The Second Epistle of Paul to the
II THESSALONIANS

Opening Considerations

Greeting

1 [1]Paul, Silvanus and Timothy,[1] to the congregation[2] of the Thessalonians in God our Father and Sovereign Jesus Christ: [2]Grace and peace to you from God our Father and Sovereign Jesus Christ.[3]

Commendation and encouragement

[3]We are obligated to always give thanks to God about you, brothers, and properly so, because your faith is really growing, and the love of each and every one of you towards each other keeps increasing; [4]so that we ourselves boast about you among God's congregations, referring to your steadfastness and faith in the midst of all your persecutions, and the tribulations that you are enduring[4] [5]—the above is evidence that God's judgment is right,[5] to the end that you be considered worthy[6] of the Kingdom of God, on behalf of which you are actually suffering; [6]since to God it is right to pay back affliction to those who are afflicting you[7] [7]and rest (along with us) to you who are being afflicted,[8] at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with His powerful angels in blazing fire,[9] [8]inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ,[10]

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[1] Paul gives recognition to the junior members of the team.

[2] The first image that the term 'church' evokes in the minds of many is that of a building; what is in view here is a group of people, and a very particular group of people.

[3] To the 'western' mind the repetition of the full form, "God our Father and Sovereign Jesus Christ," may seem unnecessary, if not stylistically poor, but this letter was written by a Hebrew.

[4] Paul boasts of their steadfastness and faith. Evidently the believers in Thessalonica were passing through tough times—the adversity caused their faith to grow and their love for each other to increase. This equation appears to be a norm within the Kingdom of God.

[5] Presumably God's judgment in choosing them (see 2:13 below).

[6] Wait a minute! If salvation is by grace, where does 'being worthy' come in? Well, again we are faced with the paradox of the coexistence of God's sovereignty and human responsibility. "God's judgment" = sovereignty; suffering to be "considered worthy" = responsibility. The gift of life in Christ is indeed free; we do not deserve it and cannot buy it or earn it. To live for Christ costs everything, and not a few have backed out.

[7] Payday is coming; those who mistreated God's people are not going to like it.

[8] There is a rest for the people of God (Hebrews, chapters 3 and 4), but the full realization of that rest comes only when we are glorified.

[9] The syntax allows "in blazing fire" to go either with the angels or the vengeance; it seemed more natural to me to put the phrase with the angels—in that event the "revelation" will be an impressive sight.

[10] It is clearly implied that they could have known God and could have obeyed the Gospel; if they had no way of knowing and never ever heard, "vengeance" would seem to be too strong. So what about the millions of individuals born into cultures where no representative of the Creator has ever gone? Romans 1:18-25 makes clear that all have

9who will pay a penalty: everlasting ruin,[1] away from the face of the Lord and from the glory of His might, 10whenever He comes to be glorified by His saints,[2] yes to be marveled at by all who have believed (because our testimony to you was believed);[3] in that Day.[4]

A model prayer

11To this end we also pray always for you, that our God may count you worthy of the calling[5] and fulfill[6] with power every desire of goodness and work of faith,[7] 12so that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ[8] may be glorified in you,[9] and you in Him,[10] according to the grace of our God and Lord, Jesus Christ.[11]

The Day of Christ

2 1Now, brothers, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to Him,[12] we urge you 2not to be quickly shaken from your conviction or disturbed, whether by a spirit[13] or a word or a

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the light of creation. Since all human knowledge is based on the principle of cause and effect, any rational creature must conclude that there has to be a sufficient Cause for the marvelous creation he sees all around. Each one is also born with a conscience. No doubt anyone who responds correctly to the light of creation will receive more light. That said, however, one gains the impression that there will be degrees of punishment, according to the amount of light rejected. Perhaps 40% of the Greek manuscripts omit "Christ" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

1 The lost do not cease to exist; they are eternally separated from the Source of all good; they are condemned to never achieve/realize their potential—everlasting ruin. That said, however, it is presumably the case that those who hate God would react to "the face of the Lord" and "the glory of His might" as being intolerable torture, worse even than hell-fire.

2 There is a stark contrast between the saved and the lost: the saved will rejoice and glory in Christ's presence; the lost will be excluded from it, a basic ingredient in the ruin. If we have emotions, it is because God had them first—He will enjoy being glorified and marveled at.

3 Paul includes them in that sanctified throng (and takes a little personal credit).

4 Verses 3-10 form a single sentence in the Greek Text, which is why I followed suit.

5 I suppose that "the calling" here is to have an active part in bringing about God's Kingdom in their context; as they are counted worthy, God will work with them to introduce goodness and works of faith into that context.

6 God does the fulfilling.

7 The declared objective of the prayer in verse 11 is given in verse 12: "that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified <u>in you</u>"; so it would be in God's own interest to aid any desire on our part to be useful and to do works of power with a view to that glory.

8 Perhaps 55% of the Greek manuscripts omit "Christ" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). I follow the best line of transmission.

9 Note that the point of the manifestations of God's power is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ; and they do add force and credibility to our Message.

10 When we glorify the Lord there is reciprocation.

11 I take "our God and Lord, Jesus Christ" to be the best rendering of the precise turn of phrase here. Jesus Christ is God and Lord.

12 The reference is to the Rapture, presumably.

13 Attention! Paul is saying (and the Holy Spirit through him) that Christians may receive misinformation from evil spirits. Those ideas that just 'pop into your head' need to be evaluated as to their source.

letter as from us,[1] as though the Day of Christ[2] has come.

The man of sin

3Do not let anyone deceive you by any means; because *that day cannot come* unless the rebellion[3] comes first and the man of sin[4] is revealed, the son of ruin,[5] 4who opposes and exalts himself over everything that is called a god or an object of worship, to the point of taking his seat as God[6] in God's sanctuary,[7] proclaiming himself to be God.

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1 Evidently there were people fraudulently using Paul's name, even in writing. Fraud has been around for a very long time.

2 Instead of "Christ", some 15% of the Greek manuscripts have 'Lord' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.); the 85% that have "Christ" (including the best line of transmission) are doubtless correct. I remember one day in a Greek exegesis class, the professor stated that one reason he preferred the 'critical' text (that reads 'Lord' here) is that it fit better with his view of eschatology—the 'Day of Christ' is usually associated with the Rapture and blessing of the saints, while the 'Day of the Lord' is usually associated with heavy judgment upon the world and unrepentant Israel, including the outpouring of wrath just before and after the Second Coming of Christ, when He returns in glory to establish His Millennial Messianic Kingdom. The perceived difficulty here would appear to be that while verses 1, 6 and 7 evidently relate to the Rapture, verses 3-4 and 8-10 evidently relate to the Great Tribulation and the Second Coming. What to do? Look carefully at the Text.

In verse 2, why would the Thessalonian believers be "disturbed"? Someone was teaching that the Rapture had already happened and they had been left behind—I would be disturbed too! So "Day of Christ" is precisely correct with reference to the content of verses 1 and 2. The trouble comes in verse 3 because a clause is elided; as an aid to the reader translations usually supply a clause, preferably in italics, to show that it is an addition, as in NKJV—"*that Day will not come*". But that would put the Rapture after the revelation of the man of sin and the 'abomination of desolation'—definitely not congenial to certain eschatological systems. An easy 'solution' would be to change 'Christ' to 'Lord' in verse 2, but that would put the Rapture within the 'Day of the Lord'—also not congenial. I submit that fine-tuning our view of eschatology is preferable to tampering with the Text.

If the 'Restrainer' in verses 6-8 is the Holy Spirit (which seems to me to be the only adequate identification), then the Rapture happens before the 'abomination', and may be viewed as its 'trigger'. But if the 'Day of Christ' includes the Rapture, then verse 3 would appear to place the Rapture after the 'abomination'. So where does that leave us? Although my own training was strongly 'pre-trib', I have moved to a 'meso-trib' position. If the Rapture follows immediately upon the 'abomination', then the 'surprise' factor remains untouched. If the 'abomination' and the Rapture happen within minutes of each other, then from God's point of view they form a single 'package', and the actual sequence is not important—for all practical purposes they happen at the same time.

3 There has been no end of rebellion down through the centuries, but this one will be worse (the rebellion in the so-called 'western world' is getting nastier by the day).

4 Instead of "sin", some 5% of the Greek manuscripts read 'lawlessness' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, etc.), but the 95% (including the best line of transmission) are doubtless correct. Yes, 'the' man of sin—there have been no end of evil men down through the centuries, but this one will be really bad.

5 He is characterized by ruin; he ruins everything he touches (like Midas).

6 Some 9% of the Greek manuscripts omit "as God" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

7 If this refers to God's temple in Jerusalem, it has yet to be rebuilt. (All the pieces are ready, and with modern technology it can be erected in 24 hours.)

5(Don't you remember that I used to tell you these things while still with you?)[1]

The Restrainer

6So now you know what is restraining, to the end that he[2] may be revealed at his own time. 7For the mystery of the lawlessness is already at work;[3] only He who now restrains *will do so* until He removes Himself.[4] 8And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and abolish by the splendor of His coming;[5] 9that one's coming is according to the working of Satan with all power[6] and signs and lying wonders, 10and with all wicked deception among those who are wasting themselves,[7] because they did not receive the love of the truth[8] so that they might be saved.[9]

Believing 'the lie'

11Yes, because of this God will send them an active delusion[10] so that

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1 Evidently eschatology was in the roster of subjects that Paul normally covered in his teaching.

2 The man of sin.

3 Why "mystery" and why "<u>the</u> lawlessness"? After Christ's victory on the cross, demonstrated by His resurrection, and His taking back the 'keys' (Revelation 1:18), Satan had to go 'underground'. He is behind all human lawlessness and foments it in all sorts of ways, but his master plan is under wraps, hence a "mystery".

4 Perhaps more literally, 'gets Himself out of the middle' (the verb *ginomai* is inherently middle in voice). I would say that the Holy Spirit is the only one who satisfies the description.

5 Note that "His coming" is subsequent to the revelation of the man of sin and the events he will usher in, and that revelation is subsequent to the departure of the Restrainer (even if virtually simultaneous). So if the Rapture is linked to the Restrainer's departure, the Lord's "coming" (here in verse 8) is a distinct, subsequent occurrence.

6 When Satan fell he did not lose his power.

7 The verb here, *απωλλυμι*, often rendered 'to perish' (John 3:16 in KJV), is used in a variety of contexts, but I take the core meaning to be 'waste'. The participial form here is ambiguous as to voice, either middle or passive, but the basic form of the verb is middle. Ephesians 1:5-14 makes clear that a basic objective of our redemption is that we be 'to the praise of His glory', which was part of the original Plan (Isaiah 43:7). Only as we live for the glory of God can we realize or fulfill our potential, our reason for being. If you live for any other reason, you are wasting yourself.

8 The use of the verb 'receive' clearly implies an act of volition on their part; that love was offered or made available to them but they did not want it; they wanted to be able to lie and to entertain lies told by others. But the consequences of such a choice are terrible; they turned their back on salvation.

9 Since there are only two spiritual kingdoms in this world, that of Sovereign Jesus and that of Satan, "those who are wasting themselves", in this text, are still in Satan's kingdom and therefore wide open to his "wicked deception". The Text states plainly that they are wasting themselves "because they did not receive the love of the truth so that they might be saved". They are not saved.

10 Notice the sequence: first they reject the love of the truth; it is as a consequence of that choice that God sends the delusion. The implication is that there is a point of no return; God sends the delusion so that they may be condemned. The only intelligent choice is to embrace the truth!

they will believe the lie[1] 12and so that all may be condemned who have not believed the truth but have taken pleasure in wickedness.[2]

To be Saved is Different

13Now we are obligated to always give thanks to God about you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning[3] God chose you into salvation, through sanctification of spirit and belief in truth, 14to which[4] He called you through our gospel, so as to obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.[5]

15So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the traditions[6] that you were taught by us, whether by word or by letter.

Another model prayer

16Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort[7] and good hope, by grace,

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Consider with me the consequences of the facts enunciated in verses 10-12 for a whole nation, like Brazil, where I now live. We have many thousands of local churches that call themselves Christian. But I know of almost none that could be characterized as 'loving the truth'. No one wants a Bible with objective authority. Humanistic, relativistic, materialistic values have taken over the churches. Biblical values are no longer acceptable. In consequence, Satan has control of the government, of education, of health services, of commerce, of the entertainment industry, in short, of the whole culture. The churches that have rejected biblical values are part of the problem—since they have rejected "the love of the truth", they have been taken over by "active delusion".

Note that God Himself sends that delusion with the declared objective of condemning all those who believed the lie. If God Himself visits "active delusion" upon a whole country, what possible escape is there? The only possible 'medicine' is "the love of the truth". Those of us who consider ourselves to be true subjects of Sovereign Jesus need to appeal to Him to show us how to promote the love of the truth to the churches and to the society at large. Here in Brazil it may be too late, but if God's grace still offers us a window of opportunity, we must devote ourselves to promoting the love of the truth by all possible means.

1 Perhaps "the lie" is best illustrated in our day by the theory of evolution: 'There is no Creator'—so there will not be any accounting; so you can do what you feel like. How terrible will be the awakening!

2 "Taking pleasure in wickedness" involves rejecting the Truth of a moral Creator who will demand an accounting, or even overt rebellion against that Creator (like Lucifer/Satan).

3 Instead of "from the beginning", perhaps 6% of the Greek manuscripts have 'firstfruits' (as in some versions).

4 Our versions typically have 'sanctification of the Spirit and belief in the truth', but the Text has no article with 'spirit' or 'truth'; further, the relative pronoun 'which' is neuter in gender, while the most likely antecedents are either masculine ('sanctification') or feminine ('salvation' and 'belief'). But when the antecedent is a phrase, the pronoun is typically neuter, so I take the antecedent to be "through sanctification of spirit and belief in truth". The human spirit must be sanctified. In 1 Peter 1:2, Peter includes all three persons of the Godhead in the process of our salvation; the part of the Holy Spirit is to 'set us apart' (He works in our minds to encourage or predispose us to obey).

5 Note that our salvation is not only about forgiveness of sins, it is also about obtaining glory, our Sovereign's glory.

6 Some traditions are good.

7 "Eternal comfort"—I love it.

17encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good word and work.[1]

A request for prayer

3 1Finally, brothers, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may spread rapidly and be glorified, as also with you, 2and that we may be delivered from evil and malignant men; for not all have the faith.[2]

3But the Lord is faithful, who will strengthen you and guard you from the malignant one.[3] 4We have confidence in Sovereign concerning you, that you both do and will do the things we command.[4] 5Now may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the perseverance of Christ.[5]

Instructions

Don't be irresponsible or lazy

6Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who behaves irresponsibly and not according to the tradition that they[6] received from us. 7For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we did not behave irresponsibly among you; 8neither[7] did we eat anyone's bread without paying; rather we worked night and day, with difficulty and hardship, so as not to be a burden to any of you; 9not because we do not have the right, but in order to offer ourselves to you as a model for you to imitate. 10Yes, because when we were with you we gave you this command: "If anyone does not want to work,[8] neither let him eat!" 11Yet we hear that some among you are behaving irresponsibly; not working, just meddling. 12Now to such individuals we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread.[9]

Isolate the disobedient

13But as for you, brothers, do not lose heart in well doing. 14If anyone does not obey our word in this letter, take note of him and do not associate with him, that he may be shamed; 15yet do not regard him as

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1 Notice again that it is not 'word' alone, it is "word **and** work".

2 Since everyone believes something, has a worldview, the reference is presumably to faith in God.

3 'The' malignant one is Satan.

4 Observe that Paul considers that he is in a position to command.

5 As Paul makes clear in the opening paragraph, they are already manifesting love and perseverance, so I take the point of the prayer to be progress into God's kind of love and Christ's kind of perseverance. They have made a good start, they are on the right road; Paul asks God to help them on toward the goal.

6 There were several of them.

7 The distinction implied here indicates that the irresponsible behavior covered a wider area than just idleness or freeloading.

8 "Does not **want** to work"—the reference is not to those who want to work but cannot find a job; it is to the lazy.

9 To eat 'your own bread', you have to work to earn that bread.

an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.[1]

Conclusion

Benediction

16Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you the peace[2] during every situation, in every way.[3] The Lord be with you all.

Sign-off

17The greeting of Paul, with my own hand, which is the 'trademark' in every letter that I write in this way.[4] **18**The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

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[1] The discipline is to be corrective, not punitive. Note that Paul clearly claims authority; he expects to be obeyed.

[2] "The peace": there is no lack of counterfeit 'peace', but the reference here is presumably to 'the peace of God, that surpasses all understanding' (Philippians 4:7)—and only "the Lord of peace" can give it.

[3] Since they were being actively persecuted, this was a very appropriate blessing.

[4] I take the clear implication to be that Paul dictated his letters to an amanuensis, or secretary, but 'signed' the letter by writing the last line himself.