

2 THESSALONIANS

The following is adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Paul's Epistles to the Thessalonians (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, forthcoming).

2 Thessalonians 1

Overview

This letter was written shortly after Timothy returned from Thessalonica, where he had delivered Paul's first letter and made sure its contents were made available to all the house churches. As with the first letter, Paul includes Silas and Timothy as its senders.

This letter, even more than the first one, highlights the uncomfortable and perhaps even dangerous condition in which these Saints were living. For most congregations of the Church throughout the Greco-Roman world, maltreatment was a daily reality. It was, however, harsher in some areas than in others, and persecution seems to have been particularly concentrated in Thessalonica. Even so, most Christians everywhere lived with either the dread of potential harassment or the pain of its reality.

Looming large among the Apostle's concerns were false ideas concerning the Parousia that continued to plague the branch. What Paul does in this chapter is lay out needed background so that he can refute the rumor that the day of the Lord is imminent. In order to do that, Paul lays out exactly what that day entails and its result. His objective seems to be to lay out such strong evidence that it should be obvious to all that the Parousia is still some time off.

1:1–2

Paul begins this letter with his usual invocation, identifying himself, Silas, and Timothy as joint senders and noting who his audience is, bequeathing upon them his hope that they are finding peace and hope through the Father and the Son.

Though the letter identifies its senders as Paul, Silas, and Timothy, once again it is Paul's thinking and words that the letter captures. The phrasing that he uses to indicate his audience is interesting. He writes to the "assembly [*ekklēsia*] of the Thessalonians in God" (2 Thessalonians 1:1). Though he mentions the place, his emphasis is on the people—not as a group composed of Jews and Gentiles or Saints and proselytes but of one body of people. In doing so, he subtly indicates that his audience is primarily converted Gentiles whom God has chosen as His own people.

That he twice invokes the names of God and Christ stresses their relationship to the people and the peoples' relationship to them. A religious situation may be at play here. Insight comes from coins found by archaeologists. These coins have the names of Roman rulers (Octavian—Augustus or Tiberius) and the title θεός (*theos*), "god," on the obverse, and the name of the city, Θεσσαλονικέων (*Thessalonikeion*), appears on the reverse. These coins indicate that the gentile population in Thessalonica accepted these men as gods since Roman emperors were commonly worshipped in the provinces as such. Paul's words may indicate that he was countering this idea and insisting that for the Saints, it is the Father, not Caesar, who is their God and who has claimed them as His own.

With his invocation that the Saints receive both grace and peace from God and Christ, Paul links both the Father and the Son as the single source for these virtues (1:2). The divine favor of one reflects the same for the other. Noteworthy is that the statement indicates that the Christians understood at this early date that the Son held place side by side with the Father. This juxtaposition, with no perceived need for elaboration on Paul's part, indicates that these Christians understood Jesus as fully divine.

Although Paul's desire that these good people be enveloped in divine favor and find peace therein follows his usual greeting formula,¹ it may be more pointed in this case. That is because it is couched in the present suffering of the branch and points to the promise of persecution's cessation and the reward of peace for faithfulness in the promised eschatological Judgment. Given their situation, the promise of peace may have eclipsed any other reward that could be given.

1:3

Reading 2 Thessalonians 1:3 as it stands, Paul's address feels less personal and more distant than in his first letter to the Thessalonians. As with the first epistle, his usual custom (as his later letters reveal) in his greeting is to look back at his close association with his addressees and make them a part of his thanksgiving. That is not the case here. The reason is likely that he is using his greeting to set up the foundation for the major thrust of his letter: the need for all to help and support others.

The phrase indicating as it does the constant need for the missionaries to pray "for you" refers to these converts' thankless situation and throws brilliant relief on their personal character and bearing given the adverse circumstances under which they were living. Such faithfulness is the seat of the Apostle's statement that the missionaries' pleas are fitting only because of their due recognition for the faithfulness of

these people. Here the adverb “always” (*πάντοτε, patntote*) reinforces Paul’s insistence that the goodness of these people ought to create a constant feeling of awe to be noted in the missionaries’ prayers.

Paul directs his thanks and praise to God because of the Saints’ flourishing faith and ever abounding love. In other words, Paul’s deep sense of gratitude is toward God but rested on the response of his converts to the spirit that God had poured out upon them. Thus, he felt the obligation to continually pray to God in sincere thanks for the faithfulness of these people.

Of note are the two items for which he praises these Saints (their ever-increasing love and flourishing faith). These were items that in his first letter, he noted needed to be improved (1 Thessalonians 3:10, 12). Paul’s statement indicates he is fully aware that his former prayer is being realized. That he could praise them at this point evidences how seriously and quickly these people responded to apostolic counsel. Little wonder, then, that he has such high praise for them.

1:4–5

What makes the Saints’ expression of these virtues so astonishing is the social situation in which they are being manifest. According to 2 Thessalonians 1:4, the Saints are feeling the full weight of public maltreatment because they have turned from the gods that their society worships to devotion to one their culture does not even recognize. The way Paul phrases this clause indicates that the persecutions have not let up since he left the area. Paul’s reference to “all your persecutions and afflictions” specifies the breadth of the ill treatment these people are enduring. That both verbs are in the present tense is his acknowledgement that their maltreatment will not stop for the foreseeable future. Hence, it is little wonder that the converts’ history of bearing up under such pressure is something the Apostle readily boasts about.

The force of the opening word, “consequently” (*ωστε, hōste*), in 1:4 is instructive. It denotes an unexpected result. Its source, in this instance, comes from the faithfulness of these Saints.

It is, however, the content of Paul’s boast that is important. The Apostle stays away from boasting “in the flesh” or “of the self” but rather gives credit to what God accomplishes in and through others according to His grace.² As a result, he feels completely free in boasting about the God-assisted strengths and the example of these people in receiving and using it.

Though there is no doubt as to the depth of his sincerity, His purpose in boasting is to encourage all to reach for a higher level of Christian belief, faithfulness, and living. In sum, Paul’s praise is also a tacit exhortation showing all what they need to live up to and sustain.

That Paul has boasted to other branches about the astonishing perseverance and faithfulness of these people suggests that the persecution they were suffering was not a general rule. Most of the branches appear to be experiencing less difficulty with their neighbors. That made the stand of the Thessalonians even more exemplary and presented a model for the other branches should hostilities break out among them.

From the New Testament perspective, faith, in part, is to be fashioned in the heat of oppression and suffering the world imposes. For these people, such suffering is not evidence of the absence of God but

rather is evidence of His presence. But it must also be understood that a component of that evidence is also the Saints' acknowledgement of God enabling and strengthening them not only to endure but also to flourish. Paul can, therefore, rejoice in the suffering that he himself has endured. He expects others to do the same.³

The point Paul is making can seem foreign to the modern reader. Today pain, sorrow, grief, and oppression are all situations to be avoided at all costs. Indeed, there are those that feel such ills deny rather than prove that God is with His people. The New Testament perspective is different. In fact, at times it seems to go out of its way to highlight the suffering of the Saints. At the same time, it emphasizes that suffering is a means by which God works out His eternal purpose. As a result, Christians must not expect to avoid maltreatment.

Beginning in 1:5, Paul explains that the Saints' endurance will bring about the equity of God's favorable judgment by making right the present inequalities they suffer. The phrase "righteous judgment" (*δικαιαὶς κρίσεως, dikaias kriseōs*) shows that Paul has in mind the law of divine recompense as he looks to the future and, for these people, the Final Judgment, which the Apostle will expound on in the next four verses.

Paul calls his audience's attention to the evidence that supports the fairness of God's judging them as fit for His kingdom. It is fair because these early converts were enduring their unfair situation with faithfulness and courage. Their suffering, hard as it is, had a positive effect. They may not be realizing it, but it is strengthening and purifying them for entrance into God's kingdom. The phrase points to God making right the present inequalities of life that they are now suffering.

The idea Paul expresses throws a backlight on the reason for the Saints' current suffering. Paul's statement assumes that it is due to his audience's loyalty to the Lord, expressed in an innocence of life—in short, that they are undeserving of their suffering. That being the case, their trials, Paul explains, are the necessary qualifications for securing entrance into the divine realm. That God has not outwardly moved to assist them suggests that the Apostle contemplates "a suitable reward and destiny for those who endure them in the right spirit."⁴ With these words, Paul gives an intelligible purpose to suffering by connecting it to the refinement necessary for exaltation.

1:6

At this point (2 Thessalonians 1:6), Paul moves from the Saints' present distress to the triumphal majesty that God will display at the Second Coming, in which they will take part. Their affliction has arisen because they have dared to go against the established pagan religious system. Their persecutors, through their open hostility to Christ and His way, have made this a religious war, one in which God must act. Paul's reasoning defuses any concern about God's fairness by noting specifically those who will receive punishment.

The Apostle reflects here the paradigmatic statement in Deuteronomy 32:35 in the Septuagint that God will avenge His people (compare Romans 12:19; Hebrews 10:30). That is not the full picture, though, because the Apostle also clearly shows that the justice of God's judgment involves both retribution and

vindication. Paul's focus here, however, is on its negative aspect. Because God is just, and since these Saints are suffering at the hands of mortals, in all fairness the perpetrators must pay by suffering in kind (see Lamentations 3:64–66; Obadiah 1:15.)

In sum, God's repayment reflects His action toward both those who afflict and those who are afflicted. For the former, it is punishment; for the latter, recompense. God's action is based on the Old Testament law of *lex talionis* (that the punishment must fit the crime). In the past, its force has often been directed against Israel's enemies, but now it will be directed toward those who refuse to accept God and obey the gospel (see Isaiah 66:6, compare Obadiah 1:13–15).

Paul's assurance likely acted to provide the beleaguered Saints with a sense of power over their foes. Their enemies might oppress them for the time being, but in the end, the roles of the oppressed and their oppressors will be dramatically reversed.

1:7–8

Having put in place the principle of divine recompense and having emphasized its punitive aspect, Paul now turns to its timing and setting (2 Thessalonians 1:7). Elements among the Jews saw the end time as one of intense suffering for the righteous, and the Christians followed suit. The Savior had clearly warned His disciples that the entirety of the present age would not be friendly to them.⁵ From near the beginning of his ministry, Paul taught both members and investigators that all “must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22).

His purpose is to console this audience not by emphasizing their own reward but by depicting the doom that will fall upon their oppressors. Retributive justice demands that those affected be fully compensated on Judgment Day. The reward these people receive, as Paul shows, is not from seeing their enemies suffer. It is, rather, rest (*ἀνέσις, anesis*). Paul does not outright define the term, but context suggests *rest* denotes being relieved from constant maltreatment and finding peace and security.

The repayment is God's revelation to all of Christ's position, majesty, power, and rank that will vindicate the faith of the Saints in their Lord. Paul's statement that God will repay them “together with us” sent an affirming message that even the missionaries were not free from undergoing trials. He may have shared, during his ministration among them, his own suffering for the kingdom that he listed for their Corinthian counterparts.⁶ Now he assures his audience that they will all find recompense when the Savior comes.

Recompense will not come from the Lord alone but also from the “angels of his might,” who appear to be those whom he has delegated to assist him in exercising his judicial authority. They are likely the same ones Paul referred to as his “holy ones” in 1 Thessalonians 3:13.

Divine ire, Paul points out, will be directed at those who do not know God and are, therefore, disobedient to the gospel. His reference is not to people who are ignorant of God or His message but rather to those who have had a chance to know both but have willfully rejected them. Those who were guilty of tormenting the Christians would have had some knowledge of what they believed and were reacting thereto.

It is this group that Paul seems to have in mind. Of note is that their punishment is derived, at least in large part, not because of their harsh treatment of the Saints but because of their refusal to know God and obey Christ's gospel.

Paul describes Jesus as coming "with flaming fire." The imagery is found in several apocalyptic accounts relating what will happen when Christ appears. The description looks less at the Lord's glory and more at the destructive and cleansing power He will exhibit at the time.

1:9

In 2 Thessalonians 1:9, Paul clearly defines the consequences of God's judgment as he describes what will happen to the wicked. It is banishment away from the Lord. The exclusion of the wicked from His presence—their damnation—stands opposite to the inclusion of the righteous—their salvation—to be ever with Him.

Paul emphasizes that God is the actor, not the Saints. Vengeance does not belong to the converts but to the divine. In this way, he subtly appeals to his people not to take action into their own hands.

Paul's focus is on the long-term consequences that follow either those who accept the Lord or those who reject Him. Paul's stark description of what will happen on Judgment Day makes clear his understanding that "there are eternal consequences to having and persevering in faith in Christ or refusing to do so."⁷ In each case, the outcome is appropriate and fits the total response in this lifetime. The wicked would be "more miserable to dwell with a holy and just God, under a consciousness of [their] filthiness before him, than [they] would to dwell with the damned souls in hell" (Mormon 9:4). For the righteous, on the other hand, to bask in the Father's glory and be filled with His love would be heaven indeed.

What those who are concerned about God's vengeance do not seem to get, but which Paul and the other writers of the New Testament did, is that God loves even when His children are yet His enemies, ungodly, and sinners. The God of the New Testament willingly offers love, forgiveness, and reconciliation to all these. But when they refuse to accept it and continue in their willful rebellion in the face of His goodness and love, they have also rejected His mercy. His justice demands that they face the consequences.

1:10

In order to leave his audience with a positive feeling for what awaits them, in 2 Thessalonians 1:10 Paul shifts emphasis from the negative to the positive aspect of the Second Coming. Of note is that the Apostle's focus is not on the Saints but on the Lord. One purpose of His coming, Paul notes, is to be glorified and greatly admired by His people. An important way this is done is through worship. God's glory is shared by Jesus (1 Corinthians 2:7; 2 Corinthians 4:6). To glorify Him is to acknowledge Him also as God and pay Him the honor due to that station. By this means the Lord will be glorified by His Saints. Paul seems to have understood that, at present, the glory of the Lord is hidden, seen only through the eye of faith. But believers have the clear conviction that as disdained and ostracized as they are, at that very moment they share in the glory of both God and Christ because they are "in" both (2 Thessalonians 1:1). Their earthly

high station will be revealed at the Second Coming when they will bask in the glory of the Lord and sustain his rightful place as Lord and God. Because of the high caliber of the lives of these Saints, they have become another source of Christ's glory (compare John 17:10).

Paul states that the praise will come from "all those who have believed." The phrase does not point to a group different from the Saints but to a much larger group in which they are included.

To make sure his audience knows this, Paul makes an aside noting that the Thessalonians will be among the blessed because of their positive response to the missionaries' testimony. The aside reveals that his main focus is on these beloved converts even though he is depicting the bliss of the Saints in general. His words also carry a tacit encouragement for them to continue to trust his witness and yield to what he is about to tell them.

1:11–12

In this last section (2 Thessalonians 1:11–12), Paul offers up a heartfelt prayer for these, his beloved converts. In doing so, his perspective shifts. No longer is human responsibility the focus but rather that of God the Father, who not only called them but continues to do so. By this means He will vindicate both their good intentions, even if imperfectly carried out, and their faithful deeds. The phrase "this calling" refers to God's call of the Saints to "glory and honor, [that is] to be glorified in Christ at his coming, to inherit eternal life with him in his kingdom."⁸

The beginning phrase "for this reason" (*eis ho*) points back to the potentiality of cursing and blessing that Paul has been enumerating. His prayer finds its energy in his desire for these people to be found totally worthy so that they can fully participate in the joy of their call (compare Ephesians 4:1). The Apostle has shown them that one reason why God deems them worthy of His kingdom is their resistance to loss of faith even in suffering.

His words betray his concern that even though they have been much enlightened and faithful, they can still fall. His counsel points out what they must do as they await the coming of the Lord. Being called into Christ's future dominion demands that they live worthy of it in the present. In this way, God will declare them worthy (compare 1 Thessalonians 5:24).

In 2 Thessalonians 1:12 Paul states clearly the reason for his prayer: that Jesus might be glorified through the faith of the Saints and that they, in turn, might be glorified by his acceptance of them. The ideas housed in 1:10 and in 1:12 are very similar. The difference is that 1:10 looks at the result, faith that has been fulfilled, while 1:12 focuses on the perseverance of faith that must continue until the eschaton. In 1:10 the focus is on the glory the Saints will bring to Christ while here it points to the reciprocal glorification of Christ in the community and the glorification of the community in him.

For the present, however, Paul states that the name of Christ must "be glorified in them." To do so is no mere acknowledgement of belief but an outwardly verbal and behavioral commitment to Him and His cause. This act of manifest faith was important at the time, for it evidenced the sureness of the Christians'

faith in the Lord. We must stress that these converts lived in a world where those who dishonored and reviled the name of Christ were willing to bring harsh treatment to those who did not. The Saints' marvelous endurance and faithfulness was continually demonstrated in public reverencing the name.⁹ The act evidenced to all the depth of their conviction. Given the continual growth of the Church, such faith seems to have touched others who were then willing to take upon themselves the name despite its exacting and even dangerous obligations. It is little wonder, then, that Paul promises these faithful people that Jesus will glorify them in Him and that, for the present, He will sustain them through His grace.

With this prayer, Paul is subtly putting into place one more important task. Very often the purpose of a prayer or wish is not only to state one's desires but also to instigate transformation in the hearing party. The solemnity and gravity of the prayer helps the audience to take its words seriously and thus favorably respond to it. In particular, the Apostle desires to persuade the Saints of the need to continue in faithful endurance such that they will receive place in the Lord's coming domain.

2 Thessalonians 2

2:1–2

At this point in his epistle (2 Thessalonians 2:1–2), Paul begins to address a concern that has caused misunderstanding and confusion and led to improper behavior among some of the Saints. It deals, as Paul notes, with the gathering of the Saints to meet the Lord at His Second Coming. Apparently, some members were very confused and had even had their faith shaken due to the idea that the event had already occurred (2:3). That some could entertain such an idea might seem strange to the modern reader, but we need to keep in mind that Christianity brought into the world a host of new and startling concepts, some more fully developed than others. As a result, Church leaders had to understand, refine, solidify, codify, and teach this exciting but new material continually better. Unfortunately, during this period false ideas and practices found their way into some congregations.

In the present case, some were promoting the idea that the Resurrection and Second Coming had already happened. Indicating that such a belief was not a localized phenomenon, though Paul challenges the idea here, is that it continued to spread for some time. For example, ten years later, Paul is still fighting the idea (see 2 Timothy 2:16–18).

2:3–4

At 2 Thessalonians 2:3, Paul makes a strong plea for these Saints not to be deceived. The problem Paul is trying to address arose from one of three sources: possible hallucinations or other false prophetic statements of some of the congregants (*πνευμα, pneuma*); misunderstandings of the Church's teachings and doctrines (*λόγος, logou*), supposedly from an authoritative source, that some members were circulating and advocating; and finally via a letter with which some of the Saints were acquainted (*επιστολη, epistolē*).

There is the possibility that the term could refer to a misreading of Paul's teachings with a brief aside in 2:5. He speaks of a coming apostasy, of the coming of the man of lawlessness and his desire to preside over God's temple, of a restraining power, of one who wields it, and of the eventual destruction of this son of perdition.

The identity of the figures he mentions in these verses has generated a great deal of debate, much of it because Paul identifies neither the main characters he refers to nor the exact sequence of events involved nor their timing. We must keep in mind that nowhere in his treatment is the Apostle inviting his audience to figure out who the lawless one or the restrainer are. His entire thrust is to show that the whole eschatological program has not yet begun.

Taking the material in 2:3–4, 6–12 as presented in the JST, Paul is clear that troubles are coming. In 2:3–4, he takes up a traditional eschatological theme, the source of which reaches back to the Savior Himself. The Lord clearly taught that deceptive powers would be at work shortly after His ministry. He warned His disciples to “take heed that no one deceive you, for many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Christ’ and shall deceive many” (Matthew 24:4–5; compare Mark 13:5–6, authors’ translation). He continued to warn them that “many false prophets will appear and deceive many people,” and why? Because “of the increase of wickedness” that will stifle love (Matthew 24:11–12, authors’ translation). A society in which love is absent becomes fertile ground for false notions and ideas to thrive.

The result is frightening. The Church will experience a falling away. Paul uses the word *apostasia* (*apostasy*) to describe the event. In secular Greek, the term denoted an uprising “in open defiance of authority, with the presumed intent to overthrow it or to act in complete opposition to its demands.” That included such acts as removing a commanding officer and, thus, “to mutiny.” Among the religious, it denoted an utter abandoning of a faith. Paul accepts both nuances of the word. In doing so, he reveals that there will be a general desertion of the faith as revealed by the early missionaries. His major concern is, however, not apostasy *from* the Church but apostasy *of* the church.

The one fueling this frightening movement Paul describes as “the Man of Wickedness”—that is, Satan himself. Paul states that with the Apostasy, the work and nature of this malevolent being will be revealed. The term does not necessarily indicate that he was formerly unknown. Rather it refers to his public manifestation as mentioned in 2:9. In 2:3–4 Paul shows this “manifestation is a deceptive parody or ‘anti-parousia’ of Jesus’ future coming,” as this dark being sets himself up as not only the ultimate and only god but also as the only object of worship.¹⁰ His objective is to “sit down in the temple of God proclaiming himself to be God.” The Greek word Paul uses to describe his activity (*ὑπεραίρω, hyperairō*) is instructive. It means “to exalt oneself” due to an “undue sense of one’s importance.” This describes Satan most accurately.

Paul tacitly reveals to his audience that they personally need not be overly concerned with the machinations of the evil one. The Apostle does so by stating the epithet of the man of lawlessness (that, is “the son of perdition” or “of ruin”). The phrase is full of irony. The term indicates one whose station and power are destined for destruction. The phrase looks to the final standing of persons who have persisted in evil, especially those who directed their efforts against the Lord’s people. They are ruined (the aftermath of

their personal disaster) and fall into a state of powerlessness. For a being as arrogant and prideful as Satan, such a fall will be hellish. The real stinger is that Satan will not even rule over hell. Cain will hold that dreadful spot (Moses 5:23). By giving Satan the epithet, Paul tacitly tells his readers that this being is neither to be feared nor followed.

2:5

At this point in the development of his argument (2 Thessalonians 2:5), Paul makes an aside that serves as a rather harsh rebuke of these people. He stridently reminds them that none of this should be new to them because the missionaries had repeatedly taught them this very doctrine. The undertone is that with this knowledge, they should not have fallen for false speculation concerning the Second Coming.

2:6

At 2 Thessalonians 2:6, Paul picks up his discussion of the situation revolving around the Man of Lawlessness. He again chides his audience via an oblique reference stating that they already know that some force is holding the evil one back so that only when the proper time comes will he and his works be revealed. That force the Apostle identifies in the next verse. By means of this statement, Paul calls his audience to tap into their apocalyptic knowledge and, by that means, put the timing of “the Day of the Lord” in its proper eschatological perspective.

2:7

Paul sadly reports in 2 Thessalonians 2:7 that “the mystery of iniquity” is already at work. The phrase refers to those yet hidden forces that have no regard for the laws and teachings of Christ. Paul’s words show that the process of the corruption of Church doctrine and teachings has, even as he writes this epistle, already begun. Satan is already hard at work. Even so, the evil one cannot yet make any big moves because Christ is restraining him. It seems likely that the reason for the Lord impeding the devil’s work is to allow the gospel to take firm root such that even though the fullness thereof will be lost, the main message will be so strongly planted in history’s field that it cannot be destroyed. The JST also shows that Satan will continue his work right up to the moment when Christ will send him reeling into the unforgiving walls of hell.

Based on the idea that the Apostasy would consist of the success of Satan’s efforts and people, as a result, breaking their covenants and either abandoning or perverting the true faith, Paul could be referring to one of three situations the Church would face. The first would be the lawless one generating a revolt against established ecclesiastical authority. The second would be satanically inspired ever-rising societal persecution resulting in Christians abandoning the faith. The third would combine the two ideas, pointing to false leaders who quite deliberately will pull people away from Church authorities so they can gain acolytes and also to external and ever mounting pressure causing many Christians leave the Church.

According to insights from the Restoration as well as the New Testament itself, though external persecution was a constant and malicious pressure, the real cause of the Apostasy was internal. The “mystery of iniquity” appears to have been numerous satanically inspired movements within Christianity itself, in which individuals broke the everlasting covenant, set themselves up as authorities, and preached various forms of false but beguiling doctrines that appealed to an ever-larger segment of Christians.

2:8

Paul begins his discussion in 2 Thessalonians 2:8 with the phrase “and then.” It refers to the moment that the Savior will reveal, for all to see, the full work of Satan. We hear echoes of the Lord’s declaration that at that time, there will be “nothing concealed that shall not be revealed, and nothing hidden that will not be known” (Matthew 10:26, authors’ translation; compare Mormon 5:8). According to the Book of Mormon, “the things of all nations shall be made known; yea, all things shall be made known unto the children of men. [Indeed, there] is nothing which is secret save it shall be revealed; there is no work of darkness save it shall be made manifest in the light.” And what will the result be? “Satan shall have power over the hearts of the children of men no more” (2 Nephi 30:16–18).

Paul assures the Saints that not long after Satan and his work are fully exposed, the Lord will destroy him in the sense of making his efforts of no effect. There will be no contest, no last drawn-out battle, no final confrontation of power against power. All Satan’s work will come to an end in one quick, blinding, irresistible display of divine power.

Paul states that two agents will combine to destroy the adversary. Both point to the ease with which the act will be done. The first is the breath of the Lord and the second is the brilliance of His glory. His unveiled presence coupled with the power of His word the devil will find irresistible and overwhelming.

There are those who equate Paul’s “Wicked One” with John’s Antichrist. That idea simply does not work. The figure of the Antichrist as a personality that stands to oppose the Messiah is a Jewish mystical figure taken over by the early Christians. According to Jewish belief, this being will rise in power as part of the trials of the denouement of earth’s history. His work will be a major sign of the end time. The Apostle John, Paul’s contemporary, historicizes the figure and in the process both corrects it and gives it life. In doing so, he confirms its reality but also shows that it is not a single being but rather a group of beings. They are false teachers that are arising from within the Christian community itself and are bent on the deception of other Christians (1 John 2:18–19). As a group they deny that Jesus is the Messiah and refuse to confess Him, insisting that the real Messiah never took on flesh and blood as did Jesus (1 John 1:7; 2 John 1:7). What is important is that these people viewed themselves as legitimate members of the community and, with missionary zeal, promulgated incorrect doctrine and gained quite a following (2 John 1:7).

2:9–10

In 2 Thessalonians 2:9–10, according to the JST, Paul reiterates the point that the Lord’s coming will happen only after the Apostasy has been fully completed. Also of note is that the Apostle shows that there will be a period before the Second Coming when Christ will allow the adversary a seemingly free hand. That idea may seem surprising, but it serves the purpose that Paul reveals in 2:10.

The Apostle gives significant information on how the devil will operate during this period. It will be through delusions, including “every sort of evil” he can concoct. The power of these “supernatural delusions is especially manifest in *signs and wonders*. The power of working miracles in order to deceive people (ver. 11) was an accepted trait in the Jewish and early Christian idea of such eschatological opponents of God.”¹¹ Paul appears to give full validity to these miracles, hence his description of them as “deceiving.” Though the adversary will have some success, as Paul notes in 2:11, God is in control of all and uses even the devil’s deceptions to His ends.

Paul explains why some are deceived. It is because they love not the truth and are, thereby, looking for an excuse not to believe. The satanically supplied lies coupled with reinforcing signs did the trick.

2:11–12

At this point (2 Thessalonians 2:11), Paul makes a statement that many may find troubling if not quite upsetting. He states that because of these people’s rejection of God and His ways, He is sending them (the present tense is Paul’s) “a powerful delusion” that will result in their trusting the lie they are being fed. It will, consequently, lead to their condemnation and misery. To many, the idea that God would delude people to secure their failure seems wrong. However, Paul’s audience, consisting of both Jews and Greeks, would have seen his statement as obvious. Hebrew belief was that under certain conditions, “God may deliberately lead men astray, or permit them to be totally infatuated, as a penal discipline.”¹² Hellenistic thought also allowed for the gods to act against those who attempted to thwart their will. The gods did so by sending a blindness upon the rebellious through which they brought upon themselves and their house total destruction.

To put this teaching in perspective, we must keep in mind three points. The first is that biblical writers attributed to direct action that which God only allowed to happen. In short, God’s actions in these cases are, in fact, passive rather than active. He simply allows the acts of the rebellious to take on His part and, therefore, He is involved.

The second point is that those whom Paul referred to all had a chance to hear and accept the gospel, but they rejected it and “found delight in unrighteousness,” thereby becoming hardened in their ways (2:12). Such hardened sinners, whether consciously or unconsciously, trust in a new reality away from God. This is a big, seductive lie by which Satan catches them. In it there are no unpleasant eternal consequences to their actions either because life ends in nonexistence or with no condemnation in the afterlife (2 Nephi 28:8; Alma 30:17). This false idea of a non-judgmental afterlife, however, is so beguiling that it

hardens the people in their position. It is only as they reach this point, as Paul makes clear, that God acts. His method is to blind them to the consequences of their actions such that by following their own will unopposed, they run into the natural consequences of destruction, condemnation, and misery.

The third idea is that God loves and wants all His children to return to Him, but they must abide by his law to do so. Agency is at full play but so also are the consequences of all choices made, good or bad, and God will not impede either.

2:13–17

Here Paul repeats almost verbatim the thanksgiving with which he opened the epistle. The difference in the two is that his former thanks stressed the virtue of these Saints while this one focuses on the consequences of their current station as being chosen and sanctified by God. This holy condition is the result of their faithfulness to the truths of the gospel. In giving these thanks, Paul delivers a strong contrast between the Saints and the recalcitrance and faithlessness of those who are perishing.

In 2 Thessalonians 2:13–14, Paul lays out the plan of salvation. As he sees it, the plan moves in concrete steps. The first is God’s choosing or selecting these people from the beginning, next comes the sanctifying action of the Spirit as the Saints are faithful to gospel truths as engendered through the preaching of the gospel, and finally comes salvation by participating in the glory of Christ.

Paul contrasts the result of following Christ with that of following the lawless one. While, as he noted, the acolytes of the latter are carried away by strong delusions into destruction, those faithful to Christ and God are sanctified by both their faith in truth and the action of the Spirit. Paul notes that God calls people only “with the view to salvation.”¹³ Here the noun “call” (*καλέω, kaleō*) is in the past tense, thus refocusing the idea on the earlier time when the missionaries were working among the people. Hence, the preaching acted as God’s call as the instrument of salvation.

God’s objective in making the call (by sending the missionaries) is to bring eternal life to those who will hear—nothing less, nothing more. As the Apostle witnesses, “God chose you for salvation.” A major means is through the work of the Holy Spirit. Noteworthy is that Paul does not mention Jesus directly anywhere in the whole process. His total focus is on the work of God, the Spirit, and the individual. Such an emphasis is typical of Paul’s approach. He loves and knows the Lord and has personally and dramatically partaken of His saving power, but the Apostle also does not let his audience forget that the major player is God. Even so, Jesus’s work is tacitly acknowledged, hidden in the phrase “by the preaching of the gospel.” The “good news” (*εὐαγγέλιον, euangelion*) always centers in the work of Christ, and as Paul makes clear, the whole purpose of the preaching is so that the Saint can “obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2:14).

The process of salvation begins with God’s call or choosing of the individuals. It is noteworthy that the call, given in mortality through the preaching of the gospel (2:14), is not extended due to merit or worthiness. It is an act of grace on God’s part. He sends out His missionaries to proclaim to all who will hear the joy of the good news of salvation in Christ and to call people to come to the Lord by entering into

a covenant relationship with Him. Once God's grace has been extended through the call, another aspect of grace enters in—namely, its obligations. The recipient must accept these or reap the unpleasant and eternal consequences of rejection.

These converts could still fall. Therefore, in 2:15, the Apostle finishes his prayer or wish with a firm admonition. He does so with the use of two imperatives: “stand fast” (*στήκω, stēkō*) and “hold firm” (*κρατέω, krateō*), the former looking to the ongoing and vigilant effort on the part of each Saint and the latter to devotion and commitment to the traditions (*παραδόσεις, paradoseis*) of the Church. The thrust of this noun looks to both the Lord's teachings and their application. That Paul uses two imperatives reveals his anxiousness that these people stay true to what they have been taught.

Noteworthy is that the communication and spread of the traditions was a regular feature of Paul's ministry and one of his major means of controlling its content. The means by which he and others disseminated these teachings was through teaching (*διδάσκω, didaskō*), the verb emphasizing the content, not the method, by which the gospel was delivered. Even so, Paul allows for two legitimate methods. The first is through the spoken word (*λόγος, logos*) that ranged from informal discussions to formal treatments of gospel subjects. The second is by letters (*ἐπιστολή, epistolē*)—that is, written instruction. A major purpose of both was to spread the story of Jesus as Savior and establish His doctrine, including how it was to be applied in the lives of the Saints.

Having closed this section of his treatment on the Second Coming, in 2:16–17 the Apostle asks a heartfelt prayer or wish for these beloved Saints that tacitly reinforces how they should behave while they wait for the Lord's return.

Of note is that Paul breaks from his usual format in two ways, first by invoking the Savior's name before that of the Father and second by stating their titles, “Lord” and “Christ” for Jesus and “our Father” for God. By doing so, he emphasizes the authority and position of these divine beings.

His initial focus, however, is on the blessings the Saints have received from the Father, of which he lists four. The first is His all-encompassing love (*ἀγάπη, agapē*). The second is the enabling power of His grace (*χάρις, charis*), through which comes the last two: eternal encouragement (*παράκλησιν αἰωνίαν, paraklēsin iaiōnian*) and good hope (*ἐλπίδα ἀγαθήν, elpida agathēn*). The former refers to the inspiration and strength God gives so that the Saints can persevere in the necessary work. It is eternal in two senses: it is forever unfailing and inexhaustible, and it assists the recipient not only in the present but also in the future Judgment associated with the Second Coming and into the age to come. The latter refers to the confident expectation in the reward that God will give them. It is good because it will bring full satisfaction. This virtue empowers the commitment to stay true to the way of the Lord.

With 2:17, Paul implores both God and Christ to bless these people with two more deeply needed gifts. The first is encouragement of the heart. Through this gift, these people would receive assurance of their acceptance by the divine that would bring hope for and a determination to the whole of the inner selves so that they could and would endure in faith and trust. The second is that they receive strengthening in every

good deed (*ἔργον*, *ergon*) and word (*λόγος*, *logos*) or, in other words, in everything they do and speak. It is important to note that Paul's concern includes not only their inner state but also their outward behavior. He wants their inner encouragement, in face of external pressures, to be accompanied by godly behavior that encompasses equally word and deed. Therefore it is important that both be "good" (*ἀγαθός*, *agathos*).

This is the second time in just two clauses that Paul has used the adjective "good." He likely does so to stress the properness and satisfactory nature of activities (both spoken and performed) used to bless others. His words show that through God and Christ, this virtue can be acquired or instilled in others. Consequently, when the Christian shares in God's goodness, she or he passes this virtue on by doing good.

2 Thessalonians 3

3:1

In 2 Thessalonians 3:1, the Apostle directs the Saints' prayers not to the needs of the missionaries but to the need for divine help to move the ministry forward. Though it is Paul's practice to refer to the faithfulness of God,¹⁴ his focus in this section of the epistle is on the Lord. In fact, he started using the title for the divine with his mention of the "Man of Lawlessness." He did so to highlight the power of God. The repetition of the title "the Lord" would keep the attention of these converts on the greatness of their spiritual leader and, at the same time, belittle the forces of evil.

In this verse, Paul asks the Saints to pray for the first two of three important needs (the third he will make in the next verse). The initial one is for divine assistance in moving the preaching of the gospel forward. Paul encapsulates the preaching with the loaded noun "word" (*λόγος*, *logos*). In this context, it refers to oral communication but does not rule out written sources. It also includes such nuances as doctrine, the body of accepted teachings and practices, and the Christian message as a whole.

Paul's second request is that this word be glorified or honored (*δοξάζω*, *doxazō*)—that is, held in high, reverent, and merited esteem by each member such that it is accepted and lived. Paul's request suggests that he has the whole of the congregations with their investigators in mind, for only those who are involved in a positive way with the gospel would show it honor.

3:2

In 2 Thessalonians 3:2 Paul makes his third request for what he wants the Saints to pray for. This request looks to the present need of the missionaries, and the root of that need is not pleasant. They are meeting strong opposition, and therefore, he requests the faith of these people to gain divine help to both endure and push through that situation.

Paul describes the merciless antagonist as being wicked (*ἄτοπος*, *atopos*) and evil (*πονηρός*, *ponēros*), the former denoting a state of hurtful, even cruel opposition and the latter, the expression of that state through spiteful and even malicious deeds. According to Acts 18:1–17, certain Jews were very active in

the area trying to hinder Paul and disrupt the spread of the gospel. That being the case, this segment of the Jewish population may be the wicked and evil people that Paul has in mind. Indeed, he states that the reason for the opposition was faithlessness on the part of some. That would be particularly telling if it were pointed to these Jews, for they should have been, as God's covenant people and inheritors of his blessings, the ones to express faith in the word. Of note is that from Paul's perspective, what the opposition is doing is not just the misplaced result of ignorance but malevolently deliberate, openly evil acts.

3:3

The Apostle at this point (2 Thessalonians 3:3) stops the flow of his thought to make an interjection. His mention of the faithlessness of people has drawn his mind to the exact opposite—the faithfulness of the Lord and its dual consequences so far as these Saints are concerned.

The first consequence is that God will strengthen them. Paul's witness testifies that the Lord does not leave His righteous followers to fight against evil and resist temptation by themselves but will empower and guard those striving to do His will. He not only places the faithful Saints in a firm position but also maintains them against further assaults. In sum, Paul's prayer is not that God will free these beloved people from trials (he is realistic enough to know that in this world, such is simply impossible) but to strengthen them amid their trials so they can endure them.

The second consequence is that God will protect them. Exactly what they are protected from is not clear because of the ambiguity of the phrase “the evil” (*τοῦ πονηροῦ, tou ponērou*). The noun can be construed as either masculine and thus refer to a person (“the evil one”) or neuter and thus refer to evil in general. If Paul had the latter in mind, then his petition is for protection from the wickedness that is universal; if he had the former in mind, then it is against the machinations of Satan, whose workings he has already pointed out in 2:7. The latter seems to be the best given that the noun is preceded by a definite article, hence suggesting “*the evil one*,” and due to the apocalyptic tone in chapter 2, in which the work of the “wicked one” is examined.

3:4

In 2 Thessalonians 3:4 the Apostle expresses his confidence that the strengthening power of the Lord is already working in the Saints as evidenced by their continuity in living the teachings and doctrines (*παραγγέλλω, parangellō*) the missionaries have proclaimed. Of note is that his confidence does not come from them but from the Lord, a surer basis of certainty. In short, the Apostle's words suggest a personal and spiritual confirmation of the reality of their efforts. His words are then a tacit but high compliment to these people stemming from the Saints' efforts. He does not say just what generated his godly assurance concerning them, but given Paul's praise, it is likely due to his assurance of their enduring faithfulness to the Christian cause.

His expressed confidence at this point, just before he addresses some wrong-headed situations that need immediate correction, serves an additional purpose: to assure his audience that he has in mind what

is best for them. In this way, he creates a pathos within his audience such that they will be inclined to hear and favorably respond to the exhortation that he will soon turn to.

3:5

The final verse in this pericope (2 Thessalonians 3:5) links what Paul has just been saying to those problems. He has made sure his audience understands the depth of his confidence in them as derived from the Lord. As he does so, he once again breaks into prayer asking the Lord to grant to these beloved Saints two gifts. The first is that they may love God and do so with their entire beings (*καρδία, kardia*). The second is that they may imitate Christ in the way they express their patient endurance (*ὑπομονή, hyponomē*)—that is, through a willingness to let God play out events according to His own timetable just as Jesus did.

3:6

In 2 Thessalonians 3:6 Paul uses very strong language as he commands members to withdraw their association from those who are acting contrary to Church tradition (*παράδοσις, paradosis*). To give his injunction proper force and attention, the Apostle invokes the name and titles of the Lord, in essence indicating that disobedience to this charge is disobedience to the Lord Himself.

A problem with these people is that they are going against teachings and practices that Paul and the other missionaries had clearly established—a problem that if unchecked could have dire consequences for the nascent Church. Even if they were somehow acting in ignorance, their behavior simply could not be tolerated and they must, even if other members must distance themselves from them, be brought into line.

Paul describes the problem as behaving responsibly—that is, being out of line with the established practices of the Church. The verb he uses (*ατακτεῖ, atakteō*) and its related adverb (*ατακτως, ataktōs*) have strong nuances. In a military sense, it refers to soldiers who do not hold their position in rank and thereby bring on a disorderly retreat during battle. This was a very grievous offense. In civil society, it refers to one who blatantly disregards responsibilities and obligations to work. The ecclesiastical sense is close. It refers to those who refuse to obey Church norms of conduct (*παράδοσις, paradosis*) and, in doing so, contradict the direction the Lord designed His Church to move. Paul’s phrase points to an ongoing habit of irresponsibility and disorderly behavior.

3:7–8

In 2 Thessalonians 3:7 Paul chides his audience and, in doing so, suggests that they should have already taken appropriate action. It is based on the example previously set by the missionaries and passed on by them. He gives three reasons why they should follow the missionaries’ example. The first was that they behaved at all times in an appropriate manner. The Apostle’s words underscore his point that imitating him and his fellow workers is not optional. Paul’s position suggests he understands that one who preaches the gospel is under obligation to live it as a means of commanding the message.

The second, noted in 3:8, is that they never sponged off people for their food or other necessities but willingly paid for everything they received. Third, they worked hard, long hours to take care of their own needs with the objective of being a burden to no one.

3:9

In 2 Thessalonians 3:9, Paul sets the record straight. He admits that given both social and ecclesiastical norms, he and his companions had the right to have their basic needs met by those whom they served. Even so, wanting to be an example, they refused this right. In doing so, they demonstrated that Church members on the local level, no matter what office they held, were to serve without compensation.

Paul apparently took on the responsibility of his own physical welfare in order to avoid any entanglements with patronage relationships, a model he wants the others to follow. Further, it serves to set Paul apart from some unscrupulous members who were trying to make a living by hawking the Christian message. He refuses to exercise his right as a matter of principle and to insulate himself from any taint of impure motive, especially that of getting gain.

3:10

It is in 2 Thessalonians 3:10 that the plague of idleness becomes the most apparent. Paul is hard on the lazy. To be clear, the offense he addresses is an unwillingness for a person to take responsibility for his or her own welfare. The text indicates that this had been for a time a continuing practice, not an occasional offense. The problem may have arisen due to the expectation of the imminence of the Second Coming. They were to hold rank in the next order and seem to have felt to take advantage of that in the present.

Paul directs his remarks not at those who can neither legitimately work nor find it but at those who refuse to. Christian charity can go only so far. If it enables indolence, puts the Church or its members under obligation to any person or entity, or brings public censure on the institution, it must be withheld. The Church and its members are to stand independent of all things under heaven.

Throughout the vast expanse of the Greco-Roman world, the plight of the urban poor was considerable. Many were day laborers or, if skilled or in the trades, dependent on patrons to make a living. The lazy among these were likely Paul's primary target.

Record indicates that only a few men among the Greco-Roman elite were drawn to Christianity but that a number of wealthy women were. These may have allowed some of the less scrupulous members to take advantage of them. Paul's command is sharp and pointed: "If any refuse to work, let them go hungry." In this way, he likely put a stop to any unwarranted help.

3:11

In 2 Thessalonians 3:11 Paul notes the source that aroused his concern: a report. He does not say from whom, but it appears not to have been Timothy since Paul uses the plural "we hear," suggesting Timothy

was with him at the time. Paul apparently received the report while laboring in Corinth, and the stress he was under there likely played a part in his concern for what was happening in Thessalonica. At the time, philosophers were notorious for living off patrons whom they served as rhetors or tutors. They used their free time, of which they had quite a bit, to meddle in the affairs of others. People used the pejorative epithet “busybodies” (*περιεργαζόμενοι, periergazomenoi*) to describe them. The term described those who intruded or pried into matters that were none of their business. Paul uses that very term to define the inappropriate and irresponsible activities of some of the Thessalonian Saints. That Paul is willing to work hard at manual labor himself and demands that others do the same evidences his earnest desire to distance himself, his companions, and the Saints from being so branded. That means using rather strong methods (shunning the guilty) to bring the practice to an end.

3:12

To push his cause, Paul again issues a command to “such people” (*τοιούτοις, toiotois*). His wording suggests that he did not expect the guilty ones to be present when the letter was read and therefore designates the hearers to inform them. Once again, he gives punch to his demand by invoking the name and titles of the Messiah with the same tacit nuance that to disobey is tantamount to rejecting the Lord’s will.

Christians were to live and work in a quiet (that is, in an unobtrusive) manner—as he had already instructed them in 1 Thessalonians 4:1—so as not to draw undue and troublesome attention to themselves. They could meet this condition fully only if they did not meddle in the affairs and business of others but focused on taking care of their own matters. Paul’s command is directed toward those who refuse to work and insist on being indolent and irresponsible. He maintains that they be brought in line even if it means being excluded from Church fellowship.

3:13

Paul next turns to the responsible members of the Church (2 Thessalonians 3:13). His words suggest he is anxious that these good people understand that his instruction not to help the willfully indolent does not nullify the Saints’ need to be engaged in charitable works. Though they must neither enable nor encourage the way of the irresponsible members whom Paul has rebuked, they still have the obligation to assist the needy.

3:14

Paul picks up his theme as to how to handle the recalcitrant Church members in 2 Thessalonians 3:14. His words suggest that the guilty have not been notified of their improper behavior and, consequently, have not had a chance to change their ways. Even so, they are not off the hook. They have had the excellent example of the missionaries’ comportment as well as the injunction in the first letter and now in the second. Any present lack of response to a call for repentance would reveal a measure of obduracy on their part.

If, therefore, voluntary conformity did not occur, the Church had to act decisively. Paul's instructions suggest that he has hope that due to this letter, these people will return to Church practice. His use of the phrase "our instruction" (*τῷ λόγῳ ἡμῶν, tῷ logῷ hēmōn*) emphasizes the apostolic authority behind what he says with the implication, as noted above, that disregarding it is tantamount to disregarding God's messenger.

3:15

In 2 Thessalonians 3:15 Paul defines the behavior and feelings members should have toward these irresponsible people particularly since they have been asked to ban the wayward from fellowship. They were not to be considered an enemy. Indeed, the problem they cause must be overcome. In short, Paul does not want Church members to give up on the erring individual. To withdraw does not mean total ostracism but to apply enough pressure that he or she will be willing to take to heart the admonition lovingly given.

In sum, the Saints' shunning is to bring the wayward to their senses, not to alienate them from the community. Instead, certain ones whom Paul does not identify were to reach out to them in sincere admonition but as one would a family member and in that way, hopefully, help them comply with Church practices. With this instruction, Paul attempts to moderate and direct the members' attitudes toward these people and give the members a positive action they could carry out in restoring these individuals to full association within the Christian community.

What does the dissociation he demands entail? Based the only other occurrence of such instruction in 1 Corinthians 5:9–11, the focus is on banning the Saints from eating with someone who is misbehaving. The ban then could be directed at congregational meals, especially those dedicated to the Lord's Supper or to invitations to participate in private meals. In both cases, Paul's injunction would prevent the indolent from taking advantage of members of the Church.

Unfortunately for the modern reader, Paul's lack of instructions makes it unclear just who within the Church was to both shun and encourage the individuals. It does seem clear that the Apostle expected that the Church could do both at once.

3:16

There is some debate whether the material in 2 Thessalonians 3:16 acts as the final note in Paul's argument begun in 3:6 or marks a conclusion to the letter as a whole. Since the foregoing section also includes a wish or prayer, this one could act as an end bracket, as it were, to the hope that the indolent and irresponsible members could be brought back into full fellowship and with that act have peace restored. Against this idea, however, is that other factors, including harsh external pressures, were also disturbing the disharmony of the Saints. That being the case, Paul's desire likely included a prayer for peace that would mitigate all the forces playing against these faithful but beleaguered people.

With his closing wish or prayer, Paul draws the audience's attention back to the Savior. The Apostle's focus is on the divine gift of peace (*eἰρήνη*, *eirēnē*). His wish stands in contrast to the fears and troubles the Saints are experiencing. This gift looks to a friendly, even familial tie between God and these harried souls. Denoting as it does both a divine attribute and a heavenly state, it suggests a soul's unity with God and Christ that brings comfort and security even in this less-than-kind world. Paul's use of the phrase "in every way" alludes to a peace that is unchanging; "it abides continually." Tacitly, it suggests that this enduring peace is ever independent of the divine.

3:17

Having completed his dictation, as the words in 2 Thessalonians 3:17 indicate, Paul closes his epistle by taking the pen from his scribe and, as is his habit, writing the last few words himself. He does so for the purpose of authenticating the letter. The precaution seems natural given that even this early in Church history, unauthorized communications were circulating.

3:18

He closes his personal and handwritten wish or prayer (2 Thessalonians 3:18) with words nearly identical to those he used in 1 Thessalonians 5:28. The exception is that here he adds the adjective "all" (*pontōn*), indicating he wants everyone to share in God's grace. He likely did so to include both the idlers and the irresponsible along with those maintaining the traditions of the Church. His words reveal that he deems none as enemies and sincerely wants God's favor to rest upon every one of them.

Notes

1 See, for example, 1 Corinthians 1:1–3; Galatians 1:1–3; Ephesians 1:1–2.

2 2 Corinthians 10:8–13; 12:5–9; compare 1 Corinthians 4:7.

3 See, for example, Romans 8:17; 2 Corinthians 1:7; Galatians 6:12; 2 Timothy 2:13; compare Acts 5:41.

4 Leon Morris, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 45.

5 See Matthew 5:20; Mark 4:17; John 16:33.

6 See 1 Corinthians 4:8–13; 2 Corinthians 6:4–10; 11:21–29.

7 Ben Witherington III, *1 and 2 Thessalonians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 193.

8 Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City, UT: Bookcraft, 1965–1973), 3:61.

9 1 Timothy 6:1; Hebrews 13:15; James 2:7; 1 Peter 4:14, 16.

10 Charles A. Wannamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 245.

11 James Moffatt, “The First and Second Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Thessalonians,” in *The Expositor’s Greek Testament*, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll, vol. 4 (New York, NY: Hodder and Stoughton, 1897), 49.

12 Moffatt, “First and Second Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Thessalonians,” 50; see, for example, 1 Kings 22:23; 1 Chronicles 21:1; Isaiah 29:10; Ezekiel 14:9; Psalm 81:12.

13 Morris, *First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 240.

14 See, for example, 1 Corinthians 1:9; 10:13; 2 Corinthians 1:18.

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Source: *New Testament Insights: 2 Thessalonians*, by Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes