

The Chapel Ministry



CLEARCREEK
CHAPEL

2nd Thessalonians

Russ Kennedy

*S*avoring the *S*upremacy of *G*od
*S*tudying the *W*ord of *G*od
*S*haping the *P*eople of *G*od
*S*preaching the *G*ospel of *G*od

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Introduction

Sometimes the Bible and the lives it describes are so distant from us and so difficult to understand. Some of this is cultural. But some of it is more. The men and women who were Christians in Bible days lived under a pressure and persecution we can hardly comprehend. We live in a time and age and place that is soft and easy. Sometimes the greatest spiritual stresses we experience is whether or not we are going to return the two cents of extra change we got at the check-out line.

Paul's first letter to the church at Thessalonica brought help and hope in the midst of the persecution and problems they were suffering. But it did not immediately solve all their problems. Some were seeing the present trouble as having eschatological (prophetic) implications. This was reinforced when, it seems, the church received a letter claiming to be from Paul, stating that the Day of the Lord was actually present.

The result was a confused and discouraged church. They were not dealing with the undisciplined members who were abandoning their responsibilities. Paul learns that there were people who were not submitting to the authority of the Word. In this church, Satan was working to devour them (1 Peter 5:7-8) and to deceive them (2 Corinthians 11:3).

In response to all these needs, Paul wrote this letter from Corinth around 51AD.

We may not be suffering today in the same way they were in their day, but we still face tribulation and trouble which tests the limits of our (admitably) small endurance. Our ears are filled with all sorts of triumphalistic teaching in prophecy. But the greatest need addressed by this book is our lack of practical submission to the Scripture. O, we acknowledge it as the Word of God for our theories, but not for the day-to-day grind. We have all sorts of things that work better.

The message to us is that the second coming does not excuse us from our labors and encourages us in our trials. So let us listen carefully to these words of the Spirit in the Word that we also "might be worthy of the kingdom." (2 Thessalonians 1:5)

Inspiration for the Discouraged

2 Thessalonians 1:3-12

Introduction

War can bring almost endless, relentless pressure. Even to civilians. The bombing of London was largely designed by the Germans to break down the will of the British to resist. Much of our strategy in the Gulf and in Yugoslavia was much the same.

But life can bring us much the same. Most of us will not face the pressure of persecution. But maybe we will face the long, relentless pressure caring for an invalid spouse. (Story of Herbert Lockyer).

Yet, how prevalent discouragement is among us and how much it affects us.

Paul opens with their most pressing need, the persecution they were experiencing because of their faith. So there is encouragement for us in the midst of our difficulties. We might not identify very closely with persecution—but many of us are enduring afflictions that weigh in heavily on our spirits.

The Encouragement of Praise

(v.3-4)

How we need, in the midst of difficulty, to hear words that encourage us. Paul praises them by noting how God had answered his prayer in 1 Thessalonians 3:10-13. For what God is doing in them in the midst of their extremity, he is very thankful.

The Obligation of Thanksgiving

(v.3)

What interests me here is the sense of *obligation*. He saw thanksgiving for people's spiritual growth as a necessity. Is this our view? Do we observe spiritual growth in others without responding in praise to God?

For a Growing Faith

Paul begins by considering the vertical dimension in their faith in God. If Paul could give thanks for their growing faith, then the church could give evidence of it. Now what would that be? How can Paul say that their faith is "greatly enlarged" (NASB)? There are two ways in which our faith can be enlarged.

- **Our knowledge of God and the Word is growing.** Through attendance to the means of grace, our understanding of truth which elevates our affections and directs our wills, grows.
- **Our trust in God and reliance on His Word is growing.** Through application of our growing understanding, we are ever more trusting in the providence, provision and purifying purposes of God.

For an Increasing Love

That leads us then to quite naturally consider the second element, the horizontal dimension with men. There is an abounding or overflowing of their love. Again, we must ask ourselves how he knows this to be true? The larger testimony of Scripture indicates how a true and growing love is expressed and evaluated.

- **In sacrificial deeds.** Where there is no sacrifice, no giving up of self for the other, there is no love. We may say we love God, love our spouses, love our church—but if we are not willing to sacrifice self (with all its possibilities), then our love is diminishing, not growing. The growth of their love was evident for it was measurable in deeds done solely for the benefit of the one loved.
- **In Biblical submission.** The second exhibition of growing love is in increasing submission in the roles and to the authorities God places in our lives. Again, we may say we love God—where there is little submission, there is little love. Wives may say they love their husbands, but this must be exhibited in growing submission.

The Opportunity to Testimony

(v.4)

Their walk with Christ gave Paul opportunity to boast about them to other churches. We know that Paul did this in order to encourage other churches in their difficulties or to motivate them to complete ministries they had committed themselves to.

- **There is a connection between our endurance with our hope.** Because they were suffering, then their endurance and faith grew. If Paul gave thanks for their faith and love, then what is this but another way of expressing *hope*? Faith is seeing with our understanding the realities of spiritual truths so that we embrace them no matter what the cost or circumstances. In hope, we patiently endure until that which we have understood by faith becomes a reality.
- **There is a connection between patience and suffering.** Since tribulation exercises and thus develops endurance, we will be soft in our faith and fading in our endurance *unless God brings affliction and suffering in our lives*. This is the underlying reason for

the easiness of our modern Christianity. We come to comfortable buildings to hear motivational messages and it rarely costs us anything. In fact, let it cost us something, and we will often simply not come. What would a church think of us today when their very existence was threatened by the might of the Roman empire, the power of the local government and the animosity of the pagan and Jewish cults around them? We know little of this. We are not pure enough in our walk nor powerful enough in our witness to incur the real and visible anger of the lost.

Now we may trivialize the depths of their suffering by drawing parallels with our own perceived suffering at the brutal hands of our past abuses and our present afflictions. I fear when we do that. What they are commended for is a patient endurance rooted in faith in the midst of a very real fiery furnace. So we rather than being excused from class for the course of Suffering 101, we are exhorted to endure in the light of their graduate level experience of suffering. *If our own experience of affliction and stress and discouragement is trivial in comparison, then how much more disastrous is our lack of determination and endurance.*

The Encouragement of Promise (v.5-10)

All this is evidence There is no encouragement like knowing when and how our problems are going to come to an end. In the light of the present suffering and persecution, what are the future prospects? How and when will all this come to an end? And will it come to an end that satisfies the justice of God that is reflected in our own sense of justice?

The message of these paragraphs speaks these words clearly into our own life situations: “What you are going through will end well.”

The Righteousness of God (v.5-7a)

Character Here is the foundation on which their faith and hope and encouragement rests: *God is a just God who will do justice.*

- It is right of God to use suffering as a measure and means of making us worthy of His kingdom. So the suffering in view here is what comes to us because of seeking God's Kingdom first. If the sovereign crown of Christ came through the suffering cross of Christ, then it is right to endure affliction before expecting glory.
- It is right of God to bring about the end to suffering that is consistent with His character; that is to say, He will repay the affliction and relieve the afflicted.

So what we are going through will end well because of God is just.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

(v.7b)

Coming Here is the breath-taking prospect which is the end of history. *Jesus will be revealed from heaven.* He will be accompanied by the spectacle of His mighty angels. 2 Peter 3:10-15 paints a fuller picture of the brief sketch of these words.

¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. ¹¹ Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, ¹² looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, on account of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! ¹³ But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells. ¹⁴ Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless, ¹⁵ and regard the patience of our Lord to be salvation. . . .”

So what we are going through will end well because Jesus is coming.

The Retribution to the Unbeliever

(v.8-9)

Condemnation In that day, God will deal out the retribution that will be the just reward and wages of sin in the unbeliever. This is where you will stand if you are not quickened by the Spirit of God to see your sin and sinfulness and to feel its offense against God. If these words do not awaken a holy fear in you (even you who claim to have fled to the safety of the cross) then either your heart is dead to the life of God or hardened to the love of God. It is not possible to hear these words with believing hearts and not gasp with the horror of it all. But what is said here is flowing out of the justice of God on the day when the glory and power of Christ are unfolded for all to see.

The Condemnation of the Lost

(v.8)

- **Did not know God.** Here are those who suppressed the knowledge of God in creation, conscience and culture who never heard the gospel. There is sufficient revelation to ensure the justice of their condemnation for they will be without excuse.
- **Did not obey the gospel.** Here are those who heard and consciously rejected the gospel. The hearing of the gospel carries with it an obligation: the obedience of faith. So the gospel is not only to be believed, but also obeyed. In fact, it is only truly believed when it is obeyed.

The Condition of the Lost

(v.9)

The horrible consequence of your unbelief and condemnation is characterized.

- **As paying a penalty.** There will be a constant and abiding sense that you will be suffering simply what is richly deserved. There will be no appeals to injustice, no shaking of the fist against God. The astounding glory and holiness of God will so strike the unbelieving on that day as to bow their knees to Christ even as they are smitten with awful penalty of their punishment.
- **As eternal destruction.** Now the word here does not refer to annihilation, but to death as separation. It must not be argued that these words point to the final annihilation of the lost in cessation of being. No, that misses the point that the just penalty is *eternal*. There will be no end to it. Ages upon ages upon ages will roll and each millennium will be but a tick of the clock of hell's eternity. That you will suffer the everlasting torment of hell, as the penalty for a lifetime of sinning does not excise the justice of God, rather it exhibits the greatness of the glory you have sinned against.

Illustration

We cannot know what it is like to experience travel in space. But there are some men, who even have walked on the moon, will never experience that again. It is an inexpressible loss. So it is with the presence and power of our glorious God. You may not know what it is you will lose until it is eternally too late.

- **As separation from the presence and power of a glorious God.** Eternal destruction is being shut out from the conscious presence and glorious power of God. Even today, you live your life against the constant background murmur of the self-disclosing presence of God for we live and move and have our being in Him. Though you may deny it, suppress it, alter it or openly rebel against it, you cannot escape it. Then there will come a day when you will be confronted the possibility of the fullness of being sustained and satisfied with that glory and *you will be thrust away from it*. It may mean little to you today—but then it will be the very fiery agony of hell.

So what we are going through will end well because unbelievers will be punished.

The Results for the Saints

(v.10)

Consummation If we only had a dim sense of the brightness and the wonder if this day we would be like little children standing tremblingly on tip-toe waiting in shivering anticipation of the satisfying joy.

- **God glorified in us.** I have no words by which I can begin to express what this will mean. All the eloquence of human expression would be like a candle in the brightness of the sun. All the elevation of human expectation would be like a thimble of water in the vastness of the ocean. But only this I can say. Imagine your greatest joy, your greatest pleasure, your most satisfied moment, your

highest ecstasy. Elevate it by the greatness of God and extend by the eternality of God and purify it by the holiness of God and you will still only be an infant pleased by the touch on the cheek. For this day every believer yearns with a sin-breaking power.

- **God marveled at by them.** What does this mean? We marvel at the intricacies of life systems and cellular structures and genetic codes. We marvel at the vast galaxies moving in the grand dance of the cosmos and the vast sea of stars. But what will it be to be amazed by God—to marvel at Him. I am sure that a great part of our astounded wonder at God will be in the satisfying greatness of His glory.

So what we are going through will end well because God will be marvelously glorified in believers.

Loved ones, what we are going through will end well. It will end well because of the just character of God, because of the coming of Christ, because of the punishment of you who do not believe and because of the glory in you who do believe. It will end well.

The Encouragement of Prayer

(v.11-12)

If this is how it will end, then how do we live now? This is the encouragement Paul offers by prayer. The assurance that it will end well should not suppress, but rather sustain prayer.

The Petition for Gratification

(v.11)

Two petitions are offered here.

- Made worthy of our calling. We have been called to His kingdom and glory. Are you thinking and living in a way worthy of that call?
- Fulfill your delight (good pleasure, purpose) prompted by goodness and your work prompted by faith.

We must bend our knee like the bow and send the arrows of these petitions to hit straight and true in the target of God's glory.

The Purpose of Glory

(v.12a)

That we live worthy of God's calling and that God's power fulfills our delight in Him and our work for Him must be done so that the name of Jesus, that is, worth and value are magnified in us. And all our worth and value is in Him.

The Provision by Grace

(v.12b)

How do we patiently endure affliction till Jesus comes with a life worthy of magnifying Jesus? By the enabling power of grace.

Conclusion

- You who are suffering affliction for the sake of Christ as believers—take heart. It will all turn out well in the end. He will then repay the wicked and relieve the distress by amazing us with the intensity of the His satisfying glory.
- You who are satisfied with passing pleasures and glittering prosperity —take caution. You are living a life unworthy of the kingdom and glory of Christ.
- You whose only prospect is the retribution to be dealt out in the awful wrath of God—trust Jesus today and bow to Him as King.

Notes

Instruction for the Distressed

2 Thessalonians 2:1-17

Introduction

Illustrate the danger of being misinformed and the importance of truth. Maybe the story of the *Titanic*?

Illustrate how an activity may have multiple layers of purpose. In soccer, we had the boys take a ball with them everywhere. They did everything they did with a ball, including laps and sprints.

Concerning the Lord's return, the church at Thessalonica had been:

Uninformed - 1 Thessalonians 4 Led to unchristian grief

Misinformed - 2 Thessalonians 2 Led to unchristian fear.

The mesmerizing imagery of this passage can have the very effect on us today that Paul was trying to counter in their day. A surface reading and handling of this passage can actually lead us to the same sort of misdirected emphasis that disturbs the church. So we must take up this instruction and in doing so, we will discover that Paul is interested in informing the church about the Lord's return; but he is more concerned to awaken them to the importance of truth.

What emerges from this text is Paul's passion for truth. It is a theme that underscores the importance truth has for all people, believer and unbeliever alike.

- These words and phrases are like the chime which keeps tolling for truth: prophecy, message or letter (v.2), deceive or deception (v.3, 10), counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders (v.9), believing what is false and not believing what is true (v.11-12) in contrast to phrases like remember what was told (v.5), you know (v.6), the truth (v.10,12,14), our gospel (v.14), traditions (v.15) and word (v.17).
- The contrast between the man of sin whose coming is characterized by deception, deceit and counterfeit wonders and the messengers of Christ whose coming is characterized by truth, teaching and holiness.
- The truth is to be received and loved (v.10), believed (v.12) by those who have chosen for faith in the truth (v.13) and called by the gospel (v.14).
- Condemnation is upon those who do not love the truth (v.10) and under a deluding influence, believe what is false (v.11) instead of believing what is true while taking pleasure in sin (v.12).

With this emphasis upon truth large in our minds, let's study these paragraphs together, asking for God's help.

The Problem that Disturbs

(v.1-2)

In the midst of their terrible suffering in affliction and persecution, the church had been disturbed by misinformation. Their life's context of persecution made them vulnerable to this deception.

Its Important Subject

(v.1)

They have become disturbed over and he is concerned with what we call Eschatology. Paul introduces this subject under the twin rubric of *the coming* and *the gathering*. It is Jesus the Lord who is coming and it is we, His people, who will be gathered to Him. He is talking about the *Parousia* and the *Assembling*—we use the terms Revelation and Rapture to refer to Jesus' Second Coming.

Its Disturbing Effect

(v.2)

The problem is that the church is misinformed. They have been told things that were not true that left them shaken and disturbed. The error, linked with the truth they did know and held to, unsettled and alarmed them. This is both the design and the effect that being misinformed has.

Its Fraudulent Authority

(v.2)

The church had a prophetic declaration, a preaching message and finally a forged letter. All of these were counterfeit. The prophecy, the word and the letter were all purported to have had Paul as their source or authority. Imagine. In the first century church, a massive letter writing campaign had been mounted against Paul. A letter to Corinth had attacked Paul's apostolic authority; to Galatia, Paul's gospel; to Thessalonica, Paul's eschatology to the extent that Paul took to signing his letters with his very distinctive and laborious signature to authenticate them.

Its Subtle Error

(v.2)

Now we have to do a bit of thinking here. The phrase *the day of the Lord* is used in two ways in the New Testament. It is used in these ways consistently by Jesus and the Apostles.

- The Day of the Lord is used to refer to the whole period of time beginning with the resurrection of Christ and the commencing of the age of the Spirit which culminates in the Return of the Lord. It

is the age in which the promised Kingdom of Christ commences and reaches its final and full realization with the *Parousia*.

- The Day of the Lord is also used of the short period of time in which the very wrath of God is poured out on the unbelieving nations at the end of Daniel's 70th week or as it is sometimes (erroneously) called, the Tribulation.

Now why would this be a particularly disturbing message? What would be disturbing about an authoritative and prophetic declaration that their persecutions and afflictions come because the Day of the Lord had come? Because it would have meant that they were beginning to experience the wrath of God *as unbelievers*. In effect, they had missed the gathering unto the Lord. This deeply distressed them just as it would you.

- ☞ But the lesson is great for us here: *we must be on the guard for subtle errors on important topics that come backed by fraudulent authorities whose effect is to undermine our faith and hope in difficult times.*

The Truth that Informs

(v.3-12)

In response to the misinformation that distressed and disturbed them, Paul gives truth that is to inform and to encourage them. Receiving that truth gives them the responsibility to not be deceived. There were sufficient resources in the truth they had learned and the grace they were receiving not to be led astray. So he is calming their affections by informing their minds. We need this model today when people are upset, alarmed and disturbed due to being misinformed about Biblical truth.

Before we move forward, it is important to remember that our Articles of Faith give us freedom, as Premillennialists, to continue to grow and be stretched in our thinking on a Biblical schema.

In spite of that I am probably about to alarm a number of you. You have a particular schema or timeline that you are committed to as a framework. The plain language of this text is going to force you to do one of two things: re-evaluate your framework or force it onto the Scripture. As a matter of fact, I am seriously concerned that the general misinformation in churches today about eschatology is going to expose us to severe difficulty in the time of apostasy and tribulation that may shortly be before us.

Understand the Prerequisites

(v.3-4)

Before the Day of the Lord, there are two events that must happen. This is the very plain meaning of the words here. These two events must come to pass before the Coming and the Gathering at the Day of the Lord.

Some dispensational commentators to the contrary, it *does not* mean a departure from earth, that is, the rapture.

- **The Departure of an Apostasy** - The word here refers to a falling away from, a departure from. In the context, it is a departure from truth. Immediately preceding the *Parousia*, the professing church will largely abandon the faith leaving only a relative small number of the elect. Paul is alluding to Jesus' teaching in Matthew 24:8-14 where in verse 10 Jesus said that many would *depart from* the truth.
- **The Disclosure of the Antichrist** - That the man of sin or lawlessness here refers to the Antichrist is little disputed. The language Paul uses alludes to Daniel 7:23-28; 8:9-14,23-26 and especially Daniel 9:24-27 and Matthew 24:4-51. In these texts the Antichrist is portrayed in all his wickedness. How will he be revealed for who he is? (1) He will oppose and exalt himself over every religion. (2) He will enthrone himself in the temple of God (3) He will proclaim or display himself to be god.

This man of sin may be revealed or uncovered, but he is doomed to destruction.

Remember the Clear instruction

(v.5-8)

Paul was reminding them that he had been continually teaching them these things. This was not new information to them. In fact, what he was saying to them was rooted in Jesus' own teaching on eschatology that expounded on the Old Testament prophecies.

Who is this person? We can easily identify him *Biblically*. There have been attempts all through history to identify him *personally*. We must be very careful—we will know who he is when he does what the Bible predicts.

There is coming a time in the future when this man of sin, the anti-christ will come to power. We do not know when, but we know that 3 1/2 years after he has established a treaty with Israel and rebuilds a Jewish Temple, he will erect an image of himself in it and command that all the world should bow down and worship him as god. This is what has traditionally been called *the abomination of desolation*. Then begins great tribulation as he persecutes those who worship the true God. That period of time is shortened for the sake of the elect when Jesus appears, gathers His elect to Himself and begins the awful out-pouring of His wrath on the Day of the Lord.

From this sequence of events, we can see why:

- The church was disturbed. If the Day of the Lord had come, then they were subject to the wrath of God as unbelievers and had not been gathered at Jesus' appearing.

- The church could know that these events had not yet transpired *because what must precede them had not yet taken place*. It is quite evident that Paul is informing them that the rise and revelation of the Antichrist and his desolating abomination in the middle of the Daniel's 70th week must occur before the Day of the Lord. So the persecution they were suffering was terrible, but not yet that of the great tribulation from which they would be rescued.

So they must remember (and so must we) Paul's clear instruction:

His Present Restraining

(v.5-7)

Proposals

The Roman Government
The Restraining of Law
The Church
The Holy Spirit
Michael, the Arch Angel

The reason that the antichrist had not been revealed is that he was being restrained. Frankly, in all my studies I cannot come to honestly say to you what or who this restrainer may be. They well knew; we do not. But, we do know that, in spite of all of Satan's efforts to bring forth this man, God will continue to restrain until it is in God's timetable. Then God will remove the restrainer so that this Satan inspired person may carry His evil to its full measure. Until then, the secret force, or hidden principle of lawlessness is at work. There is an evil principle of sin working in the public arena even in our society and culture today. There will come a day when out of the *mystery* of sin will come forth the *man* of sin.

His Future Destruction

(v.8)

The one who is revealed will be utterly destroyed. Here is the great comfort of this text. That man of sin who emerges out of the chaos of the mystery of lawlessness who exalts himself to be worshipped as God is utterly overthrown and destroyed.

- Destroyed by the breath of the Lord. The Spirit of God going forth in the Word of God is a sword at the throat of Satan's false christ to bring an end to his life.
- Brought to an end by the appearing of Jesus. Here is an amazing statement. All of the deceiving effects of the antichrist will be nullified by the brightness of the majesty and glory of Christ's appearing.

I leave to your sanctified imaginations the wonder and amazement with which we will marvel and the fear that will grip the unbeliever on that day. This is the day when our glorious king will shine forth in majesty from the heavens. The sword of His Word and Spirit will plunge deep into the wicked heart of the lord of darkness and the blinding, choking smog of his deception will vanish in the hot glow of Jesus' glory and holiness.

Be Warned About Deception

(v.9-12)

The Character of that Deception

(v.9-10a)

The coming of the man of sin will be a natural progression from the religious and cultural environment in which he arises. His coming will not be sudden and strange, but will seem to arise naturally out of the apostasy and its characteristic religious activity. In some measure, what Paul goes on to describe has always been with us. But we cannot help but wonder as we see the astounding rise of these characteristics across all religious, not just denominational grounds.

The antichrist will arise out of the apostasy characterized by counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders energized and activated by Satan. It will also be accompanied by blinding and binding effects of ever growing wickedness for those who are doomed to perish. They will perish, having loved their sin while following after the signs and wonders, because they did not receive the love of the truth.

The Consequence of that Deception

(v.10)

Here is the horrible outworking of power and pleasure—they do not love the truth. And loving the truth is the antidote to the fascinating allurements of supernatural power and seductive pleasure. Because they would not receive the love of the truth, they are not saved.

Listen loved ones, here is a sobering message to the Christianity of our day. To be saved, you must love the truth. And it is a *love for the truth*. Many who are in the middle of the signs, wonders and miracles will nod to the truth while embracing deception. They are seeking after the power of signs, wonders and miracles, not the power of God in the Word. The end result is that they are being snared by Satan and denying the sufficiency of the Word. This is why Paul is so concerned for truth. And it is why we must have a passion for truth in the Word.

The Condemnation by that Deception

(v.11-12)

The terrible purpose of God is revealed. He will accomplish his judgment and condemnation of those who are perishing. Those who were not elect and are not gathered at the appearing of Christ, those who were perishing and were not saved:

God will send them a deluding influence
 So that they will believe the lie (what is false)
 So that they may be condemned (judged)

Because they
 Did not believe the truth
 But delighted in wickedness.

After the gathering of the church at the appearing of Christ, no one will be saved who heard the truth and delighted in their sin because God will send a deluding influence which will cause them to believe the lie of Satan. Sobering words these. There is no second chance. You are hearing the truth now, If you do not receive the love of the truth, if you do not believe the truth now, your heart will be so turned by your sin and the powerful delusion that you cannot and will not believe to be saved. Even in the face of the horrible judgments that will fall in the wrath of God on the Day of the Lord, you will continue to pant after your pleasure and will shake your fist in rebellion against God. O, my friend, believe in Christ today. Turn your heart to believe and love the truth so as to receive and submit to the Lord.

☞ So the church is not to be distressed because the coming of Christ and the gathering of the church to Him has not happened yet.

The Contrast that Challenges

(v.13-17)

Thank God for the “buts” of Scripture. In contrast to the sad doom awaiting those who would not believe, Paul is so thankful for this church. The great contrast is between those who are perishing and those have been chosen for salvation. This is a great doctrine about which a great deal of the church is misinformed.

The Explanation of the Truth

(v.13-14)

Let's develop these truths by asking the questions this paragraph answers.

- **What is the root and ground of election?** The love of God. We are those who are *loved by the Lord*.
- **What is election?** God chose (single aorist, middle, indicative) you. It is the marking out of some men and women whom God loves with a saving love. The object *you* means that it is personal. God chose people. Ah, the wonder of it: Loved by God, so we are chosen by God.
- **When did election take place?** From the beginning. As Ephesians 1 puts it, before the foundations of the world; that is, before anything was created. Election took place in eternity past.
- **What are we chosen for?** To be saved. Election is of people to be saved. We are “chosen for salvation” (NASB).
- **How is election carried out in salvation? How is that salvation brought about?** Through the sanctification of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. Here again is Word and Spirit. The consistent witness of all the Bible is that the new birth and the

whole effecting of salvation is partnership of the working of the Spirit and Word in the one chosen.

- **What then is my responsibility in it?** To respond to the call of God. The word here means an imperial summons. This is not like standing on the back porch calling the kids, cows or pigs home. It is the summons that is vested with sovereign authority.
- **How or by what am I summoned?** In or by the gospel. The gospel is not merely an invitation based on a series of truths. It is an imperial summons based on the saving work and sovereign authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are saved by faith in the truth because we are hearing the gospel. Only those who hear the truth in the gospel are being saved.
- **For what purpose have we been chosen to be saved?** That we might share in the glory Christ receives. We all know what it means to share in the warmth of the fire. We know that we are not the ones burning, rather we are basking in the warmth of its flames. So this is not our being glorified, but in Christ being glorified and us sharing in that glory with Him. O, that will be glory for me only because all the glory is for Him.

Salvation originates in a Divine choice
Is wrought by a divine power,
Is effected through a Divine message,
Will be perfected in a Divine glory.

So, God loved us and before creation, chose us to be saved by the work of the Spirit and the belief in the Word. He then summoned us through the gospel. All of this is that we will share in Christ being glorified.

The Exhortation because of the Truth

(v.15)

So if the truth is so important, what is our responsibility?

- We must stand firm and hold fast. These two words communicate tenacity. If we love the truth, believe the truth, obey the truth and teach the truth, we had better be standing firm and holding fast. The pressures to conform our doctrine to everything else except the Scriptures are immense.
- We must value both doctrine and duty. *Tradition* here is not those things that we have added to the Word and hold dear. It is the idea of doctrine and duty *that is handed down to be received and passed on*.
- These doctrines and duties *come from the deposit of apostolic teaching in the Word*. All the words and the letters that give us our doctrine and duty have been preserved without error in the Scripture. Therefore, it does not matter what our traditions are— and it matters terribly if we elevate them to be equal with or higher than the Scriptures.

- ☞ So the church is not to be distressed because we have been chosen by God to be saved.

The Prayer that Encourages

(v.16-17)

In the light of the distress of the church and these two great truths, Paul turns to prayer. Both our distresses and our doctrines need to be turned into doxology.

The Roots of Encouraging Prayer

(v.16)

Prayer that encourages should not just come out of thin air. It must stand on a firm foundation.

- **The Person of our God.** *The Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father.* This petition pleads and expects the personal involvement of God. Jesus Himself and our Father are being asked to be involved in what he will ask. God does not distance Himself from our affliction and distresses, but bends to intimately involved with us.
- **The Perfections in our God.** *Who has loved us and graced us.* Do not miss that this petition is borne up on the wings of God's love and grace to us. We know that God is graciously disposed toward us.
- **The Provisions by our God.** *Gave us an eternal comfort and a good hope by grace.* What God has done in the past causes us to look forward in faith and hope to what His grace will do for us in the future. We do not live the Christian life by gratitude for the past. Rather, encouraged by the past, we live by faith in the grace that will come in the next moment of need.

The Requests of Encouraging Prayer

(v.17)

So what is it that we should be praying for in our distress and our need to love and believe the Word?

- **The Actions** - God, by grace, is being asked to *comfort* and *strengthen* our hearts. Now stop just a moment. Can you think of a time that you prayed for someone else that God would become so intimately involved in someone else's distress that they would be comforted and strengthened inwardly? When was the last time this was your experience?
- **The Arena** - Our petition is for comfort and strength in every good thing we are doing and saying. Don't miss this. Comfort and strength are given in the midst of ministry. Note that this distressed church is to be comforted and strengthened in the very

midst of its good work and word. This grace was not then to make them feel better, but to cause them to serve greater.

 So the church is not to be distressed because we are praying for enabling grace for each other.

Conclusion

- If we learn nothing else from these paragraphs, we must learn to value the truth. The truth is to be heard, taught, told, loved and believed. The truth will save us, mature us, encourage us and inform us so that we will not be easily distressed.
- This text leads me to conclude that the great apostasy out which the antichrist arises will involve the counterfeit signs, wonders and miracles activated by Satan. We can only witness to and pray for those who are ensnared in this movement today.
- I know that many do not believe the grand truths about the electing love of God. How sad. Why would you let Satan rob you of such nourishing and God exalting truth? Particularly, when a passage like this is so clear and so encouraging.
- May I summarize again this wonderful truth for you? God loved us and before creation, chose us to be saved by the work of the Spirit and the belief in the Word. He then summoned us through the gospel. All of this is that we will share in Christ being glorified.
- Truth must be transformed into living. It is of little value that you hold the truth in your head when you do not do the truth. In fact, the whole of the Scripture condemns that kind of knowledge as a dead faith.
 - So the church is not to be distressed because the coming of Christ and the gathering of the church to Him has not happened yet.
 - So the church is not to be distressed because we have been chosen by God to be saved.
 - So the church is not to be distressed because we are praying for enabling grace for each other.

No matter what affliction or apostasy or spirit of antichrist surround us, may God give us grace that we will be comforted and strengthened in every good work and word.

Injunctions for the Disobedient

2 Thessalonians 3:1-18

Introduction

When problems are not solved, they grow worse. Often though, we think if we ignore problems, eventually they will go away. Yet any doctor can tell you that even what appears to be a small or insignificant injury can become infected. While playing High School basketball, I once dove for a loose ball and scraped my forearm. I didn't worry about it too much until two weeks later, it was red, puffy and oozing. Needless to say, the doctor had to end up inserting a needle, draining off the infection and pus and packing it with antibiotics. Inattention to a small problem led to a potential for major corrective measures.

Church problems are little different. If they are ignored, they grow worse and worse, infecting more and more people. The church is a body; and what germs are to the physical body, sin is to the spiritual body. This is graphically illustrated by the two letters to the church at Thessalonica. In the first, Paul warns the idle busybodies to get to work (1 Thess. 5:14) and told the elders to warn those who were unruly. Evidently, the problems continued for the second letter closes with several paragraphs devoted to this problem.

Now what is it that was infecting the church? The problem, like a disease, has its symptoms and its causes.

- The symptoms were people who would not work and were using their idle time to go from church member to church member spreading error and gossip. Now they had what appeared to be a Biblical justification; after all, wasn't the Lord coming back very soon? They had time on their hands, gossip on their lips and arguments to back them up. They were misusing doctrine to excuse them from their duty. The end result was disobedience.
- The cause of all these symptoms is quite simply they were disobedient. They were disobeying the orders of the apostles (v.6), the commands of the Scriptures (v.14) and the Biblical principles of Christian conduct clearly taught and modeled by the apostles and elders (v.7,10,12).

So what do we observe from the flow of chapter 2 into chapter 3? God is very concerned about our relationship to the Word of God itself and to those who, by teaching, are mediating the rule of God's Kingdom:

- Chapter 2 - The **priority** of the Word
- Chapter 3 - The **authority** of the Word

Paul has a passion for the Word of God (2:1-12), a passion for the truths of the Word (2:13-17) and a passion for obedience to the Word (ch. 3). We sometimes lack that same passion today. These paragraphs are going to force you to face the question, “How committed are you to submitting to and obeying the Word?”

Why all this talk, though, about commanding (v.4,6,10,12), obeying (v.4,14) and modeling (v.7)? Are we not under grace? Are we not free from living by commands and laws? Has Paul turned from theological grace to practical legalism?

Christ has brought us under the New Covenant *with its greater and higher obligations* and has *empowered us by grace* to actually keep those commands. The Word of God still commands us; but the grace of God now enables us. We have been set free, but set free *to obey God*.

What Jesus says is the foundation on which Paul builds. That foundation has these words inscribed on it, “Love for God is doing and dying: it is submitting to God’s Word and sacrificing for God’s people.”

What then are given in this passage to stir up the grace that enables our love to obey?

A Motivating Examination

(v.1-5)

One of the privileges and disciplines of Christian living is prayer. One of the delights of Bible study is noting how Paul links his request for prayer with the paragraphs to follow.

Its Petitions

(v.1-2)

Thank you to each of you who labored with me by prayer in preparation for this message. On Friday, God gave such clarity in articulating the burden of the passage.

“Pray for us”, Paul writes. If Paul desired the prayer of the saints on his behalf for ministry then I am in desperate need of your prayers. I want this phrase, this idea to ring constantly in your thinking, *prayer must be the visible engine of all our efforts in ministry*. Prayer must be what is making ministry work—prayer energizing talent, shaping skill, clarifying insight, strengthening weakness, enervating fear and articulating truth. A prayerless ministry will be a powerless ministry.

- Opportunity** ➤ *IN THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD* - Pray that the Word continues to be spread and honored. Literally, pray that the Word runs out rapidly like an advancing army and is acknowledged respected and revered. May the Word quickly spread and conquer.
- Opponents** ➤ *AS THE MINISTERS OF THE WORD* - Pray that we will be delivered from the grip of sinful people. Pointedly, pray that we might be rescued from unbelieving people who have become twisted and gnarled by their sinning.

These two petitions establish two categories that motivate our obedience. Obedience arises from hearing and heeding the Word and disobedience will soon twist and gnarl us.

Its Perspectives

(v.3-4)

In contrast to people twisted by their sin, people who do not have faith, we have:

- *THE CHARACTER OF THE LORD* - The Lord is faithful. In the circumstances of faithless men, we have a faithful Lord. In His covenant mercy He will provide what is necessary to keep us from evil.

So we can never say that we must disobey.

- *THE CONFIDENCE IN THE LORD* - His confidence rests in the Lord whose purpose has enabled them and will enable them to obey. This phrase “in the Lord” is also a reference to or union with Christ. Since we are united with Christ, there is flowing to us the strength necessary in which we are now obeying and by which we will continue.

So we can never say that we are not able to obey.

Its Priorities

(v.5)

Paul requests prayer for himself in terms of *ministry*; he encourages them with prayer in terms of *maturity*. It is going to take maturity to hear and to heed what he is about to say. If they are going to be able to deal with the problems in the church, then they are needing a firm understanding and embracing of:

- *THE LOVE OF GOD* - Their hearts must be pointed again and again to the love of God in devotion and duty, in doing and dying. They must avoid sentimentalizing the love of God to exclude duty and discipline. And they must not focus on duty and discipline to the exclusion of the graciousness of the love of God. As we have seen, God’s love does not exclude, but rather demands obedience. And the love of God is poured out in the hearts of believers who then pour out their very lives *for the holiness of others*.
- *THE ENDURANCE OF CHRIST* - Their hearts must be pointed again and again to the endurance of Christ. Now this may refer to Christ’s carrying through in total obedience to God in the face of opposition. It may also refer to His long patience with us who struggle with disobedience. His model of patient endurance in devotion, duty and discipline motivates us in the midst of the circumstances of our own and others disobedience.

This paragraph causes me to reflect on the importance of prayer:

- ☞ It must be the visible engine all our efforts at ministry (v.1)
- ☞ It is the vehicle of deliverance from the agendas of people twisted by their sinning (v.2).
- ☞ It draws its strength in spiritual battles from the very person and character of God (v.3).
- ☞ It turns my union with Christ into obedience to Christ; my position into my practice (v.4).
- ☞ It focuses the gaze of my soul on the abounding love of God and the abiding endurance of Christ.

 Before we can deal with the difficult problems, precepts and people of verses 6-15, we must be gripped by God's love and Jesus' endurance. When it comes to duty and discipline, love and endurance go together.

A Correcting Exhortation

(v.6-10)

These paragraphs actually deal with the problem itself. Our obedience is stirred both by the message of the Word and the manner in which it comes. So here are their responsibilities.

In the Light of the Past Instruction

(v.6-10)

Because they had been taught these instructions and commandments in the past, they were being held accountable for it. This section is being addressed to the congregation as a whole.

Its Power

(v.6a)

The note of command and authority is unmistakable. Paul is speaking even as he instructed Titus, "These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you." (Titus 2:15) This authority is in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. By virtue of our relation to Him and His revelation to us. This is not just Paul, or an elder or teacher: behind them stands the Lord of the church in whom we are united as brothers and to whom we owe allegiance.

 The elders are to preach and exhort from doctrine to duty with authority.

Its Precept**(v.6b)**

17 Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them.

(Romans 16:17)

11 But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he should be an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler-not even to eat with such a one.

(1 Corinthians 5:11)

- *WHAT IS BEING COMMANDED* - We are being commanded to avoid, stay away, turn away from a category of people in the church. The word here means not to get mixed up with. When admonition fails, then segregation follows. This is not yet excommunication, but a lack of association. This probably should not require public announcement, except if people are unaware of it.
- *WHO ARE BEING IDENTIFIED* - These are people who were disorderly, out of step and disobedient. Their lack of self-discipline led them to idleness, gossip and theological speculation. These were nice, friendly people who used the time they should have been working to be meddling. But their sin was infecting the body.



The congregation is commanded to avoid associating with believers whose lives are marked by a lack of self-discipline and disobedience.

Its Pattern**(v.7-9)**

What Paul commends to them here arises from what he has commended before them. He has lived out a model sacrificial labor so as not to burden the church. They knew the responsibility to work hard at one's vocation for it had been lived out in front of them. Are we willing to imitate Paul in this? Are we willing to forego our rights in order to offer ourselves a model for others to follow?



The elders must model the duties which are commanded for the congregation.

Its Principles**(v.10)**

When the church was being taught, this rule was laid down. The rule has not changed for them or for us. If a person is unwilling to work, he is not to be provided for even in the most basic necessities. Now note, it is not inability to work: it is an unwillingness to work. Those who are poor in the providence of God are to be provided for by the sacrificial generosity of the congregation.

The duty commanded here speaks to all. Whether your vocation is outside or inside the home, idleness must be avoided. You must work hard. Do not miss the application of this to wives in their duty at home, to children in their duty to school and employees in their jobs.



The elders must give clear instruction as to what Biblical duties are expected of the congregation.

In the Report of their Continued Problem (v.11-13)

Its Identification (v.11)

Do you hear the constant connection being made between being idle and getting involved in gossip? Idleness and gossip are sins.

The report had come to Paul through Timothy about the disobedient. They were continuing to lead an irresponsible, undisciplined life. They were doing no work. Instead of keeping their bodies busy, they had become busybodies.



The disobedient are identified by indicating their specific sins

Its Injunction (v.12)

What they must do is repent. They must change. They must go to work and earn their own living. This is not a suggestion. This is not just godly advice. This is a command.



The disobedient are instructed and commanded in specific duties.

Its Instruction (v.13)

But for those who are working hard and watching others in the church flitting about, not working, gossiping and meddling in people's business, it was discouraging. To them Paul says keep on doing what is right.

We need this word as well. One of the great struggle faithful saints have in church ministry is watching unfaithful saints and wondering if it is worth it all. To you, God says to stay with it. Don't allow weariness to deter you. If the love of God can motivate you, let the endurance of Christ inspire you to endure in doing your duty till Jesus comes.



The obedient are commended and encouraged to continue in faithfulness to their duties and labors.

In the Case of their Future Disobedience (v.14-15)

The two verses answer two very important questions:

- What if they continue to disobey? The actions then begin to become more public.
- Is only this one issue (idleness) in view? No, the whole epistle and for us, the whole of Scripture, requires our obedience.

Its Action**(v.14)**

Elders subject to this same discipline
 Those [elders] who continue to sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest also may be fearful of sinning. (1 Timothy 5:20)

The causes of discipline are broadened from idleness to any disobedience to the exhortations in the epistle. The resulting actions are more difficult as well for now the disobedient is identified publicly (marked), avoided in fellowship in such a way as to cause that person to be ashamed.

In our modern environment, this is almost unthinkable. That we would so embarrass a poor Christian who is struggling with disobedience by announcing their name and calling for Christians to not associate with them would ruin their self-esteem, is unloving, unkind and unworthy of us. And so, the terrible infection of sin rots our character, robs us of our power, ruins our fellowship and grieves God.

A little fear and shame and humbling would do our proud, sinning souls much spiritual good. It is sad to see individuals disobeying God; it is catastrophic to see a whole congregation disregarding God.

You see, when there is trouble in the church, it is usually that there is trouble in someone's heart.

Its Approach**(v.15)**

Here is the attitude with which we do this. We treat them as brothers and sisters, not as unbelievers. We are not fellowshiping with them because they are out of fellowship with the Lord and the Lord's church. But, we are continuing to admonish them even as the Spirit is continuing to convict them. What is commanded is *remedial separation* in which *admonitional contact* is made but *personal fellowship* is avoided.

Now this gracious approach to sinning saints eliminates this form of discipline as a way for elders (or others in the congregation) to squelch accountability for their sins. This is **never** to be seen as retributive, but as remedial. The whole exercise of dis-fellowshipping is to shame believers so that they will obey God and His Word. There is also a wonderful restraining effect on humble, obedient Christians who are encouraged to continue to do what is right.

 Those who persist in disobedience are to publicly identified, avoided and admonished as a brother so as to bring about shame, repentance and obedience.

A Comforting Expectation**(v.16-18)**

The inspiration for the discouraged (Ch.1), instruction for the disturbed (Ch.2) and the injunctions for the disobedient (Ch.3) call forth three expectations from the church, both theirs and ours.

Its Product

(v.16)

We expect that in every circumstance, the Lord of peace will grant us peace by His presence. When we are discouraged by the pressure and stress of circumstances, persecution and affliction, the presence of Christ in those things brings a stabilizing calm. When misinformation and error distress us and cause us to lose our passion for the Word and for truth, then presence of Christ in His Word and in His people brings peace and passion. And finally, when the disobedient seem to flourish and the faithful struggle, when the difficult disciplines of the covenant community and family of God demand that we not associate with a brother or sister for their good and the purity of the church, then the chastening presence of our heavenly Father yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness.

That these messages ruin instead of promote the peace of the church simply indicates how far we have come from the apostolic church. So then the Lord of peace gives us peace by His provision and by His presence as the Lord.

Its Authentication

(v.17)

We expect that this epistle and this word and this message will all be accepted as authentic truth because attached to it is By the attesting signature of Paul. We have this now as Scripture, as the deposit of apostolic truth. We know that it is genuine. Against all the claims to on-going revelation stands the completed canon with its final and authorized truth. *And it is this truth that we are preaching.*

Its Provision

(v.18)

We expect the enabling grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. What do we need when we are discouraged, distressed and disobedient? We need the grace of God. How do we receive the grace of God? By the inspiration, instruction and injunctions that come from hearing the Word of God preached and taught with authority and integrity. So may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

Conclusion

- **Summarize the major principles in these paragraphs.**
 - The elders are to preach and exhort from doctrine to duty with authority.
 - The congregation is commanded to avoid associating with believers whose lives are marked by a lack of self-discipline and disobedience.
 - The elders must model the duties which are commanded for the congregation.
 - The elders must give clear instruction as to what Biblical duties are expected of the congregation.
 - The disobedient are identified by indicating their specific sins
 - The disobedient are instructed and commanded in specific duties.
 - The obedient are commended and encouraged to continue in faithfulness to their duties and labors.
 - Those who persist in disobedience are to publicly identified, avoided and admonished as a brother so as to bring about shame, repentance and obedience.

- In the preaching of the Word:
 - **Authority** - Let the Bible be preached and taught with authority. Let Christ be commanding us in the Word. If Biblical doctrine and duty are being commanded, then you ignore it with dire consequences.
 - **Integrity** - Let what is commanded in the public ministry arise directly from the text. Integrity in the Word demands that we do not tell you how to wear your hair, but we do tell you that you must study, pray, serve, give, love, work, etc.
 - **Consistency** - Let those who proclaim the Word model what the Word is commanding. You can expect your elders to study, pray, serve, give, love and work. And let us model it sacrificially.

- In the obeying of the Word:
 - **Submission** - Let us be humble and obedient in submission to the Word of God. Am I here to critique the message and the messenger or does the message critique me? Am I consciously hearing the text commanding me and saying, “Yes, Lord”?
 - **Self-discipline** - Let there be strong commitment and firm self-discipline which leads to obedience, even when it costs us much. Do you notice how often a lack of self-discipline leads to sin? Do you see that self-discipline is a large key unlocking the door to personal holiness?
 - **Endurance** - Let us measure the level of our commitment by what it takes to stop us. Where has all our endurance gone? And we are not even facing real suffering, just minor inconvenience and stress! May God help us to run the race and finish the course.

- In our dealing with the disobedient:
 - **Love** - Let us show the genuine love of Christ that instructs, exhorts, encourages, admonishes and disciplines. Let us not sentimentalize love—true love understands the necessity of the cross.
 - **Firmness** - Let us recognize that we have been saved to be a holy people. May we know with our understanding that our holiness is not just personal and private, but is also public and community. Let us be willing then to deal with the disobedient.
 - **Brotherly** - Let all our discipline be remedial and not retributive. May we, even when we must not associate, extend ourselves to admonish until God gives repentance.

- Are you a part of the problems or the peace of the church?

Additional

From: Introduction Yes, we under grace and not under the Old Testament system of law keeping. The difference is not that we have no commands, but that Christ has fulfilled the Law, brought us under the New Covenant *with its greater and higher obligations* and has *empowered us by grace* to actually keep those commands. Grace has moved us from the kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of His dear Son. The Word of God still commands us; but the grace of God now enables us. We have been set free, but set free *to obey God*. What Paul is doing is turning his theology of salvation by the enabling grace of God into the practice of sanctification by the grace of God.

Now this is not unique to Paul. Jesus told His disciples, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. He who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me.” (John 14:15,21). Jesus laid the foundation for the second expression of love in these words, “These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you and that your joy may be full. This is my commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends, if you do what I command you.” (John 15:11-14). So the essence of love is submission and sacrifice. “By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” (John 13:35).

From: Particulars This text has profound implications for our welfare society today. One or two aspects to highlight.

- The church is responsible for its own. The Bible does not charge the church with the welfare of the general population. The generosity of believers to the poor is a matter of conscience and out of resources beyond the proportional stewardship to the church.
- No welfare is to be given to the able but unwilling to work. Let them bear the consequences of their indolence. The Bible distinguishes between those who are poor because of God’s providence and those who poor because of sloth. The first is to be aided; the second to be admonished and avoided.
- Coercive State welfare is not Biblical. The poor are to be cared for by those are able. The primary responsibility for the poor, the elderly and the handicapped is charged to their families.

- From: Conclusion** ➤ New Testament examples of what is disciplined in the church:
- Personal differences Philippians 4:1-3
 - Doctrinal error. The process is:
 - (1) teach 2 Timothy 2:23-26
 - (2) rebuke Titus 1:10-14
 - (3) avoid Romans 16:17-18
 - (4) separate 2 Timothy 2:18f; 2 John 9f
 - Entrapped in habitual sin Galatians 6:1-3
 - Repeating troublemaker Titus 3:10
 - Open immorality 1 Corinthians 5 (2 Cor 2:6f)
 - Open disobedience 2 Thessalonians 3