

# 1 & 2 Thessalonians

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## 1 Thessalonians

### Introduction

It is held by good scholars that Paul’s Epistles to the Thessalonians may be his earliest New Testament Epistle,<sup>1</sup> challenging the earlier date for Galatians. It is our opinion that an early date to Thessalonians does not necessarily deny the early date of Galatians to Southern Galatia. By stressing *cultural concerns* and *pastoral care*, Malherbe and Krentz emphasize the *priestly, pastoral, paranetic, exhortative* nature of the Thessalonian epistles over the more *prophetic doctrinal* nature of Galatians and Romans. This does not mean that there are not doctrinal elements in the Thessalonian epistles. It is as though the *doctrinal elements* serve the *paranetic pastoral concerns* of Paul for a young Gentile congregation.

In keeping with this thought, Edgar Krentz in the *Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* suggests that 1 Thessalonians is the earliest of the New Testament Epistles, “1 Thessalonians is the oldest document in

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<sup>1</sup>Malherbe, Abraham J. *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, The Anchor Yale Bible Commentaries, Yale University Press, 2004

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the NT. It offers the earliest direct insight into the early Christian mission and the life of an early, fundamentally non-Jewish-Christian church. It also contains the oldest summary of Paul's missionary proclamation to a non-Jewish community (1:9–10). Paul called the Thessalonians to turn away from the worship of images of gods to believe in and serve a God who is alive and authentic. Paul stresses that the gospel is the gospel about this God (the “word about God,” 2:13; the “gospel about God,” 2:2, 8, 9), who has demonstrated that he is authentic and alive by raising Jesus from the dead.

Paul's earliest proclamation also included *exhortation* about a lifestyle that corresponded to this call to faith (4:1–2). He had handed on to the Thessalonians “how they were to live and please God” (4:2). The standard of action and judgment is “the will of God” (4:3). “You may” “disregard the brother in sexual misconduct *and, but*, God will carry out the judgment against the transgressor (*ekdikos*, 4:6), since misconduct “disregards the God who gave the Holy Spirit” (4:8). Thessalonians are “taught by God” (a single Greek word, unique in the NT, 4:9) to love one another. Because God has destined them for the possession of salvation, they are to *exhort one another* (5:9–11). *Paraenesis* is oriented to God, not the Spirit or Christ. Indeed, the Spirit is almost absent from this letter, and *baptism and the Lord's Supper are not mentioned.*<sup>2</sup>”

Whether the Thessalonian Epistles are early or late, they do fall in Paul's and Silas' *second missionary journey*, ca 59-62 CE., Acts 16-18, Paul at *Troas, Macedonia, Philippi, Thessalonica, Beroea, Athens, Corinth.*

### Brief Overview of Paul's Second Missionary Journey

**Acts 15:36-41**, “*And after some days Paul said to Barnabas, “Come, let us return and visit the brethren in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are.”*<sup>37</sup> *And Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark.*<sup>38</sup> *But Paul thought best not to take with them one who had withdrawn from them in Pamphylia, and had not gone with them to the work.*<sup>39</sup> *And there arose a sharp contention, so that they separated from each other; Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus,*<sup>40</sup> *but Paul chose Silas and departed, being commended by the brethren to the grace of the Lord.*<sup>41</sup> *And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.”*

**Acts 16:1-5**, “*And he came also to Derbe and to Lystra. A disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer; but his father was a Greek.*<sup>2</sup> *He was well spoken of by the brethren at Lystra and Iconium.*<sup>3</sup> *Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him; and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews that were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.*<sup>4</sup> *As they went on their way through the cities, they delivered to them for observance the decisions which had been reached by the apostles and elders who were at Jerusalem.*<sup>5</sup> *So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily.”*

**Acts 16:6-10**, At Troas, Paul receives a vision of a man from Macedonia “*inviting him*” to come to Macedonia to help the Macedonians by preaching to them the Gospel of Christ. Macedonia was not in the Greek area of Achaia, but was a *Roman colony/province.*

**Acts 16:11-15**, Paul and his group cross the Aegean Sea, land at Samothrace, on a small island, then go on through Neapolis to Philippi. “<sup>12</sup> *and from there to Philippi, which is the leading city of the district of Macedonia, and a Roman colony. We remained in this city some days;*<sup>13</sup> *and on the sabbath day we went outside the gate to the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer; and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together.*<sup>14</sup> *One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to give heed to what was said by Paul.*<sup>15</sup> *And when she was baptized, with her*

<sup>2</sup> Krentz, E. M., “First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians,” *Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, vol. 6, p. 516, 1992.

*household, she besought us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us."*

**Acts 16:16-40**, Paul and Silas are encountered by a slave girl, a practitioner of divinity, casts out a "spirit of divinity", is brought before the magistrates, cast into prison and beaten, experiences an earthquake, converts the prison keeper and his family, and leaves Philippi, and heads through Amphipolis and Apollonia for Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish Synagogue.

**Acts 17:1-9**, Paul and Silas convert some Jews and Greeks, and plant a church in Thessalonica *"<sup>1</sup> Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. <sup>2</sup> And Paul went in, as was his custom, and for three weeks he argued with them from the scriptures, <sup>3</sup> explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ." <sup>4</sup> And some of them were persuaded, and joined Paul and Silas; as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women. <sup>5</sup> But the Jews were jealous, and taking some wicked fellows of the rabble, they gathered a crowd, set the city in an uproar, and attacked the house of Jason, seeking to bring them out to the people. <sup>6</sup> And when they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brethren before the city authorities, crying, "These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also, <sup>7</sup> and Jason has received them; and they are all acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus." <sup>8</sup> And the people and the city authorities were disturbed when they heard this. <sup>9</sup> And when they had taken security from Jason and the rest, they let them go."*

**Acts 17:10-15**, Paul and Silas sail on to the Island of Beroea, plant a church in Beroea, and have to move on to Athens in Greece/Achaia.

### Social and Political Setting of Thessalonica

Although Thessalonica was populated predominantly by and ethnically Greek speaking community there was also a fairly large Jewish community, large enough to have a Jewish Synagogue. The Greek population of Thessalonica were culturally, religiously, traditionally different from Greek communities in Asian Achaia as in Athens, Ephesus, and Corinth. They all spoke a closely related Greek tongue, *dialect*, but their political, religious, cultural, and philosophical traditions differed from those in Athens, Ephesus, Asian Achaia, and Corinth. In *Athens* the primary line of thinking was shaped by the traditional ancient Greek philosophers. In *Ephesus* the culture was influenced by the Goddess Artemis/Dianna. In Thessalonica the culture, religion, and philosophy were swayed by the Gods of Mount Olympus. Thessalonica was a new cultural experience for Paul with the Christians struggling with problems not found in Ephesus and Corinth.

Krenz observes, "Thessalonica was the capital of the Roman province Macedonia. It was essentially a Greek city with early devotion to the cult of the Roman emperor. Acts 17:1-9 narrates Paul's initial missionary activity in Thessalonica. Paul travels there from Philippi along the Via Egnatia through Amphipolis and Apollonia. Paul preached Jesus as the Anointed One (*christos*) for three Sabbaths in the synagogue. His success among the non-Jewish worshipers of God stirred up opposition among the Jews, who accused him of anti-Roman propaganda to the *politarchs* (chief city officials in the administration).

After leaving Thessalonica Paul came to Athens. Unable to revisit the Thessalonians, he sent Timothy north to get information about the conditions in the Thessalonian congregation (3:1-2) and to solidify them by exhortation to remain firm during persecution (3:2-3). *Timothy's return with good news about their fidelity and their warm friendship for Paul occasioned the letter. Paul does not write to combat a theological aberration in the church at Thessalonica.* There is none. His purpose is to strengthen the congregation by reminding them of his initial proclamation and by reinforcing the exhortation he had given them on the founding visit (4:1-2).

Recently, scholars have stressed different aspects of Thessalonian history and culture as the social setting in which to place Paul's thought in 1 Thessalonians. *Malherbe (1987) argues that the role of the philosophic teachers of ethics, especially as portrayed by Dio Chrysostom, illuminates Paul's self-description in 2:1–12 and the paraenesis in 4:1–12. Donfried (1985) stresses the significance of the cults of Dionysus and Cabirus for understanding Paul's discussion of sexual morality (4:1–9) and the civic cults for understanding the unique eschatology in 4:13–18 and the affliction present there ...* Krentz (1988) more generally calls attention to the character of a Greek polis as the matrix for interpretation. We still await a definitive answer.<sup>3</sup>

The philosophical theological problems in Thessalonica would have been similar to most of the Aegean and Mediterranean Greek world, but seeking how to incorporate Jesus and Christian principles in their unique situations necessitated Paul's two *paranetic culturally* related epistles. Since the Thessalonian epistles were possibly the earliest Christian epistles, even prior to the Gospels, the Christian literary tradition at the time of Thessalonians would have been *tabula rasa!* In a unique sense Paul was "establishing" a literary explanation of *how Jesus should impact pagan cultures.*

Although some scholars, primarily Premillennial, have identified the Thessalonian epistles as eschatological epistles the emphasis on eschatology is paranetic in context. There is no emphasis on *ecclesiastical* or *church organization* structure in the two Thessalonian epistles. Malherbe and others have appropriately identified them as *practical paranetic cultural* epistles on *how to live for Christ as a Christian in a pagan Gentile world.*

### **The Theological-Historical Significance of Thessalonians**

Krentz mentions and develops items not present in the Thessalonian epistles that were present in Paul's later epistles indicting an early development of the Greek church in Paul's missionary and epistolary experience. This is not an argument for Paul not being the author of the Thessalonian correspondence, only that the Thessalonian church did not manifest issues association with later churches related to Old Testament *Torah* arguments that we find in Paul's later epistles. In his article Krentz provides a theological history of Paul's early mission work among the Gentile-Greek world. We should remember that God and Jesus had chosen Paul to be an apostle to the Gentiles.

Krentz expresses this well in his *Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* article on Thessalonians. *The italicized emphasis in this Krentz citation id mine, IAF.*

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<sup>3</sup> Krentz, E. M., "Thessalonians, First and Second Epistles to the 1 Thessalonians," *Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, vol. 6, p. 5162.

Spirit or Christ. Indeed, the Spirit is almost absent from this letter, and baptism and the Lord's Supper are not mentioned.

Paul also uses early traditional christological formulas. Havener (1981) identifies three christological passages: 1:10, 4:14, and 5:9–10. *The first mentions Jesus' resurrection by God, but not his death, and stresses his rescue of the Thessalonians from future wrath. The second (4:14) states that the Thessalonians believe that Christ died and rose as the basis for their certainty of the future resurrection, while 5:9–10 states that the formula "who died on our behalf" is the basis for the conviction about future salvation (Rigaux 1975). Paul makes no use of Jesus' death in this letter.* He stresses that the resurrection made him the Lord who will come as deliverer (1:10; 4:13–17). 1 Thessalonians uses *parousia* (the technical term for the arrival of a ruler) to describe Jesus' coming as Lord, the future deliverer, more than any other Pauline letter. The language is borrowed from the ANE ruler cult to proclaim Jesus as Lord.

*Some language and modes of argumentation frequent in the later letters are totally absent. There is no use of the OT or any reference to any of the great OT figures (Abraham, Moses, David, the prophets), any great events in Israel's history (Exodus, kingship, Exile), or any of its cultic institutions (temple, priesthood, sacrifice). There is no reference to the Torah and, consequently, no language of justification. Paul does not refer to baptism or the Lord's Supper. There is no developed description of the Church as the body of Christ or the Israel of God. Christians are not described as living "in Christ" or "by the Spirit." Paul's theological and linguistic resources in this letter differ from the later ones. That does not mean his thought is impoverished; it is simply different, fitted to the church he addresses.*

The Thessalonian church has only informal leadership (5:12). There is no trace of any clerical office. Thessalonians are encouraged to support one another by admonishing, encouraging, and enduring one another (4:14). Even their worship appears unstructured. 1 Thess 5:16–22 suggests common prayer. Spirit-filled prophecy (5:19–20), which is encouraged, must be put to the practical test of whether it leads to good or not. The Thessalonian church still lives in the spontaneous joy (1:6; 5:16) that does not require ecclesial structure to endure.

*1 Thessalonians, so far as we know, is the first Christian letter. It sets the pattern for Christian letter writing that goes beyond the NT into the life of the early Church (the Apostolic Fathers). Koester (1980) calls it an "experiment in Christian writing" that influenced the subsequent Church.<sup>4</sup>*

## 1 Thessalonian Structural Outline

- 1 Thess 1:1-10 - Salutation and Thanksgiving
- 1 Thess 2;1-3:13 - Personal Concerns for the Thessalonian Christians
- 1 Thess 4:1-5:22 - Paranetic Ethical Moral Exhortation
- 1 Thess 5:23-28 - Conclusion and Benediction

## Exegetic Comments

### 1 Thess 1;1-10. Salutations and commendations

<sup>41</sup> *Paul, Silvanus, (Silas) and Timothy* (Timothy had Jewish mother, Greek father. Paul had Timothy circumcised before joining the mission group so that Jews would not be able to look down on Timothy and their mission. This

<sup>4</sup> Krentz, "Thessalonians, First and Second Epistles to the: 1 Thessalonians," *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, vol. 6, pp. 516–517.

circumcision was not a religious requirement, but a missiological cultural wise decision). *To the church of the Thessalonians in God<sup>5</sup> the Father and the Lord<sup>6</sup> Jesus Christ.*

The bringing together the expression “*God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*” Paul was making an allusion to Deut 6:4, the Jewish confession of faith, the *Shema*, which makes the statement that there is only one God and Lord, “*Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD;*<sup>5</sup> *and you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.*<sup>6</sup> *And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart;*<sup>7</sup> *and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.*<sup>8</sup> *And you shall bind them as a sign upon your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.*<sup>9</sup> *And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”*

In the unity of the *One God the Father and one Lord, Jesus Christ*, Paul was emphasizing in the Gentile Greek world *that God and Jesus are one deity.*

**Grace** (χάρις, *cháris*, traditional Greek salutation implying *joy, favor, acceptance*) *to you and peace* (εἰρήνη *eirēnē*, *peace, harmony, tranquility*).

### 1 Thess 1: 2-10 theological Paranesis.

This is a **densely packed greeting** with *theologically* and *paranetic* emphases. It is expressively loaded with terms of *endearment* indicating Paul’s *personal feelings* about the Thessalonians with the emphasis on the joy of deep personal relationships. Paul expresses his joy over how they had turned from pagan practices and given themselves to Jesus. Paul introduces *the power of the Holy Spirit in their conversion and growth*. One cannot miss *Paul’s mention of the resurrection* in view of their problems they were experiencing in martyrdom, cf. 1 Thess 4:13-18. Paul commends the steadfastness of their faith, love, and service of others, mentioning that this faith had already had a global impact among other Christians in Macedonia and Achaia.

<sup>2</sup> *We* (Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy) *give thanks to God always for you all, constantly mentioning you in our prayers,*<sup>3</sup> *remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.*<sup>4</sup> *For we know, brethren beloved by God, that he has chosen you;*<sup>5</sup> *for our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.*<sup>6</sup> *And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with joy inspired by the Holy Spirit;*<sup>7</sup> *so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.*<sup>8</sup> *For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything.*<sup>9</sup> *For they themselves report concerning us what a welcome we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God,*<sup>10</sup> *and to wait* (ἀναμένω, *anaménō*, “wait with eager anticipation”<sup>7</sup>) *for his Son from heaven* (the *parousia*, the *coming* or arrival of the Lord, cf. 1 Thess 4:13-18) *whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.”*

### 1 Thess 2:1-3:13 - Personal Concerns for the Thessalonian Christians

In this remarkable salutation Paul compares the strategy and character of *his fellow missionaries* with the many *travelling philosophers* who, like Paul and his group, moved around from town to town seeking personal fame and money. The philosophers used smooth beguiling words to impress the

<sup>5</sup> Zodhiates,

<sup>6</sup> Zodhiates, “κύριος *kúrios*, might, power, Lord, master, owner. Also the NT Greek it is the equivalent for the OT Hebrew. *Jehovah*.”

<sup>7</sup> Zodhiates, “ἀναμένω *anaménō*; emphatically to remain, to wait for, to await, to expect eagerly, to look for with a view of receiving favorably, to continue steadfastly.”

hearers, and adopted any false means of seeking personal gain, mostly financial gain. Because of Jewish and local gentile opposition Paul had frequently been run out of town. The Thessalonians knew well, had seen, and clearly understood the guile of the philosophers, and *knew well* Paul's and his colleagues' character.

**1 Thess 2:1-12.** Paul discusses his work among the Thessalonians, commending them for their receipt of the gospel message.

<sup>1</sup> *For you yourselves **know** (οἶδα, oída, to really know, perceive, understand well<sup>8</sup>), brethren, that our visit to you was not in vain; <sup>2</sup> but though we had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we had courage in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the face of great opposition. <sup>3</sup> For our appeal does not spring from error or uncleanness, nor is it made with guile; <sup>4</sup> but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please men, but to please God who tests our hearts. <sup>5</sup> For we never used either words of flattery, as you know, or a cloak for greed, as God is witness; <sup>6</sup> nor did we seek glory from men, whether from you or from others, though we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. <sup>7</sup> But we were gentle among you, like a nurse taking care of her children. <sup>8</sup> So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.*

<sup>9</sup> *For you remember our labor and toil, brethren; we worked night and day, that we might not burden any of you, while we preached to you the gospel of God. <sup>10</sup> You are witnesses, and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our behavior to you believers; <sup>11</sup> for you know how, like a father with his children, we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you <sup>12</sup> to lead a life worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.”*

### 1 Thess 2:13-16 - Paul's Reception by the Thessalonian Christians

*“And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers. <sup>14</sup> For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus which are in Judea; for you suffered the same things from your own countrymen as they did from the Jews, <sup>15</sup> who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out, and displease God and oppose all men <sup>16</sup> by hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles that they may be saved—so as always to fill up the measure of their sins. But God's wrath **has come** (ἐφθασεν, aorist indicative, strong statement, from φθάνω *phthánō* ... to come suddenly and unexpectedly.<sup>9</sup>) upon them **at last!***

The expression, **at last**, εἰς τέλος, toward the last, is almost parallel to ἐσχάταις ἡμέραις, *eschatais hemerais* used by Peter at Acts 2:17, and the preacher of Heb 1:2, “In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; <sup>2</sup> but **in these last days** he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.” The expression *the last days*, refers to *the messianic eschatological kingdom age*. C. F. D. Moule summarizes εἰς τέλος as *completely*. J. B. Lightfoot, as *in full*. F. F. Bruce, *to the uttermost*. However, *eschatologically* it would mean *in these last days, the final days, in the Messianic kingdom age their evil has been consummated, they are judged fully*. All three of the suggestions are good, with the eschatological view including the other views!

Paul addressed this thought at Rom 1:18-32. He was explaining that the world, Jews and Gentiles, had no excuse against being judged by God, they had turned away from God and turned to licentiousness. Paul was proclaiming God's judgment on the world for sinful behavior, “*For the wrath of God is revealed* (present tense, *the judgment of God is already being revealed*) *from heaven against all*

<sup>8</sup> Zodhiates, “To know, oída ... Oída strictly means to have seen, perceived, apprehended; hence it takes the present meaning of to know.”

<sup>9</sup> Zodhiates, ἐφθασεν, aorist indicative, strong statement.

*ungodliness and wickedness of men who by their wickedness suppress the truth.*” The world is already judged and condemned.

### 1 Thess 2:17-3:5 – Paul explains Timothy’s mission to the Thessalonians

From Luke’s account of Paul’s second mission trip, after Paul, Silas, and Timothy and arrived in Athens, Paul was concerned over his sudden departure from the new Christians in Thessalonica. He sent Timothy back to Thessalonica to minister and reassure the Thessalonica Christians of his concern for them. This pericope explains Paul’s reason.

“<sup>17</sup> *But since we were bereft of you* (ἀπορφανισθέντες from ἀπορφανίζω, *aporphanízō*,<sup>10</sup> separated from you as orphans), *brethren, for a short time, in person not in heart, we endeavored the more eagerly and with great desire to see you face to face;* <sup>18</sup> *because we wanted to come to you—I, Paul, again and again—but Satan hindered us.* <sup>19</sup> *For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you?* <sup>20</sup> *For you are our glory and joy.*

<sup>3:1</sup> *Therefore when we could bear it no longer, we were willing to be left behind at Athens alone,* <sup>2</sup> *and we sent Timothy, our brother and God’s servant in the gospel of Christ, to establish you in your faith and to exhort you,* <sup>3</sup> *that no one be moved by these afflictions. You yourselves know (understand) that this is to be our lot.* <sup>4</sup> *For when we were with you, we told you beforehand that we were to suffer affliction;* (Jesus – Matt 24:9-14, and Paul- Col 1:24, had predicted that choosing to follow Jesus in a Jewish and Roman culture would bring opposition, persecution, and death. Physical death was serious but not as serious as spiritual death, being separated from God and Jesus, eternally) *just as it has come to pass, and as you know.* <sup>5</sup> *For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent that I might know your faith, for fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you and that our labor would be in vain.”*

### 1 Thess 3:6-10. The Good News from Thessalonica

“<sup>6</sup> *But (to the contrary) now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us the good news of your faith and love and reported that you always remember us kindly and long to see us, as we long to see you—* <sup>7</sup> *for this reason, brethren, in all our distress and affliction we have been comforted about you through your faith;* <sup>8</sup> *for now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord.* <sup>9</sup> *For what thanksgiving can we render to God for you, for all the joy which we feel for your sake before our God,* <sup>10</sup> *praying earnestly night and day that we may see you face to face and supply what is lacking in your faith?* (Paul knew that they were still young in their faith in Jesus, and wanted them to understand this!)”

### 1 Thess 3:11-13. Paul’s “Benedictory” Prayer for the Thessalonian Christians

“<sup>11</sup> *Now may our God and Father himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way to you;* <sup>12</sup> *and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all men, as we do to you,* <sup>13</sup> *so that he may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming (parousia, coming, arrival) of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.”*

*Benedictions* usually come at the end of a letter or epistle, but Paul inserts one here at the end of a “*priestly paternal*” prayer for the Thessalonian Christians, just before engaging in a major parnetic/doctrinal point, concern over dying as martyrs, resurrection, and Jesus eschatological coming at the end of the age.

<sup>10</sup> Zodhiates, ἀπορφανίζω, *aporphanízō*, an orphan, to be bereaved of parents. In 1 Thess. 2:17, as disciples deprived of a teacher, as children bereaved of their father, helpless.

## 1 Thess 4:1-5:22

### *Paranetic, Ethical, Moral Exhortation*

#### Explanation

At the outset of this study we mentioned that the Thessalonian correspondence is somewhat different than most of the Apostolic Epistles of our New Testament. Although there is some *didactic, theological* focus in these epistles, Paul's intention, due to the young age of a Gentile-Greek congregation, was to address the primary need for former Gentiles *to learn how to live as disciples of Christ* and not as Gentil/pagan Christians! For this reason Malherbe and others have defined the Thessalonian epistles as pastoral, paranetic epistles explain how the new converts should live together in a Christian community, a congregation of Jesus believers, no longer as Gentiles with pagan leanings.

A major point in the following pericope was how Christians react to dying as martyrs for Christ. Obviously, the resurrection features prominently in the message stressing that dying as a martyr was not a disgrace, or that there was no advantage of escaping martyrdom, for all of Christ's people, dead and alive, will meet Jesus when he comes, *parousia*, with the *call* of an *archangel* and *sound of a trumpet* for the last and final judgment of all.

Careful reading will note that there is no mention of a *Rapture* or *Second* coming in the text. These notions, or terms, have to be introduced into the text from external presuppositions.

#### Exegesis of the Text: 1 Thess 4:13-18

The first paragraph is loaded with sexual lasciviousness which was common among Gentiles whose gods religious practices were often overtly sexually inclined! Ephesus, and the prostitution associated with the Goddess Artemis, was a feature of the religious seaport city. Marriage fidelity was a core message in stressing a sound relationship with God and Jesus.

“<sup>1</sup> **Finally**, (λοιπός *loipós*, *there is still something lacking* <sup>11</sup>), *brethren, we beseech and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you learned from us how you ought to live and to please God, just as you are doing, you do so more and more.* <sup>2</sup> *For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus.* <sup>3</sup> **For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from unchastity** (sexual relationships outside of the marriage vow); <sup>4</sup> *that each one of you know how to take a wife for himself in holiness and honor,* <sup>5</sup> **not in the passion of lust like heathen who do not know God;** <sup>6</sup> *that no man transgress, and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we solemnly forewarned you.* <sup>7</sup> **For God has not called us for uncleanness, but in holiness.** <sup>8</sup> *Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you.*

In the second paragraph, Paul reminds the new Christians that **love for one another** is a striking characteristic of a Jesus disciple, and a key to *marriage fidelity*. **Love** is a *serious cognitive attitude* towards others out of *compassion, concern, and mercy*, learned from God and Jesus, and reinforced by the strengthening power of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

<sup>9</sup> **But concerning love** (φιλαδελφία, *philadelphia*, *family love*,<sup>12</sup> not ἀγάπη *agápē* which is *a cognitive concern for others*. *Philadelphia* is a more emotional love than ἀγάπη, *agápē*) **of the brethren** (family emphasis) *you have no need to have any one write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another;* <sup>10</sup> *and*

<sup>11</sup> *Zodhiates*, λοιπός *loipós*; something lacking or remaining.

<sup>12</sup> *Zodhiates*, love, φιλαδελφία *philadelphia*, one who loves his brother. Brotherly love. In the NT, used of the love of Christians one to another, *brotherly love out of a common spiritual life* (Rom. 12:10; 1 Thess. 4:9; Heb. 13:1; 1 Pet. 1:22; 2 Pet. 1:7). Synonym, *philanthrōpía*, benevolence, philanthropy; *philia* friendship, kindness, goodwill, benevolence.

*indeed you do love all the brethren throughout Macedonia* (Jew ad Gentile) *But we exhort you, brethren, to do so more and more, <sup>11</sup> to aspire to live quietly* (ἡσυχάζω, *hēsucházō*, in tranquility, peacefully with others) *to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we charged you; <sup>12</sup> so that you may command the respect of outsiders, and be dependent on nobody.*

Paul encourages the Thessalonians regarding concerns over death as a martyr or being alive when Jesus returns, comes. Note, this paragraph does no mention a Rapture or a Second coming of Jesus. These concepts are introduced from Premillennial persuasions not mentioned in this text. Paul sets the discussion in the context of Jesus coming with the call of an *archangel* and the *blowing of a trumpet*, both associated with the final judgment at the end of the age, 1 Cor 15:20 ff; 15:51ff, 1 Thess 5:1ff, 2 Thess 2:1ff, Matt 14:29-31.

A *Second* coming of Jesus implies a *first* coming, a *Second* coming, and a *final* coming. The New Testament speaks of an *initial* coming, his *incarnation*, and another coming, *his final judgment at the end of the age*. But **no** intermediate *Second* coming is mentioned in the New Testament or this text other than the Premillennial proposal of a reading a *Second* coming into the text. ***A Second coming is not mentioned in this text.***

It is apparent from reading the text that sleeping, κοιμάω, *koimáō*<sup>13</sup>, is a euphemism for *dying* or *being dead*.

<sup>13</sup> *But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning those who are asleep* (κοιμάω, *koimáō*), *that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope.* <sup>14</sup> *For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, **God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.*** <sup>15</sup> *For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede* (have an advantage over, not speaking temporally, but being advantageous) *those who have fallen asleep.* <sup>16</sup> *For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel's call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first;* <sup>17</sup> *then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up* (ἁρπάζω *harpázō*,<sup>14</sup> an interesting concept ranging from *snatching by force*, *snatching secretly*, *taken by a strong force*, or *just taken*. Enoch, Gen 5:25, and Elijah, 2 Kings 2:1-11, are two instances when God removed, took, someone, implying divine power, without any sense of *snatching* secretly by force. When Jesus comes *the saints who are alive* will be caught up, like Enoch and Elijah, to be with God and Jesus and all the saints. The Premillennial word or concept of *rapture* is nowhere mentioned as **rapture** in Scripture) *together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so we shall always be with the Lord.* <sup>18</sup> *Therefore comfort one another with these words."*

## 1 Thess 5:1-22 – The Sudden Coming/Arrival of the Lord

Since the beginning of Jesus' ministry, as recorded at Matt 24, Mark 13, Luke 21, when Jesus spoke of his coming in judgment on the world, the disciples have contrary to Jesus' instructions, speculated as to *when this would be!*

For instance, when Jesus predicted the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, Matt 24, Mrk 13 and Luke 21, the disciples confused the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple with *the end of the world*, the *final judgment of God on all men*. In a heavily loaded apocalyptic discussion Jesus explained

<sup>13</sup> Zodhiates, κοιμάω *koimáō*, to lie outstretched, to lie down, to cause to lie down to sleep. In the NT, generally in the mid. *koimáomai* or *koimōmái*, with the fut. mid. *koimēsomai*, to fall asleep, to sleep. Used intrans ... *Spoken of the sleep of death, to die, be dead* (Matt. 27:52; **John 11:11**; Acts 7:60; 13:36; 1 Cor. 7:39; 11:30; 15:6, 18, 20, 51; 1 Thess. 4:13–15; 2 Pet. 3:4; Sept.: 1 Kgs. 2:10; 11:43; Is. 43:17).

<sup>14</sup> Zodhiates, ἁρπάζω *harpázō*, to seize upon, spoil, snatch away ... *Literally, to seize upon with force ... to steal secretly*. It denotes an open act of violence in contrast to cunning and secret stealing. Though generally *harpázō* denotes robbery of another's property, it is not exclusively used thus, but sometimes used generally meaning forcibly to seize upon, snatch away, or take to oneself (Matt. 13:19; John 6:15; 10:12, 28, 29; Acts 23:10; Jude 1:23).

that the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple would soon take place, Matt 24:1-35, for which *there would be a warning*, Matt 24:15. The city and the Temple were destroyed by the Romans ca CE 66-70.

However, the disciples should not confuse the destruction of the city and Temple with the end of the age, or final judgment at his coming, Matt 24:26-51. For Jesus coming at the end of the age in judgment on the world, *there would be no warning*, Matt 24:36-39. The disciples should be ready, alert, and prepared.

## 1 Thess 5:1-11 Anticipation for Jesus' Coming

“<sup>1</sup> **But** (Περί δὲ, “*now concerning* times and seasons, *speculation about timing or dates*) *as to the times and the seasons* (special times, events, or dates), *brethren, you have no need to have anything written to you.* <sup>2</sup> **For you yourselves know well** (are fully aware and informed) **that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night** (cf note above and Matt 24:36-44). <sup>3</sup> *When people say, “There is peace and security,” then sudden destruction will come upon them as travail comes upon a woman with child, and there will be no escape.* <sup>4</sup> **But you are not in darkness, brethren, for that day to surprise you like a thief.** <sup>5</sup> *For you are all sons of light and sons of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness* (important contrasts in Greek philosophical symbolism, God is pure light, evil is darkness). <sup>6</sup> *So then let us not sleep* (καθεύδω, *katheúdō*, to fall asleep physically or spiritually), *as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober* (γρηγοροῦμεν καὶ νήφωμεν *sober, alert, sober.*) <sup>7</sup> *For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night* (For Greek Christians *dark* or *night* speak of *evil* or a *corrupt failed world*). <sup>8</sup> **But, since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation** (Pauline favorite protection, Eph 6:10-20). <sup>9</sup> **For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,** <sup>10</sup> **who died for us so that whether we wake or sleep we might live with him** (Jesus died for all, the bad and the good, sinners and the righteous. The Scribes and Pharisees did not understand this when he ate with tax collectors and sinners, Mtt 9:10-17). <sup>11</sup> **Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.”**

## 1 Thess 5:12-22 – Practical Paranetic Exhortations

This pericope is a clear example of *paranetic, cultural, practical, and hortative imperatives*. The *imperative tense* comes in at least *four moods* which explain the *nature or degree of the imperative*.

The imperative of *Command*

The imperative of *Prohibition*

The imperative of *Entreaty* (*Hortative imperative*)

The imperative of *Permission*

Paul mentions at least 14 *entreaties* or *hortative imperatives* in this pericope in which he *encourages Christian behavior* in the *Greek religious and cultural environment of Thessalonica*.

“<sup>12</sup> **But we beseech** (ἐρωτάω *erōtáō*, *ask, entreat, bequest, beseech, strong request*) **you, brethren, to respect** (εἰδέναι, *eidenai*, from οἶδα *oída*, *to know*, meaning *recognize, acknowledge, honour*) **those who labor among you and are over you** (at this point the church in Thessalonica would not have had *chosen* and *appointed elders, bishops, and deacons*, but certain leaders in the Synagogue had converted to Christ and the church. They would have continued by nature, not office, to lead the new Christians) **in the Lord and admonish you,** <sup>13</sup> **and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves.** <sup>14</sup> **And we exhort you, brethren, admonish the idlers, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.** <sup>15</sup> **See that none of you repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to all.** <sup>16</sup> **Rejoice always,** <sup>17</sup> **pray constantly,** <sup>18</sup> **give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.** <sup>19</sup> **Do not quench the Spirit,** <sup>20</sup> **do not despise prophesying,** (As a result of Greek false prophets, soothe sayers, and false leaders, from the Temples on Mount Olympus, the ethnic Greek Thessalonians were reluctant to accept Christian charismatic Holy Spirit practices and style, and *were opposed* to such. Paul's admonition was to test such behaviour and to hold fast to that which was good. In most early Christian churches there would be some who would abuse the gifts of the Holy Spirit for

personal gain Cf. 1 Cor 12-14, Eph 4:30, *et al*)<sup>1</sup> **but test everything; hold fast what is good,** <sup>22</sup> **abstain from every form of evil.**

## 1 Thess 5:23-28 - Conclusion

<sup>23</sup> *May* (Αὐτὸς δὲ, “reflexive” personal pronoun with δὲ, *now* the *of me* reflexive pronoun making a personal request, *may the God of peace sanctify you ...*) **the God of peace** (from whom peace derives) **himself sanctify** (ἀγιάζω *hagiázō*, from *hágios*, *holy*, *make you holy, sanctify you, make you clean*, render you pure. Cf. 2 Thess 3:13.<sup>15</sup>) **you wholly** (The anthropology held man having a *trifold* nature, *body, soul, and spirit*, interpreted in Christianity as *your whole being, physical, emotional, and spiritually*. The Jewish anthropology held to a *two-fold* nature, *body and soul/spirit*); ... **may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming** (παρουσία, *parousia, coming, arrival*) **of our Lord Jesus Christ.** <sup>24</sup> **He who calls you is faithful** (you have been called, invited, by God into His family), **and he will do it.**

<sup>25</sup> **Brethren, pray for us.**

<sup>26</sup> **Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss** (Cf. also Rom 16:16, a general Christian doxological blessing of others).

<sup>27</sup> **I adjure you by the Lord that this letter be read to all the brethren.**

<sup>28</sup> **The grace** (χάρις *cháris, joyful favor*) **of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.”**

## 2 Thessalonians

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<sup>15</sup> Zodhiates, ἀγιάζω *hagiázō*, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*.

## Introduction

2 Thessalonians follows naturally after 1 Thessalonians and Timothy's visit to Thessalonica to encourage and strengthen the church. Timothy has returned to Paul and Silas with good news.

This letter continues to *commend* and *encourage* the Thessalonian Christians, and *re-emphasize* some of the *culturally related paranetic behavioral needs* which Paul felt he needed to enlarge on in 2 Thessalonians for Christians living in the Macedonian pagan communities.

## 2 Thessalonian Outline

- 2 Thess 1:1, 2 – Salutation
- 2 Thess 1:3-4 – Thanksgiving
- 2 Thess 1:5-10 – Encouragement to Endure
- 2 Thess 1:11-12 – Prayer for the Thessalonian Christians
- 2 Thess 2:1-12 – The Coming Day of the Lord
- 2 Thess 3:1-5 – Exhortation to Pray
- 2 Thess 3:6-15- Exhortation to Labor
- 2 Thess 3:16-18 – Benediction Prayer

### 2 Thess 1:1, 2 – Salutation

*The Church of the Thessalonians.*

<sup>1</sup> *Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:* (note the unique way Paul addresses the church, it is *the church of the Thessalonians!*)

The bringing together the expression “**God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ**” Paul was making an allusion to Deut 6:4, the Jewish confession of faith, the *Shema*, which makes the statement that there is only one God and Lord, “*Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD;*”<sup>5</sup> *and you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.*”<sup>6</sup> *And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart;*”<sup>7</sup> *and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.*”<sup>8</sup> *And you shall bind them as a sign upon your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.*”<sup>9</sup> *And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”*

In the unity of the *One God the Father and one Lord, Jesus Christ*, Paul was emphasizing in the Gentile Greek world *that God and Jesus are one deity.*

Traditionally, modern Churches of Christ have referred to themselves as *Churches of Christ*, favoring Rom 16:16, “*the churches of Christ salute you.*”

There is much in favor of giving honor to Christ in naming a congregation.

Paul recognized the church as *the Church of Christ, Rom 16:16*, since Christ *built the church*, Matt 16:18, *died for the church*, Eph 5:23, 25, and is *head of the church*, Eph 5:23; Col 1:18.

However, at 1 Cor 1:2 and 2 Cor 1:1 Paul wrote to *the church of God which is at Corinth.*

In 1 Thess 1:1 and 2 Thess 1:1 Paul wrote to *the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Apparently Paul was flexible in naming the local congregations to whom he wrote!

### Grace and peace.

<sup>2</sup> **Grace** (χάρις, *cháris*, a joyful greeting of favor) *to you and peace* (εἰρήνη, *eirēnē*, *peace and tranquility between people*) *from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*”

## 2 Thess 1:3-4 – Thanksgiving

Paul is careful to attribute the wonderful growth of the Thessalonians to God, not to himself. The Thessalonians are “congratulated” and encouraged by Paul’s comment, but because of God’s working in their lives **through the Holy Spirit**, (1 Thess 1:5, 6, 1 Thess 4:8, 2 Thess 2:13, 14).

“<sup>3</sup> *We are bound* (Paul knows the source of the Thessalonian growth, God and the Holy Spirit) *to give thanks to God always for you, brethren, as is fitting, because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing.* <sup>4</sup> *Therefore we ourselves boast of you in the churches of God for your steadfastness and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions which you are enduring.*”

## 2 Thess 1:5-10 – Encouragement to Endure

This paragraph ties back to Paul’s comments in 1 Thess 4:13-5:11 of *the coming of Jesus to take up his saints*, (ἀρπάζω harpázō, taken up, caught up, together with him) **to be with him, and to judge the world, the oppressors, with final judgment.**

“<sup>5</sup> *This is evidence* (the inclusion of the Gentile Christians and their growth in Christ) **of the righteous judgment of God, and is intended to make you** (Gentiles) **worthy of the kingdom of God**, (the kingdom of God was global and ethnically universal, for all people, not only Jews) *for which you are also suffering.* <sup>6</sup> *For it is indeed just of God to repay with affliction those who afflict you,* <sup>7</sup> *and to give relief to the afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels* <sup>8</sup> *in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.* <sup>9</sup> *These will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, separated from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might,* <sup>10</sup> *when he comes to be glorified by his saints and to be marveled at on that day among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed.*”

## 2 Thess 1:11-12 – Prayer for the Thessalonian Christians

Paul reminded the Thessalonians of his continued prayer, but adds a dimension to his comment! The purpose and final end of his prayer lies beyond the Thessalonians! It focuses on *God the Father, Jesus the Savior, and the Holy Spirit receiving the glory* as the power and *grace* of the Thessalonian’s inclusion in the kingdom of God.

“<sup>11</sup> *To this end* we always pray for you, asking that our God will make you worthy of his call and will fulfill by his power every good resolve and work of faith, <sup>12</sup> *so 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 Coming of the Lord

### Prescript

In this extended pericope Paul first discusses a simple clear point, *a false teacher or false teaching will surface* regarding *Jesus’ coming, or arrival at the end of the world*, when *all the saints will be with Jesus*, taken or still alive. Jesus will **at his coming** judge all *lasciviousness and false teaching*.

However, **before he comes** expect **false teachers to arrive** with false teachings regarding his coming, etc. When this occurs the saints will be protected by someone, undefined, who will protect them from the rebellion, apostasy. **The Thessalonians know who this will be! Paul has already told them!**

Furthermore, the evil one, the lawless one, the son of *perdition, damnation*, will be judged and destroyed **when Jesus comes at the end with final salvation and judgment.**

An interesting point, and one which has challenged interpreters through the ages, surfaces! **Naming or identifying** who this *lawless one, the son of perdition* is. Paul did not think it necessary to explain this to the Thessalonians. Remember the letter was originally written to the Thessalonians, not us! Paul

clearly states that *the Thessalonians knew who this would be! He had told them! The knew who this was!* Paul spoke only in this epistle in general terms. **He had already identified to the Thessalonians who this lawlessness would be!**

***The interpreter's responsibility, our responsibility, is to determine the theological principle Paul had in mind, and apply that to our situation ... God does not leave us unprotected! We have his Word, Scripture, we have the indwelling Holy Spirit to strengthen us.***

The point of this lesson is that *false teachers will appear who will distort God's revelation in Scripture, lawless ones* doomed for damnation, **who will come teaching false doctrines about his coming**, but who will be judged for this when Jesus comes.

## 2 Thess 2:1-12 – Events Concerning the Coming of the Lord

“<sup>1</sup> **Now** (δέ dé, particle, but now also<sup>16</sup>), **concerning** (ἐρωτάω, *erōtáō*, I ask concerning<sup>17</sup>) **the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our assembling to meet him**, (1 Thess 4:13-18) **we beg you, brethren** (urgency implied), <sup>2</sup> **not to be quickly shaken in mind or excited, either by spirit or by word, or (even) by letter purporting to be from us** (obviously an allusion to false teachers), **to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.** <sup>3</sup> **Let no one** (false teachers) **deceive you in any way; for that day** (that day, the day of the Lord, the *parousia*) **will not come, unless** (ὅτι ἐάν μὴ, *oti ean muh*, will not, unless) **the rebellion**, (ἡ ἀποστασία, *the apostasy, false teaching*) **comes first**, (the *apostasy*, “*rebellion*”, *false teaching* will come first, before Jesus coming), **and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of perdition**, (whom ever Paul has in mind, he is evil, the son of damnation, the false teacher)<sup>4</sup> **who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God** (the false teacher, the lawless one, the son of damnation, sets himself, or his false teachings in Jesus' place!)<sup>5</sup> **Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you this?**<sup>6</sup> **And you know what is restraining him now so that he may be revealed in his time.**<sup>7</sup> **For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way.**<sup>8</sup> **And then the lawless one will be revealed, and the Lord Jesus will slay him with the breath of his mouth and destroy him by his appearing** (ἐπιφάνεια, *epipháneia*; *epiphany, to appear, appearance.*<sup>18</sup>) **and his coming** (he appears at his coming, *παρουσία parousía*, ... to be present, present, presence, a being present, a coming to a place, coming, or arrival.<sup>19</sup>).<sup>9</sup> **The coming of the lawless one by the activity of Satan will be with all power and with pretended signs and wonders,**<sup>10</sup> **and with all wicked deception for those who are to perish, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.** (The extremely lawless one is a false teacher),<sup>11</sup> **Therefore God sends upon them a strong delusion, to make them believe what is false,**<sup>12</sup> **so that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”**

## 2 Thess 3:1-5 – Exhortation to Pray

“<sup>1</sup> **Finally, brethren**, (λοιπός, *loipós*, τὸ λοιπὸν, *the remaining thing to do*), **pray** (προσεύχεσθε, present imperative, keep praying) **for us, that the word of the Lord may speed on and triumph, as it did among you,**<sup>2</sup> **and that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men; for not all have faith.**<sup>3</sup> **But the Lord is faithful; he will strengthen you and guard you from evil.**<sup>4</sup> **And we have confidence in the Lord about you, that you are doing and will do the things which we command.**<sup>5</sup> **May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ.”**

<sup>16</sup> Zodhiates, δέ, dé, particle, but now also is ask you.

<sup>17</sup> Zodhiates, ἐρωτάω, *erōtáō*; I ask, inquire.

<sup>18</sup> Zodhiates, ἐπιφάνεια, *epipháneia*.

<sup>19</sup> Zodhiates, παρουσία *parousía*.

## 2 Thess 3:6-15 - Exhortation to Labor

The problem Paul was addressing in this pericope was two-fold! **First**, the reaction to the *begging practice* of many of the Greek travelling philosophers was that they were *looked down on by the general Greek culture* as a hindrance to the “*city Culture*,” cf., Malherbe, Abraham J., *Paul and the Popular Philosophers*. Paul had stressed that he and his missionary team were not like that! They had not begged but had “*worked with their hands*” so as to set an example to others.

**Second**, most “cultured” communities, notably Greek and Jewish, had standards of unacceptable community behavior, stealing and murder in most ancient cultures were not acceptable. From the literature and inscriptions of many ancient cultures, refusal to work to provide family needs or personal health resulting in overt laziness and begging from others, was frowned on. Apparently from Paul’s arguments in this text such laziness would have been derided in the Greek culture of Macedonia..

“<sup>6</sup> **Now we command** (Παραγγέλλομεν, παραγγέλλω, *paraggéllō*, *charge, command, pass on an announcement*<sup>20</sup>) **you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ** (a high order command, right from the Lord Jesus), **that you keep away from** (στέλλεσθαι from *stéllomai*,<sup>21</sup> it means *stay away from*) **any brother who is living in idleness and not in accord with the tradition** (παράδοσις, *parádoxis*<sup>22</sup> something taught as a serious tradition) **that you received from us** (παραγγέλλω, *paraggéllō*, Paul had obviously *passed down* to the Thessalonians the Christian/Judeo ethic tradition regarding work). <sup>7</sup> **For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us; we were not idle when we were with you,** <sup>8</sup> **we did not eat any one’s bread without paying, but with toil and labor we worked night and day, that we might not burden any of you.** <sup>9</sup> **It was not because we have not that right, but to give you in our conduct an example to imitate.** <sup>10</sup> **For even when we were with you, we gave you this command: If anyone will not work, let him not eat.** <sup>11</sup> **For we hear that some of you are living in idleness, mere busybodies, not doing any work.** <sup>12</sup> **Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work in quietness and to earn their own living.** <sup>13</sup> **Brethren, do not be weary in well-doing.**

<sup>14</sup> **If any one refuses to obey what we say in this letter, note that man, and have nothing to do with him** (συναναμίγνυμι, *sunanamígnumi*,<sup>23</sup> to mix together, to mingle together, have fellowship or keep company with), **that he may be ashamed.** <sup>15</sup> **Do not look on him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother.”**

## 2 Thess 3:16-18 – Benedictory Prayer

“<sup>16</sup> **Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in all ways. The Lord** (in person) **be with you all.**

<sup>17</sup> **I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand.** (Paul’s customary practice was to use a scribe or *amanuensis* to pen his letters. Silas and Tychicus<sup>24</sup> were on occasion his scribe. The scribe would be skilled in script, but also in grammar

<sup>20</sup> Zodhiates, παραγγέλλω, *paraggéllō*, *charge, command, pass on an announcement*.

<sup>21</sup> Zodhiates, “στέλλεσθαι ὑμᾶς ἀπό, in its passive form, *stéllomai*, with the middle voice meaning, with an accusative and the preposition *apó* following, it means to avoid or withdraw oneself from, shrink back, 2 Cor. 8:20; 2 **Thess. 3:6**; Septuagint, Mal. 2:5.

<sup>22</sup> Zodhiates, “παράδοσις, *parádoxis*, something delivered in teaching. *A tradition, doctrine or injunction delivered or communicated from one to another, whether divine*, 1 Cor. 11:2; 2 Thess. 2:15; 3:6, or *human*, Matt. 15:2, 3, 6; Gal. 1:14; Col. 2:8.”

<sup>23</sup> Zodhiates, συναναμίγνυμι, *sunanamígnumi*, to mix together, to mingle together, have fellowship or keep company with, with a dat. 1 Cor. 5:9, 11; 2 Thess. 3:14; Septuagint Hos. 7:8.

<sup>24</sup> Tychicus was an Asiatic Christian who, with Trophimus, accompanied the Apostle Paul on a part of his journey from Macedonia to Jerusalem. He is also alluded to have been with Paul in Rome, where the apostle sent him to Ephesus, probably for the purpose of building up and encouraging the church there. In the New Testament, he is mentioned five times (Acts 20:4; Ephesians 6:21–22; Colossians 4:7; 2 Timothy 4:12; Titus 3:12).

and syntax. They were professional assistants who would know the style of the author well.) *This is the mark in every letter of mine; it is the way I write.*<sup>18</sup> *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.*”