



2 THESSALONIANS

A Verse-By-Verse Commentary

(Originally written one verse per day)

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CHAPTER 1

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy,

To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

2 Thessalonians 1:1

Welcome to the book of 2 Thessalonians! It is comprised of 47 verses, and so it will take us (one day at a time, just as the dawn of each new day) only one and one half months to analyze it. It is hoped that you will be blessed as each day unfolds with marvelous insights into this beautiful epistle from the mind of God and through the hand of Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles.

He begins by introducing himself along with Silvanus (also known as Silas in the Bible) and Timothy. The letter bears Paul's name, and there is no valid reason to suggest that he is not the true author. However, he leaves off the customary term "apostle," which he uses in many other epistles, because he was already well known to those at the church. He is the Apostle to the Gentiles, and the letter is written to a Gentile-led church.

Silvanus and Timothy were Paul's companions at Thessalonica, and he included them in his opening greetings as they were still with him at this point in his ministry. They are both noted together in Acts 17 & 18. Silvanus (Silas) is noted 13 times in Acts 15-18. He was a Roman citizen as is seen in Acts 16:37.

Despite this, he was also a Jew. The longer name Silvanus is used of him by Paul in 2 Corinthians and 1 & 2 Thessalonians. He is probably also the same person referenced by Peter in 1 Peter 5:12. Timothy is the better known of the two because of his being prominently mentioned throughout the New Testament, and in particular because of the two books which bear his name, being written to him by Paul.

After his introduction, Paul says, "To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." This same address is used in both 1 & 2 Thessalonians with the exception of the word "our," which is used here. He addresses the church as a whole here instead of the more common term "to the saints" or "to the brethren" that he uses in many other letters.

The unique term "in God our Father" is probably used to ensure that there is a distinction made between God the Father and God the Son. In 1 Thessalonians 1, he said in verse 1:9 that the church "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God." By making a distinction between God the Father "and the Lord Jesus Christ," he is

demonstrating that both are God, but there is more than one Person in the Godhead. And yet, their worship of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ is not pagan polytheism.

The two are one essence, and yet there is an order within the Godhead by which access is made available. Without Christ Jesus, there is no access to God the Father. He is the Mediator between the two. Pagan idolatry, from which they had turned, is not the same as what is presented in the Christian faith. His introductory words are carefully chosen for them (and thus us!) to learn, and remember, what is right and appropriate in the worship of God.

Throughout Paul's letters, as with the entire Bible, the deity of Jesus Christ is a concept and a precept which is on evident display. It is the very heart of what God has done for the reconciliation of the people of the world.

Life application: Honest daily Bible study is hard work. It takes time and it takes effort. In today's world many people who come to 2 Thessalonians do so in order to read the end-time events verses which are especially noted in Chapter 2. They then use those verses to build up an entire theology on rapture-related events by combining those verses with the other prophecy/rapture verses in the Bible.

However, this is the extent of their biblical knowledge. They cannot logically tie what they believe in with the rest of Scripture to defend why they believe what they claim they believe. It is a sad and narrow approach to biblical theology. Taking the time to read and comprehend the entire Bible may be a large challenge, but it will help solidify one's theology and keep the individual from error in the various disciplines found in Scripture.

Heavenly Father, thank You for each book of the Bible. They are sixty-six books which form a united whole that then tells us Your very heart. They also give us a broad and blessed understanding of Your intent and will for us, if we will just come to You. Give us the wisdom to diligently study Your marvelous word, and to stand fast on its precepts. Help us to never deviate from making a daily study of it. Instead, may it be our life-long habit. Amen.

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

2 Thessalonians 1:2

After identifying himself, and those with him, and then who the letter is directed to, Paul now gives the standard greeting which is found in most of his epistles, "Grace to you and peace to you."

Grace is unmerited favor which cannot be earned. This is the common greeting among the Greek people. Peace however is the common greeting among the Hebrew people. In their language, the word is *shalom*. This is more than a greeting for calm or quiet but is a state of wholeness and completion in all ways. Paul unites the two terms just as the church is being united between Jew and Gentile during his time. This grace precedes the peace because only after receiving the grace of God can a person experience the peace of God.

Paul extends this wonderful blessing to them "from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." It is a greeting from the eternal God – both the unseen Father and His Son who reveals the Father to us. Rather than being an argument against the divinity of Jesus Christ, it is an argument for it. He is tying the two in as one - Jesus being a member of the Godhead. He is not making some type of great division, but a harmonious blending of the two.

Throughout Paul's letters, as with the entire Bible, the deity of Jesus Christ is a concept and a precept which simply can't be missed. It is the very heart of what God has done for the reconciliation of the people of the world.

Life application: Outside of God's creation, which reveals Him in a general way, we cannot comprehend Him except through His special revelation. One way we receive special revelation is through the mouths of His prophets. But these prophets all testified to the same thing - Jesus Christ (John 5:39).

The most magnificent special revelation of God that we have received is the incarnation of Jesus. But for us, even this isn't sight, it is found in the testimony of those who have recorded what they knew into the New Testament. So, in order to understand God, one must know Jesus Christ, and one cannot understand Jesus Christ unless he knows his Bible. Today's life application.... know your Bible.

Heavenly Father, how grateful we are that because of Jesus, we can fellowship with You personally. We can read Your word and know who You are. We can have personal talks with You as we pray in a quiet place or on a bustling city street. And we can feel Your presence as we attend church and fellowship with others as we praise You and give You

thanks for Your wonderful care of us. Thank You for allowing us to fellowship with You, O God. Amen.

We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other,
2 Thessalonians 1:3

After his introductory thoughts, Paul now begins the main portion of his epistle. In this, he states, “We are bound to thank God always for you.” The word translated as “bound” is *opheiló*. It means “indebted.” It “originally belonged to the legal sphere; it expressed initially one's legal and economic, and then later one's moral, duties and responsibilities to the gods and to men, or to their sacrosanct regulations. . . *opheílō* expresses human and ethical responsibility in the NT” (HELPS Word Studies).

Paul is noting that he and his associates are actually indebted to God for those at Thessalonica. The reason for this will be explained in a moment. But first he calls them “brethren.” As always, Paul makes note of the inclusive nature of the Christian faith for those who are the redeemed of the Lord. It is only to them that he writes, but his words are also intended to lead others to that same faith where they too will, hopefully, be included in the term “brethren.”

Following this, he explains the reason for the debt of thanks which they owe to God, by stating that “it is fitting” that they give these thanks. What he will say concerning them demonstrates that thanks are not just something which is haphazardly offered to God without purpose and intent, but rather it is something which is right and good to offer because it is a response to something most positive and wonderful which has come about within the church. This special occurrence is, as he says, “because your faith grows exceedingly.”

The believers at Thessalonica didn't just profess faith in Christ and then stagnate as so commonly happens in churches, even since the beginning. Instead, they had faith, and their faith increased. They desired to know more and more about this marvelous God who would step out of eternity's realm in order to redeem fallen man unto Himself. What a marvelous thing for the hearts of Paul and his companions to know that their labors were not only not in vain, but that they were magnified! But even further, he continues that “the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other.”

This is something which must have truly enlightened their hearts. The faith of the church had grown exceedingly, but it wasn't a faith which was found in individuals who

independently grew in holiness. Instead, it was a faith which was shared between all at the church as they grew in love.

This would mean that each had the best intent for the others in mind, and they would be there to build one another up in times of weakness, trial, sadness, and so on. They would remain strong, and also Christ-directed, because of this common bond of love which was both strong and strengthening among one another.

What is even more wonderful for Paul and his friends was that this is exactly what they had admonished the church in the first letter to them –

“And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we *do* to you...” 1 Thessalonians 3:12

Those words, along with Paul’s other exhortations in his first letter, were acted upon and they had taken root. Increased faith, and abounding love had become a hallmark trait of his beloved church in Thessalonica.

Life application: What is the state of your church? Is there great faith among the congregants? Do you even know? Could you rely on them if things were to go sour in your life? Could they rely on you? Do you have a shared love which is growing with each passing week? Or do you just show up, spend your time as if a chore is being completed, and then follow it up with a quick exit and without a care what transpires in the lives of the others in the week ahead? Think on this, and then set your mind to be a more active part in your church. It is only a “fellowship” if you are there to fellowship.

Lord God are we doing enough in our respective churches to help others in their times of crisis. When their faith is tried, will we be there to help them through it? Do we even know the state of the others in our churches? Do we even care? Precious Lord, give us the desire to make our “fellowship” a place which is based on fellowship. Help us to be a part of the solution to the difficulties which others face in our home church. This we pray to Your glory. Amen.

...so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure, 2 Thessalonians 1:4

Paul had just noted the exceeding growth of faith among the believers as well as their abounding love toward one another. Because of this, he encourages them by saying, “so

that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God.” In this, he is not boasting in them as the object of boasting, but rather the subject of it.

The actual object of such a boast is in the Lord who was working among them and through them in their increased faith and love. This is what faith in Christ is intended to do, and so Paul and his companions used those in Thessalonica as examples of how an effective church, centered on the Lord, should interact – with their God (faith) and among one another (love) of the previous verse.

Paul then continues by explicitly noting their “patience and faith.” In the context of the New Testament, the idea of patience here is “endurance.” It is a steadfast attitude which is centered on the fact that God enables a person or group to remain under whatever challenges or trials He has allowed them to face. This is coupled with their “faith” which is confidence in God despite those challenges and trials. Such is certainly the case here, because he then specifically notes the “persecutions and tribulations that you endure.”

The persecutions are specific and targeted attacks against them. It indicates anyone who was directly irritating them, badgering them, or even bringing troubles against them physically. The tribulations are more general, and they are indicative of difficulties which hem someone in, even to the point where it seems there is no avenue of escape.

Between the persecution and tribulations, others might simply get up and leave, feeling that the trouble outweighed the benefits. But the hope of those in Thessalonica was steadfast, and so they endured through all that came their way. Their faith told them that they were to receive a kingdom which will not be shaken, and so they remained fixed on that and continued to serve God with reverence and fear.

Paul will explain the benefits of their steadfastness, and he will explain what will come to those who had been persecuting them. In the end, their patience and endurance would be rewarded. They knew this, and Paul’s words will come as both a reminder and a continued encouragement to them. They are words which should be considered and applied to our own lives now because, until the Lord returns, there will always be persecutions and tribulations for the Lord’s faithful.

Life application: As Paul’s letters are prescriptive for the church age, it’s important to understand that teachings of prosperity, health, wealth, and good times are misguided, and at times they are shown to be ridiculous. The true benefits of calling on Christ are set for a future date. Any times of blessing in this life are to be accepted with thanks but are not to be expected as if we are entitled to them.

Heavenly Father, every good blessing we have has come from You. But should times of trial, persecution, and tribulation come, grant us the strength to endure through them. Help us to keep our hope on that which lies ahead. This world is temporary, and every happy time is temporary as well. But what You have promised is eternal, and it will be coming at some wonderful time ahead. May we fix our hope on that and stand fast in our faith now – through good times and bad. Amen.

...which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer; 2 Thessalonians 1:5

The words “which is” are inserted here. In the original, the words make a sharper statement –

“...so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure – manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer.”

The “manifest evidence” which is being referred to is debated. Is it speaking of the “patience and faith” of those in the church, or is it speaking of the “persecutions and tribulations” that those in Thessalonica face?

It is probably speaking of the entire clause, both their patience and faith, and their persecutions and tribulations. Thus, what Paul means is that God’s judgment on those who persecuted them would be deemed as completely fair. They had unjustly persecuted the church, and God will look on their lives, including their persecutions of the church, and He will be fully just in their condemnation.

And yet, at the same time, their patience and faith were also manifest evidence of God’s righteous judgment on their persecutor’s sin. The patience and faith look back to the cross on behalf of believers; the persecutions and tribulations look forward to final judgment on the offenders. Thus, the words, “that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God” are not words of merit for salvation, but words of merit of salvation.

The form of the verb which is translated as “that [you] may be counted worthy” signifies “to the end that.” There is an end purpose in their faith, and there is an end purpose in their suffering. We demonstrate faith in Christ, and we endure in our faith, with an end purpose – the salvation of our souls.

This verse neither speaks of works for meriting salvation, nor does it give the possibility of losing one's salvation. Paul is simply stating that what has occurred, and what is occurring, has an end purpose in the redemptive process. This end purpose is being counted worthy of the kingdom of God.

In these words, there is the sense that because of suffering one can predict the fair verdict of God – “Worthy.” It is not a question of merit, but of standing. We are in Christ, He suffered, and our actions show that we understand this. It is for this reason that Paul then says, “for which you also suffer.” This hearkens back to the words of Jesus –

“In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” John 16:33

What Christ did for His people is fully sufficient to save His people. But this does not negate that His followers are exempt from what He faced. It actually presupposes it. This is why in John 15:18, He told his followers, “If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before *it hated* you.” Paul is simply re-explaining these things to those in Thessalonica so that they can understand what has taken place, what is occurring, and what the outcome of those things will be.

Life application: If you face suffering for your commitment to Christ, it is not an indication of God's disapproval of you. Instead, it is quite the opposite. If you are in Christ, you are beloved of the Father, and He is allowing troubles into your life for various reasons which all have a sound purpose. He is proven just in His condemnation of those who persecute you, and His salvation of you because of what Christ did is revealed in your own suffering. Be of good cheer. God's plan for you is perfect, even if it includes suffering.

Lord God, though we may suffer because of our faith in Christ, Your word tells us that it is not a sign of Your disapproval. Instead, it is a part of the normal and expected treatment of those who set their allegiance on You and not on anyone or anything in this world. We were told that the world first hated Jesus, and so we can expect the same. But the end for us, and the end for those who persecute us, will be vastly different. Thank You for the sure hope we profess, even through suffering. Amen.

...since *it is* a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, 2 Thessalonians 1:6

Paul's words here are actually given in a hypothetical sense. The Greek reads, "...if so be that *it is* a righteous thing..." However, the words leave nothing uncertain, and there is nothing conditional in them. Rather, it is simply a tool Paul uses from time to time in order to argue a fact that will be recognized as true by his readers. Thus, the English does carry the correct sense. It is "a righteous thing with God to repay."

If the words stopped there, one might think that every type of tribulation and suffering would be recompensed by God, but God is also at times the initiator of tribulation. He is perfectly just in His decisions, and when afflictions come from Him, they are a part of what is ordained from His eternal mind for various reasons, and to meet His ultimate end. However, there is repayment from God which Paul speaks of here which is based on the suffering of His saints. Thus, he says that God will "repay with tribulation those who trouble you."

The affliction of His redeemed people may appear to go unpunished, but it never will be. God, in due time, will repay all such things, and He will do so with tribulation which comes from Him. All of this is given as a support for the words of the previous verses. God is wholly just, and He will dispense judgment based on His perfect nature. Albert Barnes gives four logical reasons for Paul's words here now –

1. It is inconceivable that God should threaten such punishment unless it were just.
2. People themselves believe that it is just that the wicked should be punished.
3. If it is right to punish wickedness here, it is not wrong to punish it in the future world.
4. It will be a righteous thing for God to punish the wicked in a future state, for they are not always punished here as they deserve.

Paul, under the inspiration of the Spirit, says that punishment of those who cause the Lord's redeemed trouble will come, and so we know it will be as he has said. He is fully in control of all things; it would be wrong for Him to say He would do this and then not do it; and it would be wrong for Him to allow His people to suffer if their suffering wasn't repaid on those who caused them to suffer. Therefore, because we serve the perfect, just, and righteous God, our sufferings will be repaid upon those who cause us to suffer.

Life application: The book of Romans says, "Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. ¹⁸ If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. ¹⁹ Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but *rather* give place to wrath; for it is written, 'Vengeance *is* Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord" (12:17-19).

The Lord will, in fact, judge the evils rendered against us. Though it is difficult to not retaliate, it is for this reason that we are then admonished to tend to our enemies. Maybe we can convert them before their just punishment comes. This is what we are called to do. Lord, give us strength to so act.

Lord God, it is a tough thing for us to wait on Your righteous judgment upon those who mistreat us. But this is what Your word asks of us. Grant us the ability to feed and care for our enemies that maybe some of them might be converted. If they are, then their just punishment will have been executed at the cross and not in them. Isn't that a better, happier end? Help us to respond in the way which would be most pleasing to You. Amen.

...and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, 2 Thessalonians 1:7

Paul has just noted the repayment by God with tribulation of those who troubled the believers. As the epistle is written for the entire church age, it is a time that lies ahead, and in which the world will be judged for its treatment of believers. This becomes more evident as the words of this verse continue to unfold. He now states believers will obtain the opposite of the “tribulation” the world will receive by saying, “and to give you who are troubled rest.”

The word “rest” here is only used five times in Scripture, once in Acts, and four times by Paul. It gives the sense of relief or freedom. It is a type of rest that occurs when one lets loose something tense. A person who has held a bow and arrow until the strain builds up is given this type of relaxing ease when he lets go of the arrow. This is what will be given to those who face the stress of the world which comes against faithful Christians. Paul then says this will occur “with us.” He is speaking specifically of himself, Silvanus, and Timothy.

His words give the sense of the gathering together of all believers. Those who first suffered tribulations, and those then who saw their trials and were willing to also endure what they saw by receiving Christ, will together be given relief from those who troubled them. And all of this is set to occur “when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven.” The Greek literally reads, “at the apocalypse of the Lord Jesus.”

It is a different term than is normally used of the advent of Christ, *parousia*. That denotes “presence.” On the other hand, the word “apocalypse” gives a more striking concept of the appearance or manifestation of Christ. It is a period where Christ will be revealed as the One, Supreme, and All-powerful Ruler of the world.

Thus, this appearance here is speaking of something different than the rapture itself, which he already described in 1 Thessalonians 4. However, Paul uses the name “Jesus” to help the believers identify more closely with His human nature. Despite what is coming, we have a Lord who first personally suffered for His people.

When His people now suffer, He can empathize with them, and He will then be faithful to fully repay those who have persecuted His beloved church. It will be a time when He “is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels.”

Again, the term in Greek more literally says, “with the angels of His power.” These are angels which serve the Lord, and which exercise His great power for His sovereign purposes. They are given His commands, and they execute His judgments according to His words. Jesus speaks of them in Matthew. Jude speaks of them as well. And in the book of Revelation, we are given exacting insights into what they will accomplish at the Lord’s direction.

Life application: As the world continues to tailspin into more and more perversion, God’s people can expect to be faced with more and more persecution. But the Lord is not uncaring about this. Just the opposite is true. His plans and purposes are being fulfilled, even through our times of trouble. But He will also faithfully execute judgment on those who persecute His people. Don’t think the Lord has abandoned you; He has not.

Lord God, the Bible is clear – judgment is coming upon the world because of its turning away from You. Your word is also clear that judgment begins in Your house. Those churches which are openly condoning perversion of all kinds will be brought to utter ruin. Is a moment of perverse enticement worth condemnation and eternal punishment? Certainly not. We pray today that holiness will be restored in Your churches, and that the sexually immoral will be expelled from Your house. Surely things can’t continue for long as they are now progressing. Amen.

...in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Thessalonians 1:8

The “flaming fire” here belongs to the angels, not to the judgment of the angels. Thus, there should be a comma after fire instead of before it. In the Old Testament, angels are known as *seraphim*, or “burning ones.” Much of the tribulation judgment does not come in the form of fire. Thus, there would otherwise be an inconsistency in the text. These powerful angels display a burning aura around them. Their judgments will be poured out on the world according to the descriptions found in the book of Revelation.

They will be, as it says, “taking vengeance.” However, the word “taking” is not appropriate. It implies personal vindictiveness, a characteristic not found in the true God. The Greek reads “giving” or “rendering.” God is not punishing because of a personal grudge against offenders. Instead, He is assigning to the unrepentant world their just due, and each man will receive that just due for not ascribing to God what is appropriate, and for just repayment of those who troubled His people.

It is for this reason that vengeance will come, and it will come upon “those who do not know God.” Jesus stated that if one sees Him, he has seen the Father. It is He who reveals God to us in a manner which we can understand, and it is He who mediates between God and man.

Those who reject Jesus do not ascribe to God what is appropriate, and they, in turn, are those who then trouble His people. Otherwise, they would be His people. But they are, instead, at odds with God, enemies of Jesus. This is explicitly stated in the words, “and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

By the words here then, we have two different categories:

- 1) Those who do not know God.
- 2) Those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Though the two go hand in hand, they are listed separately because there are different types of knowledge in Paul’s mind. There are those who “know” God (even that Jesus is God), but they then do not acknowledge Him. And there are those who don’t “know” God, because they don’t know who Jesus is.

This then follows through with the next clause. The first category may “know” God because they know who Jesus is, but they do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. They reject the truth of Christ, and thus they reject God. The two categories are necessarily stated separately to show that all will be punished because of failing to meet one or the other category.

The words “of our Lord Jesus Christ” are specifically used here to define those who may know the gospel, but who still reject the work of Jesus as the Messiah. In other words, this includes Jews of the end times who will be destroyed, even to two thirds of the nation (Zechariah 13:8). With God, there is no partiality, and both Jew and Gentile are favored only because of their standing with Christ Jesus. No other distinction will save them. Destruction lies ahead for all who fail to come to Christ.

Life application: If you have failed to come to Christ through the gospel of Christ (and this includes all who attempt to be justified by works of the law), you will be left behind at the rapture, and you will endure the judgments of the tribulation period. Now would be a good time for you to leave the Hebrew Roots movement, the SDAs, or any other group who mandates observance of the law, in part or in whole. Call on Christ, trust in Christ, rest in Christ.

Lord God, Your word assures us that there is a period of time coming on the earth which will be complete destruction and final judgment. You have shown in Your word that there is but one way to be freed from that time – trusting in the gospel of Christ Jesus. You gave us this avenue, and so for us to willingly reject it means that we merit Your disfavor. Help people to realize this and help us to be willing to lead all to a saving knowledge of what He has done for us! Help us in this, O God. Amen.

These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, 2 Thessalonians 1:9

Wow Paul. Really? Rather un-PC of you to say such a thing!

The result of the “vengeance” of the previous verse is defined here. Punishment lies ahead for those, as Paul said, “who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.” It is punishment that is eternal in nature, and it is punishment that is universal in scope, excepting only those who have called on Jesus and who are the redeemed of the Lord.

It needs to be understood from the Greek here that the word translated as “destruction” does not mean “annihilation.” Instead, “it emphasizes the consequent *loss* that goes with the complete ‘undoing’” (HELPS Word Studies). In other words, one cannot justify the doctrine of “no eternal hell for unbelievers” with this verse. The Bible elsewhere speaks of eternal punishment. Instead of annihilation, it will be a type of ruination “from the presence of the Lord.”

Whatever hell will be like in its fullest sense, and whatever pains or sufferings the damned soul will receive, the worst possible punishment is the thing that those who hate God claim they want the most – to cast off the Lord, and to have nothing to do with God. This they will receive, but it will only be after they have beheld His glory at the Great White Throne Judgment. In this, they will see the Source of all goodness, glory, and desire, and then they will be removed from that forever. The memory of that separation alone will be the greatest torment of all.

There will be nothing of God's eternal splendor, and thus there will be only lack, deprivation, and the highest desire to return to Him for the Water of Life and the spiritual connection they had run from in this life. The memory of what they saw will be the last good thing they will ever see and it will be seared into their memories, but they will be cast from His presence "and from the glory of His power."

This glory of the power of the Lord certainly has, at least in part, the thought of the human Christ, reigning on His throne. And yet, it surely signifies the divine Lord as well. There is both the physical and spiritual aspect of Jesus, which will endure forever. He will lead His people, but He will also continuously and ceaselessly reveal the unseen Father to us.

It is this on-going revelation of the glory of God that those to be cast away from His presence will desire with all of their mind. They will be deprived of this boundless joy, and it will utterly consume them. However, the misery of having realized that it is the human Jesus that made this possible, and that they rejected Him... that will be the source of their eternal regret. It will eat them up for all eternity that they had mocked and mistreated the exalted name of Jesus, exchanging it for whatever lie they held to in this temporary, pitiful life.

Life application: In 2 Kings 25, Zedekiah, the king of Judah was captured by the king of Babylon. He was taken before him and his sons were killed before his eyes. After that, they put out his eyes. Thus, the last thing he ever saw was the ending of his family line.

The painful memory of his failed life would be seared into his conscience forever. This is the thought presented to us by Paul's words of this verse. In both cases, the wounds were self-inflicted. But in the case of those who have rejected Christ Jesus, the wounds will be infinitely more painful. Pay heed and call on Christ today.

Lord God, Your word speaks of eternal punishment for those who reject Your one and only avenue to peace with You, Jesus. As You have revealed Yourself through Him, and as He is our only way back to You, it would be good for people to consider this, to see if it is true, and to make the right choice now. This life is temporary, it is fleeting, and the ending of it is completely unknown. Help us to be wise and responsible with this moment in time. To Your glory we pray. Amen.

...when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed.

2 Thessalonians 1:10

Here we have a sharp and resounding contrast to the previous verse. He just said that those who don't know God, and who don't obey the gospel of Jesus, will be punished. This will include their removal from the glory of His power. In contrast to that, it says, "when He comes." This is speaking of Jesus. This defines the period of time that the punishment upon the wicked will occur. It is "in that Day" that the contrast for those who have believed in the gospel will come about.

In this, Paul says that He is "to be glorified in His saints." The glory spoken of is not "through" His saints, nor is it "among" His saints. Instead, it will be "in His saints." He suffered and died so that we may live. In contrast, those who reject Him will suffer and die because He, in fact, lives. They ignored this willingly, and they will receive their just punishment for their failure to acknowledge His work which He accomplished for them. Thus, they are found unworthy of its merits.

But for the saints, they will reflect His glory, because they received His atonement and are covered in His righteousness. And along with this, He is "to be admired among all those who believe." This reflects the state of what has occurred in us. We have, by a simple act of faith, been granted the righteousness of Christ. But it is His righteousness. We can claim no credit for this. Instead, we will always remember that the Lamb was slain so that we might live.

What is done is past, but its effects will endure forever. It is a one-time-for-all-time thing. When we behold Him in glory, we will give Him the admiration He eternally deserves because we have been eternally redeemed. As noted, this was by an act of faith, as Paul once again explains with the words, "because our testimony among you was believed."

The Calvinist doctrine of election and predestination is shown, once again, to be wholly incorrect here. Nowhere in Scripture do we find the notion of being "regenerated in order to believe." That is as nutty as a tennis puck. Paul and his associates shared the gospel, the people believed, and they were saved. The same is true with every person who has been redeemed since. Faith is excluded as a work according to Romans 3:27. It is something that comes from us, and it is what then results in our salvation.

Life application: If you are excited about Jesus, then imagine how great it will be when we see Him face to face. If you are saved, but not excited about Jesus, you have a serious problem with understanding the magnitude of what He has done for you. Reconsider your station and be excited to glorify Him for the marvelous things He has done for you!

Lord God, help us never to lose our excitement over what Christ Jesus has done for us. May we be willing to share that excitement everywhere we go, and to be willing to provide the lost with the same chance of being saved as we once had. Help us to not sit on our hands and idly wait for the day of our passing. Instead, help us to be active and alive concerning the wonderful news that brought us to salvation. Amen.

Therefore we also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of *this* calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of *His* goodness and the work of faith with power, 2 Thessalonians 1:11

The word “therefore” is looking back to the previous verses. In verse 5, Paul said “that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God.” In that verse, it was noted that this was a worth not of merit, but of standing. In verse 10, it then noted that when the Lord comes, He will “be glorified in His saints.” Because of these things, and the surrounding verses, Paul says “therefore,” or “with a view unto this,” he and those with him “also pray for you.” When Christ is glorified in His saints is to this view that their prayers are directed.

His adding in the word “also” stresses the thought of the prayers they offer. They didn’t just hope for a good outcome, but they actively prayed for it. With prayers being offered, they looked forward to the good outcome “that our God would count you worthy of this calling.” The “calling” here takes us right back to verse 5, which is a call of standing. Paul prayed that they would stand firm in their calling and not shy back.

They had been called, they were suffering for it, and Paul prayed that they would continue in their calling despite this. This is obvious because in 1 Thessalonians 1:12, he stated hopes that they would walk worthy of God who called them. Again in 1 Thessalonian 4:7, he noted God had called them unto holiness. And then again, in 1 Thessalonians 5:24 he noted that God who calls is faithful. These things show us that the calling was already in existence, and that it would continue.

With this in mind, he then noted that they also prayed that God would “fulfill all the good pleasure of *His* goodness.” The word “His” is inserted here. It is true that the goodness is that which is godly, but it is more a personification of goodness which stems from Him.

The scholar Oldshausen says of these words, “May God fill you with all that good which is pleasing to him.” They stand in their calling and, because of this, the hope is that they

will perform according to their standing, reflecting the goodness that would be expected of a person who was so called.

Finally, he says to them that their prayers are also directed to “the work of faith with power.” This essentially means “to powerfully complete the work that faith was able to produce in you.” The gospel was presented to them, they received this gospel by faith, and now it was prayed that they would be filled with godly power to complete the work set before them in this new life. As Albert Barnes notes of these words, “The work of religion on the soul is always represented in the Bible as one of power.”

Life application: As always, care needs to be taken when evaluating words which may appear as if we must do something apart from faith in order to be saved or to continue to be saved. Such is not the case. If this were true, our salvation would not be by grace through faith. Instead, it would be by personal merit worked out in our action. This is not the gospel.

Lord God, thank You that the race is not up to us to complete. Instead, it is You who have saved us through an act of faith, and it is You who keeps us because of that belief. Our faith may weaken, and we may lose heart at times, but You never forget the time that we called out to be saved, we believed in the work of Christ, and we were forever reconciled to You. Thank You for this, our precious God. Amen.

...that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Thessalonians 1:12

The use of the term, “the name,” is given to denote the Person. It is more than a mere title or form of honorary dignity. Everything about the Person – His title, His power, His being, etc., is summed up in the term “the name.”

Therefore, the words, “that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified,” is speaking as a summary of what has previously been said, not just about those saved, but about those set for destruction as well. They will see the honor and glory placed upon the saved which will demonstrate God’s righteous judgment upon them. This is because we are “in Christ,” and thus we are a part of His body. When we are vindicated, it glorifies Him. This is why Paul continues with the words, “in you.”

Everything about the name of the Lord Jesus Christ is exalted when He is glorified in His saints. And the reciprocal is true as well. As Paul then says, “and you in Him.” Our salvation and God’s favor upon us because of our faith in Christ will be seen as having

been vindicated before the eyes of those who mock the faith and the faithful. In their lives, they pursued either self-indulgence, or some type of works-based salvation.

However, the true Christian sets aside self and instead trusts in the work of Christ alone. This explains how we will be glorified in Him. In the end, it is all about Jesus and what He has done. Our works are excluded. As it says, “according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Grace is unmerited favor. Any work or effort to be reconciled to God on our part would mean we merited God’s favor, and thus grace would be excluded. But such is not the case. Instead, we hear the gospel, we receive the words, and we are saved. The grace is two-fold. First it is of “our God,” and secondly it is of “the Lord Jesus Christ.” Rather than this being an argument against the deity of Christ, it forms an argument for it.

Throughout his epistles, Paul speaks of the grace of God, and then he defines that as being the gift of Jesus. The two are inseparably linked. Jesus Christ is God working out our salvation in human form.

The point of Paul’s words is to demonstrate that God is just, He is righteous, He is holy, He is gracious, He is merciful, He is loving, and He is truthful. But more, He is perfectly so in each of these ways. He cannot violate His own righteousness in order to be gracious. If He did, He would be unrighteous. The same is true with each of these attributes. But through Jesus, He can accomplish all of these things without violating His perfect nature.

This will be seen and understood with all clarity by those who have rejected Him, and by those who were faithful to receive Him.

Life application: Jesus is God’s way of working out the salvation of man. No other way is possible, and therefore let us hail Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith. To God be the glory.

Heavenly Father, considering what You have done through Jesus, how can we but praise You? You have reconciled us to Yourself, and we stand before You purified, cleansed, and holy. And it is all because of what You have done. Can we boast in the work of another? How much more then should we boast in You! Thank You for sending Jesus to bring us home to Your glory. Amen.

CHAPTER 2

Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, 2 Thessalonians 2:1

Paul now moves from his opening comments to the main portion of instruction in the epistle. His words concern future events which will further explain his thoughts of his first letter to them.

In Chapter 1 of this letter, he spoke of judgment upon unbelievers, and of the glorification of the saints as well. But there is an order in which things happen, and there are times set by God for them to come about. Paul will give some details of these things now. And so he begins with, “Now, brethren.”

The words are to believers, and they are friendly and warm. Those who are included in the fellowship are all to read and feel encouraged by them. With this in mind, he then begins his thoughts with, “concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

This is an issue which he has already addressed in his first letter, particularly in Chapter 4 of it. Therefore, his words are to be taken along with what he said there. Without getting too far ahead now, it is evident from his coming words that people were making false claims about the events of 1 Thessalonians 4, and these statements were troubling the fellowship. Paul wants them (and thus us!) to know the proper sequence of events which will occur in and around the Lord’s coming “and our gathering together to Him.”

This is specifically referred to in 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 –

“For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive *and* remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.”

The word Paul uses, translated as “gathering,” is found only here and in Hebrews 10:35 in regard to Christians assembling together for worship and instruction. In this case, it must be referring to all who are in Christ, both the dead and the living. The words of 1 Thessalonians 4 are being further explained. Therefore, it is certainly referring to the time of the rapture at the Lord’s coming for His church.

It is based on this event that the words of this verse finish with, “we ask you.” He is going to petition them to pay attention to what he and his associates have to say so that they will not be misguided by false claims concerning this event. The words are meant for the church as a whole, and so believers today can pick up their Bible and have the same assurances that those in Thessalonica had 2000 years ago.

Life application: What is the sequence of events that surround the rapture? How can we know if someone is making stuff up out of their head? Stay tuned for the exciting details. Paul will give us words that will keep us from being distracted by people who are either uneducated in Scripture, or who purposely twist end-time events for their own perverse purposes. Taking Paul’s words in context, we can avoid being misled by them.

Lord God, it sure is marvelous to have Your word available to us. It gives us a grand outline of things which lie ahead, and it will help us to find reassurance in our walk now... if we just pick it up and study it. Help us in this Lord. Grant us the wisdom to spend more time reading Your word than we spend in front of the TV. May it be our daily desire to get into this treasure and soak up its goodness! Amen.

...not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. 2 Thessalonians 2:2

Correctly understanding Paul’s words of this verse are essential in forming an end-times doctrine which is sound and in accord with what will actually take place. So, pay heed as we follow along with the words he gives. First, he says that those in Thessalonica (and thus us!) are “not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled.”

This is based on what he said in verse 1 about the rapture. He is asking them to be sound in their doctrine, and thus they will not be led astray in their minds. Their hope will remain steadfast, and their faith will not be weakened.

The idea of being “shaken” comes from a Greek word which concerns the tossing or swelling of the sea. They were to be firm and fixed, as if on dry land, not tossed about like a little boat on a raging sea. And this was to be in their mind, or seat of reason. He then says that this should be the case if presented with a false claim “either by spirit or by word or by letter.” The reason why it is false lies yet ahead in Paul’s words, but if a claim is made which contradicts the word of the Lord, then it is false.

Such a claim could be “by spirit.” This would be a supposed “prophetic utterance” by someone in a Christian setting. It would be a claim to divine revelation. Note: Today we

have the word of God. We do not need, nor will we receive, such a word of “prophetic utterance.” Any claim of such a prophecy is to be rejected, and the supposed recipient is to be disregarded as a lunatic.

Next, Paul says, “by word or by letter.” The “word” would be a false claim that someone had an oral message from Paul or another apostle. What Paul will write now is to be considered doctrine. Any word brought to their ears (or ours!) which claims to be apostolic in nature, and which contradicts what Paul will write, is to be rejected.

The “letter” is the same – a claim that a particular writing was from Paul or another apostle. As he says, “as if from us.” If a supposed letter or writing is received which contradicts what Paul will now say, then it should be tossed into the garbage can, soaked with gas, and lit on fire. Be careful to not burn down your house in the process!

With this thought of the importance of what he will now say out of the way, he finishes the verse with, “as though the day of Christ had come.” The focus here is on the day of Christ. This is the main thought of Paul’s words in this section. The “coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering to Him” is being set in relation to “the day of Christ, not the other way around.

If one does not properly follow this thought, then there will be confusion in end-times theology. When is the rapture? When is the anti-Christ revealed? These things have to be taken in connection with what is now said by Paul. Otherwise, an incorrect analysis of the timing of these events is inevitable. This is why Paul has specifically started with the rapture, and then set it in relation to “the day of Christ.”

What is “the day of Christ” then? It needs to be understood that various manuscripts say, “day of the Lord” and “day of Christ.” They both have the same meaning. Christ is the Lord. This is speaking of the 7 years of tribulation which are coming upon the world. It is not merely the last 3 ½ years of this period. This will become evident by what he says in verses 3 & 7.

These seven years are what are spoken of in Daniel 9:24-27. The details of these seven years are given in numerous places in the Old Testament, and they are described in greater detail in Revelation 4:2 – 19:10. This is what Paul is referring to. In understanding that this is what Paul is using as his baseline for the coming prophetic events, it will then allow the reader to correctly follow the timeline of Paul’s coming words.

Life application: Do you believe in a “rapture” of the church? If so, do you accept a pre-trib, mid-trib, or post-trib rapture? What is the basis for your choice? If one follows what the Bible says, in context, the answers to these questions are given. Set aside your presuppositions and follow Paul’s thoughts of this chapter as they come. In doing so, you will see how the timeline is properly revealed.

Lord God, what a blessed hope we have. Throughout the ages, man has walked in a contrary path to Your will. And a time is coming when You will lift Your hands and allow man to walk on that path without restraint. Man will sadly find out that life without You is beyond terrifying, but there will be no exit when that day comes. But for those who have trusted in Jesus, there is a place of safety. How blessed we are to possess this hope. Thank You for our Lord. Amen.

Let no one deceive you by any means; for *that Day will not come* unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition,
2 Thessalonians 2:3

The opening clause of this verse, “Let no one deceive you by any means,” is based on what was said in the previous verse. He told them that they were “not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us.”

At that early day in church history, there were deceivers who were making crazy stuff up out of their own heads and passing it off as prophecies from the Lord. Paul is showing those at Thessalonica (and thus us!) that only the instructions of true apostles were to be regarded as authoritative. Now that the apostolic age is over, our only source for divine revelation is the word of God. Any supposed word from the Lord, or any supposed divine instruction apart from the Bible, is to be wholly rejected.

The words of warning concerning being deceived are not unique to this verse. Rather, Paul warns of such things in other letters as well. And yet, instead of reading the Bible and accepting what it quite clearly says, people fawn over deceivers all the time. And they are out there by the bucketful. “Oooh, I have a word from the Lord.” Reject this nonsense! Read your Bible, and be sound in your doctrine.

Paul’s next words have a thought inserted in them by the translators, “for *that Day will not come* unless the falling away comes first.” The Greek simply reads, “because if not shall have come the apostasy.” However, the words which were inserted by the translators are rightly supplied. It is speaking not of the rapture of verse 1, but of the

“day of Christ” (or day of the Lord) of verse 2. The day of Christ (meaning the tribulation period) will not come “unless the falling away comes first.”

It has become common to teach that this word, *apostasia*, or “falling away,” is actually speaking about the rapture because the word signifies “leave” or “depart.” However, this is an unnecessary stretch of the intent of Paul’s words. The word is only used elsewhere in Acts 21:21 when speaking of forsaking Moses, meaning the Law of Moses. The departure is one of purposeful turning away from a set doctrine.

There will be a falling away from the true faith of Christ before the day of Christ comes upon the world. What is implied here is that the true church will be gone by then, but that will be explained in verse 7. It is not explained by the word *apostasia* of this verse. Along with this thought, Paul finishes the verse with, “and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition.”

Here Paul speaks of “the man of sin.” The term is unique in the New Testament. It is applied to a specific person who will be a man of lawlessness, as the word *anomia* implies. The word signifies “the utter disregard for God’s law (His written and living Word)” (HELPS Word Studies). To further describe him, Paul calls him, “the son of perdition.” This is a term used only one other time in the Bible, in John 17:12, when speaking of Judas who betrayed Jesus.

Judas, in essence, “fell away” from the truth of the apostolic office which otherwise could have been his, along with the other apostles. He chose the evil path, and he was essentially born to be destroyed, as is implied in the words of Matthew 26:24. Like Judas, this person will be set on a course which can only lead to ruin. The word Paul uses which is translated as “revealed” is *apokaluptó*. It will be as if a covering is pulled away and this person, bent on disregarding God’s law, will be unveiled. He then is a counterfeit to Christ, and thus he is known to us as the Antichrist.

What we have so far is the understanding that the day of Christ (the day of the Lord), will not actually commence until the Antichrist is revealed. However, he will not be revealed until after the rapture, as is implied in this verse, but which will be made explicit in verse 7. And so thus far, we see the sequence of events –

- 1) Rapture of the church
- 2) The falling away and the revealing of the Antichrist
- 3) Day of Christ (Day of the Lord)

Life application: It is common today among rapture deniers to state that the doctrine of the rapture was never taught until the time of John Darby (who is then maligned in order to diminish his writings – a source fallacy). However, this is untrue. Paul clearly teaches the doctrine in his letters (1 Corinthians and 1 & 2 Thessalonians).

Just because Paul's words have been improperly understood, because of a misinterpretation of the role of the church, it does not mean that the doctrine is unsound. Instead, it means that church doctrine has simply not been in line with Scripture. That deficiency has been corrected.

Lord God, it sure will be nice when You come for Your church! May that day be soon. Amen.

...who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

2 Thessalonians 2:4

The words which begin this verse are actually in the present tense. Rightly translated, it says, "...the [one] opposing and exalting himself." If taken substantially, it would read "...the opposer, and exalter of himself." It clearly references the Antichrist. The words are reflective of Satan himself but are being applied to a man; and so it is one who is wholly in league with the goals and intents of Satan. It is this man of lawlessness who places himself "above all that is called God or is worshiped."

In this phrase, it is understood that the Antichrist will place himself above the true God as well as all other false gods. Total allegiance to him will be required. In essence, he will be believed to be the fulfillment of whatever hope is laid out in any religion. For those who say they are Christians, he will appear to be their Christ. For the Jews, he will appear to be their Messiah.

For the Muslims, he will appear to be their Mahdi, etc. But he will even exalt himself above the God or gods that he claims he is from, demanding worship of himself only. The words "[all] that is worshiped" are actually from a noun in the Greek, and so it should read, "object of worship."

There are things that are not "gods" which receive worship or adoration, but he will exalt himself above any such thing. This self-exaltation will be seen in a demand for total allegiance above power, money, or even life itself. This will be fully seen and realized on

the day that “he sits as God in the temple of God.” These words, for countless years of the church age, have been taken to mean something other than a Jewish temple.

That temple was destroyed, and there seemed no chance of one ever being rebuilt. Some have taken this to mean “the Vatican” where the pope sits. Others argue it is referring to the Christian church in general. Some have taken it to mean “a poetical or prophetic description of usurping divine prerogatives generally” (Charles Ellicott).

These and other analyses were based on a misunderstanding that the church had somehow replaced Israel, or that – at best – there would never be a “temple of God” in Jerusalem again.

However, it is understood from the dispensational model that the Jews do have another temple coming (Daniel 9:24-27), and that is now possible with Israel back in their land. The temple implements are ready, and the temple itself will be built. This is actually in accord with Revelation 11:1 where John was told to “measure the temple of God.”

One doesn’t measure a universal church or a “poetical or prophetic description,” and the Vatican doesn’t sit in Jerusalem. Paul’s words, combined with those of Daniel and John, clearly indicate a rebuilt Jewish temple in Jerusalem. It is in this temple that the Antichrist will sit “as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.”

To sit in the temple, where only God was allowed to reside, is to claim the authority and personage of God. No priest is said to sit in the temple. There are duties to be conducted and then they are to depart. But no such furniture exists for the priests to sit down. Only in the Holy of Holies of the temple was there a place of rest.

This is where God dwelt above the cherubim on the mercy seat above the ark. The high priest would enter behind that veil once a year to make atonement for the sins of the people, but other than that, there was no sitting of any kind involved in temple duties.

For the Antichrist to sit in the temple, it will be his claim that he is entitled to sit there because he is the one who “is God.” As it is known that Jesus is God incarnate, and Jesus is Christ, this then is the “Antichrist.” He will make a false claim against the true God who has revealed Himself in the Person of Jesus.

Life application: Only the dispensational model of biblical interpretation can properly explain what Paul’s words are referring to in these verses. Without accepting that Israel

is Israel, and that they have an actual purpose in the end-times, verses such as this must be allegorized, spiritualized, or misapplied.

But when one understands that the nation of Israel, and the Jewish people as a whole, have been returned to their land for the culmination of the ages, the timeline comes into focus, the verses make logical sense, and God's plans are properly understood.

Heavenly Father, Your word says that a temple will be rebuilt in Israel, and that the Antichrist will sit there, claiming he is the true God. But You have revealed Yourself already, and much of the world has missed it. Help each of us to be willing to get up, get out, and tell about Jesus now before the time of the deceiver comes. Many will perish following a false god and a false Christ. Before that time, give us the strong desire to tell about the majesty of Jesus, bringing many to salvation. Amen.

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

2 Thessalonians 2:5

Paul now takes time to upbraid the church at Thessalonica, and he does it in the form of a question. Further, in a change unique to this verse alone, he switches from the third person to the first person. Whereas he has been saying "we" to include Silvanus and Timothy, he now departs from that in his zeal to correct his audience and says, "I."

He begins with, "Do you not remember." It is a way of saying, "You obviously didn't pay attention." Jesus used this same type of questioning in order to rebuke the disciples, such as in Matthew 15:16. Paul has done it elsewhere as well, such as in his letters to the Romans and those at Corinth. Now, having chided them for not having remembered, and for instead having become shaken by someone's introduction of false doctrine (see verse 2), he goes on to say, "that when I was still with you."

As noted, he speaks here in the first person – "I personally was there, and I personally instructed you on this matter." The frustration in Paul is obvious. He wanted soundness of mind for his beloved brethren, but they had instead been disturbed in their thinking because of the introduction of incorrect information.

The situation here is similar to that of the book of Galatians. False teachers had come in and introduced false doctrine. In its reception, the church in Galatia had started down a bad path. Paul spent an entire letter attempting to get that heretical nonsense corrected. Now, he is writing a second letter to Thessalonica in order to do the same.

To finish the verse, he says, “I told you these things.” The word translated as “told” in the Greek is in the imperfect tense. In other words, “I repeatedly told you these things.” The use of the imperfect, when read by the church, would be an embarrassing moment for them.

Paul had spoken of the end times as a core part of his doctrine, and one of the things he told them was that it would probably be a long time before the Lord returned. Further, before “the day of Christ” came, certain things would precede it.

If they had paid attention, they would not now be unsettled. The same imperfect tense is used in 1 Thessalonians 3:4 when reminding them that they would face tribulation. Paul and those with him didn’t just tell them this, they told them it often. The same is true with his words of end-times events. The entire thought of this verse is reminiscent of that of Hebrews 5:12 –

“For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need *someone* to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food.” Hebrews 5:12

There are things which people hear, and of which they should pay close attention, but they instead take brain-naps while the instructor is imparting his wisdom to them. In this, they are only harming themselves.

Life application: It’s a real problem in Christianity today that people do not carefully read and study God’s word. People selectively pick and choose what they will read, or they simply listen to teachers who do not have the best in mind for their hearers.

Thus, they become unsettled in their doctrine, and they are led very quickly down wayward paths. It is truly heartbreaking to see the amount of confusion over simple, straightforward doctrines. The timing of the Lord’s coming for His people, and the events which follow that, are carefully laid down for us if we will but open the book and look.

Lord God, why do we fail to pick up the word and study it for ourselves? Instead of doing a thorough evaluation of its teachings, we take Your word in a piecemeal fashion, and we are prone to accept other’s faulty views without checking them out. If we do this with things like prophecy, how much more serious is it when we do it with the core doctrine of salvation? Have we got that right? Help us to be assured of our standing before You. It would be sad to find out we have that one wrong. Amen.

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

2 Thessalonians 2:6

Paul continues with his thoughts on the revealing of the Antichrist. He said that the Antichrist would not be revealed until after the rapture of the church. This is implied in the previous verses, and it will be implied again in the coming verses. Only then will Antichrist be revealed, and the world enter the day of Christ (the day of the Lord). But something is restraining that from occurring, something they have already been told about. This is reminded to them now with the words, “And now you know what is restraining.”

The words, “And now” are not speaking of anything he has said in this letter. Instead of being in a temporal sense, the word “now” is being used in an introductory sense. They are being asked to call to memory what had already been told them.

The reason for explaining it this way is because the church had been fooled; they had been misdirected by false information claiming that “the day of Christ” had come. The reminder now is that the revealing of the Antichrist is actually purposefully hindered, and it would continue to be so until the right time arrived.

The words, “what is restraining” are insufficient here. There is a definite article in front of “restraining” in the Greek. Therefore, this is not a mere doctrine that they are aware of, but rather of a specific and familiar object.

Therefore, it should say, “that which is restraining.” A known entity is restraining the coming of the Antichrist, and the time for that entity to cease restraining will come as planned by God. And so there was absolutely no reason for those in Thessalonica (and thus us!) to speculate about having already entered into the tribulation period.

The truth holds for us even until this day. And yet, how many have claimed that the day of Christ (the day of the Lord) has arrived? How many speculations about the tribulation period have been laid out in chart upon chart! But there is one restraining, and that will continue to be the case so “that he may be revealed in his own time.” The “he” is speaking of Antichrist.

What is restraining the revealing of the Antichrist is not specifically mentioned, but it can be readily inferred based on several things. These will be looked at in the verses to come. But suffice it to say that:

- 1) the Antichrist is one who stands in opposition to Jesus. If this must be restrained for even 2000 years now, it shows that even though Antichrist is a person, there is more involved. He is a person who will be specifically filled by Satan. And
- 2) if this could be at any given time, then there is a set time – known even 2000 years ago – when this would come about. What could restrain Satan from so filling whatever person he chose for that long? Stay tuned.

The words, “that he might be revealed in his own time,” have the meaning of “with a view to.” What this means is that God’s purposes will come about because the power of Antichrist will stop being restrained when He sees fit.

Just as God ordained Israel to be exiled to Babylon for 70 years, and then that exile ended as prophesied, and then just as the same is true with the ending of their second exile at a pre-prophesied moment to effect His purposes. The ending of the restraint of the power which will be given to the Antichrist is intended to meet God’s purposes for judgment on the unrepentant world.

The word translated as “time” indicates a set and purposeful time. It is a particular season. Just as Christ Jesus was said to have come in the fullness of the time set by God (Galatians 4:4), so Antichrist will come at a particular season to fulfill God’s purposes.

Life application: Way too many people focus on who the Antichrist is. That is a pointless venture. The Bible says he will be revealed at a particular time, and that time will not be until after the rapture of the church. If you are looking for Antichrist, you need to redirect and look for Christ. Stop wasting your time on useless videos about an already-defeated enemy. Instead, pick up your Bible and find Jesus.

Lord God, Your word does tell us that one known as “Antichrist” is coming. It also tells us that believers don’t need to worry about his identity. Instead of looking for that loser, we are asked to fix our eyes on Christ. Help us to remember this, to study Your word to see His glory revealed, and to set our hearts and affections on Him alone. Grant us the wisdom to seek the Lord and not futile speculations about things which You alone have the knowledge of. Surely knowing Christ Jesus in His fullness is enough! Amen.

For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains *will do so* until He is taken out of the way. 2 Thessalonians 2:7

The word “For” is given based on the words of the previous verse. Paul said something was restraining the Antichrist. This was “that he may be revealed in his own time.” From

this, Paul continues with “For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work.” A mystery is something not revealed.

There is a lawlessness which is working (and it has been working for 2000 years or more) which is not yet fully revealed. It has been slowly working out a plan. In the Greek, there is an article in front of both “mystery” and “lawlessness.” It reads, “For the mystery of the lawlessness.”

The state of lawlessness which is still not fully revealed is “already at work.” The idea of the work is that of an inward action, as if yeast causing bread to swell. As Charles Ellicott notes, “This is not a personal thing.” It is a state of lawlessness which is working, and which will eventually be revealed.

This mystery is then sharply contrasted to the word “revealed” which is found in verses 6 & 8. There is a time when the lawlessness will come forth to effect its purposes on earth. It will be when the Antichrist is revealed, because he will then embody this lawlessness. This working of lawlessness, however, is kept in check until the appropriate time.

At some point, the restraining force of verse 6 will no longer restrain. As it says, “only He who now restrains *will do so* until He is taken out of the way.” The words “will do so” are supplied by the translators for clarity. The use of the masculine word “He” is based upon the masculine, singular article in the Greek.

In verse 6, the restraining force was described with a neuter article, “that which restrains.” That is converted now to a masculine noun. The question is, “Who is He?”

The NKJV capitalizes the word. This is a presupposition that it is speaking of the Holy Spirit. Others continue to translate this as “the one,” “he” (not capitalized), “that which,” “the person,” etc. Each translation is based on a best guess of the nature of this “restrainer.”

But Paul uses the masculine here for a reason, and so it is not appropriate to continue to translate it in the neuter. Further, this cannot be a “person” in the regular sense. The restraining has gone on for millennia. It is also not something belonging to the lawlessness. To be restrained is an external force, not an internal one.

Therefore, it appears that the NKJV is correct in their translation. This is God who is restraining. However, and more specifically, it is the restraining power of the third member of the Godhead – the Holy Spirit. One analysis is that the restrainer is the

church itself, but as the word is masculine, it is more appropriately the One who is intimately identified with the true church.

The Holy Spirit is given to all who believe in Christ (Ephesians 1:13, 14). As this is so, the church is involved in the restraining process, but it is the Holy Spirit who is the one who actively restrains the lawlessness. And He will do so “until He is taken out of the way.”

What this means is that there is a time when the Holy Spirit’s restraining influence will no longer be effected. A releasing of the restraint will come about, and then only will the lawless one be revealed. What is certain then is that if the Holy Spirit is taken out of the way, the church too must be taken out of the way.

If the effect of the Holy Spirit is to end, and the church were to remain, then the “guarantee” of the sealing of the Spirit which Paul notes in Ephesians 1:14 would not be a sound “guarantee” at all. We would be left abandoned. This is completely contrary to the nature of God and His word.

Thus, this taking “out of the way” of the Holy Spirit is simultaneous with the taking away of the church at the rapture. Both occur, and only then will the mystery of lawlessness (and thus the Antichrist) be revealed. This will be explicitly stated in the next verse.

Life application: Are you a believer in Christ? If so, you are sealed with the Spirit. There is a time when the Spirit will be taken out of the way. But God will never leave nor forsake His people. Thus, the rapture is implied in today’s verse. And it is a moment prior to the revealing of the Antichrist and the seven years of tribulation on earth. Why would you look to determine who the Antichrist is? He is a part of a mystery not yet revealed. Rather, look for Christ – our hope of glory.

Lord God, the promises of Your word are so very wonderful. You have, even from the first pages of the Bible, shown that we will someday be restored to a land of perfection and delight. How wonderful it will be. All the things that tire us and wear us out will be forever forgotten as we search out Your infinite glory. Surely You have wonderful things in store for those who trust in You as You have revealed Yourself in Christ Jesus. May that day be soon. Amen.

And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. 2 Thessalonians 2:8

“And then.” In Greek it is *kai tote*. It is correctly translated... “And then.” So here we have a clear sequence of events –

- 1) The Restrainer (meaning the Holy Spirit, and thus the body of believers whom the Holy Spirit has sealed) will be “taken out of the way.”
- 2) And then the lawless one will be revealed, which will be in conjunction with...
- 3) The tribulation period (the day of Christ/the Lord)

The timeline is set. There is no reason at all to debate who the Antichrist is, and there is no need to wonder if Christians will have to endure some (mid-trib) or all (post-trib) of the tribulation period. Paul is the one to define these things. Going to the words of Jesus in the synoptic gospels to determine the timing of these events is inappropriate, because Jesus is not speaking to the church about these things. He is speaking to Israel about things which will affect them, including the tribulation period.

In using the words of the gospels to form a prophetic timeline for the church, one mixes dispensations. In doing so, a convoluted theology will always result. Stick to the epistles of Paul for proper church-age doctrine.

It is only after the removal of the Restrainer that “the lawless one will be revealed.” It is this Satan-filled person “whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth.” This is alluded to by John in the book of Revelation –

“Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations.” Revelation 19:15

Isaiah 11:4, which Paul is actually loosely citing, is another reference to this –

“But with righteousness He shall judge the poor,
And decide with equity for the meek of the earth;
He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth,
And with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked.”

One can see that this doesn’t merely mean that Christ will exhale and the Antichrist will evaporate. Rather, the symbolism of the sword and the rod reveals a destroying weapon which will come against the forces of Antichrist and destroy them all. They will be destroyed so easily that it will be as if He simply breathes out and they are vanquished. The details are explained in Revelation 19:19 & 21.

It also is further defined by Paul with the words, “and destroy with the brightness of His coming.” The supposed power and majesty of the Antichrist will pale in comparison to the glory of Christ Jesus. After defeating the armies gathered together to make war against Him, it then says in Revelation 19:20 –

“Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone.”

Bad times lay ahead for this worker of iniquity. Instead of ruling the world, he should have been reading his Bible. Jesus said as much to us in Matthew 16:26. There he asked an obvious question, “For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?” The answer is, “None.” This vile person will have gained the whole world, and yet his soul will be eternally condemned. Not a very bright choice in the end.

Life application: The words, “And then” which open this verse show us that the Antichrist will only be revealed after the rapture of the church. Let’s not worry about who he is. All the idle speculation in the world on this matter is simply wasted time. Instead, try something new and fun... try going on out telling someone about Jesus. The hour you spent watching a video about the Antichrist is an hour that may have made an eternal difference in someone’s destiny.

Heavenly Father, for those of us who are redeemed by the blood of Christ, should we keep this a secret? Should we fail to tell others about the very thing that brought us back to You? Help us to set our priorities properly, and to be willing to simply open our mouths and speak. A moment of sharing may make an eternal difference in the life of another. Help us to speak! Amen.

The coming of the *lawless one* is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, 2 Thessalonians 2:9

Paul now uses words that are more than just descriptive talk about the Antichrist. Instead, they are given as a contrast to the coming of Christ in His power. The Greek word for “coming” is the same often given concerning the second coming of Christ, *parousia*. It is a word which indicates an arrival, or an advent.

Paul uses this word to contrast the two arrivals. The coming of Christ is according to the redemptive working of God; the coming of the Antichrist is according to the destructive

working of Satan. One results in salvation for His people; one results in destruction for those who follow him.

It is a coming which Paul, as noted, does more than merely describe, but rather purposely contrasts to Christ. He will be revealed “with all power, signs, and lying wonders.” Scholars argue over the placement of the word “lying.” Does it only describe “wonders,” or does it describe all three of the aspects given? The most likely answer is that it describes all three. This is how, for example, the Holman Bible translates it (translating the word as “false”) –

“The coming of the lawless one is based on Satan's working, with all kinds of false miracles, signs, and wonders.”

As Satan is the father of lies (John 8:44), the working of Antichrist fits in perfectly with the one from whom his workings are derived. Each of these three descriptors has been used when speaking of Jesus, such as in Romans 15:19 (and elsewhere), and so applying them to the Antichrist as “false” workings, gives us the needed contrast to see how much greater Christ is.

Being God, and possessing God’s unlimited power, Christ Jesus displays that power perfectly. His signs are true, and they are a confirmation of His place within the Godhead. And His wonders are intended to bring glory to God. On the other hand, the power of the Antichrist is limited. It is a false power, merely granted to him until the fullness of judgment has come upon the world.

At that time, it will be shown ineffective against Christ Jesus. His signs are false, proving that his power is not godly, but Satanic. And his wonders are intended for self-glorification, not the glorifying of God. Everything about him is a cheap knockoff, and it will eventually be proven as such.

Life application: How easily people are deceived into believing lies. Even Christians are duped constantly by those who present false gospels (Galatians 1:6-8), false doctrines (Romans 16:17), false displays of power (Benny Hinn), and false predictions (the rapture did not happen on 23 September 2017).

How easy then it would be for Christians to believe the false presentations of the Antichrist. But such will not be the case. God will keep His people from such lies. For now, the cure for being duped by false teachings is to KEEP YOUR NOSE IN THE BIBLE. Read! Study! Show yourself approved! KNOW YOUR BIBLE!

Lord God, Your precious word, and experience in life as well, shows us that even those who are saved can easily be deceived by false gospels, false doctrine, false displays of power, and false prophecies. It is a chronic problem as we fail to rightly apply the word to our lives. The cure is found there though. You have given it to us for right doctrine and holy living. What a shame we watch TV instead of reading Your word! Help us to get over the stupid and hold to the good. To Your glory we pray. Amen.

...and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. 2 Thessalonians 2:10

The words, “and with all unrighteous deception,” are tied into the previous thought. Paul had just said that when the Antichrist comes, it would be with “all power, signs, and lying wonders.” Along with that, he will bring “all unrighteous deception.” The thought expands the previous three points.

Everything about the Antichrist will be filled with unrighteous deception. In this, there is deceit being worked out, and that deceit is specifically for the purpose of committing unrighteousness. This will be evidenced then “among those who perish.”

This is speaking not of those who commit the deception, but of those who are the objects of it. They will be utterly deluded by the wiles of the Antichrist. Instead of looking for God, they will have their eyes fixed on this person, the one who most wholly manifests and embodies Satan. They will believe the lie and they will be condemned for it. As Paul says of them, “because they did not receive the love of the truth.”

The “love of the truth” is speaking of the gospel of Christ which alone can save the soul. The word “because” gives the sense of judicial standing. They had, in fact, been offered the truth, but they turned it down. These people entered the tribulation period because they had refused to check on whether the Christian message was true or not. They will continue to refuse the message which will obviously be received by some who will not take the mark of the beast.

A testimony to the truth will stand, but they will willingly refuse it. This is not at all a matter of predestination such as Calvin would teach, stating that they are condemned apart from hearing the truth. Rather it is a willing refusal of the truth.

This will be seen further as the next verse is introduced. For now though, Paul simply declares the fact that those who follow Antichrist will not receive the love of the truth,

“that they might be saved.” The obvious implication is that if they did receive it, they would be saved.

Salvation because of the truth of God in Christ does not end with the rapture of the church. Instead, it is that which alone can save, at any time and in any dispensation. However, these people will willingly receive error and falsity rather than accept the simple gospel – salvation is by grace through faith. Thus, their condemnation is just.

Life application: The words of this verse are true even today. There are countless false religions and cults out there who strive against God, introducing error and falsehood into their theology. But the truth of the message of Christ is available for any who will simply pick up the Bible and read it.

But the general condition of man is to follow deception rather than truth. One must willingly put aside self, accept that we have no merit before God, and receive the simple gospel. If we fail to do this, we remain enemies of God, and our condemnation is just.

Lord God, it is pretty obvious that the natural human condition is to follow a path which is contrary to You. We tend to insert ourselves into any hope of salvation, as if we can somehow merit Your favor. But Your word shows that salvation is completely apart from our merits. Instead, we are to receive the work of Jesus by faith, and then to trust that it alone is sufficient for our salvation. May we never trust in our own merits. Instead, may we simply call out for Jesus, and continue to trust in His work to carry us home to You. Thank You for what He alone has done! Amen.

And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, 2 Thessalonians 2:11

“And for this reason” is given based on what had just been said in the previous two verses. Antichrist will come according to the working of Satan. He will be infused with Satan’s power, signs, and lying wonders, as well as with all unrighteous deception. This will be “among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.” Because they preferred the lies and false powers of Satan over the truth, a natural response result. It is that “God will send them strong delusion.”

The Greek literally reads, “a working of error.” It is an active power of misleading, and it is ascribed to God. However, as a Hebraism, it doesn’t require actual direct, positive influence by God. A classic example of this process is found in the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart in the Exodus account, prior to the actual exodus from Egypt.

Carefully following along in that account, different words are used to describe this hardening process. God acts, Pharaoh responds. Each step Pharaoh is progressively built up in the hardness of his own heart. It will often state, "...but Pharaoh hardened his heart." And yet it states at other times, "But the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh."

It is this process which will come about in the people of the world. The "working of error" will be begun by God, but it will be responded to by the people in a way where they carry the blame for their actions. To understand this, we can use a boxing match as an example.

Boxer A wants to defeat his enemy, but he wants to do it in a particular way, demonstrating that he has total control over the match. He goes into the ring, and actively throws a weak, ineffective punch. The opponent perceives this as a foe who is not up to the challenge. He takes the offensive, expending energy which should be kept in reserve. Boxer A responds with a bit more force, but still with a perceived ineffective approach.

The foe hardens his heart and comes back with his own elevated response. This continues, step by step, exactly as it did with the Lord and Pharaoh. Pharaoh was lulled into complete destruction because of the incremental nature of the war against him. Boxer A eventually destroys his foe because his foe has slowly grown more frustrated, and thus more reckless as the match intensified.

In the end, Pharaoh was willing to do the unthinkable by driving his army between walls of water in order to pursue his enemies. The working of error on God's part was fully effective in allowing Pharaoh to utterly destroy himself and his army. Boxer A stands over his opponent who is down for the count.

This is how God works in such matters, and there are other such examples in Scripture, each given so that His enemies "believe the lie." God does not lie, but rather, the lie is formed in their own minds by accepting the situation around them as if it is within their control, when in fact it is completely within the control of God.

This is important to understand, because there were those under Pharaoh who understood what was happening. They told Pharaoh that what was occurring was "the finger of God" (Exodus 8:19). They also implored him saying, "Do you not yet know that Egypt is destroyed?" (Exodus 10:7). And when Israel went out of Egypt, a mixed multitude went with them, understanding that the Lord was leading them.

Such instances show us that what will occur is God-directed, and each person will have to make his own choice. The majority of the earth will follow Antichrist and be destroyed; self-destruction will come upon them.

However, the Bible speaks of a “great white multitude” who will come out of the great tribulation who are comprised of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues (see Revelation 7). They will not be caught up in the “working of error” that comes upon the world, but rather they will be willing to die for the God they had once rejected but came to realize was the One true God.

Life application: That which has been will be again. In order to understand what lies ahead, we can look at what has already occurred. The Bible shows us the depravity of man. It shows us the hardness of the human heart as well. But it also shows us the remedy for these things. It is to love the truth, and to trust in Christ Jesus, the Lord. In this, man can and will be saved.

Lord God, You certainly work in all of our lives at times, calling us to You through subtle means in order to wake us up from our spiritual slumber. For those who are wise, they will look at what occurs and seek to find out the truth of the Source. Help those of us who are saved to keep our eyes open to these things. And for those who do not yet know You, give them the wisdom to stop... and contemplate what has occurred so that they will then turn and seek You out. May it be so! Amen.

...that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness. 2 Thessalonians 2:12

“That” is referring to “God sends them a strong delusion” of verse 11. As noted in the previous verse, the “strong delusion” or literally, the “working of error” will be begun by God, but it will be responded to by the people in a way where they carry the blame for their actions. God is not purposefully sending people to hell. He allows them to make their own beds, but He provides the opportunity for them to do so. This is actually confirmed in the coming words of this verse.

“They all” is speaking of those referred to in verses 10 & 11. Paul says (according to this translation) “that they all may be condemned.” The word “condemned” here is incorrect, as is the term “damned” used by the KJV. The Greek word *krinó* simply means “to judge.” Condemnation may be implied here, but it is based on judgment on those “who did not believe the truth.” Here is the key to the entire passage, belief.

God does not ask the world to do great or fantastic things in order to be saved. He simply asks for faith. No matter how great or how fantastic our deeds are, they can never replace faith in what He has offered. In demonstrating faith, it then conveys the fact that God is righteous. In accepting this, we then should naturally desire to pursue Him in this capacity. But because of unbelief, those who are to be judged “had pleasure in unrighteousness.”

Such a delight in that which is opposed to righteousness is incompatible with what is true, moral, and holy. Instead of lacking understanding what is right, they simply desire what is morally perverse; they believe the lie. It is a willful rejection on their part, and it is what condemns them.

It is completely unnecessary to find an active sending of delusion by God into the minds of man in order for him to be judged. Rather, God provides the opportunity for those who willingly reject Him to receive what they deserve.

Life application: What does God desire from you? He simply asks for faith in what Christ has done. From that springboard, we should naturally desire to be like Him, to follow Him in righteousness, and to be holy just as He is holy.

If we fail to do these things, it does not negate that we demonstrated the faith that saved us. If it were to do so, then we would not be saved by grace through faith. Our salvation would still be conditioned on what we do. Have faith, and then be responsible enough to exercise that faith in right living.

Lord God, how weak we are in our natural selves that we would see what Christ has done, accept it by faith, and then be unwilling to do our best to emulate Him and be obedient to Your word! You save us by Your grace through faith, and so help us to live out that salvation in a manner which is holy, pure, and acceptable to You. And in order to do that, we must know what You expect. And so give us the desire to pick up the Bible, read it, and apply it to our lives. Amen.

But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, 2 Thessalonians 2:13

Here we have Paul, after his detailed discourse on end times events, going back to a train of thought from the beginning of the epistle, and then expanding on it. In verse 1:3, he said –

“We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other...”

In the same type of fashion, being bound to giving thanks, he begins with, “But we.” There is an emphasis on the word “we” which is given to contrast Paul and his associates with those mentioned in verses 10-12.

The contrast, though, is actually made between those mentioned and the Thessalonians who, along with Paul and his companions, are set apart from those who are lost. This is seen at the end of the clause, “But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you.”

Paul has written of those who would be lost, and why they would be lost. He would only do this as one who was setting himself apart from that group. His words here unite the Thessalonian believers into that same setting apart. This is first evidenced by the words, “brethren beloved by the Lord.”

First, they are “brethren.” Secondly, they are “beloved by the Lord.” The word “beloved” is in the perfect tense, showing its completed nature. They have been beloved by the Lord, and they are beloved of the Lord. This is essentially the same phrase that he used of them in 1 Thessalonians 1:4 where he used the word “God” instead of “Lord.” Thus, one can logically make the connection that in Paul’s mind, Jesus the Lord is God.

It is this Lord, who is God, that Paul continues his thoughts with. He states, “because God from the beginning chose you.” This is the only time in the New Testament that the Greek word translated as “chose” is used concerning God’s election. It is used in the Greek Old Testament (such as in Deuteronomy 26:18), which is surely what is on Paul’s mind, concerning Israel having been chosen as the Lord’s peculiar people.

As this is not the ordinary word when speaking of election, implying His eternal selection, it means that He has “taken for Himself.” He has adopted them according to His eternal purpose. There is a group of people who would come to Him by faith in Christ, and He has adopted them as His own.

This was His eternal selection, and it was “from the beginning.” The words here mean “from eternity.” God knew before He created what would come to pass, and who would make certain choices, and He elected those “for salvation.”

God chose to save certain people in a certain way, and He did it before anything was created. "I will save, and this is how that salvation will occur." Paul then goes on to explain that process which is first "through sanctification by the Spirit."

The words here actually read in the Greek, "in sanctification by the Spirit." Sanctification is the mode of salvation. Christ did the work and, in our faith in that, we are sanctified, thus bringing about our salvation.

The Spirit of God will sanctify those who are to be saved. This is necessary because being saved implies that one is first fallen. One must be saved "from" something and "to" something. Man is fallen and separated from God; man must be sanctified in order to be reconciled to God. This is the work of the Spirit, but it is based on "belief in the truth."

Belief in the truth is man's part in the equation. It is here contrasted with those who "believe the lie" of verse 11, and "did not believe the truth" of verse 12, of this same chapter. There, those who did not believe were then said to be condemned. Here, those who believe are said to be saved.

In both, man is involved in the process (synergism). God elected those who would believe; He elected them to be sanctified by the Spirit; and He elected them to be saved. God chose the means of salvation, and He laid it out for those who would hear and heed.

Condemnation already exists (John 3:18), but it is also a choice when one hears and rejects the truth. One willingly stays in his default position of condemnation, or that person willingly chooses the path of salvation and is saved.

The doctrine of monergism is not at all evident in this process. It is true that the choice of how salvation would come about is solely up to God, but the choice allows man to freely choose that "how." It also allows him to willingly decline the same if it is presented to him.

Life application: Salvation is a gift. A gift is not forced upon a person, but it must willingly be accepted. The Person and work of Jesus Christ is that gift, and it is offered to you to accept or reject. Be wise; be discerning; choose life.

Lord God, You have offered a Gift to the people of the world. It is a Gift of life. A gift which is forced on another is no gift at all, and so You have given us a choice to receive or decline Your Gift of Jesus and His finished work on the cross. Those who receive this are

the elect of God and will never be separated from You again. New life has come! Thank You for offering the Gift. May many people reach out and receive it today! Amen.

...to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Thessalonians 2:14

Look carefully at the progression of thought that Paul has said in the previous verse and in this one –

- God from the beginning chose you
- For salvation
- Through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth to which He called you
- By our gospel

He uses a neuter relative pronoun, translated here as “which.” As the preceding nouns (salvation, sanctification, and belief) are either feminine or masculine, he is not referring to any of these individually, but rather to all of them together. As Charles Ellicott notes, it is “the general state of life which is compounded of these three notions – ‘to which thing He called you.’” He then notes that, “The election or choice takes place in eternity (2 Thessalonians 2:13); the call is at that point of time when the men first hear the gospel. (See Romans 8:30).”

This wonderful insight, which is confirmed in the tense of this relative pronoun, clearly shows that the Calvinist view on predestination is wrong. Though God chose in eternity past, the process is also clearly based on a presentation of the gospel in the present of the believer. God calls each by the gospel. If no gospel presentation is given, salvation will not occur. As Paul says, “...faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17).

Paul shows that God calls us to salvation, sanctification, and belief by the gospel, “for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” There are actually several different possibilities as to how this final clause is translated –

- 1) “...for the purpose of an acquisition of glory to Jesus Christ.” This seems to indicate that the gospel was given in order for Jesus to accumulate glory. It is true that Jesus indicates that He is glorified in His disciples in John 17:10, but this doesn’t appear to be Paul’s intent as he writes.
- 2) “...for a glorious possession of Jesus Christ.” This would show that the intent of our salvation and sanctification is so that we would become subjects of Christ in

His kingdom. It is true that this will occur. Christ is our Head and we are His people, but once again this doesn't seem to be what Paul is thinking of.

- 3) "...to be possessors or sharers in the glory of Jesus Christ." This appears to be what is on Paul's mind. He relates this idea to the saints at several times in several distinct ways. For example, in Romans 8:17 he says that we will be "heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ." Paul is an apostle who is, at this time, telling his readers what lies ahead for them because of the process that they have gone through, and continue to go through.

Life application: God has a plan. It is a plan which was in His mind before He created anything. We must understand this, and in understanding it, we can be assured that everything is exactly as it should be. However, we also need to understand that His plan is being worked out in the stream of time.

The means of salvation is given in His word – a presentation of the gospel message. That message must then be received by the hearer of it. There is no external forcing in this process, but rather a free-will decision by the believer.

Neither Paul, nor any other writer in the Bible, ever hints that we are "regenerated in order to believe." Be sure to open your mouth and speak. People need to hear the word, and they must respond to what they hear.

Lord God, thank You for having granted us the choice to believe Your message or to reject it. This then places all the glory on You for those who receive it, and it places all the responsibility for failing to act upon those who reject it; thus giving You the glory even in their rejection. Nobody will be able to say, "It's not fair!" on that great day when we stand before You. You are sovereign, and You are gracious. Glory to You in the highest. Amen.

Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle. 2 Thessalonians 2:15

The word "Therefore" is especially given based on Paul's words back in verses 1 & 2 of this chapter. However, he has supported those words with everything else since. He said then to them that they should not be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from them. In other words, "Anything you have heard which has not been given to you by an apostle, or which cannot be confirmed as apostolic in nature, is to be rejected outright."

After that, he defended this position by reexplaining what he had already explained to them, confirming that what he said was to be taken as authoritative. Anything contradictory to that was a false message.

He then says again, “brethren.” He is addressing them as fellow-believers in Christ, and he wants them to be sound in their doctrine and faith. For this reason, he continues with the words, “stand fast.” To stand is to be sound, fixed, and firm in doctrine.

They were not to waiver and be “soon shaken or troubled” when some Johnny-come-lately passed along something which was not in accord with sound apostolic teaching. To support this, he continues with, “and hold the traditions which you were taught.”

“The traditions” are those things which they first heard from Paul and his associates, and which became ingrained in them. The word “tradition” here means “from close-beside.” It indicates something passed on from one generation to the next. As the apostles gave them their first instruction in Christ, it was this, and this alone, which they were to hold fast to.

The word translated as “hold fast” means to seize hold of and to put under one’s control. This is what they were to do with the word given to them, and this is what we are to do with the word, once delivered to us, today. We are to hold fast to it, and we are not to be shaken by every wind of doctrine which passes by. How sad that Paul’s words are pretty much completely ignored by countless cults and unsound churches today!

He finishes with the words, “whether by word or by our epistle.” This is referring to the “traditions you were taught.” Those things which are apostolic in nature, and which were either in writing, or which would be codified in writing by other apostles, form what we call “the word of God,” or “the Holy Bible.”

Once the word was recorded, and canonicity was determined, the word was set. What we should ask God when we hear someone claim divine inspiration over anything we hear is, “Shall I accept this, or will I stand fast on Your word alone?” It is a question each person must answer on his own. Is God’s word sufficient for our life and practice, or is it not?

Life application: This verse again shows us the truth of the doctrine of apostolic inspiration. It further implies then that when the apostolic age ended, no further revelation is given for our doctrine and faith. Paul’s words show that people should only hold on to what can be confirmed as from this divinely inspired process.

It is exactly the reason why we are to never accept prophetic utterances, or claims of divine inspiration, by anyone else. The church age is literally spattered with false teachers who have claimed divine inspiration (and who continue to do so today), but none of their messages are to be considered authoritative or acceptable.

Lord God, You have spoken. Your word is set, and it is settled. May we never accept any supposed “word” from You by those who would attempt to add to what You have once and for all time delivered to the saints for their life, doctrine, and practice. Help us to be secure in our minds that the sixty-six books of the Bible are all-sufficient for us to know Your intentions for us, and to reject anything else which claims divine inspiration. You have spoken, and we have a sure, precious, and understandable word. Amen.

Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, 2 Thessalonians 2:16

In these words, Paul presents a prayer which is connected to the exhortation he just made. He asked those in Thessalonica (and thus us!) to “stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle.” In response to these words, he issues a prayer to confirm this in them. In a rather unusual construction, he says, “Now may the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father..” In this, he begins with Jesus, and only then does he move to the Father. This is the opposite of 1 Thessalonians 3:11 –

“Now may our God and Father Himself, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way to you.”

The reason for placing the Lord Jesus first is because of words which follow, and which describe the work of the Father. However, in doing this, there is the implicit hint, as is seen so many times elsewhere, of the equality of the Persons within the Godhead. The word “and” between the two shows that they are separate and distinct (a Godhead is thus identified), and that they are equal within this Godhead. As this is a prayer made directly to Jesus, as well as to the Father, it recognizes the equality of the two.

With that understood, it says that it is God the Father “who has loved us.” God the Father is the Source of the love which is being expressed in the thought. His love for us is what then leads to Paul’s next thought, that He has “given us everlasting consolation.” These words describe a type of comfort which is enduring, and which cannot be robbed from us.

No matter what happens, our comfort will endure. How untypical of all other faiths where adherents place their lost loved ones in the grave, and who then mourn their eternal loss. But this is completely untrue with the Christian faith. As Paul noted in verse 13, God chose us “for salvation in (as the Greek reads) sanctification by the Spirit.”

This is the everlasting consolation now being referred to. Those in Christ are saved, and they have been sanctified. Every terrifying thing described earlier in the chapter (and elsewhere in Scripture) concerning those who fail to come to Christ has no bearing on us. Instead, we have the everlasting consolation “and good hope by grace.”

The words in Greek read “in grace.” This denotes the mode of the everlasting consolation and good hope which we have been given. Grace is the element in which it occurs and is experienced. The words here then correspond to verse 13 –

“God from the beginning chose you for salvation in sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.”

“God and Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope in grace.”

We are chosen for salvation in sanctification, and we are given everlasting consolation and good hope in grace. This shows us the extent of the Father’s love for us. He sent Christ Jesus to accomplish these things for us in order to reconcile us to Him, and it is this Gift of Christ Jesus which is a reflection of His unlimited grace. Praise be to God.

Life application: If you struggle with the concept of the Trinity, that’s OK. It is a difficult concept for us to grasp. Not fully understanding something, however, does not mean that we cannot accept it as true. The word of God clearly teaches this doctrine, and so we are expected to accept it by faith, even if we do not fully understand it. Have faith in God’s word, and do not let others bring you into error because they are unwilling to take God at His word.

Lord God, we may not understand everything presented in Your word, but we can still have faith that Your word is true. And this isn’t a naive trust in a dubious thing. Rather, it is trust in a word which has confirmed itself countless times. It has been proven true so many times that we would be ignorant fools to not accept the parts we don’t yet get. Our faith is grounded, and our hope is sure. We step into Your revealed light when we enter into the pages of Scripture! Amen.

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

2 Thessalonians 2:17

The verse here is divided in a way where it cannot be taken alone. The word “comfort” is based on Paul’s previous words – “Now may our Lord Jesus Christ, and our God and Father ... comfort your hearts.”

The word “comfort” here is tied into the intervening words of that same verse which said, “who has loved us and given *us* everlasting consolation and good hope by grace.” There, the word “consolation” is a noun form of the closely corresponding verb “comfort” here.

As those in Thessalonica were facing trials and troubles, Paul is praying that they will be comforted by the comfort which exists in the Lord Jesus Christ, and in God the Father. He then adds in, “and establish you in every good word and work.”

To be established is to be firm and fixed. It is to be unyielding when difficulties or confrontations come. The word in Greek means to stand against vacillation. And Paul applies it to “every good word and work.”

The word is the word of God, and the doctrine that flows from it. The work is applying that doctrine properly and in accord with the word. It then is a thought more fully fleshed out by Paul in Ephesians 4:13, 14 –

“...till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; 14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting.”

The words of the word, combined with a right application of them, will lead to good works which are suitable and pleasing to the Lord Jesus Christ, and to God the Father. And this is exactly what is implied here in Paul’s choice of words in the Greek.

The verbs are in the singular, but the corresponding pronouns are “the Lord Jesus Christ” and “God the Father” of verse 16. Both are united in the use of the singular verbs. Thus, once again, there is the implication of the divine unity between these two Persons. It is another reference to the nature of the Godhead.

Life application: These words were written to those in Thessalonica, but they are a part of the word of God. And so, Paul's words to them are still a prayer of Paul to us today. They are a hope which endures through the ages of the church age, and they are words which we can rely on in our own times of trial and trouble, knowing that eons before we existed, the faithful apostle was making this petition to God on our behalf as well.

Glorious, precious, and wonderful heavenly Father! It is good to give thanks and praise to You. You have established us, You have granted us so very much good, and You are merciful and forgiving of our failings when we submit ourselves to You through Christ our Lord. Surely we are undeserving of the least of Your favors, and yet You have lavished us with abundance. Thank You for Your kind hand upon our lives. Amen.

CHAPTER 3

Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run *swiftly* and be glorified, just as *it is* with you, 2 Thessalonians 3:1

Chapter 3 begins with the word, “Finally.” Though there were no chapter and verse divisions in the original books of the Bible, this is a logical place to begin the chapter. He has finished the main purpose of the book with its theological discourse on the timing of the end times.

As was seen, those in Thessalonica had been disturbed by input from someone telling them that the day of the Lord had already come. Paul ensured them (and thus us!) that such was not the case, and that we could know how this was true. He gave a concise and precise detailing of the sequence of end-time events so that we wouldn’t be duped by others, and so that we wouldn’t waste our time speculating on who the Antichrist would be.

After opening the final section, he immediately again says, “brethren.” This is the fifth of seven times that he will say this in this short book. Thus, he is ensuring they don’t forget that they are “beloved by the Lord” (verse 2:13). Despite the things which may come against them and afflict them, they are united in Christ as brethren. With that understanding, he then petitions them for prayer.

As brethren, this is right for him to ask, and for them to respond. Paul was known for keeping his beloved brethren and their churches in prayer (such as in verse 1:11), and he anticipated that they would likewise be in prayer for him and those with him. And so, with specificity, he names the type of prayer they seek. It is “that the word of the Lord may run *swiftly*.” His request is reflected in the 147th Psalm –

“He sends out His command *to the* earth;
His word runs very *swiftly*.” Psalm 147:15

The request of Paul and his companions is that their work of spreading the word would be swift, that it would not be in any way hindered, and that it would be without any type of anxiety or stress which could slow down its progress. And in addition to this, he asks that they pray that the message conveyed will “be glorified.”

This is not asking for Paul and his associates to receive distinction or honor, but that the message itself would be honored. The desire is for the exaltation of the gospel message,

and thus for the honor of the Lord upon whom it is based. The thought is reflected in Acts 12 where it says that “the word of God grew and multiplied” (verse 24). This was the continued hope of Paul and his company.

Finally he notes, “just as *it is* with you.” If they wanted to know exactly what to pray for, all they needed to do was to look at how the word had taken hold in their own church. It had been presented, received, and brought honor to the Lord. This was the hoped-for condition of each place to be encountered by Paul’s group.

Life application: There are churches in towns and villages around the world, but there are still places where the word has not been conveyed. Churches are set groups that generally don’t go far beyond their own places of meeting. But then there are missionaries who are there specifically for that purpose.

Even though churches don’t head out from their home areas, they can, and should, support those who do. This is one of the major purposes of the church. We are to ensure that we don’t stagnate behind walls, but that we continue to refresh ourselves and the gospel through the support of missionaries.

Lord God, we who live and work in various towns and cities enjoy gathering together to worship You and hear Your word explained, but we are also grateful for those who go out into the mission field, forsaking home and comfort, in order to help others establish what we already possess. Today, we pray for those who are willing to do this, knowing that they face times of trial, difficulty, and loneliness. Be with them and guide them. May their message run swiftly, and may Your word be glorified through them. Amen.

...and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith. 2 Thessalonians 3:2

The words here closely reflect those of Romans 15:31 –

“...that I may be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe.”

Paul was constantly hemmed in and persecuted by those who lacked faith. In particular, it was the non-believing Jews. They hounded him, they attacked him, and they did their best to destroy him. This was also true among the Gentiles, but more often than not, their attacks were first spurred on by the unbelieving Jews. The book of Acts carefully details these things, and those in Thessalonica were perfectly aware of this, having seen it in their own city firsthand. Acts 17 records this.

His request here, “that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men,” is given to describe the request for prayer of the previous verse. He had made his request, now he gives specific details concerning that request that they can plug into their prayers.

The Greek actually has an article in front of “unreasonable.” Thus, he is identifying a specific group of people. It says, “and that we may be delivered from the unreasonable and wicked men.” The word translated as “unreasonable” is rather rare, being used just four times. It is an adjective which signifies “out of place,” and thus “warped.”

There was a specific group of people, warped in their thinking and action, and who were also wicked. Paul desired that prayer be made against them in order to hinder them from effectively stopping the swift and effective transmission of the word of the Lord. To complete his description of them, he says, “for not all have faith.”

Again, there is an article in the Greek which is lacking. It says, “the faith.” People may have faith but are misdirected in their faith. He is unconcerned with their faith and is targeting his concerns concerning their lack of “the faith” in Christ Jesus. Their lack of this particular faith is what makes them harmful. Not only do they have faith (in something else), but they also use the faith they have against “the faith” which Paul proclaims.

Again, it seems certain that those of the Jewish faith are who Paul is referring to. He was one of them and their culture, and he had once worked with all of his might to destroy the faith which is found in Christ. He knew the passion these enemies of the gospel possessed, and he knew that prayer was effective in working against their success.

Life application: Paul asked for prayer. Paul wrote about his prayers. The many examples of prayer that he gives us are intended to show us that prayers are not unnecessary, and that they are effective. It may seem pointless to pray to the God who already knows all things, but it is not. We pray and He hears. A prayer which is not uttered is a prayer which will probably not be acted upon.

Lord God, help us to improve our prayer lives. Your word shows us that prayers are both expected, and that they are effective. Should we presume to know more than the word You have given us? Rather, help us to live in accord with Your word, and to be people who pray with conviction, and in hopes of a favorable response. And should the response not be favorable, help us to understand that Your wisdom is far higher than ours. In the end, we will see why all things have transpired as they have. Amen.

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

2 Thessalonians 3:3

Here Paul makes a play upon the words of the previous verse –

“for not all have (the) faith.”

“But the Lord is faithful.”

He is taking the same word and applying it in two ways. He does this also in Romans 3:3. Here, he is in essence saying, “Not everyone possesses the faith. Despite this, the Lord is faithful.” The implication is that for all who have the faith, He is and always will be faithful. That is then explained in the next words. The Lord, who is faithful, “will establish you.”

The word indicates “to firmly plant.” He had just prayed for the Thessalonians in verse 2:17 using this exact same word. Now, having made that prayer, he notes that it will be as he has prayed. This is based upon the faithful nature of God towards those who are in Christ Jesus.

And more than being established, he says that the Lord will also “guard *you* from the evil one.” Some translations simply say “evil.” However, with an article before evil, it should be translated as “the evil,” or “the evil one.” The personification of evil, or the source of evil, meaning the devil, is what is being presented. Again, like the word “faith,” he is using the same word as in the preceding verse, translated there as “wicked,” in order to make a play on the words –

“and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked (evil) men.”

“the Lord will guard *you* from the evil one.”

Note how he had just asked for prayers for himself and those with him in verse 1 & 2, but how in this verse he has spoken only in the second person. He immediately reverted from his needs to a note of comfort for his beloved brethren. The attitude is selfless and “other” directed. He trusts that the prayers of the church will be effective for him and his companions, and so he redirects immediately for their sake.

Life application: It is good to remember, even when we are in times of need, to extend words of comfort and edification to others. If we can trust that those we hope to receive comfort from will have us in prayer, then they are doing what they can for us. With this

assurance, we should remember to build them up in their own walk through this world of trial and difficulty.

Most wonderful Lord! It is such a blessing to be able to share in prayer with others in our times of need. At various times, we all have needs. When it is our time, how wonderful it is to know others are praying for us. And so, when their time comes, help us to be mindful to also pray for them. And surely You are attentive to all prayers of Your redeemed people. We know this is true because we have the perfect Mediator who never fails us! Thank You for this. Amen.

And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, both that you do and will do the things we command you. 2 Thessalonians 3:4

Paul just said, “But the Lord is faithful.” In agreement with that, he continues with, “And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you.” Paul’s confidence is not at all in the faithfulness of those in Thessalonica. Instead, it is a confidence for them which is grounded in the Lord. This is the same thing that he relays to others, such as the church in Philippi –

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

Paul understood the wretched state of the human heart, and its ability to not effectively work out anything but evil. However, when one is in Christ, there is the truth that Christ’s power and purposes can be realized in us in a way which was previously not possible.

This doesn’t mean that saved believers are automatons which can rely on Christ doing everything for us, but that when we are willing to submit to Him, we are able to do what He expects of us. Our human will is not excluded from the process, and we can choose to work out evil even after coming to Christ. But if we desire to do as He wills, He will ensure that it is possible for us to do so.

Paul then states what that confidence in his hearers is – “both that you do and will do the things we command you.” It is the same formula which is found throughout Paul’s writings. God presents an offer; man receives the offer. It is a synergistic working of God’s divine offer and assistance being coupled with man’s human efforts.

This does not mean that man's works are credited for salvation. God has done all the work, but man must respond to the offer by exercising faith. Romans 3:27 excludes faith as being considered a work. After salvation, our proper walk in Christ follows this same pattern, but it then involves human effort beyond faith. We must "work out [our] own salvation with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12).

As far as the word "command." It is a word which signifies a watchword or command that has full authorization because it has gone through the right and correct channels. Paul's commission is specifically noted in Acts 9. He (and those with him) had the full authority of Christ Jesus to make such commands as authorized by the Lord. He will begin to give some such commands in just two verses.

Life application: As always, Paul notes that we must actively do something in order for God's will to be realized in our lives. The Lord makes it possible for us to be pleasing to God, but we still must do in accord with that which the Lord makes possible. Obedience to the Lord's will must be an active part of our lives, or we will not be pleasing to the Lord.

Heavenly Father, in Christ, You have given us the ability to be pleasing to You, but we also must respond to that divine assistance. To be saved, we must demonstrate faith. To walk rightly, we must demonstrate obedience. Help us to do according to Your will in all things by granting us the wisdom to rightly discern what Your will is, and then to act upon it. To Your glory we pray. Amen.

Now may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ. 2 Thessalonians 3:5

An implicit reference to the Trinity is stated here. "Now may the Lord direct your hearts" is a work which properly belongs to the Holy Spirit. "The Lord" here would be, in Paul's mind, the Greek rendering of the divine Hebrew name of God. In the Greek, it is a general word for God, but the order of the verse is showing us that he is thinking of the sacred name first, which he then breaks down into the Persons and workings of the Godhead.

"Into the love of God" gives the sense of, "So that you may love God." This doesn't mean that they didn't yet love God, but Paul is petitioning that they will always be directed to love God. It is comparable to saying to a couple on their wedding day, "May the power of love direct your heart into the love of one another."

They are already in love, but the appeal is that they will always be in love and drawn into the love of one another. It is as if the love is a safe haven from all the cares and worries which could otherwise steal away the joy of being united. And to ensure that this love is strengthened so that it can be realized, he finishes with “and into the patience of Christ.”

Christ was able to face His trials patiently because His heart was fully directed to the love of God. But it is also true that His patience in those trials made it possible for Him to be directed into the love of God.

The two work hand in hand to form a complete whole. In our trials, we need to be patient, understanding that God has a good end for us, even if the immediate moments are seemingly unbearable. And, in our trials we need to direct our hearts into the love of God so that we may be patient through the trials. Each is a part of the whole, and together they will keep us on the right path towards the good end which lies ahead for the people of God.

And these things are needed based on what he had said in the previous verse. He had just said, “And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, both that you do and will do the things we command you.” By having our hearts directed into the love of God, and also by having the patience of Christ, we will certainly have the desire and the ability to do the things we are commanded to do. This is Paul’s heartfelt prayer for those in Thessalonica (and thus us!).

Life application: Times of trial are certain to come, but if we are properly directed, and if we are determined to patiently endure them, then those trials will not destroy our faith. Instead, we will be able to maintain it through the trials. If we are lacking these things, we should pray for the Lord to direct us and establish us in them. He will graciously grant such a request, as He has done for the countless faithful who have gone before us.

It is a tough life, O God. Even on the best of days, we can get misdirected and tossed about in a moment. In this, we can quickly lose our direction. How much truer is this when extended times of trial and trouble cross our path. In such times, help us to remember that You are there. Direct our heart to loving You even more and give us the patience which Christ Himself demonstrated in His own hour of trial. Surely, as He prevailed, so we can too. Help us in this, O faithful and glorious God. Amen.

But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us. 2 Thessalonians 3:6

In verse 4, Paul noted his confidence that the Thessalonians would do the things that were commanded them. He now gives such a command, specifically stating it as such. But he again calls them “brethren.” It is a command based on their place in Christ, and one which is intended to ensure harmony within that placement. To further bolster this, he then says, “in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” This is what made them “brethren” in the first place.

Because of their standing in Christ, and under the authority of that name which was given to Paul (and those with him), he issues his first of a series of commands and exhortations. This first command is “that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly.” The word he uses is only found elsewhere in 2 Corinthians 8:20. It gives the sense of “taking precaution” against. In modern lingo, we might nod towards such a person and quietly say under our breath, “Watch out for that guy.”

This is not a formal excommunication, but it is a strong warning to not get tangled up with such a person. Most churches of any size at all have one or two people like this. They are given instruction, and they refuse to apply it to their lives. Thus, they are disorderly.

The word so translated is an adverb found twice, both in this chapter (see verse 11 for its second use). As an adjective, it is used in 1 Thessalonians 5:14 where it is translated as “unruly.” It signifies someone who walks in an insubordinate manner towards the word of God and is thus fruitless. He lacks proper discipline.

The reason he is this way is because his walk is “not according to the tradition which he received from us.” The “tradition” Paul speaks of is an authoritative standard which is expected to be passed on and adhered to. As it says, it is “from us.” It is that which is apostolic in nature. As it is, it ultimately receives its authority from Christ the Lord.

Today, with the Bible complete, there is no such tradition which is not found there. In other words, with the ending of the apostolic age, any other “traditions” are from men and not from God. They may be useful, but they do not carry the same authoritative stamp. Papal edicts, books of discipline, etc., can be amended. The word of God cannot. It is this word of God which carries the “traditions” which Paul speaks of here.

Life application: Churches often place high value on written codes which are extra-biblical, using them for the practical guidance of their gatherings. This is rather unfortunate, as has been seen among many long-standing denominations in recent years. One example is the Book of Discipline found in the Methodist church. It was given

with guidelines concerning morality which were originally closely aligned with biblical standards.

However, those standards have lately been changed, or are being evaluated for change, to allow all kinds of unbiblical perversion. Instead of going back to the source, meaning the Bible, they have altered the traditions which were man-given. This is error. Either the Bible is the rule and guide of our walk, or we have no proper source by which we will conduct ourselves in accord with God's standards.

Lord God, codes of conduct, papal edicts, books of discipline, etc., can all be amended or superseded, but the Word of God stands forever. Help us to redirect our lives away from such things, and to correct our walk before You based on Your word alone. There is way too much perversion in churches today because they have decided upon their own moral standards instead of relying on what You have instructed. And with this turning from Your word, only a sad expectation of wrath and indignation can be expected. Wow! We sure don't want that! Help us to stick to Your word for our holy conduct. Amen.

For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you; 2 Thessalonians 3:7

The word "For" is given here based on the words of the previous verse which exhorted those in Thessalonica to "withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly..." It then is explained in this and in the coming verse. Now, he says, "For you yourselves know."

As he has done on numerous occasions, Paul calls to memory what occurred in the past. Each time he does this, it solidifies his argument and his exhortations, because there can be no doubt of what he relays. He and his associates acted in a certain way, and they saw it with their own eyes.

Understanding this, he goes further by saying that they know "how you ought to follow us." The meaning of "follow" is "to imitate." In the manner that he and his fellow-workers acted, the church should also act. The missionaries had set the standard, and those ministered to should take note and follow accordingly. This "how you ought to follow us" is actually described by him in his first letter to them –

"You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe; ¹¹ as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children, ¹² that

you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.”

-1 Thessalonians 2:10

The final words of the verse, “for we were not disorderly among you,” are not meant to contrast for the purpose of condemning. Rather, they are words of contrast for the purpose of exhortation that they would choose and walk on the right path.

The Greek word he uses which is translated as “disorderly” is the verb form of the adverb he used in the previous verse which was also translated as “disorderly.” Thus, he is saying, “Just as you are to withdraw from those who are disorderly, you should emulate one who is marching in proper order, for we were not walking in a disorderly way among you.”

He is using a negative in order to form a positive example in the eyes of the Thessalonians. Like his description of himself in his first letter, he will next again provide concrete examples of the conduct he and his associates demonstrated while he was among them.

Life application: Paul’s words are as much to us as they were to his original audience. If we want to live properly, all we need to do is go to the Bible and apply its precepts to our own lives. This is especially so with the words of Paul’s epistles. They are our “marching orders” during this dispensation. All Scripture is profitable for this purpose, but his words are especially directed to this Gentile-led church age.

It is such an honor to know that we can come to You, O God, and to ask You for our heart’s desire because of the mediation of Christ. There is no longer any fracture between us. The veil is rent, and we have full and unfettered access to Your throne of grace. Help us to be confident in our prayer life and help us to use this privilege and honor wisely so that our prayers will be pleasing to Your ears. Thank You, O God, for our intimate line of communication in Christ. Amen.

...nor did we eat anyone’s bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, 2 Thessalonians 3:8

These words are not just descriptive reminders, but they are instructive as well. Paul just said, “For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us.” By stating what they did, he is instructing what those in the church should do. He began that instruction by stating they were “not disorderly.” Now he continues in this verse with, “nor did we eat anyone’s bread free of charge.”

Paul and his companions didn't just come to town, proclaim the gospel, and then say, "As your instructors, we hope you will provide for our means while we are among you preaching and teaching." Instead, he uses a Hebraism – "eat anyone's bread" – to show that they tended to their own basic needs.

"Bread" here is used as a metaphor for that which sustains life. Not only did they shun pay for their instruction, but they also even refused to accept a gift (free of charge) for the most commonly needed of provision. Instead, they "worked with labor and toil night and day."

They were willing to expend themselves for the sake of those they ministered to rather than accept what they were actually rightfully due. Elsewhere Paul says, "The laborer *is* worthy of his wages" (1 Timothy 5:8). He also says, "Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches" (Galatians 6:6).

However, it is obvious that Paul and his associates perceived that there was a streak of slothfulness in the Thessalonians which needed to be rebuked through living example. As Charles Ellicott notes, "There is a flavour of scorn in St. Paul's disclaimer of such a parasite's life."

In order to quench this attitude among the Thessalonians, they worked all the more heartily, even night and day, in order to be living examples of how to conduct one's affairs.

This is all the more certain, because he and his associates were willing to receive pay at other churches (see 2 Corinthians 11:8). But for those churches which needed proper guidance in how to conduct life's affairs, they would go the extra mile in being the right example. This was so "that we might not be a burden to any of you."

In seeing this example, they would hopefully learn to rightly live as well. Instead of being freeloaders, they would learn hard work, industry, and making one's own way in life. This will continue to be seen as Paul continues.

Life application: With the advent of liberal policies, and handouts from the government, being a freeloader has become an acceptable part of society. However, it is not an acceptable attitude according to the Bible.

The book of Proverbs, in particular, has strong words against such people. They are leeches that need to be scraped off from the bloodied flesh they cling to, and they need to either fend for themselves, or suffer the consequences of their own idleness.

Lord God, Your word teaches that each man is to be industrious, and to earn his own way. We are not to be freeloaders who rely on others, whether individuals or governments. It's unfortunate that the policies of those in power have led to a generation of freeloaders and leeches. We would pray that this would change. If a man has two working hands and two working feet, he needs to be responsible for his own way in life, or he needs to be cut off as a pariah. You have made us to be industrious, and so help us to be just that. Honorably working in society – helpful to others and glorifying of You. Amen.

...not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us. 2 Thessalonians 3:9

One can see the importance of apostolic authority in Paul's words. He has explained why he and his associates did not impose upon those in Thessalonica. It was because they did not desire to be a burden on them. However, he now notes that they had every right to do so with the words, "not because we do not have authority." They had a legitimate right to partake of anything any other apostle was entitled to. They bore the word of God, and they transmitted it to the church there.

The implication is that bearing the word of God carries this authority. As the word of God comes through the apostles, only those who bear the word of God, as given by the apostles, have such a right to the same authority. And as there is only one word of God, only those who hold to it alone have a true right to what accompanies its transmission.

Someone who stands in the pulpit and dismisses the word of God, or who adds to it, has no authority, or has abused his authority. He is to be rejected. This is all implied in how Paul reveals these truths. The word of God alone is our authority within the church. He, and his associates, possessed that authority, but they did not exercise it. This was, as he says, "to make ourselves an example."

The words "to make" means "so that we might give." They were setting themselves as examples for those in Thessalonica to learn from and to emulate. They had purposefully acted as they did with the intent of teaching those who were slothful among the church.

They were to learn by it in hopes that they would emulate what they saw. This is revealed in the words, “of how you should follow us.” Paul and his companions had set themselves as a model, and this model was expected to be applied to the lives of those in the church.

What is seen here is a letter that centers on the coming rapture of the church, and then the coming Day of the Lord. It is to be inferred that there were congregants who were sitting around doing nothing because it was so much easier to speculate about the coming of the Lord than it was for them to get up, get out, and work. And it was also so much easier than studying the word, gaining sound theology, and actually applying Scripture to their lives.

They were the forerunners of today’s YouTube prophecy addicts who spend all their time in the realm of “goofy” instead of in the realm of reality. They didn’t want to work, and they used the soon-coming of the Lord as an excuse to not do just that. They didn’t want to strain their minds on sound theology, and they mishandled Scripture in order to avoid learning to rightly apply it.

Before YouTube, one can see them setting up stalls on the road and promoting their wares for everyone to see. Instead of a DONATE button, they had a DONATE slot. Instead of computer graphics, they had their wife paint a bizarro screen at the back of the stall.

And instead of an open Bible, filled with study notes, they listened to words of false teachers (see verses 2:1-3), or they simply made things up out of their own heads, passing it off as the truth of God. Paul is (and will continue) telling them that this is not appropriate. They needed to get out there, work, and stop idly speculating about something which is known but to God alone.

Life application: Paul set the example of work and industry. Stop watching 60 hours of YouTube a week, get up, get out, and get to work. And in your free time, read the Bible.

Lord God, Your word sets forth an example for Your people that we are to be hard working, self-sufficient, and industrious. It also informs us that this is so because idle speculation about the Lord’s return is unproductive, it is time-wasted, and it is harmful to the body. This can all be inferred from Your word, and some of it is explicit. Help us to get a grip, get off YouTube, and get to work – always anticipating, but never expecting the great Day when Jesus comes to take us home. Whoo hoo. Oh what a day that will be. Amen.

For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat. 2 Thessalonians 3:10

Food: When you're hungry, nothing satisfies like food. Paul now ties this wonderful necessity in with an oft-dreaded word, "work." We both need food, and we enjoy food. We often do not like work, but according to Paul, we need to work if we want that other thing we need and enjoy, "food." He links the two together as if they are one.

This verse seems to be tied back to verse 6 –

"But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us. ... For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat."

And so, "For when we were with you," is first based on that command, and then it was practically lived out by Paul and his associates in verses 7-9. Next, "we commanded you this," is tied to what is spoken at the beginning of verse 6, "But we command you."

This is now repeated in the epistle to remind them of what they had said. While in Thessalonica, it was evident that some were unwilling to work, but instead were sponging off the kindness of others. "Gee, we're all Christians here, you wouldn't let a hungry brother down, now would you?"

This is something that is still seen 2000 years later. Some people use their status as Christians to guilt other Christians into tending to them, even for their basic necessities. It happens to individuals, and it happens to churches. There are sponges all over the place who take advantage of this. But Paul advises the Thessalonians (and thus us!) to not be duped into this kind of thing. He says quite clearly, "If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat."

It is not an optional thing, and Paul actually presents nothing new. Solomon speaks of the need to be industrious on several occasions, and he tells the sad results of being a lazy-Joe –

Go to the ant, you sluggard!
Consider her ways and be wise,
7 Which, having no captain,
Overseer or ruler,

⁸ Provides her supplies in the summer,
And gathers her food in the harvest.
⁹ How long will you slumber, O sluggard?
When will you rise from your sleep?
¹⁰ A little sleep, a little slumber,
A little folding of the hands to sleep—
¹¹ So shall your poverty come on you like a prowler,
And your need like an armed man. Proverbs 6:6-11

In Paul's words then, there is nothing out of the ordinary, nothing un-Christian, and nothing harsh. Rather, there is wisdom which is intended to 1) Get lazy people up off their duffs and out into the world to earn their bread, and 2) Save industrious people from being seduced by those in category 1.

We should not feel the slightest bit guilty when a person actually has to miss a meal because he spent the day at the beach or whittled his time away on an iPad.

Life application: For obtaining life-prolonging food-intake, get to work.

Lord God, what a treasure it is to open Your word and find in it the words, "If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat." Wow! That takes the burden off those who are willing to get out and earn their own way. They don't have to be used by sluggards and lazy people, and they don't need to feel guilty when a lazy-Joe misses a meal or two because play is more important than work to him. Whoo hoo! Those who are capable, but don't get to work, can entertain us with growly-tummy noises. We'll pray they learn their lesson and get to work! Amen.

For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies. 2 Thessalonians 3:11

The words "For we hear," are an indication that some were at the church in Thessalonica, and they were personal witnesses of those who were being lazy and sponging off of others. It was probably the carriers of his first letter back to the church. They took the letter and had a visit, probably a bit horrified that those who had accepted Paul's gospel presentation and instruction were already departing from it and receiving false words from others.

The source may have been someone from the church itself as well, dispatched to get Paul's thoughts on what was going on. Either way, he has been giving direction,

instruction, and correction based on this saddening news, which is “that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner.”

He has already instructed that the church members were to “withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly” among them (verse 3:6). Now he shows that this wasn’t just an arbitrary statement of instruction, but a preparation for specific accusation, which is now given.

Those who were disorderly (and they were already there in the church) were to be withdrawn from. Here they were, repeating false doctrines which had been received from unreliable sources, and they were spreading them around like a growing virus. The way to end this was to end any contact with them.

While most in the church were being productive, living their lives out in a sound and reasonable manner, these sensationalists were “not working at all.” Instead, they were “busybodies.”

In the Greek, there is a play on words which is wholly lacking in the English translation. The word “working” is *ergazomai*. The word “busybodies” is *periergazomai*. It is used only here in the Bible, and it is a superlative word. *Peri* means “all around,” and so one gets the idea of “working all around,” and thus meddling.

Instead of doing what should be done, they had their noses in the work of everyone else, fixating on what they were up to. In this, one can almost see then what they would do next. “Gee, you are too busy making a living. Don’t you know that the Day of the Lord has come (or the rapture is going to happen on 23 September). Why are you wasting your time? But, seeing as how you have your wages coming in, why don’t you give me a bit for lunch...”

Whatever attitude was demonstrated in these people, it included a theological misunderstanding (or intentional falsification) of the sequence of events concerning the return of Christ and the tribulation period. In their mishandling of what was to occur, they were not being productive, and they were leeching off of those who were. And doesn’t this sound like the rapture date-setters of today!

They put out video after video, monetizing those videos, robbing people of their time which would otherwise be spent more productively, and leading those uninformed in Scripture down unsound paths of doctrine. And with the link to the DONATE button,

they rake it in at the expense of people who are too unclear in their life and doctrine to see they are being duped.

Paul has set the timeline of events in his writings, but because people are unwilling to study the word, they get caught up in the false teachings of these people who should otherwise be, as Paul directly commands, stayed away from. How sad it is that people won't take the time to simply learn the Bible.

In this, they will stop speculating, and they will learn to devote their time, work, and resources to productive things. Rapture-schmapture. It will happen when it happens, and so we can cherish the thought in our heart without becoming duped into false hopes by these abhorrent people.

Life application: Still watching videos and reading commentaries about a particular date for the rapture? Try reading your Bible instead.

Lord God, there have been enough false-predictions about the return of Jesus that maybe it's time we should just stop paying attention to this nonsense. Maybe... maybe we should instead just read our Bibles each day, and then get out to our jobs, be industrious and hard working there, and then devote our free time to something worthwhile, like telling people about their need for Jesus. What an innovative idea... maybe we should. Amen.

Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread. 2 Thessalonians 3:12

It is of note that Paul uses the word translated as "command" a total of 12 times in all of his letters, and yet four (one-third) of them are in 2 Thessalonians, and all four are in this chapter. It is, therefore, a clear indication that he is not just a bit miffed about the attitude of those sponging off of others in the church, but he is highly upset about it.

These, the forerunners of "rapture date-setters," are uninterested in hard work and sound doctrine, and they are an annoyance to the body. Each time they believe someone who says, "The day of the Lord has come," and then pass it on to others, they cause harm. Each time they say, "The rapture will be on this day because..." they cause people to stop their productive lives, and to hope on that which is not based on any type of reality.

Paul had already told the church the things he knew of concerning the end-times when he was with them (2:5), and then he repeated that in this letter. No “word from the Lord” will come along and change these things, and no special insights into when these things will occur will ever be forth-coming, thus contradicting Paul’s words of this letter. Therefore, it is a waste of time and energy to focus on them. Instead, he directs his words to this particular group saying, “Now those who are such...”

It is those who are not willing to work but are spending all their time being unproductive and passing on unsound theology that he is writing to. Instead of living productive lives, they sponge off of those who do, and sway them with words which have no basis in authoritative words of the apostles (today, those words of the apostles which have been recorded and saved are a portion of the Bible).

It is to these that he says, “we command and exhort.” A command is a directive – “You are to do this thing.” The words require attention and action. However, he immediately follows up with “and exhort” in order to lessen the chance of angry rebellion by those he is commanding.

These are, after all, date-setters who are easily miffed over being told their doctrine is unsound. Thus, the word “exhort” is given as a friendly, hopeful way of them taking the “command” in a positive way instead of stomping off in an angry huff.

Remember that it is the same group of people whom he commanded to be withdrawn from in verse 6. Those words were for the people of the congregation who weren’t caught up in the idle speculation. These words are for those who are. “The congregation is to withdraw from you, but you can be brought back into a right relationship with them if you stop this nonsense, get to work, and earn your own bread.”

This is still applicable today. We are to withdraw from rapture date-setters until they stop their disturbing posts and learn to be productive. They can then be brought again into a right relationship with the church.

And to bolster his words, Paul continues on with the note that the command and exhortation is “through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Some manuscripts say “in” instead of “through,” but the title is where the main focus is.

Whether Christ directly gave this command (which He in fact did in Acts 1:7, 8), or whether Paul is simply giving it under inspiration as an apostle, the words are given by

authority of the name of the Lord. And the command and exhortation is “that they work in quietness and eat their own bread.”

“Folks, it’s time to stop listening to non-biblical things, to stop spreading those things, and to get to work. At the end of the day, you’ll have your pay, and you can go buy your own food with it. Stop interrupting the church.

Stop idly speculating on the day of the rapture. Get wisdom. Get sound instruction. Stand approved before the Lord.” All of this and so much more is tied up in Paul’s words. There are souls who need to hear about Jesus, and it won’t get done while people are watching videos about the rapture coming up on Friday.

There are people who see Christians watching those videos and who laugh at them each time another date passes by without anything happening. And there is the name of the Lord which is brought to shame each time this occurs.

Life application: If you see what appears to be a really interesting looking video about the prophetic timeline pointing to the coming tribulation and the rapture of the church, don’t watch it.

Heavenly Father, You have a wonderful plan of redemption laid out for the world. It’s been going on for a long, long time. We are living in a small moment of that plan, and we have this one short chance to be a productive part of it. Help us to be properly directed in our attitude towards the gospel. Help us not to waste our time on idle speculation about the rapture or the coming tribulation period, but to quietly tuck those things into our minds, and keep on working diligently in our daily lives as workers at our jobs, and as Christians with a duty to share the good news of redemption in Christ. Amen.

But *as for* you, brethren, do not grow weary *in* doing good. 2 Thessalonians 3:13

Here we have a subtle jab at those referenced in the previous two verses. Paul has said that he who “will not work, neither shall he eat.” He then built upon that, pointing out these sluggards and what they should do in verse 12. Now, he gives a contrast to them with the words, “But *as for* you, brethren.”

In other words, he is making a distinction between the two. He has cumulatively called all (both hard worker and sluggard) “brethren” quite a few times already, but he has told

those who are diligent and industrious to “withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us” (verse 6).

He acknowledges that they are brothers, but now in this verse he gives them a poke by using the term “brethren” as applying to those who aren’t like them. There are brothers, and then there are brothers! The intent here is to convict those who are sitting around watching crazy YouTube rapture videos all day, and who then pass on this false information to the church, to stop doing this, to get to work, to be examples of Christ, and to be obedient to His will.

After this direct and convicting opening, he then tells the “brethren” that they are to “not grow weary *in* doing good.” The word translated as “weary” is used once by Luke and five times by Paul. It gives the sense of fainting.

Paul is exhorting the brethren to not allow anything to interfere with doing good, even exhaustion itself. The word translated as “doing good” is used just this once in the Bible. It comes from two Greek words which together give the sense of “doing good that inspires others to rise up and do what is noble” (HELPS Word Studies).

This exhortation is tied back to the “patience of Christ” of verse 5. Just as Christ continued in His ministry, never faltering in His work, so we are to likewise act. And we are to do so by inspiring others in the process.

The contrast between the sluggardly rapture/Day of the Lord date-setters and those who are acting properly is crystal clear. While they are doing nothing of value, wasting time, and harming the walk of others, those who are obedient to the word are productively working, making the best use of the time they are allotted, and their work is inspiring others on to their noble work as well.

Life application: Are you a rapture date-setting sluggard, or are you a person interested in the whole counsel of God, and in sharing your interest in the word with others? Paul has set a distinction between the two. If you are the former, he tells the rest to withdraw from you. If you are the latter, he tells others to emulate you. Which will receive commendation from the Lord on that Day? Hmmm... I wonder which.

Lord God, our main hope and goal in this life, and in everything we do, should be to receive commendation from You on the Day we stand before You. What a waste to think that You would save us through the agonizing cross of Calvary, and then after accepting what You have done, fritter our time away doing nothing productive in return! Help us to

think this through clearly. This life is a breath and then it will be gone. We should endeavor to use it to Your glory right up until the end. Amen.

And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed. 2 Thessalonians 3:14

In these words, Paul is working for unity within the body, not division. But by calling for division from sluggards, it is a call for those who need to be withdrawn from to wake up from their slumber, get their act in order, and become productive, compliant members of the church.

It must be remembered that the entire discourse here is based on the fact that some in the church had been swayed by a false word concerning the end times (verses 2:1, 2). From that departure, they had become unproductive members of the body, lollygagging around, and interrupting a normal environment of right worship and proper daily life.

Understanding this, he begins the verse with, “And if any man.” This is the call for division in hopes of obtaining unity. The reason this is so, is that the person is already divided from the body in a general sense. He is not in accord with the rest, and so there is no point in allowing him to continue to be in fellowship with the church. The reason why he isn’t in accord with the rest is because he, as Paul says, “does not obey our word in this epistle.”

“This epistle” is based on apostolic authority, derived from Christ Jesus. Therefore, such a person is being disobedient to the word of God. This continues on today because the epistle has found a permanent place in the word of God. Therefore, the command applies just as much today as it did when it was received by the church at Thessalonica. And the instruction given is to “note that person and do not keep company with him.”

The word translated as “note” means “to set a mark upon.” The individual is to be highlighted as if branded so that we are constantly reminded of his errant ways. Until he is compliant, the note is to remain. It’s not enough to say, “Oh, he’s not holding to the word, but in this case, he has an interesting insight I think you should hear.” Instead, he is to be noted, and to be completely ignored.

As seen above, the main thrust of the letter concerns adhering to the word of God concerning end times. It is a call to not speculate on what belongs to the Lord alone (see Acts 1:7 and 1 Thessalonians 5:1).

As this is disobedience to the words of Jesus, and the words of Paul (who is Jesus' representative), we are to not keep company with date setters. We are not to watch their videos on YouTube, and we are not to attend their conferences, if applicable. Instead, we are to remain productive members of the church, not idle speculators wasting precious time which should be directed towards attaining spiritual maturity.

Paul's words, however, are certainly all-encompassing. Anyone who is not obedient to the words of his epistles – regardless of the infraction – is to be kept away from. Though the words here are centered on end-times date-setters, they must also pertain to all flagrant ignoring of church-age doctrine.

He then finishes up with an explanation of why he commands this with, "that he may be ashamed." In the coming verse, he will further define this, but for now, the intent is one of correction.

Rapture date setters shouldn't be applauded for their diligence in trying to determine when the rapture will be. They should be shunned for being an embarrassment on the body. Such is true with any infraction.

A brother who is sexually immoral is to be expelled from the body because he is bringing disgrace upon the name of Christ, and his actions are harmful to those who may think it is otherwise OK to act in this way. Such things should not be. The place to find out what is and what is not acceptable is the word of God. When it is not adhered to, action must be taken to restore order and to maintain holiness.

Life application: Some people seem to be beyond shame. They make stuff up out of their own heads, and they misuse Scripture willingly in order to appear super-religious. Whether they will acknowledge their infractions or not, we are given our orders – keep ourselves away from such people. Don't get caught up in that which is misdirected. Instead, grow in sound theology, and hold fast to the word of God!

Most wonderful God, how precious it is to be in Your presence. How good it is to know that You are here for Your people, and that You hear their prayers because of the offering of Christ Jesus. Now, help us to be obedient to Your word, to hold fast to sound doctrine, and to apply it to our daily lives. When we stand before You, it will all have been worthwhile if we pursue You now. May it be so in our lives. Amen.

Yet do not count *him* as an enemy, but admonish *him* as a brother.

2 Thessalonians 3:15

The Greek begins with “and,” not “yet.” There is no thought of bitterness or unkindness in Paul’s words already spoken, or which he now writes. Instead, this is a saving measure towards the wayward brother. Using the proper conjunction “and” shows that not keeping company with this person is actually an act of brotherly kindness. It is intended to correct his incorrect conduct and hopefully bring him back to proper conduct.

Understanding this, Paul says, “And do not count *him* as an enemy.” What is occurring here is Christian discipline, not warfare. This person is not holding to sound doctrine. He is misusing Scripture, or has been misled concerning Scripture, and has come to faulty conclusions about an issue.

This, in turn, has led him to lollygag around and not working. Such a person isn’t to be treated as an enemy, but rather as a misdirected brother. In order to correct him, he is not to be associated with, but at the same time, he isn’t to be treated like someone who is actually hostile to the faith. Rather, we are to “admonish *him* as a brother.”

Admonish means to correct, counsel, or exhort. We are to urge such people to turn and look for God’s best in their lives. Rapture date-setting doesn’t qualify. One misses out on life when he spends all his time speculating about the next prophetic event to occur.

Proper work habits are interrupted, family relationships suffer, and other people are brought into the same inane paths of futile speculation. None of this should occur, and such people are to be properly admonished, as brothers, to give up this avenue and pursue sound doctrine.

Life application: With the UNFRIEND option on Facebook, it is pretty easy to just cut people off without a care. This is necessary at times, but it can also be harmful as well. We need to ensure that we only take such measures towards other Christians if they are truly disruptive or passing on heretical ideas.

Otherwise, we should just admonish them to pursue right doctrine, and avoid otherwise commenting on their incorrect posts about the next rapture date or “sign in the sky.” Always attempt to use Christian courtesy when dealing with your fellow brethren.

Heavenly Father, in our modern world, we have the added burden of the dreaded “unfriend” option on social media. When it is used against us, it can bring about sad feelings of rejection. Understanding this, help us to be as courteous as possible to others before using this option ourselves. Help us to not divide Christian fellowship over minutiae, but instead to reserve that option for the truly offensive people who come into

our lives. Help us to strive for peace to the greatest extent possible as we live in Your presence. Amen.

Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always in every way. The Lord be with you all. 2 Thessalonians 3:16

Paul has given multiple commands and exhortations since verse 6. Now, he attaches a benediction to these by saying, “Now may the Lord of peace Himself...” He has been speaking of withdrawing from those who are disorderly. Now as a prayer that such will resolve this unhappy situation, he calls on the “Lord of peace.”

This phrase is unique in all of his writing. Elsewhere he says, “God of peace,” such as in Romans 15:33 and 1 Thessalonians 5:23. Thus, we have another implicit reference to the Godhead, ascribing to Jesus what was previously ascribed to God. This probably stems from Isaiah’s use of the term “Prince of peace” in Isaiah 9:6.

It is Christ Jesus who provides the peace of God. It is a peace which is more than just quiet, but wholeness of heart and soundness of mind. It is also the peace that extends to harmony between people. Paul asks that this fullness of peace be given to those at Thessalonica. As he says it, “always in every way.”

In adhering to the commands and exhortations, along with all of the other apostolic instruction, this will be possible. Obedience to the word of God is what will bring this about in their lives.

In completion of the verse, he then adds in, “The Lord be with you all.” This petition hearkens back to Matthew 28:20 where the Lord promised to be with his people always. In obedience to the word of the Lord, there is found the comfort of the Lord. How often people say, “I feel like the Lord’s presence isn’t with me lately.” More often than not, it is because there is some deficiency in their own walk.

The Lord has promised, Paul has petitioned, and the only thing to keep either from being effective must then be from our side, not the Lord’s. If we are walking obediently, and yet we still do not feel the Lord with us, then we need to draw near to the Lord who is already there.

In Hebrews 10:22, we are admonished to “draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith.” If the Lord seems distant, let us follow these words and correct the problem from our end. He has never left us!

Life application: If our spiritual walk is dry and barren, or when we feel that the Lord is distant, let us return to the word. Let us remember that He has given His promise to never leave us, and to never forsake us. With that in mind, let us then draw near to the One who is right there. Open those spiritual eyes and direct them to Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith.

Lord God, it is true that at times we find ourselves in a place where You seem distant. We wonder, "Why has the Lord drawn away from me?" But Your word says otherwise. For those in Christ, You have promised to never leave us. As this is a promise and a guarantee, help us to feel Your presence again as we draw ourselves near to You. There You are with us. All we need to do is realize this truth and rejoice in it. Thank You for the eternal surety we possess. Amen.

The salutation of Paul with my own hand, which is a sign in every epistle; so I write.

2 Thessalonians 3:17

"This salutation of Paul with my own hand," tells us that until this point he has had a scribe writing the epistle for him. It is at this point that he stopped his narration and said to the scribe something like, "Bentonious, let me have the quill to finish up the letter." Certainly not miffed at all because of writer's-cramp, Bentonious probably said, "It's all yours, fine Sir, finish away." The salutation of Paul was intended to keep from happening exactly what did happen, as noted in verses 2:1-2

"Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, ²not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come."

A handwritten salutation from Paul authenticated the letter so that there would be no mistake in whether it was valid or not. This is seen in his next words, "which is a sign in every epistle, so I write." Paul obviously wrote the concluding thoughts of the first letter to them, but he didn't highlight it at that time, but now he is doing so in order to keep from any future possibility of a false letter being received and accepted.

It is known from Galatians 6 that Paul had a unique style of handwriting which was with very large letters (Galatians 6:11). It is generally assumed that this was because he had poor eyesight. The reasons for this assumption are convincing. His handwriting would be very easy to recognize, and rather hard to forge. This was his mark of authorship, and the letter's mark of authenticity.

Life application: Nowadays, we send many emails, and our social intercourse is often reduced to short, rather impersonal, messages. From time to time, it should be our practice to take a moment and to actually write a note to those we cherish. In this, we go back to a more personal, even intimate, time where associations and friendships were recognized as such.

Lord God, You have created us to be personal, social beings. But our lives have been reduced to impersonal social media for the most part. We tell people we love them because they post friendly things and don't annoy us, but we just as quickly unfriend them when they say they voted for Senator Do-Nothing. Grant us the ability to be more personal to others than just a 100-character tweet. Help us to establish true and enduring friendships. Your word says, "A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity." Help us to be true friends and brothers. Amen.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all. Amen. 2 Thessalonians 3:18

Paul's closing words here are identical to those of 1 Thessalonians 5:28, except here he adds in the word "all." This is in line with his words of verse 16 of this chapter where he said, "The Lord be with you all."

This is especially important because he has censured some of the congregation for being lazy sluggards. Despite this, he has no ill will towards them, and the letter has been intended to correct their sloth. Should they fail, the congregation also has its orders to withdraw from them, but still admonish them as brothers.

Despite the addition of "all," as is in accord with all of his epistles, Paul's closing salutation is a blessing which is a petition for divine favor to be upon his audience. In the Greek, there is a definite article in front of "grace." Quite often English translations will insert "the" for clarity at certain points, but it may not be in the Greek. However, it is here.

"The grace" is different than saying something like, "May grace from the Lord Jesus be with you." Paul is asking for a divine impartation of this attribute of the Lord to rest upon those in Thessalonica (and thus us!) and to sustain them in their walk. It must be then considered that those who are not obedient to the epistle are to be excluded from this petition.

For example, in a similar petition for grace to be bestowed upon the congregation at Corinth, he wrote concerning a disobedient congregant, saying to "deliver such a one to

Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.” Until that person was willing to adhere to the sound instruction of the epistle, his petition for divine grace was most probably not intended for him.

And yet, at the same time, we all fall short of one precept or another. Therefore, it must be considered that it is for those who earnestly strive for adherence to it, even if they do fall short. Such is the nature of grace, undeserved merit. Paul, in one form or another, closes out every one of his epistles with such a note of request for this divine favor. Even the last words of the Bible are very closely aligned with his words here. There John writes -

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all. Amen.” Revelation 22:21

Finally, Paul closes the letter with “Amen.” In essence, “So let it be.” Paul has petitioned for grace upon his audience, and he then confirms that petition with assured hopes that it will be so.

Life application: The Bible, time and again, asks for an undeserved blessing to be bestowed upon those who pursue it, even if they fall short of what it states. Such is the nature of grace, and such is the nature of our gracious Lord. As you walk along life's highway, take time to contemplate the wondrous grace that has been lavished upon you. And then thank the Lord and praise the Lord for that same grace.

Lord God, we take the many blessings of this life for granted. At times we even act as if we deserve Your grace. But grace is unmerited favor, and so help us to realize this. May we look to each radiant day of sunshine as a gift. Every beautiful flower that opens is because of Your gracious hand. None of such things are deserved, but are instead kind acts from You, our loving Creator. Grant us wisdom to realize this, and to thank and praise You for each delight which fills our eyes, minds, and hearts. Amen.