

The Second Epistle To The Thessalonians



Sermons Outlines

MARK A. COPELAND

The Second Epistle To The Thessalonians

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MarkCopeland@aol.com

The Second Epistle To The Thessalonians

Introduction To The Epistle (1:1-2)

INTRODUCTION

1. In our study of First Thessalonians, we found it to be an epistle...
 - a. Written shortly after the establishment of the church in Thessalonica
 - b. Providing personal reflections (**1 Th 1-3**) and apostolic instructions (**1 Th 4-5**)
 - c. With the theme of "**Holiness In View Of The Coming Of Christ**"
 - d. Mentioning the coming of Christ in each of the five chapters
2. Not longer afterward Paul wrote Second Thessalonians, an epistle...
 - a. Containing three short chapters
 - b. In which the coming of Christ is again an important theme
 - c. Encouraging Christians in time of persecution
 - d. Cautioning them against false conceptions of the Lord's return
3. As we continue to wait for the coming of the Lord...
 - a. There may be times when we are persecuted
 - b. There are certainly many different views of the coming of the Lord

[Therefore this epistle is certainly relevant to our time. Thus we begin a series of lessons based on Second Thessalonians, starting with an "**Introduction To The Epistle**"...]

I. THE AUTHOR (1:1a)

A. PAUL...

1. Confirmed by a reference to his own signature at the end - **2 Th 3:17**
2. Early sources in church history that attribute this letter to Paul include: Clement of Alexandria (200 A.D.), Tertullian (200 A.D.), and Irenaeus (200 A.D.)

B. JOINED BY SILVANUS AND TIMOTHY...

1. **Silvanus**, also known as Silas
 - a. Who together with Paul established the church in Thessalonica - **Ac 17:1-4**
 - b. Who joined Paul in the salutation of the first letter - **1 Th 1:1**
2. **Timothy**, also known as Timotheus
 - a. Paul's son in the faith - cf. **1 Ti 1:2**
 - b. Who also joined Paul in the salutation of the first letter - **1 Th 1:1**
 - c. And served as Paul's emissary to Thessalonica - **1 Th 3:1-2,6**

[Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy were naturally concerned about the welfare of the church in Thessalonica. Let's now review some things about...]

II. THE RECIPIENTS OF THE EPISTLE (1:1b)

A. THE CITY OF THESSALONICA...

1. It was the capital and largest city of the Roman province of Macedonia
2. Located on the Egnatian Way, a major road from Rome to the eastern provinces
3. The city served as a center of trade and commerce
- Today, it is known as Thessaloniki (formerly Salonica)

B. THE CHURCH OF THE THESSALONIANS...

1. Its establishment is recorded in **Ac 17:1-9**
 - a. On his second journey, Paul and his companions had just left Philippi
 - b. Traveling through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they arrived at Thessalonica
 - c. Paul went to the synagogue on the Sabbath as an opportunity for evangelism
 - d. For three weeks he reasoned with the Jews, converting some and a number of prominent Gentiles
 - e. Unbelieving Jews soon caused a disturbance, forcing Paul to leave
2. Despite such ominous beginnings, a strong church was established
 - a. It quickly gained a good reputation - **1 Th 1:8**
 - b. It was mostly Gentiles - **1 Th 1:9**
 - c. Members included Jason (**Ac 17:9**), Aristarchus and Secundus (**Ac 20:4**)
3. From the first letter we learn...
 - a. Persecution of the church had continued, giving Paul grave concern - **1 Th 3:1-5**
 - b. Yet they had remained strong, giving Paul great comfort - **1 Th 3:6-8**

[Encouraged by what Timothy had reported, Paul wrote the first epistle. But it was not long after that Paul found it necessary to write again...]

III. THE PLACE AND DATE OF WRITING

A. THE PLACE...

1. In our study of First Thessalonians, we suggested Corinth as the place from which it was written
 - a. Paul had only been gone a short time - **1 Th 2:17-18**
 - b. He had sent Timothy from Athens, who had returned - **1 Th 3:1-6**
 - c. Yet Paul did not stay long in Athens - **Ac 17:16-18:1**
 - d. And Timothy came back from Macedonia after Paul arrived in Corinth - **Ac 18:5**
 - Thus the first letter was likely written soon after Paul's arrival in Corinth
2. The second letter appears to been written just a few months, perhaps a year later
 - a. Paul stayed in Corinth eighteen months - **Ac 18:11**
 - b. If Paul wrote the first letter at the beginning of his stay, he could have easily written the second letter toward the end of his stay
 - Thus the second letter was likely also written from **Corinth**

B. THE DATE...

1. Paul arrived in Corinth sometime around 50-52 A.D.
2. Writing the second epistle toward the end of his stay, the date would be **53 A.D.**

[Now let's consider...]

IV. THE PURPOSE AND CONTENT OF THE EPISTLE

A. THE PURPOSE...

1. From the letter itself, it appears that the church at Thessalonica remained strong in the Lord despite persecution - cf. **2 Th 1:3-4**
2. But it is apparent from this letter that misunderstanding about the Lord's coming was present in the church
 - a. Some of the members were being troubled by false reports - cf. **2 Th 2:1-2**
 - b. Others had stopped working, perhaps assuming that the Lord's imminent return meant one did not need to work anymore - cf. **2 Th 3:11-12**
3. Paul appears to have a threefold purpose in writing this epistle:
 - a. To encourage them in their steadfastness under persecution
 - b. To correct their misunderstanding about the imminence of the Lord's return
 - c. To instruct the congregation on what disciplinary action to take toward those who refused to work

B. THE CONTENT...

1. **Encouragement** in persecutions - **2 Th 1:1-12**
 - a. Salutation, and thanksgiving for their spiritual growth - **1:1-4**
 - b. Encouragement in trials in view of the coming of Christ - **1:5-10**
 - c. His prayer for them - **1:11-12**
2. **Enlightenment** about the coming of the Lord - **2 Th 2:1-17**
 - a. The apostasy must come first - **2:1-12**
 - b. Steadfastness encouraged - **2:13-17**
3. **Exhortation** to Christian living - **2 Th 3:1-18**
 - a. A request for prayer, and a prayer for them - **3:1-5**
 - b. A charge to discipline the disorderly - **3:6-15**
 - c. Concluding remarks - **3:16-18**

CONCLUSION

1. With an emphasis on remaining steadfast, an appropriate theme for this epistle would be:

"Steadfastness While Waiting For The Coming Of Christ"

2. In keeping with such a theme, I offer the following passage as the key verses of the epistle:

"Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle. Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work." - 2 Th 2:15-17

As we proceed through this epistle, it will be my prayer that our study will lead to steadfastness in our service to God as we wait for the coming of Jesus, that we might truly be recipients of His grace and peace (**2 Th 1:2**)!

The Second Epistle To The Thessalonians

Holding Up Under Hard Times (1:3-7)

INTRODUCTION

1. As Paul began his second epistle to the Thessalonians, he expressed thanksgiving...
 - a. Thanksgiving which he felt compelled to offer - **2 Th 1:3a**
 - b. Thanksgiving which was fitting - **2 Th 1:3b**
2. He was thankful regarding their faith and love...
 - a. Their faith was growing exceedingly - **2 Th 1:3c**
 - b. Their love toward each other was abounding - **2 Th 1:3d**
3. Indeed, he was even boastful regarding their faith and patience...
 - a. Boasting of them among the churches of God - **2 Th 1:4a**
 - b. Boasting of their faith and patience in the midst of persecution - **2 Th 1:4b**
4. The perseverance of the Thessalonians is certainly worthy of note...
 - a. They were a congregation that was born in tribulation - cf. **Ac 17:1-9**
 - b. Persecution evidently continued, yet they endured - **2 Th 1:4**

[What can we learn from the Thessalonians about "Holding Up Under Hard Times"? First of all, they serve as a reminder that...]

I. HARD TIMES HAPPEN

A. THIS MAY SURPRISE SOME...

1. Contrary to the promulgators of the gospel of health and wealth, who would have us believe that becoming a Christian is the key to success in life
2. Many suffer disappointment because of the trials they face as new Christians

B. THE BIBLE WARNS OF HARD TIMES...

1. Jesus warned His apostles - **Jn 15:19-20; 16:33**
2. The apostles warned the disciples - **Ac 14:22; 1 Th 3:4; 2 Ti 3:12**

C. WE CAN EXPECT HARD TIMES...

1. We are not spared the affects of sin and evil in this world
 - a. We still live in a world with sickness and death
 - b. We may often suffer the consequences of choices made by others
2. We can anticipate persecution because we are Christians
 - a. Our families, friends, and foes may ostracize or even physically persecute us
 - b. We have an adversary who seeks to devour us - cf. **1 Pe 5:8-9**

[Be thankful if you seem to be spared trials and tribulations, but be prepared for difficulties in life that will inevitably come. From the example of the Thessalonians we learn that...]

II. FAITH, LOVE, AND PATIENCE IS NEEDED

A. FAITH THAT GROWS EXCEEDINGLY...

1. Faith that is:
 - a. A strong conviction in things unseen - **He 11:1**
 - b. Created by the Word of God - **Ro 10:17**
 - c. Constantly growing - **2 Th 1:3**
2. This is the kind of faith that sustains one in persecution
 - a. Remember the faith of Job! - **Job 19:25-27**
 - b. Recall the faith of Habakkuk! - **Hab 3:17-19**

B. LOVE THAT ABOUND TOWARDS ONE ANOTHER...

1. Love that is:
 - a. Taught by God Himself - cf. **1 Th 4:9**
 - 1) Through the example of the Father's love - **1 Jn 4:9-11**
 - 2) Through the example of the Son's love - **1 Jn 3:16**
 - b. Increasing more and more - cf. **2 Th 1:3; 1 Th 4:10; 3:12**
2. This is the kind of love that sustains one in hard times
 - a. Even as it comforted Paul in his tribulation - **1 Th 3:6-7**
 - b. So we can endure persecution when we are surrounded by brotherly love!

C. PATIENCE THAT HOLDS UP UNDER TRIAL...

1. Patience that is:
 - a. Based upon the hope that we have - **Ro 8:25**
 - b. Developed by reading the Scriptures - **Ro 15:4**
 - b. Needed if we are to receive the promise - **He 10:36**
 - c. Strengthened the more we look unto Jesus - **He 12:1-3**
2. This is the kind of patience that makes us even stronger!
 - a. It makes us complete, lacking nothing - **Ja 1:3-4**
 - b. Giving us experience, which can strengthen our hope even more - **Ro 5:3-4**

[As long as our faith is growing, our love for one another is abounding, and our patience remains firm, we will be "**Holding Up Under Hard Times**". We can also take heart in knowing that...]

III. RECOMPENSE IS COMING

A. GOD'S JUDGMENT WILL BE RIGHTEOUS...

1. For God's people who have endured tribulation with faith and patience
 - a. Which is evidence of God's righteous judgment to come - **2 Th 1:4-5**
 - b. Having been made worthy of the kingdom through their suffering - **2 Th 1:5**
 - 1) Though we must never forget that it is God who qualifies us for the kingdom - cf. **Co 1:12**
 - 2) He is the one Who perfects, establishes, strengthens, and settles us - **1 Pe 5:10**

2. For those who have caused tribulation for His people - **2 Th 1:6**

B. GOD WILL REPAY THOSE WHO TROUBLE HIS PEOPLE...

1. Tribulation will come upon them, a righteous recompense - **2 Th 1:6**; cf. **Ro 2:4-11**
2. Paul will describe the nature of this tribulation more fully in **2 Th 1:8-9**

C. GOD WILL GIVE HIS TROUBLED PEOPLE REST...

1. Also a righteous recompense - **2 Th 1:6-7**
2. The same rest enjoyed by Paul, Silas, Timothy ("rest with us")! - **2 Th 1:7**
3. This rest to be given when the Lord is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels
- cf. **1 Th 4:16-17**

CONCLUSION

1. We will consider what more Paul has to say about that great day in our next study - cf. **2 Th 1:7-10**
2. What we have seen so far should help us to endure trials and tribulations...
 - a. Don't be surprised by hard times, God's Word has told us they will come
 - b. Look to God and His Word for the faith, love, and patience needed to sustain us
 - c. Anticipate the coming of the Lord, who will bring us rest even as He brings judgment upon those who trouble us!

Is your faith growing exceedingly? Is your love abounding? Are you patiently enduring what trials come upon you, looking for the rest to come when Jesus returns?

Let the Thessalonians be an encouragement to us in "**Holding Up Under Hard Times**"!

The Second Epistle To The Thessalonians

There's A Great Day Coming! (1:7-12)

INTRODUCTION

1. The Thessalonians endured much adversity for the cause of Christ...
 - a. From the very beginning they were persecuted for their faith - cf. **Ac 17:1-9**
 - b. Initially, it was a matter of grave concern for Paul - cf. **1 Th 3:1-5**
2. Yet the Thessalonians persevered, giving Paul...
 - a. Great joy and comfort - cf. **1 Th 3:6-10**
 - b. Good reason to boast of their faith and patience - cf. **2 Th 1:4**
3. To encourage them even more, Paul reminded them that their labor was not in vain...
 - a. Their suffering would make them worthy of the kingdom of God - **2 Th 1:5**
 - b. God would one day repay those who troubled them - **2 Th 1:6**
4. The "day of recompense" will occur when Jesus returns...
 - a. The events of that day would make their suffering for Christ worthwhile
 - b. Indeed, like the hymn we often sing, "**There's A Great Day Coming!**"

[As we continue our study of 2 Thessalonians, we find Paul describing this "great day" as...]

I. A DAY OF HONOR FOR JESUS

A. JESUS WILL BE REVEALED...

1. The Greek word for "revealed" is **apokalupso**, "an uncovering, unveiling"
2. Right now, Jesus is **in** heaven
 - a. As such He is hidden from the world's view
 - b. But one day He will be revealed by appearing - cf. **Co 3:1-4; Ti 2:13; He 9:28**
3. When that occurs, it will be **from** heaven
 - a. Coming with His mighty angels - **2 Th 1:7**; cf. **Mt 16:27**
 - b. Coming in flaming fire - **2 Th 1:8**; cf. **2 Pe 3:7,10-12**

B. JESUS WILL BE GLORIFIED...

1. He will be glorified, i.e., be "honored" - **2 Th 1:10,12**
 - a. Now, many people reject Him, despise Him, use His name in vain
 - b. Then, people will bow and confess His name - cf. **Ph 2:9-11**
2. Note that He will be glorified "in His saints" - **2 Th 1:10,12**; cf. **Jn 17:10**
 - a. Much of the honor Jesus will receive will be because of His people!
 - b. For what He was able to accomplish through His life, death, and present ministry in heaven (i.e., turn sinners into saints!) - e.g., **Ph 1:20; 1 Pe 2:9**

C. JESUS WILL BE ADMIRERED...

1. He will be "marveled at", "wondered at", "held in admiration"
2. By those who believe - **2 Th 1:10**
 - a. Those who accepted the testimony of the apostles - cf. **1 Th 2:13**
 - b. Those who trusted in Him with the eyes of faith while He was still "hidden"

[What a "great day" it will be for Jesus when He comes to be revealed, glorified, and admired! Yet as we continue we note that it will be a "great day" for another reason, for it will be...]

II. A DAY OF JUDGMENT BY JESUS

A. A TERRIFIC DAY FOR SOME...

1. A time of **rest** - **2 Th 1:7**
 - a. To those who have been troubled
 - 1) With persecutions and tribulations - cf. **2 Th 1:4**
 - 2) For the sake of the kingdom of God - cf. **2 Th 1:5**
 - b. This rest involves the kingdom of God in her future glory
 - 1) Referred to by Jesus in His parable of the tares - **Mt 13:41-43**
 - 2) Beautifully depicted in the revelation given to John - **Re 21:1-7**
 2. A time of **glory** - **2 Th 1:12**
 - a. Not only will Jesus be glorified, but also His disciples ("you in Him")!
 - b. Because of their persevering faith - cf. **1 Pe 1:7**
- Made possible by the **grace** of our Lord Jesus Christ! - **2 Th 1:12b**

B. A TERRIBLE DAY FOR OTHERS...

1. A time of **vengeance** - **2 Th 1:8**
 - a. Bringing just recompense - cf. **He 10:30-31**
 - b. On some because they persecuted Christians - **2 Th 1:6**
 - c. On others because they "knew not God" - **2 Th 1:8**
 - 1) The most important thing in this life! - cf. **Jer 9:23-24**
 - 2) Yet many refuse to know Him - cf. **Ro 1:18-21,28**
 - d. On all who "obey not the gospel" of Christ - **2 Th 1:8**
 - 1) Note well, the gospel must be obeyed! - cf. **He 5:9; 1 Pe 4:17**
 - 2) That is because the gospel contains commands to obey, such as the commands to believe, confess, repent, and be baptized - cf. **Ro 10:9,10; Ac 2:38**
2. A time of **punishment** - **2 Th 1:6,9**
 - a. In the form of "tribulation"
 - 1) A form of righteous repayment
 - 2) Especially for those who troubled God's people
 - b. In the form of "everlasting destruction"
 - 1) Destruction that lasts forever! - cf. **Mt 26:41,46**
 - 2) Destruction from the presence and power of the Lord! - cf. **Re 14:10,11**

CONCLUSION

1. In view of these words, "**There's A Great Day Coming!**"...
 - a. For some, it will be a terrific day, one to anticipate - cf. **2 Pe 3:12-14**

- b. For many, it will be a terrible day, one to fear - cf. **Mt 7:13-14,21-23**

- 2. What will this "great day" bring to us?
 - a. Rest and glory?
 - b. Vengeance and punishment?

- 3. The answer lies in how we answer two questions...
 - a. Do we know God?
 - b. Have we obeyed the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ?

If you have not, why not today? If you have, then may this sobering passage encourage you to remain faithful, so that Paul's prayer for the Thessalonians will be fulfilled in your life as well:

"...that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power, that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ." - 2 Th 1:11-12

The Second Epistle To The Thessalonians

The Falling Away Must Come (2:1-3)

INTRODUCTION

1. Paul's epistles to the Thessalonians have much to say about the coming of Christ...
 - a. Every chapter in 1st Thessalonians makes some reference to His return
 - b. We have seen Paul refer to that great day coming in **2 Th 1:7-10**
2. It appears that misconceptions existed in the church at Thessalonica...
 - a. At least some were being told that the day of Christ had come
 - b. Paul writes to reassure them such was not the case - **2 Th 1:1-2**
3. Paul explains that before the Lord returns, two events must take place...
 - a. The "*falling away*" will come first - **2 Th 2:3**
 - b. The "*man of sin*" will be revealed - **2 Th 2:3**

[In this study, I would like for us to focus our attention on the "*falling away*" as described in the Bible, as fulfilled in history, and its implication for us today. Let's start with the fact...]

I. A FALLING AWAY WOULD COME

A. PAUL WARNED THE EPHESIAN ELDERS...

1. It would occur after Paul's departure (death?) - **Ac 20:29a**
2. It would be affected by forces outside and within the church - **Ac 20:29b-30**

B. PAUL WARNED THE EVANGELIST TIMOTHY...

1. In latter times some would depart from the faith - **1 Ti 4:1-2**
2. Examples of the doctrines taught by the apostates are given - **1 Ti 4:3**

C. PETER WARNED THE CHRISTIANS IN ASIA MINOR...

1. There will be false teachers - **2 Pe 2:1**
2. Many would follow their destructive ways - **2 Pe 2:2**

[The Scriptures are clear that a "falling away" (apostasy) would occur. Did it happen? Unfortunately...]

II. A FALLING AWAY DID COME

A. IT BEGAN IN THE FIRST CENTURY...

1. John described it in his epistle
 - a. Telling of "*antichrists*" who had gone out from them - **1 Jn 2:18-19**
 - b. Warning of "*false prophets*" who were already in the world - **1 Jn 4:1-3**
 - Who were teaching false doctrines about the nature of Christ
2. Jude described it in his epistle

- a. Certain men had crept in unnoticed - **Ju 4a**
- b. Ungodly men who turn the grace of God into lewdness - **Ju 4b**
- Who were denying the authority of Jesus Christ

B. IT CONTINUED IN THE SUCCEEDING CENTURIES...

1. One of the first changes involved **local church organization**
 - a. From self-governing congregations with a plurality of bishops (elders) over each congregation - cf. **Ac 14:23; 20:17,28; Ti 1:5-9; 1 Pe 5:1-2**
 - b. To a distinction between bishops and elders in which individual bishops had oversight of geographical areas and multiple churches (ca. 150 A.D.)
2. Other changes were slowly introduced, as traditions of men took precedence over the Word of God
 - a. **Clergy-Laity distinction**, borrowed from the OT Jewish priesthood concept
 - b. **Religious holidays**, such as Easter; then later, Christmas (3rd, 4th century)
 - c. **Pouring**, then **sprinkling**, in place of immersion for baptism (251 A.D.)
 - d. **Church councils**, meetings in which doctrinal matters were decided (325 A.D.)
 - e. **Creeds**, statements of beliefs developed by church councils
 - f. **Instrumental music** (first used in the 5th century)
 - Other doctrines developed along the way, such as **original sin, infant baptism, penance, millennialism, veneration of Mary**

C. IT REMAINS IN THE PRESENT CENTURY...

1. Appeals to "**reformation**" did not work
 - a. Despite efforts of Luther, Calvin, etc., to reform the Roman Catholic church
 - b. Their followers simply created a myriad of denominations, keeping some of the human traditions, and adding new ones of their own
2. Appeals to new "**revelation**" have not worked
 - a. Several have appealed to "modern-day" revelation, believing it to be the solution to the religious confusion
 - b. Such efforts have only added to the confusion, with such religions as Mormons, Christian Science, Seventh-Day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, and many Pentecostal churches
3. The only solution that has a hope of working is "**restoration**"
 - a. Like Ezra and Nehemiah did when they restored the Jewish worship after the Babylonian exile - cf. **Neh 8:1-18**
 - b. Like John the Baptist did when he prepared the people for the coming of the Lord - cf. **Lk 1:13-17**
 - c. I.e., restoring the hearts of the people back to the Word of God
 - 1) Taking heed to the Word of God is the only way to prevent apostasy - cf. **He 2:1-4; Ac 20:32**
 - 2) Restoring ourselves back to the Word of God is the only way to return from apostasy!

[A survey of church history confirms that a falling away from the New Testament pattern has occurred, exactly as foretold by the apostles. While it is always possible to be restored back to the New Testament church, we should never forget that...]

III. A FALLING AWAY CAN STILL COME

A. APOSTASY IS ALWAYS POSSIBLE...

1. The Scriptures are filled with warnings against falling away
 - a. Not just of a general apostasy, such as in our text
 - b. But of individual apostasies as well - e.g., **1 Ti 1:19-20; He 6:4-6; 2 Pe 2:19-22**
2. Therefore we need to heed the warnings!
 - a. To give the more earnest heed, lest we drift - **He 2:1-3**
 - b. To not develop a heart of unbelief - **He 3:12**
 - c. To not becoming hardened by sin - **He 3:13**
 - d. To hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end - **He 3:14; 6:11**

B. IT HAS HAPPENED BEFORE...

1. With the rise of Catholicism, and the development of denominationalism
2. Previous restoration efforts have often reverted back to apostasy
 - a. As with many in the Stone-Campbell movement
 - b. E.g., the development of the Christian Church-Disciples of Christ denomination

C. IT IS HAPPENING NOW...

1. The pull of the world continues to draw many Christians away
 - a. Just as it did with Demas - **2 Ti 4:10**
 - b. So the love of money causes many to stray from the faith - **1 Ti 6:9-10**
2. The appeal of denominationalism and sectarianism continues to have their affect
 - a. E.g., the development of the International Church of Christ
 - b. E.g., many "mainstream" churches of Christ developing the "Church of Christ" denomination
 - c. I also see the beginning of a "Non-Institutional Church of Christ" denomination (as reflected in the question, "Can someone help me locate an NI Church?")

CONCLUSION

1. The "*falling away*" of which Paul wrote appears to have come...
 - a. There has certainly been a general departure from the faith and practice of the NT
 - b. This apostasy is clear to anyone familiar with the pattern of the NT church
2. But the danger of "*falling away*" is an ever present one...
 - a. It has happened once and again, many times
 - b. It happened to those who were once restored, it can happen to us just as easily
3. Apostasy rarely happens overnight...
 - a. The path to departure is usually gradual, hardly noticed by those involved
 - b. It begins with a mindset, develops through a pattern of speech
 - c. It is encouraged by a desire to be like the world, rather than to be as God would have us

To avoid apostasy, make sure our hearts have been restored to the Word of God, then give earnest heed to the Word lest we drift away!

The Second Epistle To The Thessalonians

The Man Of Sin (2:3-12)

INTRODUCTION

1. In correcting misconceptions about the Lord's return, Paul wrote that two events must occur before the Lord returns...
 - a. The falling away must come - **2 Th 2:3**
 - b. The man of sin is revealed - **2 Th 3:3**
2. Our previous lesson focused on the falling away, and how...
 - a. The apostasy of many was foretold by the apostles - cf. **1 Ti 4:1-3; 2 Pe 2:1-2**
 - b. The history of the church gives evidence of a departure from the faith - cf. **1 Jn 2:18-19**
 - c. We must be diligent lest we too fall away - cf. **He 2:1-3**
3. We now direct our attention to what is said about "the man of sin"...
 - a. Who will be **revealed** before Christ comes
 - b. Who will be **destroyed** when Christ is revealed

[As we examine our text (**2 Th 2:3-12**), let's first consider what we can about...]

I. THE DESCRIPTION OF THE MAN OF SIN

A. WHAT THE SCRIPTURES REVEAL...

1. **His perverse character - 2 Th 2:3**
 - a. A man of "lawlessness" - having no regard for God's law
 - b. A son of "perdition" - one begotten for destruction
2. **His God-defying activity - 2 Th 2:4**
 - a. He opposes and exalts himself
 - 1) Above all that is called God
 - 2) Above all that is worshiped (including Jesus)
 - b. He sits as God in the temple (the church?)
 - c. He shows himself that he is God!
3. **His present restraint and future revealing - 2 Th 2:5-8**
 - a. He was being restrained at the time Paul wrote
 - 1) The Thessalonians knew what was restraining him
 - 2) For Paul had told them when he was with them
 - b. Even so, the "mystery of lawlessness" was already at work
 - 1) His lawless influence was already spreading
 - 2) But it was hidden (still a mystery), to be revealed only when that which restrains was removed
 - c. He would be revealed when the restraining force was removed
4. **His relation to Satan - 2 Th 2:9-10**
 - a. His coming will be according to the working of Satan

- b. His coming will be with all power, signs, lying wonders
 - c. He will exercise unrighteous deception among those who are perishing
- **Who or what is this "man of sin, the son of perdition"?**

B. WHAT SOME HAVE SUGGESTED...

1. One view is that the man of sin is **one particular individual**
 - a. Who will arise with great power and deceive many just before Christ returns
 - b. Who is the "antichrist" spoken of by John in **1 Jn 2:18**
 - This view is held by pre-millennialists, and some amillennialists (e.g., William Hendricksen, Edward J. Young, Anthony Hoekema)
 2. Another view is that the man of sin is **a series of individuals**
 - a. Perhaps a successive line of men with the same general character
 - b. In this sense many have applied it to the Roman papacy
 - 1) This was first suggested by a pope himself!
 - a) Gregory the Great (550-604 A.D.) said that whoever arrogates to himself the title of "universal priest" is a forerunner of antichrist (cf. Hendricksen)
 - b) It was not long before patriarchs of Rome began to claim such distinction
 - 2) Many Protestants view the papacy as the "man of sin" (e.g., Luther, Barnes)
 - a) Noting the similarity between what is said about the man of sin, and what the Roman papacy became
 - b) Suggesting that either the Holy Spirit or the Roman empire was what was "restraining" the lawlessness that was just beginning and would eventually lead to the apostasy and revelation of the man of sin
- **In the absence of any particular individual to arise so far, I am prone to think the latter view may be the correct one**

[While there may be some question as to the actual identity of the man of sin, there is no doubt what unfortunate souls will be misled by his influence...]

II. THE DECEPTION BY THE MAN OF SIN

A. THOSE WHO WILL FOLLOW THE MAN OF SIN...

1. Those who are perishing will be the ones deceived - **2 Th 2:10-12**
 - a. Those who do not have a love for the truth, that they might be saved
 - b. Those who do not believe the truth
 - c. Those who have pleasure in unrighteousness
- **People whose priority is pleasure-seeking rather than truth-seeking will be prime candidates for deception!**
2. Those who believe the lie will be strengthened in their delusion - **2 Th 2:11-12**
 - a. God Himself will send a strong delusion!
 - b. Since they do not have a love for the truth, He will strengthen their love for a lie!
 - 1) As he hardened Pharaoh to resist Moses - cf. **Exo 9:12-21**
 - 2) And the Israelites, who resisted the gospel - cf. **Ro 11:7-25**
- **The delusion will not be against their will, but will harden or strengthen them in their desire to follow error**

B. THOSE WHO WILL RESIST THE MAN OF SIN...

1. Will be those who have a love for the truth - cf. **2 Th 2:10**
 2. Will be those who believe the truth - cf. **2 Th 2:12**
 3. Will this be true of us?
 - a. Do we love the truth?
 - b. Do we even know the truth?
 - c. Do we take the time to learn the truth (i.e., study the Bible)?
 - d. Do we place our trust in the Bible (i.e., believe and obey it)?
- **Our attitude and treatment of God's Word will determine whether we will be susceptible to deception by the man of sin**

[We cannot afford to be complacent with truth if we do not want to be misled by the man of sin! Finally, those who love and believe the truth of Christ can take comfort in knowing what is said regarding...]

III. THE DESTRUCTION OF THE MAN OF SIN

A. THE DECISIVE NATURE OF HIS DEFEAT...

1. He will be consumed and destroyed by the Lord - **2 Th 2:8**
2. His end will be similar to that of those who know not God and obey not the gospel of Christ - cf. **2 Th 1:7-9**

B. THE TIMING OF HIS DEFEAT...

1. This will happen at the coming of the Lord - **2 Th 2:8**
2. The Lord will destroy the man of sin with the brightness of His coming! - **2 Th 2:8**
3. Just as the Lord will destroy Satan at His coming - cf. **Re 20:10**

CONCLUSION

1. As with many prophetic passages, there has been a lot of **foolish speculation...**
 - a. In every generation, attempts have been made to identify the man of sin
 - b. In the 20th century alone, from Kaiser to Hitler to Hussein, etc.
 - c. Many have spoken, confident in their identification, only to be proven wrong with time
 2. What is important, indeed necessary, is that we **be ready** for whatever comes...
 - a. Whether the man of sin proves to be a specific individual
 - b. Or whether the man of sin is indeed a series of individuals, such as the papacy
 3. How shall we be ready for whatever comes?
 - a. Have a strong love for the truth
 - b. Believe in the truth
 - c. Obey the gospel of Jesus Christ
- Only then can we be confident that we are in a right relationship with the Lord

Is your love and faith in the truth sufficient not to be misled by the man of sin, or is your love for unrighteousness setting you up to be deceived even more?

The Second Epistle To The Thessalonians

Obtaining The Glory Of Our Lord (2:13-17)

INTRODUCTION

1. In clarifying possible misconceptions about the coming of Christ, Paul warned of two ominous events that must occur first...
 - a. The falling away must occur - **2 Th 2:3**
 - b. The man of sin must be revealed - **2 Th 2:3**
2. Both events portend a sad end for many people...
 - a. The falling away would necessitate the apostasy of many people
 - b. The man of sin would deceive many people who were perishing
3. Yet Paul writes of "**Obtaining The Glory Of Our Lord**" ...
 - a. Thankful that the Thessalonians appeared destined for that blessing - **2 Th 2:13-14**
 - b. A blessing to be received when Christ comes - cf. **2 Th 1:10**
 - c. A blessing for which Paul prayed diligently they would indeed receive - **2 Th 1:11-12**

[In our study I wish to address the question: What is necessary for "**Obtaining The Glory Of Our Lord**"? From Paul's remarks in our text (**2 Th 2:13-17**), obtaining this glory is possible...]

I. BY BEING CHOSEN

A. THE THESSALONIANS HAD BEEN CHOSEN...

1. **For which Paul was bound to give thanks - 2 Th 2:13**
2. **Which was evidence of God's love for them - 2 Th 2:13**
3. **From the beginning - 2 Th 2:13**
 - a. Likely referring to God's election before the foundation of the world - **Ep 1:4-5**
 - b. Which I understand to be general, not particular; corporate, not individual
 - 1) God chose the body of Christ, the church, to be the recipients of His grace and purposes predestined before the world began)
 - 2) Not select individuals, as per Calvinism
 - c. While in the "corporate" sense this choice is unconditional and final, as "individuals" we must be "*diligent to make your calling and election sure*" - **2 Pe 1:10**
 - 1) Just as Israel (as a nation) had been chosen by God to receive His blessings
 - 2) Yet individually, the Israelites had to "make their calling and election sure"
 - 3) Thus Paul would need to exhort the Thessalonians to "*stand fast*" - **2 Th 2:15**
4. **For salvation - 2 Th 2:13**
 - a. Salvation from the wrath to come, as vividly described in **2 Th 1:7-9**
 - b. Salvation that will include participation in the glory to come - cf. **2 Th 1:10; 2:14**

B. HOW THEY BECAME PART OF THE CHOSEN...

1. **Through sanctification by the Spirit - 2 Th 2:13**
 - a. They had been sanctified (set apart) by the Spirit
 - b. This sanctifying work of the Spirit included:
 - 1) His work in revealing and confirming the Word of God through the apostles
- **Jn 17:17; He 2:1-4**
 - 2) His work of regeneration and renewal in conversion - **Ti 3:5**
2. **Through belief in the truth - 2 Th 2:13**
 - a. They had believed the testimony of the Spirit through the apostles - **2 Th 1:10**
 - b. This was their part to become one of the chosen, God's elect
3. **Through the call of the gospel - 2 Th 2:14**
 - a. Here is how it all came together...
 - 1) Through the preaching of the gospel God was calling them
 - 2) Those who believed the preaching of the gospel, were sanctified (set apart) by the Holy Spirit in their conversion
 - b. Thus set apart...
 - 1) They became God's beloved, part of His elect
 - 2) They were among the chosen to receive salvation

[This salvation, involving "**Obtaining The Glory Of Our Lord**", is available to all who answer the call of the gospel, and believe the truth concerning Jesus Christ.

But in light of the earlier warning of apostasy, and the danger of deception by the man of sin, how can we "make our calling and election sure" and obtain the glory of the Lord? Paul's answer...]

II. BY STANDING FAST

A. THE THESSALONIANS ARE CHARGED TO STAND FAST...

1. Similar to charges given to other churches - **1 Co 15:58; Ph 4:1**
 2. Why such a warning, unless the danger of apostasy is real?
 - a. The danger is real - cf. He 3:12-15
 - b. The Scriptures are filled with many such warnings
- So we need to stand fast if we desire to obtain the glory of our Lord!

B. HOW THEY WERE TO STAND FAST...

1. **Holding to the traditions of the apostles - 2 Th 2:15**
 - a. Traditions are teachings "handed down"
 - 1) Such as those delivered by those apostles - cf. **1 Co 11:2**
 - 2) Whether by word (orally) or by epistle (written)
 - b. The apostles' traditions were to be kept - cf. **2 Th 3:6; Ac 2:42**
 - 1) If we desire to stand fast, we must hold to the teachings of the apostles
 - 2) Like the Jerusalem church, we must continue steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine
2. **In the comfort of God's love and grace - 2 Th 2:16-17**
 - a. God and Jesus have already:
 - 1) Shown Their love
 - 2) Given everlasting consolation and good hope by grace

- This God and Jesus did by saving them through the gospel
- b. Thus Paul prays that God and Jesus will also:
 - 1) Comfort their hearts - cf. **2 Co 1:3-5**
 - 2) Establish them in every good word and work - cf. **1 Pe 5:10**
- Established and comforted, they would be able to "stand fast"

CONCLUSION

1. **"Obtaining The Glory Of Our Lord"** is made possible only with the help of God, and from our text we learn that...
 - a. God loves us
 - b. Jesus Christ Himself loves us
 - c. They have given everlasting consolation and good hope by grace
 - d. They are willing to comfort our hearts
 - e. They desire to establish us in every word and work-- For such reasons we should feel "bound to give thanks to God always"!
2. Yet while God and Jesus stand ready to help us obtain the glory of the Lord, let's not forget our obligation...
 - a. To believe the truth
 - b. To accept the call of the gospel
 - c. To stand fast
 - d. To hold to the traditions of the apostles

Do we desire to obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ? May Paul's words always serve to remind us how it is possible, and encourage us never to become slack in our dedication to the Word of God!

The Second Epistle To The Thessalonians

A Prayer Requested, A Prayer Rendered (3:1-5)

INTRODUCTION

1. On several occasions already, Paul has expressed prayers on the behalf of the Thessalonians...
 - a. That they might increase and abound in love - **1 Th 3:11**
 - b. That the Lord might establish their hearts blameless in holiness - **1 Th 3:12**
 - c. That God might sanctify them completely - **1 Th 5:23**
 - d. That God might count them worthy of His calling - **2 Th 2:11**
 - e. That the name of the Lord might be glorified in them, and they in Him - **2 Th 2:12**
 - f. That Jesus and the Father might comfort their hearts and establish them in every good word and work - **2 Th 2:16-17**
2. That preachers prayed for their brethren was not an uncommon practice...
 - a. Paul prayed for his brethren often - cf. **Co 1:9-11**
 - b. Epaphras also - cf. **Co 4:12-13**
3. Preachers need prayers also, and Paul did not hesitate to ask his brethren to pray for him...
 - a. He asked those in Rome to pray for him - **Ro 15:30-33**
 - b. He asked those in Ephesus for their prayers - **Ep 6:18-20**
 - c. He asked those in Colosse to offer prayers in his behalf - **Co 4:2-4**

[As we continue our study of 2nd Thessalonians, we find Paul making a similar request for prayer...]

I. A PRAYER REQUESTED (1-2)

A. FOR THE WORD OF GOD...

1. That the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified - **2 Th 3:1a**
 - a. Paul wanted the gospel to spread unhindered
 - b. He believed the Lord could "**open doors**" for the Word
 - 1) As He had done in the past - cf. **1 Co 16:9; 2 Co 2:12**
 - 2) As Paul hoped He would in the future - cf. **Co 4:3**
 2. As it was in their case - **2 Th 3:1b**
 - a. Paul's coming to them had not been in vain - cf. **1 Th 2:1**
 - b. They had received the Word - cf. **1 Th 2:13**
 - c. Indeed, the Word resounded from them into other areas - cf. **1 Th 1:8**
- **As preachers seek to spread the gospel, we need to pray that the Word will "run swiftly" (i.e., have free course)**

B. FOR THE MEN OF GOD...

1. That they be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men - **2 Th 3:2a**
 - a. Paul had his share of such men, especially in Thessalonica
 - 1) Who forced him to leave town - **Ac 17:5-10**

- 2) Who followed him to other towns - **Ac 17:13**
- b. For this reason, Paul beseeched his brethren to pray in his behalf:
 - 1) For deliverance, where possible - **2 Th 3:2**
 - 2) For boldness, when necessary - cf. **Ep 6:19-20**
- 2. For not all are believers - **2 Th 3:2b**
 - a. Not all believe the Word of the Lord
 - b. Of those who don't, some mock, others persecute
- **Preachers often bear the brunt of resistance and persecution in reaction to the gospel; such men are not super heroes (cf. 1 Co 2:3), they need our prayers!**

[Certainly if Paul, called by God and commissioned by Christ Himself, felt incomplete and inadequate without the prayers of his brethren, how much more should preachers today! Yet as Paul continues, we see that preachers should also be praying for their brethren...]

II. A PRAYER RENDERED (3-5)

A. FIRST, AN EXPRESSION OF CONFIDENCE...

- 1. In the faithfulness of the Lord - **2 Th 3:3**; cf. **1 Th 5:24**
 - a. Who would establish them
 - 1) As Paul prayed previously - **2 Th 2:17**
 - 2) As Peter prayed in his epistle - **1 Pe 5:10**
 - b. Who would guard them from the evil one
 - 1) A wonderful assurance for the Christian - cf. **1 Co 10:13**; **2 Pe 2:9**
 - 2) For which we should diligently pray - cf. **Mt 6:13**; **Jn 17:15**
- 2. In the Lord concerning them - **2 Th 3:4**; cf. **Ph 1:6**
 - a. That they do the things he commands them
 - 1) As evidenced by their growing faith - cf. **2 Th 1:3**
 - 2) As illustrated by their abounding love - cf. **2 Th 1:3**
 - 3) As demonstrated by their enduring patience - cf. **2 Th 1:4**
 - b. That they will do the things he commands them
 - 1) Their past performance gave Paul confidence regarding their future faithfulness
 - 2) Just as the Philippians' conduct gave Paul confidence - cf. **Ph 1:6-7**
- **Knowing the Lord's faithfulness to provide for His own, the faithfulness of Christians provides great confidence regarding their future!**

B. THEN, A PRAYER FOR THEM...

- 1. That the Lord direct their hearts - **2 Th 3:5a**
 - a. It is not enough that we seek to aim our hearts in the right direction
 - b. We ought to seek God's assistance in this regard
 - 1) As David prayed for Israel and Solomon - cf. **1 Chr 29:18-19**
 - 2) As Solomon prayed for himself and Israel - cf. **1 Kin 8:57-58**
 - c. We definitely need the help of God even in our desires to do good - cf. **Ph 2:13**
- 2. Into the love of God and the patience of Christ - **2 Th 3:5b**
 - a. Into the kind of love God has for them
 - 1) Which God had taught them - cf. **1 Th 4:9**

- 2) Which God demonstrates through Jesus - cf. **1 Jn 4:9-11; 3:16-18**
 - b. Into the kind of patience Jesus displayed
 - 1) Which He endured the cross - cf. **He 12:1-3; 1 Pe 2:21-23**
 - 2) Which they continued to need in light of their circumstances - cf. **2 Th 1:4**
- **Certainly every Christian needs to have a God-like love and Christ-like patience; this should be the prayer of every preacher for the souls with whom he labors!**

CONCLUSION

1. In "**A Prayer Requested, A Prayer Rendered**", we are reminded of the need for prayers
2. Preachers need our prayers...
 - a. That the gospel may have free course
 - b. That preachers of the gospel not be hindered by the world
3. Preachers need to pray for their brethren...
 - a. That the Lord will direct them in their spiritual growth
 - b. That they will grow in love of God and patience of Christ

Happy is the church where both preacher and congregation do not hesitate to say to one another:

"Brethren, pray for us." - 1 Th 5:25

The Second Epistle To The Thessalonians

A Charge To Withdraw (3:6-15)

INTRODUCTION

1. As Paul nears the end of his epistle to Thessalonians, he gives them a serious charge...
 - a. To withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly, and not according to the tradition received from Paul - **2 Th 3:6,14**; cf. **2:15**
 - b. The seriousness of the charge seen in that Paul invokes the name of Jesus - **2 Th 3:6**
 - 1) Something he rarely does
 - 2) Another example is found in **1 Co 1:10**
2. The circumstances at Thessalonica that prompted such a serious charge?
 - a. Some had quit working, and had become busybodies - **2 Th 3:11-12**
 - b. Contrary to Paul's own example, and previous commands - **2 Th 3:7-10**; cf. **1 Th 4:11-12**
 - Perhaps excitement about the Lord's coming was the excuse given
3. This charge to withdraw pertains to the subject of church discipline...
 - a. How churches are to discipline unruly members
 - b. A subject not often discussed, even less often applied
 - Yet necessary if we are to remain a faithful church of Jesus Christ!

[With Paul's charge to withdraw before us (**2 Th 3:6-15**), this may be a good opportunity to review what else is revealed about the command and purpose of church discipline...]

I. THE COMMAND TO WITHDRAW FELLOWSHIP

A. BY JESUS HIMSELF...

1. In the case of a brother who sins and refuses to repent - **Mt 18:15-17**
2. Jesus' own words: *"...let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector."*
 - a. Spoken in the context of social relations at the time
 - b. Jews had no social dealings with Gentiles, nor with their Jewish brethren who worked for the Roman government as tax collectors
3. The point is to withdraw social association from a brother who refuses to repent

B. BY HIS APOSTLES...

1. Paul's charge to the church at Rome - **Ro 16:17-18**
 - a. Involving those who *"cause divisions and offenses"*
 - b. The brethren were to *"note"* and *"avoid them"*
2. Paul's charge to the church at Corinth - **1 Co 5:1-13**
 - a. Involving a man who had his father's wife
 - b. The church was instructed:
 - 1) To *"deliver such a one to Satan..."* - **1 Co 5:5**
 - 2) To *"purge out the old leaven"* - **1 Co 5:7**

- 3) To *"not keep company"* - **1 Co 5:11**
- 4) To *"not even to eat with such a person"* - **1 Co 5:11**
- 5) To *"put away from yourselves that wicked person."* - **1 Co 5:13**
3. Paul's charge to the church at Thessalonica - **2 Th 3:6-15**
 - a. Involving those who would not work and support themselves
 - b. The church was instructed:
 - 1) To *"withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us"* - **2 Th 3:6**
 - 2) To *"note that person and do not keep company with him"* - **2 Th 3:14**
4. John's charge to the elect lady and her children - **2 Jn 9-11**
 - a. Involving anyone who would seek their support, and yet not abide in the doctrine of Christ
 - b. They were instructed to *"not receive him into your house nor greet him"*

[It is clearly evident that "withdrawing" is necessary under certain conditions. What is the purpose of withdrawing in such cases?]

II. THE PURPOSE FOR WITHDRAWING FELLOWSHIP

A. TO SAVE THE SOUL IN ERROR...

1. Note well: one who refuses to repent of sin is in a lost state - cf. **He 10:26-31**
2. By making him (or her) "ashamed" of their sin, perhaps they may repent - cf. **2 Th 3:14**
3. Consider again Paul's words in **1 Co 5:5...**
 - a. The church is to *"deliver such a one to Satan"*
 - 1) That is, to remove all godly influence from that person
 - 2) This is done by withdrawing fellowship
 - b. The purpose is *"for the destruction of the flesh"*
 - 1) It is "fleshly desires" (of which pride plays a great part) that encourage one to persist in sin
 - 2) But "shame" can go a long way to destroying these things of the flesh
 - 3) Therefore the command to publicly note and withdraw from such a person - cf. **1 Co 5:4,13**
 - c. The ultimate goal: *"that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus"*
 - 1) Our concern is not his (or even our own) temporary happiness
 - 2) But the salvation of his soul on the day of judgment!
 - 3) Therefore the need for "tough love" by withholding fellowship

B. TO SAVE THE SOULS OF OTHER MEMBERS IN THE CHURCH...

1. This is Paul's point about the need to purge out the "leaven" - cf. **1 Co 5:6-8**
2. Just as leaven infects the whole loaf, so can "sin in the camp"!
3. Sin left unchecked will destroy the other members in the congregation
 - a. Either by tempting them to sin in similar fashion
 - b. Or by their failure to exercise the proper discipline
 - 1) For they would then be guilty before the Lord on that basis!
 - 2) As was the church in Pergamos - cf. **Re 2:14-16**

4. Even if the erring brother does not repent, the church that exercises proper discipline will still be saved!

C. TO MAGNIFY THE LORD AND HIS CHURCH IN THE EYES OF THE WORLD...

1. This was an effect of the first case of "church discipline" recorded in the NT.
 - a. The example of Ananias and Sapphira illustrates how seriously the Lord Himself views "sin in the camp" - cf. **Ac 5:1-10**
 - b. The result was one of "fear", yet great "esteem", which lead to many conversions - **Ac 5:11-14**
2. The world is not going to take the gospel call to holiness seriously if the church does not deal properly with "sin in the camp"
3. But when a church deals with unrepentant sin in the manner of withholding fellowship, the reputation of the church is held in high esteem
4. When people decide to get serious about sin, where do you think they will go?
 - a. To a church that winks at sin?
 - b. Or one that provides every proper motivation to turn from sin?

CONCLUSION

1. One cannot ignore the subject of church discipline...
 - a. It is commanded by Christ and His apostles
 - b. It is necessary for the salvation of erring brother, and for the rest of the brethren
2. It is a form of "tough love"...
 - a. Not to be done out of spite
 - b. But in the spirit of brotherly love, as difficult as it may be - cf. **2 Th 3:15**
3. Yet the charge to withdraw presumes certain conditions exists...
 - a. There is fellowship to withdraw
 - b. Fellowship withdrawn will be a significant loss to the erring brother
 - For church discipline to be more effective, church fellowship must be more meaningful

If we desire to truly walk "*according to the tradition received*" from the apostles, we need to heed the command to love one another (cf. **1 Th 4:9,10**) as well as the command to withdraw when necessary! May the Lord help us keep both commands as He intended...

The Second Epistle To The Thessalonians

Paul's Closing Benediction (3:16-18)

INTRODUCTION

1. Paul's second epistle to the Thessalonians was designed to encourage, enlighten, and exhort...
 - a. He offered **encouragement** in the midst of persecutions - **2 Th 1:1-12**
 - b. He offered **enlightenment** about the coming of the Lord - **2 Th 2:1-17**
 - c. He offered **exhortations** to Christian living - **2 Th 3:1-15**
2. As was Paul's custom, he concludes with a benediction and prayer in their behalf...
 - a. Compare his conclusion to the first epistle - **1 Th 5:23-28**
 - b. While shorter, he ends the second epistle in similar fashion - **2 Th 3:16-18**

[There are two main thoughts expressed in "**Paul's Closing Benediction**", the first in vs. **16...**]

I. MAY THE LORD GIVE YOU PEACE

A. THE PEACE THE LORD PROVIDES...

1. It was prophesied that Jesus would guide us into peace - **Lk 1:78-79; 2:14**
2. He came preaching peace - **Ac 10:36**
3. Jesus offers a peace that the world cannot give - **Jn 14:27**
4. A peace that prevails despite tribulation - **Jn 16:33**
5. It involves peace with God - **Ro 5:1**
6. It involves a kingdom in which peace is reign - **Ro 14:17**
7. In which Jew and Gentile can now be one new man in peace - **Ep 2:14-18**

B. HOW THE LORD PROVIDES THIS PEACE...

1. Through His death on the cross
 - a. Reconciling Jew and Gentile - **Ep 2:15-16**
 - b. Reconciling man with God - **Co 1:20-22**
 2. Through our faith, and the justification it brings - **Ro 15:13; 5:1**
 3. Through harmony with brethren - **2 Co 13:11**
 4. Through the Spirit bearing fruit in our lives - **Ga 5:22**
 5. Through fervent prayer
 - a. Producing peace in the inner man - **Ph 4:6-7**
 - b. Producing peace in our communities - **1 Ti 2:1-2**
 6. Through emulating the example of Paul - **Ph 4:9**
 7. Through the pursuit of peace
 - a. As Paul exhorted the Romans - **Ro 14:19**
 - b. As Paul exhorted Timothy - **2 Ti 2:22**
 - c. As the Hebrew Christians were commanded - **He 12:14**
 - d. As Peter commanded the Christians in Asia Minor - **1 Pe 3:10-11**
- **The Lord certainly desires to give us peace: He died to make it possible, He**

offers it to all who will follow Him. Our task is to be diligent to be found by Him in peace (cf. 2 Pe 3:14) by allowing this peace to rule in our hearts (cf. Co 3:15)!

[As we return to our text (2 Th 3:16-18), we find that Paul makes a brief reference to writing in his own hand (17). He then closes in verse 18 with a final benediction...]

II. MAY THE GRACE OF THE LORD BE WITH YOU

A. THE GRACE THE LORD PROVIDES...

1. Again, it was prophesied that Jesus would bring grace - **1 Pe 1:10-11**
2. Jesus came full of grace - **Jn 1:14,16-17**
3. His apostles proclaimed the gospel of grace - **Ac 20:24**
 - a. How God justifies us in Christ Jesus - **Ro 3:24; Ep 1:7; 2:4-9**
 - b. Describing how we might stand in God's grace - **Ro 5:2; 1 Pe 5:12**
4. He gives us everlasting consolation and good hope through this grace - **2 Th 2:16-17**
5. His apostles commended souls to the Word of God's grace - **Ac 20:32**

B. HOW THE LORD PROVIDES THIS GRACE...

1. By obeying the gospel of grace - **He 5:9**
 - a. Obeying the doctrine delivered to us, which sets us free from sin - **Ro 6:17**
 - b. Through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit - **Ti 3:4-7;**
cf. **Mk 16:15-16; Ac 2:36; 22:16**
 2. Through growing in grace - **2 Pe 3:18**
 - a. Grace is multiplied as we grow in the knowledge of Jesus - **2 Pe 1:2,5-8**
 - b. Grace is received through prayer - **He 4:14-16**
 - c. Grace is given to the humble in heart - **Ja 4:6; 1 Pe 5:5**
 3. Making sure we do not receive the grace of God in vain
 - a. His grace will not be available forever - **2 Co 6:1-2**
 - b. Looking carefully lest we fall short of God's grace - **He 12:15**
 - c. Aware of the possibility of falling away - **Ga 5:4**
- **How sad to receive God's grace, but then to have received in vain! Peter describes the sorry condition of those who turn away from God's grace after having known it (2 Pe 2:20-22). Like Timothy, we need to heed the admonition to be strong in the grace of God (2 Ti 2:1)**

CONCLUSION

1. Paul's love for his brethren in Thessalonica was evident...
 - a. He wanted the Lord Himself to give them peace always in every way
 - b. He wanted the grace of the Lord to be with them all-- **Thus He began and closed this epistle with a prayer for grace and peace - 2 Th 1:2; 3:16-18**
2. As we have considered how Paul encouraged, enlightened, and exhorted his brethren...
 - a. I hope that I have done the same through this series of lessons
 - b. I leave with you with another prayer expressed in our text: *"The Lord be with you all."*