

Verse 23. Every good thing is of God, but he is here said to be of *peace* because that is an outstanding result of being wholly *sanctified*. The word means to be devoted to the service of God, and such a condition is accomplished by the word of God (John 17: 17). As a general statement, the rest of this verse is a prayer of Paul that the entire being of the brethren be kept blameless, which means in obedience to the truth of God that has sanctified them, and that such a condition would exist until Christ comes again. *Spirit* and *soul* and *body*. This is the only place in the Bible where the three parts of the human being are named in one sentence. There is not much difference between the first two, for they are used interchangeably at various places in the sacred writings. However, since Paul uses them together in the present passage, there must be some difference, although they both refer to the inner or immaterial part of man, in contrast with the material or bodily part. Genesis 2: 7 states the origin of the body and soul of man. But God did not stop with the creation of those two parts. Zechariah 12: 1 states that God formed the spirit of man within him, thus completing the three parts of the human being. From the forgoing considerations, I will give to the readers the three parts of man as follows: The body is that part that is composed of the ground, made in the form of an animal (not a vegetable or mineral); the soul is the part that makes him a living animal; the spirit is the part that makes him a human, living animal. It should be added that God intended this being to have an endless existence, beginning with his stay on the earth, during which he was to be given opportunity to serve his Creator intelligently and spiritually. Because of this exalted purpose, God gave to this being a superior personality over all other living creatures, both as to his material and to his immaterial formation.

Verse 24. We usually think of the term *faithful* as applying to one who is true and obedient to another unto whom he is obligated. Yet it would not be appropriate to regard the Lord in that light; hence it means that He will make good all of the promises he has made to man. Such promises were made when He *called* man by the Gospel and promised him spiritual

benefits in this life, and endless joys in the life to come. *Who also will do it*. God not only has always been faithful, but always will be.

Verse 25. It is interesting that the apostle Paul felt the need for the prayers of the brethren, although he was an inspired man. That was because inspiration was not any special protection against misconduct in one's personal life; it guaranteed only that he would not make any mistake in his teaching. An inspired man could go wrong in his life, even though he had done his duty in his teaching (1 Corinthians 9: 27).

Verse 26. Paul was not starting any custom by this command. The salutation of a kiss was a common one in that age, and still is in some countries. The emphasis should be placed on the word *holy*, and the thought is for the brethren to be sincere when they greet each other.

Verse 27. There were no duplicating devices known in old times, whereby multiple copies of an epistle could be made and sent to all individuals of a congregation. The inspired documents were sent in care of some responsible person, who was expected to see that the other members would learn of their contents; hence the command to read this epistle to them. *Holy brethren* simply means righteous men and women of the congregation, since holiness and righteousness are names for the same quality.

Verse 28. Grace is the unmerited favor of Christ, which Paul wishes for the Thessalonians. It was a benediction with which he closed most of his epistles.

2 Thessalonians 1

Verse 1, 2. These verses are the same in thought as the opening verse of the first epistle to the Thessalonians. See that place concerning *Silvanus* and *Timotheus*.

Verse 3. In the preceding epistle Paul expressed thanks for the good report of the brethren in Thessalonica. He repeats it in this place, and adds the word *bound*, meaning he is urged toward his attitude by the great truths connected with the work of that congregation. *It is meet* denotes that it is proper because the good influence of their work made them deserving of such consideration. *Faith groweth* means they were increasing their good works as a result of their faith. (See

1 Thessalonians 1: 3.) This growth included their *charity* (love) for each other, which is the meaning of the word *aboundeth*.

Verse 4. *We ourselves glory in you* is not said in the sense of vanity or puffed-up boasting. It means that Paul spoke very commendably of their good work, when he had any contact with other churches. *Churches of God* is the same as "churches of Christ" (Romans 16: 16), because God and Christ are one in spirit and purpose. *Patience and faith* are very logically coupled together, for a Christian's patience will be no greater than his faith. These brethren were put to a special test of these qualities by their enemies among the Jews (Acts 17: 1-9). *Persecutions and tribulations* are virtually the same, the former having special reference to the disagreeable treatment of the body, the latter to its effect on the mind by way of worrisome concern.

Verse 5. It is God's judgment that the faithful servants shall prove their faith by enduring persecutions (2 Timothy 3: 12), such an experience being a proof that they are true disciples. Knowing that such persons will actually endure their trials, He has regarded such a truth as rendering them worthy of the test. (See Acts 5: 41; James 1: 2, 4; 1 Peter 4: 12-14.) This is why Paul refers to the matter as a *manifest token of the righteous judgment of God*. The Lord knows how much the true disciples can withstand, hence He will not suffer them to be tried beyond that (1 Corinthians 10: 13); and when they come out of their trials as victors over evil, it proves the righteousness of His judgment.

Verse 6. God will suffer evil men to persecute His children in this world, knowing they will withstand the test and thus prove their worthiness to be counted as heirs of the kingdom. But these evil doers will get their just dues after a while, and such a dealing with them is declared to be a righteous thing. *Recompense* means to repay or "deal out"; *tribulation* denotes trouble or punishment. The verse means that God will deal out punishment to the ones who have been troubling His children.

Verse 7. The word *rest* is a noun (not a verb), and it is the object of the verb "recompense" in the preceding verse. The two verses contain a

sentence that has two objects. God is the actor or subject; *recompense* is the verb or predicate; *tribulation* and *rest* are the objects. Since these objects are opposite in kind, it follows that they will not be recompensed to the same people. The preceding verse says the *tribulation* will be recompensed to the troublers of God's children; this verse says the *rest* will be recompensed to the ones who are troubled by these evil workers. *With us* means that faithful Christians will join with the apostles in enjoying this rest—the rest that "remaineth to the people of God" (Hebrews 4: 9). The time when all this is to take place will be *when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his angels*.

Verse 8. *In flaming fire*. The first word is from the Greek *EN*, and Thayer's general definition is, "in, on, at, with, by, among." In the King James Version it has been rendered through 37 times, by 142, with 139. In Luke 21: 27; Acts 1: 9-11; Revelation 1: 7 it is shown that Jesus will actually be accompanied with clouds when he comes, yet there is no teaching that clouds will be used as instruments for the punishment of the unrighteous. On the other hand, there is plenty of scripture that teaches us that fire will be the element used in their punishment. (See Matthew 3: 12; 25: 41; Mark 9: 43-48; 2 Peter 3: 7; Revelation 20: 15; 21: 8.) From this information the conclusion is that when Jesus comes he will be prepared to administer the fire upon the unsaved. All fire will burn, but a flame is more active and penetrating, so the phrase *flaming fire* is used to indicate the intensity of punishment that is to be inflicted upon the wicked. *Vengeance* is not used in the sense of spite or the "get-even" spirit as men often do, but it is from an original that means legal and judicial punishment on one who has shown disrespect for some law. *Know not God* means those who refuse to recognize H.M., and that attitude is manifested by their refusal to obey the Gospel of Christ who is the Son of God.

Verse 9. The preceding verse names the element the Lord will use in punishing the disobedient. This verse shows the nature or extent of that punishment, that it will be everlasting. The unrighteous will first be sentenced to this fate, which is one meaning of the word for *punished*. It

is the same Greek word translated "judgment" in Acts 25: 15, where Festus says he was asked to have *judgment* (meaning a sentence) against Paul. So our verse means Jesus will pronounce the sentence when he comes, and the verdict will begin to be served on that day. The punishment to which the unsaved will be sentenced is described next. *Destruction* is from *OLETHROS*, which Thayer defines, "ruin, destruction, death," and he explains it to mean, "the loss of a life of blessedness after death, future misery." The word does not mean total annihilation as certain false teachers claim. The wicked will not cease to be, but their right to happiness will be totally destroyed. Hence they will be driven from the presence of God, and the separation will be everlasting.

Verse 10. The nature and extent of the punishment to be pronounced against the unsaved are set forth in the preceding two verses, and the occasion when such a sentence will be announced is stated in this verse, namely, when Jesus comes again. *Glorified in his saints*. Other believers are mentioned in addition to these *saints*, hence these are the "ten thousand of his saints" mentioned in Jude 14. Their presence with Him at that time will be a glory to him, in the same sense that a person of great dignity is honored upon his entry into a place, by a vast escort of other persons of high rank. This distinction is indicated further by what is said of others who are called *believers* who will admire Jesus when he comes. It is made definite by the words *among you*, in direct connection with the fact of the testimony of the apostles having been delivered to them, and believed by them. Another conclusion is justified by these several verses, namely, that the sentencing of the wicked, and the resurrection and ascension of the righteous (1 Thessalonians 4: 16, 17) will occur at the same time, although the entire story is not told in any one place.

Verse 11. In Ephesians 4: 1 Paul exhorts brethren to walk worthy of their calling, and in this verse he expresses the same thought in a different wording. He prays that God would *count* or consider the Thessalonians worthy, which would require that they live as they should, since God will not favor any unworthy persons. God is perfectly good, and will not take

pleasure in the disciples unless they *fulfill* the conditions on which such grace is promised. Those conditions must be a work of faith, and that means according to the Gospel, since it is the *power* that directs men and women into salvation (Romans 1: 16).

Verse 12. When Christians prove their faith by their works, they will thereby glorify the Lord. By the same token the glory of the Lord will be given upon them, for both Lord and servant are to work together (1 Corinthians 3: 9). This entire workmanship is *according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ*.

2 Thessalonians 2

General remarks. The background of most of this chapter is historical, involving the original government of the church as it was established by Christ and the apostles. The ruling men were called by three different names as rendered in the King James Version; they are elders (Acts 20: 17), overseers (Acts 20: 28), and bishops (1 Timothy 3: 1). There is some difference in the meaning of the words, because the duties of the men are so various that one word will not cover them. However, no distinction is made between their authority because of these names; each of them wore all the names. This is proved by the two verses in Acts 20 referred to above, where the same men are called elders and overseers. Incidentally I will add that bishop and overseer come from the same Greek word which is *EPISKOPOS*, and elder comes from *PRESBUTEROS*. The qualifications and work of these men will be explained when we come to 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. For the present their authority and function as governors or rulers is what is to be considered. There was a plurality of elders in each congregation (Acts 14: 23; Titus 1: 5), and their authority did not extend beyond their own congregation. As proof of this it is well to consider the case recorded in Acts 15. When the dispute arose in Antioch over circumcision because of the teaching of some from Judea, a group of them went to Jerusalem to consult the church. While the decision arrived at was sent to the brethren at Antioch, it was concerning the agitation among them caused by these who came from Jerusalem. Besides, this matter was enforced by the apostles, and they had authority everywhere.

The time came when some of the elders became thirsty for more power than the others had, and they worked it around so as to dominate them in the affairs of the congregation. This was one thing that Paul had in mind in Acts 20: 30, where he says "of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." This ambition for power continued until in most of the congregations, one elder became virtually the head over the others, assuming the exclusive right to the title "bishop" and leaving the simple role of "elder" to the others. But human nature is such that when a man becomes desirous of more authority than he is supposed to have, he will not stop until he tries to obtain the rule outside his allotted realm. Hence these dominating bishops reached out and gained control over other churches in their general area. Such a movement as I have just described was going on in many parts of the world, until the government fell into the hands of the bishops in such centers as Antioch, Corinth, Ephesus, Jerusalem, Rome, and others. The next struggle was among the bishops, to obtain superiority over all the other bishops, with a hungry mind upon a possible attainment of universal rule of one bishop over the brotherhood.

But this concentration of power among the bishops was held back by another mighty force, which I will now describe as briefly as I can. The Roman Empire was the secular government in power, which was the fourth one of the "world powers" predicted in Daniel 2: 31-45. These world powers made their religion a state affair, so that whatever the state religion was, it was regarded as a mark of disloyalty to the government to oppose that religion. The religion of the Roman Empire was the pagan or idolatrous system, and its presence presented an obstacle to the growing ambition of these bishops in the church, for if they went too far in their activities, they were apt to run into trouble with the government. But a change took place in the Empire which turned out to the advantage of the bishops. Constantine became emperor and was pursuing a military course in behalf of his government. On his way to what proved to be one of the "decisive battles of the world," he claimed to see a cross in the sky,

with an inscription that said, "by this sign conquer." He won that battle which he professed to believe was caused by the influence of the cross, the emblem of Christianity. On the basis of that victory and its causes, Constantine (as emperor) announced his support of Christianity with the weight of the empire in support of his decision. After that the Roman Empire presented no obstacle to the enlargement of the power of the bishops, since their religious professions were the same. That circumstance virtually united church and state, bringing on the apostasy and the Dark Ages, called by Paul the "falling away." With the foregoing paragraphs to consult frequently, the reader is now asked to consider the several verses in order.

Verse 1. *By* is from HUPER, which Thayer defines at this place, "concerning, of, as respects, with regard to." It is the word for "concerning" in Romans 9: 27. Paul beseeches the brethren concerning some very important events to occur in the future. One is the coming of Christ, and the other is our *gathering together unto him*. These events are prophesied in 1 Thessalonians 4: 16, 17.

Verse 2. There seemed to be a state of unrest among the disciples over the coming of Christ, thinking that it was "just around the corner," to use a familiar figure of speech. This doubtless was suggested by Paul's words in 1 Thessalonians 4: 17, "we which are alive and remain." It might seem to teach that Paul and some others would be living when Jesus comes, and hence that the event was due and might occur at any hour. As a result of such a notion, business and religious activities were at a standstill. Why should anything be done when the end was just at hand? To correct that error, the apostle takes occasion to make the famous predictions of this chapter, to tell them that all of this revolution will take place before the Lord comes. *Soon shaken in mind* refers to the unsettled condition which I have just described. To add to this disturbance, certain false teachers made claims of having "first hand" information on the subject, just as Jesus said some would do at the time preceding the destruction of Jerusalem (Matthew 24: 5, 24). Paul mentions three sources of false information that might deceive the disciples, and he wants them to know

that any theories claiming to come from such sources, that predicted the immediate approach of Christ, were false and not according to truth. Those three so-called sources were *spirit, word, and letter*. The first refers to those who claimed to have a gift of the Spirit. The second claims that they had received word from the apostles on the subject, and the third refers to some letters that had been forged as coming from the apostles. *At hand* is from ENISTEMI, which Thayer defines, "to stand in sight, stand near, to be upon, impend, threaten." This is commented upon at the beginning of this paragraph.

Verse 3. All who accepted this disquieting teaching were being deceived, and Paul bids them not to be deceived *by any means*. The words in italics denote that any information, from whatever source, that claims to teach this disquieting theory, is false. The second coming of Christ will not occur until after the *falling away*. Those words are from the Greek word APOSTASIA, which Thayer defines, "a falling away, defection, apostasy," which is a name for the formation of centralized rule in the church, described in "general remarks" at the beginning of this chapter. *Man of sin* would be a term of general application, were it not for the description that follows through several verses. It shows it means the bishop who finally got to the head of the church as it came to be, and he was finally known as the Pope of Rome. He is called the *son of perdition*, because the first word means "one who is worthy of a thing" (Thayer).

Verse 4. *Opposeth and exalteth himself above* is the same as saying, "he exalts himself in opposition to all" of what is to be named next. *That is called God*. Any person or thing that might be related to God or be claimed to be so related, would come under this phrase. *Or that is worshipped*. This is an extension of the thought expressed in the preceding phrase in italics. The thought is that this *man of sin* (the pope) will not recognize any being or object of worship as his equal, regardless of whether it pertains to the One in heaven or the many earthly rulers who receive homage from men. *Sitteth in the temple* means in the church, for it is said to be the temple of God (1 Corinthians 3: 16, 17; 2 Corinthians 6: 16). It is true that the institution called

the church in history at this period of development, was so corrupt that we could not acknowledge it to be the true church. But the pope and the system of centralized power over which he was head, was professed to be the church, and Paul is speaking of the subject historically, and from the standpoint of the pretensions of the Romish institution. At this point it will be well to state that all through these centuries that the apostasy was forming, there were some exceptions where congregations would not join in the departure, so that during the entire time of the Dark Ages there were faithful congregations here and there, which kept the pure church in existence, although as a woman persecuted for righteousness' sake, she had to flee to the wilderness of comparative hiding or obscurity, caused by the apostasy, to preserve her existence. (See Revelation 12: 1-3 and verse 14 of that chapter.) *Showing himself that he is God*. No man can actually show or display proof that he is God, but he can claim such a high rank, and display himself under such a guise, hence the pope is presented to his people as "Lord God, the Pope."

Verse 5. *I told you these things*. Since signs of the apostasy, namely, desire for power were being manifested in those early years of the church (3 John 9), it was natural that Paul would warn his brethren about it when laboring in their midst. He also instructed Timothy to remind the brethren where he preached, of this very defection that was to come into the world. In 1 Timothy 4: 1-3 is such a prediction, and verse 6 directly advises the evangelist to do this service of remembrance for the brethren.

Verse 6. *Withholdeth* (likewise *letteth* in next verse) is from KATECHO, which Thayer defines, "to restrain, hinder," and he comments on it as follows: "That which hinders, namely, Antichrist [the pope], from making his appearance; the power of the Roman empire is meant." I urge the reader to consult "general remarks" again, to learn why the Roman emperor was a hindrance to the coming of the pope into universal power over the church. In verse 5 Paul refers to previous information which he had given to the Thessalonians, to the effect that certain men were already showing signs of wanting this great power, and who finally would come out in the open and strive for

it. The brethren might wonder why such a development did not then come to the fore, and he is explaining that this Roman power (which then professed the heathen religion), was withholding or hindering such a movement. *Revealed in his time* means when the time came that the religion of Rome would not be any hindrance, then would be the *time* for the pope to be *revealed* or come out in the open.

Verse 7. This verse virtually has the same thoughts that have been already explained, but in different words that give additional points. *Mystery of iniquity* means the concentration of power described in "general remarks." *Doth already work*. The thirst for power was already manifesting itself in those days (3 John 9). *He who now letteth* (hindereth) *will let*. He (the Roman heathen religion) will continue to be a hindrance to the growing movement in the church for universal power. *Until he be taken out of the way*. This means until the pagan or heathen religion of the Roman Empire is replaced by the professed Christian religion that was claimed by the ambitious bishops. Again, let the reader consult "general remarks" at the beginning of comments on this chapter.

Verse 8. *Then* means when the pagan religion is replaced by the profession of the Christian, which finally resulted in the union of church and state. *That wicked be revealed* refers to the bishop who was to succeed over all the others in obtaining supremacy at the head of the church, and who later took the title of Pope of Rome. He was *revealed* or came out in the open after the hindrance of the pagan or idolatrous religion had been removed. *Consume* and *destroy* mean virtually the same if either of them is used alone. When both are used in one sentence, the former means a gradual using-up of something, and the latter denotes the final result of that consuming, namely, the complete canceling out of the thing spoken of. *Spirit of his mouth* is a figurative term for the truth spoken by the Lord through the apostles and others who were proclaimers of the inspired word. *Brightness of his coming* is the same as saying "the appearance of his presence." This does not mean that Christ was to appear in person, but would be present in the world or represented by the teach-

ers of divine truth, which was finally to counteract the power of the pope, by breaking up the union of church and state. This great event was accomplished by the Reformation, when the Bible (*the spirit of his mouth*) was given to the people in their own languages.

Verse 9. *Even him whose coming*. When the predicted *man of sin* does come, it will be like the coming and working of Satan. He is compared to Satan in that his power will consist of *signs and lying wonders*. The first italicized word is used in both a good and a bad sense in the New Testament, and it means an omen of something to come, or a supposed proof of something already in existence. It is used in a bad sense in this verse, since the signs are coupled with lying wonders. That refers to the deceptive means the pope and his associates will use, whereby the unsuspecting subjects of the Romish institution will easily be deceived.

Verse 10. *Deceivableness and unrighteousness*. All kinds of unrighteousness are to be condemned; but some kinds are naked and open so that everyone can understand them. However, the kind that this *man of sin* will use is such that his followers will be misled into doing it, with the notion that they are doing the right thing. *In them that perish*. The pope will not be able to deceive every individual on whom he tries his trickery. He will succeed only on those who are not honestly disposed to eternal life, and they are the ones who are destined finally to perish. The explanation for such an attitude is in the fact that they do not have enough *love of the truth* to obey it and be saved. In other words, since they do not love the truth, they will be "easy marks" for the agents of the pope, and consequently they will not be saved.

Verses 11, 12. *And for this cause*. Because of the conditions just described, these people who are devoted to the pope and his system, will receive some deserved punishment. *Strong delusion*. This phrase is rendered "a working of error" by the Englishman's Greek New Testament. A correct and short term would be "active errors." The word *that* is a poor translation for it is from EIS, and that word has the idea of "unto" or "to the end that" or "with the result that." It is a statement of what results from the thing spoken of, and

not intended as a term to show any motive on the part of God. Also, God *sends* things in other ways than by direct force; sometimes it is done merely by suffering a thing to happen. In Romans 11:8 it is stated that "God hath given them the spirit of slumber," yet we know it only means that He had given them over to their own determination to be blind to the truth. So in our passage it is preceded by the statement "they received not the love of the truth." For that reason God determined to "let them have their own determined way," and in so doing He sent them these errors that were so active that it resulted in their believing the lies of the leaders of the pope's system; this agrees also with verse 12. It does not say that they all would be damned because God had arbitrarily decreed it so, but it was because they "believed not the truth, and had pleasure in unrighteousness." That is the principle upon which God has always dealt with mankind. The Bible in no place teaches that God ever forces a man to sin, then punishes him for the wrong-doing. Neither does He compel man against his will to do right, but has always offered him proper inducements for righteous conduct, then left it to his own responsibility to decide what he will do about it.

Verse 13. With the preceding verse, Paul concludes his great prophecy of the apostasy and formation of the church of Rome. He now comes to matters more directly pertaining to the Thessalonians. He is thankful for their standing with God, which was brought about by their acceptance of the truth. This is far different from the characters described in the foregoing verses, who were condemned because they did not accept the truth. *From the beginning* is both general and specific. It was always God's plan to choose any who would accept the truth. The Thessalonians did so at the first opportunity, or *from the beginning* of the preaching of the Gospel among them. On the Lord's side of the plan, they were chosen through sanctification, which means a setting apart for a holy purpose, and it was by the Spirit because the truth that sanctified them (John 17:17) was given by the Spirit. But this alone would not have caused them to be chosen; it required also the *belief of the truth* on their part.

Verse 14. *Called you by our gospel.* God does not call people into His service from the world, for the sake of their personal salvation, by any direct contact with them. In every case of conversion recorded in the New Testament, there was a third person or other means used for the purpose. The people of Samaria heard the word through Philip (Acts 8:5, 6). The eunuch heard the Gospel from the mouth of Philip (Acts 8:35-38). Saul was instructed to go where he could be told what to do (Acts 9:6). Cornelius was to be told "words" whereby he could be saved (Acts 11:14). The Philippian jailer became a saved man by hearing the word of the Lord (Acts 16:30-33). All this is in keeping with 1 Corinthians 1:21, which says it is by the foolishness of preaching (called foolishness by the critics) to save them that believe. Hence our verse says the Thessalonians were called by the Gospel. Paul calls it *our gospel* in the sense that it was the Gospel which he preached. The word is not used with the meaning of possession, but to show relationship. When a man speaks of "my country," he does not mean he owns it, but that he is related to it and not to some other. The result of having been called by the Gospel was that the Thessalonians might obtain the glory of our *Lord Jesus Christ*. Stated in other words, the italicized phrase means that the salvation coming from Christ is the most glorious or praiseworthy thing a man can obtain.

Verse 15. *Stand fast* denotes that they were to remain firm in their belief of this Gospel, and not be deceived by the tricky teachers of the Romish system. *Traditions* is from PARADOSIS, which Thayer defines, "a giving over, giving up; i.e. the act of giving up, the surrender. A giving over which is done by word of mouth or in writing." The word is used in both a good and a bad sense in the New Testament. Any doctrine or rule of conduct becomes a tradition when it has once been given over from one person to another. Whether it is good or bad, and whether it is of any authority or not, depends upon the person or persons handing over the doctrine. Hence the traditions Paul is recommending to the Thessalonians are of authority since they come from him, either "by word of mouth" (oral preaching), or by his epistle.

Verse 16. God and Christ are again named in a manner that proves they are two separate individuals, although they are a unit in spirit and purpose. The title of *God* denotes his supreme deity as head over all creation, while that of *Father* pertains to his spiritual relationship to all who will become members of the spiritual family through obedience. *Lord* is a title that means ruler, and the Son has been given the rule over the church (Matthew 28: 18). *Jesus* means saviour and is given to him because he is the Saviour of the world (Matthew 1: 21). The title *Christ* belongs to him because he was anointed (figuratively crowned) to be over the kingdom (Acts 10: 38). *Everlasting consolation* is thus named because the consolation that comes from God and Christ is not temporary. *Good hope* simply means that the things for which Christians can hope are good in the highest sense. *Through grace* denotes that the entire benefit is a gift from on High, and not a return for labor, since that cannot earn or merit eternal life.

Verse 17. The preceding verse gives a general statement of the provisions or spiritual benefits possible for man, and this verse expresses Paul's wish for all such good things to come upon the Thessalonian brethren. One result of such comfort would be to *stablish* (make firm) them in *every good word and work*; no other kind of works will be blessed of God.

2 Thessalonians 3

Verse 1. *Finally* is defined "more-over" in Thayer's lexicon. It merely indicates that the apostle has some additional instructions to give the brethren, and not that it was to be the final or last of his remarks. *Pray for us*. In 1 Thessalonians 5: 25 Paul makes this same request. (See the comments at that place.) It is sufficient here to say that not even an inspired man has any special immunity against temptation. *Us* is the plural form of the first personal pronoun. It is true that all of the apostles needed the prayers of the faithful, and Paul could properly include them in his request. However, this use of a plural pronoun is like that of "we" which is a form of "editorial modesty" with reference to one's personality. In this verse the request is not for some favor to Paul especially, but for the *word of the Lord*. *Have free course*

means that it may not be obstructed by any foe. *Be glorified* denotes that it would receive its proper recognition from those who heard it. *As it is with you*. The Thessalonians had given such respectful attention to the word of the Lord, and it was the wish of Paul that others accord it the like treatment.

Verse 2. *Be delivered*. Be rescued or be protected from falling into the hands of them. *Unreasonable* literally means "out of place"; men who do not keep their place in society. *Wicked* has the regular meaning, referring here to the men who do not stay in their proper places nor mind their own business. *All men have not faith*. Paul regards this as the explanation of why some men are *unreasonable and wicked*. If a man does not believe the word of the Lord, he will not have any motive for respecting righteous people.

Verse 3. *Lord is faithful*. We usually think of the term *faithful* as applying to one who is true and obedient to another to whom he is obligated. Yet it would not be appropriate to regard the Lord in that light; hence it means that He will make good all his promises. Among the things God has promised to do for his obedient servants is to *stablish* or make them firm. A means of doing so is to protect them *from evil*, by not suffering them to be tempted beyond endurance (1 Corinthians 10: 13).

Verse 4. *Confidence in the Lord touching you*. This phrase combines Paul's estimate of the steadiness of the brethren, and his feeling of assurance that the Lord will perform his part of the relationship as the preceding verse states. The outward proof of the truths the apostle here expresses is the present life of obedience among the Thessalonians, which he is sure will be continued.

Verse 5. This verse is a prayer of Paul for the Lord's direction of their hearts. Under His guidance, they will come under the enjoyment of God's love, which can never be obtained except by faithful service to Him (John 14: 23). Such a degree of devotion to God will beget in the mind of a true disciple the quality of *patience* as the apostle desires him to have. The word is from *HUPOMONE*, and Thayer defines it at this place, "a patient, steadfast waiting for." It means that while faithful disciples will be eager for the coming of Christ

(2 Peter 3: 12), they will not become fretful and wavering because of their desire for it.

Verse 6. The command is in the name of Christ which means by his authority; hence to disobey would constitute disobedience against Him. *Disorderly* is from *ATAKTOS*, which Thayer defines as follows: "disorderly, out of ranks; irregular, inordinate, deviating from the prescribed order or rule." The word originated in the conduct of soldiers who got out of line in the march. When used in religious affairs, it applies to any kind of misconduct, although Paul is here specifically dealing with indolent persons, who are neglecting to perform the manual labor necessary for a living. But he states the rule by which any conduct may be classified, namely, the *tradition* that had been delivered by him. This word is explained by the comments at chapter 2: 15. Any conduct that is not in harmony with apostolic tradition is disorder; and when such is continued it constitutes *walking disorderly*. *Withdraw yourselves* is from the single Greek word *STELLO*, and Thayer's definition at this place is as follows: "To remove one's self, withdraw one's self, to depart; to abstain from familiar intercourse with one." It would be impossible to obey this command without excluding the guilty one from the congregation. Opponents of formal discipline claim this command can be obeyed without excluding the party; that it only requires the faithful to abstain from friendly association with him. But that would be out of the question if he is retained in the fellowship of the congregation, for that would entitle him to partake of the Lord's supper and other parts of the congregational services. It is certain that such an association would require great intimacy, the very thing that the command for withdrawal forbids.

Verse 7. The apostle now comes to the specific case of disorderly walking that he introduced in the preceding verse. There were some brethren who would not perform manual labor to obtain the necessities of life, and all such were guilty of disorderly conduct and subject to final discipline. The apostle reminds the congregation of his own example that he set when among them, saying they ought to *follow* (imitate) him—be willing to perform labor.

Verse 8. This verse is another refer-

ence to Paul's practice when he was among the brethren in Thessalonica. The subject is mentioned in the first epistle to the Thessalonians, chapter 2: 9, which shows that he labored for his own support very diligently, in order to relieve the brethren of that burden.

Verse 9. *Power* is from *EXOUSIA* which also means right or authority. Paul had the right to live from the support of the brethren, since the Lord has ordained that "they who preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel" (1 Corinthians 9: 5, 14). However, he had voluntarily refrained from using that privilege, in order to set an example of getting one's living from his own labor.

Verse 10. *When we were with you* refers to the time after coming from Philippi. The teaching now put in writing in this epistle, was given to them in person when among them, which is referred to in his first epistle, is very severe on people who are lazy; such have no right to the provisions produced by others. Of course we know the apostle does not expect these idlers to go on a "hunger strike" and die of starvation. However, he does lay the command before them that they go to work, and as a means of enforcing the order, he states that if they are not willing to work, they have no right to eat. This brings the brethren into the command, forbidding them to feed those who are not willing to work.

Verse 11. In this verse Paul makes it plain whom he especially means by the ones *walking disorderly* in verse 6, namely, the idlers. One might wonder why Paul would call an idler a *busybody*. The term is from a Greek word that Thayer defines as follows: "To bustle about uselessly, to busy one's self about trifling, needless, useless matters." Our own observation will verify this definition. Men who will not work, are often seen intruding into the affairs of those who are willing to work, even to the extent of trying to interfere to prevent them from working.

Verse 12. The idlers are first given a *command* which makes the thing under consideration a positive obligation. Then the *exhortation* is given which is an appeal to the conscience, to persuade them to do their duty in the case. This command and exhortation did not come from the personal impulse of the apostle, but it was

by our Lord Jesus Christ. *Quietness* is from HESUCHIA, and the one word "quietness" is Thayer's definition of the Greek word. He then adds by way of explanation at this place, "descriptive of the life of one who stays at home doing his own work, and does not officiously meddle with the affairs of others." *Eat their own bread* shows Paul means for them to work at something to earn a living.

Verse 13. *Weary* does not pertain to the body or material part of our being, for if we exercise ourselves we cannot avoid becoming tired; such result is beyond our control. God never forbids that which is unavoidable; the original word refers to the mind and not to the body. A man may become literally worked down or "worn out" by his trials for the Master, but if he has the proper interest in the work he will never become tired in mind, but will always feel keen and alert in the duty for Christ. This thought is treated by Paul in 2 Corinthians 4: 16-18.

Verse 14. When Paul was with these brethren he gave them instructions about the evils of idleness, but we are not told what commands, if any, he gave the congregation as to how the idle persons should be treated. Here the information is given that the same command is delivered in this epistle and that it must be obeyed as if the apostle delivered it in person. *Note that man* means to pay particular attention to him, to make sure that he comes under the classification of men whom Paul has been condemning. If it is seen that he does, then the brethren were to *have no company with him*. Since the apostle is writing about the same case that he has been for several verses, we know the words in italics have the same meaning as "withdraw yourselves" in verse 6. Let the reader consult the comments at that place in connection with the present one. The purpose for the discipline upon the disorderly one is *that he may be ashamed*. Indeed, the first object of discipline is the salvation of the guilty one (1 Corinthians 5: 5), and the second is to save the church (verses 6, 7 of the same chapter).

Verse 15. In a sense, every person who does wrong is an enemy of righteousness and of the church. The idea here is that this man is not an enemy in the same rank as an outsider who has always been in the army of the foe. He has been in the congregation,

but had to be dealt with on the principle of discipline, hence he should be regarded in the light of a member of the family who has gone wrong. By such a token, the admonition should be as to a wayward brother and not as to a member of a foreign family. The word *admonish* implies that some undesirable result may follow if the wayward member does not return to the government of the Father's family.

Verse 16. *Peace* is from EIRENE. As it pertains to individuals, Thayer gives a very complete definition of the word, and it is in full agreement with the teaching of the New Testament; the definition follows: "The tranquil state of a soul assured of its salvation through Christ, and so fearing nothing from God and content with its earthly lot, of whatsoever sort that is." This certainly describes something that is good; and since all good things come from the Lord (James 1: 17), it is appropriate for Paul to refer to Him as *the Lord of peace*. He adds his wish that the Thessalonians be given such peace from Him. *The Lord be with you all* is another form of the wish for His peace to be with them.

Verse 17. Some impostors had forged the name of Paul to their letters, and thereby had deceived the brethren. (See chapter 2; 2, 3.) However, the uniformity of his handwriting would finally make them acquainted with his genuine signature. As a safeguard against further deception, Paul states that his signature would be seen at the the end of every one of his epistles, and it was to be understood as a *token* or sign of the genuineness of the epistle. *So I write*. This is to call their attention to his style of writing, for his signature would be done in the same manner, which would help them to recognize it and know it to be genuine. For a discussion further into the subject of the actual writer of his epistles, see the comments at Galatians 6: 11.

Verse 18. This is a closing benediction to indicate Paul's personal concern for the happiness of the brethren. The grace of the Lord is his favor to be given to them as a gracious gift, for the word means something that is not received upon the principle of merit. For the significance of *amen*, see the comments at Romans 16: 24, in volume 1 of the New Testament Commentary.