

The Second Epistle Of Paul To The Thessalonians

The Argument

Lest the Thessalonians should think that Paul neglected them, because he went to other places, rather than come to them, he writeth unto them and exhorteth them to patience and other fruits of faith, neither to be moved with that vain opinion of such as taught that the coming of Christ was at hand, for as much as before that day there should be a falling away from the true religion, even by a great part of the world, and that Antichrist should reign in the Temple of God; finally commanding himself to their prayers, and encouraging them to constancy, he willeth them to correct such sharply, as live idly of other men's labors, whom, if they do not obey his admonitions, he commandeth to excommunicate.

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2 Thessalonians 1

3 He commendeth the increase of faith and charity, 4 and the patience of the Thessalonians; 6 And describing God's vengeance against such as oppress the godly, 10 he teacheth the godly to wait for the last judgment.

1 Paul and Silvanus, and Timothy, unto the Church of the Thessalonians, which is in God our Father, and in the Lord Jesus Christ:

2 Grace be with you, and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

3 ^(*) ⁽¹⁾ We ought to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith ^(a) groweth exceedingly, and the love of every one of you toward another, aboundeth,

^(*) 1 Thessalonians 1:3 .

(1) The first part of the Epistle, wherein he rejoiceth that through the grace of God, they have manfully sustained all the assaults of their enemies; wherein this he confirmeth them, moreover shewing with what gifts they must chiefly fight, to wit, with faith and charity, which must daily increase.

(a) That whereas it grew up before, it doeth also receive some increase every day more and more.

4 So that we ourselves rejoice of you in the Churches of God, because of your ^(*) patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye suffer;

^(*) Which proceedeth of your faith as a most notable fruit.

5 ^(*) ⁽²⁾ Which is a manifest ^(*) token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for the which ye also suffer.

^(*) Jude 1:6 .

(2) He openeth the fountain of all true comfort, to wit, that in afflictions which we suffer of the wicked for righteousness' sake, we may behold as it were in a glass the testimony of that judgment to come, and the end therefore most acceptable to us, and most sharp to his enemies.

(*) The faithful by their afflictions see, as in a clear glass the end of God's just judgment when as they shall reign with Christ which have suffered with him, and the wicked shall feel his extreme wrath and vengeance.

6 ⁽³⁾ For it is a righteous thing with God, to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you,

(3) A proof: God is just, therefore he will worthily punish the unjust, and will do away the miseries of his people.

7 And to you which are troubled, rest ⁽⁴⁾ with us, ^(*) ⁽⁵⁾ when the Lord Jesus shall shew himself from heaven with his ^(*) mighty Angels,

(4) He confirmeth them also along the way, by this means, that the condition both of this present state and the state to come, is common to him with them.

(*) 1 Thessalonians 4:16 .

(5) A most glorious description of the second coming of Christ, to be set against all the miseries of the godly, and the triumphs of the wicked.

(♣) By whom he declareth his might.

8 In flaming fire, rendering vengeance unto them, (6) that do not know God, and which obey not unto the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ,

(6) There is no knowledge of God unto salvation, without the Gospel of Christ.

9 Which shall be punished with (*) everlasting perdition from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power,

(*) As God is everlasting, so shall their punishment be everlasting; and as he is most mighty of power, so shall their punishment be most sore.

10 When he shall come to be glorified in his Saints, and to be made marvelous in all them that believe (7) because our testimony toward you was believed) in that day.

(7) The children of God shall be counted by the faith which they have in the Gospel, which is preached unto them by the Apostles.

11 (8) Wherefore, we also pray always for you, that our God may make you worthy of (b) his calling, and fulfill (c) (*) all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the (d) work of faith with power,

(8) Seeing that we have the mark set before us, it remaineth that we go unto it. And we go to it, by certain degrees of causes: first by the free love and good pleasure of God, by virtue whereof all other inferior causes work; from thence proceedeth the free calling to Christ, and from calling, faith, whereupon followeth both the glorifying of Christ in us, and us in Christ.

(b) By (calling) he meaneth not the very act of calling, but that selfsame thing whereunto we are called, which is the glory of that heavenly kingdom.

(c) Which he determined long since, only upon his gracious and merciful goodness towards you.

(*) The free benevolence of God's goodness, comprehendeth his purpose, his predestination and vocation; the work of faith containeth our justification, to the which God addeth glorification; and all these he worketh of his mere grace through Christ.

(d) So then, faith is an excellent work of God in us; and we see here plainly that the Apostle leaveth nothing to free will, to make it checkmate with God's working therein, as the Papists dream.

12 That the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be (*) glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God, and of the Lord Jesus Christ.

(*) As the head with the body.

2 Thessalonians 2

2 He sheweth that the day of the Lord shall not come, till there be a departure from the faith, 3 and that Antichrist be revealed, 8 whose destruction he setteth out, 15 and thereupon exhorteth to constancy.

1 Now (1) we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our (a) assembling unto him,

- (1) The second part of the Epistle, containing an excellent prophecy of the state of the Church, which shall be from the Apostles' time unto the latter day of judgment.
- (a) If we think earnestly upon that immeasurable glory, which we shall be partakers of with Christ, it will be an excellent remedy for us against wavering and impatience, so that neither the glistening of the world shall allure us, nor the dreadful sight of the cross dismay us.

2 (2) That ye be not suddenly moved from *your* mind, nor troubled neither by (b) (*) spirit, nor by (c) word, nor by (d) letter, as *it were* from us, as though the day of Christ were at hand.

- (2) We must take heed of false prophets, especially in this matter, which go about to deceive, and that for the most part, after three sorts: for either they brag of feigned prophetic revelations, or they bring conjectures and reasons of their own, or use counterfeit writings.
- (b) By dreams and fables, which men pretend to be spiritual revelations.
- (*) As false revelation or dreams.
- (c) Either by word of mouth, or by written books.
- (d) Either by forged letters, or falsely glozed upon.

3 (*) Let no man deceive you by any means, (3) for *that day shall not come*, except there come a (♣) departing first, and that (e) the (♦) man of sin be disclosed, even the son of (♣) perdition,

- (*) Ephesians 5:6 .
- (3) The Apostle foretelleth that before the coming of the Lord, there shall be a throne set up clean contrary to Christ's glory, wherein that wicked man shall sit, and transfer all things that appertain to God, to himself; and many shall fall away from God to him.
- (♣) A wonderful departing of the most part from the faith.
- (e) By speaking of one, he pointed out the body of the tyrannous and persecuting Church.
- (♦) This wicked Antichrist comprehendeth the whole succession of the persecutors of the Church, and all that abominable kingdom of Satan, whereof some were bears, some lions, others leopards, as Daniel describeth them, and is called the man of sin because he setteth himself up against God.
- (♣) Who as he destroyeth others, so shall he be destroyed himself.

4 Which is an adversary, and (f) exalteth himself against all that is called God, or that is worshipped, (4) so that he doeth sit as God in the Temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

- (f) All men know who he is that saith he can shut up heaven and open it at his pleasure, and took upon him to be lord and master above all Kings and Princes, before whom Kings and Princes fall down and worship, honoring that Antichrist as a god.
- (4) He foretelleth that Antichrist, (that is, whosoever he be that shall occupy that seat that falleth away from God) shall not reign without the Church, but in the very bosom of the Church.

5 (5) Remember ye not, that when I was yet with you, I told you these things?

(5) This prophecy was continually declared to the Ancient Church, but it was neglected of them that followed.

6 And now ye know (g) what (*) withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time.

(g) What hindereth and stayeth.

(*) Because the false apostles had persuaded after a sort the Thessalonians, that the day of the Lord was near, and so the redemption of the Church; Paul teacheth them to look for this horrible dissipation before, and therefore rather to prepare themselves to patience, than to rest and quietness: for as yet there was a let, that is, that the Gospel should be preached throughout all, Matthew 24:14 .

7 (6) For the mystery of iniquity doeth already (*) work; (7) only he which (♣) now (h) withholdeth, shall let till he be taken out of the way.

(6) Even in the Apostles' time the first foundations of the Apostolic seat were laid, but yet so, that they deceived men.

(*) To wit, privily, and is therefore called a mystery because it is secret.

(7) He foretelleth that when the empire of Rome is taken away, the seat that falleth away from God shall succeed and shall hold his place, as the old writers, Tertullian, Chrysostom, and Jerome do expound it.

(♣) Which shall stay for a time.

(h) He which is now in authority and ruleth all, to wit, the Roman Empire.

8 (8) And then shall (i) that wicked man be revealed, (*) whom the Lord shall (k) consume with the (l) (♣) Spirit of his mouth, and shall abolish with the brightness of his coming,

(8) That wickedness shall at length be detected by the word of the Lord, and utterly be abolished by Christ's coming.

(i) Word for word, that lawless fellow, that is to say, he that shall tread God's law clean under foot.

(*) Isaiah 11:4 .

(k) Bring to nought.

(l) With his word, for the true Ministers of the word are as a mouth, whereby the Lord breatheth out that mighty and everlasting word, which shall break his enemies in sunder, as it were an iron rod.

(♣) That is, with his words.

9 (9) Even him whose (*) coming is by the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and (m) lying wonders,

(9) He foretelleth that Satan will bestow all his might and power, and use all false miracles that he can to establish that seat, and that with great success, because the wickedness of the world doeth so deserve it; yet so, that only the unfaithful shall perish through his deceit.

(*) Meaning the whole time that he shall remain.

(m) Which are partly false, and partly wrought to establish a falsehood.

10 And in all deceivableness of unrighteousness, among them that (*) perish, because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

(*) Satan's power is limited that he cannot hurt the Elect to their destruction.

11 And therefore God shall send them (n) strong delusion, that they should believe lies,

(n) A most mighty working to deceive them.

12 That all they might be damned which believed not the truth, but (o) had (*) pleasure in unrighteousness.

(o) They liked lies so well, that they had pleasure in them which is the greatest madness that may be.
(*) Delighted in false doctrine.

13 (10) But we ought to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren (*) beloved of the Lord, because that God hath from (♣) the beginning chosen you to salvation, through (p) sanctification of the Spirit, and the (q) faith of (♣) truth,

(10) The elect shall stand steadfast and safe from all these mischiefs. Now election is known by these testimonies: Faith is gathered by sanctification; faith, by that which we accord unto the truth; truth, by calling through the preaching of the Gospel; from whence we come at length to a certain hope of glorification.

(*) The fountain of our election is the love of God; the sanctification of the Spirit, and believing the truth are testimonies of the same election.

(♣) Before the foundation of the world.

(p) To sanctify you.

(q) Faith which layeth hold not upon lies, but upon the truth of God, which is the Gospel.

(♣) And Gospel.

14 Whereunto he called you by our (r) Gospel, to obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

(r) By our preaching.

15 (11) Therefore, brethren, stand fast and keep the (*) instructions, which ye have been taught, either (♣) by word, or by our Epistle.

(11) The conclusion remaineth then, that we continue in the doctrine which was delivered unto us by the mouth and writings of the Apostles, through the free good will of God, who comforteth us with an invincible hope, and also in all godliness our whole life long.

(*) That is, the doctrine, 1 Thessalonians 2:2 .

(♣) That is, by my preaching of the Gospel.

16 Now the same Jesus Christ our Lord, and our God even the Father which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace,

17 Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every word and good work.

2 Thessalonians 3

1 He desireth them to further the preaching of the Gospel with their prayers, 6 and to withdraw themselves from those, who through idleness, 11 and curiosity pervert good order; 14 Whom he excludeth from the company of the faithful.

1 Furthermore, (1) brethren, (*) pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free passage and be glorified, even as *it is* with you,

(1) He addeth now consequently according to his manner, divers admonitions: The first of them is, that they make prayers for the increase and free passage of the Gospel, and for the safety of the faithful ministers of the same.
(*) Ephesians 6:19; Colossians 4:3 .

2 And that we may be delivered from (a) unreasonable and evil men; (2) for all men have not (*) faith.

(a) Which have no care of their duty.
(2) It is no marvel that the Gospel is hated of so many, seeing that faith is a rare gift of God. Notwithstanding, the Church shall never be destroyed by the multitude of the wicked, because it is grounded and stayed upon the faithful promise of God.
(*) Although they boast themselves thereof.

3 But the Lord is faithful, which will stablish you, and keep you from (b) evil.

(b) From Satan's snares, or from evil.

4 (3) And we are persuaded of you through the Lord, that ye both do, and will do the things which we (*) command you.

(3) The second admonition is, that they follow always the doctrine of the Apostles as a rule for their life.
(*) By the Word of God.

5 (4) And the Lord guide your hearts to the love of God, and the waiting for of Christ.

(4) Thirdly, he diligently and earnestly admonisheth them of two things which are given us by the only grace of God, to wit, of charity, and a watchful mind to the coming of Christ.

6 (5) We command you, brethren, in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh inordinately, and not after the (*) instruction, which he received of us.

(5) Fourthly, he saith, that idle and lazy persons ought not to be relieved of the Church; nay, that they are not to be suffered.
(*) Which is, to travail, if he will eat, 2 Thessalonians 2:15 .

7 (6) For ye yourselves know, (*) how ye ought to follow us, (¶) for we behaved not ourselves inordinately among you,

(6) Lest he might seem to deal hardly with them, he setteth forth himself for an example, who besides his travail in preaching, labored with his hands, which he saith he was not simply bound to do.

(*) 1 Corinthians 4:12; 1 Thessalonians 4:11 .

(¶) Acts 20:34; 1 Thessalonians 2:9 .

8 Neither took we bread of any man for nought, but we wrought with labor and travail night and day, because we would not be chargeable to any of you.

9 Not because we have not authority, (*) but that we might make ourselves an example unto you to follow us.

(*) 1 Corinthians 11:1 .

10 For even when we were with you, this we warned you of, that if there were any, which would not (*) work, that he should not (c) eat.

(*) Then by the word of God none ought to live idly, but ought to give himself to some vocation, to get his living by, and to do good to others.

(c) What shall we do then with those idle bellied Monks, and sacrificing Priests? A Monk (saith Socrates, book eight, of his Tripartite History) which worketh not work with hands, is like a thief.

11 For we hear, that there are some which walk among (7) you inordinately, and work not at all, (8) but are busybodies.

(7) How great a fault idleness is, he declareth by that which God created no man in vain or to no purpose, neither is there any unto whom he hath not allotted as it were a certain standing and room. Whereupon it followeth, that the order which God hath appointed, is troubled by the idle, yes, broken, which is great sin and wickedness.

(8) He reprehendeth a vice which is joined with the former, whereupon follows an infinite sort of mischiefs, to wit, that there are none more busy in other men's matters than they which neglect their own.

12 (9) Therefore them that are such, we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that they work with quietness, and eat their own bread.

(9) The Lord commandeth, and the Apostles pray in the name of Christ, first that no man be idle, and next, that every man quietly and carefully see to do his duty in that office and calling wherein the Lord hath placed him.

13 (10) (*) And ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing.

(10) We must take heed that some men's unworthiness cause us not to be slack in well doing.
(*) Galatians 6:9 .

14 (11) If any man obey not this our saying in this letter, note him by a letter, (*) and have no (12) company with him, (13) that he may be ashamed;

(11) Excommunication is a punishment for the obstinate.
(*) Matthew 18:17; 1 Corinthians 5:9 .
(12) We must have no familiarity or fellowship with the excommunicated.
(13) The end of the excommunication is not the destruction, but the salvation of the sinner, that at least through shame he may be driven in repentance.

15 (14) Yet count him not as an (*) enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

(14) We must so eschew familiarity with the excommunicated, that we diligently seek every occasions and means that may be to bring them again into the right way.
(*) The end of excommunication is not to drive from the Church such as have fallen, but to win them to the Church by amendment.

16 (15) Now the Lord himself of peace give you peace always by all means. The Lord *be* with you all.

(15) Prayers are the seals of all exhortations.

17 (16) The salutation of me Paul, with my own hand, which is the (*) token in every Epistle; so I write,

(16) The apostle subscribeth his letters with his own hand, that false letters might not be brought and put in place of true.
(*) Whether they be mine Epistles of other men's.

18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all, Amen.

The second Epistle to the Thessalonians, written from Athens.