

THE BOOK OF II THESSALONIANS

A Bible Student's Commentary
by
Bob Stewart

In concert with dedicated Bible students
choosing to be a part of this work and
to whom it is dedicated.

This study, as in all my work, is subject to revision as more is learned

II THESSALONIANS

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Introduction and background to the epistle

Acts, chapter eighteen, reviews Paul's stay at Corinth during his second missionary journey. During his ministry there, Gallio was in residence as pro-counsel to Achaia. A brother to Seneca the Stoic philosopher, (who was also tutor to the young Nero yet to come to power), Gallio's tenure during 51-52 A.D. under Claudius fixes Paul's ministry there in Corinth and the writing of this epistle as well as I Thessalonians.

After Paul had to leave Thessalonica and Berea to protect both himself and the new believers there, he arrived at Athens and sent for Silas and Timothy. Weeks later, Timothy did arrive at Athens with some brethren but Silas was not with them. He may have felt constrained to remain behind due to serious needs in one or more congregations in Macedonia. When Timothy arrived at Athens he brought news of the many difficulties the new church at Thessalonica was having. The church was comprised of a diverse membership that caused diverse thought to be sown among the saints there. In the congregation were Jews, both Hebrew and Hellenized, Gentiles, both proselytes, and "God fearers" as well as leading citizens both men and women (Acts 17:1-4). Foremost was the church's overwhelming concern for Paul and his well being. This concern was of such importance that it seemed to be affecting their walk with the Lord. They were looking to and depending upon Paul for their strength. To exacerbate the problem, the young church was suffering persecution, ridicule and internal conflict over their moral and spiritual walk, the destiny of those who had died in their faith in the Lord (perhaps due to the persecution) and eschatological matters regarding the how, when and if of Christ's return. Finally, there were those who were questioning Paul's claim as an apostle and the authenticity of his message. Some seemed to be infringing on the church, bringing a conflicting message, claiming authority and taking advantage of the church.

Rather than keep Timothy with him, Paul immediately sent him back with the report that he was doing well and that his ministry at Athens had been well received and he was going on to Corinth with some of the brethren to begin a work there. He instructed Timothy in how to deal with matters there and, apparently appoint some "elders" to lead the church (I Thessalonians 5:12-13). Timothy was to meet him at Corinth and if possible, bring Silas this time which occurred some two months later. Apparently Timothy and Silas were not able to answer all the questions the church had and had received conflicting reports about Christ's return and the disposition of those having died prior to His return. But they did report to Paul that the church was thriving and proclaiming the gospel to many who passed through this great trade city and doing well in their acceptance of one another, although problems still existed (as mentioned in the above paragraph) and they needed more specific counsel about how to handle them.

So Paul wrote I Thessalonians and noted that it was a corporate epistle as they all stood together in prayer and instruction for the church at Thessalonica. It was then sent to them by the hand of an unnamed, but highly trusted messenger, possibly Aristarchus. Aristarchus was from Thessalonica and became a life long associate of Paul's and one of his constant care givers. He

took the epistle to Thessalonica. In addition, others came along side Paul from the same region including Sosipater (Sopater) of Berea and Jason, host to the group in Thessalonica where he lived and was a “kinsman” of Paul. See: Acts 17:5-9; 20:4; and Romans 16:21) Any of these could have been the messenger as they were involved in Paul’s ministry from this time forward.

In any case, the messenger returned some two months later to Corinth and reported to Paul that there were still specific questions and problems that needed Paul’s direct attention. Further, the church had received either reports or letters purported to be from Paul that were causing confusion and conflict in the church (2:2). To authenticate his letters, Paul began the practice of signing his letters in his own hand and manner so any other supposed correspondence from him could be verified by comparison of handwriting (3:17). He also made it clear that when his fellow companions spoke, they were speaking on his behalf also, so they did not have to worry whether their instruction was apostolic. Paul even began to call them apostles as well (I Thessalonians 2:6). So with all this in place, Paul penned II Thessalonians in response to the word he received back from the messenger.

EXCURSUS – THE FULLER MINISTRY AT THESSALONICA

The letters of I and II Thessalonians and other texts referencing this ministry in Thessalonica give us a fuller picture of all that transpired during the months Paul and Silas were in the city and describe what happened thereafter. In summary we know these things:

1: The church at Philippi sent Paul financial support as well as an offering for the poor at Jerusalem. Paul, in accordance with the request of James, faithfully gathered funds for this purpose when he met with believers. This support could have come by the hand of Timothy. In Paul’s letter to the church of Philippi he notes,

“You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone; for even in Thessalonica you sent *a gift* more than once for my needs. (Philippians 4:15-16)

This reflects the faithfulness of those in Philippi, (not known for wealth – except perhaps for Lydia) as they sent gifts and offerings more than once.

2: Paul and Silas suffered considerable harassment and persecution before being “deported”. His letters to the Thessalonians tell us the story.

(I and II Thessalonians were written over a period of a year and a half while Paul was at Corinth in the latter part of 51 into 52 A.D.. They may have been his first apostolic epistles. We know the date because an inscription at Delphi notes the proconsulship of Gallio as being during 51-52 A.D., the same Gallio who is mentioned specifically in Acts 18:12)

“...for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for

your sake. You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit,..." I Thessalonians 1:5-6

"For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain, but after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, as you know, we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition. For our exhortation does not *come* from error or impurity or by way of deceit; but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who examines our hearts. For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed-- God is witness--nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority. But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing *mother* tenderly cares for her own children. Having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us. I Thessalonians 2:1-8

3: Paul and Silas took on work while at Thessalonica to support themselves.

"For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, *how* working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. You are witnesses, and *so is* God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers; just as you know how we *were* exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father *would* his own children,..." I Thessalonians 2:9-11

"Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you, nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we *kept* working night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you; not because we do not have the right *to this*, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, so that you would follow our example. For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either. For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread. II Thessalonians 3:6-12

4: Paul's teaching covered many things including the letter from Jerusalem (Acts 15).

"Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us *instruction* as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you excel still more. For you know what commandments we gave you by *the authority* of the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, your sanctification; *that is*, that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; *and* that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is *the* avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned *you*. For God has not

called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification. So, he who rejects *this* is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you. Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for *anyone* to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; for indeed you do practice it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more,..." I Thessalonians 4:1-10

"Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. Let no one in any way deceive you, for *it will not come* unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things?" II Thessalonians 2:1-5

"So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions (*paradosis*- "*that given over*" or "*a gift from or alongside*") which you were taught, whether by word *of mouth* or by letter from us. II Thessalonians 2:15

5: The church in Thessalonica suffered constant harassment and persecution after Paul left.

"For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, for you also endured the same sufferings at the hands of your own countrymen, even as they *did* from the Jews, who both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out. They are not pleasing to God, but hostile to all men, hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved; with the result that they always fill up the measure of their sins. But wrath has come upon them to the utmost". II Thessalonians 2:14-16

"We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is *only* fitting, because your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows *ever* greater; therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure. *This is* a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering. For after all it is *only* just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and *to give* relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed--for our testimony to you was believed. To this end also we pray for you always, that our God will count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power, so that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and *the* Lord Jesus Christ. II Thessalonians 1:1-12

6: Paul may not have ever visited the city again after being “deported”, and certainly had questions about a revisit in any case.

“But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short while--in person, not in spirit--were all the more eager with great desire to see your face. For we wanted to come to you--I, Paul, more than once--and *yet* Satan hindered us. For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? For you are our glory and joy. Therefore when we could endure *it* no longer, we thought it best to be left behind at Athens alone, and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith, so that no one would be disturbed by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we have been destined for this. For indeed when we were with you, we *kept* telling you in advance that we were going to suffer affliction; and so it came to pass, as you know. For this reason, when I could endure *it* no longer, I also sent to find out about your faith, for fear that the tempter might have tempted you, and our labor would be in vain. But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always think kindly of us, longing to see us just as we also long to see you,..." I Thessalonians 2:17-20, 3:1-6

7: The church at Thessalonica either wrote one or more letters to Paul seeking his teaching on different matters or sent messages.

“Therefore when we could endure *it* no longer, we thought it best to be left behind at Athens alone, and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith, so that no one would be disturbed by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we have been destined for this. For indeed when we were with you, we *kept* telling you in advance that we were going to suffer affliction; and so it came to pass, as you know. For this reason, when I could endure *it* no longer, I also sent to find out about your faith, for fear that the tempter might have tempted you, and our labor would be in vain. But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always think kindly of us, longing to see us just as we also long to see you, for this reason, brethren, in all our distress and affliction we were comforted about you through your faith; I Thessalonians 3:1-7

For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies.” II Thessalonians 3:11

8: Paul had difficulty writing letters, so he used an amanuensis and only signed them in his own hand.

“I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand, and this is a distinguishing mark in every letter; this is the way I write. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. II Thessalonians 3:17-18

END OF EXCURSUS

II THESSALONIANS

CHAPTER ONE

1:1-2

1: Paul and Silvanus and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: 2: Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1: This is exactly the same greeting with which he opens I Thessalonians. Again, it is a corporate epistle, although Paul is the chief author (2:5). His salutation of grace and peace to them from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ became common in Paul's writings. It soon became part of the tradition with which members of the church greeted one another. Grace and peace are seen as conveyed from both God and Jesus, placing them at the same level of authority.

1:3-5

3: We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is *only* fitting, because your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows *ever* greater; 4: therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure. 5: *This is* a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering.

3: In the time Paul had been physically absent from them (nearly a year) little had changed in that they were still undergoing persecution and difficulty. Yet they had grown in the Lord and in numbers as well as in their love for one another, for which Paul, Silvanus and Timothy were thankful to God. Paul expresses this as their "duty" or "obligation", that is, they cannot help but give thanks. It is appropriate and called for and they would be derelict not to do so.

4. "Speak proudly" - "εγκουχαομαι" (egg-kowk-ah-oh-mai) is used only once, here, in the New Testament with the prefix. It means to "boast" or "brag". "Among the churches".... This statement begs the question, "To what churches has Paul or the others been communicating?" So far, since Thessalonica, he has only been in Berea, Athens and Corinth. There is no record of any correspondence or visitation to any of these churches except his first letter to Thessalonica. References to the "churches of God" prior to this were in Judea, especially Jerusalem. Paul uses this term in this way in I Thessalonians 2:14. It seems that others like Timothy, Silas, or Aristarchus may have been the ones to speak thus, perhaps even at Philippi. The subject of praise and "boasting" is their perseverance and faith in the midst of persecutions. Persecution

seems to do more to strengthen one's determination to persevere onward than does an environment where no persecution is forthcoming.

“Perseverance” is “υπομονη” (hu-po-mon-eh), often translated “patience”. This is different than “μακροθυμew” (mak-ro-thu-meh-oh) meaning “long-suffering”. The word Paul uses means something like “continuing while under a heavy weight or trial”. The other word is essentially relational. Both words are used many times as part of Christian character.

5. Paul continues the theme of verse 4 on to verse 10 without a break. First, their perseverance in the midst of suffering is demonstration of their true faith. Second, in summary, their continued growth in their love toward one another as well as their faith - and in view of their perseverance, indicates that God's final judgment regarding both the redeemed and the wicked is righteous. This is explained in verses 6-7 to follow.

1:6-10

6: For after all it is *only* just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, 7: and *to give* relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, 8: dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9: These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, 10: when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed--for our testimony to you was believed.

6-7a: “For”..., a conjunction tying the previous thought to this one, and can also be translated “since” meaning, “because of this”. “...just...”, or “righteous” the antecedent being “righteous” in verse 5. The same Greek word is used. “...repay”...a strong verb meaning to recompense in like manner. “...affliction, afflict”..., is “θλιπσις”, (thlip-sis), the common word often translated “tribulation”. To the afflicted “relief” is given. It includes both the church at Thessalonica and the apostles who suffer regularly for the sake of the gospel and the churches. “Relief is “ανεσις” (ah-nay-sis) meaning “relaxation, release or freedom from a stressful situation”.

7b-8. The twofold “righteous judgment” of verses 6-7a is now described. It is initiated by the “revealing” of the Lord Jesus from “heaven”. “Revealing” is “αποκαλυψις” (ah-pock-ah-loop-sis). This the same word used for John's Book of “Revelation”. Nearly half a century later, John's book gives a stunning portrait of this event and its context in the finest traditional Hebrew apocalyptic literature. From heaven Jesus is suddenly revealed with His mighty angels in a flaming fire to bring “relief” to the saints and, at the same time deal out retribution to the wicked. It is as if He is hidden or concealed behind a “heavenly” curtain and then the curtain is withdrawn.

This “revealing” suggests both an unexpected and sudden event, the timing of which is a secret, or unknown to mankind. Jesus said it was unknown to Himself and to the angels, but only the Father had this knowledge (Matthew 24:36). However, the manner of this appearing is consistent in Jesus' teachings with that of Paul.¹

¹ Note: Matthew 13:36-43, 16:27, 24:29-31, 25:31-46; Mark 8:38, 13:24-37; Luke 9:26; (of interest perhaps also Luke 12:8-9). Note also Hebrews

God's "righteous judgment" is two fold, executed in "affliction" toward the wicked and "relief" toward the redeemed in that they will be glorified when He appears. This is a common theme in the Old Testament.² Jesus reflected this theme in the positive sense in Luke 14:13-14.

"Flaming fire". This is also an Old Testament portrait. In the Old Testament, God (Yahweh) is given the attributes of judging in or with "flaming fire"³ and the "mighty angels" are seen as belonging to Him in Psalm 103:20. These attributes are now given to Jesus at His coming. The "flaming fire" is representative of impending judgment.

"Dealing out..." – "administering from His hand". "To those ..." These two groups do not necessitate that these are somehow two distinct groups, although a debate exists over this, nor does it exclude any who are yet to hear or believe. It can be seen as a simple parallelism where Paul is describing these people two different ways so there will be no question or confusion, rather than cause question or confusion. If it designates two different groups, the natural conclusion in this context is that those two groups could be Gentiles and Jews.

9: The retribution that is dealt out to these faithless and disobedient sinners is the penalty of "eternal destruction". "αιωνιος ολεθρος" (i-oh-nee-ohs oh-lay-thros) is the Greek for this term and reflects the idea of the "age to come" as literally it translates ("destruction age").

"Destruction" can also be translated "death", "ruin" or "punishment". For believers the "age to come" is "eternal life" in contrast to that designated for the wicked in verses 6-9. There is a legitimate debate about the fate of the wicked in light of scripture in its Jewish context, as to whether the fate of the wicked is destruction or eternal torment as has become the general view of western Christianity. In any case, these who suffer this penalty will be "away from presence of the Lord and the glory of His power." There is no question that a separation from Christ's presence is assured. There will be no hope of fellowship with God or a second chance for redemption. Jesus is the world's second and last chance.

10: The time of this judgment and the dealing out of this penalty is when Jesus "comes to be glorified in His saints on that day". It is important to recognize that is a translator's choice as to use either "saints" or "holy ones" when translating the Greek word "αγιοις" (ha-gee-ois). The context is clear that these are people, not angels. Generally He comes "with His angels" but "for His saints". He is to be glorified "in" His saints, not "by" or "with" His saints. His "saints" are, as F.F. Bruce notes,⁴ "God's masterpiece". As such, the vindication of their faith and their rejoicing expresses glory to Christ. Psalm 96:11-13 is reflective of this theme, "11: Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; Let the sea roar, and all it contains; 12: Let the field exult, and all that is in it. Then all the trees of the forest will sing for joy 13: Before the LORD, for He is coming, For He is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness And the peoples in His faithfulness."

This is a similar picture to Paul's comment in Colossians 3:3-4, 3: "For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4: When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also

² See: Deuteronomy 32:35, 43; Nahum 1:2-6; Isaiah 66:6, etc.. Deut. 32:35 is also quoted in Romans 12:9 and Hebrews 10:30.

³ See: Isaiah 66:14-16, 29:6, 30:27-28, 30:30; Psalm 18:6-13; Deut. 33:2; Ezekiel 1:4-13; Daniel 7:9-10; and as if to answer any objection, John 5:27; Mark 8:38; Acts 10:42, 17:31, etc..

⁴ Word Biblical Commentary, Word books, 1982, volume 45, page 153, P 1..

will be revealed with Him in glory.” (See; comment on 7b-8)⁵

“That day...” The day the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven (verse 7).⁶

“...and to be marveled at...”. There will be great “wonder” and “joyous amazement” in among all the believers who experience this astounding event and, Paul seems to add that this “wonder” will authenticate or vindicate their belief in the message they heard from Paul and his companions. It is as if they will, at that time, recognize the truth and authority of the word they received from the apostolic team.

1:11-12

11: To this end also we pray for you always, that our God will count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power, 12: so that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and *the* Lord Jesus Christ.

11-12: The point of this prayer, once again, is to bring this (and the following) to their attention in order to motivate them to, living the kind of lives that will not render them in a state of shame at Christ’s return, but allow God to work in them a life worthy of who they are in Christ. Again, he reiterates the same theme he presented in I Thessalonians 2:12. This is a key theme and purpose for the writing of both epistles. It must not be lost in the discussion of “end times”.

The phrase, “according to the grace of our God and The Lord Jesus Christ” gives them a focus on where the fulfillment of this prayer comes from and what it consists of according to their desire.

CHAPTER TWO

2:1-4

1: Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, 2: that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. 3a: Let no one in any way deceive you, for *it will not come* unless the apostasy comes first...”

⁵ Once again a legitimate debate can be held that Paul’s description here and in I Thessalonians reflects more traditional Jewish and Biblical perceptions than the popular “dispensational” teachings regarding a “pre-tribulation” rapture and its attending interpretations. When Christ “comes again” it is in judgment of the wicked and receiving His own. The culmination of “this age” has occurred and “the age to come” has commenced.

⁶ The term “that day” became a jargon phrase meaning the day God vindicates His people, judges the wicked and establishes His kingdom and rule upon the earth. For example, see: Isaiah 2:10-12; Jeremiah 30:7-8; Zechariah 9:16; Matthew 7:22; 26:29; Luke 21:34; II Timothy 1:12, 4:8. It is also called “the day of Christ” and “the day of the Lord” as Paul has already alluded to in I Thessalonians 5:2 ff.

1-2: One of the reasons Paul writes this epistle is to address their being shaken by letters, reports or some “spiritual utterance” that the day of the Lord (the return of Christ) had already occurred. “Shaken and disturbed” indicates a serious confusion and befuddlement regarding their own place in Christ’s plans as well as the disposition of those already having died in Christ. Their composure was being undermined. The term for “shaken” is used of earthquakes and of ships being torn loose from their moorings.

The “parousia” or “coming” of the Lord Jesus Christ (in verse one and also noted in I Thessalonians 2:19) is paralleled to the “day of the Lord” in verse two. In verse one, “we” are gathered together to Him at His coming. This parallels Paul’s teaching in 4:13-17. Paul, at this juncture, specifies that they are to ignore and disregard any teaching about this topic that purports to come from him and/or his companions. So he gives them a means to distinguish his letters from others claiming to be from him. He personally signs this letter so they can compare signatures (3:17).

In clarifying the truth about the return of Christ and to calm their fears, Paul notes that the day of the Lord⁷ will not occur until other certain events come first. Therefore any attempt to state that this has already occurred can be disregarded unless the events he describes have already taken place.

3: Anything other than what Paul writes is a deception. Now we can work backwards. Before Christ’s “parousia” or “revelation” occurs there will be a great “apostasy” of those falling away to giving allegiance to the individual described. To what or whom is Paul referring? This is the subject of great debate.

First, we can reiterate that Paul made a clear demarcation between “this age” and the “age to come” or, that “which is present” from that “which is to come”. Note especially Romans 8:38; I Corinthians 3:22; Galatians 1:4 for example. His dissertation appears to describe the transitional period between the two.

Second, the word “apostasy” means a “rebellion”, “defection” or literally a “turning away from your stand”. It is used sparingly in the New Testament, Acts 21:21; Matthew 5:31, 19:7 and Mark 10:4 (where it is translated “divorce”). In the sense Paul uses it here, this is the only instance. It tends to include abandoning allegiance to personal (or spiritual) attachments and political. It is used frequently in the political sense outside of the New Testament. To many Jews, the turning from Moses to Christ was this “apostasy” as some Jewish schools had taught.

But Paul places this event at the end times and states that it is those who are to perish (not receiving the truth) that will be caught up in the deception (verse 10). They are mingled with believers in the church and will follow after this one who will be revealed, assuming Paul is referencing this in I Timothy 4:1-3. In this passage, a choice is made to leave the truth and follow lies. Although some teach that it is true believers that will “fall away” or constitute the “apostasy”, this is never actually said anywhere in the New Testament. Matthew 24:9-13, often quoted to support this view, makes a distinction between “you” and “many”. An argument could be made that the concept of “wheat” and “tares” growing together is indicated.

⁷ Discussed at length in the excursus of the commentary on I Thessalonians.

In the succeeding verses, Paul refers to persons, events and times already recognizable to his readers in some way. He will refer to images from Daniel and some of the prophets as well as to current historical events as he portrays the future. The past and present have set patterns as to how God in Christ will bring about the culmination of this age and initiate the age to come.

2:3b-5

3b. "...and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, 4: who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. 5: Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things?

3b: The "man of lawlessness...the son of destruction" (or perdition).⁸ This means this man stands opposed to all law, not just God's alone and becomes "law", introducing "law" based on the most evil principles of Satan. He deceives the ignorant into believing one thing when his goal is the destruction of any and all who would be drawn to the truth. It is to this man and his message that many turn, constituting the "apostasy".

4: This man opposes every religion on earth and exalts himself above all of them. There is considerable discussion about what it means that he "takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God." At the time of this writing, the temple still stood, but Paul had to be aware of Jesus' prediction regarding its destruction. Paul's death took place prior to its destruction. The only attempt to erect an image in the temple during Paul's lifetime was by Caligula in 40 A.D. in assertion of his claims to divinity which the Jews refused to acknowledge. Caligula was long dead by the time Paul wrote these epistles to the Thessalonians, so, it is unlikely he is referring to him. So the four alternative views are that Paul is: 1. Thinking that this may occur before the temple is destroyed, 2. Referring to the "temple of God" as the church. This can be inferred from, I Corinthians 3:16; 6:19; Ephesians 2:21. 3. We must conclude that the temple will be rebuilt for this to happen or, 4. It simply points to the "holy place" is referred to as Jesus taught in Matthew 24:15 (Mark 13:14).

F.F. Bruce suggests, "The material temple in Jerusalem has much to be said in its favor. ...It may be best to conclude that the Jerusalem sanctuary is meant here by Paul and his companions, but meant in a metaphorical sense. Had they said, "so that he takes his seat on the throne of God," few would have thought it necessary to think of a literal throne; it would have been regarded as a graphic way of saying that he plans to usurp the authority of God. This is what is meant by the language actually used here, although the sacral associations of "naos" (*temple or sanctuary*) imply that he demands not only the obedience but also the worship due to God alone."⁹ (Italicized parenthesis mine)

One event definitely providing a pattern to this scenario is the very vivid account and memory of the invasion of Antiochus IV into Jerusalem depicted in Daniel 11:36-37. This chapter in Daniel clearly portrays the conquest of Alexander the Great and the dominion of his four succeeding

⁸ The same term "son of perdition" is used of Judas Iscariot (John 17:2).

⁹ F.F. Bruce, Word Biblical Commentary, *ibid.* page 169.

generals, one of which was Antiochus I, who had as a descendent, Antiochus IV, whose exploits are chronicled in both Daniel and II Maccabees. He called himself “Epiphanes” meaning the “manifest god” and believed he was the incarnation of Zeus, the chief of all gods. As king of Syria (the “north”) Antiochus, in a rage, invaded Jerusalem in 168-167 B.C. and issued an edict demanding that all peoples must adhere to one religion, law and custom which he had determined. He issued decrees against all Jewish observances such as the Sabbath, circumcision, food laws and possession of any copy of the scriptures. He erected a statue and altar to Zeus on the altar of sacrifice in the temple (likely the “abomination of desolation” Jesus spoke of in Matthew 24:15 referencing Daniel 11:31). Upon penalty of death, he forced the people to worship Zeus and refrain from their own religious practices. Many were killed for refusing to obey his edict.

But a revolt broke out led by Judas Maccabeus against those who would conform to, or enforce the edict, and ultimately the victory was won. This victory is celebrated as “Hanukah” or “The Feast of Lights” since that time. This story was and is so popular that it is even spoken of by Jesus. He uses it as a pattern for such a future event at the end of the age. Paul is likely following suit.

The final determination as to how this will all look and transpire at the awaited end of the age will likely come through simple observation, but Antiochus IV seems to be a strong model for the end time “man of Lawlessness”.

5. Paul reveals he is the actual author of this corporate epistle (See: I Thessalonians 5:27 as well). Although he spoke of these things, he needs to clarify that the apostasy as well as the appearance of this lawless man or perdition will precede Christ’s return.

2:6-12

6: And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed. 7: For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains *will do so* until he is taken out of the way. 8: Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; 9: *that is*, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, 10: and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. 11: For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, 12: in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.

6: This man’s appearance or “revealing” in history is being restrained until the appointed time. The word “revealed” is once again, “apocalypsis”, the same word used of Christ’s “revealing” from heaven. He is hidden until the appointed time. He is also “restrained”. “Restrained” is “kat-echo” meaning to “hold against”, “hold back”, or “hold down”. In verse six the “restrainer” is neuter, a “what”, while in verse seven it is masculine or “he”. Those in Thessalonica know what or who this restrainer is that is already at work during their present time. We will return to this.

7-8: This verse attempts to clarify the previous one but seems to add confusion. First, while the restraining is occurring, the “mystery of lawlessness” is already at work. Paul sees it happening. The word or idea of “mystery” is simply something going on that only those grasping God’s word and plan are clear about. So believers who are in touch with God are able to distinguish true righteousness from deception posing as righteousness. For example, here in the United States, much of what used to be considered unrighteous, depraved, despicable, or immoral is now being touted as acceptable - the way God would have it - and even good. Believers know better. But the rest are deceived into believing that unrighteousness is righteousness, etc.

The final personification of this deception is this man of lawlessness, often called “the Antichrist”, although that term is used in the New Testament in a different way - albeit with some similarities to Paul’s general theme.¹⁰ He is also interpreted by most as being the “beast with two horns” in Revelation 13:11-18.

This “lawlessness” will be restrained in terms of its fulfillment in this “man” who personifies the whole disgusting thing and then restraint will be removed so that Christ can destroy him at His coming. This “man of lawlessness” will simply be disintegrated at the very appearance of Christ and “by the breath of His mouth”. Paul here is dipping into prophetic imagery here, from Isaiah 11:4, 30:31-33; and Psalm 18:6-15.

The restraining force is another issue of debate. It is interesting and provoking that Paul does not name it directly in writing, but apparently told the Thessalonians what it was when he was there. Many different sources are presented as possible “restrainers”. At the time of Paul’s writing, the restrainer was in place and had not yet been removed, thus the “man of lawlessness” had not appeared and thus, Christ had not returned.

Among the various principle suggestions for this restrainer have been: 1. The Roman state with its emperor, law and military power, 2. Paul’s incomplete missionary work, 3. The Jewish state, 4. World wide law and law enforcement, 5. The Holy Spirit, or 6. The Holy Spirit in the body of Christ, the church. The early church fathers such as Tertullian and John Chrysostom stated they believed it was the first suggestion. Even John Darby, the founder of dispensationalism, believed it to be the first suggestion expanded to the governments established by God to restrain evil in the world (Romans 13:3-4)¹¹. It would seem appropriate for Paul to keep this idea out of writing but if he intended the restrainer to be anything else, why not state it? Also, the first suggestion accommodates both the neuter and masculine attributes of the restrainer. In addition, it was the Roman authority that “restrained” Antiochus IV when he desired to conquer Egypt and enraged him so much that, on the way home, he wreaked havoc in Jerusalem.¹² So when the Roman authority left Egypt or was “removed”, Antiochus went mad. Finally, Paul had no complaint against Rome and neither did Jesus. When Jesus was prodded to speak out against the Romans, He refused to do so, but instead insisted they be given their due.¹³

¹⁰ See: I John 2:18-22; 4:3; and II John 1:7. Here John is using the word to describe Gnostic influence, and it is always in the plural.

¹¹ John Nelson Darby, “Notes on the Epistles to the Thessalonians”, London: Morrish, pages 437-455

¹² One Roman legate, Gaius Popilius Laenas, “waved his finger” in front of Antiochus at Alexandria and said in effect, “uh, uh”. This was in 168 B.C., before Rome was nearly the power it came to be in the first century A.D..

¹³ Matthew 22:17-21.

9-10: Paul returns to define the character of this individual even more. In describing the “coming” of this “one”, Paul uses the word “parousia”, the same word he often uses for Christ’s “coming”. The parallels are striking. There is a sense of a “False Christ” to whom the world will flock as opposed to the “True Christ” who will destroy the “False Christ” at His appearance. How many will be able to distinguish the “False Christ” from the “True Christ”? This is a part of the “mystery” of lawlessness culminating in the appearance of the “False Christ”. The “coming” of this “one” mirrors the work of Satan but duplicates Christ’s first advent as well. He employs all sorts of signs and wonders (note: Acts 2:22) that lead to a false conclusion among those unaware and they are sucked in (verse 11). He also appeals to the fleshly lusts and desire for debauchery pointing out that it is acceptable and good, and that those who would stand against this are the true purveyors of evil. After all, God gave us these desires and nature, so why would He then constrict them? As Jesus said, “This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil.” John 3:19

11-12: Paul’s statement reflects Isaiah 6:9-10; 29:10; 32:1-6; and he says something similar in II Corinthians 4:4. There will be absolute clarity about who is a true and faithful believer and who is not. Those who take pleasure in wickedness will be clearly distinguished from those who believe the truth. The word judged is “krino”, the same word used in John 12:48, “He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who *judges* him; the word I spoke is what will *judge* him at the last day.” (Italics mine)

2:13-14

13: But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. 14: It was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

13: The first part of this verse is nearly identical to 1:3 (see comment there). The “thanks” is because God “chose” them for salvation from the beginning. “Chose” is not “elect” as in most cases but rather “ειλατω” (ei-la-tow”) meaning “to take up” or “separate out”(to Himself). “The beginning” is one of two possible translations as manuscript evidence supports both. First, if translated “the beginning”, it is close to the idea of “when God decreed it all to commence according to His will”. The words (“ap arcane”) carry with it authority, not just time. This is a purpose clause. Second, it could be by a simple spacing correction, (“aparcane”) meaning “first fruits” and so could be translated “God has separated you to Himself as first fruits unto salvation...”. This translation had merit due to the use of the word “ei-la-tow” above rather than “e-kal-eh-oh”, the common word for “choosing” or “election”.¹⁴ Paul would be describing them as the first converts at Thessalonica. The concept of “first fruits” is a very common Jewish theme in the early church. The means to this salvation is “in”, “through” or “due to” the sanctifying Spirit and belief of the truth.

¹⁴ Both translations have support in Paul’s writings. For concepts associated with “beginning” see: I Corinthians 2:7; Ephesians 1:4; II Timothy 1:9. For those associated with “first fruits” see: I Corinthians 15:20-23; I Corinthians 16:15; Romans 8:23, 11:16, 16:5.

14: Paul clarifies verse 13 further. It was the message of the gospel that God used to “call” (“ka-leh-oh”) them to Himself to “gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ”. This gain is equivalent to “salvation” in verse 13. Paul has stated the same thing in I Thessalonians 5:9 and in I Thessalonians 2:12 where the term “glory” is used in the same sense. The word “glory” presents the idea of “that which is greater than any earthly glory”. In II Corinthians 4:3-7 Paul writes, 3: “And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, 4: in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. 5: For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake. 6: For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. 7: But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves;.... So “glory” is a “surpassing greatness”, unimaginable and beyond comprehension. The Hebrew equivalent is “kah-vod” and carries with it the idea of a great and massive weight, splendor or abundance.

2:15

15: So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word *of mouth* or by letter from us.

15: This and the following two verses appear at first to be the closing of the letter. In 15 Paul, once again instructs them (in light of the truths he has reminded them of) to 1: “Stand firm”. The words in the Greek are clear, they are to be “unmovable” and 2: “use their strength to seize and hold fast” to the “traditions” (those teachings “handed over to them”) taught only by Paul and his companions. The use of the word “tradition” prior to the compiling of the New Testament Canon carried the same weight as the “tradition” of Rabbinic law handed down through the centuries. This was the essential corpus of Judaism. The teachings of the apostles carried no less weight. This is not to suggest that they are to attend to the Rabbinic law, quite the contrary. It is clear that they are to they are to relinquish all other precepts and ideas and replace them with the “traditions” of the apostles as they encompass the gospel of God. Further, it is implied that these “traditions” are likewise to be handed down to others. Thus, the letter(s) are copied and we have them today.

2:16-17

16: Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace, 17: comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word.

16-17: Here is a benedictory prayer by Paul on their behalf, once again. Though it appears to be a closing prayer, Paul is simply reflecting on his previous teachings and, in prayer, encouraging them. It demonstrates a firm assurance of their salvation in spite of the confusion and challenges the church is facing both corporately and personally. Note the equality between God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul always sees them as equal, one and the same. Although the idea

of a triune God is theologically common and accepted, these type of designations picture for us the warmer concept of “family”. “Love” is “agape”, the love only God is able to demonstrate and infuse in His people by the Spirit.¹⁵

God not only loves us with a love He has set upon us that cannot be diminished, He also has given us “eternal comfort”. This is a continual “encouragement”, “comfort” and “prompting” that will never be removed. It will carry us from now into eternity. The word “comfort” is, “para- ka-leh-oh”. It is a word used very often of the ministry of the Holy Spirit also called the “comforter” in John 14:16, 26 (KJV) or “helper” (NASB). It is used again in 17 followed by “strengthen your hearts” or “make your hearts “resolute” and “steadfastly set” to every “good work and word”. These good “works” and “words” focus on deeds and words done in the name and ministry of Christ. They are not general work and words as in everyday tasks, but prompt those tasks and all others to be done as Christ would have them done to His glory.

3:1-3

1: Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified, just as *it did* also with you; 2: and that we will be rescued from perverse and evil men; for not all have faith. 3: But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil *one*.

1: Paul has a few remaining thoughts to add to his benediction. As they pray for the church at Thessalonica, Paul seeks their prayers for himself and his companions as he did in I Thessalonians 5:25. At Corinth, the missionaries may, by this time, come into conflict in the synagogue and have moved to the home of Titius Justus who lived next door to the synagogue. Over the nearly two year period in Corinth, Paul faced one of his most difficult challenges, and the problems in the church at Corinth plagued him the rest of his life.¹⁶ The word did go out from this ministry to other cities.

2: “Rescued” is “ruh-oh-mai”, the same word used in I Thessalonians 1:10.¹⁷ “Perverse” indicates people “not in the right place” or (“not where they should be”) and this idea is joined with “evil” suggesting something close to “demonic” (verse 3) and are those who do not have “faith”, specifically “the faith”. This shows that there are those who are approaching members of the flock of God¹⁸ attempting to dissuade them from following Jesus or the teaching of the missionaries as well as threatening and attacking Paul and his companions. This is borne out by Luke in Acts 18.

3: Paul shows that his situation is similar to theirs and, rather than state that, “...the Lord is faithful and He will strengthen and protect *us*”, he applies this to them. There is also the contrast to God’s “faithfulness” and the “faithlessness” of his opponents. God’s faithfulness does not waver. He will “strengthen” (see comment on 2:17) and “protect” (Phu-lahs-oh”) them

¹⁵ See this authors work on “Love”.

¹⁶ Acts 18:4-7. See the commentary by this author and his study group on the Book of Acts.

¹⁷ See commentary at that reference.

¹⁸ Or even perhaps infiltrating the assembly.

from the evil (“one”). “Phu-lahs-oh” pictures one who is a guard or watchman over someone or something. The “evil” may be that which comes through the “evil men” in verse 2 or that which the “evil one” works and is manifested through these men. Both verses translate “evil” from the same Greek word, “pon-eh-rohs”. The definite article is used in this verse however, (“the” evil) and so the word “one” can be properly supplied indicating Satan.

The focus however, is not on “evil” but on God who is sovereign in all things and has supreme power over the activities of the evil one.

3:4-5

4: We have confidence in the Lord concerning you, that you are doing and will *continue to* do what we command. 5: May the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the steadfastness of Christ.

4: In spite of the fact that God is sovereign, they have the free will to either avail themselves of God’s truth and direction (which will bring them persecution and pain) or not. Paul expresses confidence (as a coach would as he cheers his team on with “You can do it”) that they will continue in the “command” of the teaching. “Command” is “par-ang-el-ohs” literally translated “according to the message”. He is saying that he has confidence that they are doing and will go on doing that which is according to the message the apostles are teaching them. This is not in the imperative mood, but an observation by Paul regarding their confidence in God. The Greek word “en-tell-oh-mai” is a stronger word to indicate “command” or “order”.

5: We have another prayer of desire from Paul about their hearts.¹⁹ He prays (and subtly suggests) that the Lord “direct” (“send their hearts straight to”) the love (agape) of God and to the “steadfastness” (endurance) of Christ. Is this their love “for” God or God’s love “for” them? The context persuades us that both the “love of God” and “steadfastness of Christ” as divine characteristics are to be the resources that are to be reproduced in them as they seek our the Lord.

3:6-15

6: Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us. 7: For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you, 8: nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we *kept* working night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you; 9: not because we do not have the right *to this*, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, so that you would follow our example. 10: For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either. 11: For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. 12: Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread. 13: But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary of doing good. 14: If anyone does

¹⁹ See: 2:17

not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that person and do not associate with him, so that he will be put to shame. 15: *Yet* do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

6: It is as if Paul, in the midst of concluding his letter is reminded of a problem brought to the missionaries in the report from Thessalonica. It is as if he looked up after reviewing the letter with his companions and asked, “Is there anything else we missed or should address?” And this matter was brought up. So Paul continued on and the entire third chapter focuses on this one topic.

The verb “keep away” is not in the imperative mood, so again the translation of “par-ang-el-ohs” as “command” is perhaps too strong as coming from the apostles.²⁰ However, “we charge, direct or instruct” you would be appropriate. Paul attaches the authority of Christ to this directive showing how serious he is about the pending matter. It is Christ who is giving the directive and in that sense it is a “command”. Apparently the church is confused about how to care for the needy and who the needy really are.²¹

They are to “keep away” from the herein described “brother”. “Keep away” is “στελλεσθαι” (“stel-es-thai”) and literally Paul is telling them “not to stand” or “take their place with” the “unruly” brothers. In other words, do not indulge them or tolerate the behavior.²² These “brothers” are believers who are living in an “unruly” way. This means that they are neither living in a manner consistent with the teaching of the apostles (“traditions” again), the rest of the Christian community nor with how Christ would have them conduct themselves. In noting that they are not living according to the traditions received from the apostles, Paul may be implying that they are following a contrary teaching.

7-8: The above comment is made clear as Paul uses himself and his team as an example of how to properly live among the believers. In so doing, Paul implies that these “unruly” or “undisciplined” (the same root as “unruly”) brothers are 1: Receiving the support of meals without willingness to work (indeed refusal to work), 2: Are idle and spend their time as “busybodies” or were “making nuisances of themselves” (verse 11) and 3: Are a burden to the rest of the body. For one reason or another they had abandoned their responsibilities to work and care for themselves, their families, or others in need. They were living off the generosity of the church. The church, however, seems to have been confused about how to handle this as they were trying to do good to everyone as Paul had instructed. But the behavior of these “slackers” and “freeloaders” had drawn the ire of some in the church and appealed to the apostles as to how to handle the situation in a proper manner.

9-10: The point here is that the apostles could have been appropriately supported by the church

²⁰ See comment at verse 4.

²¹ See comment at verses 7-8. Is it possible that as Paul traveled to each church he told them of the “community resource bank” that was established in the early days? (Acts 2:44-45; 4:32 ff.) It may be that some quit work and claimed “need” so they could use the storehouse goods without having to work. This would have been the first “welfare” scam.

²² See verse 14 for clarification.

when they were there, but they refused this privilege. So if the apostles could rightly ask and receive support but refused it insisting on working and paying their own way, what then is the excuse of these other “nare-do-wells” for taking advantage of the church? Even while there at Thessalonica, he told them that if one is not willing to work, then he should not be fed.

11: Paul references the report brought to him and the others describing these brothers. Rather than work, they spent their time being a nuisance to others. Paul uses a play on words here as the Greek describes them as “busy being busybodies”. Many have experienced giving food and shelter to someone in need “until they get on their feet”. It is discovered later, to the chagrin of the host, that the individual is simply taking advantage of the situation and has no intention of “getting on their feet”. To make matters worse, they constantly point out how others should be doing things or simply complain about what life has dealt them.

12: Paul directs his instructions right at those of whom he is speaking and tells them first to work “in a quiet fashion”. This means to work and mind their own business getting out of the business of others who are working as Paul as instructed and 2: Then they can eat the food they have earned.

13: This verse suggests that the church was indeed unsure about what is included in “doing good” within the context of this issue. So Paul, with the clarification, encourages those who desired to do good, as they had been doing, to continue to do so with the understanding of how to deal with those who sought benefit unworthily.

14: Paul is quite firm about this and makes it clear what “keeping away” from such a person meant. The rest are not to “associate” with him. This means neither to accompany him as a supporting person nor condone his behavior. They are to place a distance between themselves and these people. They are not accepted within the “fellowship” until they correct their thinking and deportment. They are to be considered a “disgrace” to the brotherhood, and not to receive respect. In this way, they will be ashamed. The word “shame” carries with it the idea of “turning to respect to that to which they ought to conform”. In other words, this action is to hopefully motivate them to consider what they have done to the body and prompt them to change their behavior. But there is still to be contact in terms of admonishment, instruction and sharing of what the apostles are teaching and ordering. This is to be done in the context of the love of the Lord for those who are brothers as verse 15 states.

15: In spite of the need to turn the brother around, he is not to be treated like an enemy. In other words, he is still family, a brother. As such he is to be “admonished” or “gently reproved”. The word here is not “para-kah-le-oh” but “νουθετεω” (“nou-theh-teh-oh”) meaning “to put into one’s mind”. The attitude with which this is done is much like what we see in I Thessalonians 5:14-15; Galatians 6:1-2; and James 5:19-20.

3:16-18

16: Now may the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance. The Lord be with you all! 17: I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand, and this is a

distinguishing mark in every letter; this is the way I write. 18: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

16: Paul's prayer of desire wishes for them a peace, likely an inner peace, regardless of what they suffer or face. This wish is for them all, Jew, Gentile, the unruly as well as those working hard. "peace" is a circumstantial or inner rest or calmness emanating from one's secure relationship with the Lord.

17: See the last paragraph of the introduction to this commentary on page 3.

18: Paul ended I Thessalonians with the same greeting. As there, "grace" is God's "favor", "benefit", "joy" and "presence" in their lives and circumstances.

When this letter was completed, it was sent once again to Thessalonica by the hand of the trusted messenger. This man had the authority to speak on behalf of the apostle(s). After the letter was read it, along with I Thessalonians, was deemed to have such exceeding value that it was copied and taken to other churches. This practice continued and the letters, by the end of the first century were deemed to be inspired of God and a part of the "tradition" to be handed down from generation to generation as instruction on how to live as a Christian – how to walk in a manner worthy of one's calling in Christ. So we have the letters today.