



This second letter to the Thessalonian Church is mixed with grateful thanksgiving for them, which is strongly stressed as being fitting and appropriate, while also containing warnings against being “shaken” (tossed around as it were) regarding some false teaching and influences regarding the “Day of the Lord” having already come. This is countered with the reality of God’s choosing and calling of them “...to be saved through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.” (2:13). Their “steadfastness” in Christ was primary in the focus of what is communicated along with the need to be disciplined throughout life, not being distracted to a point of becoming “theological dead-beats” (A.T. Robertson’s term for them). Knowing what is true and right must be accompanied with the responsibility in the living it out as God intended.

This letter begins with not only thankfulness for their faithful suffering in their relationship to Christ, but the assurance that He (God) not only knows all that is happening, and will be the avenger of such persecution, but is actually God’s “righteous judgment” in having it all occur. Suffering for the cause of Christ is a direct part of His plan and will. The glaring benefit of this intended persecution is the demonstration of their being “made worthy” of His calling of them.

There was a danger, though, in getting the basic truths/facts regarding the Lord’s return wrong. To misread their surroundings and the events of their time as being “signs” that what the Lord promised had already occurred, could not only discourage them, but also cause them to grow lax in their daily, God-given responsibilities. We even see such in history and in our day, where there is an eagerness for the return of the Lord, but (often) motivated by an expectation of some form of escape from trouble. It is believed that there may have been a forged letter (as if from Paul) indicating the Day of the Lord had come, and so many had ceased working - Paul then had to write immediately and correct this and end this letter with a clear indication of his actual signature and style of handwriting (3:17). All our days are to be filled with the expectation of some service that the Lord has brought us to, just as one would expect in being identified as children of God, true Christians!

## I. Thanksgiving As Obligatory Because of True Growth - 1:1-5

### A. The true definition of the “Church” - vs. 1

#### 1. Paul, “Silvanus” (Silas), and Timothy were united in what was being written (backing the latter)

This and other texts are demonstrative of how true “churches” are to be united around a common “doctrine” and even “tradition” (as in 3:6) - such is true in all “Churches” that happen to be geographically located elsewhere

- a. This letter looks to have been written fairly soon after the first letter - these three were serving as a team at the time, and were not only leaders looking to influence these new believers, but were **brothers** also (sharing the same father, God)
- b. This was so because they were all a part of the “Church” (Ἡ ἐκκλησία), those all “called out” **from** the world/age **for** the separate purposes of God
- c. What makes this group unique from all other “fraternities” was their being “in God” versus some other uniqueness that made them stand out from all others

#### 2. These also share God as “our” Father and share the Lord Jesus Christ

This greeting is particularly special when realizing what these were suffering for Him - it is probably that some of their suffering was the loss of their biological family (either by death or by being rejected and shunned for their true faith in Jesus as Lord)

- a. This (as distinguished from the first letter’s beginning) now stresses God as being their Father in common with each other (evidencing them then as brothers and sisters)
- b. Imagine the thrill of not only knowing God as your father, but He being the father we have in common (we who previously did not know each other, but by means of the “new **genetics**” of the new creation, we find our “long lost” family, having sensed our being orphaned from our genuine/actual family (often sensed “pre-conversion”))
- c. The Church is such only because Jesus Christ is the Lord of it - all other so-called churches are not truly the Church because they have another **actual** authority

### B. True peace as a result of the grace from God - vs. 2

1. The concept of “peace” would have been common and understandable, but having it associated with “grace” (Χάρις, good-will and favorable kindness, given freely to the undeserving), could have seemed odd (since peace is naturally sought in physical, situational and mental comforts and not then realized in the relational restoration with our creator realized as “Father”)

- a. All other sources of “peace” and “favor” are futile and will disappoint
  - b. Though the true Church stands-out when “grace and peace” are found in Christ alone
2. “Grace” is also seen (and “grown in”, as in II Pet. 3:18) as God’s favor shown by gifting for the opportunities He brings us to, or sends our way - “Peace” is then the calmness of spirit realizing His grace is always upon us - because of His grace we have peace with God, and knowledge of such (not just overall, but in each day’s particulars) soothes the heart/mind no matter the circumstances

C. “Fitting” and “right” thankfulness for their growing faith - vs. 3-5

1. “εὐχαριστέω” is the first word in the sentence in the Greek (which sentence goes on to verse 10) - in its “parts” this word is prefixed with “εὐ” which means “good” followed by the word for “grace” (“χαρισ”), showing that thankfulness, at its core, is acknowledging the goodness of God’s grace at work in all things at all times - vs. 3

It particularly stands out because of the persecution they were facing - when watching another believer face hardships, there is typically a sense of fear that they will not respond correctly

His observation and concern for these as needs directed what he prayed for regarding them (as it should in our prayers for each other)

- a. What makes this use of gratefulness stand out, is the use of two words that are used along with it that **insist** on it being expressed; the words being “ought” and “fitting” (or “right”)
- b. It would be encouraging to read of this thanksgiving, but it is (again) directed at God (because of Him their faith is growing and their love for each other is increasing)
- c. This illustrates the best use of expressing praise/thanksgiving to another; God at work in them!
- d. Some of this is likely tied back to Paul’s prayer for them in I Thes. 3:6-13, being comforted by news of their faith, seeking that God would give him the opportunity to “supply what was lacking” (that they get to participate in this by allowing them to visit and minister again to them, and finally that their love for each other would “abound”) - and their faith was truly abounding (the word being ὑπεραυξάνει, as in “hyper growing”) as well as their love (πλεονάζω, exceeding more than enough) - these were not just maturing, they were “super abounding” even though oppositions abounded against them - see also I Thes. 2:17-20

2. Their consistency and growth was significant enough for Paul to reveal he “speaks proudly” of them - vs. 4

We should note the significance of what is praised and put forward as what is “boasted” about- mostly, living by faith/trust of God is what is focused on above all else

- a. This “boasting” (glorying) is still in God, as in saying to the other churches, “Look what a great thing **God** is doing with/in the Christians in Thessalonica!” - glory did not belong to them or their leadership, and the results were more along the lines of fortitude than they were varying forms of “measurable prosperity” (as we see so much as the focus of how thankfulness today is expressed)
- b. Because of their faith (focused (undistracted, unwaivering) trust), they were “persevering” (τῆς ὑπομονῆς, the endurance) in the midst of persecutions and afflictions (two words describing being hunted down and finally cornered/trapped) - all this they were bearing
- c. The point of joyful regard (boasting), was focused on the pressure they were able to bear-up under because **their faith was growing stronger**

3. Why would being thankful for such a situation be “fitting”? - vs. 5

The opposition to the faith was not to be seen as possible evidence that their faith was misplaced; on the contrary, steadfast faithfulness was an outward indicator that the “opposition” were headed toward judgment

see also Mat. 5:11-12

- a. It might strike some as odd to realize the reason Paul gives for this expressed gratefulness to God for their patient suffering - it was an indicator of their being “considered worthy” of God’s kingdom (in direct opposition to their being considered unworthy of man’s kingdoms)
- b. Their being mistreated and enduring it in faith served as a “plain indicator” (Ἐνδειγμα, a token/sign of proof) that judgment would come from God on those inflicting it, and that those facing it were then plainly (by it) shown as worthy of it (by God’s grace)
- c. This is one of the reasons the enemies of God are so desperate to see Christians yield to persecution (to alleviate their inner sense of God and their accountability to Him) - the witness of a faithfully suffering Christian (for the Lord) is more powerful in its potential impact (and what it communicates) than we can anticipate!
- d. The concept of being “counted worthy” is a reoccurring topic elsewhere, such as in Mat. 10:34-39 and Luke 14:25-33 - this faithful suffering does not make one worthy, but demonstrates one is “considered worthy” (a word describing the determination/demonstration of the “exact worth” of something) - this is book-ended in II Thes. 1:11

Compare this to Acts 13:44-49, Eph. 4:1-3

Each age offering a replacement for the faith with its “faith” (religions, morality, ethics, values) which may at times mimic forms of Godliness, but will be tainted with mankind’s determined self-will one way or another

- e. To “blend-in” with the age in which we live, and to be unwilling to contradict its man-centered values/priorities, is to reveal the intent to be found worthy of the temporal, Godless society of the current age
- f. So it is because of (for the cause of God’s Kingdom (His ruler-ship/authority over all else)) that these were suffering, and so will we, sooner or later (in some capacity)

## II. Retribution and Relief at the Return of Christ - 1:6-12

### A. Righteous retribution is expected of God, realizing He is just - vs. 6-10

1. It is (indeed, after all) a righteous thing for God to pay back (recompense) the affliction imposed on those that are His - His justice demands it (because the wrong is actually against Him)

These verses do not stir in us a greed for vengeance because we have been wronged - the wrong is against God and it is His righteousness and His justice that is glorified in the judgment coming

There is no "potential moral dilemma" because of good, but because of evil - "good" is the dominant and so evil must be (will be) dealt with completely/overwhelmingly

- a. It is (of necessity) that it be done, not because God is externally obligated, but because this is who/what God "is" in His nature - no evil (whatsoever), will be left unpunished
- b. This is not presented as speculative, but is more of the idea of "of course" God will "pay-back" the affliction being imposed on them (the Thessalonian Christians)
- c. This is not vengeance (used in verse 8) for us but for Himself - the wrongs (dealt with here) done to Believers, are because of Christ, not because of us
- d. The "afflictors" though are not equal - those of this earth are severely limited in the affliction they can impose on us, while God is not limited (their affliction of believers will be temporal, while God's affliction of them will be eternal)
- e. The idea included for "repay" is not the strict idea of "recompense in the equivalent amount" as much as it is *payment due* for the wrongness (severity) of what was done

2. In contrast, the "payment" returned to those presently suffering this persecution is "relief" - vs. 7

Suffering affliction is expected to be painful and difficult, but when suffering with others (of the same "cause" and for the same) provides an odd sense of motivation

- a. "τοῖς θλιβομένοις ἀνεσι" (the "pressed-in", (pressured, oppressed) repose/freedom) - it is not "rest" as in the idea of no work, as much as it is freedom from the opposition to the work, and so now being free to work, enjoying labor to its fullest
- b. Paul included the endearing words "and to us" (referring to himself, and his fellow laborers), indicating their camaraderie (mutual fellowship/friendship) in the same suffering
- c. Part of the life to come will be the thrill and satisfaction of the "sigh of relief!" - this is characteristic of those in Christ, in that they are not bound to this world, because *their anticipation and longing is for the next*

3. The return of the Lord as seen by those "who do not know God" - vs. 7-8

This same Christ is now seated at God's right hand and when He comes again, it will be for judgment - those flagrantly sinning against those that are His do not realize the dread fear they should have now and will someday have

- a. The second coming of Jesus Christ will be an "unveiling" (revealed, as in the underlying word "ἀποκάλυψις" meaning "to uncover") - it is stated as such to demonstrate not only something being seen, but something being seen for what it is, and that it was always there
- b. These persecutors will all see Jesus in His mighty glory, and His coming with conquering power, surrounded by His "mighty angels", and coming "in flaming fire" - such "fire" is one of destruction and power, not a display to be admired since these are on the receiving end - see Isa. 66:15-18
- c. This describes those alive at the Lord's return and what they will see - those who have already died without Christ are already in Hell
- d. Still demonstrating God's justice, he also indicates that as part of the Lord's return, there will be "vengeance" (vindication/punishment not of passionate emotion, but of strict judgment), but it is in response to the wrongs done toward God Himself in the persecution inflicted on His followers
- e. These, in particular, receive what they receive because they "do not know God" as in their deliberate refusal to hear or consider Him, His existence, and the accountability to Him
- f. These are also described as those who "do not obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus" - such refuse to "ὑπακούουσιν" (pay attention to and so to heed) the Good News of Christ and what He has done - the wording is clear that they disregard the "good news" (so, in some capacity, they do not look on it as good news, and possibly because it contradicts their self-righteousness or their actual love of sin (or likely, both))
- g. So they may believe they can sin (as it were) with impunity (as if they are exempt from any punishment), but their accounting came, and more is to come (the final judgment, the "Great White Throne"), and those persecuting when the Lord returns will face their own immediate reckoning

The reason for God's wrath is spelled out in Rom. 1:18-28

Romans 2:8-9 describes those who will not "obey the truth" but instead "obey unrighteousness" - this demonstrates there is no "freedom" as many would have it - all obey/serve something

4. These persecutors will pay the penalty of "eternal destruction" - vs. 9

"Destruction" can also be defined as the utter loss of blessing (goodness)

"There is no sufficient reason for interpreting the destruction of the reprobate as signifying their annihilation, or extinction of being; they will be lost for ever—lost to God and goodness. - CBN

- a. At His coming will begin their (literal) "δικην τίσουσιν ὀλεθρον αἰώνιον" (suffering payment of destruction/ruination forever) - this describes the other way that sin is paid for if it is not paid in Christ - the debtor must pay on it forever
- b. What makes this so devastating is the realization this is done (and is so) because it is "away from the presence of the Lord" - and such then is characterized more by the presence of sin in all its agonies, pains, regrets and everlasting disappointments/unfulfillment

Mankind has never seen (this side of eternity) the true separation from the goodness of the Lord

And it will be by means of His glorious power that He does this separating judgment

No doubt, part of this glory is the powerful demonstration of the rightness of their faith in the Lord versus all other "faiths" mankind created and promoted

There are countless other ideas/answers one could believe, but only one is true - the seeming "amount" of belief is not the key indicator... it is this particular "witness" that is believed

The desire/goal is to be treated / dealt with by God in accordance with His calling of us to His purposes, glory, and faith in Him in and through it all

We can see the need and reason for such a request also - many express a faith in God and desire to live for Him, but it ends up proving to be superficial and the "doing" fades away either by troubles or "better pursuits"

The greatest dishonor of Christ is the disbelief in Him and His work (His Gospel) and this often evidenced in its alteration by those who do not trust it "as is"

- c. This suffering will be true suffering, for even the most wicked (of this age) still experience some of the goodness of God's grace - to be in the next age (αἰώνιον - literally "age-like" and here it is the next "age" which is represented as being unending in contrast to this "age") without Christ is to be away from any goodness of God
- d. Just as these persecutors did not desire to have these believers in their presence, not to experience the "goodness" of society (and its perceived "glories"), so these will themselves face the separation from God and "the glory of His power" (the splendid displays/evidences of His absolute power/authority)
- e. The intent is not to "feed" a desire for vengeance, just to make it clear that God's judgment is just and right - for, the "wicked" will suffer greatly, and though we may suffer temporarily under their power/influence, they will suffer eternally (which should prompt a sense of pity and a desire to see them converted rather than judged) - see also Mt. 3:11-12; 13:40-42; II Pet. 2:9-17; and Rev. 20:11-15; 21:1-8

5. The ultimate time of judgment (while all those that have died who are not "in Christ" are in waiting... in Hell (the jail) awaiting trial) will occur at the return of Christ on "that day" - vs. 10

- a. In contrast to the wicked who are separated from God's glorious power, those alive (and those returning with Him (I Thes. 4:13-18)) that "have believed" will have the Lord "glorified in them" and so He will be "marveled at" even "in" them (a glory the unbelievers will not experience personally, and will ultimately dread) - these that have (simply) believed (taken Him at His word above all others) are called "saints" (holy ones)
- b. Tyndale translated the phrase, "...and to be made marvelous in all them that believe." - the word is "θαυμασθηῖναι" picturing an astonishment and amazement at what is being seen (as if having it far exceeding expectations) - this, in contrast to those of verses 8-9, are thrilled
- c. The indicator that this is theirs (the Thessalonian Christians) is in their believing (having believed), and clarified further, it was not just believing in general, it is what they believed... "our testimony" (the particular "witness" of what is true (of Paul and the Apostles))
- d. So, "that day" will be obvious, and "you" (Thessalonian believers) will know it has come (without an possible doubt, realizing what will take place) - remember the "sign of His coming" as the Lord detailed it in Mt. 24:29-31

B. With all this in focus (to this end), Paul prays they be "counted worthy" of the calling of God - vs. 11-12

1. A prayer they be "dealt with" as worthy of what God has called them to - vs.11

- a. Rather than being distracted with diversions regarding whether or not the Lord had returned, Paul's request to God for them was for their focus and activity of faith
- b. It is still seen today, where some become so engrossed in theological studies, they lose sight of its application (usage) in daily life (becoming those "theological deadbeats" A.T. Robertson described) - if the knowledge (strictly) of the Truth is the sole focus (without the "doing" and living in light of it), life becomes misprioritized
- c. The word is "ἀξιόσθη" for "counted worthy," and can also be an accounting term (as to the assessed value of something, only here, *the value seen in that it is used*) - it may seem odd, but the prayer is requesting they be treated as those called of God (which involves all the challenges, conflicts, victories (without/within) that come with it)
- d. This is accompanied with the fulfillment of "every desire for goodness" - this is the desire that comes from "goodness" - not only that they desire what is truly good (and so pursue it rather than other life pursuits), but that these desires for what is best be accomplished (fulfilled)
- e. The prayer is for "all" not "some" of this "goodness" - this is a prayer for all-inclusiveness (and exclusivity in setting life direction and priority)
- f. The last part of this prayer being a request that their faith be "energetic" (with power) - it is "ἔργον πίστεως ἐν δυνάμει" (work of faith in power/ability/strength/activity) - all of this not being a prayer for their good intentions and efforts, but that God would do it (make it happen)

2. The reason/purpose for this prayer was the glorification of the name of Christ - vs. 12

- a. In the pursuit of self-glory, life purpose is missed (and, consequently, so then is life purpose)
- b. Life fulfillment (contentment) is never found in the life controlled by natural instincts - this is why there is a need for God's calling over man's, His "good pleasure" pursued over ours, and the power/results that come from faith rather than our natural understanding
- c. Notice the "locations" of this glory - He in us, and we in Him (our core definition encompassed in Him)

He being in us is often considered, but our being “in Him” is remarkable, considering it is the safest and most glorious of “places” (positions) we could ever be

- d. Paul describes here a “reciprocal glory” in that not only is the Lord Jesus Christ glorified in us (in His effective work in making us “worthy” of His calling) and so honored/revered in us, but that He also is glorified by “you in Him”, and this (not of any merit of our own) and by the grace of “our God and the Lord Jesus Christ” alone
- e. This prayer demonstrates a standard for us when praying for each other - the request is for God’s work in them and not their work for Him - it is too easy to seek out superficial “signs” of God’s apparent grace, yet we truly desire to see His actual grace at work in each other

### III. Getting the Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ Correct - 2:1-12

#### A. Don’t allow yourself to be “shaken from your composure” - vs. 1-2

##### 1. The phrase in verse 2 “shaken from your composure” is “ἀπὸ τοῦ νοῦς” (from your mind/thinking)

It was important to be able to face the sufferings he had just dealt with in Chapter 1, by properly understanding the significance of the Lord’s return and its timing

- a. The immediate concern of Paul (and the core of this letter) is focused on their response to false information/teaching that the Day of the Lord had come (or that they were in/at the Day)
- b. This is all dealing with the “day of the Lord” in I Thes. 4:13-5:8 of which they were to not be “uniformed” (or, as we see here, misinformed) - considering the words Paul uses (“shaken”, “disturbed”) the impact or potential impact was serious
- c. The Lord’s return is not just comforting in the understanding that we will be freed from sin/suffering, but also to properly see all that is now present in light of its coming end and ultimate subjugation to Christ (no matter how arrogantly it flaunts itself against Him)

##### 2. The concept that had been used to comfort them regarding the return of the Lord, had now been (somehow) turned/handled in such a way to potentially shake them off their stability - vs. 1-2

This is the same time and event referenced in I Thes 4-5 (often also referenced as the “rapture” (being “caught-up”) and now also referenced as our being “gathered together to Him”)

- a. History has many examples of the concepts related to the return of the Lord where it has been used for various extreme responses (some only “extreme”, because the Lord was not actually coming at that time)
- b. The Lord’s return is broken down into two parts (both the same event) 1). His coming and 2). Our being “gathered together to Him” - rather than being comforted, they were troubled that somehow they were now in the initial aspects of the Day of the Lord and the soon to come (judgmental) return of the Lord

Their being “alarmed” or “shaken” could also have come in the form of them giving up on their daily lives since it was essentially “all over with anyway”

- c. First, they should not be “shaken in mind” or “alarmed” because they had **nothing** to fear regarding the Lord’s return - yet they were, so we may surmise that they had the impression they were doomed themselves or that the aspects leading up to the Lord’s return would be particularly dreadful for them - the Lord warned against such a response in Mt. 24:6
- d. The request of them (as “brothers”) was that they not be so quickly derailed from the right way - this is always a result of some type of reaction (“quickly” demonstrating a lack of thorough consideration) - we see this commonly today where many will casually study a text or circumstance and reach an unfounded conclusion (at least not founded on the actual truth of Scripture) - this type of response has hazarded the lives of countless people!

Such a mishandling of the Lord’s return could also be part of what leads to the deception towards the very end of the age - see Mt. 24:22-27

##### 3. The various methods/sources of error (misinformation) - vs. 2

Church history (all the way back to the time of the Apostles) demonstrates all three types of error-spreading (and validation) and we see its like continuously today

- a. False teaching had reached them through one or all of the three means Paul mentions in this verse - They are not to be destabilized by means of “a spirit” (as if supernaturally communicated/revealed to them), or if by “word” (as in someone telling these believers that they had heard Paul communicate that the Day of the Lord was already here), or by means of a forged letter (forged, in that it “seemed” to be from him)
- b. Even today we have those supposedly (supernaturally) receiving special revelation from the Lord and individuals flocking to hear, believe and follow after it - while many others (under the banner of “Christianity”) will proclaim their own “words of wisdom and insight” messages that contradict the Scripture - see also II Pet. 2:1-3
- c. “..the intellectual assault on Christianity is often fiercer than the physical... Loyalty to apostolic teaching, now permanently enshrined in the New Testament, is still the test of truth and the shield against error.” Stott

Look how the concepts related to the Lord’s return have been distorted, discredited or neglected altogether (so that many are left uncomfortable and then easily alarmed and shaken in their thinking)

Imagine what the disappointment would have been thinking of the Lord’s return (the final days leading up to His second coming) and they did not know they were in it (being called “sons of light” in I Thes. 5:4-5 and that they should not be overtaken like a thief)

- d. It might seem harmless or not too threatening to allow the idea that the Lord had already come - but this situation was dangerous in at least a few ways - first, it contradicted what Paul had already taught, allowing the idea that it was in error or subject to change with the times - second, it misrepresented what would actually occur at the Lord’s return - third, it would attempt to keep their “hook” set in this age versus that which is coming

B. Two things must occur before the Day of the Lord” begins - vs. 3-4

1. Be on the alert so as not to allow/permit anyone, **in any way** (by means of any method or approach (by “spirit”, message or letter)) to “deceive” you - vs. 3

There are areas where opinions will differ regarding “doctrine” but each needs to be weighed carefully under the suspicion of possible deceit

- a. The word for “deceive” is “ἐξαπατήση” being more than just “trickery” but representing a complete deception, where one has been “taken in” totally (wholly deceived)
- b. This is characteristic of false teachers - they seek out any point of “sound doctrine” to infiltrate, and the deceived being either willing participants (for whatever reason), or those who are too trusting of the messengers, undisciplined in needed cautious scrutiny/research; or they think there is no risk in the flexibility of areas such as “Eschatology” and that such is more just *gracious* differences of opinion - see the Lord’s warning in Mt. 24:4-6
- c. It is naive to think there are not deceivers in professing Christianity and is also naive to become so skeptical that no one is trusted in any capacity and to become an authority to self (both positions finding roots in some form of laziness or irresponsibility)

2. What comes first - what will precede the day of the Lord - vs. 3

It is important to get this right so as to know not only what it describes, but who exactly participates in it

- a. “The apostasy” comes first - “ἐὰν μὴ ἔλθῃ ἡ ἀποστασία πρῶτον” (literally, “if not shall have come the apostasy first”) - the initial question would be “what exactly does the “apostasy” refer to?” - the core word (ἀποστασία) describes a leaving where one previously stood, Strong defining it as “defection from truth”
- b. It is often generalized (by some) to refer to humanity rebelling against God (possibly knowingly), but it seems most normal to look on this term as it would be associated with professing Christians (the apparent “Church” in the last days)
- c. The true Church cannot/will not “apostatize”, but there were those that had a form of Christianity that “fell away” (forsook the faith completely that they had associated with so closely) - examples of such are seen in I Tim. 4:1-3, II Tim. 4:3-4, Heb. 3:12-13; 6:4-8
- d. Two core texts regarding the concept of apostasy and its results are seen in Hebrews 6:4-8 and Hebrews 10:26-31, demonstrating that those closely associated with actual New Testament truth, practice, and experience can defect (not having actually been regenerates) - they can defect to another “faith” (religious) or to a life of sin (or a combination of both)
- e. Since this “defection from the truth” (rebellion) is associated in this text with the “man of lawlessness”, it also seems right to associate the apostasy with him somehow - when one forsakes the faith they typically defect to something else, and this “something else” is reasonable to conclude the “Antichrist” himself, since he will proclaim himself as God
- f. We assume this “man of lawlessness” is the same described as coming in Rev. 13:1-8 (“the Beast”) and Dan. 7:19-26 (one of the 10 “horns of the beast” (a nation/kingdom) that prevails over the others, blaspheming “the Most High” and “wearing out His saints” for a short time)
- g. His description of being the man of “lawlessness” (ἀνομίας - literally “no law”) - based on this word/idea, possibly the appeal will be “freedom” from laws/morality and yet with still the presence/symbol of “ethics” and so much so, the majority of those on the earth will worship him
- h. Consider also, that if we are to consider a “catching away” of the Church before this all takes place, this would have been the most significant indicator that the “Day of the Lord” had not yet come
- i. If the apostasy is focused on varying ideas of “freedom” (from God and everything associated with Him), we have seen and continue to see a growing trend in this direction - much is “justified” in churches, still associated with Christ, but the real Christ/God is being so diluted and neglected, a replacement that looks to unite the world and offer what it seeks (seemingly effectively), can be anticipated to be embraced by secular and religious alike
- j. With reference to his being “revealed” (ἀποκαλυφθῆ - having been revealed/unveiled), we realize he will be alive before this takes place and will be shown for who/what he is at the - some believe the apostasy will bring him on the scene (as if lending to his “creation” (his entrance) onset of all that is included in the final days (the Day of the Lord) - he will be described more soon
- k. This man is also called “the son of destruction” (also called “the son of perdition” in reference to his ultimate end) - the use of “son of” is a figure of speech showing his relation to “destruction” (he is part of its offspring, and will be so used to bring in the final destruction of this age)
- l. So the “falling away” of so-called Christianity at that time, and either this precedes or is in tandem with the revealing of the Antichrist - then we will know the time has begun

Seeing this term has a proper article with it, it is significant and likely describes a one-of-a-kind mass exodus from the Faith

Varying degrees of this can be seen throughout history, but this apostasy will be like none before

This is all particularly interesting because it will be one key item we will be looking for when anticipating the coming day of the Lord

Note also this man must be revealed, and this apostasy must come before the Day of the Lord - we see no indicator of a “pretribulation rapture”

The apostasy we currently see will pale in comparison to what is coming - what is coming will be a very deliberate turning on Christ to this “alternative” - but we should realize that so much of what we see occurring is leading to this

It is possible that he is revealed for who he is in the event described as the “abomination of desolation” in Mt. 24:15

### 3. The “religion” of anti-religion of the “man of lawlessness” - vs. 4

There are many who interpret these texts as though they have been accomplished and then envision a scenario where the Lord will return when we (the Church) have been used to make the world progressively better till the Lord returns - this is called “Postmillennialism”

This is one of the problems we have with true Biblical Christianity being presented as just one of many among “religions” - it is “lumped” in with all other deceptions and will be characterized as one like all the rest

Consider how many wars have been fought because of religions - the concept is already an “easy target”

see also Rev. 13:1-10

“...this Antichrist shall have devastated all things in this world, he will reign for three years and six months, and sit in the temple at Jerusalem...”  
Irenaeus, Against Heresies, 30.4

From an article “The “Temple of God” in 2 Thessalonians 2:4: Literal or Metaphorical?” June 30, 2004

Note, in Greek it is “the temple of the God”

compare with Mt. 24:24

Plus, Antiochus Epiphanes, though making himself a “god” did not exalt himself above all other god’s

- a. This verse is related to Daniel 11:36-37 (see verses 20-45 describing the events leading up to the end) - this is dealing with the “last days” and not a prophecy that has already come and gone (based upon Paul’s usage of it looking forward, and our Lord’s reference (as to the future) of Daniel 9) - no need to “tie” this to A.D. 70 because what is described has never taken place
- b. Some look to place the “apostasy” as just that of the Jews, but that had already been in progress at the time of Paul - this may seem like harmless differences in eschatological beliefs, but if it is not properly understood, the same deception (or type of deception) could continue to occur (the anticipation of the Lord’s return is important, in its literal/actual understanding versus the spiritualizing of it making it more mystical than actual)
- c. This man will be characterized as one who stands in opposition and above every so-called god - he is essentially against all religions and worship of deities, and will instead offer himself above all others that made themselves “as God” or any other “object of worship” - all that has ever been held as sacred, he will oppose and look to completely replace
- d. Pseudo-Christianity will be an easy target and will quickly fall as well, having had its essentials removed and the remaining “shell” left lifeless to show the true Truth, and all seeming “promises” left unfulfilled (and so it being “proven” to be delusional like all the rest)
- e. He does two things to “religion” - he “opposes” (ἀντίκειμαι - steadfast against) it and lifts himself above it (ὑπεραίρω - raise over), he being “above it” and offers what is taken to be a better solution/answer to it all - this is a key “clue” in detecting the actual, endtimes Antichrist since he will not be “of” any religion, but against them all and will establish his own answer
- f. The next phrase “εἰς τὸν ναὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ καθίσει ἀποδεικνύντα ἑαυτὸν ὅτι ἔστιν Θεός” (into the temple of the God, sits down demonstrating (showing forth) himself that he is God) has various handlings, most of which take “temple” (ναὸν) to be figurative (not believing this to be the actual temple in Jerusalem since it no longer exists))
- g. It is most probably (taking this and other texts plainly) that **this will be** the reconstructed temple in Jerusalem - “...we are on much surer ground if we see the literal temple referenced in 2 Thess 2:4. If so, then it seems that such may well be rebuilt. Thus, when the antichrist sits on the mercy seat, claiming to be God, he will have culminated a long line of multiple and partial fulfillments of Daniel’s prophecy...” Daniel B. Wallace
- h. It will be at this place (the “Temple of God”) that he will take “his seat” and will proclaim himself to be God - since his coming is also with “signs and wonders” it is likely he will declare himself to be supernatural deity and not just “a god” - the natural inclination of the Jews (and all others) will be to receive the one that comes in his own name (versus the Lord Jesus Christ Who came in His Father’s name) - presumptive arrogance will be the most impressive to mankind!
- i. Some note that this seems very similar to Antiochus Epiphanes in 168 B.C., and his desecration of the temple in Jerusalem, but Christ’s reference to the prophecy of Daniel 9 (well after these events) makes it clear this is all still future

### C. The “mystery of lawlessness” is already at work - vs. 5-12

#### 1. The importance of remembering - vs. 5

- a. Paul points out to these new believers, that he had taught them clearly regarding these things - the way it was worded indicates he taught them these truths often - clearly, Paul thought it a priority to teach even new converts the truths of the last days
- b. He had spoken of these things regularly when with them; they had been “soon shaken” from their “composure” - at the time of being taught (learning), one of the challenges we often face is the motivation to pay attention, and to consider the urgency of remembering/expecting the oncoming distractions and doubt-causing efforts of error-bearers/promoters
- c. The costs of not remaining focused regarding what is most important (in being taught the Scripture, what it says and means) are higher than we can estimate - see also II Pet. 1:10-15

compare to II Pet. 3:1-13 - the purpose of the letters was to “...stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder...” regarding the last days

#### 2. This “mystery of lawlessness” describes the working of sin/lawlessness while under restraint - vs. 6-7

- a. This “man of lawlessness” is held back (detained) until it is his “time” (season)
- b. History demonstrates the failed attempts of those that would established unrestrained rule (in evil) only to fall short of the goal of unhindered domination - but the time is coming when this restraint will be removed, allowing this “Satan’s superman” to rule for a short time

Then, when he is revealed, the "Day of the Lord" is come

Sin/evil will look to put itself forward as equal with "righteousness" and as a viable option (at least for a time)

Even though it's not realized, all of mankind benefits from the restraint of evil (though it naturally is inclined to it and would have all restraints removed)

This will be Satan "let go" to do all he can - yet, it will last no longer than 3.5 years

- c. The speculation over who/what the "restrainer" is, is almost endless, but having a named entity is not necessary since we know with certainty that it is ultimately God's sovereign control that is holding "lawlessness" back from full domination
- d. When the time is right (in accordance with God's plan), this man of sin will be revealed for who he is (the Antichrist, ultimate blasphemer, the antithesis of Christ)
- e. Sin in general is known (by believers) to be "kept in check" because this "mystery" is a reality previously unknown but has now been revealed - it is still a mystery to the majority, who (at best) see an equal fight between "right and wrong", though it is seen as still subject to the definition of the majority (not realizing God's overwhelming control of it all)
- f. For the "mystery of lawlessness is already at work" - it was then and still is now, trying in every possible way, at all times, to dominate and fully overtake/infect the entire world - things are "bad" but not as bad as they could be, and ***not as bad as they will be during this time***
- g. When God removes this restraint (possibly the Holy Spirit Himself letting evil be as evil as it can be) then the "mystery" will be seen by all (the desire/drive for absolute world domination to do all that it can do) - it is (as it were) a wild beast, currently chained and sedated, then unchained and left to work its will to its fullest extent

### 3. The "lawless one revealed" - vs. 8

We will not be able to stop this apostasy, but we must not lead to it!

It is very important we keep this "sizing-up" of evil and its "heroes" against Christ in our minds, so that we are never given over to despair or intimidation - compare also Nahum 1:2-7

The stark comparison between what looked to be an unstoppable power now being immediately, without effort, brought to nothing, will be an indescribable display of true power!

This "lawless one" will not only be destroyed, but all he stood for will be "rendered useless" (bring it to an end)

- a. Once the "apostasy" (falling away) has come, and then the Antichrist is revealed, you will know for certain you are in the Day of the Lord
- b. Yet keeping to the context (one of encouragement to the persecuted Thessalonian Christians), once the Man of Lawlessness is mentioned as being revealed for who he is (because God has removed what would have normally restrained him), Paul immediately mentioned that this same world ruler (unrestrained to work all of his might) will be the same that "the Lord Jesus will slay with the breath of His mouth" - this was referenced also in II Thes. 1:5-10
- c. These world powers and supernatural powers of Satan will then be "brought to nothing" (the word being "καταργέω" picturing something brought to a stop that had been progressing, and so rendering it useless) - and this simply by His appearing - once the Lord comes, it will be all over and all opposition will become non-relevant
- d. So we should not be taken-in with the power of sin/evil (either impressed or depressed by it) for it is of no genuine threat to God, and serves only His ultimate purpose to magnify His limitless power and wisdom - this is where it is all heading... stay focused!
- e. "...the whole Antichristian will be put out of operation by the conspicuous shining forth of our Lord's presence. The visible encounter with the glorious Lord Jesus will paralyze the daring presumption and arrogant activity of the lawless one." Hiebert

### 4. The overriding purpose of why this all will take place is for rightful judgment/condemnation - vs. 9-12

"With studied emphasis and precision he borrows for the coming of Antichrist the terms proper to the coming of Christ, making the one appear as a frightful mimicry and mocking prelude of the other." CBN

So, we could say that this man will end up being the world's "Captain Marvel", the super-human hero come to save and protect them to live their lives as they wish (protected from the overbearing God of creation)

As in "Don't just allow immorality, participate in it; experience it for yourself"

- a. The two "comings" described in this chapter are contrasted - the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and that of the coming of the "Lawless one", who comes "in the power of Satan"
- b. The phrase is "κατ' ἐνέργειαν τοῦ Σατανᾶ" (after the energy/working of Satan) - the source of the Lawless one's power/ability will be the Satan - so he will be truly powerful
- c. This man's coming is also associated with "power, signs and wonders" all of which are to lend to his agenda of deceit/falsehood - the word "ψεύδους" ("lying", "false") doesn't necessarily mean that the "signs, wonders and displays of power" will be fake, but that the message/philosophy that they are used to endorse/validate will be false
- d. All of the followers of the Antichrist, seeing themselves as freed from the restraints of law/morality, will in all actuality be working out the "energies" (workings, agendas) of Satan... as his own followers/slaves - all seemingly legitimized by the displays of power, the signs (used to demonstrate one can do what they say they can do, and in so doing, validate they are the "real-deal"), and "wonders" (literally, that which ***causes the onlookers to marvel***)
- e. All of these miraculous works summed up (revealed to be) "deception of wickedness" for those in particular who are "perishing" - the underlying idea can also include not just being deceived by wickedness/unrighteousness, but that the signs, wonders and displays of power are encouraging them into wickedness
- f. These miracles and the resulting message is "deceitful" and the groups drawn in by it, believing it are those identified to be those that are "perishing" (in the process of being "cut-off")



As in Heb. 3:13, the “deceitfulness of sin” hardens the heart (so that it becomes determined in its sin)

This is with “πάση” (every kind) of deception - it will be the most profound deception the world has ever seen

All “live” in either the truth or a lie (whatever the actual basis for their life/living is)

Those not perishing are so, having “escaped the corruption that is in the world” - II Pet. 1:3-4

It is interesting that it is worded this way - these would not even entertain the idea of loving the truth - such are inwardly repulsed by it and are not welcoming of it and what is associated with it

The old adage “Be careful what you wish for” is true in light of such circumstances - they wish for something other than the Truth and are given over to Truth’s antithesis

This is at the core of why knowing all of these things is a comfort to the Thessalonians in their struggles - God will always be in control and ultimately dictates all that is happening and that is coming

see John 3:16-21

- g. This “man of lawlessness” will also come with “all the deception of wickedness” - this not only indicates deception being evil, but that it is the deceit that comes with being “unrighteous” - once given over to, the person becomes delusional in their sin
- h. The Antichrist will delude many, and partly by means of his exceptional ability to deceive by the multiple lures of sin/unrighteousness (the appeal of doing what is known to be wrong, or deliberate opposition to “righteousness” and finding particular pleasure in knowingly doing/being such) - such is the ongoing work of “false teachers” - II Pet. 2:1-19
- i. Those being taken-in by all this are identified as those **already** “perishing” (not in the future tense, but in the present, for **those without the Truth are assuredly, constantly, and slowly perishing within the falsehood in which they live**)
- h. This is their case (on their part) because of their refusal to “love the Truth” - literally this statement in verse 10 is that they are perishing under the wicked deception because (in return for) their not welcoming /receiving the Truth - compare with II Cor. 4:1-7
- i. As the one they follow is the “Son of Destruction” so they will end up - knowing what we know, we are grateful (even when persecuted and opposed by such) because we do not nor would we envy them in their “destruction” (thinking “temporal” they also do not envy us)
- j. And they are this way also, not just because of the error, but because they do not welcome the “love of the truth” - some may intellectually receive aspects of the truth (for whatever reason), but they do not love it (love evidenced in their lives being focused and built upon it)
- k. As a result of their determined response against the Truth, God sends them a “deluding influence” (a supernatural “working” of them to “delusion”) - as these have refused the truth, many having apostasized from the true Gospel, they are given over to a power that leads them to believe what is false - God “rouses” them to their own wishes and gives them over to what they are pushing for - compare with II Chron. 18:1-27
- l. These are no hypocrites - they will truly believe “τῷ ψεύδει” (the lie, the one described here) - this will be “their man” (their god-man), the very best a godless people and their deity (Satan) can produce (now being free to do their worst) - **God here, will use evil to destroy evil**
- m. Notice God at work in all this - we see Satan working in his “son” as it were, while God using it all for His purposes - even at his freest, Satan will never have the upper-hand
- n. God uses such (Satan and the “Lawless One”) to condemn those refusing belief (which here includes the love of the Truth), because such “had pleasure in unrighteousness” - and such is what will always distinguish between unregenerates and those truly in Christ - the underlying word for “judged” means “to distinguish between” and here these are clearly seen for what they are
- o. Disbelief is far worse than many realize - we first need to realize its alternative (mistrust of God) and what it will always evolve into (a distaste and hatred for what is actually righteous)

#### IV. “Chosen From The Beginning For Salvation” - 2:13-17

A. Realizing all that is coming and even the reality of the “lawlessness” at work now, there is an endearing affect on those in Christ for each other - we are “in this together” and share a mutual mission/purpose ordained before the world began - what could better unite us than an eternal gratefulness for God’s choice of us?

1. “Lest the saints should be discouraged by the above account of antichrist, and his followers, and fear they should be left to the same deceptions, and damnation be their portion; the apostle being persuaded better things of them, gives their character, and represents their case in a quite different light...” John Gill - their situation is set, having been foreordained - vs. 13

There is to be an **obvious** obligation to be grateful for God’s providing brothers/sisters

And this is why thanks is given to God for these - we are not alone in this journey/struggle - God chose us and we hold this distinction throughout our lives

compare to I Thes. 1:2-5

- a. Paul references them as “brothers, loved of the Lord” - we are united on this, our truest identity and what draws us together, and comfort is found in His love us (and so the hope of the “world” loving us is not to be pursued )
- b. There is a gratefulness also in their security (for there is a normal fear of those in spiritual leadership of others falling for the deceit of the enemy) - even when diligent to protect and teach/guide, the security and consistency was in the hands of the Lord
- c. “God chose you from the beginning for salvation” - this is at the core of their comfort; regardless of what happens, they are the Lord’s, under His grace, and this is the core of their hope and happiness through all they will face
- d. They are to dwell upon and rest in the fortunate position of being chosen by God

It is key to realize that such “separation from the age/world to God” will absolutely come with salvation - salvation is His predetermined work and so is sanctification - see also I Pet. 1:2 where “obedience to Jesus Christ” is a result of sanctification

- e. “Chose” is in the middle voice indicating “God chose you for Himself” to be saved
- f. And this would be accomplished (practically worked out) by means of “sanctification by the Spirit” - “sanctification” (ἁγιασμῶ) being “the process of making or becoming holy, set apart” - in other words, this would be the byproduct of being chosen to be saved (versus “appointed unto wrath” (I Thes. 5:9))
- g. Also, unable to be separated from this, is the “faith in the truth” - this is in direct opposition to verse 10, where the alternative is not “not knowing the truth,” but not loving the truth and in so doing, refusing to be saved - genuine salvation (and so conversion) comes not only with belief in the truth, but the love of it and a life lived in light of its reality

## 2. With salvation *always* comes the “call” through the Gospel - vs. 14

There are attempts to this day to incorporate the means of salvation as something apart from or in addition to the actual Gospel - sooner or later, if one is “saved”, love and belief of the truth will be evidenced (not its neglect) and separation from the world and its “religions” and philosophies will be evident

- a. This is often called the “effectual call” because of the guarantee - it was to this (being chosen to be saved (and that from the beginning) through being sanctified and faith in the truth) God called them to (*not potentially but actually!*)
- b. This “call” was not generic and a “customized experience” for each individual... it was “through our Gospel” (versus that of the false teachers already at work to pollute/poison the truth of the Gospel) - this is why, in verse 15, they will be challenged to “stand firm”
- c. This call ends up with obtaining “the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ” (in contrast to self-glory or any other glory concocted by mankind) - there are countless “glories” the ages have put forward as a goal to be reached/desired/sought, but all of them pale in comparison to Christ’s glory which we will then share - we will be truly “glorious” people!
- d. All of this describes the “mystery of Godliness” (see I Tim. 3:14-16 and Col. 1:24-29) in contrast to the “mystery of lawlessness” - neither have been obvious to the casual observer, yet both have been revealed to those in Christ, and help us to stay focused on all that is really happening
- e. Think of the encouragement this was (and still should be)! - “...the new world which the gospel created for the mind of man...addressed originally to a little company of working people, but unmatched for length and breadth and depth and height by all that pagan literature could offer to the wisest and the best.” Denney
- f. The “glory of Christ” is His glory (splendor/greatness) in comparison to all others (as infinitely above them); but is also believed to include an actual “glory” (luster) that was lost at the fall of man - see Php. 3:20-21 and I Cor. 15:42-43

We have revealed to us not only all that is actually happening, but where it is all heading (the end result) - don’t be distracted by things as they simply appear to be

What they had (and we have) was priceless and they needed to know its value in the face of so much trouble

## B. “Stand firm” - vs. 15-17

- 1. “So then brethren...” - Summing up with a challenge what began in verses 1-2 (where they were identified as having been “quickly shaken” from their “composure” (of their mind/thinking on these essentials)), Paul challenges them to be the opposite - to “stand firm” (στήκετε - with the idea of persevering, firmly planted with the anticipation of resistance) - vs. 15

Since victory is assured, we are motivated to action and not despair or lazy, hopeless inaction - see I Cor. 15:57-58

- a. Now that they had been given (directed to) hope, they have something on which to stand and can see the dangers of being knocked-off their footing
- b. “God’s sovereign choice of believers, so far from being a ground for inaction on their part, is the strongest incentive to action and perseverance in it.” JFB
- c. Part of the ongoing stability against the various attacks at hope (founded in the Truth), Paul also instructs them to “hold to the traditions” that they (the Apostles) had taught them
- d. The word for “hold” (κρατέω) has an interesting picture - it is used of holding on to power, so here including the idea to maintain possession of (not allowing something to be overthrown or forcefully taken away)
- e. Sadly, many will yield these truths of Scripture in their personal battles, coming to some type of compromise with the enemy (who often knows more the value of what is being surrendered)
- f. “Traditions” here describe what had been “handed-down” by the Lord to the Apostles and not what had been made-up and added to over time - see I Cor. 15:1-3 where Paul instructs to “hold fast” to what was taught and what he himself had received
- g. The reason to hold fast to these “traditions” so closely was because not only would the “enemy” seek to snatch it away, but they themselves would have the inclination to alter it
- h. These “traditions” were exclusively made-up of what was “taught by spoken word or by our letter” (what was taught to them personally and what was written to them by Paul)

So many “battles” fought by believers today are over the wrong priorities (such as pride, self-governance, rights, comforts, personal agendas), when what is most precious, protecting and powerful, is taken away without opposition... the Truth of God’s Word

If its value is not seen, then there is no perceived sense of urgency to protect/keep it

This demonstrates the value in good, foundational training that is a reliable standard to compare all else to that is coming in life

- i. The key reason for stating these things was to keep them focused on what they had been originally taught/exhorted to them in I Thes. 5:19-22 (to test/scrutinize everything that was put forward as teaching and hang-on to (hold to) what was proven to be good (by comparing it with what had been taught to them originally))

## 2. Comforted and established - vs. 16-17

Some yield to fear/discouragement and live lives of dreading the future, while others find comfort/courage in the wrong sources - someone who is comforted who should not be, is not benefited, though they “feel” better - those encouraged in the Truth remain so regardless of circumstances (the heart/mind being properly anchored)

- a. Having dealt with the false teaching regarding the “Day of the Lord” and the discouragements that had come with it, Paul “wishes” comfort for them through the correct source and by the correct means - this may sound like needless logistics or just added phrases to sound elegant, but it is core to the context
- b. Most commentators refer to these verses as a prayer, though it is more an open expression of Paul’s desire for them (knowing, of course that God hears) that their comfort and hope be the correct ones - because, for instance, there are temporal comforts and “bad” hopes
- c. The wish for them is to be “comforted and established” (verse 17), though this is prefixed with the Lord Jesus Christ Himself and “God our Father” as being the one to do this (since from them/Him comes “eternal comfort” (παράκλησιν αἰωνίαν - comfort/calling along-side that is eternal/endless) and “good hope” (ἐλπίδα ἀγαθὴν - an expectation/anticipation of good/pleasant/kind) - the opposite being either a consolation that is false and short-lived, found to not hold-up against life’s troubles/doubts, and evil/useless, ungracious dreading of the future
- d. Such hope stems off of the reality that God loved us and provided such by means of His grace - His love of us is given to us in our undeserving state (no “payment plan” to obtain or keep), which is also in contrast to the counterfeit religious wolves who come to unrighteously obligate their “captives” (prey) to a comfort dependent on performance and an expectation/hope of doubt/uncertainty
- e. The objective is that these young believers be encouraged to the core (comforted in their hearts) so as to be strengthened/established (στηρίζω - firmly/permanently secured) and so not susceptible to lures that disregard solid/trustworthy hope (as in “moralizing” doubt (as the Agnostics do)) and offering the hopes of a pessimist (legitimized by arguments toward what they call “realistic” (finding authority in what can be “seen” versus what is to be believed))
- f. The end result being their establishment in “every work and word that is good” - that what they do (work) is truly “good” because everything they subscribe to (word) is good/right

see also II Cor. 4:7-18 Heb. 6:13-20 and Rev. 7:13-17

It’s interesting to consider the opposite that others bring - because of a love of themselves (impostors) they seek validation (versus offering comfort) and induce/promote fear of the future, all while imposing demands upon their followers

Remembering primarily God’s choice of them specifically and His resulting purpose always being at work - this is to be their focus and not the exposition upon the apparent present (read on circumstances)

## V. Praying For the Lord’s Work in Paul and His Team and The Thessalonian Church - 3:1-5

A. The initial prayer request is more than just asking for prayer - it is in the imperative - vs. 1-2

1. While instructing them in the prayer that the “Word of the Lord may spread rapidly” he is about to include them and their action as a part of this also - vs. 1

Compare to Paul’s request with the Colossians in Col. 4:2-6 - A command to pray (with including Paul in it) and other instruction regarding their ongoing responsibility

Part of this would be the praying that hindrances be removed - this (for us) would include our seeing hindrances (diversions) for what they truly are so as to stay focused on the goal

Alterations to the original often occur because the messengers are ashamed with aspects of the message

- a. It is common to pray for others and about things we should seek to happen, but it is often done without the inclusion of self as a part of a possible part in the answer - prayer ought to be done/practiced, but not as a means to excuse lazy irresponsibility
  - b. With this, we see Paul refocusing these believers back to what they are to be doing - it is important (as we’ve seen) to work through key doctrinal issues, but this must not be all we do - there is much to be done because of and with what we’ve had revealed to us
  - c. So now, “pray for us,” but in particular, not their well-being but for the ministry with God’s Word they were given to do - and further, that it might “τρέχω” (progress faster (as in running)) - not just that it progress, but fast and without obstacle
  - d. Along with the Word of the Lord spreading rapidly, the prayer is that it be honored (for as we also see in our day, the apparent swift and popular acceptance of the Gospel is actually an altered, more popularly acceptable version of the Gospel, and so **it is dishonored in being changed to conform to the recipients rather than expecting the recipients to conform to it**)
  - e. These Thessalonian Christians had been distracted away from their original reception of the Gospel (quickly receiving and believing it (in focused, undistracted faith)) and Paul now asks that they pray that the Gospel will have the same impact elsewhere
2. To be specific, that the “we” be “delivered from perverse and evil men” - vs. 2
    - a. Paul was asking for prayer that they be rescued/delivered from literally “ἄτοπος” (out of place) people (those “out of line” and so perverse or even outrageous in their tactics)

These are “out of place” (the meaning of the underlying word ἀποπος) being an authority to themselves - the world seems flooded with those that fit this description now in religious circles

Because of such people and such circumstances, Paul requested prayer (as he would and must face this) - praying for the progress of the Gospel message and protection from such opposition

Security and reliant footing in anything else will not establish us when opposed

This prayer demonstrates that much of what prayer is, is not the requesting as much as it is the openly acknowledged dependence upon the Lord

Our expectation of growth and stability is to rest in the Lord and not on the one we are praying for

This describes more obedience than it does ingenuity or clever creativeness (in determining what needs to be done) - God is not seeking from us ideas, just that we follow/obey what He has already revealed

What “obedience” actually is needs to be kept in focus - it is defined in doing what was “commanded” in Scripture (and not the ever changing code of morality constantly in flux with the pursuit of new/different ideas)

The prayer being that the Lord direct their way through the obstacles of life and keep them focused/determined/undistracted

We long to be loved, not just for the affection and acceptance, but for the security - there is a security that comes with being loved

To face suffering and to bear through the challenges of life we need to know the value and the motive in doing so - Jesus set the example and proof

- b. So there have always been those who have no qualms in how they seek to distract/divert from the true Gospel - such are “perverse” not necessarily in their morals (though they could be), but in how they are, in comparison/contrast to the Gospel they seek to thwart/counter-these are those disorderly, having no standard but themselves and so unaccountable
- c. These are also “evil” men (πονηρῶν, a word at its basic idea refers to hard labor and the agonies that come with it) - these would be those making the labor of the Gospel difficult, making the progress more difficult because of the labor they put into trying to oppose it - this idea of evil may also include the result of their endeavors (making not only the presentation of the Gospel difficult, but its content (as the legalist does))
- d. Knowing this, there will be those who do not have “faith” - these new believers may have been discouraged that so many rejected what they readily received - so do not doubt or be diverted because of so many that react and reject the Gospel and what is truly associated with it

## B. “But the Lord is faithful” - vs. 3-5

1. There looks to be a special (intended) wordplay by Paul for emphasis in verse 3, playing off of the last part of verse 2 - the wording from verse 2 to 3 is “... οὐ γὰρ πάντων ἡ πίστις Πιστὸς δὲ ἐστὶν ὁ Κύριος...” (for not all [as in have] the faith, faithful however is the Lord”) - vs. 3-4

- a. In his request for prayer, he now demonstrates the prayer was for them all (not just Paul) - for the Faithful Lord will protect them and “strengthen” (στηρίζω as used also in 2:17 with the idea of grounding/establishing them) - this is what the Lord will assuredly do
- b. This “grounding” is against “the evil one” - the expectation in this prayer is that of strong opposition and the Lord being the one securing in it
- c. The confidence was not in these believers but in the Lord (as to their being obedient)
- d. “It is remarkable that when Paul expresses the utmost confidence in Christians that they will live and act as becomes their profession, his reliance is not on anything in themselves, but wholly on the faithfulness of God. He must be a stranger to the human heart who puts much confidence in it even in its best state.” Barnes
- e. As we pray for each other (that we be obedient), it should be done with confidence (in the Lord) that what they (and ourselves) are to be doing will be done (accomplished) by the Lord (this is descriptive of what is often referenced as “progressive/practical sanctification”) in us
- f. This is a prayer of faith, for it was a confidence (in the Lord) that they would continue to do what they already were doing in what they had been charged to do - the word for “command” is “παραγγέλλω” which pictures the heralding-out commands - and as such this describes a faithfulness/consistency (like the Lord) in doing what we are told (and learning what that is)
- g. This concept is perfectly related to Php. 2:12-13 - there is a commanded obedience (“working out your salvation”, and that with reverence) while also acknowledging that it is the work of God that **will work in us** to do and “will”
- h. So, the confidence Paul has “in the Lord regarding you” not only directs their focus to the source/cause of their being and remaining obedient, but also lends to their expecting it - much in “Christianity” appears to expect more disobedience and expectations are set so low that the unregenerates are indistinguishable - see Gal. 5:1-15 (note vs. 10)

2. Two essentials in remaining faithful, focused and obedient - vs. 5

- a. At the core of our faithfulness will be (as it was here in Paul’s prayer for the Thessalonians) that the Lord be the one directing the heart (the real/inner us, who we are because of what we think/love (prioritize)) - the heart is the “seat” of our thinking, feeling, willing and decision
- b. The “inner person” needs to be “directed” (κατευθύνω - to make straight and so avoid unnecessary delays and wrong directions)
- c. This is done/accomplished when their focus/hearts are directed/straightened to, first of all, the “love of God” - this is as plain in its meaning as it sounds - a life-gaze affixed on the love God has for us will not be swayed and led away by the pseudo and fickle “love” of others and even of self
- d. The second point of focus the heart needs to be directed to is the patient endurance (long-suffering) that was exemplified in Christ - compare to Heb. 12:1-6
- e. Christ suffered immensely in this world and demonstrated the greatest victory the world has ever known by use of it (the suffering) and had no inclination to living His life aiming at the priorities of the world/age - such an example Paul prays to be the authoritative one for these believers

## VI. Keep Away from Brothers Who are Rebelliously Insubordinate in Their Responsibilities - 3:6-18

A. This last section has a variety of ways in which it is handled in determining the core subject/issue Paul is addressing, whether it is disorder “in the ranks” or more specifically, a rebellious (determined) laziness - vs. 6

1. What is being addressed is a serious issue as seen in Paul’s usage of “command” in verses 6 and 10, as well as the reiterating of the avoidance of such in verses 6 and 14

Many are confused in the usage of forgiveness and disciplinary actions - both are required throughout life - forgiveness does not mean that another’s sin is excused or tolerated, just that when these cause us some form of harm or sadness, we do not hold it against the offender

a. This command to “keep yourself away from” (“στέλλεσθαι” - a word picturing an arranging or moving away from, and being in the middle voice, one does this themselves (actively, purposefully) - the use of “brother” makes it clear they are believed to be in Christ, and this deliberate avoidance is then to be for their well-being - compare to I Cor. 5:11-13

b. The seriousness is also seen in the invoking of the “name of our Lord Jesus Christ” - this is not just a “judgment call” on Paul’s part, but a command from the top!

c. The particular wrong here is “ἀτάκτως” and in the NASB it is translated as “an unruly life” while elsewhere it is “idleness” - the core word describes someone who is “out off the ranks” and so in their disorder, they are unproductive and are a hindrance to the rest of “the ranks”

2. The need and requirement for responsibility - vs. 6

We all were designed to be productive and to work throughout our lives - even if “unemployed” or “retired” we ought to be people of responsibility

a. It is not hard to realize the lure of the thought that one can reach a status or situation in life where life is generally free of responsibility - some hope for wealth, retirement, or an opportunity to get-by in life without having to work for a living, or even if working, to do as little work as possible and to be free of as many responsibilities as practically possible

Times of rest are needed, but a life of laziness is a presumptive use of the time we have been given - we were not placed here and given life to waste away our lives being unproductive in whatever God has brought us to or brought to us

b. The laziness and idleness described is often attributed to the idea that many figured that since the Lord’s coming was so near, that they gave up working (either for spiritual purposes or just that they thought it was a useless use of time) - the “tradition” is revealed more in Paul’s personal example and in other places such as I Thes. 4:11 and 5:14

c. The general idea looks to be that there were those who figured they could “ride-out” this part of life (being “idle busybodies”) - the mindset of a “walk” that is determined to be lazy and unconcerned with being productive is never to be seen as tolerable amongst “brothers” - this is not dealing with those unable to work, just those unwilling - there are numerous, addictive — idle activities (the lack of any goals, schedules, entertainments and time/heart-consuming activities that come to dominate the thoughts and daily objectives)

Self-control is two-fold - keeping self back from what is wrong/evil and pushing one’s self to continue doing what is right and of true value

B. The importance of living out faith and the need for living examples - vs. 7-9

1. Paul is very bold in his usage of “δεῖ μιμεῖσθαι ἡμᾶς” (literally, you “must imitate/emulate us”) - vs. 7-8

Paul not only taught, he lived under the same obligations (even when he did not have to be as strict as he was)

a. This is typically translated as “ought” though this is not necessarily as forceful as it was meant

b. This can only be stressed in this way when the one writing it is certain that what they are doing and have done is non- optional for all else

c. We might look on this (as apparently some of these early Christians did) as though it is optional, and left to our own discretion whether or not we **choose** to work for a living and be faithful in ministry

see I Thes. 2:9 where he stated this in the first letter

d. The example that Paul and his team left was the opposite of “idle” - another translation of the underlying word is “truant,” as in skipping out on duties or obligations and leaving others to make up for the lack of help - this concept should also be considered with our “ecclesiastical” responsibilities (as being a part of the Church)

Many times we ought to yield our “rights” in order to set a better example of diligence (so as not to be used by others as a form of justifying laziness, neglect or “disorderliness”)

e. Paul worked “night and day” with a driving reason to “not be a burden to you” - God may have us, at times, need the assistance of our Christian family, but we work more to “carry our load” and not to rest in the thought of others bearing the load for us

2. Paul yielded his right to being supported to set the best example - vs. 9

As with Paul we also need to realize the calling of God on each of us and that His message outranks us all and should be given priority over our perceived rights and comforts

a. Paul detailed this right in I Cor. 9:1-19 - as an Apostle and teacher, he had the right to be financially and practically supported - he chose not to use this in Corinth and in Thessalonica so as to set an example, so as not to be used as any type of distraction and to not burden them in particular

Many face what they call “burn-out” because their expectation was not that of “laboring night and day” since we truly work for the Lord

b. The example (that needed to be free from distraction) was **hard work** (and the expectation of it all throughout life) - far too many generations of Christians have allowed and even elevated the idea of comfort and rest as being the most desirable, and as if it is a reward of God - our “rest” while this side of eternity, is not “out of the storm” but while still being in the storm

William Barclay c. “The Christian, just because he is a Christian, should be a better workman than anyone else.”

- d. Paul had indicated in I Thes. 2:8 that this was personal - he was not out to only share the Gospel, but “our own selves” - true ministry to others will always involve some degree of giving of self which may include foregoing personal rights for the best of the other

C. Continue to work and do so calmly, earning your own living - vs. 10-12

1. “If anyone is not willing to work, don’t let him eat” - vs. 10

It would be irresponsible and unloving to cater to such a vice - potential and actual hunger can be the best motivator for such

Essentially, don’t sanction laziness and idleness in any way - this does not mean we must always be working, but that some amount of work should be tied to being able to eat

- a. To many, this statement sounds harsh because they only focus on the “not eating” and not on the unwillingness to work - being unwilling (determined not to work) demonstrates a critical flaw in their thinking and character (e.g. presuming on God and others)
- b. Paul reiterates what he had already “commanded” when he was with them - notice it does not say that only poor people should work to eat, but that all should - idleness is never sanctioned in Scripture and each needs to be in the pursuit of something productive
- c. This may be related to Genesis 3:19 also where, as a result of the curse, man would “eat bread” by the “sweat of your face” (hard work would be linked to eating)

2. Idleness and being a “busybody” - vs. 11-12

Similar to children who will seem to have endless energy except when told to do what needs to be done

Interestingly, these are busy, just doing the wrong things - too many have time and energy to gossip because they are not busy doing what they ought

Rebellious/defiant neglect of work/responsibility is to be looked upon as a serious wrong - just because our society has chosen to support such life decisions, does not make it a viable option for those in Christ!

Enjoying what one has worked for is not done out of pride but out of doing what is right

- a. The particular issue facing this church was that of “idleness” (ἀτάκτως- without order (disorderly) and so unproductive), in particular they were not working, but instead were busying themselves in what is not useful and in so doing, meddling in the affairs of others (possibly to get food/money) and burdening others who are trying to work (be productive)
- b. It can be observed by any of us how this is instinctive to human nature - when not working (and without schedules and deadlines), there is an incessant desire to focus on what others are doing - the best cure for a “busybody” is work/responsibility! - the underlying word has also been translated as “intrusively busy,” intruding in others’ lives while being defiant
- c. The core concept of diligence and working was not new - Proverbs deals with these concepts often, such as in Pro. 13:4, 20:4 and 21:25
- d. “Such person” (those Paul had heard of) are commanded and so strongly encouraged under the authority of the “Lord Jesus Christ” to work - clearly, invoking the name of the Lord this way makes it clear this is not a minor point - many in our day take the concept of someone choosing not to work (refusing) as a small thing, but what it leads to and what it demonstrates of the person is a perversion of a “life fundamental”
- e. As these take up work duties again, they are to do so “quietly” (calmly, humbly) and so no complaining and no more meddling in the lives of others! - they are to “earn their own living” (literally, “their own bread they may eat”)

D. Do not grow weary in doing good - vs. 13-15

1. It can be easy to be envious of those who seem to live a carefree life and yield to natural inclinations, and to see consistent labors (as if without end) as too much to continue - so Paul cuts to the point in commanding the ones doing well not to yield to the lure of weariness - vs. 13

Paul instructed the Galatians not to “be weary in well-doing” (in doing what they ought) because it will “pay-off” ultimately - Gal. 6:9

Some are more wearied by seeing so many yield to the wrong and/or forsake the work altogether and tire at the thought of the “ranks” shrinking

- a. For the word “weary” Thayer defined it here as “to be utterly spiritless, to be wearied out, exhausted” - most of us think of these “feelings” as being unavoidable so expect them throughout life (and so willingly yield to them) - yet Paul commands/exhorts against it!
- b. Paul speaks to them as “brothers” and not as a “boss” just telling them to “stay the course” or “stay with it” but he had been doing the same himself - there was no expectation of any release from responsibility in his life, so they also should not - there is to be a mutual motivating
- c. “We must take heed that the unworthiness of some men does not cause us to be slack in well-doing.” Geneva Bible Notes

2. Seriously warn the disobedient brothers as brothers - vs. 14-15

If there is condoning (under the guise of “love”) how will the essentials ever be worked-into those we are to actually love? - separating and even shunning will be (and should be) difficult, but will be done rightly if it is remembered why it is being done and the anticipated result

- a. If there is any among you that “does not obey” (οὐχ ὑπακούει - literally “not heed what was heard,” though the word for heed/obey is an interesting word picture, as it indicates someone who not only hears, but does so “under”) - disobedience is a clear sign they one does not look upon the instruction/command as being “above” them
- b. Of such “take note” (make note of them personally) for the purpose to have “nothing to do with them” - literally it means “do not mix/mingle” with them, with the purpose that they be ashamed - this seems harsh in our day of confusing true love with condoning of wrong-doing and irresponsibility - but it (obedience (subservient hearing)) is really that important!
- c. The desire is that, in their shame, they **repent and reform**

Paul dealt with this type of thing in Gal. 6 where he deals not only with discipline in others, but self-inspection also and in all of it, not growing weary in doing what is right

Church discipline is more challenging today since being ostracized by a church, one is left (in their pride) to seek out an endless variety who will take them in and agree with them.. or since church authority is disregarded, all become authorities to themselves

This also is a good prayer for each other, realizing the "drama" that seems to sweep through in waves over congregations and families, keeping them all off balance and scrambling to regain footing

This cautious approach is still needed, not necessarily that someone would impersonate another teacher, but that the Scripture and its proclaimers can be defamed and slandered in order to discredit their message and redirect the hearers to error

The awareness and acknowledgment of our mutual need for God's grace is a constant unifier and encourages our mutual gratefulness and debt of Love to the Lord and focusing our faith on Him (where our security and hope are anchored throughout the waves of change in life)

- d. It is a form of church discipline - the word for "put to shame" is ἐντρέπω, which literally translated means "to turn inward," demonstrating the intent for the disobedient brother to be introspective (and see the wrong, feel shame (versus stubborn pride), and change for the right)
- e. But, as with any form of discipline, it can be over done either way... too much and too little - so stay with it (the discipline) and don't grow weary in it either, but do not become condemning; "do not regard him as an enemy" but "warn" him as you would a brother, hoping/anticipating restoration - note the word for "admonish" (warn) is νουθετέω (where we get our word for "nouthetic" (as in nouthetic counseling) and simply means "to put into the mind" (aid in changing their thinking by convincing/persuading, not controlling/dictating)
- f. This is what "real brothers" are to do - they will separate (not mingle) with the one doing wrong so as not to be an enabler or an endorser of their wrong, but all with the intent to bring them back around

### E. May the Lord give you peace - vs. 16-18

#### 1. The need for the true peace at all times, in all places - vs. 16

- a. Paul ends with a succinct and singular prayer for, not a sense of "peace," but "the peace" that only comes from the Lord, and since it is from Him and focused on Him, it does not fluctuate within the changes of life - compare to Php. 4:7-9
- b. This "peace" (calmness of spirit) keeps us focused in challenging times such as these Thessalonian Christians were facing - it also enables us to not react and become vulnerable to wrong teaching (designed to play off of fears and insecurities, appealing to emotions more than to the heart/thoughts/spirit)
- c. This peace (in contrast to the "peace" the world offers), is consistent at all times and in every place, so its possessors are settled, secured, and stable

#### 2. Validating genuineness - vs. 17-18

- a. As had been seen earlier in this letter, there had been counterfeit communications as if from Paul, which were used to destabilize these believers - in seeking to avoid it again, Paul validates with his own "sign" and his own handwriting that this is from him (and likely should be used in the future to identify any counterfeits (seen also in Gal. 6:11, I Cor. 16:21 and Col. 4:18))
- b. We need to realize deceivers working under banners of Christianity are still at work and are still trying to misdirect away from true truth

#### 3. Validating salutation - vs. 18

- a. This standard type/message of Paul's salutation is not necessarily given as proof of authenticity, but its core idea, though short, is directed to the grace of "our Lord Jesus Christ" (His condescending favor directed at the undeserving, a concept not literally used by false teachers) - deceivers appeal to pride, self-sufficiency, and self-righteousness and are not proponents of the true grace of God
- b. The difference here from other uses of this phrase is the addition of the word "all" - this is fitting since a rebuke had been directed at some of them, but all were still under and in need of the grace of the Lord