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THE SECOND EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS

BY

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Introduction

This second Epistle to the Thessalonians was written at Corinth by the Apostle Paul and in the joint names of Silvanus and Timotheus. How long after the first epistle cannot be correctly ascertained. It was probably a year after they had received the first document.

What Occasioned This Epistle

From the second chapter we learn that they were greatly troubled about something else. The first Epistle was written to comfort them on account of those who had fallen asleep and to make known the great revelation concerning the coming of the Lord for His saints. And now the apostle writes: "Now we beseech ye, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and by our gathering together unto Him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter, as if it were by us, as that the day of the Lord is present" (2:1-2). Evidently some one had troubled them and tried to convince them that the day of the Lord, with its threatened judgments, was actually present. When they had received the comforting first epistle, we can imagine how their waiting for the Lord was stimulated. With what simple, childlike faith they must have taken hold of the words, "We who are alive and remain shall be caught up in clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord." Daily, no doubt, they expected this blessed promise to be fulfilled.

Certain false teachers then appeared on the scene, telling them that

their hope was vain and that the day of the Lord was actually upon them, that the threatened tribulation and judgment had begun and that they had to pass through all the horrors of the times preceding the visible manifestation of the Lord. They were passing through fearful persecutions and tribulations that these teachers probably told them that these sufferings were the indication of the beginning of the day of the Lord. It was this which greatly agitated them and robbed them of the blessed hope. If they were to pass through the tribulation and judgment which is in store for the world and be on the earth when wrath is poured out, then the blessed hope ceases to be that. And it seems these false teachers had gone so far as to produce a document, which they pretended was a letter from Paul, in which he confirmed their false teaching. For this reason, that they might know that the letter they received now was really his, he added, "The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle, so I write" (3:17).

But who were these teachers who aimed at the joy and hope of these earnest believers and troubled them with their false message that the day of the Lord was present? They belonged unquestionably to the same class of Judaizers who had sneaked among the Galatian churches. They attacked the blessed hope given to the Church and put in its place the judgment and tribulation of the day of the Lord. They swept aside the comforting revelation of the coming of the Lord and the gathering of the saints unto Him and put the Church on earthly, Jewish ground. What is in store for the ungodly nations and for the Jews, they taught would also be shared by true Christians; it would all come before the Lord comes for His own. To correct this error the Spirit of God moved the apostle to write this second epistle.

A Fundamental Prophecy

Chapter 2:1-12 contains the words of instruction to show that the day of the Lord was then not present. It furthermore tells us what must precede that day, which is nowhere related to the Church of God. It is a great unfolding of prophecy, fundamental and most important. It is needed for the correct understanding of what will take place when the Lord has taken away His true Church. Here is the prediction of the apostasy, which will have for its head and climax the man of sin, the final, personal Antichrist, the same person of whom Daniel speaks (Dan. 11:36, etc.), who is described in Rev. 13:11-18 and in other portions of the prophetic Word. Here we read of the necessary condition before this apostasy can come and that lawless one is revealed, and what will be the fate of all who received not the love of the truth. The strong delusion of him, whose coming is, according to the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders, will be believed and accepted by the apostates of Christendom. We have given to this portion of the epistle in our annotations the attention it deserves, and we trust it will be, under God, a help, and comfort to His people.

The Division of Second Thessalonians

The scope and divisions of this Epistle are very simple. In the first chapter the Apostle shows that while the Thessalonians had tribulation, they suffered not in a punitive sense, but for the kingdom of God, and that God would recompense tribulation to those who troubled them. The punishment for the world comes when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven. While that day brings this for the world, it will bring glory for those who have believed. As already stated in the second chapter, the day of the Lord,

what must take place before that day comes is made known. Words of comfort, prayer and exhortations conclude the Epistle. This gives us three divisions.

- I. THE REVELATION OF THE LORD JESUS FROM HEAVEN (1)
- II. WHAT PRECEDES THE MANIFESTATION OF THE LORD (2:1-12)
- III. THANKSGIVING, PRAYER, EXHORTATIONS AND CONCLUSION (2:13-3:18)

Analysis and Annotations

I. THE REVELATION OF THE LORD JESUS FROM HEAVEN

CHAPTER 1

- 1. Salutation and thanksgiving (1:1-4)
- 2. The revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven (1:5-10)
- 3. The prayer (1:11-12)

Verses 1-4. The opening words of salutation are the same as in the first Epistle. Once more he gives thanks to God for them, because their faith increased exceedingly and love abounded, the result of an increasing faith. On account of this progress and spiritual condition he wrote, "So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure." The patience of hope, which was mentioned in the first Epistle, is omitted by him. Their hope had been dimmed through the false teachers and alarmists, who would have them believe that they were heading for all the tribulations of the day of the Lord. They endured persecutions and tribulations on account of which they were greatly disturbed, because of the insinuation that these were the judgments of the day of the Lord. They looked more to what was happening to them than to the Lord. They were more occupied with these conditions than with the blessed hope.

Verses 5-10. He quiets these fears. Satan was pressing upon them, terrifying their minds, and they were fearing everything, the enemy taking advantage of the persecutions and sufferings he had instigated to distress them. The Apostle tells them that all their persecutions and tribulations, far from having a punitive character, were "a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God" with this purpose, "to the end that ye should be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for the sake of which ye also suffer."

They were children of God, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, and their path was to suffer with Him, that they also might be glorified together (Rom. 8:17). A similar word he wrote later to the Philippians. "in nothing terrified by your adversaries, which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God" (Phil 1:28). What was happening to them was a seal upon them of their being worthy of the coming kingdom. The persecutions they endured showed they were identified with the Lord, who was "despised and rejected of men." Their sufferings were the sufferings of Christ.

And then the contrast. When the day of the Lord comes with the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven, it will bring the punishment of

the wicked. Their persecutions were from the ungodly, who inflicted suffering on them because they believed on the Lord. But when the day of the Lord comes God will change all by recompensing those that troubled them. "Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you, and to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels." In other words, in His day they would have rest and peace, while their wicked enemies will suffer the well deserved judgment. From this inspired declaration they learned that the day of the Lord had not come.

The day of the Lord brings the revelation of the Lord from heaven with His mighty angels, "in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall suffer the penalty of everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His might, when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be wondered at in all who have believed (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day." "In that day" is a phrase which we find many times in the Old Testament prophetic Word. In most cases it means the day of the visible manifestation of Jehovah to deal in judgment with His enemies and to deliver those of His earthly people Israel who wait for Him. "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall punish the host of the high ones that are as high and the kings of the earth upon the earth" (Is. 24:21). "And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God, we have waited for Him, and He will save us" (Is. 25:9).

Judgment for the world is always connected with that coming day. Our Lord, in His earthly ministry, also spoke of that day, the day of the coming of the Son of man. "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then shall He reward every man according to His works" (Matt. 16:27). His visible coming out of heaven and bringing judgment is still more fully described in Rev. 19:11-21. It will be the day of vengeance after the acceptable year of the Lord is ended (Isaiah 61:1-2). The apostle's testimony tells us the same. Two classes are mentioned by him. Those that know not God, which means the idolatrous Gentiles and sinners in general, "and those that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." (The text of the Authorized Version having omitted the word "those" makes it appear as if it were only one class; but that is incorrect.) These are the Jews and also nominal and apostate Christians. The latter class will suffer the great punishment. The destruction mentioned has been explained as meaning annihilation. But that is not true. It is banishment from the presence of that glory upon which man has turned his back and which he despised--hardening himself into a final, awful incapacity for it and for communion with Him. What else is it but the destruction "of one who was made at the first in the image of God?" They will live on in eternal separation from God.

The apostle mentions something else which is not found in the Old Testament prophetic Word. When the Lord comes in that day He will be glorified in His saints and then wondered at in all who have believed. When He comes thus in judgment upon the world the true Church is no longer on earth, but the saints, having been previously caught up to meet Him in the air, come with Him in glory. It is the time of the manifestation of the sons of God, transformed into His image, each reflecting His glory, who is the leader and the first begotten. And so these poor, persecuted, despised Thessalonians would then be the marvels for the inhabitants of the earth when they appear with Him. Blessed future for all the redeemed to come with

the Lord in glory and to be like Him!

These explanations concerning the day of the manifestation of the Lord bringing judgment upon their enemies and glory to them, delivered them from the concision into which the false teachers were leading them, and they were now ready, after being put at rest in their mind, to receive the needed additional instruction about that coming day. A prayer concludes this chapter that, called with such a calling, God may count them worthy of it, that their walk may be of such a nature as to correspond with that calling and that the Lord might be glorified in them by the power of faith, and that afterwards they might be glorified in Him, "according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

II. WHAT PRECEDES THE MANIFESTATION OF THE LORD

CHAPTER 2

1. The gathering of the saints preceding that day (2:1-2)
2. The apostasy and the man of sin (2:3-4)
3. The revelation of the man of sin and his fate (2:5-8)
4. His deceptions and the fate of Christendom (2:9-12)

As this section of the Epistle is one of the most important of the New Testament, we give it first of all in a corrected translation.

"Now we beg you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together unto Him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, nor troubled, neither by spirit, not by word, nor by letter, as (if it were) by us, as that the day of the Lord is present. Let not any one deceive you in any manner, because it will not be unless the apostasy have come first and the man of sin have been revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself on high against all called God or object of worship; so that he himself sits down in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. Do ye not remember that, being yet with you, I said these things to you? And now ye know that which restrains, that he should be revealed in his own time. For the mystery of lawlessness already works; only there is He who restrains it until He be gone, and then the lawless one shall be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus shall consume with the breath of His mouth, and shall annul by the brightness of His coming; whose coming is according to the working of Satan in all power and signs and wonders of falsehood, and in all deceit of unrighteousness to them that perish, because they have not received the love of the truth that they might be saved. And for this reason God sendeth them an energy of error, that they may believe the lie; that they all might be judged who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

Verses 1-2. He begs them "by the coming of the Lord and our gathering together unto Him" not to be disturbed by the rumours these false teachers were circulating, as if the day of the Lord is present. The Authorized Version has the misleading translation, "the day of Christ." (Equally incorrect is the translation, "the day of the Lord is at hand." The meaning is "present," that it had actually come. The same Greek word is also used in Rom. 8:38, "things present.") There is an important difference between the day of Christ and the day of the Lord. The day of Christ concerns the Church, the saints of God. The day of the Lord concerns the earth--Israel and the nations. The day of Christ begins when He takes His saints in glory

and they are with Him. The day of the Lord will bring, as stated before, the visible manifestation of the Lord from heaven. The day of Christ comes first and the day of the Lord follows at least seven years later. The following passages speak of the day of Christ, and it will be seen that that day is for God's people only (1 Cor. 1:8; 2 Cor. 1:14; Phil. 1:6-10, 2:16). The day of the Lord does not concern the saints at all; it falls on the world. Before the day of the Lord can come, His saints have to be gathered together unto Him. The promise of 1 Thess. 4:16-18 needs first to be fulfilled. He uses this hope of being gathered to Christ, when He comes for His saints, as a motive why they should not listen to those who said the day of the Lord is present. He reminds them of the fact that their gathering unto Him had not yet taken place. How, then, could the day of the Lord be present? And this opens the way for still more important teaching.

Verses 3-4. The false teachers were deceiving them. Before the day of the Lord can come there must be the falling away first and the man of sin, the son of perdition, must be revealed. No such conditions need to be fulfilled before the Lord comes for His saints. But before the age closes with the visible manifestation of the Lord from heaven these two solemn things must be on the earth. A falling away from the God-given faith has been going on throughout this Christian age. But that is not the apostasy of which the apostle speaks. The complete apostasy means that the entire faith will be abandoned by Christendom, even as our Lord indicated when He said, "Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall He find the faith on the earth?" That this present age closes in apostasy is more than once mentioned by the Spirit of God. See 1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 Tim. 3:1-5; 2 Peter 2; Jude. Evidences to that effect are abundant in our own days. The destructive Bible criticism rejecting inspiration and revelation, the denial of the person and work of Christ and of every other article, denials which are rapidly increasing, made the way for this final apostasy. The many cults in which Satanic powers are manifested, under the garb of angels of light, such as Christian Science, Spiritism, Theosophy, etc., are also harbingers of the time of which the apostle writes. Satan is surely actively at work to bring about this apostasy, and his ministers are transformed as the ministers of righteousness (2 Cor. 11:15), advocating reform, better living, but denying and antagonizing the doctrines of Christ. We shall hear later that this final apostasy is held back from its full manifestation by One who restraineth; only when He is taken out of the way can this predicted apostasy and renunciation of Christianity come with its leader, the man of sin.

Who is the person whom Paul mentions as the man of sin? it would take many pages to give the views and opinions of expositors as to who is meant. The Roman Empire, the Roman Emperors, Mohammed, the Pope and the Romish Hierarchy have been given as being the man of sin. During the French revolution many thought it was Napoleon, as some today say the German Emperor is the man of sin. Inasmuch as the great apostasy is not yet here, the person whom Paul describes has also not yet come. First there must be the apostasy before there can be the leader and head of that apostasy. And before the revelation of Christ comes from heaven the world, which rejected Christ, will get its Antichrist. John mentions the man of sin. "Who is the liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is Antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son" (1 John 2:22). It may be learned from this description that he will be the leader of Jewish unbelief and the unbelief of Christendom. Denying that Jesus is the Christ--that is Jewish; denying the Father and the Son, that is rejection of the Christian revelation. He will therefore take the leadership of Jewish and Christian apostasy. The

most common interpretation that the Pope and the Papal system is this man of sin is incorrect, for the Pope does not deny that Jesus is the Christ, nor does the Pope claim to be the Christ. That the Pope has certain marks of the Antichrist about him no one can deny; but that he is the Antichrist is not true. (Certain Roman Catholic writers have charged Protestantism with being Babylon and anti-Christian. A so-called Protestant who denies the Virgin birth, the deity of Christ, surely is an antichrist.)

The final Antichrist, the man of sin, the son of perdition, is the heading up of the apostasy. He fills up the measure of the apostasy of humanity. He opposeth and exalteth himself against all that is called God or object of worship. He takes the place of God on earth. He will be the superman who is expected by the world to make his appearance in the near future. In the book of Revelation his number is given as 666. "For it is a man's number; and the number is six hundred and sixty-six" (Rev. 13:18). There is no need to speculate on this number. The meaning is very simple. Seven, in Scripture, is the complete number, used in connection with what is divine and perfect. Six is incomplete, and is man's number. The number 666 signifies man's day and man's defiance of God under Satan's power reaching its climax. This "superman" takes a seat in the temple of God and sets himself forth that he is God. From this we learn that he claims a religious character. He must therefore not be identified with the little horn in Daniel's prophecy (Daniel 7).

This little horn is another Satan-possessed person who takes the leadership politically of the coming federation of nations, the revived Roman Empire. He is "the prince that shall come" of Daniel 9:26. The beast out of the sea in Rev. 13:1-10 is the revived Roman Empire; the ten horns on that beastly empire correspond to the ten horns on Nebuchadnezzar's prophetic dream image and the ten horns on the fourth beast of Daniel's vision. The little horn, the domineering head of the revived Roman Empire, comes first into prominence and is soon followed by the second beast out of the earth, having two horns like a lamb, but speaking as a dragon. Rev. 13:11-18 describes this second beast and the work he does, in which he is helped by the first beast. This second beast is the man of sin, the son of perdition. Read now Daniel 11:36-39, This is another description of the same person. He is called a king because, as the false Christ, he will claim kingship among the Jews. He is also called in Revelation "the false prophet." He is the one of whom our Lord spoke in John 5:43, "I am come in My Father's name and ye received Me not; if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive."

But what is the meaning of "he sitteth in the temple of God, setting himself forth that he is God?" The temple of God does not mean the Church. It is a Jewish temple. When the true Church is gone the Jewish people, restored once more to their own land, established there as a nation, though still in unbelief, will erect another temple and institute once more the temple worship. (See Isaiah 66:1-4). God will despise their worship. The man of sin will sit in that temple, demanding worship for the image he will set up for himself. This will be during the time of Jacob's trouble, the great tribulation. The man of sin, the Antichrist, will be undoubtedly a Jew. He will be filled with the energy and power of Satan. The nearness of the reestablishment of the Jewish people in Palestine in unbelief is an indication that all these prophecies are about to be fulfilled.

(For a closer study of the interesting details of the tribulation we refer our readers to "Exposition of Matthew," "Daniel," and "Exposition of

Revelation," all by the author of The Annotated Bible.)

Verses 5-8. When the apostle was with them he had spoken to them about those things. "The mystery of lawlessness (not iniquity) already worketh," he informed the Thessalonians. Sin is lawlessness, and that has been at work from the beginning, man having forsaken God and exalted himself in self will. This works on till it works out into open lawlessness in an out-and-out opposition to God and His Son, culminating in the man of sin, the false Christ, "to give the world its long-sought liberty from divine restraint and bring its vaunted progress to perfection, which under Christianity it has found impossible to attain." The mystery of lawlessness will cease to be a mystery when the lawless one, the man of sin, is manifested. But what keeps back the manifestation of this lawless one? Who or what is it that restrains it? Who is to be taken out of the way before the lawless one can be revealed? Many answers have been given to this question which we do not need to investigate. It is self evident that that which restraineth must be a power superior to man and Satan and of a nature totally different to the man of sin. The restraining one is a power and a person. It is the Holy Spirit of God.

"The Holy Ghost was here below; the Church, be its condition what it might, was still on earth, and God maintained the barrier. And as the porter had opened the door to Jesus in spite of all obstacles, so He sustains everything, however great the energy and progress of evil. The evil is bridled: God is the source of authority on earth. There is one who hinders until he be taken out of the way. Now, when the Church (the Church, that is, as composed of the true members of Christ) is gone, and consequently the Holy Ghost as the Comforter is no longer dwelling here below, then the apostasy takes place, the time to remove the hindrance is come, the evil is unbridled, and at length (without saying how much time it will take) the evil assumes a definite shape in him who is its head. The beast comes up from the abyss. Satan-not God-gives him his authority; and in the second beast all the energy of Satan is present. The man of sin is there" (Synopsis of the Bible).

When the Church leaves the earth then this restraining power and person, who dwells in the Church and therefore is here on earth, will be taken out of the way. As the result, in due time, the lawless one will be revealed. The Holy Spirit, who came down from heaven on the day of Pentecost to form the Church, the body of Christ, will be withdrawn when that body is complete and taken to glory to be joined to the Head, the Lord Jesus Christ. The light being gone, gross darkness will settle upon the nations, the apostasy will be here, the enemy comes in like a flood and the lawless one appears. Here we have the best evidence that the true Church cannot be on the earth during the final years with which this age closes. No true believer will be in the final apostasy under the lawless one, nor will the Church pass through the great tribulation. How this should fill our hearts with holy joy and our lips with praises!

Before he speaks of the lawless one with his lying wonders, he tells us at once of his fate. The Lord Jesus, in His visible manifestation, will consume him with the breath of his mouth and annul him with the brightness of His coming (Isaiah 11:1-5 and Rev. 19:11-21).

Verses 9-12. This lawless one, the Antichrist, will come in the energy of Satan with all power and signs and wonders of falsehood and in all deceit of unrighteousness to them that perish, because they have not

received the love of the truth that they might be saved. And for this reason God sendeth them an energy of error, that they may believe the lie, that they all might be judged who believed not the truth, but had Pleasure in unrighteousness. This shows us what is coming upon the so-called "Christian nations," with their boast of progress and civilization. This is the future of the destructive critics, the Bible-rejecting, gospel-neglecting masses of Christendom, as well as of apostate Judaism.

"Scientific infidelity now avouches with a sneer that we never see a miracle, and Hume's argument against all evidence in favor of such is its contradiction of universal experience. But it is soon to be matter of extensive experience that miracles there are; only in a very opposite interest to that of Christianity. These things are even now showing themselves in a more or less tentative and doubtful way; they are yet to throw off all reserve and challenge the faith of the world. 'Powers and signs and wonders' are the threefold designation of miracles in Scripture: 'wonders,' which excite attention and admiration; 'signs,' or things that have meaning and doctrine; 'powers,' that are evidently beyond human. These have borne witness in past time to the truth--never proved it, apart from the truth itself with which they were connected; and this is the mistake of so many at all times that a real miracle--something that could be rightly spoken of as all these--is an absolute guarantee of the message that it brings. Thus they are ready at any time to follow what is thus supported. Yet, if there are heavenly beings--'angels that excel in strength'--it is evident that, if permitted, and if evil enough to attempt it, they could at any time lead us thus according to their mind. Now that is the very thing which God has declared He will permit, when the time shall have arrived. When men have shown that they desire the truth no longer and the patient, long-suffering God has at last no justification further, that will have come to pass for the professing Christian world which we recognize as coming to pass in the history of individuals: God will say again, 'Ephraim is joined to his idols; let him alone.' And then will rise up one 'whose coming is according to the energy of Satan, with all power and signs and wonders of falsehood'--no longer in the interest of truth, but of a lie--and in all deceit of unrighteousness for those that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

"Dangerous would it be, as well as foolish, to assert that this is of the past, and not the future; that it has been fulfilled in Romanism, or in any like way. Has the power of Rome, whatever its pretension to fabulous miracle may be, exhibited itself after this fashion? No doubt, there is a class at all times ready to be duped in this way, as we see in the rapid progress of such transparent absurdities, as, for instance, 'Christian Science'; but in all this there is only the feeble anticipation of a delusion which will yet carry away the multitudes of unbelieving profession. The arch deceiver is not in the Vatican, nor elsewhere at the present time; he is to be revealed in his time. And yet we may indeed discern the foreshadows of this tremendous iniquity and realize that his way is being prepared in many events and movements that are taking place under our eyes" (Numerical Bible).

Then the rejectors of the truth will receive their judgment. No one can even imagine what will be the fate of the millions who received not the love of the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. Horrible as the events are today, that coming time of Antichrist, the time when the lawless one reigns, energized by Satan, will be far worse. As it has been said, "Sin will be allowed to be its own terrible witness against itself, a

witness at which eternity will shudder."

III. THANKSGIVING, PRAYER, EXHORTATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

CHAPTERS 2:13-3:18

1. Thanksgiving and prayer (2:13-17)
2. Prayer for the Word and for deliverance (3:1-5)
3. Exhortations (3:6-15)
4. Conclusions (3:16-18)

Verses 13-17. What blessed reasons are stated here to give thanks to God for what He has done for us and for all who believe! Brethren, beloved of the Lord, this is what believers are. Chosen we are to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. And glory is before all who have believed "the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." And that glory may burst upon us at any time. For this God's people wait. Therefore we are "to stand fast and hold fast." The word "traditions" means the instructions they had received from the apostle; that is, the truth of God. To stand fast and to hold fast the truth are the two necessary things for God's people. He also prays for them that their hearts might be comforted and that they might be established in every good word and work.

Chapter 3:1-5. As in other Epistles, so here the apostle requests prayer for himself, "that the Word of the Lord may run and be glorified." His great ambition was to spread the gospel and the Word of God everywhere. When sinners are saved by grace, are added as members to the body of Christ and walk in the Spirit, then the Word is glorified. Enemies were on all sides then, as they are now, obstructing and hindering the word, "for faith is not the portion of all." He counted on the faithfulness of God to establish and keep them. It is a comfort for His people to know that their keeping rests in His hands. If God be for us, who can be against us? "And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ." Christ, in infinite patience, waits in heaven, and His people on earth wait for Him and with Him until the appointed time comes when His waiting and their waiting ends.

Verses 6-15. Exhortations follow. It seems there was considerable disorder among them. "For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies." This was no doubt the result of their unsettled condition brought about by the false teachers. He therefore exhorts them to withdraw from any brother who does not hearken to the instructions he has given and who continued in a disorderly walk. Once more he cites his own exemplary life among them (1 Thess. 2:9-10). "For we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; neither did we eat any man's bread for nought (as charity); but wrought with labor and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you. Not because we have not authority, but that we might give you an example to imitate us." He exhorts such who were disorderly, doing nothing but living in idleness, that with quietness they should work and no longer live from the labors of others, but eat their own bread. If there is refusal from the side of such, no obedience to this rule, he is to be noted and no company kept with him. Yet he is not to be treated as an enemy, but to be admonished as a brother. How well it would be if this course would always be followed.

Verses 16-18. "And the Lord of peace Himself give you peace continually in every way." This is the final prayer in these two Epistles. It must be noticed how prominent prayer is in both of these Epistles. And the Lord, who is with His people, will give peace continually in every way, if they walk in obedience, subject to Himself.

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