" is used to denote the beginning of the Christian life as well as its continuance to glorification.
- C. They were to show forth in their daily life the purpose of their calling (Eph.

4:1-

2).

(3) "And fulfill all the good pleasure of his goodness."

- A. The pronoun "his" is not in the original. The goodness intended is not God's but theirs
- B. Believers should have a delight in goodness (Rom. 15:14; Eph. 5:9; Gal. 5:22).
- C. The word rendered "goodness" (*agathosune*) is not applied in the New Testament to God, but only to man.
- D. The parallel work of faith requires that both be related to the readers (I Chron. 29:17; Ps. 5:4).

(4) "And the work of faith with power."

- A. His prayer was that God would mightily fulfill in them all moral goodness and a faith which was energetic (I Thess. 1:3; Jas. 2:17).
- B. Their own efforts would be ineffectual apart from God's power (*dunamis*). See Peter 1:5.
- C. The same power, which first produced faith, continues to make it grow.

2. The purpose of the prayer (v. 12).

(1) "That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him."

- A. "The name" means Jesus as revealed to men. Christians in the early days were known as those who called upon the name of Jesus (Acts 9:14).
- B. If Christ's name is to be hallowed, then Christ is God.
- C. Christ is glorified in believers when their holiness promotes His cause and reflects His glory.
- D. They will be in the likeness of his glory at His second advent (Col. 3:4).
- E. They now manifest His glory in their lives and conduct; their hope is future glory---this affects the former (I John 3:1-3).

(2) "According to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ."

- A. The calling, the power, and the glory mentioned are all of grace and apart from any human merit.
- B. Is it one or two persons here? The use of only one article with the two nouns makes it possible to render: "of our God and Lord, Jesus Christ."
- C. This would make Christ God and Lord (Tit. 2:13).
- D. Most do not favor this rendering. The construction used marks the unity and equality of the Father and Son.

E. The answer to the apostle's prayer was in accordance with divine grace.

## II THESSALONIANS

### Chapter Two

#### I. CORRECTING ERRONEOUS VIEWS CONCERNING THE DAY OF THE LORD (2:1-5).

##### 1. The rapture of the saints (v. 1).

- (1) "Now" is a transitional particle marking the passing to a new topic.
- (2) "We beseech you, brethren" is not impersonal and cold, but personal, warm, and affectionate.
- (3) "By" (*hyper*) means "on behalf of, in the interest of." "By" is an acceptable translation.
- (4) There is a literal and personal coming of Jesus Christ, not some coming in spirit at the destruction of Jerusalem.
- (5) This statement is a summary of I Thessalonians 4:13-18.
- (6) "Gathering together" (*episunagoge*) denotes the acts of gathering together. This word is used of the assembling of the saints for worship in Hebrews 10:25.
- (7) Church gathering are a foretaste and anticipation of the future assembling of the saints at the rapture.
- (8) "Unto him" means Christ is the convening center for his saints now and then.
- (9) The Thessalonians loved, looked, and longed for the coming of Jesus Christ.

##### 2. A warning against deception (v. 2).

- (1) "That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled."
  - A. They needed their mental equilibrium restored. Paul feared they had been knocked off their mental balance.
  - B. "Shaken" signifies like waves by a storm (Jas. 1:6).
  - C. We are not to be controlled by emotions, but by the mind enlightened by the Spirit and Word.
- (2) "Neither by spirit"---by a supposed prophetic communication (I John 4:1; II Cor. 11:4).
- (3) "Nor by word"---an oral message.
- (4) "Nor by letter as from us"---a forged letter. Such a letter may have been circulated (II Thess. 3:17-18).
- (5) "As the day of Christ is at hand."
  - A. Some insist this must read "the day of the Lord." Some Greek manuscripts do read this way.
  - B. The day of Christ is the same, as Christ is the Lord (I Thess. 5:2).
  - C. The Thessalonians seem to have believed the coming of Christ had already taken place, and they were in the day of the Lord (Matt. 24:23).
  - D. False teachers had confused them. Paul denied that Christ had already come

and that they had entered into the day of the Lord.

F. They had been told their tribulations proved they were in the day of the Lord.

3. The rapture must occur before Antichrist can be revealed (v. 3).

- (1) "Let no man deceive you by an means"---by any of the foregoing methods or in any way whatever (Mat. 24:4-6; II Cor. 4:2; II Tim. 3:13).
- (2) "That day shall not come." These words are not in the Greek text, but they are properly supplied by the translators.
- (3) "Except there be a falling away first."

- A. Kenneth Wuest, Schuyler English, and others contend the word *apostasias* means simply "a departure."
- B. The Tyndale, Coverdale, Cranmer's, Geneva, and Beza's versions of the 1600s all have "a departing first."
- C. Paul had not in the first epistle mentioned a departure from the faith, but he had departure of the saints (I Thess. 4:14-18).
- D. Landmark post-tribbers deny church succession. They say the church will apostatize so as to become the kingdom of Antichrist. The Bible speaks of true churches on earth until Jesus comes (I Cor. 11:26).
- E. As long as the churches are on earth, there cannot be an apostasy which will reveal Antichrist.

(4) "And that man of sin be revealed."

- A. This is a real "man," not some system. This is Antichrist (I John 2:18; Rev. 13:1-10).
- B. As Christ was the incarnation of holiness, he will be the incarnation of evil.
- C. In this man sin has no limits, the flesh has no bounds, and vileness is without restraint---a man fully possessed of the Devil.
- D. Some translated "man of lawlessness," meaning a man without law (I John 3:4).
- E. Sin has absolute dominion over this man. He is the willing and efficient instrument of sin and Satan.
- F. "Revealed" indicates a sudden manifestation of one hidden (II Thess. 1:7; 2:9).

(5) "The son of perdition."

- A. Or, son of destruction (John 17:12).
- B. "Perdition" denotes the destruction awaiting Antichrist (Rev. 19:20).
- C. "Son of" expresses one's nature or one's distinguishing characteristics.
- D. Some make it to mean "son of the Destroyer" (Rev. 9:11; 17: Ps. 89:22).

4. The purpose of the coming of Antichrist (v. 4).

- (1) "Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is wor-

shipped."

- A. He is the opponent and adversary of Christ---the Antichrist (I John 2:22). He leads an atheistic revolt.
- B. "All that is called God." This includes the true God and all false gods (Dan. 9:27; 11:36-37).
- C. The pope is not the final Antichrist. No pope is called God nor worshipped as God. They claim only to be the vicar of Christ.
- D. Religion in every form will fall under the band of the Antichrist.
- E. This is the abomination of desolation (Dan. 9:27; Mark 13:14; Rev. 13:14-15).
- F. Every so-called god will be disposed in favor of himself.

(2) "So that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God."

- A. The temple is the rebuilt tribulation temple in Jerusalem during the seven-year tribulation period (Matt. 24:15; Mark 13:14; Rev. 11:1-2).
- B. The Antichrist could not take his seat in a Baptist church, for the building is not the church.
- C. Rotherham gives it properly: "So that he within the sanctuary of God shall take his seat."
- D. "Temple" (*naos*) is the inner sanctuary of the Jewish temple, the place where only the priests could go.
- E. Antichrist will claim absolute and exclusive deity (John 5:43). Most people will render him submission (Rev. 13:15).

5. Paul reminds them of past oral teaching (v. 5).

- (1) When Paul was among them he had talked with them about these things.
- (2) Paul did not believe prophetic teaching should be withheld from young converts.

## II. THE HINDERER OF THE MISSION OF ANTICHRIST (2:6-7).

1. The thing that restrained (v. 6).

(1) "What withholdeth."

- A. The neuter present participle presents this restraint as an impersonal operative force.
- B. "Withholdeth" (*katecho*) means "to hold down, to hold back, to restrain."
- C. Lawlessness is said to be restrained in its development.
- D. This restraint is the churches on earth (Matt. 5:13) indwelt by the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 3:16; I John 4:4).

(2) "That he might be revealed in his time."

- A. The purpose of this delay is that Antichrist may be fully revealed at the time divinely ordained.

- B. "In his time" is literally "in his season."
- C. Just as there was a fullness of time for Christ to appear (Gal. 4:4), so there is a fullness of time for Antichrist to be revealed.
- D. The development of evil is under God's control.

2. The removal of the Restrainer (v. 7).

(1) "For the mystery of iniquity doth already work."

- A. When Paul was writing this letter the mystery of lawlessness was actively at work, but it had not reached its climax.
- B. "Worketh" indicates the active operation of some spiritual power---Satan himself (Matt. 13:33).
- C. The aim of the devil is to overthrow the laws of God and to establish his own rule over the world.
- D. Antichrist is not yet revealed, but the spirit of Antichrist is already at work (I John 2:18; 4:3).
- E. The Restrainer is distinct from the restraint in verse 6.
- F. "Iniquity" is "lawlessness."

(2) "Only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way."

- A. There is one that restrains now. The Restrainer here is masculine and personal.
- B. A real person is doing this restraining, not a system or party. When the KJV came out "let" meant "to hinder;" now it means "to permit."
- C. This cannot be human government because it produces the Antichrist. It cannot be Satan, for Satan does not hinder Satan.
- D. The Restrainer is the Holy Spirit (Isa. 59:19).
- E. "Out of the way" is "out of the midst." The Holy Spirit and the church are taken out of the midst of the people on earth by a pretrib rapture.
- F. The Holy Spirit does not leave the earth, for He regenerates tribulation saints. His residence in the church on earth ceases because the churches are in Heaven.
- G. This is a reversal of Pentecost.
- H. The removal of the churches and the Holy Spirit will release the world to sin as never before.
- I. Like Abraham's servant, the Spirit of God came to find a bride for the Son. When His work is done, he goes with the bride to the Father's house.
- J. When the Restrainer is removed, lawlessness will no longer work in secret, but it will be openly manifested.

III. THE CAREER OF THE ANTICHRIST (2:8-12).

1. Christ destroys Antichrist (v. 8).

(1) "And then shall that wicked be revealed."

- A. "And then" indicates the career of the Antichrist will immediately follow the

removal of the Hinderer.

- B. "Wicked" (*anomos*) is "lawless" or "lawless one." This man is the embodiment of lawlessness---the man of lawlessness.
- C. The hidden mystery is now revealed in a man of lawlessness (vv. 3,6).
- D. The word "revealed" discloses the agency of Satan behind the unveiling.
- E. The man of lawlessness is not without any law. He is in rebellion to God's law.

(2) "Whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth."

- A. The word "consume" (*analousei*) points to verses in the Old Testament (Ps. 33:6; Isa. 11:4; 30:33; Dan. 7:26). Some would render "consume" as "slay."
- B. Christ will terminate the career of Antichrist quickly (Job 4:8-9).
- C. One breath of Christ's mouth is sufficient to consume Antichrist.

(3) "And shall destroy with the brightness of his coming" (Dan. 7:11).

- A. "Destroy" (*katargeo*) means to render useless or inoperative (Dan. 2:34).
- B. Not his annihilation but his immobilization is indicated.
- C. "The brightness of his coming"---*epiphaneia* of His *parousia*---the outshining of His presence.
- D. This is Christ coming in power and great glory.
- E. "Slay" points to what will personally happen to Antichrist, "destroy" ("bring to naught") points to his program of activities.
- F. Williams' translation: "The Lord Jesus will destroy him with the breath of His mouth and put a stop to his operations."
- G. It is not the brightness but Christ Himself who destroys Antichrist.

2. Satan's masterpiece (v. 9).

(1) "Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan."

- A. "Even him" is not in the Greek text, but it is necessary to the sense.
- B. "Coming" (*parousia*) is the word used to denote the coming of Christ. Here we see how Satan mimics the coming of Christ.
- C. "The working" (*enegeia*, from which we get our word energy) is used for power in action, either evil or good.
- D. The presence of the man of sin is an operation of Satan's power (Rev. 13:2). Antichrist is the organ or instrument of Satan.
- E. Antichrist is not Satan himself, but he will operate in the power of Satan (v. 7).

(2) "With all power and signs and lying wonders."

- A. "All power" imitates Jesus Christ (Matt. 28:18).
- B. Antichrist has all the power Satan can give him to work miracles. Satan apes the working of God in Christ.
- C. These three terms are used to designate the miracles of Christ (Acts 2:22) and

the apostolic church (Heb. 2:4).

- D. "Power" is singular while "signs" and "wonders" are plural. The power is real, and the signs and wonders are to deceive (Matt. 24:24; Rev. 13:11-15).
- E. Antichrist is Satan's masterpiece endowed with extraordinary qualities. The Jews require a sign (Deut. 13:1-5; I Cor. 1:22).
- F. The miracles and signs of Antichrist will be real, but they are for the purpose of causing men to worship the Devil's christ.
- G. Signs and wonders are not always proof of the operation of God's power.

### 3. The deception of Antichrist (v. 10).

(1) "And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish."

- A. Either with all deceit leading to unrighteousness or all deceit which is unrighteousness.
- B. This proves Antichrist has the power to deceive men. Sin is essentially deceitful.
- C. "Them that perish"---it reaches and affects them that perish---not true believers.
- D. Those perishing are the objects of Satan's work (II Cor. 2:15; 4:3-4).

(2) "Because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved."

- A. "Because" means in return for which action they receive due recompense.
- B. "The truth" means the gospel (Eph. 1:13; Col. 1:5; I Thess. 1:8), which is about Christ who is the Truth (John 14:6).
- C. They are not perishing because they are the unfortunate victims of predestination to damnation.
- D. The reason men perish is not the decree of God, nor a lack of the means of grace, but in their rejection and contempt of it.
- E. Some hold down the truth in unrighteousness (Rom. 1:18; John 3:19).
- F. Truth does not become saving truth unless it be loved.
- G. Here is a criminal indifference to their eternal welfare.
- H. Rejecting light, they prefer darkness; rejecting God, they chose Satan; spurning Christ, they receive Antichrist.
- I. You cannot love both truth and falsehood.
- J. Rejection of the gospel renders a person an easy victim to the deception of the Antichrist.

### 4. God subjects the dupes of Antichrist to the power of the error they choose (v. 11).

(1) "And for this cause."

- A. One account of their being destitute of the truth.
- B. See here the fearful consequence of hatred and rejection of the truth.
- C. The victims of Antichrist are abandoned to self-delusion and condemnation.

(2) "God shall send them strong delusion."

- A. "A working of error" (RV), or "efficacy of error" (Gill).
- B. As a moral being God cannot remain passive toward active evil. Sin cannot go unpunished.
- C. Upon those who reject the truth God sends an energy of error (I Kings 22:19-23; Job 12:16; Ezek. 14:9).
- D. Falsehood begets falsehood. Sin is punished by sin, or God makes sin work out its own punishment.
- E. Since the followers of Antichrist have accepted the workings of Satan, God sends them a working of error.
- F. He does not send the error, but the inward working which results in the inescapable consequences of the error to which they have given themselves.
- G. God is said to do what He permits to be done (Gen. 45:7; II Sam. 24:1 compared with I Chron. 21:1; Rev. 17:17).
- H. "God shall send" is more than a bare permission, for the evil God permits, He decreed to permit.
- J. God judicially punishes sin with sin---delusion with delusion. Men harden their hearts, and then God hardens their hearts (John 12:36-50).

(3) "That they should believe a lie."

- A. Literally "the lie." Antichrist is the embodiment of "the lie" in contrast with Jesus Christ who is the embodiment of "the truth" (John 14:6).
- B. They believe the supreme lie---that Antichrist is God (II Thess. 2:4).
- C. These are the lying wonders in verse 9. Idols are called lies (Isa. 44:20) and so is heresy (I Tim. 4:1-2; Rev. 2:2).

5. The fate of the victims who fall under the spell of Antichrist (v. 12).

(1) "That they all might be damned."

- A. "That" (*hina*) or "in order that," indicates the moral consequences, "they might be judged" or "damned."
- B. Those perishing in life must be judged in death.
- C. God makes the working of Satan (vv. 9-10) to bear its own fruit in judgment.
- D. The damnation mentioned is either the effect of their believing lies, or God sending them strong delusion.
- E. Not all judgment is unto damnation (I Cor. 11:31-32), but the judgment on the worshippers of Antichrist is unto damnation (II Pet. 2:1).

(2) "Who believe not the truth."

- A. Negatively, they never entered into a personal relationship of trust and obedience to the truth.

- B. They believe the lies of Antichrist, and they positively rejected the truth of God (v. 10).
- C. They believed a lie as the truth. Their unbelief of the truth was the consequence of their want of love of the truth, and a cause of their being judged.

(3) "But had pleasure in unrighteousness."

- A. This is the positive characteristic. They were well pleased with unrighteousness" (Rotherham).
- B. Their rejection of truth resulted in the love of evil. Evil had become to them as truth (Isa. 5:20). A moral perversion of character had taken place.
- C. God in retributive justice sends a working of error to those who love error.
- D. They had rejected God and enjoyed fellowship with Antichrist. They preferred unrighteousness to righteousness.
- E. All unrighteousness is sin (I John 5:17).

#### IV. THANKSGIVING AND PRAYER (2:13-17).

1. Thanksgiving for God's election of them ( v. 13).

- (1) "But" contains a contrast to the worshippers of Antichrist. Paul and the Thessalonians were not exposed to the delusions of the man of sin.
- (2) "We" ---Paul and his colleagues (1:1).
- (3) "Are bound to give thanks always to God for you."

- A. He was thankful for the grace the Thessalonians had received.
- B. He had often given thanks for them (I Thess. 1:2; 2:13; 3:9; II Thess. 1:3).

(4) "Brethren beloved of the Lord" (I Thess. 1:4).

- A. Though they were hated by the world, they were objects of God's everlasting love (Deut. 7:7-8; 33:12; John 3:16; Rom. 5:8; Eph. 5:25; Rev. 3:9).
- B. The "Lord" is the Lord Jesus Christ. The name of God follows immediately as a distinct person.
- C. God loved us before we loved Him (I John 4:19).

(5) "Because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation."

- A. "God hath...chosen you" (*haireomai*)---God chose for Himself.
- B. This is not from the beginning of the gospel at Thessalonica, but from the Beginning of all things, from eternity (Prov. 8:23; Eph. 1:4; II Tim. 1:9).
- C. Paul traces their salvation to God's eternal election.
- D. God never speaks of election to salvation as taking place in time. Calling takes place in time.
- E. Some give "from the beginning" the meaning of "first fruits." The Thessalonians were not the first fruits of Paul's labor in Macedonia. The Philippians were the first converts.

F. Note election is unto salvation, not merely service or office. Election is not salvation, but it is unto salvation.

(6) "Through sanctification of the Spirit."

- A. "Through" denotes the means by which this election to salvation is realized.
- B. They were saved through the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit.
- C. Sanctification is the process of being more and more detached from the world and being more and more conformed to the image of Christ.
- D. Sanctification is the work of the Spirit (Rom. 5:5; 8:2,9; I Cor. 6:11; Gal. 3:3; 5:16).
- E. Some make it our human spirit which is sanctified, but sanctification concerns the whole man (I Thess. 5:23).
- F. This is the means fixed in the decree of election to salvation.
- G. Election secures true holiness (Eph. 1:4), and it is not a licentious doctrine.

(7) "And belief of the truth."

- A. "Truth" is without the article, denoting that which is believed has the quality of truth, not deluding error.
- B. The divine choice unto salvation becomes operative through receiving the truth of the gospel.
- C. This is receiving a loving of the truth, a believing in Christ as the substance of truth, a going out of the soul to Christ in reliance, trust, and dependence.
- D. Faith is not the cause of election, but the effects of it (Acts 13:48).
- E. Faith is necessary to salvation. It is the means of salvation. Salvation is certain to the elect by faith.

2. God called them through the gospel (v. 14).

(1) "Whereunto he called you by our gospel."

- A. "Whereunto" that is unto salvation through sanctification of the Spirit.
- B. Whom God elects from eternity, He calls in time (Rom. 8:30; II Pet. 1:10). It took place when the missionaries preached the gospel to them (I Thess. 1:5; 2:2; Rom. 10:13-15).
- C. Where are the elect not called by the gospel? The outward call of the gospel is rendered effectual by the inward operation of the Spirit.
- D. "Our gospel." Paul and his companions were not the authors or subjects of it. It has been committed to them to preach.
- E. By means of the preaching of the gospel what God had planned from eternity was realized in time.

(2) "To the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."

- A. This call did not immediately transport them to glory.

- B. It sets them in the way to obtain the glory of Jesus Christ (II Thess. 1:10-12).
  - C. This efficacious call of the gospel is unto the glory of the risen Lord (John 17:2; Rom. 8:17), the glory He purchased for us.
  - D. Those God elects to salvation He sends the gospel to in time (Rom. 1:16).
3. They must not be shaken loose of their moorings (v. 15).
- (1) "Therefore."
- A. He draws a logical deduction from what has just been said.
  - B. Because of God's electing love and effectual calling into Christ's glory.
- (2) "Brethren, stand fast."
- A. He does not say, "Because of election and effectual calling, you may be careless and inactive."
  - B. These doctrines encourage us to the greatest resolution and activity.
  - C. "Stand fast" means "stand firm, be steadfast." It looks back to the negative appeal in 2:2---not to be quickly shaken.
  - D. This is a military term, speaking as a captain to his soldiers (I Cor. 16:13; Eph. 6:14).
- (3) "And hold the traditions which ye have been taught."
- A. "Tradition" (*paradosis*) refers to personal instructions, whether orally or by writings.
  - B. This church had no "traditions" in the modern sense. They had the Old Testament and the personal teaching of holy men.
  - C. Tradition is used in a bad sense sometimes (Matt. 15:26; Mark 7:3-9; Col. 2:8). In Thessalonians it means the doctrinal instructions of the missionaries (I Cor. 11:2).
  - D. "Hold" (*krato*) means "to exert strength," whether mental or physical. They were to hold on to the doctrines of grace and the second coming.
  - E. As the canon of Scripture was not completed, some things were delivered by godly men under the guidance of the infallible Spirit.
  - F. There is no argument in this verse in our day for making oral tradition equal with the Bible.
- (4) "Whether by word, or our epistle."
- A. Their teaching had been given orally and in writing (I Thess. 2:13).
  - B. "Epistle" is a clear reference to I Thessalonians written several months before.
4. He recognized the need of spiritual consolation (v. 16).
- (1) "now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father."

- A. Paul commends them to God that He might directly cheer and comfort them in their distress over their lost loved ones and in their trials.
- B. Note the equality of the two divine persons, Christ being put before the Father.
- C. This is Paul's prayer for them. We are to pray to the Father through the mediation of Christ.
- D. Christ and the Father are the source of the blessings for which he prayed.

(2) "Which hath loved us."

- A. Referring especially to the Father (John 3:16; I John 4:9).
- B. It may also include both to show the unity of the Godhead. The verb is singular.
- C. The Thessalonians had been the recipients of divine love.

(3) "And hath given us everlasting consolation."

- A. This is not temporary comfort which fades away.
- B. This is perpetual and unchanging. It begins in time and lasts to eternity. It lasts beyond the grave (II Cor. 3:1; John 14:16).
- C. This consolation the world cannot give, nor can a man give it to himself.
- D. God only can give it, and he gives it to those He loves.
- E. It flows from the everlasting covenant and God's everlasting love to His people. This is our source of eternal encouragement.

(4) "And good hope through grace."

- A. This hope is the blessed Hope (I Tim. 1:1; Tit. 2:13).
- B. It is called a living hope (I Pet. 1:3) and a sure hope (Heb. 6:18-20).
- C. This is a far cry from "I hope I am saved" or "I hope Christ died for me."
- D. This hope brings rejoicing (Rom. 5:2; 12:12; Heb. 3:6).
- E. This hope is God's gift (Rom. 15:13).
- F. Sin shut the door of hope, but grace opened it to us. No personal merit here..
- G. It is called "good" because it has for its object our greatest good. This hope is now ours in Christ.

5. He recognized the perils that beset the path of obedience (v. 17).

(1) This is a prayer wish or blessings requested.

(2) "Comfort your hearts," or in more modern English "(May He) comfort."

- A. The heart is the inner core of their very being.
- B. He prayed their hearts might be comforted and encouraged.
- C. The singular verb speaks of the unity of the Godhead again.
- D. This comfort is needed because of their sorrow and trials.
- E. He prayed they might have a continual increase of the comfort they had al-

ready received.

(3) "And stablish you in every good word and work."

- A. Practice should precede precept (Luke 24:19; Acts 1:1; 10:38). This is a reversal of Paul's usual order (Rom. 15:18; II Cor. 10:11; Col. 3:17).
- B. These young Christians needed to be established in faith and practice. Their Christian lives needed to be brought to maturity.
- C. Work is better than a speech, deeds more eloquent than words, though both are necessary.
- D. The best safeguard against temptation is to be employed. The busy man is tempted by one devil, the idle man by a thousand.
- E. There must be harmony between faith and practice. All our works and words must be good.

## CHAPTER THREE

### I. PRAYER FOR MISSIONARIES (3:1-2).

#### 1. A prayer request stated (v. 1).

(1) "Finally," (*to loipon*) or "as to the rest" (Young).

- A. He is about to introduce practical matters.
- B. What remains to be said is as important as what was already said.

(2) "Pray for us" or as the Greek "pray, brethren, for us."

- A. This sounds like I Thess. 5:25.
- B. This is an unselfish prayer. He says: "Us" (Rom. 15:30-31; Eph. 6:18-19; Col. 4:3; Phile. 22).
- C. Paul believed deeply in the power of prayer (II Cor. 1:11; Phil. 1:19).
- D. Both minister and church members must pray for each other.
- E. Mutual prayer intensifies mutual affection and promotes the success of the gospel.
- F. The ministerial office has responsibilities and dangers.
- G. If Paul, the mighty preacher, needed the prayers of the Lord's people, how more do we.
- H. Not all can go to the mission field, but all can pray and pay.

(3) "That the word of the Lord"---the good news of Christ (I Thess. 1:8).

(4) "May have free course."

- A. A metaphor expressive of free and rapid progress (Ps. 147:15).
- B. Be like a racer out of whose way every hindrance was removed. Literally, "might run," not creep (II Tim. 2:9).
- C. God only can remove all obstruction and impediments.

(5) "And be glorified." Have its power and glory manifest in the salvation of men (Acts 13:48).

(6) "Even as it is with you"---the Thessalonians had eagerly received the gospel.

#### 2. A prayer request for protection from the wicked (v. 2).

(1) He wants them to pray they may be rescued from their enemies.

(2) He wanted to be delivered for the sake of the gospel.

(3) "Unreasonable men"---persons who will not listen to arguments (Acts 17:5-9).

(4) "For all men have not faith."

- A. All do not believe the gospel. Some have a hatred for the message and the messengers.
- B. Not all who profess to have faith actual have it (II Tim. 3:5).

- C. Faith is not a product of the natural man.
- D. Faith is the gift of God (Phil. 1:29) given by the power of God (Eph. 1:19; Col. 2:12) through the redemptive work of Christ (Phil. 1:29; I Pet. 1:21).
- E. Only the elect have faith (Tit. 1:1; Acts 13:48).

## II. THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD AND THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS (3:3-5).

### 1. The divine faithfulness (v. 3).

- (1) From a lack of faith in some men he passes to divine faithfulness (Rom. 3:4; II Tim. 2:13).
- (2) "Lord" means Christ. He watches over His church and the spread of the gospel.
- (3) Christ will always show Himself faithful, trustworthy, and dependable.
- (4) He is faithful to His Word, His covenant, His promises, and His threatenings.
- (5) The faithfulness of God keeps His people secure---"Who shall stablish you and keep you from all evil."

- A. Christ preserves the saints because He is faithful.
- B. A preacher once said, "What if God let you sink to Hell!" The old lady said: "He will lose more than I do." One flaw in the divine fidelity would shatter the faith of the universe.
- C. They will be tempted by the Devil and their own hearts.
- D. God keeps us and we keep ourselves (I John 5:18; Jude 21; I Pet. 1:5).
- E. "Evil" mans the evil one or all evil.

### 2. Confidence in their obedience (v. 4).

- (1) He expects the obedience of the Thessalonians, but his confidence is in Christ. Christ would make the weak strong.
- (2) The grace and strength of Christ causes progress and perseverance in the Christian life.
- (3) The work of the Lord on the believer does not leave him passive. Divine empowerment and human effort are united (Phil. 2:12-13).
- (4) Paul had no reason to question their obedience (Phil. 1:6).
- (5) They believed in Christ, and he believed in them.

### 3. A prayer for spiritual growth (v. 5).

- (1) "The Lord" is the Lord Jesus (Acts 7:59).
- (2) "Direct your hearts"---the removal of obstacles from their inner being which would hinder their affections being centered in God's love.
- (3) "Into the love of God"---the love of God as manifested in Christ, which love generates love for God and the brotherhood (I John 4:9-10).
- (4) "The patient waiting for Christ."

- A. The words "patient waiting" are but one word in the original, generally trans-

lated "patience" or "endurance."

- B. The words simply mean "Christ's patience" or "the patience of Christ." As Christ waits for His bride, so must she wait for Him.
- C. However, the Greek often means patience of expectation, and so Paul could mean they were to patiently wait for the coming of Christ (I Thess. 1:10).
- D. We are to believe in Christ's return---to hope for it, love it, and look for it, and to patiently wait for it (Jas. 5:7).

### III. DISCIPLINE FOR DISORDERLY CHURCH MEMBERS (3:6-15).

#### 1. The apostolic command to withdraw from disorderly church members (v. 6).

##### (1) "Now we command you, brethren."

- A. This apostolic command is to the church, for only the church can discipline its members.
- B. "Brethren" shows the church has the power to receive and exclude members.
- C. This power does not lie in the pastor or elders, or even in an apostle (III John 9-10).
- D. Church discipline is an apostolic command (I Cor. 14:37).
- E. The interest of fellowship among the brotherhood is concerned in this.

##### (2) "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

- A. By the power and authority of Christ.
- B. Paul spoke of the official representative and with the authority of Jesus Christ, the Head of the church.
- C. In the name of Jehovah (Ex. 5:23; Lev. 19:12; Deut. 18:22; Jer. 11:21) is transferred in N.T. to Christ (I Cor. 6:11; Eph. 5:20; Col. 3:17).

##### (3) "That ye withdraw yourselves."

- A. These words are addressed to the whole church.
- B. "Withdraw" is a nautical expression, denoting to "shorten the sails."
- C. Metaphorically it means "to keep out of the way, to withdraw"---to avoid any intercourse and fellowship with.
- D. This would be done by a formal vote and would result in suspension from the fellowship and privileges of the church.
- E. The old Baptists spoke of the "withdrawing of fellowship that the church be not blamed with the person's sin."

##### (4) "Every brother which walketh disorderly."

- A. The action does not deny he is a brother, but his fault must be censured. In some cases he may not be a brother in Christ.
- B. A church must discipline its own members.
- C. This means every brother or sister who is disorderly, no preference being given

to one above another.

D. "Disorderly" is a military word and describes a soldier who is out of step or rank---one who has left his proper place in the ranks and is insubordinate.

(5) "And not after the traditions which he received of us."

A. The teaching of the missionaries which was either oral or written.

B. Some were not walking according to apostolic teaching.

2. Christian consistency is enforced by apostolic example (v. 7).

(1) What the missionaries preached they practiced. Much depends on the conduct of a leader.

(2) The Thessalonian church was to imitate the apostolic example.

(3) The missionaries had left the Thessalonians a worthy model for their conduct.

(4) "For we behaved not ourselves disorderly."

A. A comprehensive negative assertion concerning the whole period of their labors at Thessalonica.

B. They never saw Paul marching out of line or rank.

C. The church did not need a lengthy set of rules for they had seen the pattern lived out before their eyes.

3. Self-denying labor carried on amidst weariness and suffering (v. 8).

(1) Compare with I Thessalonians 2:9.

(2) To eat bread means to get a living. The missionaries did not depend upon the Thessalonians for a living.

(3) Missionaries have a claim to maintenance (I Cor. 9:3-14; I Tim. 5:18). He had voluntarily waived this right (II Cor. 11:7; Phil. 4:15).

(4) He did not want to be a burden to those suffering from poverty and persecution.

(5) The missionaries worked when they should have been resting.

(6) The best work may be accomplished in the midst of acute suffering.

4. A self-denying example (v. 9).

(1) "Not because we have not power."

A. We have authority from the Lord (I Cor. 9:14; Gal. 6:6).

B. To forego financial aid is the exception (Acts 18:3; 20:34; II Cor. 11:9), not the general rule (Matt. 10:10; I Tim. 5:16).

C. The missionaries had not been parasites; they had not preached for money.

D. Preachers should be a pattern (Tit. 2:7; I Pet. 5:3).

E. The essence of the Christian spirit is for unselfishness. We are to labor ungrudgingly for the good of others.

5. Labor is the law of God (v. 10).

- (1) This was a proverb among pagans and Jews.
- (2) What he practiced he commanded them to do (Eph. 4:28; I Cor. 7:20).
- (3) This was an old commandment (Gen. 3:19). This condemns self-inflicted pauperism.
- (4) We are to work and supply our own needs, and we are not to depend upon others (Prov. 16:26).
- (5) Some of the members of this church did not enjoy hard work.
- (6) The blessing of Heaven is perfect rest, but the blessing of earth is work.
- (7) The necessity of food involves the necessity of work. Work is good for health, for sustenance, and for moral development.
- (8) No one is justified in assisting a lazy man. The world does not owe us a living.
- (9) All work, sacred or secular, is to the Lord (Col. 3:23). There is no reproach here cast upon those unable to work.

6. Some worked at no business, but they were busybodies (v. 11).

- (1) "We hear." He does not give the name of his informant.
- (2) "Which walk among you" in the church as members.
- (3) "Working not at all." The point is not inability but their unwillingness to work (I Thess. 4:11).
- (4) These members cloaked their idleness under the mask of feverish activity, saying they were doing religious work.
- (5) They were not busy men but busybodies---busybodies who do no business--busy with what was not their own business (I Tim. 5:13; I Pet. 4:15).
- (6) They would not work and hindered others in their work. This was disorderly.

7. Christianity encourages and honors honest work (v. 12).

- (1) "We command and exhort" is a command and a brotherly exhortation.
- (2) "By our Lord Jesus Christ"---the source of our authority. Daily labor is Christian service.
- (3) "With quietness"---in contrast to the noisy activities of the busybodies (I Pet. 3:4).
- (4) Christians are to live peaceably (II Cor. 13:11; Col. 3:15; I Thess. 5:13; Heb. 12:14).
- (5) "Our bread." We are not to live as drones or body lice upon the labor of others. This condemns robbers, cheaters, and tyrants who live on the labor of others.
- (6) They would thus be independent of the generosity of others.
- (7) Idleness is the source of many evils. Work is a remedy and a safeguard.

8. A call to do good (v. 13; cf. Gal. 6:9).

- (1) "But ye, brethren"---contrasted with those who walk disorderly by neglecting worldly employment.

- (2) What is done according to the will of God from a principle of love , in the name of Christ, and for the glory of God, is good.
- (3) They must be on guard against the temptation to lose courage, falter, and give up.
- (4) The idea is the danger of failure in perseverance. Don't be disorderly---don't turn out to be a coward (Greek meaning).
- (5) Whatever is worth doing at all is worth doing well. No man has done his best till he has done all he can.
- (6) The best way to be prepared for the coming of the Lord is to be busy doing good.

9. Paul urges the church to discipline the disorderly (v. 14).

- (1) "And if any man obey not our word by this epistle."

- A. Paul realized some might not obey this apostolic command; that is, to work quietly and eat their own bread.
- B. He is about to give the course of action as to how the church is to deal with such a person.
- C. The church is told how to act as a body of baptized believers.

- (2) "Note that man, and have no company with him."

- A. Compare with verse 6 of this chapter.
- B. "Note" in the Greek means a mark of personal identification. The church as a body marks the man for themselves (Rom. 16:17).
- C. Exclude him from the church, put a mark upon him as a scabbed sheep and separate him from the flock.
- D. The Syriac version has "let him be separated from you." This is exclusion for a time from the church as a body.
- E. Withdraw all Christian fellowship from him.
- F. This person had denied fundamental doctrine and his conduct was scandalous.
- G. "Have no company" means in the sense of church fellowship (I Cor. 5:9-11).

- (3) "That he may be ashamed."

- A. The Greek means to turn upon oneself, meaning he comes to realize his rebellion and repents.
- B. He must be brought to a sight and sense of sin.
- C. This is for the health and welfare of both the church and the individual put under discipline.

10. The church must seek his recovery (v. 15).

- (1) He is still a brother in Christ, although he has sinned against the good order of the church.
- (2) While there is hope of his restoration, he must be faithfully admonished.

(3) Church discipline must be administered in Christian tenderness and love.

#### IV. THE FINAL REMARKS (3:16-18).

##### 1. An apostolic prayer (v. 16).

- (1) Prayer was the life breath of the apostle.
- (2) "Now the Lord of peace." Used only here in Paul's letters. Elsewhere he uses "the God of peace" (Rom. 15:33; 16:20; II Cor. 13:11; Phil. 4:9; I Thess. 5:23).
- (3) The "Lord of peace" is most likely Christ, the Prince of Peace.
- (4) "Give you peace." This is the peace established through His work on the cross (Eph. 2:14-16) and His gift to believers (John 14:27).
- (5) The way to have true peace and prosperity is to keep up the discipline of God's house.
- (6) Peace is needed with God and in the church.
- (7) "Always by all means"---unbroken continued peace---outward and inward peace, for time and eternity.
- (8) "The Lord be with you all" even the disorderly.

##### 2. Paul adds the closing words by his own hand (v. 17).

- (1) Paul had dictated this letter, and some other person had written it down for him. This was most likely Timothy or Silas.
- (2) Paul often did this (Rom. 16:22; I Cor. 16:21; Col. 4:18).
- (3) He wanted them to know this letter was from him (II Thess. 2:2).
- (4) "In every epistle" indicates a number of letters had such marks.
- (5) This was probably not true of his first epistle to them.

##### 3. The close of the letter (v. 18).

- (1) All good wishes are condensed into a single phrase.
- (2) There is no richer benediction than---"the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ."
- (3) It is like I Thessalonians 5:28 except "all" is added. With grace he begins (1:2) and with grace he concludes.
- (4) The subscription "written from Athens" is a scribal error based on a misinterpretation of I Thessalonians 3:1. This epistle was written from Corinth.