

A  
Doctrinal and Devotional  
Commentary  
on the  
Book of Second Thessalonians  
by Rénald Leroux Jr.

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## *01 - An Introduction to the Book of Second Thessalonians*

### **The author:**

The name of the author (Paul) is given in the first verse of the first chapter. Silvanus and Timothy are his fellow associates in the Lord's work.

### **Date and destination:**

It is believed that this epistle was written around A.D. 51. Thessalonica was the capital of the Roman province of Macedonia, which was a major Mediterranean sea port. This city had a population of about 100,000 people and was situated on a major north-south trade route. This city was pro-Roman and had the privilege of being a "free-city," which meant being exempt from paying a tribute (special tax) to Rome. This church did not seem to be a wealthy church, since Paul writes that they were poor in 2 Cor. 8:1,2. It is believed that this letter was written when Paul was in Corinth.

### **One of the reasons why Paul wrote this epistle:**

It seems that the first letter Paul wrote to the Thessalonians was not as profitable as he had hoped and more exhortation was needed. Some believers continued to live a life of laziness and stopped working for their sustenance. They believed that the return of Christ was imminent, thus eliminating the need to work.

### **The purpose of this epistle:**

One of the main purposes of this epistle is to encourage the Thessalonians concerning the return of Jesus Christ. They were new believers, and Paul was anxious to support them in their walk with Christ.

### **The theme of Second Thessalonians:**

The theme of this book is the return of Jesus Christ and Christian living until then. One may take the following verses as the key verses of this book: 2 Thessalonians 2:1,2 "Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering

together to Him, we ask you, 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." (NKJV)

## 02 - Greetings

### 2 Thessalonians 1:1,2

Paul and Silvanus and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>2</sup>Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

(LEB)

This greeting is basically the same as Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians. He names himself and also names his co-workers in the Lord. First we see Silvanus. His name means: "he who loves the forest". Silvanus is thought to have Silas as an abbreviation (contraction). He was one of the leading men in the church of Jerusalem (Acts 15:22). Silas joined Paul as a co-worker after the separation of Paul and Barnabas (Acts 15:37:41). He was also imprisoned along with Paul (Acts 16:25). We know that Silvanus (Silas) was a co-worker in the Lord alongside Paul for many years. Paul also names Timothy. His name means: "Valued of God". Timothy was also a life-long co-worker with Paul. Paul met him on his voyage to Derbe and Lystra (Acts 16:1). We also know that his mother was a believer, but his Greek father was not (Acts 16:1). We know that he was brought up with the Holy Scriptures that his mother taught him (2 Tim. 3:15). Paul took Timothy along with him throughout his lifetime. Timothy shared Paul's missionary outreach and also suffered along with him. He is named in the following books: Acts, Romans, First and Second Corinthians, Philippians, Colossians, First and Second Thessalonians, First and Second Timothy, Philemon, and Hebrews.

This letter is addressed to the "*church*" (EKKLESIA means: calling out, a popular meeting, the Body of Christ). Thessalonica was situated on the shore of the Thermaic Bay and was one of the capitols of the four Roman districts in Macedonia. In Acts 17:1-4 we see that Paul preached in a synagogue, some were saved, and a small congregation was established. Soon, violence broke out because of this, and Paul had to flee for his life (Acts 17:5-10). Paul writes that this church was "*in God*" (THEOS means: the supreme God, creator and sustainer). These two words describe a group of people who are sustained by and have a close relationship with the Living God. This is

the highest privilege that a human being can ever receive - being called a child of God (Gal. 4:5; Eph. 1:5).

Paul calls God "*our*" Father. Please note that Paul does not make a distinction between God being his Father and God being the Father of all the believers in Thessalonica. In other words, God is not "more" the Father of Paul because of his calling than the Father of a new believer in Christ. God is the Father of ALL true believers. Paul also calls God "Father" (PATER means: a father, literally or figuratively). Calling God his or her Father was scandalous to the average Jew! The religious leaders even wanted to kill Jesus because he called God his Father:

John 10

30 "I and My Father are one."

31 Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him.

32 Jesus answered them, "Many good works I have shown you from My Father. For which of those works do you stone Me?"

33 The Jews answered Him, saying, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself God."

(NKJV)

Even in the books of Psalms and Proverbs, no author refers to God as his Father! It is true that sometimes God is referred to as "Father" in the Old Testament, but only in a national sense and NEVER as a personal Father. This was introduced by Jesus in the New testament.

v.1 ... and the Lord Jesus Christ

The church in Thessalonica was not only in God our Father but also in the "*Lord*" (KURIOS means: supreme in authority) Jesus Christ. By writing the name alongside that of God the Father, Paul declares the divinity of Christ. Because believers are both "in" the Father and the Son, they have God as their Father and Jesus as their brother. All true believers are in the hands of BOTH the Father and the Son and NO ONE can touch them.

John 10

28 and I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand.

29 My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.

30 I and the Father are one." (RSV)

Paul continues and prays for the brethren who are in Thessalonica.

<sup>2</sup> Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

He calls for the "*grace*" (CHARIS means: favor, gift, benefit) of God to be upon the believers. It is by grace that we are saved (Eph. 2:8) and it is by the grace of God that we live (Eph. 2:5). Without the grace of God, salvation and righteousness would not be given to the repentant. The grace of God can be compared to the air we breathe that keeps us alive. Paul also calls for "*peace*" (EIRENE means: to join together, rest, quietness). Peace is given to the believer through the sacrifice of the beloved Son on the cross. Without Christ, there is no peace!

#### Romans 5

1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

2 through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

(NKJV)

Please note that in verse one, the church is in the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. In verse two, we now see that grace and peace are also given by both God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Father and Son are not to be divided in the life of the believer. In other instances, we also see that the Holy Spirit has a definitive part (alongside the Father and the Son) in the everyday life of the child of God.

## 03 - Thanksgiving

2 Thessalonians 1:3-5

<sup>3</sup>We ought to give thanks to God always concerning you, brothers, just as it is fitting, because your faith is flourishing and the love of each one of you all toward one another is increasing <sup>4</sup>so that we ourselves boast in you in the churches of God about your patient endurance and faith in all your persecutions and the afflictions that you are enduring, <sup>5</sup>a proof of the righteous judgment of God, so that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, on behalf of which also you are suffering,  
(LEB)

In our first section, we saw the general greeting that Paul introduced his letter with. We also noticed that the Father and the Son had a crucial part in the everyday life of the believer.

<sup>3</sup>We ought to give thanks to God always concerning you, brothers, just as it is fitting, because your faith is flourishing and the love of each one of you all toward one another is increasing

In his thanksgiving statement, Paul says that we "*ought to*" (OPHEILO means: to owe, be under obligation, be bound) "*give thanks*" (EUCARISTEO means: to be grateful, express gratitude) to "*God*" (THEOS means: the supreme God, creator and sustainer). He feels compelled to express his gratitude and gratefulness to the Living God. He knows that deep down, it is the Lord God who is working in the lives of the believers. It is written that he thanks God "*always*" (PANTOTE means: every when, at all times). The gratitude that lies in his heart does not come and go like the tides of the ocean. It is more like a constant stream that flows out of his heart.

The thankfulness that lives in him and is expressed by him concerns the "*brothers*" (ADEPHOS means: a brother literally or figuratively). These are the disciples of Christ and their families who are in Thessalonica. Paul sees believers as being part of the family of God, being children of God (Rom. 8:16,21). May we also see all believers in our churches as our spiritual brothers and sisters and treat them as such. Paul says that

being thankful for them is "*just as it is fitting*" (KATHOS AXIOS means: as much as it is deserving). In other words, it is God's due reward that he is so grateful for the brethren. Paul points out the reason for his thankfulness, and that is because of their "faith" (PISTIS means: persuasion, credence, moral conviction).

v.3 ... because your faith is flourishing and the love of each one of you all toward one another is increasing

Something was wonderful about their faith, Paul writes that it is "*flourishing*" (HUPERAUXANO means: to increase above an ordinary degree). Paul was amazed at how their love for each other was above and beyond what he had seen in other churches! It was more than he expected from them. If only all believers were that loving! If only we could all be so tenderhearted towards one another! Paul says that their love for each other is "*increasing*" (PLEONAZO means: increase, make or be more). This reminds me of what Jesus said about his true followers:

#### John 13

34 I give you a new law: Have love one for another; even as I have had love for you, so are you to have love one for another.

35 By this it will be clear to all men that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another.

(BBE)

Paul is very proud of the Thessalonians and tells them the following:

<sup>4</sup>so that we ourselves boast in you in the churches of God about your patient endurance and faith in all your persecutions and the afflictions that you are enduring,

He writes that he "*boasts*" (KAUCHAOMAI means: to boast, glory, rejoice) in them. He does not keep silent about his glorifying in them. He writes that he boasts of them in the "*churches*" (EKKLESIA means: a calling out, a popular meeting). When he visited other churches, Paul spoke about them. He points them out as models of believers that love each other. He boasts about their "*patient endurance*" (HUPOMONE means: cheerful endurance, constancy). They had learned how to endure, not in sadness and

irritation but with the cheerfulness that comes from the Holy Spirit. James wrote about this:

James 5

11 Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord--that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.  
(NKJV)

He also glories concerning their "faith" (PISTIS means: persuasion, credence, moral conviction). Their faith in God was outstanding, they did not waver but stood strong even during their "*persecutions*" (DIOGMOS means: tribulations, persecutions) and "afflictions" (THLIPSIS means: pressure, afflicted, trouble) . They understood the truth of what Paul would later write about in Romans:

Romans 8

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

These believers were "*enduring*" (ANECHOMA means: to hold oneself up against) all the calamities they faced. They were strong, and they stood strong. They were solidly anchored on the cross of Christ, and it seemed that nothing the enemy could throw at them could deter them from their faith.

<sup>5</sup> a proof of the righteous judgment of God, so that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, on behalf of which also you are suffering,

The phrase "as proof of the righteous judgment of God" is rather difficult to point out. We do not know exactly what Paul was referring to. We know that it was "*proof*" (ENDEIGMA means: an indication, to manifest) of the "*righteous*" (DIKAIOS means: innocent, holy, just in character) "*judgment*" (KRISIS means: justice, condemnation, judgment) of God. It may refer to the idea that if the saints were persecuted, it would be just for God to bring judgment against those who persecuted them. Remember what Jesus said to Saul on the road to Damascus:

Acts 9

3 Now as he journeyed he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed about him.

4 And he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"

5 And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting;

(RSV)

Those who persecute the true believers in Christ are actually persecuting the Lord Himself and no one can stand before Him.

v.5 ... so that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, on behalf of which also you are suffering,

The fact that they were being persecuted and going through tribulations BECAUSE of the name of Jesus was proof that they were "considered worthy" (KATAXIOO means: to deem entirely deserving, worthy) of the "kingdom" (BASILEIA means: royalty, realm, kingdom) of God. Paul wrote about suffering because of Christ.

Romans 8

17 and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

18 I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

(RSV)

It seems that suffering for the name of Christ is somehow proof that we truly belong to him. If people who live in darkness approve of our lives, then there is something that is terribly wrong with us. This is what Paul wrote to the Ephesians:

Ephesians 5

6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for it is because of these things that the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

7 Therefore do not associate with them,

8 for once you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light

9 (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true),  
(RSV)

It is on behalf of the kingdom of God that they were "*suffering*" (PASCHO means: painful, suffer, vex) sadness and persecution. We may not live in such circumstances, but does our witness for Christ disturb people around us? If not, it simply means that our light is not shining as it should.

## 04 - *The judgment to come*

2 Thessalonians 1:6-10

<sup>6</sup> since *it is* righteous in the sight of God to pay back those who are afflicting you with affliction, <sup>7</sup> and to you who are being afflicted, rest with us at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with his powerful angels, <sup>8</sup> with burning flame giving punishment to those who do not know God and who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus, <sup>9</sup> who will pay the penalty *of* eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his strength, <sup>10</sup> whenever he should come to be glorified on that day by his saints and to be marveled at by all who believe, because our testimony was believed among you,  
(LEB)

In our last section, we saw how thankful Paul was towards the Lord God for the brothers and sisters who were in Thessalonica. We also know that they suffered various persecutions. In this section, we will be told that God will not be silent and that one day a judgment will come.

<sup>6</sup> since *it is* righteous in the sight of God to pay back those who are afflicting you with affliction,

Some may have a false view of the Lord God. Often, the worldview of the society we live in can modify what the Bible says as being true. Some have taken the fact that "God is good" to the extreme and teach that God is too good to judge anyone and punishment was only to be found in the Old Testament. Here we see that Paul does not agree with our modern view of God! Paul writes that it is "*righteous*" (DIKAIOS means: holy, just, upright, agreeable to the law, proper) in the "sight" of God. In other words it is just and proper and even holy to "pay back" (ANTAPODIDOMI means: to requite, render, repay) those who are "afflicting" (THLIPSIS means: pressure, affliction, persecution) them. God will bring "*affliction*" (THLIPSIS means: pressure, affliction, persecution) to those who afflict his people. There is a spiritual universal law which says the following:

### Galatians 6

7 Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.

(RSV)

Let us not be fooled by what the "world" believes. Judgment and punishment are part of God's manifestation of his righteousness. You can read about the first judgment on Adam and Eve and the serpent in Genesis chapter three and the final judgment of all unbelievers, mockers of the truth and evil spirits in Revelation chapter twenty-two. To deny that God will judge is to be spiritually blind. One day, those who have harmed God's children will pay the price and justice will prevail.

<sup>7</sup> and to you who are being afflicted, rest with us at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with his powerful angels,

Until the time of judgment comes, what are the children of God who are living through tribulations to do? Are they to fight back, pick up arms and try to kill those who hate them? Are they to devise plans to bring a revolution and overthrow the authorities? Paul tells the Thessalonians what to do. This verse is addressed to those who are "*afflicted*" ( THLIBO means: to crowd, afflict, suffer), to those who are presently suffering. They are to "*rest*" (ANESIS means: relief, rest, liberty) with us. Paul includes himself and his co-workers as part of those who are afflicted and says, "rest with us".

v.7 ... rest with us at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with his powerful angels,

Believers can rest because it is generously offered by the Messiah.

### Matthew 11

28 Come to me, all you who are troubled and weighted down with care, and I will give you rest.

29 Take my yoke on you and become like me, for I am gentle and without pride, and you will have rest for your souls;

30 For my yoke is good, and the weight I take up is not hard.

(BBE)

Because of our flesh, which is in constant rebellion against all that is holy, PERFECT rest seems impossible to acquire. That is why Paul writes about the time when PERFECT rest will be given to God's children. Paul writes that perfect rest will be given at the "*revelation*" (APOKALUOSIS means: disclose, appearing, coming) of the "*Lord*" (KURIOS means: supreme in authority) Jesus. Jesus will come back for his disciples, and it is at that time that ABSOLUTE rest will be given. Jesus will come from "*heaven*" (OURANOS means: the sky, heaven) with his "*powerful*" (DUNAMIS means: force, miraculous power, might) "*angels*" (AGGELOS means: a messenger, an angel). This reminds me of what the angel said to the disciples when they witnessed the ascension of their Master:

#### Acts 1

9 Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.

10 And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel,

11 who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven."

(NKJV)

True rest will come when Jesus will come back with his mighty angels

<sup>8</sup> with burning flame giving punishment to those who do not know God and who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus,

Paul now gives a description of these mighty angels. We see that it is with "*burning*" (PHLEGON means: blazing) "*flame*" (PUR means: fire, lightning) that they will be "*giving*" (DIDOMI means: to give, bring forth, deliver) "*punishment*" (EKDIKESIS means: vindication, retribution, punishment). When Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden, we see that the Lord God posted an angel to guard the entrance so that they could not come back in.

#### Gen. 3

24 So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.

(NKJV)

In both instances, we see that, because of judgment, the angels had a "flaming sword" or a "burning flame" as an instrument of justice. The angels were to be "giving punishment" to those who "*do not know*" (EIDO means: to see, to know, be aware of) God. It is taught that God reveals himself through creation (Rom. 1:18-20). He also reveals himself through our conscience (Rom. 2:12-16). Finally, God reveals himself through his beloved Son (John 14:8,9). There is no excuse for not knowing God and seeking him.

v.8 ... and who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus,

Judgment will also come upon those who do not "*obey*" (HUPAKOUO means: to listen attentively, to heed, to conform) the "*gospel*" (EUAGGELION means: a good message, the gospel) of our Lord Jesus. The gospel message first and foremost is to repent of our sins. This was the message of John the Baptist:

Matthew 3

1 In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea,  
2 "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

(RSV)

It was the central message of Jesus:

Matthew 4

17 From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

(RSV)

It was the message of the apostles:

Acts 2

37 Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?"

38 And Peter said to them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.  
(RSV)

The angels will bring judgment not only on those who do not know God, but also on those who do not obey the gospel message of Jesus Christ. May we all be aware of the judgment to come and bring the "Good News" of redemption in Jesus Christ to those we meet.

<sup>9</sup> who will pay the penalty *of* eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his strength,

This verse describes the judgment to come. If you have read the Bible, you would have noticed (especially in the New Testament) that this judgment is described in various ways. For a deeper understanding of this great judgment, one must take all the information given in the Bible to have a clearer knowledge concerning this subject.

Here we see that those who reject God and his gospel message will "*pay the penalty*" (TINO means: to pay a price, a penalty). The price of the penalty is "*eternal*" (AIONIOS means: perpetual. eternal, forever). Some teach that the judgment is temporary, that people will suffer for a certain amount of time, but after it is finished, they will come in the presence of the Lord. This "temporary" punishment is not evident in the Bible. There is eternal "*destruction*" (OLETHROS means: ruin, death, punishment) that awaits them. Some people believe that at the judgment people will be obliterated, meaning that they will no longer exist. Again, this is not what the Bible states, for the punishment is eternal. If they no longer exist, then the punishment is quite temporary! Another proof is that those who are punished will be away from the "*presence*" (PROSOPON means: to front, aspect, appearance) of the Lord, which is glorious and powerful. The Bible calls the final judgment the "second death." True believers will not be hurt or suffer the "second death."

Rev. 2

11 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death."

(NKJV)

Rev. 20

6 Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

(NKJV)

On the other hand those who do not know God or listen to his gospel message WILL suffer the "second death".

Revelation 20

12 And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Also another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, by what they had done.

13 And the sea gave up the dead in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead in them, and all were judged by what they had done.

14 Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire;

(RSV)

Revelation 21

8 But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the polluted, as for murderers, fornicators, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their lot shall be in the lake that burns with fire and sulphur, which is the second death."

(RSV)

This "second death" or hell if you prefer is eternal as Jesus teaches (Mat. 8:12; 13:42,50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30) and not temporary as some believe it to be.

<sup>10</sup> whenever he should come to be glorified on that day by his saints and to be marveled at by all who believe, because our testimony was believed among you,

One day (and that is our living hope), Jesus will "*come*" (ERCHOMAI means: to come or go, appear, pass) back to earth to be "*glorified*" (EDOXAZO means: to glorify) by his "*saints*" (HAGIOS means: sacred, pure, holy, consecrated). Born-again believers are ALL

called saints in the New Testament. They are "saints" because they have received Christ's righteousness and have received forgiveness for all their transgressions. When Christ comes back, he will not only be glorified by the saints but also "*marveled at*" (THAUMAZO means: to wonder, admire, marvel) by ALL who "*believe*" (PISTEUO means: to have faith in, entrust, believe). Paul writes that they will participate in this great event because they have believed in our "*testimony*" (MARTURION means: witness, evidence given).

I hope you can see the importance of spreading the gospel message around you. When our testimony of the gospel is given and some believe it and turn to the Lord for salvation, they will also, someday, participate in this indescribable event of the return of Jesus Christ in all his glory, accompanied by his angels.

I hope that you will partake in this glorious moment alongside Jesus Christ as your Redeemer.

## 05 - Prayers for the Thessalonians

1:11,12

<sup>11</sup> for which *purpose* we also pray always for you, that you may be considered worthy of the calling of our God, and he might fulfill every desire for goodness and work of faith with power, <sup>12</sup> in order that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

(LEB)

In our last section, we saw the faithfulness of the Lord God. He promises that he will bring judgment on those who bring tribulation to his children. Until that day, believers are to live for his glory and wait for his return. This is the prayer that Paul has for the brethren in Thessalonica.

<sup>11</sup> for which *purpose* we also pray always for you, that you may be considered worthy of the calling of our God, and he might fulfill every desire for goodness and work of faith with power,

As Paul normally does in his letters, he brings up the subject of prayer. He says that he "*always*" (PANTOTE means: every when, at all times) "*prays*" (PROSEUCHOMAI means: to pray to God, supplicate) for them. Not that Paul never ceases to pray, but that he prays for them on a regular basis. His prayers for them are not sporadic; they are constant. From this, we see that the Thessalonians were on his mind and in his heart. Paul had two main prayer requests for them: The first is that you may be "*considered worthy*" (AXIOO means: think good, count worthy, deemed fit) of the "*calling*" (KLESIS means: an invitation, a calling) of our God.

For the apostle Paul, the calling of people to repentance is an important subject. In Romans 11:29 Paul describes the calling of God as being irrevocable. In 1 Cor. 1:26-28 we see that the calling of God normally favors those who are not wise, noble, or mighty according to the flesh. In Eph. 1:18 he speaks of the hope that lies in our calling. In 2 Tim. 1:9 Paul writes that our calling is holy. Paul also describes the calling that believers are to live by.

Ephesians 4

1 I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with  
which you were called,  
2 with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in  
love,  
3 endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.  
(NKJV)

All true believers absolutely need to remember that they have personally been called to live as children of light.

v.11 ... that you may be considered worthy of the calling of our God, and he might fulfill every desire for goodness and work of faith with power,

This "calling" is given by God himself! Not a priest, Christian organization, church, missionary association, or any other human source, as good as they may be. They DO NOT have the power to "call" you to God and "appoint" you to his service. Far less to give you redemption. Only God can call you to him, as Jesus said:

John 6

44 No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.  
(RSV)

The second prayer request is that God might "*fulfill*" (PLEROO means: to make replete, to cram, to level up) every "*desire*" (EUDOKIA means: delight, good pleasure, desire) that they have for "*goodness*" (AGATHOSUNE means: goodness, virtue, beneficence). Here we see that the apostle prays that the very desires of their hearts lean towards what is good and virtuous. That their "*work*" (ERGON means: toil, labor, deeds) of "*faith*" (PISTIS means: persuasion, credence, moral convictions), meaning all their service for the kingdom of God, be filled with "*power*" (DUNAMIS means: force, miraculous power, might). This gives the idea that all that they do is done through the power of the Spirit. He reminds them that it is not through the flesh but through the

Spirit that good things will be done, as we see God reminding Zerubbabel through the prophet Zechariah.

#### Zechariah 4

6 This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel, saying, Not by force or by power, but by my spirit, says the Lord of armies.

(BBE)

There is a reason why the apostle Paul prays for the Thessalonians.

<sup>12</sup> in order that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The reason is that the "*name*" (ONOMA means: a name, fig: the character of the person) of our "*Lord*" (KURIOS means: supreme in authority) may be "*glorified*" (EDOXAZO means: to glorify, adorn with glory) in them. Paul prays that their work of faith in the power of the Holy Spirit might conclude in the name of Jesus being glorified in them. This sort of prayer is certainly good for today also. True believers should walk in the Spirit, and whatever they do should bring honor and glory to their beloved Messiah.

v.12 ... according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

This can be done, they could live a life worthy of their calling and shower blessings upon the name of Jesus because this is according to the "*grace*" (CHARIS means: favor, gift, liberality) that the Father and the Son bestow upon believers.

## *06 - The return of Jesus Christ*

### 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4

Now we ask you, brothers, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our assembling to him, <sup>2</sup>that you not be easily shaken from your composure, nor be troubled either by a spirit or by a message or by a letter *alleged to be from us*<sup>[a]</sup>, to the effect that the day of the Lord has arrived. <sup>3</sup>Do not let anyone deceive you in any way, for *that day will not come* unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, <sup>4</sup>who opposes and who exalts himself over every so-called god or object of worship, so that he sits down in the temple of God, proclaiming that he himself is God.

(LEB)

In our present section, the apostle Paul will be more specific concerning what troubled some believers in reference to the return of Jesus Christ and what surrounded this colossal event.

Now we ask you, brothers, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our assembling to him,

It is obvious that Paul had received news that some of the brethren in Thessalonica were deeply troubled by what they were hearing - had they missed out on the return of Jesus and had they been left behind? Paul calls them "*brothers*" (ADEPHOS means: a brother, literally or figuratively). This is a common word which Paul uses on seventeen occasions in his two letters to the Thessalonians. It means that they were part of the family of God through salvation in the Messiah, Jesus Christ. What he is about to write concerns two things. First is the "*coming*" ( PAROUSIA means: being near, advent, return) of Jesus Christ, and second is our "*assembling*" (EPISUNAGOGHE means: a complete collection, gathering together) with him.

Please note the two "ours" in this verse: OUR "*Lord*" (KURIOS means: supreme in authority) and also OUR "*assembling*" to him. Paul does not make any distinction between disciples of Christ. He is the Lord of ALL, and ALL will assemble with him at his

return. NO true believer (if alive at the time) will miss out or be left behind because their standing in life or in the church is not as "glorious" as the others around them. Our righteousness comes from the Lord Jesus Christ and has nothing to do with what we do or the ministries we have. We are all part of the body of Christ - we are "ONE in him.

### 1 Corinthians 12

12 For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.

13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body--Jews or Greeks, slaves or free--and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

(RSV)

The apostle will begin to explain that the believers do not have anything to worry about, Jesus has not yet returned.

<sup>2</sup> that you not be easily shaken from your composure, nor be troubled either by a spirit or by a message or by a letter *alleged to be from us*, to the effect that the day of the Lord has arrived.

Paul tells them not to be "*easily shaken*" (SALEUO means: to agitate, waver, be disturbed). There was something that troubled them, and Paul came to their spiritual rescue. May we be as attentive to our troubled brothers and sisters as Paul was. May we keep our eyes and ears open and come to the aid of those who are troubled by their lack of spiritual knowledge. He also tells them not to be "*troubled*" (THROEO means: to wail, clamor, frighten). It seems that for some of the Thessalonians this brought great distress. They really thought that they had missed the return of Jesus. What would they now do and what would happen to them?

Paul mentions three ways in which the false message that Christ had already come back might have been given. The first is by a "*spirit*" (PNEUMA means: a current of air, breath, fig: a spirit). Were there false prophets who said that they spoke in the name of the Holy Spirit while it was really an evil spirit that influenced these people?

### 1 Timothy 4

1 But the Spirit says clearly that in later times some will be turned away from the faith, giving their minds to spirits of deceit, and the teachings of evil spirits,  
(BBE)

The second is through a "*message*" (LOGOS means: something said, expression, talk). This may refer to the teachings or preaching of false prophets or false teachers. There are many exhortations to be careful not to believe everything these men or women say. Jesus calls them wolves in sheep's clothing.

#### Matthew 7

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

16 "You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles?

17 "Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.  
(NKJV)

A third means is through a "*letter*" (EPISTOLE means: a written message, a letter). They may have received letters falsely written under the name of Paul or another apostle. They would contain lies and mislead disciples into believing that Christ had already come back and, therefore, they had been left behind.

If it was important in the first century to make certain of the provenance of "inspired" information, how much more so today! The world is presently drowning in the sea of misinformation and "fake news". The internet is rife with false prophets and teachers who preach their own gospel and lead countless people astray. Paul writes that these false letters were "*alleged to be from us.*" The Greek meaning of this phrase is "as if by us." There were forgeries back then, as there are today!

v.2 ... to the effect that the day of the Lord has arrived.

This was the theme of their teachings or their letters that believers feared so much! The "*day*" (HEMERA means: the time space between dawn and dark) of the "*Lord*" (KURIOS means: supreme in authority) has "*arrived*" (ENISTEMI means: come, be at hand, present). Jesus said he would come back:

Matthew 16

27 For the Son of man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay every man for what he has done.

(RSV)

The angels also declared that the Lord would come back:

Acts 1

9 And when he had said these things, while they were looking, he was taken up, and went from their view into a cloud.

10 And while they were looking up to heaven with great attention, two men came to them, in white clothing,

11 And said, O men of Galilee, why are you looking up into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken from you into heaven, will come again, in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.

(BBE)

The BIG lie was that the "day of the Lord" had arrived and Paul will explain why this was false.

<sup>3</sup> Do not let anyone deceive you in any way, for *that day will not come* unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,

We begin with "do not". This gives the idea that you are responsible for letting people lie to you. The words "do not" also mean "don't let". As believers, we have the responsibility to verify if what is being said concurs with the Holy Scriptures. This is exactly what the believers in the church of Berea did.

Acts 17

10 Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews.

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

(NKJV)

Once we verify that what is said does not align with the Word of God, we have to dismiss everything that was taught. Paul also writes "*anyone*" (TIS means: any person or object). This is important because we can believe that this well-known preacher would not lie or that my minister would certainly not lead me astray! No matter who the person is, Paul writes that anyone is capable of false teaching. They may honestly think that they are right, but they are still wrong. Believers need to verify what is taught—always. Paul writes don't let them "*deceive*" (EXAPATAO means: to seduce wholly) you. This reminds me of how the serpent "*seduced*" Eve in the Garden of Eden by introducing a carefully placed lie into his conversation with her. These false prophets are also cunning and bring falsehood, which can be disastrous.

v.3 ... for *that day will not come* unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,

Paul now begins to teach why this is all a lie. He speaks of "that day," which refers to the day of the Lord (when he will come back). That specific day WILL NOT COME unless something beforehand happens. Paul speaks of the "*rebellion*" (APOSTASIA means: defection from the truth) coming first. There is a great rebellion against God's truth that will occur BEFORE the return of Christ. This great rebellion will come when the "*man*" (HUIOS means: son, kinship) of "*lawlessness*" (HAMARTIA means: as sin, an offense) is "*revealed*" (APOKALUPTO means: to take off the cover). The prophet Daniel speaks of him.

#### Daniel 11

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

#### Daniel 12

10 "Many shall be purified, made white, and refined, but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand.  
11 "And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days.

12 "Blessed is he who waits, and comes to the one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days.

13 "But you, go your way till the end; for you shall rest, and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days."

(NKJV)

In his sermon on the last days Jesus also speaks of the Abomination of Desolation and confirms what Daniel had spoken of.

#### Matthew 24

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

16 "then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

17 "Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house.

18 "And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes.

19 "But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days!

20 "And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath.

(NKJV)

Paul calls the Abomination of Desolation the son of "*destruction*" (APOLEIA means: ruin or loss, damnable, waste). If you read the Book of Revelations, you will see all the destruction that this abomination will bring to the race of Adam.

<sup>4</sup> who opposes and who exalts himself over every so-called god or object of worship, so that he sits down in the temple of God, proclaiming that he himself is God.

This son of destruction will be characterized by one who "*exalts*" (HUPERAIROMAI means: to raise oneself over, to become haughty) himself. This reminds me of the five "I wills" that Lucifer spoke of.

#### Isaiah 14

12 "How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations!

13 For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north;

14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.'

15 Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, To the lowest depths of the Pit.

(NKJV)

The son of destruction has the same character and goals as Satan himself, and we know that he is in league with him! He will exalt himself over everything that deals with false spirituality, even "every so-called god" or "object of worship". He desires all worship to be given to him, and that is why a great number of people will be killed because they will refuse to bow down before him.

v.4 ... so that he sits down in the temple of God, proclaiming that he himself is God.

The abomination of desolation will even have the audacity to "*sit down*" (KATHIZO means: to sit down, dwell, tarry) in the temple of God. By this time, the temple of God in Jerusalem will have been rebuilt. He will be "*proclaiming*" (APODEIKNUMI means: to show off, exhibit) that he is "*God*" (THEOS means: the supreme God, creator and sustainer). We see in Rev. 13 that he will have his own throne, trying to imitate the great throne of God. All who disagree with the son of perdition and do not adore him will be slaughtered.

Paul reminds the Thessalonians that Jesus will only come back AFTER the appearance of the Abomination of Desolation. As I write this, the Son of Destruction has not yet appeared-but he will, we just don't know when.

## 07 - *The mystery of lawlessness*

2 Thessalonians 2:5-12

<sup>5</sup> Do you not remember that *while* we were still with you, we were saying these *things* to you? <sup>6</sup> And you know that which restrains *him* now, so that he will be revealed in his own time. <sup>7</sup> For the mystery of lawlessness is at work already; only the one who now restrains *will do so* until he is out of the way, <sup>8</sup> and then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will slay with the breath of his mouth, and wipe out by the appearance of his coming, <sup>9</sup> whose coming is in accordance with the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders, <sup>10</sup> and with every unrighteous deception against those who are perishing, in place of which they did not accept the love of the truth, so that they would be saved. <sup>11</sup> And because of this, God sends them *a powerful delusion* so that they will believe the lie, <sup>12</sup> in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth, but delighted in unrighteousness.

(LEB)

After writing about the return of Jesus Christ, the apostle Paul will write concerning the enemy of our souls and his appearing.

<sup>5</sup> Do you not remember that *while* we were still with you, we were saying these *things* to you?

Paul calls upon the believers to "*remember*" (MNEMONEUO means: to rehearse, be mindful, to remember). This shows us that the apostle Paul, although he was in Thessalonica for a short time, took time to teach profound things concerning the return of the Messiah and the mystery of lawlessness. People who teach or preach should not waste their time teaching over and over the simple truths of the Bible. They should vary their teachings and encourage their audience to dig deeper into their Bibles.

Hebrews 5

<sup>12</sup> 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.

13 For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness,  
for he is a babe.

14 But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of  
use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

(NKJV)

Paul writes that he taught them while he was "*still*" (ETI means: yet, still, henceforth) with them. I can also see that Paul did not waste his time by leaving things for tomorrow instead of doing them today. This is another good example for all who truly believe in Christ Jesus. There are things we must do TODAY because we never know what tomorrow will bring. So here are some of the things that Paul taught them during his stay in Thessalonica.

<sup>6</sup>And you know that which restrains *him* now, so that he will be revealed in his own  
time.

He begins by not defining what so many bible teachers would have loved Paul to do. In a way, this makes it even more mysterious! He writes you "*know*" (EIDO means: to see, to know, be aware of). So this IS NOT something new that he brings up. What do they know about that which "*restrains*" (KATECHO means: to hold down, seize, restrain). In 2 Thes. 2:3 Paul writes, about "the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction." When we are trying to understand who is doing the "restraining," we need to remember that whoever it was is needed to be much more powerful than the one that is being restrained - the man of lawlessness. I believe that he is the third person of the Godhead, - the Holy Spirit. Only God can control Satan and his fallen angels. Some believe that the Holy Spirit is restraining the coming of the man of lawlessness through His living in true believers. Because believers have become the light and salt of the earth, this forms a restraining power against the total outpouring of darkness upon the earth. When the rapture arrives and the disciples of Christ leave the earth to meet their Lord in the air, then the presence of the Holy Spirit (through believers) will no longer hold back Satan and his demons from carrying on their plan. It is then that he will be "*revealed*" (APOKALUPTO means: to take off the cover, reveal) in his "*own time*" (KAIROS means: well timed, opportune time, convenient). The Abomination of Desolation that Daniel writes about will be revealed ONLY when the

time has come and not before. Every event is in God's control and there is no need to fear.

<sup>7</sup> For the mystery of lawlessness is at work already; only the one who now restrains *will do so* until he is out of the way,

Paul warns that the mystery of "*lawlessness*" (ANOMIA means: violation of the law, wickedness) which is the coming of evil forces who will try to destroy Christianity and all true followers, is "*at work*" (ENERGEO means: to be active, efficient, to work) "*already*" (EDE means: even now, already, by this time). It is not because the Holy Spirit is restraining the evil one and his minions that they are COMPLETELY unable to do any damage in human history. He LIMITS what they can do according to his plan. We need to remember that sin works through our flesh, which is in rebellion against all that is holy and manifests itself in various ways:

#### Galatians 5

19 Now the works of the flesh are plain: fornication, impurity, licentiousness,  
20 idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit,  
21 envy, drunkenness, carousing, and the like. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

(RSV)

Paul reassures the believers that everything is under God's control and that the evil one will be held back until the time has come to allow him to work without any restraint.

v.7 ... only the one who now restrains *will do so* until he is out of the way,

So the Holy Spirit who "*now restrains*" (KATECHO means: to hold down, seize, restrain) the man of lawlessness will continue to do so. We see that the enemy has no power whatsoever to overtake the Holy Spirit. Amen to that! He will be restrained "until he is out of the way". Until the Holy Spirit allows him to pursue his diabolic plan.

<sup>8</sup> and then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will slay with the breath of his mouth, and wipe out by the appearance of his coming,

The "lawless one," Satan's puppet here on earth, will be "*revealed*" (APOKALUPSIS means: appearing, coming). We know that the Anti-Christ will somehow come to rule the world under his world wide government. There will be peace for a short time, but his true nature will be revealed and he will blaspheme the Lord and begin to war against all true believers (Rev. 13).

v.8 ... whom the Lord Jesus will slay with the breath of his mouth, and wipe out by the appearance of his coming,

At one point, in God's time, Jesus will come back to earth and "*destroy*" (ANALISKO means: to use up, consume, destroy) the enemy. He will be "*wiped out*" (KATARGEIO means: to render idle, abolish, destroy). How will the Lord do this? Simply by speaking, commanding it to become as he wills by the "breath of his mouth". Just as God spoke and the universe was created, the Lord will speak and Satan and his followers will be defeated. What an awesome God is YHWH.

<sup>9</sup> whose coming is in accordance with the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders,

In this verse, it is revealed who is behind the "*coming*" (PAROUSIA means: a being near, advent, return) of the man of lawlessness. It is in accordance with the "*working*" (ENERGEIA means: efficiency, strong, working) of Satan. He is behind this plan of overtaking the planet and having someone sit on the throne of God in Jerusalem and even declare himself to be God. The plan of the evil one had already been described centuries before in Isaiah 14:12-15.

How will the man of lawlessness be able to assemble the world (except the true children of God) under his wing and bring them to follow his lead? How will people of such diverse spiritual beliefs and human traditions ever become "one nation"? How will harmony ever come to be. The Bible tells us that three factors will align and blind mankind. The first is "*all power*" (DUNAMIS means: force, miraculous power, ability). Please note that this power will seem to be limitless (all). This person will have capacities that have never been seen before. This power will have its source in Satan. Second are "*signs*" (SEMEION means: an indication, miracle, mark). The man of lawlessness will blind people with spiritual signs such as miracles, and men will marvel

at what they are seeing. The third are "*lying*" (PSEUDOS means: a falsehood, lie, lying) "*wonders*" (TERAS means: a prodigy, omen, wonder, miracle). Note that these wonders are false; they are only there to deceive people. In other words, this man of lawlessness will IMITATE the powers of Christ when he was on earth. This will be done in such a way that people will actually believe that he is God and will bow the knee before him!

<sup>10</sup> and with every unrighteous deception against those who are perishing, in place of which they did not accept the love of the truth, so that they would be saved.

All of these miracles, might, and spiritual wonders are "*unrighteous*" (ADIKIA means: injustice, wrongfulness) "*deception*" (APATE means: deceit, delusion). They are done simply to fool people into believing Satan's lies. But will everyone be fooled? No, only those who are "*perishing*" (APOLLUMI means: to destroy fully, die, perish). Most will blindly follow this man of miracles, but for those who are not perishing, they will see through this curtain of lies. These people will perish because they did not "*accept*" (DECHAMAI means: to receive, accept, take) the love of the "*truth*" (ALETHEIA means: truth, verity). We know who the truth is and that is the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

#### John 14

6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.  
(NKJV)

Instead of coming to Christ and receiving his love and forgiveness, people will come to the man of lawlessness and receive their wages! They will NOT be "*saved*" (SOZO means: to save, deliver, protect). Rejecting the truth and embracing the lies of Satan, the vast majority of mankind living in those days will follow Satan on judgment day and be thrown into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:10-15).

<sup>11</sup> And because of this, God sends them *a powerful delusion* so that they will believe the lie,

Because of this, because people chose to follow the ways of the enemy and turn their backs on the Living God. God will bring judgment and darken their hearts even more

than they already are! God will "*send*" (PEMPO means: to dispatch, bestow, send) a "*powerful delusion*." The Greek means: a working of deceit. Is this something new? Has God ever hardened the hearts of people before as a means of judgment? Yes, he has, as we see in the following verses:

Ex. 10

1 Now the LORD said to Moses, "Go in to Pharaoh; for I have hardened his heart and the hearts of his servants, that I may show these signs of Mine before him,  
(NKJV)

Deut 2

30 "But Sihon king of Heshbon would not let us pass through, for the LORD your God hardened his spirit and made his heart obstinate, that He might deliver him into your hand, as it is this day.  
(NKJV)

Isaiah 63

17 O LORD, why have You made us stray from Your ways, And hardened our heart from Your fear? Return for Your servants' sake, The tribes of Your inheritance.  
(NKJV)

John 12

40 "He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, Lest they should see with their eyes, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them."  
(NKJV)

It comes to a point when the Lord God says "enough" and judgment falls upon the blasphemer. This "powerful delusion" from God will bring them to "*believe*" (PISTUEUO means: to have faith in, to entrust, believe) the "*lie*" (PSEUDOS means: a falsehood, lie, lying). It seems that all that the man of lawlessness will say will be gladly accepted by all, except the true disciples of God.

<sup>12</sup> in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth, but delighted in unrighteousness.

Why would God send a powerful delusion to mankind? We must remember that the Lord God is not to be mocked, for man will reap what he has sown:

Galatians 6

7 Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.  
(RSV)

God did this with Adam and Eve, and they were put out of the Garden of Eden (Gen.3). He did it with the evil world and brought a flood to destroy them all, except for Noah and his family (Gen. 7). At that point, God brought judgment upon the people and scattered them across the land, confusing their language at the tower of Babel (Gen. 11). Another example of God's judgment is Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19).

God brings a "powerful delusion" a judgment so that all may be "*condemned*" (KRINO means: a decision, damnation, judgment). Why? Simply because they did not "*believe*" (PISTEUO means: to have faith in, to entrust, believe) the "*truth*" (ALETHEIA means: truth, verity). Here, Paul is speaking of God's truth, which includes repentance and turning to Jesus for the forgiveness of sins.

v.12 ... but delighted in unrighteousness.

This little phrase is so important. People "*delighted*" (EUDOKEO means: to think well of, well-pleased) in "*unrighteousness*" (ADIKIA means: injustice, wrongfulness, iniquity). Their hearts had already rejected the Lord God. They found pleasure in evil and dark things BEFORE God brought a "powerful delusion" upon them. Remember what Jesus said:

John 5

39 You search the scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness to me;  
40 yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.  
(RSV)

Even in the End-Times people will still refuse to come to Jesus so that they would receive eternal life.

## 08 - *Stand firm and hold fast*

2 Thessalonians 2:13-17

<sup>13</sup> But we ought to give thanks to God always concerning you, brothers *dearly* loved by the Lord, because God has chosen you *as* first fruits for salvation by the sanctification of the Spirit and faith in the truth, <sup>14</sup> for which *purpose* he called you through our gospel for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>15</sup> So then, brothers, stand firm and hold fast to the traditions which you were taught, whether by *spoken* word or by letter from us. <sup>16</sup> Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given *us* eternal encouragement and good hope by grace, <sup>17</sup> encourage your hearts and strengthen *you* in every good work and word.

(LEB)

After writing about the mystery of lawlessness and the great deception headed by Satan, the apostle Paul brings words of encouragement to the little flock in Thessalonica.

<sup>13</sup> But we ought to give thanks to God always concerning you, brothers *dearly* loved by the Lord, because God has chosen you *as* first fruits for salvation by the sanctification of the Spirit and faith in the truth,

Once again, the apostle Paul gives "*thanks*" (EUCHARISTEO means: to be grateful, express gratitude) for the brothers and sisters. The phrase "we ought to give thanks to God concerning you" is exactly the same as what we find in 2 Thes. 2:3. I believe this is another proof that they truly are beloved by Paul. He writes that they are "*dearly loved*" (AGAPAO means: to love in a social or moral sense) by the "*Lord*" (KURIOS means: supreme in authority).

So why does Paul write that he always gives thanks to God for them? This should be the same reason why all true believers should be thankful for their brothers and sisters. Here is the reason: God has "*chosen*" (HAIREOMAI means: to take for oneself, prefer, choose) them as "*first fruits*." A better translation seems to be "*from the beginning*" (ARCHE means: a commencement) as other translations have preferred to use (CSB,

DARBY, HCSB, NASB, NKJV) as well as others. Once more, we see that the doctrine of election is true.

### Ephesians 1

4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.

5 He destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will,  
(RSV)

We can also see that the doctrine of personal election is true since Paul refers to each and every brother and sister in the faith. Just as Israel was a collective election (the nation was chosen by God), the believers in the Messiah are to come to him individually at the cross and repent personally.

v.13 ... for salvation by the sanctification of the Spirit and faith in the truth,

So why were these believers chosen by God before the foundation of the world? It was "*for salvation*" (SOTERIA means: defender, salvation, preservation, safety). Here are some of the benefits that salvation in Christ Jesus brings to the true believer.

1. The believer is reconciled to God (Rom. 5:10)
2. The believer is redeemed from his sins (Rom. 3:23,24)
3. The believer has the Holy Spirit living in him (Rom. 5:5)
4. The believer is no longer under condemnation (Rom. 8:1)
5. The believer is adopted by God (Rom. 8:15)
6. The believer is justified before the Lord God (Rom. 5:1)
7. The believer has access to God (Rom. 5:2)

These are but a few of the benefits given to the redeemed in Christ Jesus. So when Paul writes that they were "chosen for salvation," we now understand better why Paul "gave thanks" to God for what he had given them to become. If you are a true believer in Christ Jesus, may you rejoice in the unfathomable grace that God has bestowed upon you.

Paul writes that this salvation was by the "*sanctification*" (HAGIASMOS means: purification, consecration, set apart) of the "*Spirit*" (PNEUMA means: a current of air, breath, fig: a spirit). Here we see part of the work of the Holy Spirit in the plan of redemption. Here are some of the other benefits of being indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

1. The Holy Spirit opens our hearts to worship the Lord (Eph. 5:18)
2. The Holy Spirit gives a spirit of wisdom (Eph. 1:17)
3. The Holy Spirit enables you to win over the flesh (Rom. 8:13)
4. The Holy Spirit enables you to have a real prayer life (Eph. 6:18)
5. The Holy Spirit brings peace in your life (Rom. 8:6)
6. The Holy Spirit empowers the believer (Acts 1:8)
7. The Holy Spirit intercedes for you. (Rom. 8:27)

v. 13 ... and faith in the truth,

Our salvation is given because of our "*faith*" (PISTIS means: persuasion, credence, moral conviction) in the "*truth*" (ALETHEIA means: what is true, verity). It is not blind faith that makes all of this possible. It is the faith in the truth that Paul writes about. Jesus is the truth (John 14:6). Redeeming faith is found in the person of Christ and his sacrifice on the cross.

<sup>14</sup> for which *purpose* he called you through our gospel for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Our verse gives the answer to what is probably the greatest existentialist question that mankind has: "What is my purpose in life?" Paul writes that their purpose in life was their "*calling*" ( KALEO means: to call, bid, call forth). The purpose in life is to understand and live the calling they have received. God desired that each and every one of them would personally partake in his eternal plan. This plan is revealed in our "*gospel*" (EUAGGELUION means: a good message, the gospel). The "Good News" reveals God's plan for redemption, and once it is accepted, we have an eternal purpose that is given. This redemption is for the "*obtaining*" (PERIPOSIS means: acquisition, purchase, obtaining) of the "*glory*" (DOXA means: glory, dignity, honor, praise) of our Lord Jesus Christ. This should make our hearts overflow with thankfulness and be filled with a desire to live a life that honours the Lord God! God purpose for his adopted

children is to obtain the glory that his beloved Son has! Isn't this mind-blowing, the kindness of God!

John 17

22 And the glory which you have given to me I have given to them, so that they may be one even as we are one;

23 I in them, and you in me, so that they may be made completely one, and so that it may become clear to all men that you have sent me and that they are loved by you as I am loved by you.

24 Father, it is my desire that these whom you have given to me may be by my side where I am, so that they may see my glory which you have given to me, because you had love for me before the world came into being.

(BBE)

Knowing their calling and the grace that they had received through Jesus Christ what were the Thessalonians to do with the rest of their lives?

<sup>15</sup> So then, brothers, stand firm and hold fast to the traditions which you were taught, whether by *spoken* word or by letter from us.

The first thing they needed to do was to "*stand firm*" (STEKO means: to be stationary, to persevere). This is a continuous theme that Paul introduces in many of his letters (1 Cor. 16:13; Gal. 5:1; Phil. 1:27; 4:1; 1 Thes. 3:8). They needed to persevere, knowing the truth and the glories to come. Standing fast is certainly one way that we can manifest our true love for our Savior.

John 14

15 If you have love for me, you will keep my laws.

(BBE)

John 14

23 Jesus said to him in answer, If anyone has love for me, he will keep my words: and he will be dear to my Father; and we will come to him and make our living-place with him.

(BBE)

The second thing was to "*hold fast*" (KRATEO means: to use strength, seize, have power). What were they to hold on tightly to? Paul writes: to the "*traditions*" (PARADOSIS means: transmission, a precept, law) which you were "*taught*" (DIDASKO means: to learn, to teach). Understanding this is VERY IMPORTANT because some Christian religions teach that "church tradition" is as valid as the written Bible and sometimes even more so! Is this true? Are the traditions that came AFTER the written word holy and without fault? Are they to be applied in our lives as the Holy Scriptures? Please note that Paul writes, "*which you were taught*". This is in the past tense. Paul was able to say keep hold of the traditions you were taught because the teachings of the apostles and those who participated in the writing of the New Testament were all under the infallible influence of the Holy Spirit. NO OTHER bible teacher or preacher can be compared to them. The Bible is perfect, and so are its teachings! Nothing and no one else is.

v.15 ... whether by *spoken* word or by letter from us.

These "traditions", teachings or precepts, if you prefer, were either given to them by the "spoken word" (LOGOS means: something said, speech, preaching) or a "letter" (EPISTOLE means: a written message, a letter) from THEM. Again, we see the apostolic calling on the teachings of Paul. This has NOTHING to do with any traditions or teachings that were given by someone two, three, or fourteen centuries later simply because they said that they had the authority to give such teachings! Only what is in the Bible, in its rightful context, is to be accepted and precious kept by the believer - no matter what certain religious leaders think! Remember what reformed theology affirms:

- Sola scriptura (Scripture alone)
- Sola fide (Faith alone)
- Sola gratia (Grace alone)
- Solus Christus (Christ alone)
- Soli Deo gloria (To the glory of God alone)

Paul concludes this section with a blessing.

<sup>16</sup> Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given *us* eternal encouragement and good hope by grace, <sup>17</sup> encourage your hearts and strengthen *you* in every good work and word.

This blessing is to come from our "*Lord*" (KURIOS means: supreme in authority) Jesus Christ and "*God*" (THEOS means: the supreme God, creator and sustainer) and our "*Father*" (PATER means: a father, literally or figuratively). Please note that Paul writes "OUR" for both the Son and the Father. Believers belong to both the Lord Jesus our Savior and God the Father. Is there a greater calling than this? Is there a greater gift than this? Nobody has ever seen anything like it!

v.16 ... who has loved us and given *us* eternal encouragement and good hope by grace,

In this part of the verse, we see that the apostle Paul names three things that the Son and the Father have given to these believers. He first wrote, "who has *loved*" (AGAPAO means: to love in a social or moral sense) us. There is no doubt that both the Father, Son, and I would add, the Holy Spirit, have loved us. The Father loved them by giving his Son as a ransom for their sins (John 3:16). The Son loved them by willingly going to the cross in our place (2 Cor. 5:15). The Holy Spirit loved them by convicting them of their sin so they could come to the cross to receive forgiveness (John 16:8). The second thought is that the Father and the Son have both "*given*" (DIDOMI means: to give, to bestow, deliver) an "*eternal*" (AIONIOS means: perpetual, eternal, forever) "*encouragement*" (PARAKLESIS means: solace, comfort, exhortation). We see the prophetic word of Isaiah 61:1-3 become a reality through Jesus in Luke 4:18. Please note that the encouragement from the Lord God is "eternal". It is not temporary, brief or short-term. Once you are a child of God, he encourages you when you approach him. The last thought he speaks of is the "*good*" (AGATHOS means: good, benefit, well) "*hope*" (ELPIS means: to expect with confidence, trust). Hope in God brings:

- rest (Ps. 16:19)
- courage (Ps. 31:24)
- mercy (Ps. 33:18)
- a hiding place (Ps. 119:114)
- true life (Ps. 119:116)

- help (Ps. 119:147)
- and so many other things

The love of God, his eternal encouragement and hope flows through his "grace" (CHARIS means: graciousness, benefit, favor, gift). His grace is never received through our works or any worth we may think we have. It is a free gift from the Father to his children.

<sup>17</sup> encourage your hearts and strengthen *you* in every good work and word.

Paul calls upon the Father and the Son to "*encourage*" (PARAKALEO means: to call near, invite, comfort) your "*hearts*" (KARDIA means: the heart, fig: the thoughts and feelings of the mind). We have seen that it is one of the things that they do (v.16). He also asks that they "*strengthen*" (STERIZO means: to set fast, fix, strengthen) them - but why? It is for every "*good*" (AGATHOS means: good, benefit, well) "*work*" (ERGON means: to work, toil, labor, make an effort) and "*word*" (LOGOS means: something said, speech, preaching). The encouragement and strengthening provided are for living a complete life in works and words that bring glory to God.

## 09 - Paul calls for prayer

2 Thessalonians 3:1-5

<sup>1</sup> Finally, brothers, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may progress and be honored, just as also *it was* with you, <sup>2</sup> and that we may be delivered from evil and wicked people, *for not all have the faith*. <sup>3</sup> But the Lord is faithful, who will strengthen you and guard *you* from the evil one. <sup>4</sup> And we have confidence in the Lord about you, that you are both doing and you will do *the things* that we are commanding. <sup>5</sup> Now may the Lord direct your hearts toward the love of God and toward the patient endurance of Christ.  
(LEB)

In this section, Paul begins with two prayers concerning his ministry in the Lord. He calls upon the "*brothers*" (ADEPHOS means: a brother, literally or figuratively) in the faith to "*pray*" (PROSEUCHOMAI means: to pray to God, to worship) for them. What I would like to emphasize is the fact that Paul is not afraid or ashamed to ask for prayers. He knows the value of prayer and the power that lies behind it. We are not called to suffer silently when we can have people standing up for us in prayer. We ALL need prayer, even those who have important ministries like Paul did. If Paul can write that he and his associates in the Lord need prayer, we should also be open about our spiritual needs.

What did Paul ask the Thessalonians to pray for? Here is the first request.

v.1 ... that the word of the Lord may progress

He asks that the "*word*" (LOGOS means: something said, talk, speech) of the "*Lord*" (KURIOS means: supreme in authority) may "*progress*" (TRECHO means: to run or to walk hastily). Paul does not ask them to pray for health, money, or any other material thing, but rather for the gospel to be poured out through them. If only believers could have the same desire! Prayers are not for me, me, me, but for the advancement of the kingdom of God. We are able to pray for our needs, but sometimes I fear that this is what prayer evenings are mostly filled with.

His second request for the Thessalonians to pray for is this:

v. 1 ... and be honored, just as also *it was* with you,

He asks that not only the gospel would be spread as far as the eye can see but also that it would be "honored" (DOXAZO means: glory, honor, magnify). Paul hopes that the good news will be accepted as it truly is—the Word of God. He hopes that it will pierce the hearts of those who hear it and bring them to repentance and change their lives. Are we satisfied with only bringing the good news to people, or do we also, and even more so, desire to see them come to the Lord? Paul reminds them that this was how it happened when he was with them, "as also it was with you."

<sup>2</sup>and that we may be delivered from evil and wicked people, *for not all have the faith.*

Note the priorities in Paul's asking for prayers. First it has to do with the Lord God, and then he asks for himself and his associates (Silas and Timothy). He asks them to pray so that they may be "*delivered*" (RHOUMAI means: rescue, deliver) from "*evil*" (ATOPOS means: out of place, amiss, not befitting) and "*wicked*" (PONEROS means: hateful, evil, malice) people. These are the ones who stand up against the good news and its messengers. Here are a few examples:

In Jerusalem there was opposition:

Acts 4

3 And they laid hands on them (Peter and John), and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening.  
(NKJV)

In Antioch there was opposition:

Acts 13

45 But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy; and contradicting and blaspheming, they opposed the things spoken by Paul.  
(NKJV)

In Corinth there was opposition:

Acts 18

6 But when they opposed him and blasphemed, he shook his garments and said to them, "Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles."  
(NKJV)

In Ephesus there was opposition:

Acts 19

23 And about that time there arose a great commotion about the Way.  
24 For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Diana, brought no small profit to the craftsmen.  
(NKJV)

Paul gives the reason why there was opposition:

*v.2 ... for not all have the faith*

Paul is speaking about the true "*faith*" (PISTIS means: persuasion, credence, moral conviction). Most of Paul's opposition came from the religious Jewish community. They thought they had and wanted to guard the faith inherited by Abraham. But theirs was a faith that rejected the foundation stone given by God for his people!

Isaiah 28

16 therefore thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I am laying in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation: 'He who believes will not be in haste.'  
(RSV)

So they opposed all who would come and preach salvation through Jesus the Nazarene. They were ready to do anything to stop the message of salvation from reaching people. This included being willing to bear false witness (Mark 14:55,56) a plan to kill those

who brought the message (Acts 9:20-24) and even murder when necessary (Acts 7:58-60).

<sup>3</sup> But the Lord is faithful, who will strengthen you and guard *you* from the evil one. Then Paul reminds the Thessalonians whom they are praying to (God) and what he can do. The "*Lord*" (KURIOS means: supreme in authority) is "*faithful*" (PISTOS means: trustworthy, sure, true). He reminds them that they can count on the Lord and that he will "*strengthen*" (STERIZO means: to set fast, fix, steadfastly) them. The Lord God is the source of life and vigor. Remember what Paul wrote concerning being weak:

### 2 Corinthians 12

7 And because the revelations were so very great, in order that I might not be overmuch lifted up, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, one sent from Satan to give me pain.

8 And about this thing I made request to the Lord three times that it might be taken away from me.

9 And he said to me, My grace is enough for you, for my power is made complete in what is feeble. Most gladly, then, will I take pride in my feeble body, so that the power of Christ may be on me.

(BBE)

Not only will the God of your prayers strengthen you, but he will also "*guard*" (PHULASSO means: to watch, be on guard, to preserve) you. He will guard you from the "*evil*" (PONEROS means: hateful, evil, malice) one. God will set limits to what the evil one can do to his children as we see with Job in the Old Testament (Job 1:12; 2:6).

<sup>4</sup> And we have confidence in the Lord about you, that you are both doing and you will do *the things* that we are commanding.

After manifesting the confidence that he had towards the Lord God, the apostle Paul now manifests his confidence in the Thessalonians. We have "*confidence*" (PEITHO means: to convince, to pacify, believe) in the "*Lord*" (KURIOS means: supreme in authority) over you. Note that his confidence was in God concerning them. He knew that God was keeping and protecting them. Here is what Paul was confident about. First is that they were "*doing*" (POIEO means: to make or do) and that they will

continue on doing the things that they are "commanding" (PARAGGELLO means: to transmit a message, to enjoin, charge). Paul was certain that they would continue in the faith by following the instructions that they had received while Paul was among them.

<sup>5</sup> Now may the Lord direct your hearts toward the love of God and toward the patient endurance of Christ.

His last prayer for them was that the Lord may "*direct*" (KATEUTHUNO means: to straighten fully, guide, direct) their "*hearts*" (KARDIA means: the heart, fig: the thoughts and feelings of the mind). Remember what King David wrote concerning this:

Psalms 26

2 Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; Try my mind and my heart.

3 For Your lovingkindness is before my eyes, And I have walked in Your truth.

(NKJV)

Paul asked God to direct their hearts towards his "*love*" (AGAPE means: affection, benevolence, charity). This is our starting point - the love of God for us (Rom. 5:8) and that he loved us first.

1 John 4

19 We love Him because He first loved us.

Our eyes are also to be fixed on the "*patient endurance*" (HUPOMONE means: hopeful endurance, constancy) of Christ. We know that they suffered persecution because of their faith, so Paul calls on them to look at the patience of Christ during his sufferings and imitate him.

## *10 - Paul and personal responsibility*

2 Thessalonians 3:6-9

<sup>6</sup> But we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, *that* you keep away from every brother who lives irresponsibly and not according to the tradition that they received from us. <sup>7</sup> For you yourselves know how it is necessary to imitate us, that we did not behave irresponsibly among you, <sup>8</sup> nor did we eat bread from anyone without paying, but with toil and labor, *we were* working night and day in order not to be a burden to any of you, <sup>9</sup> not that we do not have the right, but so that we may give ourselves *as* an example to you, so that *you* may imitate us.

(LEB)

In our present section, we will see that the apostle Paul took very seriously his need to be a model for those around him and that he did not want to take for granted those whom he served.

<sup>6</sup> But we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, *that* you keep away from every brother who lives irresponsibly and not according to the tradition that they received from us.

What follows is a "*command*" (PARAGGELLO means: to transmit a message, charge, to enjoin). This was NOT a suggestion or a proposition that Paul was offering. This commandment was to be enforced by every believer. To place emphasis on the necessity to follow the instructions that will be given, the apostle Paul calls on the "*name*" ( ONOMA means: a name, fig: the character of the person) of our "*Lord*" (KURIOS means: supreme in authority) Jesus Christ. It is on the basis of the authority of Christ over his people that Paul gives this commandment.

The commandment is the following: that you "*keep away*" (STOLE means: to repress, abstain from associating) from "*every brother*" (ADEPHOS means: a brother, literally or figuratively), not just the ones you personally chose or don't mind no longer associating with, but every brother. Paul is talking about the brothers and sisters who "*lives*" (PERIPATEO means: to tread all around, walk about) "*irresponsibly*" (ATAKTOS means:

irregularly, morally disorderly). Paul is writing about people who do not live according to God's standards, are warned and choose to continue living in rebellion. This teaching was not new, for it was given by the Lord Jesus:

Matthew 18

15 "Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.

16 "But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.'

17 "And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.

(NKJV)

We also see that Paul applies this teaching towards a Corinthian believer who lived in the flesh in a shameful way:

1 Corinthians 5

1 It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and of a kind that is not found even among pagans; for a man is living with his father's wife.

2 And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you.

3 For though absent in body I am present in spirit, and as if present, I have already pronounced judgment

4 in the name of the Lord Jesus on the man who has done such a thing. When you are assembled, and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus,

5 you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

(RSV)

We all sin one way or another, and when we are asked to repent of our sins and walk in the light BUT refuse to do so, there are consequences, and one of them is that the congregation will refuse fellowship with you.

v.6 ... and not according to the tradition that they received from us.

The standard for Christian living is found in the teachings found in the Bible in its context and original language. This is what Paul calls the "*traditions*" (PARADOSIS means: transmission, a precept, or ordinance), as we have also seen in 2 Thes. 2:15. These are the teachings that they had "*received*" (PARALAMBANO means: to receive near, take unto) from us (Paul, Silvanus (Silas) and Timothy). Unfortunately, this is RARELY applied in churches today. The result is that sin is now easily accepted and the fellowship of believers loses its testimony and displeases the Lord.

<sup>7</sup> For you yourselves know how it is necessary to imitate us, that we did not behave irresponsibly among you,

In this verse, Paul begins to show how they acted properly towards the Thessalonians. Paul calls the Thessalonians as witnesses of what he is about to write: For you yourselves "know" (EIDO means: to see, to know, to be aware of). I wonder if we all have the same capacity to call upon the brethren as witnesses of our holy lives! Because of his holy life, Paul had the capacity to tell the believers that it was "*necessary*" (DEI means: necessary, should, need to) for them to "*imitate*" (MIMEOMAI means: to imitate, to follow, mimic) him and his associates. In other words, they were moral models that could and should be followed. May it be the same for all true believers! May we strive to be models for the brethren.

v.7 ... that we did not behave irresponsibly among you,

How could they be models to follow? Simply because they did not "*behave irresponsibly*" (ATAKTEO means: behave self-disorderly, to lead a disorderly life). He is opposing people who live disorderly lives (in verse 6), who should be set aside with himself and his associates who live orderly lives, and who should be modeled after. In other words, don't follow those who walk in the dark, but those who walk in the light.

<sup>8</sup> nor did we eat bread from anyone without paying, but with toil and labor, we *were* working night and day in order not to be a burden to any of you,

Paul also calls the believers to be witnesses that not only did they not live in a disorderly fashion but that they also did not "*eat bread*" (PHAGO ARTOS means: to eat bread) from anyone without "*paying*" (DOREAN means: undeservedly, freely). In other

words, they were not "freeloading" on the backs of the believers! This is what they did to buy the bread that they ate. Paul speaks of "*toil*" (ERGAZOMAI means: to toil, be engaged with) and "*labor*" (KOPOS means: toil, intense labor, weariness). They certainly worked hard for their food! Paul writes that they were "*working*" (MOCHTHOS means: toil, painfulness, travail) "*night*" (NUX means: night) and "*day*" (HEMERA means: the time space between dawn and dark). In other words, Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy did not spare any effort to work, whatever the time was.

v.8 ... in order not to be a burden to any of you,

This is why they worked so hard. It was in order not to be a "*burden*" (EPIBAREO means: to be heavy upon, overcharge) to any of you. Did Paul sometimes receive money to continue in his ministry? Yes, he sometimes did (Phil. 4:10-20) but did he ask for money or demand it? Never! Could it be that some shepherds demand too much for themselves and leave little for the different ministries of the church? Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy certainly did not do this.

<sup>9</sup> not that we do not have the right, but so that we may give ourselves *as* an example to you, so that *you* may imitate us.

Paul explains why they worked for their bread instead of expecting the Thessalonians to provide for them. First of all, Paul states that they do have the "*right*" (EXOUSIAZO means: to control, to exercise authority). If they worked for the Thessalonians, they should be rewarded for their labor. This is a basic fact of life for everybody to apply, as Jesus tells us in Mat. 20:1-16). But they did not ask for money because they decided to "give ourselves" to the believers. Instead of taking for themselves, they gave themselves away because they wanted to be an "*example*" (TUPOS means: a die, a stamp, a shape) for them. They wanted to be an example of faith and service to them so that they would "*imitate*" (MIMEOMAI means: to mimic, imitate, follow) them.

This comes down to the basic commandment of Jesus when he said "follow me" (Mat 4:19; 8:22; 9:9, etc.). Jesus never asked for any type of "gratuity" for anything that he ever did. He had faith that his Father would provide for himself and even for those who would follow him (Mat. 14:21; 15:38). Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy also wanted to be

witnesses to the faithfulness of God by not asking for anything in return for the work they did.

v.9 ... so that *you* may imitate us.

The goal was not only to manifest the provision of the Lord God for them. There was a second goal to what they did, and that was so that the Thessalonians could "*imitate*" (MIMEOMAS means: to mimic, imitate, to follow) them by doing the same thing. Paul desired to install in them the pattern of working for the Lord-for HIM and not for some kind of recompense they might receive. May we all be imitators of Jesus, who gave all for us, even his life!

## 11 - *The sin of laziness*

2 Thessalonians 3:10-15

<sup>10</sup> For even when we were with you, we used to command this to you: that if anyone does not want to work, neither should he eat. <sup>11</sup> For we hear *that* some among you are living irresponsibly, working *at* nothing, but being busybodies. <sup>12</sup> Now we command and we exhort such people in the Lord Jesus Christ that, working with quietness, they eat their own bread. <sup>13</sup> But *as for* you, brothers, do not be discouraged *while* doing what is right. <sup>14</sup> But if anyone does not obey our message through this letter, take note not to associate with him, in order that he may be put to shame. <sup>15</sup> And do not consider *him* as an enemy, but admonish *him* as a brother.

(LEB)

This section is the last exhortation that Paul brings to the believers in Thessalonica.

<sup>10</sup> For even when we were with you, we used to command this to you: that if anyone does not want to work, neither should he eat.

Paul reminds them of a "*commandment*" (PARAGGELLO means: to transmit a message, a charge) that he had given them while he was still with them, and it dealt with laziness. I can see from this that Paul was a "hands-on" person. He did not just teach them, he also cared enough to see if they were living what they were taught. I can also see that the problem with laziness was present from the beginning of his stay in Thessalonica. In the garden of Eden, the Lord God brought judgments upon Adam and one of them had to do with the fact that he would now have to work hard for his food.

17 And to Adam he said, Because you gave ear to the voice of your wife and took of the fruit of the tree which I said you were not to take, the earth is cursed on your account; in pain you will get your food from it all your life.

18 Thorns and waste plants will come up, and the plants of the field will be your food;

19 With the hard work of your hands you will get your bread till you go back to the earth from which you were taken: for dust you are and to the dust you will go back.

(RSV)

By being lazy, some of the Thessalonians were going against the direct will of God for them.

v.10 ... that if anyone does not want to work, neither should he eat.

This was the teaching that Paul had given them. If "*anyone*" (EI means: if any, whosoever) does not "*want*" (THELO means: to determine, be disposed, will) to "*work*" (ERGAZOMAI means: to toil, be engaged in, commit), neither should he "*eat*" (ESTHIO means: to eat, devour). Paul is saying that if you do not want to work, then you should not have anything given to you for your sustenance. This may seem harsh, but Paul is exposing the sin and consequences of laziness.

Please note that Paul writes "does NOT WANT to work". There is never a question of helping someone that CANNOT work but who DOES NOT want to work. Believers are to take care of the sick, feeble, and older folk. But they are not to encourage those who are too lazy and do not work by providing them with sustenance. If one can not find work even though he tries and tries, then we should help. Anyone who is UNWILLING to work should not be supported because we are just assisting them to continue in their sin.

<sup>11</sup> For we hear *that* some among you are living irresponsibly, working *at* nothing, but being busybodies.

Paul continues and brings a description of what these people look like. First, we see that Paul and his associates "*heard*" (AKOUO means: to hear, to understand) about them. That means that other Christians had noticed their laziness and may even have brought this to the ears of Paul, who had taught them to work for their bread. I'm glad to see that only "*some of them*" (TIS means: some or any person or thing) were "*living*" (PARIPATEO means: to tread all about) "*irresponsibly*" (ATAKTOS means: irregularly, morally disorderly). We can see that this sort of living is considered morally wrong. It should also be considered wrong now. Young adults living with their parents are not paying for their food or lodging while both parents work hard to pay the bills!

Paul describes this irresponsible living as "*working*" (ERGAZOMAI means: to toil, be engaged with) at nothing. They were busy doing nothing that was productive or

glorified the Lord. They were very busy being "*busybodies*" (PERIERGAZOMAI means: meddle, busybody, to bustle about uselessly), but they were just plain lazy. It seems that they could do just about anything but work! You can find many verses in the book of proverbs concerning being lazy. Here is one of them:

Prov. 21

25 The desire of the lazy man kills him, For his hands refuse to labor.  
(NKJV)

Paul reminds the believers that it is their responsibility to reach out to these lazy believers and exhort them by using this epistle to change their ways.

<sup>12</sup> Now we command and we exhort such people in the Lord Jesus Christ that, working with quietness, they eat their own bread.

Even though Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy are not among the brethren, they act with authority as if they were there. We see that Paul uses strong language to manifest his thoughts. We "*command*" (PARAGGELLO means: to transmit a message, to enjoin) and we "*exhort*" (PARAKALEO means: to call near, comfort, consolation) such people. Please note that Paul approaches these people with a touch of tenderness and encouraging words. By no means must the believers "crush" these wayward disciples with their words. They must be firm but kind. Paul reminds them that this must be done in the "*Lord*" (KURIOS means: supreme in authority) Jesus Christ.

This is the exhortation that they were to give: that they should be "*working*" (ERGAZOMAI means: to toil, work, labor) with "*quietness*" (HESUCHIA means: stillness, quietness, silence). The word "*quietness*" in Greek gives the idea of working without meddling in other people's business. By doing so, they could "*eat*" (ESTHIO means: to eat, devour) their own "*bread*" (ARTOS means: bread, a loaf) instead of freeloading. It is very honorable to be busy with work that will supply what is needed.

<sup>13</sup> But *as for* you, brothers, do not be discouraged *while* doing what is right.

Paul now switches from those who are lazy to the rest of the believers. But as for "you" these are the more noble Thessalonians who are in Christ. Paul calls them "*brothers*"

(ADEPHOS means: a brother, literally or figuratively) and tells them not to be "*discouraged*" (EKKAKEO means: to fail, faint, be weary) while doing what is "*right*" (KALOPOIEO means: to do well, live virtuously). Doing what is right could refer to the exhortation they had to give towards lazy people or life in general. Paul says to not be discouraged when you do what is right. This can often happen when we do not see any result from our work in the Lord. That is probably why Paul wrote the following to the Corinthian believers:

1 Corinthians 15

57 But praise be to God who gives us strength to overcome through our Lord Jesus Christ.

58 For this cause, my dear brothers, be strong in purpose and unmoved, ever giving yourselves to the work of the Lord, because you are certain that your work is not without effect in the Lord.

(BBE)

What were the believers to do if they exhorted the lazy people to work for their food and they responded negatively and continued in their sin?

<sup>14</sup> But if anyone does not obey our message through this letter, take note not to associate with him, in order that he may be put to shame.

Paul tells them exactly what to do. If anyone DOES NOT "*obey*" (HUPAKOUO means: to heed, to conform, obey) our "*message*" (LOGOS means: something said, word, talk) through this "*letter*" (EPISTOLE means: a written message, a letter), this is the next step. You must "*take note*" (SEMEIOO means: to distinguish, to mark) and not "*associate*" (SUNANAMIGNUMI means: to mix up together) with him. In other words, recognize the lazy people who do not change their ways and have nothing to do with them. There is a reason for this, and it is the following: in order that they may be put to "*shame*" (ENTREPO means: to confound, shame). Remember what Paul said in 2 Thessalonians 3:6:

But we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, *that* you keep away from every brother who lives irresponsibly and not according to the tradition that they received from us.

(LEB)

Paul is telling the believers to do what Jesus had taught his disciples:

Matthew 18

17 "And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.

(NKJV)

By not associating with these lazy believers, the aim would be to make them feel bad (ashamed) about their conduct, repent of their evil ways, and once more walk in the light. The aim is not to punish them but to encourage them to see how unholy their conduct is.

<sup>15</sup> And do not consider *him* as an enemy, but admonish *him* as a brother.

Because some people might have the wrong attitude towards this discipline, and their hearts harden even to the point of desiring ill to fall upon those who are lazy, Paul reminds them of the following. He asks them not to "*consider*" (HEGEOMAI means: to deem, consider, count) him (the lazy person) as an "*enemy*" (ECHTHROS means: to hate, odious, foe). The sinning brother IS NOT YOUR ENEMY, he is still your brother in Christ. Because of this, you should "*admonish*" (NOUTHETEO means: to put in mind, reprove gently) him as a "*brother*" (ADEPHOS means: a brother, literally or figuratively). Your words and approach to a sinning person should be filled with gentleness. We are firm and stand by the word of our God with calmness and tenderness. Once that is done we hope that the Holy Spirit will convince the person to change and if he does not listen to the Holy Spirit - we no longer associate with him.

## 12 - *Final greetings and blessings*

2 Thessalonians 3:16-18

<sup>16</sup> Now may the Lord of peace himself grant you peace through everything in every way. *May the Lord be with all of you.* <sup>17</sup> The greeting *is* by my hand, Paul's, which is a *sign of genuineness* in every letter: *this is how I write.* <sup>18</sup> The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be with all of you.*

(LEB)

We have come to the end of the Book of Second Thessalonians, where Paul gives his final greetings and blessings. As for the blessings, the apostle Paul has three in mind for his beloved Thessalonians.

<sup>16</sup> Now may the Lord of peace himself grant you peace through everything in every way.

The first one is the following. He calls upon the "*Lord*" (KURIOS means: supreme in authority) of "*peace*" (EIRENE means: to join, peace, rest). Who is the Lord of peace? I believe that Paul is referring to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, for he is the one who brings peace to the believer. He brings peace between the Father and the believer.

Rom. 5

1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,  
(NKJV)

He also gives his peace to all true believers.

John 14

27 "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.  
(NKJV)

His gospel is a message of peace.

Rom. 10

15 And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!"  
(NKJV)

This peace was to be received in all different aspects of their lives.

v.16 ... grant you peace through everything in every way.

This peace was to be "*granted*" (DIDOMI means: to give, bestow, yield), to be given to the believer in "*every way*" (TROPOS means: by any means, any fashion). The peace of the Lord Jesus can be found in all situations and at all times. Our hearts need to be calmed by the hand of our shepherd, and he is willing to do so.

v.16 ... *May the Lord be with all of you.*

This is the second blessing. He asks that the Lord be with his followers. Please note that Paul writes "all of you". Again, Paul does not accept any favoritism between believers. The presence of the Lord is for every single disciple of Jesus Christ. The foolish and the wise, the learned and the simple, the strong in faith and the weak. Jesus is the Savior of all and desires to be with all of those who have tasted redemption. Remember the words of Jesus:

Matthew 28

20 Teaching them to keep all the rules which I have given you: and see, I am ever with you, even to the end of the world.  
(BBE)

This is third and last blessing of Paul for the Thessalonians.

<sup>18</sup>The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be with all of you.*

Paul calls upon the "*grace*" (CHARIS means: benefit, favor, gift) of the "*Lord*" (KURIOS means: supreme in authority) Jesus "*Christ*" (CHRISTOS means: anointed, the Messiah) to be with all of you". This reminds me of the famous blessing that the Father gave to Aaron to bless the children of Israel with:

Numbers 6

24 "The LORD bless you and keep you;

25 The LORD make His face shine upon you, And be gracious to you;

26 The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, And give you peace."

27 "So they shall put My name on the children of Israel, and I will bless them."

(NKJV)

As for his final greeting the apostle Paul writes:

<sup>17</sup> The greeting *is* by my hand, Paul's, which is *a sign of genuineness* in every letter: *this is how I write*.

The "*greeting*" (ASPASMOS means: a greeting, a salutation) is by my "*hand*" (CHEIR means: the hand, a means, an instrument). Paul writes that this handwriting (his signature) is a "*sign*" (SEMEION means: a sign, token, mark) of genuineness. This was the seal of his epistle, proof that it came from him and not someone who was imitating him. They could be confident in its authenticity because this is how I "*write*" (GRAPHO means "to grave, to write").