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COMMENTARIES

EXPOSITION OF THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS **2 THESSALONIANS**

by John Gill

*Thou hast given a standard to them that fear thee;
that it may be displayed because of the truth
— Psalm 60:4*

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2 THESSALONIANS

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF 2 THESSALONIANS

This second epistle was written, not from Athens, as the subscription testifies, nor from Rome, as Athanasius^{f1} supposes; but from Corinth, from whence was sent the former, and where the apostle and Timothy, and Silvanus met; and which was sent about half a year after the other. The design of which is to comfort and support the Thessalonians under the afflictions and persecutions they endured for the sake of the Gospel; and to rectify a mistake they had gone into, and which might be occasioned by what the apostle had said in his former epistle, concerning the second coming of Christ, as though it was just at hand; which might lead them to neglect their worldly business, and duties of civil life, and give the enemies of the Gospel an advantage against the whole of it as false, should not this prove true; as also to exhort this church to take notice of disorderly persons such as were idle, and busy bodies, and withdraw from them, and remove them from their communion, as being not only burdensome to them, but a reproach to their profession.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO 2 THESSALONIANS 1

This chapter, besides the inscription and salutation, contains a thanksgiving for the flourishing condition in which the graces of the Spirit were in these saints, and consolation for them under their suffering circumstances. The inscription and salutation are in (2 Thessalonians 1:1,2) and are as usual: the thanksgiving is in (2 Thessalonians 1:3) for the growth of their faith, the abounding of their love, and their constant patience under persecutions and afflictions, insomuch that the apostle also gloried of them for these things among other churches, (2 Thessalonians 1:4) and as an encouragement to them to continue patient under sufferings, he observes that this was a token of the righteous judgment of God, and that they were reckoned worthy of his kingdom for which they suffered, (2 Thessalonians 1:5) and of which righteous judgment they might be assured, from the nature of God himself, whose justice required a retribution of vengeance to their persecutors, and rest to them with the apostles, (2 Thessalonians 1:6,7) the time of which rest and ease is pointed at, as that it will be at the coming of Christ; which is described by the place from whence he comes, heaven; by his retinue, his mighty angels; by the manner in which he shall come, in flaming fire; and by the vengeance he will execute: the objects of which are also described, by their ignorance of God, and by their disobedience to the Gospel of Christ; and by the nature of the punishment inflicted on them, which will lie in an expulsion from the presence, power, and glory of God, and in an everlasting destruction of soul and body, (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9) but as for them, the persecuted saints, and which is mentioned for their comfort, Christ shall at this day be glorified and admired in them, and by them, (2 Thessalonians 1:10) wherefore the apostle prays for this perseverance of them, that the good work of faith might be performed in them, and they enjoy the glory they were called unto; and that Christ might be glorified in them, and they in him; not according to their works, but according to the grace of God through him, (2 Thessalonians 1:11).

Ver. 1. *Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, &c.*] (See Gill on “~~1~~1 Thessalonians 1:1”).

Ver. 2. *Grace be unto you, and peace, &c.*] (See Gill on “~~1~~Romans 1:7”).

Ver. 3. *We are bound to thank God, &c.*] Since all blessings, temporal and spiritual, come from him: and that always: seeing he is ever giving out fresh favours, or continuing former ones; and because those, especially which are of a spiritual nature, always abide, such as faith and love; which the apostle particularly takes notice of, the members of this Church had, and were increasing in them: for it was not for himself, but for them he gives thanks,

for you, brethren: who were so, not in a natural or civil relation, but in a spiritual one, being the children of God, and brethren of Christ; and to do this for them, he looked upon himself with others under an obligation:

as it is meet; just, proper, and fitting; it not only becomes the persons who have received mercies from God to be thankful for them; but it is very right for others to join with them in it, and especially the ministers of the Gospel, who are bound, and whom it becomes: it is agreeable to their office and profession to give God the praise and glory of all the grace, and the increase of it, which those, who attend their labours, are favoured with, since this is not of them, but of God; and it was for an increase of grace the apostle here gives thanks, as he judged he was obliged to do, and it was fit he should.

Because that your faith groweth exceedingly. Their faith was not a faith of miracles, nor a mere historical faith, or a counterfeit and temporary one, but the faith of God's elect; which is the evidence of things not seen, of an unseen Christ, and the glories of another world; that grace by which a man goes out of himself to Christ for righteousness, life, and salvation; by which he is justified, and by which he lives on Christ, and walks on in him as he has received him. This was theirs; it was not of themselves, the produce of nature, or the fruit of their natural power and free will; but it was the gift of God, and of his operation; a fruit of the Spirit of God, and of which Christ was the author and finisher; and was only theirs, as being given unto them, implanted in them, and exercised by them under the influence of the Spirit of God, and for their use, comfort, and advantage. This was, at first, but like a grain of mustard seed, very small, but gradually increased, and grew exceedingly; and from seeing of Christ, and looking at him, and which at

first might be very dim and obscure, it proceeded to going or coming to him; and which might be in a very feeble manner, and was not without being drawn and led, and great encouragements, many invitations, and large assurances; and from thence to a laying hold upon him, though it may be but in a trembling way, and not without being called to stretch forth the hand of faith, and be no more faithless, but believing; and from thence to a leaning and relying on him, trusting in him with all, and for all; and from thence to claiming an interest in him, saying, my Lord, and my God, which is the full assurance of faith; and when it is come to this, it is grown exceedingly, which might be the case of these Thessalonians; which the apostle knew by the aboundings of their love, for faith works by love; and by their patience, firmness, and resolution in suffering for Christ; all which are in proportion to faith, and the growth of it; and for this he gives thanks to God, for faith is a precious thing; and as that itself, so the increase of it is from God, and therefore to him the praise belongs:

and the charity of everyone of you towards each other aboundeth; as their faith in Christ, so their love to one another was increasing, and showed itself in serving one another both in temporals and spirituals; and this was not the case of a few only, or of the greater part, but of everyone of them; which made their communion with one another very comfortable and delightful. For what is more pleasant than for brethren to dwell together in unity?

Ver. 4. *So that we ourselves glory in you*, &c.] Or “of you”; for though they were the subject concerning which, yet not the object in which they gloried; the apostle elsewhere advises not to glory in men, but only in the Lord; nor was this his practice contrary to his advice, for he did not boast of these persons with respect to their carnal things; he did not glory in their flesh, nor in their riches, nor wisdom, nor strength, nor any external gift; he gloried indeed of their graces, and of the exercise and increase of them; but of these not as of themselves, or as owing to him, and his fellow ministers, but as instances of the grace of God, and for which he gives thanks to him: and besides, he did not glory of these in the presence of God, in whose presence none should glory, but

in the churches of God; the other churches in Macedonia and Achaia, as Philippi, Berea, Corinth, &c. he gave thanks to God for them, and gloried of them before men, or among the saints, to the glory of the grace of God in them, and in order to stir up other churches to an emulation and

imitation of them. And the particulars he gloried of them for were as follow,

for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure: many and sore were the reproaches, the afflictions, and persecutions that befell them for the sake of Christ, and their profession of him, and his Gospel; and which is more or less the case of everyone that will live godly in Christ Jesus: and these they endured, they bore and stood up under, they were not shocked, and staggered, and moved from the hope of the Gospel by them; which shows that the truth of grace was in them; for where there is not the root of the matter, when tribulation and affliction arise because of the profession of the word, such are offended, stumbled, and quickly gone; but these saints endured their afflictions, and with great patience, without murmuring and repining, and with great constancy, firmness, and resolution of mind. They stood fast in the grace and doctrine of faith, and in the profession of both, which they held without wavering, and none of the things they met with could move them from it. The apostle had mentioned their faith before, and he takes notice of it again, because their patience, constancy, and perseverance in sufferings, arose from it; for the trying of faith works patience, (~~SOUB~~ James 1:3). The Ethiopic version leaves out the word “faith”, but very wrongly.

Ver. 5. *Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, &c.]* That is, according as some think, that God should glorify those that are persecuted, and punish their persecutors: this sense indeed may seem to agree with what follows; but the apostle is speaking not of something future, but of something present; not of what God will do hereafter, but of the present sufferings of the saints. According to others the sense is, that God's suffering affliction and persecution to befall his own people, as a chastisement of them, that they may not be condemned with the world, is an evidence of his strict justice, that he will not suffer sin in any to go unobserved by him; and is a manifest token how severely and righteously he will punish the wicked hereafter, (see ~~COMT~~ 1 Peter 4:17,18). But rather the meaning of the words is this, that whereas good men are afflicted and persecuted in this life, they have now their evil things, and bad men prosper and flourish, and have their good things, so that justice does not seem to take place; which seeming inequality in Providence has been sometimes the hardening of wicked men, and the staggering of the righteous, which should not be; this is now a manifest token, and a clear case, that there will be a righteous judgment, in which things will be set aright, and justice will

take place; for God is neither unrighteous nor careless, or negligent; and this is observed to support the saints under their sufferings, and to animate them to bear them patiently:

that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer; either of the Gospel, which is sometimes so called, and for which they suffered, and so judged themselves worthy of it; as those that put it away from them, and care not to suffer the least reproach for it, show themselves to be unworthy of it, and of eternal life also: or of a Gospel church state, and a name, and a place in it, for which the people of God likewise suffer; and those who shun reproach and sufferings for it are not worthy to have a place, or their names there: or rather of the heavenly glory; for the hope of which saints suffer much here, whereby their graces are tried, and so they are counted worthy, not by way of merit of it, but meetness for it; many tribulations are the way, or at least lie in the way to this kingdom. In the school of afflictions the saints are trained up for it; and though these are not worthy to be compared with their future happiness, yet they work for them an eternal weight of glory; by the means of these the graces of the Spirit of God are exercised and increased, their hearts are weaned from the world; and coming up out of great tribulations, they wash their garments, and make them white in the blood of the Lamb, and are made meet to be partakers of the inheritance with the saints in light.

Ver. 6. *Seeing it is a righteous thing with God*, &c.] That which is righteous in itself, is righteous in the sight of God, but it is not always so with men; men may think it a righteous thing that they should be rewarded for persecuting the followers of Christ, supposing they hereby do God good service; but on the contrary, with God, and in his sight and account, it is a righteous thing, or a point of justice,

to recompence tribulation to them that trouble you: persecution is an affliction, or a trouble to the saints; persecutors trouble them in their minds and bodies, in their persons and property; they trouble their minds by casting reflections and reproaches upon them, by severe revilings, and cruel mockings, which all are not alike able to bear; and they trouble and afflict their bodies by imprisonment and bonds, by scourging and beating, and various cruel and torturing deaths; and they disturb them in the possession of their estates, by spoiling their goods, and confiscating them to their own use; and it is but according to “lex talionis”, the law of retaliation, to render tribulation to such troublers of God’s Israel; and to them it is

recompensed, either in this world, or in the world to come: sometimes in this world persecutors are manifest instances of God's judgments and wrath upon them, as Herod, who stretched out his hands to vex certain of the church, killed James the brother of John, and imprisoned Peter, and was smitten by the angel of the Lord, and was eaten of worms; and the Jews, who were now the only and the implacable persecutors of the saints, in a short time had the wrath of God come upon them to the uttermost, even upon their nation, city, and temple, upon their persons and property. And if not in this life, it is a certain thing that hereafter such shall have indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish; they shall be cast into outward darkness, into the lake of fire; and the hottest place in hell will be their portion, even devouring flames, and everlasting burnings; and are what is designed by tribulations here.

Ver. 7. *And to you who are troubled, rest with us, &c.*] This is another branch of the justice of God, in rendering to them who are afflicted and persecuted for righteousness sake, "rest"; a relaxation or rest from persecutions, for a while at least; as the churches of Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had, from that persecution raised at the death of Stephen, (^{<408>}Acts 9:31) and as the Christians had at the destruction of Jerusalem; which though it was a day of vengeance to the unbelieving Jews, were times of refreshing to the saints, who were now delivered from their persecutors: or rather this designs a rest which remains for the saints after death in the grave, and at the coming of the Lord, and to all eternity; when they shall rest from all their toil and labour, and be freed from sin, and all disquietude by it, and from the temptations of Satan, and likewise from the persecutions of men; (see ^{<407>}Job 3:17). And this will be enjoyed in company with the apostles, and other believers; and as it is some alleviation to the sufferings and afflictions of saints now, that the same are accomplished in others, so it will enhance the heavenly glory, rest, and felicity, that they will be partners and sharers in it with the apostles of Christ Jesus, and have the same crown of glory they have; and indeed their company and conversation will be a part of their happiness.

When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven; then will the justice of God take place in both the above branches and instances of it, rendering tribulation to persecutors, and rest to the persecuted. Christ, ever since a cloud received him out of the sight of the apostles up to heaven, has been, as it were, hid, and has not been seen with corporeal eyes by men on earth ever since, but by a very few, as Stephen, and the Apostle Paul; he has only

been seen by an eye of faith; at his second coming there will be a revelation of him, and every eye shall see him: and this revelation of him will be “from heaven”: thither he was received at his ascension, and there he now is; and here he is received, and will be retained until the end of all things; and from hence the saints expect him, and from hence will he descend in person, and then he will be revealed, and appear to the view of everyone: and that

with his mighty angels; which will add to the glory, majesty, and solemnity of that appearance: these are called his angels, because he is the Creator of them, and the object of their worship and adoration, and he is the Lord and head of them, and they are ministering spirits to him and his; and “mighty” angels, because they excel all other creatures in strength; a remarkable instance of the might and strength of angels is in (^{<12K05>}2 Kings 19:35). The words from the original text may be rendered, “with the angels of his power”; as they are by the Vulgate Latin, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions, for they will be the ministers of the power of Christ in gathering the elect from the four winds, and all nations, before Christ; and in taking out of his kingdom all that offend, and do iniquity; and in severing the righteous from the wicked; and in casting the latter into the furnace of fire. The Syriac version reads the words, “with the power of his angels”.

Ver. 8. *In flaming fire, &c.*] Which may either refer to Christ, who will be revealed from heaven in such a manner; and whose coming will be as the lightning, not only sudden, but glorious, illustrious, and visible; he will be seen and easily discerned; there will be such a light and flaming fire about him, which, as it will serve to make him visible, will greatly add to the majesty of his appearance, and strike terror to his enemies, and burn them up round about; (see ^{<2700B>}Daniel 7:7,9,10 ^{<4970B>}Psalm 97:3,4) or else it may refer to the angels, who shall descend in fiery forms, which is agreeably to their nature, (^{<19A04>}Psalm 104:4) and so they appeared in the forms of horses of fire, and chariots of fire, when Elijah was carried up to heaven. And it is a tradition of the Jews ^{f2}, that the angel Gabriel descended *açad abwhl çb*, “in a flame of fire”, to burn Moses, as he was in the inn, when upon his journey from Midian to Egypt: or this clause may be read in construction with the following, as it is in the Vulgate Latin and Syriac versions, “in flaming fire taking vengeance”; and so expresses the manner in which vengeance will be taken on the wicked by Christ, the Judge of all, to whom it belongs: and the punishment of ungodly men is often signified by fire, and flames of fire, by the fire of hell, and a lake which burns with

fire and brimstone, by a furnace of fire, everlasting fire, and fire that cannot be quenched, to set forth the endless torture and inconceivable misery of the damned; and it may be, some regard is had to the general conflagration, which will be at the coming of Christ, when the heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved, the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth, and all that is in it, shall be burnt up, when the bodies of the wicked, then living, will be consumed in flames of fire, and their souls feel the wrath of the Almighty. The persons who will then be punished, and on whom vengeance will be taken, are described as follows,

on them that know not God; which is a periphrasis, or common character of the Gentiles, (^{SM5}1 Thessalonians 4:5) who know not the one, true, and living God; or know him not so as to glorify him as God, and be thankful to him for the mercies they receive from him, and still less know him in Christ Jesus; which ignorance of theirs is not without sin, nor will it excuse from punishment; for though vengeance will not be taken on them, because they have not a spiritual saving knowledge of God, in the Mediator Jesus Christ, who never was revealed to them; yet forasmuch as they had the light and law of nature, by which the being of God, and the invisible perfections of his nature might be seen and understood, and much of his will, with respect to moral good and evil, be known, against both which they have rebelled, and having sinned, will perish without law: though it may also include all such persons, who having been favoured with an external revelation, have professed to know God, and yet in works have denied him:

and that obey not the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ; of which Christ is the author, was the preacher, and is the sum and substance; which is good news and glad tidings of the grace of, God, of peace, pardon, righteousness, life, and salvation by Christ; which may be said to be obeyed, when it is received and embraced by faith, with and from the heart, and confession is made of it with the mouth, and the ordinances of it are submitted to; and which is called the obedience of faith, because faith without obedience is not right, and obedience without faith is of no avail: but all that hear the Gospel do not obey it; there are some that disbelieve and reject the doctrines and ordinances of it, and others that, do profess it, and do not yield a cordial and cheerful obedience to it; both may be reckoned among the disobeyers of it: and though the unbelieving Jews may be chiefly designed here, yet deists of every age and place, where the Gospel revelation has come, and carnal professors, and profane despisers

everywhere, may be included; whose condemnation will be aggravated by the external light which has shone around them, and they have hated; the severest punishment will be inflicted on them; it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, Sodom and Gomorrah, than for such persons; (see ~~1~~ Peter 4:17).

Ver. 9. *Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction, &c.*] With destruction both of soul and body, though not with the annihilation of either; their gnawing worm of conscience will never die, and the fire of divine wrath will never be quenched; the smoke of their torment will ascend for ever. Sin being committed against an infinite and eternal Being, will be infinite in its duration; nor will it cease to be in the persons punished, who will not be in the least reformed or purged from sin by punishment; which will make the continuance of it just and necessary. And these will be driven

from the presence of the Lord; as the former clause may express the punishment of sense the wicked will feel in their own breasts, this may intend the punishment of loss; or what they will be deprived of, the presence of the Lord, in which the happiness of angels, and of glorified saints lies; and may also signify how sudden and terrible their destruction will be. As soon as the Lord appears, they will perish at his presence like wax before the fire; and so awful will be his appearance, they will flee from it with the utmost terror, and call to the rocks and mountains to hide them from the face of the Lord, and to screen them from his wrath:

and from the glory of his power; or his glorious power, in which he shall come, and which will be exerted, and shown in raising the dead, and gathering all nations before him, in passing sentence on them, and in executing it. For he has power, as to save, so to destroy, as to glorify the bodies and souls of his saints, so to destroy the wicked, both body and soul, in hell; and the glory of his power will be seen in the one, as well as in the other. And now it will be, that tribulation will be rendered to the troublers of the Lord's people.

Ver. 10. *When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, &c.*] Or by them who are set apart for holiness and happiness by God the Father; whose sins are expiated by the blood and sacrifice of Christ; to whom he is made sanctification; and who are sanctified by the Spirit and grace of God; and in whom Christ has a peculiar interest, through his Father's gift, his own purchase, and the power of his grace: and when he comes a second time he

will be glorified in these persons; he will appear glorious to them; he will come in his own glory both as God and man; and in his Father's glory, authority, and majesty, conferred on him as the Judge of the whole earth; and with the glory of his angels, who will accompany him. And he will also bestow a glory on them; their souls will be endowed with perfect knowledge and holiness; and their bodies will be made like to his glorious body; and both will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father; and this glory on the members of Christ will redound to the glory of him their head. And as he will then, in the most full and clear manner, display the glory of his person and perfections, of his wisdom, power, faithfulness, and goodness, set off the glory of his offices, and, the administration of them, and open the riches both of his grace and glory to them; so they will, in return, ascribe honour, praise, and glory, to him, and give him the glory of their salvation to all eternity:

and to be admired in all them that believe; who are the same with the saints; these are convertible terms; for no man can be a saint, unless he is a believer in Christ, let him make what pretensions to holiness he will: and no man can be a true believer in Christ, unless he is a saint; for true faith works by love, and in a way of holiness; and in those, or by those that are sanctified by faith in him, will he be admired when he appears a second time. He is admired by them now; he is with them the chiefest among ten thousands, and altogether lovely: they wonder at the glory and beauty of his person, and the fulness of his grace; and are amazed that such as they are should be admitted to communion with him; and how much more will they wonder, when they shall see him as he is? and he will be admired by others on the account of them, when they shall see those that they have despised, and persecuted, and accounted as the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things, received into the arms of Jesus with all the expressions of tenderness and love; placed at his right hand, and set down with him on his throne, clothed with white robes, and crowns on their head, and palms in their hands: and he himself will be admired with them, when they shall see him whom they took to be a mere man, and who was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with griefs, and was loaded with reproach and ignominy, and at last suffered a shameful death, coming in the clouds of heaven in power and great glory as the Judge of quick and dead; thus will he be admired by them, in them, and with them.

(Because our testimony among you was believed) in that day; the phrase, “in that day”, belongs to all that goes before, as that Christ shall take

vengeance on wicked men, and they shall be punished by him, and he shall be glorified and admired in and by his people in that day, when he shall be revealed from heaven, and come to judge both quick and dead. Though some versions read it in construction with the clause immediately preceding, “because our testimony among you was believed in that day”; or concerning that day; that is, you gave credit to the testimony we bore, when among you, concerning this illustrious day of the Lord; or our testimony, the ministry of the word by us, in which we bore a testimony to the person and grace of Christ, to his first, and to his second coming, was received and embraced by you with a view to this day, and to the enjoyment of the glory of it. The Arabic version renders it, “for our testimony will be true in that day”; that is, it will appear to be so, everything we have said will be accomplished then. The Syriac version is very remote, “that our testimony concerning you may be believed in that day”: but it is best to read this clause in a parenthesis, as in our version; which is an application of what is said to the Thessalonians, who might conclude, that since they had embraced the testimony of the Lord Jesus, borne unto him by his apostles, they would be found among the number of the saints and believers, in whom Christ would be glorified and admired; the consideration of which might animate and encourage them to endure afflictions and persecutions with patience, and to hold out to the end, and at last enjoy the heavenly glory, for which the apostle next prays.

Ver. 11. *Wherefore also we pray always for you, &c.*] Not only observe the above things to your comfort, to support you under sufferings, but we add our prayers, and not only now, but always, that you may be among them in whom Christ will be glorified and admired; in order to which we most sincerely pray,

that our God would count you worthy of this calling. The Syriac version reads, “your calling”, as in (~~402~~ 1 Corinthians 1:26). The Vulgate Latin reads, “his own calling”, meaning their effectual calling. This is indeed of God, and not of man; and is owing, not to any previous worthiness in man, as appears from the instances of Matthew the publican, Zacchaeus, the Apostle Paul, the Corinthians, and others, but entirely to the free grace of God, who counts them worthy, not for any worthiness there is in them; but “vouchsafes”, as the word may be rendered, this blessing of grace, their effectual calling, of his own good will and pleasure: but this cannot be meant here, because these persons were partakers of that grace, God had called them to his kingdom and glory; unless the sense of the petition is,

that God would cause them to walk worthy of the calling with which they were called, which becoming walk is owing to the grace of God: or else the meaning may be, that God would grant unto them perseverance in the grace, by and to which they were called, that so they might enjoy eternal glory; which though certain, should be prayed for by saints, both for themselves and others: the words may be rendered, “that our God would count you worthy of the call”; of the call of Christ when he shall be revealed from heaven, and come a second time; for then will he first call the saints out of their graves, as he did Lazarus, and they shall hear his all powerful voice, and come forth to the resurrection of life, the first and better resurrection, which those that have part in will be secure from the second death; this the apostle was desirous of attaining to himself, and prays that God would vouchsafe it to others; of this Job speaks in (~~13415~~ Job 14:15). And next Christ will call the righteous, when raised and set at his right hand, to inherit the kingdom and glory prepared by his Father for them; and happy are those who by the grace of God will be counted worthy of this call or rather by calling here is meant, the ultimate glory itself, which the saints are called unto; this God gives a right unto in the justifying righteousness of his Son, and makes meet for by his own grace; and the thing itself is a free grace gift of his through Jesus Christ. In this sense calling seems to be used in (~~1001~~ Ephesians 4:4) and to this agrees the Ethiopic version here, “that God may impart unto you that to which he hath called you”; and that is eternal glory, which though certainly and inseparably connected with the effectual calling, may, and should be prayed for:

and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness; not providential, but special goodness; not the good pleasure of his strict justice in the condemning of the wicked, denying his grace to them, and hiding from them the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, which is a part of his good pleasure, even of the good pleasure of his righteousness; but this is the good pleasure of his grace and kindness in Christ Jesus, and intends the whole of his gracious designs towards his people: and to express the free, rich, sovereign grace of God in them, the apostle uses a variety of words, calling them “his pleasure”, “his good pleasure”; and, as if this was not enough, “the good pleasure of his goodness”; and desires that all of it might be fulfilled; it consisting of many things, some of which were fulfilled, and others remained to be fulfilled. It consists of the choice of persons in Christ, and the predestination of them to the adoption of

children, which is according to the good pleasure of the will of God; the redemption of them by Christ, in which are displayed the exceeding riches of his grace; the free justification of them by the righteousness of Christ; the full pardon of all their sins, and their adoption into the household of God, and their regeneration, of rich grace, and abundant mercy; all these instances of the good pleasure of divine goodness were fulfilled in these persons; what remained were the carrying on and finishing the work of grace upon their souls, and their enjoyment of the heavenly glory: and for the former, in order to the latter, the apostle prays in the next clause,

and the work of faith with power; faith is not only an operative grace, (see Gill on “<sup>^{S00B>}1 Thessalonians 1:3”) and is attended with good works; but it is a work itself, not of man's, for he cannot produce it in himself, nor exercise it of himself; but it is the work of God, of his operation which he works in his people; it has not only God for its object, and therefore the Arabic version reads, “the work of faith on him”; but it has God for its author: and this now, though it had grown exceedingly in these believers, was not as yet fulfilled or perfect; something was still lacking in it; wherefore the apostle prays that he who was the author would be the finisher of it: and this will be done “with power”; not of man's, for this work is neither begun, nor carried on, nor will it be finished by the might and power of men; but the same hands which laid the foundation of it, raise it up, carry it on, and give the finishing stroke to it; it is done by the power of God, and so the Arabic and Ethiopic versions read, “by his own power”: which is greatly displayed in the production of faith at first; for a poor sensible sinner, in a view of all his sins, and the just deserts of them, to venture his soul on Christ alone for salvation; for a man to go out of himself and renounce his own righteousness, and trust to the righteousness of Christ for his justification before God, and acceptance with him, is owing to the exceeding greatness of God's power to them that believe; and the same power is seen in enabling faith to do the things it does; (see <sup>^{S00B>}Hebrews 11:1) and in encouraging, supporting, and maintaining it under the most difficult circumstances, as in the case of Abraham; and to make it stand fast under the severest persecutions, and at the hour of death, and in the view of an awful eternity, when it receives its full completion.

Ver. 12. *That the name of the Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you,* &c.] This is the end of the apostle's prayer, and which is answered by the fulfilment of the things prayed for; as the name of Christ and his Gospel are dishonoured, by the unbelief, cowardice and the unworthy walk of

professors; so they are glorified in and by the saints, by their faith, patience, and good works in this world; which not only themselves adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, but cause others to glorify him likewise; and Christ will be glorified in them hereafter, by the glory which will be conferred upon them, and which will reflect glory upon him; when all the gracious designs of God are accomplished on them and the work of faith is finished in them; for should not these be completed, Christ would lose the glory of redemption and salvation, which by means of these will be given by the saints to him to all eternity:

and ye in him; that is, that ye may be glorified; the saints are now glorified in him as their head and representative, being raised together and made to sit together in heavenly places in him; and when the work of grace is finished upon their souls, they will be glorified together with him and by him; and in the resurrection morn shall appear in glory with him both in soul and body, and shall be made like him, and everlastingly enjoy him and see him as he is; the Alexandrian copy reads and us “in him”; and all this will be as it is wished for, “according to the grace of our God, and the Lord Jesus Christ”; according to the grace and free favour of God in election, and of Jesus Christ in, redemption, and of the blessed Spirit in sanctification; for election, redemption, calling, justification, pardon, adoption, and the whole of salvation from first to last are of grace and not of works; and according to this, all these things must be prayed for the application of, and must be expected only on such a foot; and to this must all be ascribed, the glory of which is the ultimate end of God, in all he has done, does, or will do for his people.

CHAPTER 2

INTRODUCTION TO 2 THESSALONIANS 2

In this chapter the apostle guards against a notion, as if the second coming of Christ was at hand; declares that, previous to it, there must be a great apostasy, and a revelation of antichrist; comforts the saints against fears of being included in this defection; exhorts them to stand fast in the faith, and closes this chapter with petitions for them. He entreats them in a most tender and solemn manner not to imagine that the day of Christ was at hand, and that they would not be disturbed and moved at it; and points unto the several ways, and cautions against them, they might be imposed upon and deceived by men with respect to it, ([2 Thessalonians 2:1,2](#)) and assigns his reasons why it could not be yet, because before this time there was to be a general apostasy, and antichrist must appear; whom from his character, he calls the man of sin, and from his end, the son of perdition; and describes him as an opposer of God, an exalter of himself above all that is called God, as sitting in the temple of God and declaring himself to be God, ([2 Thessalonians 2:3,4](#)) of which things he had told them before, ([2 Thessalonians 2:5](#)) nor were they ignorant of what at present hindered the revelation of the man of sin, who was then in being, and was working and growing up apace; only there was something (the Roman empire) which hindered, and would continue to do so, until the fixed time of his revelation was up, ([2 Thessalonians 2:6,7](#)) when he should be manifest; though he should not always continue, being to be consumed and destroyed by the breath of Christ's mouth, and the splendour of his coming, ([2 Thessalonians 2:8](#)) and the appearance of antichrist in the world, being a matter of considerable importance, it is described by being after the working of Satan, and as attended with lying and false miracles, and with all deceitful and unrighteous doctrines and practices; which reprobate men would be left to give into, as a punishment of their not receiving cordially the truth of the Gospel; upon which account God would give them to such judicial blindness, as to give credit to a lie, which would bring on their final damnation, they not believing the truth, but taking pleasure in unrighteousness, ([2 Thessalonians 2:9-12](#)), but lest this account of things should be discouraging to the saints at Thessalonica,

the apostle styles them brethren; asserts them to be the beloved of the Lord; gives an instance of it, for which he gives thanks, namely, their election of God; the date of which was from everlasting; the means sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth; the end salvation by Jesus Christ; and the evidence of which was their effectual calling by the Gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of Christ, (^{² Thessalonians 2:13,14) and then he exhorts them to stand fast in the doctrines that had been taught them, either in an epistolary way, or by the ministry of the word, (^{² Thessalonians 2:15) and concludes the chapter with petitions for them made to God the Father, and to Christ who had loved and comforted them, and given them good hope of everlasting things; that they might be comforted more and more, and be established in every good doctrine and practice, (^{² Thessalonians 2:16,17).}}}

Ver. 1. *Now we beseech you, brethren,* &c.] The apostle having finished his first design in this epistle, which was to encourage the saints to patience under sufferings, proceeds to another view he had in writing it, and that is, to set the doctrine of Christ's coming, as to the time of it, in its proper light; and this is occasioned by what he had said concerning it in the former epistle, which was either misunderstood or misrepresented; and as he addresses the saints with a very affectionate appellation as his "brethren", so by way of entreaty "beseeching", and yet in a very solemn manner:

by the coming of our Lord Jesus: which is to be understood not of the coming of Christ in the flesh, to procure the salvation of his people; nor of his coming in his kingdom and power to take vengeance on the Jewish nation, for their rejection of him as the Messiah; but of his coming to judge the quick and dead, than which nothing is more sure and certain, being affirmed by angels and men, by prophets and apostles, and by Christ himself, or more desirable by the saints; wherefore the apostle entreats them by it, that whereas they believed it, expected it, and wished for it, they would regard what he was about to say: so that the words, though an entreaty, are in the form of an adjuration; unless they should be rendered as in the Ethiopic version, as they may, "concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ"; and so express subject matter of the discourse now entering upon, with what follows:

and by our gathering together unto him; which regards not the great gatherings of the people to Christ the true Shiloh upon his first coming, and the preaching of the Gospel to both Jews and Gentiles, when there

were not only great flockings to hear it, but multitudes were converted by it; nor the greater gatherings there will be in the latter day, at the time of the conversion of the Jews, and when the fulness of the Gentiles shall be brought in; nor the conversion of particular persons, who are gathered in to Christ, and received by him one by one; nor the assembling of the saints together for public worship, in which sense the word is used in (^{<8105>}Hebrews 10:25) but the gathering together of all the saints at the last day, at the second coming of Christ; for he will come with ten thousand of his saints, yea, with all his saints, when their dead bodies shall be raised and reunited to their souls, and they with the living saints will be caught up into the air, to meet the Lord there and be ever with him; when they will make up, complete and perfect, the general assembly and church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven: this will be the gathering together of all the elect of God; and so the Arabic version reads, “the gathering of us all”; and which, as it is certain, is greatly to be desired; it will be a happy meeting and a glorious sight; by this the apostle entreats and adjures them to regard what follows.

Ver. 2. *That ye be not soon shaken in mind*, &c.] Or “from your mind or sense”, as the Vulgate Latin version; or “from the solidity of sense”, as the Arabic version; that is, from what they had received in their minds, and was their sense and judgment, and which they had embraced as articles of faith; that they would not be like a wave of the sea, tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine; or be moved from the hope of the Gospel, from any fundamental article of it, and from that which respects the second coming of Christ particularly; and especially, that they would not be quickly and easily moved from it; (see ^{<8006>}Galatians 1:6)

or be troubled; thrown into consternation and surprise, for though the coming of Christ will not be terrible to saints, as it will be to sinners; yet there is something in it that is awful and solemn, and fills with concern; and to be told of it as at that instant might be surprising and shocking: the several ways in which their minds might be troubled and distressed with such an account are enumerated by the apostle, that they might guard against them, and not be imposed upon by them:

neither by spirit; by a prophetic spirit, by pretensions to a revelation from the Spirit, fixing the precise time of Christ's coming, which should not be heeded or attended to; since his coming will be as a thief in the night:

nor by word: by reason and a show of it, by arguments drawn from it, which may carry in them a show of probability; by enticing words of man's wisdom; by arithmetical or astronomical calculations; or by pretensions to a word, a tradition of Christ or his apostles, as if they had received it "viva voce", by word of mouth from any of them:

nor by letter, as from us; by forging a letter and counterfeiting their hands, for such practices began to be used very early; spurious epistles of the Apostle Paul were carried about, which obliged him to take a method whereby his genuine letters might be known; (see ^{scrip}2 Thessalonians 3:17,18) or he may have respect in this clause to his former epistle, wherein he had said some things concerning the Coming of Christ, which had been either wrongly represented, or not understood; and as if his sense was, that it would be while he and others then living were alive and on the spot: wherefore he would not have them neither give heed to any enthusiastic spirits, nor to any plausible reasonings of men, or unwritten traditions; nor to any letters in his name, or in the name of any of the apostles; nor even to his former letter to them, as though it contained any such thing in it,

as that the day of Christ is at hand; or is at this instant just now coming on; as if it would be within that year, in some certain month, and on some certain day in it; which notion the apostle would have them by no means give into, for these reasons, because should Christ not come, as there was no reason to believe he would in so short a time, they would be tempted to disbelieve his coming at all, at least be very indifferent about it; and since if it did not prove true, they might be led to conclude there was nothing true in the Christian doctrine and religion; and besides, such a notion of the speedy coming of Christ would tend to indulge the idle and disorderly persons among them in their sloth and negligence: and now for these, and for the weighty reasons he gives in the next verse, he dissuades them from imbibing such a tenet; for though the coming of Christ is sometimes said to be drawing nigh, and to be quickly, yet so it might be, and not at that instant; besides, such expressions are used with respect to God, with whom a thousand years are as one day, and one day as a thousand years; and because the Gospel times, or times of the Messiah, are the last days, there will be no other dispensation of things until the second coming of Christ; and chiefly they are used to keep up the faith, and awaken the hope and expectation of the saints with respect to it. The Alexandrian copy, and

some others, read, “the day of the Lord”; and so the Vulgate Latin version; and accordingly the Syriac and Ethiopic versions, “the day of our Lord”.

Ver. 3. *Let no man deceive you by any means, &c.*] By any of the above means; by pretending to a revelation from the Spirit; or to have had it from the mouth of anyone of the apostles; or to have a letter as from them, declaring the day of Christ to be instant; or by any other means whatever; do not be imposed upon by them for the following reasons, for there were things to be done before the coming of Christ, which were not then done, and which required time: for that day shall not come,

except there come a falling away first; either in a political sense, of the nations from the Roman empire, which was divided into the eastern and western empire; for which, way was made by translating the seat of empire from Rome to Byzantium, or Constantinople; the former of these empires was seized by Mahomet, and still possessed by the Turks; and the latter was overrun by the Goths, Huns, and Vandals, and torn to pieces; Italy particularly was ravaged by them, and Rome itself was sacked and taken: or rather in a religious sense, of the falling of men from the faith of the Gospel, from the purity of Gospel doctrines, discipline, worship, and ordinances; and this not of some Jews who professed faith in Christ, and departed from it, or of some Christians who went off to the Gnostics; but is to be understood of a more general defection in the times of the Papacy; when not only the eastern churches were perverted and corrupted by Mahomet, and drawn off to his religion, but the western churches were most sadly depraved by the man of sin, by bringing in errors of all sorts in doctrine, making innovations in every ordinance, and appointing new ones, and introducing both Judaism and Paganism into the churches; which general defection continued until the times of the reformation, and is what the apostle has respect to in (~~500~~1 Timothy 4:1-3) where he manifestly points out some of the Popish tenets, as forbidding marriage to priests, and ordering abstinence from meats on certain days, and at certain times of the year: this was one thing that was to precede the coming of Christ, another follows, which should take place at the same time;

and that man of sin be revealed; who was now hid, though secretly working; by whom is meant not only any particular person or individual; not the devil, for though he is the wicked one, a damned spirit, an opposer, an adversary of God and Christ, and his people, and who has affected deity, and sought to be worshipped, and even by Christ himself; yet the

man of sin is here distinguished from Satan, (~~scrip~~2 Timothy 2:9) nor is any particular emperor of Rome intended, as Caius Caligula, or Nero, for though these were monsters of iniquity, and set up themselves as gods, yet they sat not in the temple of God; nor is Simon Magus designed, who was a very wicked man, a sorcerer, and who gave out himself to be some great one, and was called the great power of God, before big profession of faith in Christ; and afterwards affirmed that he was God, the Father in Samaria, the Son in Judea, and the Spirit in the rest of the nations of the world; and, because of his signs and lying wonders, had a statue erected by the Roman emperor with this inscription, “to Simon the holy god”; but then this wicked man was now already revealed: nor is this to be understood of a certain Jew, that is to be begotten by the devil on a virgin of the tribe of Dan, and who is to reign three years and a half, and then to be destroyed by Christ, which is a fable of the Papists; but a succession of men is here meant, as a king is used sometimes for an order and succession of kings, (~~scrip~~Deuteronomy 17:18) and an high priest for that whole order, from Aaron's time to the dissolution of it, (~~scrip~~Hebrews 9:7) so here it intends the whole hierarchy of Rome, monks, friars, priests, bishops, archbishops, cardinals, and especially popes, who may well be called “the man of sin”, because notoriously sinful; not only sinners, but sin itself, a sink of sin, monsters of iniquity, spiritual wickednesses in high places: it is not easy to reckon up their impieties, their adulteries, incest, sodomy, rapine, murder, avarice, simony, perjury, lying, necromancy, familiarity with the devil, idolatry, witchcraft, and what not? and not only have they been guilty of the most notorious crimes themselves, but have been the patrons and encouragers of others in sin; by dispensing with the laws of God and man, by making sins to be venial, by granting indulgences and pardon for the worst of crimes, by licensing brothel houses, and countenancing all manner of wickedness; and therefore it is no wonder to hear of the following epithet,

the son of perdition; since these are not only the Apollyon, the king of the bottomless pit, the destroyer, the cause of the perdition of thousands of souls, for the souls of men are their wares; but because they are by the righteous judgment of God appointed and consigned to everlasting destruction; the devil, the beast, and the false prophet, will have their portion together in the lake that burns with fire, (~~scrip~~Revelation 20:10) the same character as here is given of Judas, the betrayer of Christ, (~~scrip~~John 17:12).

Ver. 4. *Who opposeth, &c.*] Or is an opposer, an adversary of Christ, the antichrist; who opposes him in his kingly office, styling himself the head and spouse of the church, assuming to himself all power in heaven and in earth, taking upon him to dispense with the laws of Christ, and to make new ones; who opposes him in his priestly office, by pretending to offer him up again in the sacrifice of the mass, and by making angels and saints departed, intercessors and advocates; and also in his prophetic office, by teaching for doctrines the commandments of men, and setting up unwritten traditions before the word of God, requiring the worshipping of images, angels, and saints, when Christ requires that the Lord God only should be worshipped and served; and by introducing the doctrine of works and of merit instead of grace, and with a multitude of other things, in which he most manifestly appears to be diametrically opposite and contrary to Christ:

and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped.

The Syriac version renders the last clause, **al j dw**, “and religion”; and the Greek word does signify religion, worship, or devotion, as it is translated, in (^{<4173>}Acts 17:23) but here the act of worship is put for the object, and is rightly rendered, “or that which is worshipped”; as it is in the Vulgate Latin version, and in the Arabic version, “or that which is to be worshipped”; and it was usual with the Jews to call God the object of worship, by the name of worship itself, and by which they used to swear: it is said ^{f3} of R.

Benjamin the just, that he was appointed over the alms chest; one time a woman came to him and said, Rabbi, relieve me; he replied to her, **hdwb[h**, “by the worship” (that is, by God who is worshipped) there is nothing in the alms chest: and elsewhere ^{f4} it is said by one, concerning two that were fatherless, for whom the collectors of alms gathered, **hdwb[h**, “by the worship”, they go before my daughter: and a little after, **hdwb[h**, “by the worship”, these things are holy to thee; where the gloss says, it is an oath: and so here the word is to be understood of Deity itself; and the meaning is, that antichrist would exalt himself above all the gods of the Gentiles, who are only nominally, and not by nature, gods; to these were ascribed, some one thing, to some another; one had the government of heaven, another of hell, another of the seas, and an other of the winds, &c. but this haughty creature antichrist assumes to himself all power, both in heaven, earth, and hell. Angels are sometimes called gods, (^{<4173>}Psalm 8:4) because they are sent of God, and sometimes represent him; the popes of Rome have exalted themselves above these; Pope Clement VI. proclaimed

a jubilee, and promised forgiveness of sins to all that should come to Rome; and in his bull for it says, that

“if any that was confessed should die by the way, he should be free from all his sins; “and we do command the angels”, that they take such a soul out of purgatory entirely absolved, and introduce it into the glory of paradise:”

and in a manuscript in the library at Helmsted are these words,

“we command the angels that they carry such a soul into Abraham's bosom, as soon as it has left the body:”

kings and civil magistrates are called gods, (¹⁹⁸¹⁶Psalm 82:6) and this monster of iniquity and firstborn of Satan, the popes of Rome, have exalted themselves above these; they have not only took upon them to excommunicate emperors and kings, but to depose them, and take away their crowns from them, and give their kingdoms to others, and absolve their subjects from allegiance and fidelity to them; an emperor has held a pope's stirrup while he alighted from his horse, and was severely reprimanded for holding the left instead of the right stirrup; and the same emperor held another pope's stirrup while he got on his horse, and who set his foot upon his neck when he absolved him, being before excommunicated by him, using these words in (¹⁹⁹¹³Psalm 91:13) “thou shall tread upon the lion”, &c. An emperor and an empress waited at a pope's gates three days barefoot; another emperor and empress were crowned by the Pope with his feet; he took the crown with his feet, and, they bowing down, put it upon their heads, and then kicked it off; and one of our own kings resigned his crown and the ensigns of his royalty to the Pope's legate, who kept them five days; and when he offered a sum of money to the legate as an earnest of his subjection, to show his master's grandeur, he spurned at it; a king was thrown under a pope's table to lick the bones like a dog, while he was eating: so truly has this passage had its accomplishment in that impious and insolent set of men. Rome is by the Jewish^{f5} writers called “Magdiel”, which signifies “magnifying itself”; the reason is, *l dgtyç*, “because it magnifies itself” above all these^{f6}; that is, above all kingdoms and states: but what is worse, and most dreadfully blasphemous, follows,

so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God; not in the temple of Jerusalem, which was to be destroyed and never to be rebuilt more, and

was destroyed before this man of sin was revealed; but in the church of God, so called, (~~416~~1 Corinthians 3:16 ~~416~~2 Corinthians 6:16) the Ethiopic version renders it, “in the house of God”; for antichrist rose up out of, and in the midst of the church; and it was a true church in which he first appeared, and over which he usurped power and authority; though it has been so corrupted by him, as now to be only nominally so; here he sits, and has homage done him by his creatures, as if he was a god, and is not only stiled Christ's vicar, but a god on earth, and our Lord God the Pope; so in the triumphal arch at the entry of Pope Sixtus IV, these lines were put, “*oraculo vocis, mundi moderaris habenas, et merito in terris crederis esse Dens*”; the sense is, that he governed the world by his word, and was deservedly believed to be God on earth; and their canon law^{f7} says,

“it is clearly enough shown, that the Pope cannot be loosed or bound by any secular power; since it is evident that he is called God by that pious prince, Constantine, and it is manifest that God cannot be judged by men:”

and Pope John XXII is expressly called^{f8} “our Lord God the Pope”: the Ethiopic version reads, “he shall say to all, I am the Lord God”; (see ~~450~~Ezekiel 28:2), the Alexandrian copy, and some others, and the Vulgate Latin version, leave out the phrase, “as God”, but the Syriac retains it: however, the same blasphemy is expressed in the next clause,

shewing himself that he is God; by usurping a power over the consciences and souls of men; by dispensing with the laws of God and man; by assuming to himself all power in heaven and in earth; by taking upon him to open and shut the gates of heaven at pleasure; and by pardoning sin, which none but God can do; this is the mouth speaking blasphemies, (~~413~~Revelation 13:5,6).

Ver. 5. *Remember ye not, that when I was yet with you, &c.*] At Thessalonica, for the apostle had been there in person, and had preached there with great boldness and success; he had declared the whole counsel of God, and the Gospel came in power and worked effectually in them, and yet there was too great a forgetfulness of it; with which the apostle tacitly charges them, and rebukes them gently for it; and as a faithful monitor, stirs up their pure minds by way of remembrance, and reminds them of former truths delivered to them:

I told you these things: or “words” as the Arabic version; concerning the coming of Christ as that it would not be yet, that there, must be a defection from the faith, and antichrist must be revealed; which shows that these were things of moment and importance, and were useful and profitable to be insisted on; and therefore the apostle had told them of them, and spoke freely and largely about them, at his first preaching among them, and were what he inculcated everywhere; and also that his doctrine was all of a piece at one time as another; it was not yea and nay, or contradictory; what he now said was no other than what he had said before; and therefore it was the more inexcusable in them, to be shaken or troubled by any means with another doctrine.

Ver. 6. *And now ye know what withholdeth,* &c.] Or hinders the revelation of the man of sin, or antichrist; by which is meant not the Apostle Paul, though he by his ministry was a very great hinderance of the growth of error, and the spread of evil practices in the churches, and so of the more open appearance of the man of sin in his forerunners; and after his departure from Ephesus, and imprisonment at Rome, and suffering death, there was a great falling off in the churches, and among professors of religion, which made way for the manifestation of antichrist in due time: nor the preaching of the Gospel, in its power and purity, in the several parts of the world; though so long as this obtained, got ground, and gained success, the man of sin could not show his head; and therefore it must, as it did, decline, and was gradually taken away that he might appear: nor the Spirit of God, as the spirit of truth and holiness, though as long as he continued in his gifts and operations of grace in the churches, they were preserved from antichristian doctrine and worship; but when he removed from them, this enemy and adversary of Christ and his Gospel came in like a flood: nor the general defection in (^{scribes} 2 Thessalonians 2:3) though that was to be previous to the revelation of antichrist, and was to be what would usher him in; nor could he appear until the wickedness of men was come to a pitch, that they would be ready to receive him, and pay homage and worship to him: nor is the decree of God meant, though till the time came fixed by God for his appearance, the decree must be a bar in his way; since as there is a time for every purpose, nothing can come to pass till that time comes: but by that which withheld, let or hindered the open appearance of antichrist, were the Roman empire and emperors; these stood in his way, and while this empire lasted, and the emperors wore the imperial crown, and sat on the throne, and held the government in their

hands, the popes could not come at the height of their ambition, dignity, and authority, nor shine in their glory; nor could the whore of Babylon take her seat, and sit upon the seven hills of Rome until the Roman emperor was taken out of the way: this therefore hindered,

that he might be revealed in his time. The Ethiopic version renders it, “until his time appointed came”: wherefore till the time that God had fixed for the appearance of this monster of iniquity, this son of perdition, the Roman empire must continue, and Roman emperors must keep their place and dignity to prevent his appearance sooner: the reason why the apostle expresses this not in plain words, but in an obscure manner, and with so much caution, was, that he might not offend the Roman emperors, and provoke them to a severe persecution of them as seditious persons, that sought the destruction of the empire: the word here used, which is rendered “withholdeth”, or “letteth”, as in the next verse, signifies a ruler or governor, and answers to the Hebrew word רָחַץ, “to keep back, or restrain”; and which is used of kings, who by their laws and government restrain and withhold people from doing what they would; (see ^{<0097>}1 Samuel 9:17 ^{<4411>}2 Chronicles 14:11) to which the apostle, who well understood the Hebrew language, doubtless had reference; so רָחַץ צַרְמָי, is rendered, “a magistrate”, in (^{<0787>}Judges 18:7).

Ver. 7. *For the mystery of iniquity doth already work, &c.]* Or “the mystery of that wicked one”, as the Syriac; meaning either antichrist himself, and the spirit of antichrist, which were already in the world, (^{<6128>}1 John 2:18 4:2), “mystery” being one of the names of antichrist, (^{<6175>}Revelation 17:5) and anciently this word was engraven on the mitres of the popes of Rome: or the evil doctrines and practices of antichrist may be intended; for as the doctrine of the Gospel is called a mystery, and the mystery of godliness; so the doctrines and practices of antichrist may be called the mystery of iniquity, especially as they were now secretly spread, imbibed, and practised: the foundations of it were now laying in the church by false teachers; for errors and heresies of every sort, respecting the person and offices of Christ, and in opposition to them, were now broached; idolatry, and holding communion with idolaters, now obtained; worshipping of angels was used by some; and superstition and will worship, worship after the commandments of men, were practised; days, and months, and years, distinguished by Jews and Pagans, and difference of meats, were observed; celibacy and virginity began to be admired and

commended; dominion and magistracy were despised, and church authority contemned, and many, as Diotrephes, loved to have the pre-eminence; and the doctrine of justification by the works of the law was industriously spread, and zealously preached and received; all which laid the foundation, and are the life and soul of popery:

only he who now letteth, will let, until he be taken out of the way; that is, the Roman empire and Roman emperors, and which were by degrees entirely removed, and so made way for the revelation of this wicked one: and which was done partly by Constantine the emperor receiving the Christian faith, whereby the Roman empire as Pagan ceased; and by increasing the riches of the church, and feeding the pride, ambition, and covetousness of the bishops, especially the bishop of Rome; and next by removing the seat of the empire from Rome to Byzantium, which he called Constantinople: here the Greek emperors continued in succession, and neither they themselves, nor even their exarchs, resided at Rome, but at Ravenna; so that way was made for antichrist to come to his seat, and there was nothing to rival and eclipse the grandeur, power, and glory of the Roman popes: and that which let was also taken out of the way, by the division of the empire, by Theodosius, giving to his elder son Arcadius, the eastern, and to the younger, Honorius, the western parts of it: the eastern empire was in process of time seized upon and possessed by Mahomet and the Saracens; and the western empire was overrun by the Goths, Vandals, and Huns, and became extinct about the year 476, in Augustulus, the last of the Roman emperors, who was obliged to abdicate the government by Odoacer king of the Heruli; when the kingdom of the Lombards took place in Italy, and afterwards that was translated to Charles the great, king of the French; so that there was nothing more of the Roman empire remaining than the bare name, as at this day; and by this means the popes of Rome got to the height of their power and glory, which is meant by the revelation of the man of sin.

Ver. 8. *And then shall that wicked be revealed,* &c.] That lawless one, who sets himself above the laws of God and man, and dispenses with them at pleasure, who judges all men, but is judged by no man; as he was in his ecclesiastical power, when Phocas, who murdered the Emperor Mauritius, granted to Boniface III. to be called universal bishop; and in his civil power in succeeding popes, who took upon them the power over kings and emperors, to crown, depose, and excommunicate at pleasure:

whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth: that is, the “Lord Jesus”, as the Alexandrian copy, and Vulgate Latin version read; and the Syriac version, “our Lord Jesus”: who is Lord of lords, and God over all; and so able to do what he is here said he shall do: and which he will do

with the Spirit of his mouth; meaning either the Holy Spirit, the third person which proceeds from him, as in (⁴³³⁶Psalm 33:6), and so the Ethiopic version, “whom the Spirit of our Lord Jesus shall cast out”; Christ will by his Spirit blow a blast upon antichrist and his kingdom, which he shall never recover again, but ever after consume and waste away: or else by his spirit is meant his Gospel; the Scriptures in general are the breath of God, being divinely inspired by him, and are the sword of the Spirit, the twoedged sword of law and Gospel, which proceeds out of Christ's mouth; the Gospel contains the words of Christ, which are spirit and life; these come out of his mouth, and are sharper than any twoedged sword; and as hereby sinners are cut to the heart, hewn and slain, convicted and converted, so by this likewise antichrist will be consumed, and is consuming; for this phrase denotes the beginning of his destruction, which took place at the time of the reformation by the preaching of the Gospel by Luther and others; by which this man of sin received his deadly wound, and has been in a consumption ever since, and is sensibly wasting in his power and glory every day, and will ere long come to utter destruction:

and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming; either in a spiritual way, when he shall come in his spiritual kingdom and glory, by the light of his Gospel and the illuminations of his Spirit; when at eventide it shall be light; when he the sun of righteousness shall arise; when latter day light and glory shall appear, and latter day darkness, the gross darkness of Popery, Paganism, and Judaism, which cover the people, shall, be removed, and antichrist in every form shall disappear: or in a personal manner, when he shall come to judge the quick and dead, which will be in flaming fire and great glory; and then will antichrist and his followers, the beast and those that have worshipped him, be cast with the devil and the false prophet into the lake which burns with fire and brimstone; and this will be the last and utter end of him. In this passage there is a manifest reference to (²³¹⁰Isaiah 11:4), “with the breath of his mouth shall he slay the wicked”: which the Targumist paraphrases,

“with the words of his lips he shall slay a[yçr swl ymra,
“Armillus the wicked”.”

and which the Jews say will be done by the Messiah at his coming;

“for so ^{f9} (say they) that phrase in (⁴⁶²¹⁸Deuteronomy 22:8) “if a man fall from thence”, has respect to Armillus the wicked, who at the coming of our Messiah will be slain, as it is said in (²³¹⁰⁴Isaiah 11:4)”

This Armillus, the Jews say ^{f10}, is the head of all idolatry, the tenth king who shall reign at Rome, the city of Satan; that he shall rise up after Gog and Magog, and shall go up to Jerusalem, and slay Messiah ben Joseph, and shall himself be slain by Messiah the son of David; yea, they say expressly ^{f11}, it is the same whom the Gentiles call antichrist: it is the same with Romulus the first king of the Romans, and designs a Roman, the Roman antichrist; and it may be observed, that the Targumist interprets “the breath of his mouth”, by his word; and so says another of their writers ^{f12},

“the meaning is by the word of his lips, for the word goes out of the mouth with the vapour and breath:”

such an expression as this is said ^{f13} to be used by Moses, when he was bid by God to answer the angels who objected to his having the law given him;

“I am afraid (says he) they will slay (or burn me), $\mu\eta\upsilon\eta\beta\omicron\varsigma$ | $b\eta\eta b$,
“with the breath of their mouth:”

much more may this be feared from the breath of Christ's mouth.

Ver. 9. *Even him whose coming is after the working of Satan,* &c.] That is, as a deceiver, a liar, and a murderer; for such was the working of Satan with our first parents; he seduced Eve, not only by subtlety, but by lying; he abode not in the truth, is the father of lies, and a murderer from the beginning: and such is the working of antichrist his firstborn; he comes in a deceitful way, under a profession of Christ, and a pretension of faith in him, and love to him; but speaks lies in hypocrisy, for such are his doctrines and tenets; and is not only a murderer of the bodies of the saints, but of the souls of men; which are the wares the whore of Babylon deals in:

with all power; not omnipotence, for that is peculiar to God, and is not in Satan nor in antichrist, though the latter assumes to himself all power in heaven and in earth, and claims a jurisdiction both temporal and spiritual over men; but rather this means great power, or all kind of power of doing miracles, as follows:

and signs, and lying wonders; that is, such signs and miracles as are not real, but reigned, only in appearance, not in truth, like those that were done by the magicians of Egypt; and these were done to countenance lies, and to induce persons to believe them; and how many miracles and lying wonders the church of Rome pretends to, everybody knows.

Ver. 10. *And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness*, &c.] Not that he deceives, or goes about to deceive, or thinks to deceive by open unrighteousness; but by unrighteousness, under a pretence of righteousness and holiness; as with the doctrines of justification and salvation by a man's own righteousness, with the doctrines of merit and of works of supererogation, which are taking to men, and by which they are deceived, and are no other than unrighteousness with God, and betray ignorance of his righteousness, and a non-submission to it; as also with practices which carry a show of holiness, religion, and devotion, when they are no other than acts of impiety, superstition, and will worship; as their litanies and prayers, their worship of images, angels, and saints departed, their frequent fasts and festivals, their pilgrimages, penance, and various acts of mortification and the like: but then these deceptions only have place

in them that perish; whom the god of this world has blinded, from whom the Gospel is hid, and to whom it is foolishness: all men indeed are in a lost perishing condition, through original and actual sin; but all shall not perish, there are some that God will not have perish, whom Christ is given for that they should not perish, and whom he has redeemed by his blood, and to whom he gives eternal life; but there are others that are vessels of wrath afore ordained to condemnation, reprobate men left to themselves, and given up to their hearts' lusts; and these, and only these, are finally and totally deceived, by the signs and lying wonders, and false appearances of antichrist; (see ¹¹⁸¹Matthew 24:24)

because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved; by the "truth" is meant either Christ the truth of types, the sum of promises, in whom the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are, and by whom grace and truth came; or the Gospel, often called truth, and the word of truth, it coming from the God of truth, has for its subject Christ the truth, is dictated and directed into by the spirit of truth, and contains nothing but truth: and by "the love" of it is meant, either the loveliness of it, for truth is an amiable, lovely thing, in its nature and use; or an affection for it, which there is, where true faith in it is, for faith works by love: there

may be a flashy affection for the truths of the Gospel, where there is no true faith in Christ, or the root of the matter is not, as in the stony ground hearers; and there may be an historical faith in the doctrines of the Gospel, where the power of them is denied, and there is no true hearty love for them; and in these persons there is neither faith nor love; the truths of the Gospel are neither believed by them, nor are they affected with them, that so, they might be saved; for where there is true faith in the Gospel of Christ, and in Christ the substance of it, there is salvation; the reason therefore of these men's perishing is not the decree of God, nor even want of the means of grace, the revelation of the Gospel, but their rejection and contempt of it.

Ver. 11. *And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, &c.*] Or “efficacy of error”, which God may be said to send; and the Alexandrian copy reads, “does send”; because it is not a bare permission but a voluntary one; or it is his will that error should be that truth may be tried, and be illustrated by its contrary, and shine the more through the force of opposition to it; and that those which are on the side of it might be made manifest, as well as that the rejecters of the Gospel might be punished; for the efficacy of error is not to be considered as a sin, of which God cannot be the author, but as a punishment for sin, and to which men are given up, and fall under the power of, because they receive not the love of the truth, which is the reason here given: and this comes to pass partly through God's denying his grace, or withholding that light and knowledge, by which error may be discovered and detected; and by taking from men the knowledge and conscience of things they had, (see ⁴¹²Romans 1:28). So that they call evil good, and good evil, and do not appear to have the common sense and reason of mankind, at least do not act according to it; and by giving them up to judicial blindness and hardness of heart, and to the god of this world, to blind their minds; and without this it is not to be accounted for, that the followers of antichrist should give into such senseless notions as those of transubstantiation, works of supererogation, &c., or into such stupid practices as worshipping of images, praying to saints departed, and paying such a respect to the pretended relics of saints, &c., as they do; but a spirit of slumber is given them, and eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear, because of their rejection of the Gospel: and

that they should believe a lie; that the pope is Christ's vicar on earth, and has power to forgive sins; that the bread and wine in the Lord's supper are transubstantiated into the very body and blood of Christ; with other lying

tenets spoken in hypocrisy concerning good works, merit, pardon, penance; &c. with a multitude of lying wonders and false miracles, of which their legends are full; and this is the first and more near end of strong delusion or efficacious error being sent them; the more remote and ultimate one follows.

Ver. 12. *That they all might be damned*, &c.] Or judged, discerned and distinguished from true Christians and real believers, or rather that they might be condemned and punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and have their portion in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone; where the devil, the false prophet, and the beast, whose followers they are, will be cast; and it is but a righteous thing with God to give them up to such delusion,

that they may be damned, since they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved; and the following character of them justifies the divine procedure:

who believed not the truth; neither the word of truth, the Gospel of salvation, nor Christ, who is truth itself; and therefore were righteously given up to believe a lie; and whose damnation is just, according to the declaration of Christ, he that believeth not shall be damned:

but had pleasure in unrighteousness; in sin, as all unrighteousness is; in sinful ways and works, and in unrighteous doctrines; as the doctrines of merit, of works of supererogation, and of justification by works, being derogatory to the justice of God, and to the righteousness of Christ; and in the unrighteous persecution and bloodshed of the saints, the martyrs of Jesus; in which the followers of antichrist take as much delight and pleasure, as an intemperate man does in drinking wine or strong drink to excess; and therefore the whore of Babylon is said to be drunk with the blood of the saints; and it is but just she should have blood to drink, or be punished both with temporal and eternal destruction.

Ver. 13. *But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you*, &c.] Lest the saints should be discouraged by the above account of antichrist, and his followers, and fear they should be left to the same deceptions, and damnation be their portion; the apostle being persuaded better things of them, gives their character, and represents their case in a quite different light; and signifies, that he and his fellow ministers were under obligation to be continually thankful to God for what he had done for them; for as

God is the Father of mercies, whether spiritual or temporal, thanks are to be given to him; and saints are not only to bless his name for what they themselves receive from him, but for what others enjoy also, and that continually; because spiritual blessings, especially such as are afterwards instanced in, are permanent and durable, yea, everlasting: the characters which show them to be different from the followers of antichrist, are

brethren, beloved of the Lord or “of God”, as the Vulgate Latin and Ethiopic versions read: they were the brethren of Christ, being the dear children of God, born of him, and belonging to his family, and of the apostles, and of one another, being of the household of faith; and they were beloved by God the Father, as the instances of their election to salvation by him, and their calling to eternal glory, show; and by the Lord Jesus Christ, who had wrought out for them the salvation they were chosen to; and by the Lord the Spirit, by whom they were regenerated, called, sanctified, and brought to the belief of the truth; and since they had interest in the everlasting love of the three divine Persons, there was no danger of their falling away and perishing. The reason of the apostle's thanksgiving for the persons thus described is,

because God hath from, the beginning chosen you to salvation; which is to be understood, not of an election of them, as a nation, for they were not a nation, only a part of one; nor of them as a church, for they were not so from the beginning; nor to the outward means of grace, the ministry of the word and ordinances, for the choice is unto salvation; nor to any office, for they were not all officers in the church, only some; nor does it intend the effectual calling, for that is distinguished from it in the following verse; but an eternal appointment of persons to grace and glory: and this is an act of God the Father, in Christ, from eternity; and which arises from his sovereign good will and pleasure, and is an instance of his free grace and favour, for the glorifying of himself; and is irrespective of the faith, holiness, and good works of men; all which are the fruits and effects, and not the motives, conditions, or causes of electing grace. This act is the leading one to all other blessings of grace, as justification, adoption, calling, and glorification, and is certain and immutable in itself, and in its effects. The date of it is “from the beginning”: not from the beginning of the preaching of the Gospel to them, and the sense be, that, as soon as the Gospel was preached, they believed, and God chose them; for what was there remarkable in them, that this should be peculiarly observed of them? The Bereans are said to be more noble than they were: nor from the

beginning of their calling, for predestination or election precedes calling; (see ^{<4880>}Romans 8:30) nor from the beginning of time, or of the creation of the world, but before the world began, even from eternity; and in such sense the phrase is used in (^{<4083>}Proverbs 8:23) and that it is the sense of it here, is manifest from (^{<4004>}Ephesians 1:4) where this choice is said to be before the foundation of the world. The end to which men, by this act, are chosen, is “salvation”: not temporal, though the elect of God are appointed to many temporal salvations and deliverances, and which they enjoy both before and after conversion; yet salvation here designs the salvation of the soul, though not exclusive of the body, a spiritual and an eternal salvation, salvation by Jesus Christ, as is expressed in (^{<3189>}1 Thessalonians 5:9) and the same decree that appoints men to salvation, appoints Christ to be the Saviour of them; and there is salvation in and by no other. The means through which this choice is made, are

through sanctification of the spirit, and belief of the truth by sanctification is meant, not anything external, as reformation of life, obedience to the law, or outward submission to Gospel ordinances; but internal holiness, which lies in a principle of spiritual life in the soul, and in a principle of spiritual light on the understanding; in a flexion of the will to the will of God, and the way of salvation by Christ; in a settlement of the affections on divine and spiritual things, and in an implantation of all grace in the heart; and is called the sanctification of “the spirit”, partly from the spirit or soul of man being the principal seat of it, and chiefly from the Spirit of God being the author of it; and this being a means fixed in the decree of election to salvation, shows that holiness is not the cause of election, yet is certain by it, and is necessary to salvation; and that the doctrine of election is no licentious doctrine, since it provides for and secures true and real holiness. “Truth” designs either the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the truth of types and promises, and the substance of the truth of the Gospel, in whom it lies, and by whom it comes; or the Gospel itself, which comes from the God of truth, lies in the Scriptures of truth, is dictated and directed into by the spirit of truth; the sum of it is Christ the truth, and has nothing in it but truth. The “belief” or “faith” of this intends, not an historical faith, or a mere assent to truth; but a cordial embracing of it, a receiving of the love of the truth, a feeling of the power of it unto salvation, and a believing in Christ, the substance of it; which is a seeing of him spiritually, and a going out of the soul to him in acts of hope; reliance, trust, and dependence; and this being also a means settled in the choice of men to salvation, makes it

appear, that faith is no cause of election, but the effect of it; that it is necessary to salvation, and therefore appointed as a means; that it is certain to the elect by it, and that they therefore cannot be finally and totally deceived, or be carried away with the error of the wicked, or with the deceivableness of unrighteousness with which antichrist works.

Ver. 14. *Whereunto he called you by our Gospel, &c.*] Salvation being appointed as the end in the decree of election, and sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth, as means; the elect in the effectual calling are called to the participation of each of these; first to the one, and then to the other; to grace here, and glory hereafter: and the means by which they are called is the Gospel, which the apostle calls “our Gospel”, not because they were the authors, or the subject of it; for with regard to these it is styled the Gospel of God, and the Gospel of Christ; but because they were intrusted with it, and faithfully preached it, and in opposition to another Gospel published by false teachers. And by this they were called

to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ; not his essential glory, though he will be seen and known in the glory of his person as he is, so far as creatures in a state of perfection will be capable of; nor his mediatorial glory, though it will be one part of the saints' happiness in heaven to behold this glory of Christ; but rather the glory which shall be personally put upon the saints, both in soul and body, in the resurrection morn, is here intended: and which is called the glory of Christ, because it is in his hands for them; and is what he is preparing for them, and for which he gives them both a right and a meetness; and which he at last will introduce them into; and it will lie greatly in conformity to him, and in the everlasting vision and enjoyment of him: and now God's elect are called by the ministry of the word to “the obtaining” of this, not by any merit of theirs, or by any works of righteousness done by them, but to the “possession” of it, as the word used properly signifies. The Syriac version renders it, “that ye may be a glory to our Lord Jesus Christ”: as the saints will be at the last day, and to all eternity, when they shall be raised again, and have the glory of God upon them, and be forever with the Lord.

Ver. 15. *Therefore, brethren, stand fast, &c.*] In the doctrine of the Gospel in general, and in the article of Christ's second coming in particular, and not in the least waver about the thing itself, nor be shaken in mind, and troubled as if it was just at hand; and the rather it became them to be concerned that they stood fast in the truth, and persevered unto the end,

since there was to be a falling away, and the mystery of iniquity was already working, and antichrist would shortly appear, whose coming would be with all deceivableness, of unrighteousness; and they had the greater encouragement to continue firm and unmoved, seeing they were chosen from eternity unto salvation through sanctification and belief of the truth, and were called in time by the Gospel to the enjoyment of the glory of Christ in another world.

And hold the traditions which ye have been taught: meaning the truths of the Gospel, which may be called traditions, because they are delivered from one to another; the Gospel was first delivered by God the Father to Jesus Christ, as Mediator, and by him to his apostles, and by them to the churches of Christ; whence it is called the form of doctrine delivered to them, and the faith once delivered to the saints: and also the ordinances of the Gospel which the apostles received from Christ, and as they received them faithfully delivered them, such as baptism and the Lord's supper; as well as rules of conduct and behaviour, both in the church, and in the world, even all the commandments of Christ, which he ordered his apostles to teach, and which they gave by him; (see ^{<STR6>}2 Thessalonians 3:6 ^{<STR1>}1 Thessalonians 4:2). And so the Syriac version here renders it, “the commandments”: and these were such as these saints had been taught by the apostles, under the direction of Christ, and through the guidance of his Spirit; and were not the traditions of men or the rudiments of the world, but what they had received from Christ, through the hands of the apostles:

whether by word, or our epistle, that is, by “our” word, as well as by our epistle, and so the Arabic version reads; these doctrines, ordinances, and rules of discipline were communicated to them, both by word of mouth, when the apostles were in person among them, and by writing afterwards to them; for what the apostles delivered in the ministry of the word to the churches, they sent them in writing, that they might be a standing rule of faith and practice; so that this does not in the least countenance the unwritten traditions of the Papists; and since these were what were taught them, “viva voce”, and they received them from the mouth of the apostles, or by letters from them, or both, it became them to hold and retain them fast, and not let them go, either with respect to doctrine or practice.

Ver. 16. *Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, &c.*] The apostle having exhorted the saints to perseverance, closes this second part of his epistle, relating to the coming of Christ, with a prayer for the saints, that they

might be comforted and established. The objects addressed are Christ and the Father. And in each of their characters are reasons contained, encouraging to believe the petitions will be regarded; for it is “our Lord Jesus Christ himself” who is prayed unto; who is our Lord, not by creation only, in which sense he is Lord of all, but by redemption, and through a marriage relation; and he is our Jesus, our Saviour, and Redeemer; and our Christ, the anointed prophet, priest, and King; even he himself, who stands in these relations and offices; and what may not be expected from him?

and God, even our Father; not by creation, but by adoption; and as it is in his power, he has a heart to give, and will give good things unto his children: and inasmuch as Christ is equally addressed as the object of prayer as the Father, and is indeed here set before him, or first mentioned, it may be concluded that there is an entire equality between them, and that Christ is truly and properly God; otherwise religious worship, of which prayer is a considerable branch, would not be given him, nor would he be set upon an equal foot with the other, and much less before him. The Arabic version reads, “our Lord Jesus Christ, our Father”; and the Ethiopic version also, “our Lord Jesus Christ, God our Father”; as if the whole of this, or all these epithets and characters, belong to Christ, and he was the only person addressed; but the common reading is best: which hath loved us; this refers both to the Father and to Christ. The Father had loved them with an everlasting and unchangeable love, as appeared by his choosing them unto salvation by Christ, securing them in his hands, and making an everlasting covenant with him, on their account; by sending his Son to be the Saviour of them; by regenerating, quickening, and calling them by his grace, adopting them into his family, pardoning all their sins, justifying their persons, and giving them both a meetness for, and a right unto eternal glory. And Christ, he had loved them with the same love; and which he showed by undertaking their cause in the council of peace; by espousing their persons in the covenant of grace; by assuming their nature in the fulness of time; by dying in their room and stead; and by his continued intercession and mediation for them, and by many other instances. And since they had such a share in the affection both of the Father and the Son, it need not to have been doubted but that what was prayed for would be granted: to which is added,

and hath given us everlasting consolation: all true solid consolation is from God and Christ: God is called the God of all comfort; and if there be any real consolation, it is in, by, and from Christ; and it is the gift of God,

an instance of his grace and favour, and not a point of merit; the least degree of consolation is not deserved, and ought not to be reckoned small: and it is everlasting; it does not indeed always continue, as to the sensible enjoyment of it, in this life, being often interrupted by indwelling sin, the hidings of God's and the temptations of Satan, yet the ground and foundation of it is everlasting; such as the everlasting love of God, the everlasting covenant of grace, the everlasting righteousness of Christ, and everlasting salvation by him, and he himself, who is the consolation of Israel, as well as the blessed Spirit, the Comforter, who ever abides as the earnest and pledge of future happiness. And the present spiritual joy of the saints is what no man can take away from them, and what will eventually issue in everlasting consolation, without any interruption in the world to come, when sorrow and sighing shall flee away, and all tears be wiped from their eyes:

and good hope through grace. The Syriac version reads, “in his grace”; and the Ethiopic version, “a good hope; and his grace”, hope, as well as faith, is the gift of God, a free grace gift of his: and it may be called a good one, because God is the author of it; and it is built on a good foundation, the person, blood, and righteousness of Christ; and is of good things to come, and therefore called the blessed hope; and is what is sure and certain, and will never deceive, nor make ashamed; and since consolation is given here, and hope of happiness hereafter, it may be concluded the following requests will be regarded.

Ver. 17. *Comfort your hearts,* &c.] That is, apply the comfort given, and cause it to be received, which unbelief is apt to refuse; and increase it, by shedding abroad the love of Christ, and of the Father; by the discoveries of pardoning grace; by the application of Gospel promises; by the word and ordinances, which are breasts of consolation; and by indulging with the gracious presence, and comfortable communion of Father, Son, and Spirit. The Arabic version reads, “comfort your hearts by his grace”, joining the last clause of the preceding verse to this. This petition stands opposed to a being troubled and distressed about the sudden coming of Christ, as the following one does to a being shaken in mind on that account, (²Thess. 2:2).

And stablish you in every good word and work; that is, in every good word of God, or truth of the Gospel, which contains good tidings of good things, so as not to waver about them, or stagger in them, or to depart from them;

in practice of every duty, so as to be steadfast, and immoveable, and always abounding therein; good words and good works, principles and practices, should go together, and the saints stand in need of stability in both. For though, as to their state and condition, they are established in the love of God, in the covenant of grace, in the arms of Christ, and in him the foundation, so as they can never be removed; yet they are often very unstable, not only in their frames, and in the exercise of grace, but in their attachment and adherence to the Gospel and interest of Christ, and in the discharge of duty.

CHAPTER 3

INTRODUCTION TO 2 THESSALONIANS 3

In this chapter the apostle requests of the Thessalonians, that they would pray for him, and other Gospel ministers; and he puts up prayers for them, gives them rules about dealing with disorderly persons, and concludes the epistle with his usual salutation. The request to pray for ministers is in (~~STR1~~2 Thessalonians 3:1) the petitions to be made for them are, that their ministry might be succeeded, and their persons preserved and delivered from evil minded men, destitute of faith in Christ, (~~STR1~~2 Thessalonians 3:1-2) and, for the consolation of the saints, observes the faithfulness of God engaged in their behalf to establish them in the faith they had, and to preserve them from everything and person that is evil, (~~STR1~~2 Thessalonians 3:3) and expresses his confidence in them with respect to their walk and conversation, (~~STR1~~2 Thessalonians 3:4) and then prays for them that their hearts might be directed into the love of God, and patience of Christ, (~~STR1~~2 Thessalonians 3:5). And next follows an order to withdraw from every disorderly walker, particularly idle and slothful persons, (~~STR1~~2 Thessalonians 3:6) and from such a lazy idle life the apostle dissuades by his own example, who behaved not disorderly, nor ate the bread of others, but wrought with his own hands, though he had a right to a maintenance without it, but did this to set an example to them, (~~STR1~~2 Thessalonians 3:7-9). He puts them in mind of a precept of his when among them, that such who would not work should not eat, (~~STR1~~2 Thessalonians 3:10) and the order he now gave, and the precept he reminds them of, were not without reason; seeing there were disorderly idle persons, and busy bodies, among them, whom the apostle exhorts and beseeches, in the name of Christ, to be industrious, and eat their own bread, as the fruit of their labours, (~~STR1~~2 Thessalonians 3:11,12) and as for the other members of the church, he exhorts them to diligence and constancy in well doing, and to mark those that were incorrigible, and have no conversation with them, yet dealing with them not as enemies, but admonishing them as brethren, (~~STR1~~2 Thessalonians 3:13-15). And closes all with prayers, that the Lord would give them peace, and grant his presence to them, and with his usual salutation, written with his own hand, as a token of this being a genuine

epistle of his, and by which every epistle of his might be known, (^{SCB16}2 Thessalonians 3:16-18).

Ver. 1. *Finally, brethren, pray for us, &c.*] The apostle now proceeds to the last and closing part of the epistle, which respects church discipline, and the removing of disorderly persons from their communion; and introduces it with a request to pray for him, and the rest of his fellow ministers, particularly Silvanus and Timothy, who joined with him in this epistle: he signifies that nothing more remained; this was the last he had to say, that they, “the brethren”, not the preachers of the word only, but the members of the church, would be solicitous for them at the throne of grace; as it becomes all the churches, and the several members of them, to pray for their ministers: with respect to their private studies, that they might be directed to suitable subjects; that their understandings might be opened to understand the Scriptures; that their gifts might be increased, and they be more and more fitted for public service: and with respect to their public ministrations, that they be brought forth in the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ; that they have a door of utterance given them to preach the Gospel freely and boldly, as it ought to be spoken; and that their ministry be blessed to saints and sinners: and with respect to the world, and their conduct in it, that they be kept from the evil of it, and so behave as to give none offence, that the ministry be not blamed; and that they be not allured by the flatteries, nor intimidated by the frowns of the world, but endure hardness as good soldiers of Christ: and with respect to their persons and state, that their souls may prosper, and that they may have much of the presence of God, and much spiritual joy, peace, comfort, and strength of faith; and that they may enjoy bodily health, and their lives be spared for further usefulness. This request is frequently urged by the apostle; which shows his sense of the importance of the work of the ministry, the insufficiency of men for it, the necessity of fresh supplies of grace, and the great usefulness of prayer. The particular petitions he would have put up follow,

that the word of the Lord may have free course. By “the word of the Lord”, or “of God”, as the Vulgate Latin and Ethiopic versions read, is meant the Gospel; which is of God, and not of man, comes by the Lord Jesus Christ, and is concerning him, his person and offices, and concerning peace, pardon, righteousness, life, and salvation by him, as the subject matter of it: and the request is, that this might “have free course”: or “might run”: be propagated and spread far and near: the ministry of the

word is a course or race, and ministers are runners in it, having their feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace; which is the message they are sent with, and the errand they run upon: which comes from heaven, and is to be carried into all the world, and spread: Satan and his emissaries do all they can to hinder the progress of it; God only can remove all obstructions and impediments; when he works none can let; all mountains become a plain before Zerubbabel. Wherefore the apostle directs to pray to him for it, with what follows,

and be glorified, even as it is with you; the Gospel is glorified when it is attended upon by large numbers, and is heard with a becoming reverence; when it is received in the love of it, is greatly prized and highly esteemed; when it is cordially embraced, and cheerfully obeyed. It is glorified when sinners are converted by it, and the lives of the professors of it are agreeably to it; and thus it was glorified in these several instances at Thessalonica; and therefore the apostle puts them upon praying, that it might be so elsewhere, as there; even “everywhere”, as the Syriac version adds.

Ver. 2. *And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men,* &c.] Either from the unbelieving Jews, (see ^{<515>}Romans 15:30,31) who were the avowed enemies of the Gospel, and did all they could to hinder the spread of it; and who were the implacable and constant adversaries of the apostle; who often lay in wait for him, and opposed him, and gave him trouble in all places, stirring up the people against him: or from the false teachers, and those of their party, who are the false brethren by whom he often was in perils; who were enemies of the cross of Christ, and great hindrances to the spread of the Gospel; being men of absurd principles, and of wicked lives and conversations, whereby they perverted the Gospel of Christ, brought a reproach upon it, stumbled some, and overthrew the faith of others; and from these the apostle desires to be delivered:

for all men have not faith: no man has faith of himself, it is the gift of God, and the operation of his Spirit; and it is only given to the elect of God, who are ordained unto eternal life, and therefore it is called the faith of God's elect; all mankind have it not, none but Christ's sheep; and the reason why others have it not is, because they are not of his sheep. This is a truth; but rather the true sense of the words is, that all that are professors of religion, and members of churches, and even all that are preachers of the word, have not faith. They may have an historical and temporary faith and the faith of

miracles, and even all faith but the true faith; they may profess to believe, and yet not believe, as Simon Magus, and his followers seem to be intended here; for this is given as a reason why the apostle desired to be delivered from the above men. The Jews say^{f14}, that

“he that studies not in the law, *atwnmyhm hyb wal*, “there is no faith in him” — and it is forbidden to come near him, or to trade with him, or to walk with him, “because there is no faith in him”.”

The apostle seems to allude to this custom.

Ver. 3. *But the Lord is faithful*, &c.] Or “God” as the Vulgate Latin and Ethiopic versions read, as do also the Alexandrian and Claromontane copies. This is said for the comfort of the saints, lest they should be discouraged upon hearing that all professors of faith in Christ had it not, who might be ready to take it to themselves, and fear, that either they had it not, or if they had, that they might lose it, and fall from it. Wherefore the apostle observes to them the comfortable attribute of God's faithfulness, which he will not suffer to fail. He has promised many things, and he is faithful that has promised, who also will do them, nor will any good thing he has promised ever fail.

Who shall stablsh you: in the doctrines of the Gospel, so as not to be moved away from them, or be finally and totally seduced by those unreasonable and wicked men; and also in the grace of faith, which though it may be weakened, and there may be a falling from a degree of the steadfastness of it, as to its act and exercise, yet it shall never finally and totally fail, he who is the author will be the finisher of it; and likewise in the profession both of the doctrine and grace of faith, which true believers shall hold fast unto the end; for God will not suffer the righteous to be moved, or to depart from him; he has promised them perseverance, and he is faithful to give it to them.

And keep you from evil: from the evil of sin; not from the being and commission of it entirely, which is not to be expected in this life; but from the dominion of it, at least from its reigning unto death, and from the damning power of it: and also from that evil one Satan; from his snares and temptations, so as to be entangled and overcome by them; for God is faithful, who will not suffer his to be tempted beyond their strength, but will enable them to bear it, and make way for their escape, and deliver out of it; and likewise from evil men, unreasonable and wicked men, so as not

to be drawn aside by them, by their principles and practices, by their frowns or flatteries.

Ver. 4. *And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, &c.*] The ground of confidence concerning them was not in themselves, in their grace, and strength, and wisdom, and conduct, and good behaviour; but in the Lord, in his grace and strength, and in the power of his might, without whom they could do nothing, but through him strengthening them, could do all things.

That ye both do, and will do the things which we command you; referring both to the commandments, which they had already given them by Christ, and they had showed, and continued to show a proper regard unto, (see ^{<SMB>}1 Thessalonians 4:1,2) and also to what would be observed to them, as in (^{<SMB>}2 Thessalonians 3:6,12).

Ver. 5. *And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, &c.*] By which may be meant either the love with which God is loved. This is the sum and substance of the first and chief commandment in the law, and is what every man in a state of nature is destitute of; it is implanted in the heart in regeneration, and is a fruit of the Spirit of God; and where it is it oftentimes grows cold, and needs to be stirred up and rekindled, by the Spirit of God, which may be intended, by a directing of the heart into it, that is, to a lively exercise of it: or else the love with which God loves his people is designed, which is free, sovereign, unchangeable, and from everlasting to everlasting; and to have the heart directed into this, is to be led into it directly; or by a straight line, as the word signifies, and not in a round about way, by works and duties, as the causes or conditions of it; and to be led further into it, so as to wade into these waters of the sanctuary, from the ankles to the knees, and from thence to the loins, and from thence till they become a broad river to swim in; or so as to comprehend the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of this love, and to be rooted and grounded in it, and firmly persuaded of interest in it; and that nothing shall separate from it; and so as to have the heart sensibly affected with it. The phrase of directing the heart to God, and to seek him, is used in the Septuagint, in (^{<HQB>}2 Chronicles 19:3 20:33). And this is not to be done by a believer himself, nor by the ministers of the Gospel: the apostle could not do it, and therefore he prays “the Lord” to do it; by whom is meant the Spirit of God, since he is distinguished from God the Father, into whose love the heart is to be directed, and from Christ, a

patient waiting for whom it is also desired the heart may be directed into; and since it is his work to shed abroad the love of God in the heart, and to lead unto it, and make application of it; and which is a proof of his deity, for none has the direction, management, and government of the heart, but God, (~~3200~~ Proverbs 21:1), and in this passage of Scripture appear all the three Persons; for here is the love of the Father, patient waiting for Christ, the Spirit and the Lord. For it follows, as another branch of the petition,

and into the patient waiting for Christ; or “patience of Christ”, as the Vulgate Latin and Arabic versions render it; and may intend either that patience, of which Christ was the subject; and which appeared in his quiet submission to all that outward meanness he did in his state of humiliation; in bearing the insults and reproaches of men, and the frowardness of his own disciples, in suffering himself to be tempted by Satan; and in bearing the sins of his people, the wrath of God, and strokes of justice in the manner he did: and for the saints to have their hearts directed into this patience of Christ, is of great use unto them, to endear Christ unto, them; to lead them into the greatness of his love, and also of his person; and to make them more patient under the cross, when they consider him, and have him for an example. Or else it may respect the grace of patience, which he is the author of, for all grace comes from him; and he from hence may be called the God of patience, as his word, which is the means of it, is the word of his patience; and it is by his strength that saints are strengthened unto all patience, and longsuffering: and to be directed into this, or to the exercise of it, is of great use under afflictions from the hand of God, and under the reproaches and persecutions of men, and under divine desertions, and want of an answer of prayer, and under the temptations of Satan, and in an expectation of the heavenly glory. And the heart is never more in the exercise of this, than when it is directed into the love of God; (see ~~888D~~ Romans 5:2-5). Or this may refer to that patience of which Christ is the object, and be understood, either of a patient bearing the cross for his sake; for every believer has a cross to take up and bear for Christ, and which is to be borne constantly, cheerfully, and patiently; and nothing more strongly animates to such a patient bearing of it, than a sense of the love of God; so that a being directed into that, leads also to this: or as our version points out the sense, it may be understood of a patient waiting for the second coming of Christ. Christ will certainly come a second time, though when he will come is uncertain; and his coming will be very glorious in itself, and of great advantage to the saints: hence it becomes them, not only to believe it,

hope for it, love it, and look for it, but to wait patiently for it; which being directed to by the Spirit of God, is of great use unto them in the present state of things.

Ver. 6. *Now we command you, brethren,* &c.] The apostle is now come to the main thing itself he has in view in this part of the epistle, which is to encourage a regard to the discipline of God's house; and to exhort this church to excommunicate, or remove from communion, all disorderly persons; and those who are to do this he points out, and calls upon, and even commands; and these are the fraternity, the "brethren", the society of believers, all the members of the church; for to them to whom belongs the power of receiving members, to them only belongs the power of excluding offenders: the executive power lies in the hands of the elders or pastors of churches; they are the persons by whom the church receives or casts out members; but the power of judgment, or of determining who shall be received into, or who shall be removed from communion, lies in the church, and not in the pastors and elders only; whoever therefore take upon them to receive, or refuse, or cast out members of themselves, and at their own pleasure, act the part of Diotrephes, (~~600~~3 John 1:9,10). The authority for removing disorderly persons from communion is an apostolical command, "we command you"; who are the apostles of Christ, immediately sent by him, who had their mission and commission from him, and which were confirmed by miracles; these had a greater power and authority than the ordinary ministers of the word; they were the ambassadors of Christ, stood in his stead, represented him, and acted in his name; what they said, he spake by them; and it was all one as if he had spoke it himself: and that this might appear not to be of them, but of him, it is added,

in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; that is, by his power and authority, if they had any regard to that, or to his honour and glory:

that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly; by a brother is meant, not one in a natural or civil sense, who is so by blood, or by neighbourhood, by being of the same country, or of the same human species, since all are of one blood; but one in an ecclesiastical sense, a church member, who is called a brother, though he may not be really a child of God, one of the brethren of Christ, or born of the Spirit; yet being a fellow citizen with the saints, and of the household of God externally, he bears this character; and such an one only is cognizable by a church, who

have nothing to do to judge them that are without, only them that are within: and “every brother” in this sense falls under their notice; everyone that is a member, whether male or female, for this word includes both; and as the sisters, as well as the brethren, stand in the same relation, are in the same church state, partake of the same ordinances, and enjoy the same privileges, they are obliged to regard the same rules of the Gospel, and duties of religion, and, in case of disorder, to be withdrawn from: and this also regards every brother, of whatsoever state or condition, bond or free, high or low, rich or poor; no partiality is to be used, no preference to be given to one above the other; a poor member in a disorder is not to be bore hard upon, while a rich one is winked and connived at: and it also respects the brethren, whether private members, or officers of the church; for not only the former, but also the latter, when they walk disorderly, whether in the discharge of their office, or in any other part of their conduct, are liable to the notice and censure of the church: and which is only to be done when any of them “walk disorderly”; not for every disorder they are guilty of; there is no man lives without sin; and church members have their infirmities, and will have, as long as they are in the flesh, or in the body; and they are not to be made offenders for a word, or for a single disorder, or for the common infirmities of life; nor are the just to be set aside for a thing of nought, or a small offence, and that not continued in: it is one thing to be guilty of a disorder, and another thing to walk disorderly; which denotes a way, a course, a series of disorder, and proceeding on in it, a going from evil to evil, an increasing to more ungodliness; for walking is a progressive action, and disorderly persons do not stop, but grow worse and worse; for they take pleasure in their disorders; they choose their own ways, and delight in their abominations; the paths of sin are pleasant paths to them: and they are disorderly walkers, who pertinaciously and stubbornly continue in their disorders, notwithstanding the admonitions of private persons, and of the whole church; and of this sort there are such that walk disorderly in the world, in the commission of notorious and scandalous sins, such as uncleanness, intemperance, covetousness, &c. and that walk disorderly in families; as husbands that are not affectionate to their wives, and provide not for their household; and wives that are not in subjection to their husbands; parents that provoke their children to wrath; and children that are disobedient to their parents; masters who give not that which is fit and equal to their servants; and servants that despise their masters because they are brethren, when they should serve them the more cheerfully, because faithful and beloved: and also that walk disorderly in

churches, that fill not up their places, but neglect attendance with the church, on the word and ordinances; and who are contentious and quarrelsome, and will not submit to the sentiments of those who are superior to them in number and sense; and likewise such who entertain bad notions and principles, derogatory to the grace of God, the person and offices of Christ, and the operations of the Spirit; who walk, not in the truth, nor according to the standard of the word of God; and especially such are designed here, who are busy bodies, and idle persons, who work not at all, but live at the tables, and upon the substance of others, as appears from (^{scrib1}2 Thessalonians 3:11). These act contrary to the order and decorum of nations, towns, and families, and to that which God has fixed among mankind; and to the example of God, and Christ as God, who work hither to and jointly together in Providence, and in the government of the world; and to the example which Christ, as man, has set, and to the example of the apostles, and to their commands: wherefore it follows,

and not after the tradition which he received of us; meaning either the Gospel of Christ, which being, preached was received, but the walk and conversation of some was not agreeably to it; or the ordinances of the Gospel, and the precepts of religion which the apostles delivered, and were received, and yet due attendance to them was not given; (see Gill on "^{scrib2}2 Thessalonians 2:15"), or rather that particular injunction concerning quietness, and doing their own business, and working with their own hands, (^{scrib1}1 Thessalonians 4:11). The Vulgate Latin version reads, "which they received of us": the sense is the same; and the Ethiopic version, "and not according to the constitution we appointed them". Now what is commanded to be done to such disorderly persons, by the church, even the whole fraternity, is to "withdraw" themselves from them; by which is meant, not only to distinguish themselves from them by an orderly and regular conversation, and a strict observance of Gospel discipline, which to do is very right; nor barely to curb and restrain the affections towards such persons, lest by carrying it as heretofore, in a kind, tender, and affectionate manner, they should take encouragement from hence to continue in their disorders, as tender parents keep in their affections, and from showing them to their children, when in disorder, and under their corrections, that they might not seem to countenance them in that which is evil, though this is also very proper; nor also merely to contract or shut up the hand to such persons, and refuse to distribute to them, living such an idle life, and in such a disorderly way, though this is what ought to be done; nor does this

phrase only intend a forbidding such persons their houses and their tables, not suffering them to sit at the one, nor even to come into the other, not allowing any company and conversation with them, that they may have no opportunity of indulging their laziness and tale bearing, though so to serve them is highly just and reasonable; nor does it design only a suspension, or a debarring of them from the Lord's table, which ought not to be done to any persons, while they continue in relation to the church, and members of it; but a removal of them from church communion, or an excommunication of them; which is sometimes expressed by rejecting persons, casting them out of the church, and putting them away, and here by withdrawing from them; which are all synonymous phrases, and intend exclusion from the communion of the church. And so the Ethiopic version here renders it, "that ye remove every brother", &c. From this passage we learn who they are that are to be excommunicated or removed from the communion of churches, all disorderly walkers; what the act of excommunication is, it is a withdrawing from them, a separating them from the church, and its communion; and who they are that have the power to do it, the whole fraternity or body of the church; and also the authority for it, an apostolical command, in the name of Christ.

Ver. 7. *For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us, &c.*] The apostle goes on to dissuade from that which denominates persons disorderly walkers, and exposes them to the censure of the church, and that partly by the example of the apostles, and partly by their command. He appeals to them, to their knowledge and judgment, it being a thing well known to them, that they ought to walk as they had the apostles for ensamples; for who should they follow but their spiritual fathers, shepherds, and guides? and especially so far as they were followers of Christ, as they were, in the case referred unto, working with their own hands:

for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; they could appeal to them as witnesses, and God also, how holily, justly, and unblamably they walked among them; (see <sup>^{100>}1 Thessalonians 2:10) and particularly, that they did not live an idle and inactive life among them.

Ver. 8. *Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought &c.*] Or freely, at free cost, without paying for it; he signifies, that what they ate, they bought with their own money, and lived on no man, without giving him a valuable consideration for what they had; though if they had not paid in money for their food, they would not have ate it for nought, since they laboured

among them in preaching the Gospel to them; and such labourers are worthy of their maintenance, (~~2007~~ Luke 10:7) though the former sense is the apostle's here:

but wrought with labour and travail night and day: not only laboriously preaching the Gospel to them, as often as they could have opportunity, but working very hard and incessantly with their hands, at the occupations and trades they had been brought up to; and that of the Apostle Paul's was a tentmaker, at which he sometimes wrought, thereby ministering to his own, and the necessities of others, (~~4107B~~ Acts 18:3 20:34), nor was this inconsistent with his learning and liberal education. It was usual with the Jewish doctors to learn a trade, or follow some business and calling of life; (see Gill on "~~4107B~~ Mark 6:3"). The apostle's end in this was,

that we might not be chargeable to any of you; or burdensome to them, they being for the most part poor; and the apostles being able partly by their own hand labour, and partly by what they received from Philippi, (~~5046~~ Philippians 4:16) to support themselves, chose to that they might not lie heavy upon them, and any ways hinder the spread of the Gospel among them, at its first coming to them. And so Maimonides says the ancient Jewish doctors behaved, and with a like view: wherefore, says he ^{f15},

“if a man is a wise man, and an honourable man, and poor, let him employ himself in some handicraft business, even though a mean one, and not distress men (or be burdensome to them); it is better to strip the skins of beasts that have been torn, than to say to the people, I am a considerable wise (or learned) man, I am a priest, take care of me, and maintain me; and so the wise men have ordered: and some of the greatest doctors have been hewers of wood, and carriers of timber, and drawers of water for the gardens, and have wrought in iron and coals, and have not required anything of the congregation; nor would they take anything of them, when they would have given to them.”

Ver. 9. *Not because we have not power*, &c.] To forbear working, or require a maintenance from the churches to whom we minister, since Christ has ordained, that they that preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel; (see ~~4304~~ 1 Corinthians 9:4-6,14). This the apostle says to preserve their right of claim, when and where they should think fit to make use of it; and lest other ministers of the word, who could not support themselves as they did, should be hurt by such an example; and lest covetous men should

make use of it to indulge their sin, and improve it against the maintenance of Gospel ministers: wherefore the apostle observes to them, that they did not do this, as conscious that they had no right to demand a supply from them,

but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us; for it seems there were many idle lazy persons among them, who either had no callings or trades, or did not attend to them; wherefore the apostles wrought with their own hands, to set an example, who could not for shame but work, when they saw persons in so high an office, and of such a character, working with labour and travail, night and day, among them.

Ver. 10. *For even when we were with you, &c.*] At Thessalonica in person, and first preached the Gospel to them,

we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat; the Ethiopic version reads in the singular number, “when I was with you, I commanded you”; using the above words, which were a sort of a proverb with the Jews, and is frequently used by them, *lyka al yad*, or *sygn al y[]*, “that if a man would not work, he should not eat”^{f16}. And again^{f17},

“he that labours on the evening of the sabbath (or on weekdays), he shall eat on the sabbath day; and he who does not labour on the evening of the sabbath, from whence shall he eat (or what right and authority has he to eat) on the sabbath day?”

Not he that could not work through weakness, bodily diseases, or old age, the necessities of such are to be distributed to, and they are to be taken care of, and provided with the necessaries of life by the officers of the church; but those that can work, and will not, ought to starve, for any assistance that should be given them by the members of the church, or the officers of it.

Ver. 11. *For we hear that there are some, &c.*] This is the reason of the order or command given in (^{STR6}2 Thessalonians 3:6) for withdrawing from disorderly persons. When the apostle was with them, he observed that there were idle persons among them, and therefore gave orders then, that if they would not work, they should not eat; and in his former epistle, having intelligence that there were still such persons among them, he exhorts them to their duty, and puts the church upon admonishing them; and still information is given him, that there were some such persons yet among

them; for as the apostle had the care of all the churches upon him, so he kept a correspondence with them, and by one means or another, by sending messengers to them, or by receiving letters from those he corresponded with, he learned the state of them; and his information was generally good, and what might be depended upon; (see [4011](#) 1 Corinthians 1:11) as it was in this case relating to some persons: which walk among you disorderly; and who they were, and which also explains ([5106](#) 2 Thessalonians 3:6), are immediately observed: working not at all; at their callings, trades, and businesses in which they were brought up, but lived an idle and lazy life: and this was walking disorderly indeed, even contrary to the order of things before the fall, when man was in a state of innocence; for before sin entered into the world, Adam was put into the garden of Eden to keep and dress it; man was created an active creature, and made for work and business; and to live without, is contrary to the order of creation, as well as to the order of civil societies, and of religious ones, or churches, and even what irrational creatures do not.

But are busy bodies; though they work not at all at their own business, yet are very busy in other men's matters, and have the affairs of kingdoms, and cities, and towns, and neighbourhoods, and churches, and families, upon their hands; which they thrust themselves into, and intermeddle with, though they have no business at all with them: these wander from house to house, and curiously inquire into personal and family affairs, are tattlers, full of prate and talk, and, like the Athenians, spend all their time in telling or hearing new things; and they also speak things which they should not; they carry tales from one to another, and privately whisper things to the disadvantage of their fellow creatures and Christians, and backbite and slander them. These are the pests of nations and neighbourhoods, the plagues of churches, and the scandal of human nature; (see [5453](#) 1 Timothy 5:13 [4015](#) 1 Peter 4:15).

Ver. 12. *Now them that are such*, &c.] For this was not the case and character of them all. Did such practices generally obtain, no community, civil or religious, could subsist. And the apostle wisely distinguishes them from others, that the innocent might not be involved in the charge.

We command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ; using both authority and entreaty; taking every way to reclaim them, commanding in the name of Christ and beseeching for the sake of Christ

that with quietness they work: with their own hands, at their proper callings, and so support themselves, provide for their families, and have something to give to them that are in need; by which means they will live peaceable and quiet lives, in godliness and honesty, and not disturb the peace of neighbourhoods, churches, and families:

and eat their own bread; got by their own labour, and bought with their money, and not the bread of others, or that of idleness.

Ver. 13. *But ye, brethren,* &c.] The rest of the members of the church, who were diligent and industrious in their callings, minded their own business, and did not trouble themselves with other men's matters, took care of themselves, and their families, and were beneficent to others:

be not weary in well doing; which may be understood generally of all well doing, or of doing of every good work; which is well done when done according to the will of God, in faith, and from a principle of love, and in the name and strength of Christ, and with a view to the glory of God: or particularly of acts of beneficence to the poor; for though the idle and lazy should not be relieved, yet the helpless poor should not be neglected. This the apostle observes, lest covetous persons should make an handle of this, and withhold their hands from distributing to any, under a notion of their being idle and disorderly; or lest the saints should be tired, and become weary of doing acts of charity through the ingratitude, moroseness, and ill manners of poor people; (see ^{<RB>}Galatians 6:9).

Ver. 14. *And if any man obey not our word,* &c.] Of command, to work quietly, and eat his own bread, now signified “by this epistle”, particularly in (^{<RB>}2 Thessalonians 3:12),

note that man; some read this clause in connection with the preceding phrase, “by this epistle”, or by an epistle; and so the Ethiopic version, “show”, or “signify him by an epistle”; that is, give us notice of it by an epistle, that we may take him under our cognizance, and severely chastise him, according to the power and authority given us by Christ; but that phrase rather belongs to the preceding words: and the clause here respects the notice the church should take of such a person; not in a private way, or merely by way of admonition and reproof, such as is given before rejection from communion; but by the black mark of excommunication; lay him under censure, exclude him from your communion, put a brand upon him as a scabbed sheep, and separate him from the flock; and so the Syriac

version renders it, **çrpty**, “let him be separated from you” and this sense is confirmed by what follows,

and have no company with him; as little as can be in common and civil conversation, lest he should take encouragement from thence to continue in his sin, and lest others should think it is connived at; and much less at the Lord's table, or in a sacred and religious conversation, or in a way of church fellowship and communion:

that he may be ashamed; that he may have his eyes turned in him, as the word signifies, and he may be brought to a sight and sense of his sin, and be filled with shame for it, and loath it, and himself on the account of it, and truly repent of it, and forsake it; and this is the end of excommunication, at least one end, and a principal end of it, to recover persons out of the snare of the devil, and return them from the error of their ways: so the Jews say ^{f18},

“in matters of heaven (of God or religion), if a man does not return privately, **ymyl km**, they “put him to shame” publicly; and publish his sin, and reproach him to his face, and despise and set him at nought until he returns to do well.”

Ver. 15. *Yet count him not as an enemy*, &c.] As an enemy of Christ, and the Christian religion, as the Jews and Pagans were; or as an enemy of all righteousness, as Elymas the sorcerer was; as one that has an implacable hatred to good men, and a persecutor of them, and has an utter aversion to them and their principles; nor deal with him in an hostile, fierce, furious, and passionate manner, as if you were seeking his destruction, and not his restoration. This seems to be levelled against the Jews, who allowed of hatred to incorrigible persons: they say ^{f19},

“an hater that is spoken of in the law, is not of the nations of the world, but of Israel; but how shall an Israelite hate an Israelite? does not the Scripture say, “thou shall not hate thy brother in thine heart?” the wise men say, when a man sees him alone, who has committed a transgression, and he admonishes him, and he does not return, lo, it is **wanwçl hwxm**, “a commandment to hate him” until he repents and turns from his wickedness.”

But admonish, or “reprove” him

as a brother; as one that has been called a brother, and a member of the church, and who, though criminal, has no bitterness in him against the church, or against the name of Christ, and the doctrines of Christ; and therefore should not be treated in a virulent manner, but with a brotherly affection, meekness, compassion, and tenderness; and who indeed is to be reckoned as a brother, while the censure is passing, and the sentence of excommunication is executing on him; for till it is finished he stands in such a relation: though this also may have respect, as to the manner of excommunicating persons, so to the conduct of the church to such afterwards; who are not to neglect them, and much less to treat them as enemies, in a cruel and uncompassionate manner; but should inquire, and diligently observe, what effect the ordinance of excommunication has upon them, and renew their admonitions and friendly reproofs, if possible, to recover them.

Ver. 16. *Now the Lord of peace himself, &c.*] The Prince of peace, who is peaceable himself, and the author of peace in all his churches, and who requires peace, calls for it, and encourages it:

give you peace always by all means; both a conscience peace, through the blood, righteousness, and sacrifice of Christ, and faith in them, which passes all understanding, and which, when he gives, none can take away; and a church peace, being freed from all such disorderly persons and their abettors, the disturbers of it: and indeed, the way to have true peace and prosperity in churches is to keep up the discipline of God's house. The apostle prays for it in faith, upon an observance of the rules he had given; he prays for constant and perpetual peace, which is greatly to be desired; and that it might be had by all means, and in every way through praying, preaching, administering the ordinances, laying on censures, when necessary, and Christian conversation. Some copies, and the Vulgate Latin version, read "in every place"; as well as at Thessalonica.

The Lord be with you all; by his presence, to comfort and refresh; by his power, to keep and preserve; by his grace, to assist; and by his Spirit, to counsel, advise, and direct.

Ver. 17. *The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, &c.*] In writing his epistles, the body and substance of them he used an amanuensis, but the salutation he wrote with his own hand:

which is the token in every epistle; by which they might be known to be true and genuine, and be distinguished from counterfeit ones: and the rather he mentions this, that they might be troubled neither by word, nor by spirit, nor by epistle, as from them, as they had been, (~~sim~~2 Thessalonians 2:2) for it seems that this wicked practice of counterfeiting the epistles of the apostles, or carrying about spurious ones, under their name, began so early; to prevent which, the apostle took this method,

so I write, as follows:

Ver. 18. *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.*] This was the sign or token; (see Gill on “~~sig~~Romans 16:20”) The subscription to this epistle is, “The Second Epistle to the Thessalonians was written from Athens”; though it seems rather to be written from Corinth. In the Syriac version it is said,

“the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, which is written from Laodicea of Pisidia, and sent by the hands of Tychicus.”

FOOTNOTES

- Ft1** -- Synopsis Sacr. Script. Tom. 2:p. 129.
- Ft2** -- Zohar in Genesis fol. 63. 2.
- Ft3** -- T. Bab. Bava Bathra, fol. 11. 1.
- Ft4** -- T. Bab. Taanith, fol. 24. 1.
- Ft5** -- Jarchi in ~~Genesis~~ Genesis 36:43.
- Ft6** -- Abarbinel in Daniel fol. 42. 3.
- Ft7** -- Gratian. Decret. dist. 96. can. "satis".
- Ft8** -- Extrarag. "cum inter".
- Ft9** -- Tzeror Hammor, fol. 148. 2.
- Ft10** -- Apud Buxtorf. Lex. Talmud. col. 221, 222, 223.
- Ft11** -- Abkath Rochel, par. 1. sign. 7. p. 52.
- Ft12** -- In Ohel Moed. fol. 19. 1.
- Ft13** -- T. Bab. Sabbath, fol. 88. 2.
- Ft14** -- Zohar in Leviticus fol. 33. 2.
- Ft15** -- Hilchot Mattanot Anayim, c. 10. sect. 18.
- Ft16** -- Bereshit Rabba, sect. 14. fol. 13. 1. Echa Rabbati, fol. 48. 4. & Midrash Koholet, fol. 65. 4.
- Ft17** -- T. Bab. Avoda Zara, fol. 3. 1.
- Ft18** -- Maimon, Hilch. Deyot, c. 6. sect. 8.
- Ft19** -- Maimon. Hilchot Rotzeach, c. 13. sect. 14.