

## 2 Thessalonians 1:1

### THE ARGUMENT

(δευτερα. This is well called the Second or latter Epistle to these Thessalonians, for so it is; though Grotius would have it the first, if not sent, yet first written.)

The apostle being yet hindered from coming to them, and understanding some mistake of what he wrote in his former Epistle about the coming of Christ, he thereupon sends this Second Epistle; where, after his usual salutation, he gives thanks for them, and hearing of the continuance of their faith and patience under all their persecutions, he glories in them; and then comforts them by arguments taken from the righteous judgment of God, and the different manner and effect of Christ's coming, both to themselves and all the saints that believe, and to their adversaries, and all that knew not God, nor obeyed the gospel; and then prays for the perfecting of their faith to the glorifying the name of Christ, 2Th 1:1-12. But hearing they were shaken in their minds about the time of Christ's coming, as if it should be presently, in the age wherein they lived, he doth vehemently caution them against such a mistake: and tells them of a great apostacy, and the revelation of the man of sin, which innst precede that day, which he doth particularly describe in the manner and effects thereof: but speaks of these Thessalonians with thanksgiving to God, as such as God had chosen, and called to obtain the glory of the Lord Jesus; and then prays for their comfort and establishment, 2Th 2:1-17. He next proceeds to desire their prayers, both with respect to the success of the ministry, and the safety of the persons who were employed therein; and declares his confidence in them that God would establish them, and that they would obey the commandments they had received from them: and gives them some further commandments about such in the church as did walk disorderly; and so concludes his Epistle with prayers for their peace, and recommending them to the grace of Jesus Christ, 2Th 3:1-18.

### Chapter Summary

2Th 1:1,2      The salutation.

2Th 1:3-5      Paul certifieth the Thessalonians of the good opinion which, he had of their faith, love, and patience.

2Th 1:6-10 Of the righteous judgment of God in punishing their enemies, and recompensing their sufferings,  
2Th 1:11,12 and of his prayers that God would fulfil his gracious purpose in them.

Ver. 1,2. These two verses are the same as in the former Epistle, and therefore I proceed.

### 2 Thessalonians 1:3

Ver. 3. The apostle begins this Epistle as the former, with thanksgiving; only there he gave thanks for their faith, hope, and love, here he only mentions their faith and love; there for the efficacy of their grace, here for the growth of it. There he said only: *We give thanks* here he addeth:

*We are bound, and as it is meet;* as if he was obliged to give thanks for them now somewhat more than before, perceiving their grace did not only yet abide, notwithstanding all their persecutions, but increase and grow. But the apostle's thanksgiving here respects particularly these Thessalonians' growth. Not only the beginning, but growth of grace is from God; else why doth the apostle give thanks for it? As Php 1:6. Hence he is styled *the God of all grace*, 1Pe 5:10, weak and strong, first or second. The manner of its growth, whether by infusion of new degrees, as the first grace is infused, or by co-operating only with it, and so it is increased by exercise, is a question I leave to the schoolmen. However, growth is a duty, and commendable in churches. And the apostle mentions particularly:

1. Their growth in faith; and that a great degree, *υπεραυζανει*, it *groweth exceedingly*; it grows over and above, above the ordinary rate of growth, or the common pitch of faith. Their progress was from faith to faith, their assent to the doctrine of the gospel grew more firm and rooted, and the persuasion of their happy state in Christ was much confirmed and strengthened, with a more confident reliance on him; or their faith was extended to more objects by the increase of their knowledge.

2. Their increase in love; which he also expresseth by an emphatical word, *πλεοναζει*, which signifies increasing to more and more; their love grew in the habit, and abounded in the fruits of it. And this love he sets forth by the universality of it, and the reciprocalness of it, it was *the love of all to each other*; they all did love, and were all beloved of one another: there was no schism among them, as in some other churches.

Faith and love are two sister graces, and are always more or less together; only in the order of nature, faith is first, and worketh by love; but not first in time; and then afterwards, when it brings forth, love is *fides formata*, faith formed, as the papists speak. Hence some have said, that there was not one hypocrite or false Christian in this whole church. Now the apostle and his fellow ministers hereupon judged themselves bound to give thanks. Christians are obliged to give God thanks for the grace of God in others as well as in themselves; and especially the ministers of the gospel, for the people that have been converted by them, or are committed to them. Hereby the apostle's joy was increased at present, and his future glory might be advanced also.

## 2 Thessalonians 1:4

Ver. 4. In the former verse the apostle gave thanks for them, in this he glories in them; he gave thanks for them to God, and glories in them before men. Wherein Silvanus and Timotheus are to be understood as joined with him herein. Glorifying includes in it high estimation of a thing, rejoicing in it, high commendation of it, and applauding ourselves in it; and it must be some great thing, either really or in opinion, and in which some way or other we ourselves are concerned. And glorifying is a good or evil according to the matter or object of it. To glory in our *wisdom, strength, riches*, Jer 9:23; to *glory in men*, 1Co 3:21, in our own *works*, Ro 4:2, in what we have received as if not received, 1Co 4:7, *after the flesh*, 2Co 11:18, or in our *shame*, Php 3:19; all this glorifying is evil. But to glory in God, Isa 41:16, *in his holy name*, 1Ch 16:10, *with God's inheritance*, Ps 106:5, in the knowledge of the Lord, Jer 9:24, in the cross of Christ, Ga 6:14, *in tribulation*, Ro 5:3, in Christ Jesus, 1Co 1:31, in hope, Heb 3:6, and of the success of the ministry in the church's growth, and their faith and patience, as here in the text; all this glorifying is good: as

elsewhere he boasted or gloried in the Corinthians' liberality, 2Co 9:2; but his glorying in them was not to exalt himself, but to magnify the grace of God, and provoke other churches to imitate them.

*In the churches of God;* where the excellency of grace is known, and the commendation of it will be received and imitated; and not amongst carnal men, who scoff at true goodness. And it was the apostle himself, and Silvanus and Timotheus, that thus gloried in them. It adds to persons' commendation, when it is by men of great knowledge, wisdom, and goodness. And it was by such as well knew them, and understood their state; and being instruments in their conversion, were more concerned to glory in them than any other apostles or ministers. And their glorying in them, as it respects what he said of them in the former verse, so what he further adds in this, which is their *patience and faith in all their persecutions and tribulations*. Persecutions are properly sufferings for righteousness' sake: tribulations, any kind of suffering, as some distinguish. And it seems they had many of both, when he saith *all, &c.* And yet they endured them, that is, not only suffered them because they could not cast them off, but in the sense of the apostle James, Jas 5:11: *Behold, we count them happy which endure;* which is a suffering out of choice, and not mere necessity, as Moses did, Heb 11:25, when sufferings stand in competition with sin, or the dishonour of the Christian profession. Sufferings in themselves are not desirable, and the apostle did not glory in their sufferings, but in their *faith and patience*. As he before joined faith and love together, so here faith and patience; and as love springs from faith, so doth Christian patience, whereby it is distinguished from patience as a mere moral virtue found among the heathen, either that of the Stoics, Peripatetics, or Platonists. Faith and patience are well styled the two suffering graces, and therefore here mentioned by the apostle when he mentions their sufferings. Faith as it depends upon God, and sees love under afflictions, believes his promises, looks at the recompence of reward, &c., so it supports under suffering. And patience, as it keeps down passion, and quiets the soul under its burden, makes it to sit lighter, and gives advantage to the exercise of that grace and reason, whereby a Christian is strengthened under his sufferings. Now hereupon the apostle glories in them, as men are apt to do in the heroic acts of great conquerors; or the captain of an army, in the valiant performances of his soldiers.

## 2 Thessalonians 1:5

Ver. 5. These words seem to follow by way of argument, to comfort these Thessalonians under their sufferings:

1. By what they *manifest*, viz. *the righteous judgment of God*; they are a plain indication of it, or demonstration, as the word is used by logicians. And by *judgment* we must not here understand the judgments or afflictions God inflicts in this world; so that when God doth not spare, but chasten his own children, it is a token of his righteous judgment. But rather under understand it of the last judgment: when we see the righteous suffering such wrongs and injuries from wicked men, and they go unpunished, we may argue thence that there is a judgment to come; we cannot else well vindicate the righteousness, wisdom, goodness, and faithfulness of God in his governing the world: as Solomon so argued, when he saw so much unrighteousness in the very seat of justice; *I said in my heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked: for there is a time for every purpose and work*, Ec 3:16,17. And this judgment is called here *righteous judgment*, by way of eminency, as it is expressed by one word, δικαιοκρισια, Ro 2:5, (for all God's judgments are righteous):
  - (a) Because the wicked will then meet with justice without mercy, which is not so in any present judgments.
  - (b) Justice will then be clearly manifested, which now lies obscure, both with respect to the righteous and the unrighteous.

And in this sense the words carry an argument of comfort to the saints, under their present unjust, sufferings from their enemies. As to the same purpose the apostle speaks to the Philippians, Php 1:28.

2. The other argument of comfort is from the result of their sufferings, the great advantage which will arise out of them; they will be hence *accounted worthy of the kingdom of God*: not by way of merit, as the papists say; the Greek word in the text, in its usual acceptation, will not favour that opinion, it signifies no more in the active voice, than the Latin word *dignari*, which we English to deign, or vouchsafe; and yet we may allow the word to signify more here, not only that this kingdom

may be vouchsafed, but that ye may be meet or worthy to receive it; not that all their sufferings could deserve this kingdom, for the apostle saith, Ro 8:18: *I reckon the sufferings of this present time not worthy of the glory,* &c. There is no proportion between them, and so they cannot merit it, yet God may account those that suffer for this kingdom worthy of it, according to the grace of the new covenant in Jesus Christ, and as it hath a congruity with the nature of God, and his faithfulness in his promises; and so our translation renders the word, not that ye may be worthy of the kingdom of God, but *accounted worthy*; God of his free grace will account them worthy. The kingdom of God is propounded to men in the new covenant upon certain conditions, and those that perform them have a worthiness of right, as Re 22:14, but not of merit. But God enables men to perform the conditions, so that there is nothing on our part properly meritorious; yea, when we have performed them, yet our worthiness is to be attributed to Christ, and God's grace, and not to ourselves, else man would have whereof to glory. The Scriptures call *eternal life the gift of God*, Ro 6:23, and attributes salvation to grace, Eph 2:8. We must allow a worthiness only that is consistent with grace; but when we have done all we must say: *We are unprofitable servants.* Lu 17:10; and after all we have done and suffered for the kingdom of God, must pray, as Paul for Onesiphorus, that we *may find mercy of the Lord at that day*, 2Ti 1:18.

*For which ye also suffer*; the sense either respects their enemies, that it was upon the account of this kingdom that they persecuted them, having nothing else justly against them; or else their own aim and intention in suffering, it was for the kingdom of God. And hence we may learn that his kingdom is worth suffering for, and that in some cases it cannot be obtained without suffering: and he that then refuseth to suffer will be accounted unworthy of it; as he that doth suffer for it, as these Thessalonians, hath, upon the account of God's covenant, and the merits of Christ, not only the grace and mercy, but the justice and faithfulness, of God engaged to bestow it upon him. And also that we may and ought in our sufferings look to the reward, as Moses did, Heb 11:1-40.

## 2 Thessalonians 1:6

Ver. 6. By these words the apostle doth illustrate his argument for a

judgment to come, taken from the persecutions and tribulations of the saints. It is of necessity that God should be righteous, and recompensing is a necessary act of righteousness; but we yet see it not, therefore there is a judgment to come. And this recompence is both to the righteous and the wicked, the persecutors and persecuted. The former he here speaks first of: and to recompense tribulation to them that trouble the people of God, is a just recompence; it is according to the law of retaliation, whereof we have some instances in this world, as in Pharaoh, Adoni-bezek, Haman, &c.; and many others, whereof we have a large account in the history of the church and her persecutors; but this will be more fully verified in the judgment to come, called *the revelation of the righteous judgment of God*, Ro 2:5. And God's recompence to them is here called *tribulation*; so Ro 2:9. And though in other scriptures the punishment of the wicked is set forth by other names, yet here it is called by this name; not only for elegancy of speech, by a paranomasia, but to parallel their suffering to their sin; they brought tribulation upon others, and God will bring it upon them. And under this word is comprehended all the torments of hell, which our Saviour expresseth by *weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth*, Mt 8:12, which is the extremity of tribulation. And it is said here, God will recompense, &c., which should teach us not to revenge ourselves; as Ps 94:1 Ro 12:19. And this the apostle sets before these Thessalonians by way of comfort; not that we ought to rejoice in men's destruction merely for itself, but in the honour that will thereby arise to God's justice, and in the favour, honour, and salvation God will vouchsafe to his people herein.

## 2 Thessalonians 1:7

Ver. 7. Having spoken of the recompence of the troublers, here of the *troubled*: and in this we may observe a parallel, as in the former. The recompence to these is expressed by *rest*; in the Greek, dismissal, or cessation from labour or trouble; as Heb 4:9: *There remaineth a rest to the people of God*, where the word is, keeping a sabbath, importing a rest from labour, as this text doth speak of a rest from trouble. And though the word *rest* is properly negative, yet under it the apostle comprehends all the felicity of the future state; elsewhere called a crown, a kingdom, an inheritance, glory, salvation, eternal life, yea, it contains in it the perfect satisfaction of the soul in the fruition of God, &c. And this is said to be given them by way of recompence, as tribulation is to their troublers;

though there is no parity between their trembles and the rest, that is, their recompence, yet it is a proper recompence; and therefore the grace and mercy of God will be much manifested therein, though it is said to come from God's righteousness in the text. The righteousness of God dispenseth both these recompences; but yet the righteousness in both is not alike; ακριβοδικαιον, strict justice, dispenseth the one, and the punishment of the wicked riseth from the nature of their sin, and the merit of it; but it is only επιεικεια, equity, that dispenseth the other, and that not so much with respect to the nature of the saints' duties or sufferings, as the promises and ordinance of God, and the merit of Christ for them. And this rest the apostle sets forth before them, under a twofold circumstance:

1. *Rest with us. Us,* the apostles and ministers of Christ, we and you shall rest together; as we have partaken of troubles together, so we shall of rest. And you shall enjoy the same felicity with the apostles themselves, in the same state of rest. And though now place doth separate us, yet we and you shall rest together, which will the more sweeten this rest to you and us.
2. *When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven;* the other circumstance. This is the time of their entering into this rest. Christ's coming is sometimes called his επιφανεια, *appearing*, 2Ti 4:8, or shining forth; sometimes, φανερωσις, his manifestation, 2Co 4:2 1Jo 3:2; sometimes, αποκαλυψις, his revelation, as in the text. Now the heavens contain him, but he will come in person, and his glory shine forth: though before that their souls shall be at rest in heaven, and their bodies in the grave, yet not till then shall their persons be at rest. And as Christ himself is already entered into his rest, Heb 4:10, so he will come again to take his people into the same rest with him.

## 2 Thessalonians 1:8

Ver. 8. But his coming will be upon another account to many others, which is said here to be to take vengeance, for which purpose he is said to be revealed *with his mighty angels*, or angels of might; and elsewhere, with all his holy angels. They are said to *excel in strength*, Ps 103:20, or to be mighty in strength, and have the name of *might*, Eph 1:21. And here called *mighty*, because as the work Christ comes upon is great and



difficult, so he will have instruments sufficient for it, and none shall be able to hinder. And though he hath power himself sufficient, yet the angels must attend him to solemnize this great day, and to be serviceable to him in the work thereof, which, as it will respect the saints in their resurrection from the dead, and their gathering from the four winds, and separating them from the ungodly, as tares from the wheat and sheep from the goats, so the taking vengeance also in this day of the Lord's wrath, which the apostle, especially, is in these verses speaking of, is the work they shall be employed in. As also *in flaming fire*, or the fire of flame, a Hebraism. Fire is the most dreadful of all the elements, especially flaming, to denote the great wrath of that day, and its breaking forth, as fire when it flameth. God's wrath is often expressed in Scripture by *fire*, De 32:22 Ps 97:3, &c.; Jer 21:12 Heb 10:27; and as that which attendeth the great day of Christ, Da 7:10 1Co 3:13 2Pe 3:7,12. And whether this flaming fire is material, or only metaphorical; if material, whether the present elementary fire, which shall descend, and be joined with that which shall break forth out of the bowels of the earth, as in Noah's flood the waters were from above and from beneath; or whether it shall be some new created fire, and the action of it natural, or supernatural, I shall leave it to the schoolmen. Yet it is generally conceived it is a material fire; else how can *the elements* be said to *melt with fervent heat*, and the world and the works thereof burnt up, as the apostle Peter speaks, 2Pe 3:10; and parallels it with the deluge in Noah's time, which was with material water. But yet it is to be a manifestation of the fire of God's wrath, and an instrument of it also in the destruction of ungodly men, 2Pe 3:7; for it is said in the text, Christ is revealed in it to take vengeance. Vengeance is an act of justice; it is a retribution of evil for evil, the evil of suffering for the evil done: and God claims it as belonging to himself, Ps 94:1 Ro 12:19 Heb 10:27; and it is mentioned in the parable, Lu 18:7,8, as one great work of Christ, at his coming, to avenge the elect.

*On them that know not God*; these are the persons upon whom he will execute vengeance: by whom some think are meant the heathen, who had not the gospel. Those that had not the gospel, yet had means to know God, by the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence, which if they did not improve, but remained ignorant of God, will fall under this vengeance. And by knowledge here is not meant so much a speculative as a practical knowledge of God; and so such as do not fear, love, and honour God, may be said not to know him. As the Gentiles, who are said to know

God, Ro 1:21, but yet not glorifying him as God, and living in idolatry, are said not to know him, Ga 4:8 1Th 4:5. And as God tells the king of Judah, that to do justice and judgment is to know him, Jer 22:16. And Eli's sons, though priests, yet are said not to know the Lord, 1Sa 2:12.

*And that obey not the gospel;* which may be taken in conjunction with the former words, and then such as obey not the gospel are the same with *them that know not God*. As God is not known aright but by the gospel, so they only know God aright by the gospel who obey it. Some are ignorant and know not God, though they live under the gospel. Or, such as have knowledge, yet are not obedient. Knowledge and obedience ought to go together. And this obedience is called the obeying of the gospel. The gospel hath not only promises to be believed, but precepts to be obeyed. Yea, faith itself may fall under its precepts, and then those that believe not the gospel do not obey it: as the same word in the Greek signifies to believe and obey. And as the gospel hath some peculiar precepts and institutions, so all the commands of the moral law are comprehended in it; and the equitable part of the judicial law, yea, and the ceremonial law also, where that which is moral is figured by it; and so far as the gospel commands, men ought to obey; and disobedience appears to be a great evil, when it will expose men to this great vengeance. So Ro 2:8,9: *To them that do not obey the truth, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, &c.* Not to obey the law of nature, exposed the heathen to God's wrath, Ro 1:18; and to disobey the law of Moses, the Jew, Ro 2:2 Heb 2:3 10:28 Heb 12:25; much more not to obey the gospel. Christ is said here especially to take vengeance of such at his coming. Gospel sins are most heinous and most provoking, and will be most severely punished.

## 2 Thessalonians 1:9

Ver. 9. This is the vengeance before spoken of; it is here called *destruction*, not an annihilation, and cessation of being, but of all well-being: and elsewhere called *death*, Ro 6:23, and *the second death*, Re 20:6, which imports also not all ceasing of life, but all comfort of life. And it is not the body alone, nor the soul alone, but their persons, *who*, &c.; and as fire is a great destroyer, so Christ's coming in flaming fire brings their destruction. And this destruction is *everlasting*: the fire that destroys them is never quenched, Mr 9:43,44. As the fire of the altar, which was a

fire of mercy, was not to go out, so the fire of Tophet burns for ever, Isa 30:33, which is the fire of justice; and God living for ever, and his justice never satisfied, their destruction is for ever. They sinned in their eternity, and will be punished in God's eternity. There was a remedy provided in the gospel for men, but rejecting the gospel, and not obeying it, there remains no hope; their destruction is everlasting. And this destruction is called punishment, *δικην τισουσιν poenam luent*; not the chastisement of a Father, as the temporal affliction of God's people. It proceeds from vindictive justice; it is taking vengeance. And this punishment is twofold, punishment of loss and sense, and from both together proceed perfect destruction.

*From the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;* the preposition *from* in the first expression noting separation, in the second noting efficiency. Others conceive efficiency to be meant in both, their destruction proceeding from the face of Christ frowning on them, frowning them into hell, (which smiling upon others, will bring their salvation), as well as from his glorious power manifested against them to destroy them, Ro 9:22. And yet others interpret the preposition in both places to note separation, both from the face of Christ, which the saints shall behold and rejoice in for ever, and from his glorious power; which will work in some for their complete salvation in the day of his appearing, as it had done before in their first conversion, and sanctification. The destruction of the wicked will be from or by the power of Christ; but by this *glory of power* may be meant only that power which will bring glory both to the bodies and souls of the saints, and this the wicked shall have no experience of in that day.

## 2 Thessalonians 1:10

Ver. 10. This speaks the different manner of Christ's coming towards the saints and believers; not in flaming fire to destroy them, as in the former verse; but to be *glorified* and *admired* in them. He saith not to be glorified by them, by their adoring and praising of him, but in them. He hath a personal glory, wherein he will appear glorious, and another mystical, in his saints. The Head will be glorified in the members, as they are glorified in and from the Head: as the sun hath a lustre and glory in the moon and stars besides what it hath in its own body, as Col 3:4: *When Christ, who is*

*our life, shall appear, we also shall appear with him in glory.* The glory God gave his Son, he hath given it to his saints, Joh 17:22, and will put it upon them, and be glorified in it in the day of his appearing; as God is said to have *glorified himself in Israel*, Isa 44:23.

*And to be admired;* and this glory will be so great, that he shall be admired in it, as the word signifies. It will set the saints themselves, and all the angels of heaven, yea, the whole world, a wondering. Small things do not cause admiration, but what is great and we cannot comprehend, that we admire. And Christ will not only be admired by them, but in them; the wonderful love, grace, mercy, wisdom, and faithfulness of Christ towards them will be admired. To raise up such a number of poor, sinful, despicable worms out of the dust into such a sublime state of glory and dignity, will be admirable.

*Because our testimony among you was believed;* and that these Thessalonians might have the comfort of this particularly, he having spoken of *saints*, and *those that believe* in general, the apostle applies this therefore to themselves in way of parenthesis: q.d. Christ will be admired in all that believe; and ye are among them that believe; ergo, &c. And the doctrine of the gospel he had preached, he called it his *testimony*, as Joh 3:33 1Co 3:6; which implies it was not an invention of his own, he did not speak of himself, as the word implies: and this testimony found different entertainment, some believed it not, others believed it and received it; upon which account the Thessalonians are commended and comforted here by the apostle. The Syriac read the words in the future tense, without a parenthesis; Christ will come to be thus glorified and admired in his saints, because our testimony among you concerning it shall be believed or confirmed *in that day*; he means the day of Christ's last coming, which he called *the day of the Lord*, 1Th 5:2; and because it is so great a day, is therefore by way of emphasis called *that day*.

## 2 Thessalonians 1:11

Ver. 11. The apostle here again mentions his praying for these Thessalonians, as he had often mentioned it in the former Epistle. And the reason might be, because he was absent from them; they might the more need his prayer, and by telling them of it, he thereby assures them that he

forgot them not. And the prayer he here makes for them hath reference to the discourse he had been upon, as appears by this word  $\epsilon\iota\varsigma$   $\omicron$ :

*Wherefore, or for, or in order to which, we pray, &c.*

*This calling;* which is figuratively to be understood of the blessed state they were called to, for the calling itself they had received already. And so it is the same in effect mentioned before, 2Th 1:5, called there *the kingdom of God;* or to have Christ *glorified and admired in them*, 2Th 1:10. And elsewhere termed *the prize of the high calling of God*, Php 3:14. And that God would *count them worthy of it*; as he had used the same expression before; only there it was mentioned with respect to their sufferings, here in a way of prayer. He encouraged them under their sufferings, that they might thereupon be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, and now prays that God would count them worthy; their worthiness arising more from the gracious account of God than their own sufferings. A Christian's calling hath duty annexed to it, whereupon the apostle exhorts the Ephesians to walk worthy of it in discharge of those duties, Eph 4:1,2. And it hath a state of blessedness belonging to it, which is meant here; and none shall partake of it, but those whom God shall count worthy of it. But God's account is not according to the strictness of the law, but the gracious indulgence of the covenant of grace; but yet his prayer implies such a walking according to this covenant, as whereby they might be counted worthy of the blessed state they were called unto.

*And fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness:* the gracious purposes of God towards his people are called often his good pleasure, as Mt 11:26 Lu 12:32 Eph 1:5,9; and the same is meant Isa 53:10: *The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand;* the Hebrew word *Chephets* being of the same signification with the Greek word here used. Christ shall accomplish the gracious purposes of God towards his people. And called his *good pleasure*, partly because they have no reason out of the sovereign will of God, and they are such also as he hath great complacency and delight in; and though they are executed in time, yet they were in his heart from everlasting, and therefore called *eternal*, Eph 3:11. And I find purpose and good pleasure put both together, Eph 1:9. It is here called *the good pleasure of his goodness*, which is not a tautology, as it may seem to be, but to make his expression of God's grace the more emphatical; or rather, to show that this good pleasure of God towards his people ariseth out of

his goodness. God hath purposes of wrath towards some, but such cannot be called the good pleasure of his goodness. Goodness is that excellency in God, whereby he is ready to communicate good to his creature; but by goodness here is meant God's special goodness, which is peculiar to his people whom he hath chosen. To *fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness*, is to accomplish all those good purposes that were in his heart; some whereof were already fulfilled in their calling, adoption, justification, and sanctification begun, but the whole was not yet fulfilled, which he therefore here prays for; so that as their election, and their first conversion, were not from any worthiness or foresight of faith in them, but the good pleasure of his will, so the progress and perfection of their salvation was also to be from the same good pleasure.

*And the work of faith with power:* by *the work of faith* is either meant faith itself, which is the work of God, or else the fruits of faith; and so work is here taken for works or operations of faith. And the apostle addeth this in his prayer, to show that we are not saved only by God's good pleasure without faith, such a faith that worketh. And to perfect their salvation is a fulfilling the work of faith, for perseverance and progress towards perfection is from the work of faith. Or it may particularly refer to their patience and constancy under their sufferings, which he had before spoken of, and which is a peculiar work of faith. But because faith is not sufficient of itself, and the work of faith may fail, he therefore addeth, in power, or *with power*; that is, the power of God, which is his Spirit, so called, Lu 1:35. Our faith and the power of God are here joined together, as 1Pe 1:5. The same power that first worketh faith, afterwards co-worketh by it and with it.

## 2 Thessalonians 1:12

Ver. 12. *That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him;*  $\sigma\omega\varsigma$ . All expositors agree that these words contain in them a final cause, as the Greek word imports; and so understand them as the ultimate end of the apostle's prayer for them; he had prayed for things that did concern their salvation, but he looked further, which was, that thereby the name of the Lord Jesus may be glorified in them. The glory of Christ and the saints' salvation are wrapt up together; and though they are to look immediately to the latter, yet ultimately to the former. But whether

the apostle means the glorifying Christ in this life, or the life to come, is a question. I rather think the words refer to the life to come, when the name of Christ shall be for ever glorified in the salvation of his people, when all the good pleasure of God's goodness shall be fulfilled upon them, they having been kept in the faith by the power of God unto the end, through Jesus Christ; and then also they shall be glorified not only by him, as we may read the text, but in him, in being received into a participation of the same glory with Jesus Christ, and by their union with him are glorified in him, Joh 17:22 Col 3:4 1Jo 3:2. And when this is done, then have they received the prize of their calling, then is the whole good pleasure of God's goodness fulfilled, then is the work of faith accomplished; which things the apostle saith he prayed for in their behalf.

*According to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ:* what the apostle before called the good pleasure of God's goodness, he here calls his *grace*, and he adds the grace of Christ, because the grace or favour of both are so eminently manifested in these things, whereby not only the name of God, but of Christ also, shall be glorified, as he said before; and that it may be glorified in them according to his grace, that is, greatly glorified; and they glorified in him according to the grace of God and Jesus Christ, that is, greatly glorified, as we may further understand the words; the grace of God being exceeding great towards them in Jesus Christ. And hereby the apostle would exclude all thoughts about their own merit, 2Th 1:11.

## 2 Thessalonians 2:1

### Chapter Summary

2Th 2:1 Paul warneth the Thessalonians against the groundless surmise that the day of Christ was near at hand,

2Th 2:3-12 showing that it would be preceded by a great apostacy, and that the man of sin would be first revealed, and by his wicked impostures draw many into perdition.

2Th 2:13-14 He repeateth his good hopes concerning them,

2Th 2:15-17 exhorting them to stand fast in his doctrine, and praying God to comfort and stablish them

in all goodness.

Ver. 1. The apostle now comes to refute the opinion that some at least of these Thessalonians had received, as if the day of Christ was near at hand. He having said, 1Th 4:17: *We which are alive and remain shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, &c.*, then some might think his coming would be in the apostle's time, or some other way they might fall into this conceit; and some do conceive this was the chief reason of the apostle's writing this Epistle. And because this mistake might be of dangerous consequence, therefore he is very vehement and particular in refuting it: for hereupon they might be brought to question the truth of the whole gospel when this should not come to pass: they might be unprepared for the sufferings that were to come upon the church; their patience might fail in expecting this day, and their minds be doubting about the coming of Christ at all. This opinion also would much narrow their thoughts about Christ's kingdom, and the enlarging of the gospel among other Gentiles; and the profane might abuse it to sensuality, as 1Co 15:32: *Let us eat and drink, &c.* That he might the better persuade, he calls them *brethren*, and beseeches them, &c. And next, conjures them, using the form of an oath, *by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, &c.* We conjure men either by what they love, or by what they fear; as they would enjoy the one, or avoid the other. The coming of Christ was what they desired and rejoiced in, as that which would bring rest to them, and tribulation to their adversaries; and by this he doth therefore beseech or adjure them: and therefore we must understand this of Christ's last coming, as the word *παρουσια*, in the text, is still applied to this coming, 1Th 2:19 3:13, &c.; and not of his coming to destroy the Jewish church and state, for that coming was at hand.

*And by our gathering together unto him;* at his last coming, when the whole body of Christ shall be gathered to him, to meet him in the air, 1Th 4:17. And then the sense is: As ye hope ever to see such a blessed meeting, and to be of that number, so take heed of this opinion. Yet some read the text otherwise, because in the Greek it is not *δια*, but *υπερ της παρουσιας*, and so the same with *περι*, not *we beseech you by*, but concerning *the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto him*, as denoting only the subject matter treated of. I prefer the former; and so the apostle conjures them not to be soon shaken in



mind, but to stand fast in the truth about the doctrine of Christ's coming, which they had been taught, and very lately taught, and therefore it was the greater evil to be *soon shaken*; as the apostle upbraids the Galatians, Ga 1:6, and God the Israelites, Ps 106:13.

## 2 Thessalonians 2:2

Ver. 2. *That ye be not soon shaken in mind*; σαλευθῆναι it is an allusion to the waves of the sea that are tossed with the winds, as false doctrines tend to unsettle the mind, as Eph 4:14 Heb 13:9; and to be established in the truth is often commanded, 1Co 16:13 Php 4:1 Col 1:23, &c. And by *mind* here is either meant the faculty itself; and then the apostle beseecheth them to keep company with their understanding, not to be removed from their mind: as false doctrine is said to bewitch men, Ga 3:1, and to make men foolish, 2Th 2:3; as madness is called *amentia*, or *dementia*, as that which doth as it were unmind men, and corrupt the mind, and pervert the judgment, 2Ti 3:8,9, as Jannes and Jambres deceived the people by their enchantments, as the apostle there mentions. Or else, the sentence and judgment of the mind; and then he beseecheth them to hold fast the right judgment they had entertained about Christ's coming, and not to hesitate and waver about it; so the word is taken, 1Co 2:16.

*Or be troubled*; θροεῖσθαι, alluding to soldiers affrighted with a sudden alarm. We find the word, Mt 24:6 Mr 13:7, used in this allusion. And the opinion of Christ's coming to be at hand might occasion this trouble in them, either lest they might be surprised by it, and unprepared for it, or by judging themselves mistaken in their former apprehensions about it; and those false teachers that broach this opinion, did also perhaps so represent this coming in such terror as to cause this trouble; as false teachers in general are such as are said to cause trouble, Ga 1:7 5:12; though the coming of Christ is in itself rather the saints' hope and joy, than ground of trouble, as 1Th 1:10 4:18, &c. And it may be some did pretend for this opinion the Spirit, or some letter from the apostle, either the former Epistle to them, or some letter that was forged, or some word he had spoken, or preached. And those words *as from us* may refer to all these: the Spirit, *as from us*; or word, *as from us*; or letter, *as from us*.

*Neither by spirit*; some extraordinary revelation of the Spirit, which the

false teachers pretended to, especially in the primitive times, when they were more ordinary; as in the church of Corinth, 1Co 14:6, and the churches of Galatia, Ga 3:2,5: some would pretend the Spirit that called Jesus accursed, 1Co 12:3, and therefore the apostle bids: *Try the spirits*, 1Jo 4:1. Simon Magus pretended to it, and had his Helene, Montanus his Paraclete, Mahomet his Dove: and the man of sin pretends to this Spirit, though it is in truth *the spirit of antichrist*, 1Jo 4:3, and the spirit of Satan, in the next chapter of this Epistle, as was foretold that in the last times there would arise *seducing spirits*, 1Ti 4:1; as there was in the times of the Old Testament false prophets that pretended to the Spirit, as 1Ki 22:24 Mic 2:11. And the very heathen would pretend to divine oracles, inspirations, and revelations, especially their kings and lawgivers, as Numa Pompilius, Lycurgus, &c.; and still there are enthusiasts who make these pretences.

*Nor by word*; δεα λογου, whereby some understand calculation by astrological rules, that the day of Christ was at hand; others render the word reasoning; and so from the declining of the vigour of the earth, and the nearer approach of the sun to it, as Ptolemy observed in his time, or some other natural causes, they reasoned the coming of Christ and the dissolution of the world to be nigh at hand: but rather we understand by it some word from the apostle's own mouth, which was pretended he had spoken or preached some where, though not written. As the Church of Rome pretends to traditions, besides the written word, upon which they ground many of their superstitions and idolatries, not warranted by Scripture. As the Jews had a second *Mishneh*, and their *Cabbala*, collected in part from the sayings of Moses, or some other of their prophets, which they did not write.

*Nor by letter*; some letter that was sent to them from some other hand, or else by some forged letter as from the apostle himself, or his former Epistle misunderstood.

*As that the day of Christ is at hand.*

*Objection.* But is it not said that the day of the Lord, or the coming of the Lord, is at hand, 1Co 10:11 Php 4:5 Jas 5:7,8 1Pe 4:2?

*Answer.* The word used in those places differs from this in the text; for it

signifies either that which is actually present, or very near it, as Ro 8:38 Ga 1:4; as that which is to be done presently is spoken of as done, Joh 17:4 2Ti 4:7. Or those places mean his coming is at hand, as to God's account of time, though not as to man's. And in that sense Christ saith: *Behold, I come quickly*, Re 22:7. But the error the apostle warns them of is, as if the coming of Christ would be in the age in which they lived. The apostles all said that the coming of the Lord was at hand, but their right meaning was perverted to a false sense, as seducers usually do.

### 2 Thessalonians 2:3

Ver. 3. *Let no man deceive you:* here the apostle urgeth again his charge against this error, though in other words, and begins his arguments to refute it. He had adjured them not to be shaken, and here he cautions them against being deceived, for the one makes way for the other; so also not to be troubled, 2Th 2:2, for troubled minds are apt to be made a prey to seducers. And the caution in the text proves that their shaking and trouble did arise from some deceivers that were amongst them, rather than any misunderstanding of their own of what he wrote in the former Epistle about Christ's coming. To be shaken in mind is bad, hut to be deceived is worse, for it is a going out of the path, as the word signifies; and thercfin'e his caution against it is universal, both as to persons and ways: Let no man deceive you, though he pretend to revelations, or be of the greatest reputation in the church.

*By any means;* either of era craft, flattery, pretending love, or plausible arguments, or misrepresenting our words, or forging of letters, or misintering our Epistle to you or any other part of Scripture, or feigned miracles, &c. Then he enters the arguments to confute it, which are.

1. The general apostacy.
2. The revelation of the man of sin.

Neither of these are yet, nor will be in this age; and yet *that dog shall not come* till these both first come.

*For that doth shall not come, except there come a falling away first;* there

is a supplement in our translation, for in the Greek it is only, *for, except there come a falling away first, &c.*, or an apostacy, a recession, a departing, or a standing off, as the world imports; so that apostacy may be either good, when it is from evil to good, or evil, when it is from good to evil: it is always used in this latter sense in Scripture. Again, it is either civil or spiritual: civil, as when people fall off from the civil government they were under, and so some would interpret the text of the defection from the Roman empire, the east part from the west, and the ten kingdoms that arose out of it; which was the opinion of Hierom, Epist. ad Algasiam. But the apostle writing to the church speaks not of civil government, and the affairs of state, and speaks of such an apostacy which would give rise to the man of sin, and the revelation of him. And this man of sin riseth up in the church, not in the civil state; and the consequence of this apostacy is giving men up to strong delusions to believe a lie, and then follows their damnation; and the cause of it is said to be, not receiving the truth in the love of it; so that it is not a civil, but a spiritual apostacy, as the word in Scripture is always (I suppose) so taken. And it is not of a particular person, or of a particular church, but a general apostacy of the church, though not of every individual; that church that is afterwards called *the temple of God*, where the man of sin sitteth, and is exalted above all that is called God; which cannot be in any particular church; and would not the apostle have specified that particular church? Neither is it some lesser apostacy which may befall the best church; but such as would be eminent, called *η αποστασια*, that apostacy, greater than that of some believing Jews to Judaism, or of some Christians to Nicolaitanism, which some think is meant. Much less can it be Caius Caesar, as Grotius interprets, or any one person, for the apostle saith not apostate, but apostacy; else a man of sin could not rise out of it, and exalt himself above all that is called God, and worshipped. It is an apostacy from sound doctrine, instituted worship, church government, and true holiness of life, as may be further considered afterwards. Neither is the apostacy all at once, but gradual; for out of it ariseth a man of sin, who grows up to this manhood by degrees; and sin and wickedness are not completed at first, as well as holiness. Much less is this apostacy a falling off from the Church of Rome, as some papists affirm, and make the Reformation to be the apostacy, which was a return from it. Doth the man of sin rise out of the Reformation? Did any of the first Reformers oppose and exalt themselves above all that is called God, or is worshipped? Or, as God sat in the temple of God, &c.? Was any of their coming with all power, and signs, and lying wonders? Or did any of

them forbid to marry, and to abstain from meats, &c.? Which is the character our apostle gives of this apostacy, 1Ti 4:1-3. Neither is the Mahometan religion this apostacy, for Mahomet sitteth not in the temple of God. Neither is it in the falling of the converted Jews from the Jewish church to the gospel church; the apostle would never call that an apostacy. And that man of sin be revealed: the next argument is from the revelation of the man of sin; this is also to precede Christ's last coming: it is a Hebraism. A warlike man is styled a man of war; a bloody man, a man of bloods; a deceitful man, a man of deceit, &c.: so a man eminent in sin is here called a man of sin; not only personally so, but who doth promote sin, propagate it, countenance it, command it. See Platina, Sigebert, Blonetas, Beuno Usprengensis, Matt. Paris. In sins of omission, forbidding what God requireth; in sins of commission, requiring or allowing what God hath forbidden. In sins of the first table; corrupting God's worship by superstition and idolatry, taking God's name in vain by heartless devotion, dissembling piety, dispensing with perjury and false oaths, taking away the second commandment and the morality of the fourth commandment, and making men's faith and obedience to rest upon a human authority, &c. In sins of the second table; to dispense with duties belonging to superiors and inferiors; with murder, adultery, fornication, incest, robbery, lying, equivocation, &c. And besides all these, promoting a false religion, and destroying the true, by fines, imprisonments, banishments, tortures, poisons, massacre, fire, and faggot. And this man of sin is not a single person, but a company, order, and succession of men; because all are acted by the same spirit, therefore called a man; as *the man of the earth*, Ps 10:18, is all men of an earthly spirit, and *a man of the field*, Ge 25:27, is men whose minds and employments are in the field. Or, it is a sinful state. As the civil state of the four monarchies in Daniel is represented by four single beasts, and the antichristian state by a beast rising out of the sea, Re 13:1; so by *man of sin* is meant a sinful state, which though it consisteth of many people and nations, yet, being under the influence and government of one man, may be also styled the man of sin upon that account; *impietatis Coryphaeus. Moulin*. And because the sin of the whole community is chiefly centred in him, and springs out from him; a man in whom is the fountain of all sins. *Hierein ad Algasiam*. And the sin of this state is called *a mystery of iniquity*, 2Th 2:7, and so differing from the sin in all other political states; and therefore may well be judged to be the same with the whore sitting on many waters, that hath *mystery* written in her forehead, Re 17:1,5. And as no expositor takes the whore to be meant

of a single woman, and the true apostolic church is represented by a woman in travail, Re 12:1,2, why then should we take the man of sin to be a single man, as the papists do? viz. a Jew of the tribe of Dan, that shall erect his kingdom and temple in Jerusalem, seduce the Jews, continue three years and a half, make great havoc of the church, to be opposed by Enoch and Elias, and is to come a little before the end of the world. Ridiculous! Neither call this man of sin be Simon Magus and his followers, for he was revealed in the apostle's time, seeing the mystery of iniquity belonging to this man of sin began to work in the apostle's days, as 2Th 2:7, and he is the same whom St. John calls *antichrist*, 1Jo 2:18; and the *spirit of antichrist* began to be in the world in his time, 1Joh 4:3; and the nations are to be made drunk with the cup of his fornication, and to serve and obey him, &c., Re 13:8 17:4; all which requires more time than is allotted by them: but they set him a great way off, that none may suspect him to be among themselves; but he that will compare the Church of Rome in the apostle Paul's times with what it is now, and the doctrine of the council of Trent with that laid down in his Epistle to the Romans, may say: How is the faithful city become a harlot! And this man of sin is to *be revealed* also, which shows that he is not a single person, not yet born: revealing relates not so much to a person, as a thing; in particular to *the mystery of iniquity*, mentioned 2Th 2:7: his revealing is either *quoad existentiam*, or *apparentiam*. The former is meant here, and the latter 2Th 2:8. He grows up into an existence, as the apostacy grows, as vermin grows out of putrefaction. As the church's purity, faith, love, holiness declined, and as pride, ambition, covetousness, luxury prevailed, so he grew up: and which was the direct point and time of his full revelation in this first sense is conjectured by many, but determined by none; it is most generally referred to the title of Boniface the Third, to whom Phocas granted the style of oecumenical bishop, and to the Church of Rome to be the mother church. But as the apostacy brings forth this man of sin, so as he riseth he helps it forward; so that he both causeth it, and is caused by it. As corruption in doctrine, worship, discipline, and manners brought him forth, so he was active in corrupting them more and more.

*The son of perdition*; another Hebraism, where sometimes that which any way proceeds from another, as its cause, is called its son, as sparks the sons of the coal, Job 5:7, and branches sons of the tree, Ge 49:22, and the learner the son of the teacher, Pr 3:1; and sometimes that which a man is addicted to, as a wicked man is *the son of wickedness*, Ps 89:22. Again,

that which gives forth what it hath in itself, as the branches of the olive trees giving oil are called the sons of oil, Zec 4:14; and in the text, the man of sin is *the son of perdition*, as Judas is called, Joh 17:12: and he is so either actively, as he brings others to destruction, and so may be called *Apollyon*, Re 9:11; or rather passively, as devoted to perdition; as Re 19:20, *the beast and false prophet* are both cast into the lake of fire and brimstone; and *the beast that was, and is not*, is said to go into perdition, Re 17:11. The destroyer of others both in soul and body will be destroyed himself: first, morally, by the word and Spirit, as 2Th 2:8; and then judicially, by God's revenging justice in this world, and that to come. The apostle, at the very first mentioning him, declares his destiny; at his first rising and revealing, mentions his fall and ruin.

## 2 Thessalonians 2:4

Ver. 4. A further description of this man of sin, by his opposition and exaltation.

*Who opposeth*; or, ο αντικειμενος, the opposer; or rather, opposing, expressed in the participle of the present tense, denoting a continued act, or that which he bends himself strongly to. But against what? The same that he exalteth himself above, as some conceive; but the grammar will not well admit that sense, and we should not so restrain it; and therefore we will take the word indefinitely, as expressed in the text. But we may well conceive, it is Christ himself whom he opposeth; as his name given him by the apostle John doth evidence, when he is called *antichrist*, or *the antichrist*, one that is against Christ; not that he openly and professedly opposeth him, but as Judas kissed his Master, and betrayed him: see those that have written of antichrist, as Philip Nicholas, Whitaker, Danaeuns, Chamier, Moulin, Junius, &c. It is iniquity in a mystery. He serveth Christ, but it is to serve himself upon him. He acknowledgeth him in all his offices, and yet doth virtually deny and oppose him in them all: called antichrist, as opposite to the unction of Christ: Christ signifies anointed, and so he opposeth him in the offices to which he is anointed, while he owns his natures. He professeth himself a "servant of the servants of God", and yet persecutes, curseth, proscribes, and killeth them, opposing Christ in his members. He maketh *war with the saints*, Re 13:7. He hath two horus like a lamb, and speaks as a dragon, 2Th 2:11; speaks lies in

hypocrisy, 1Ti 4:2. And then he is described by his exaltation; υπεραιρομενος, exalted, which is well supplied, he *exalteth himself*: it is not from God. He *exalteth himself*, or lifteth himself, *above all that is called God*, though not really and essentially God. The apostle well knew that in the Old Testament magistrates were called *gods*, Ps 82:1,6; and 1Co 8:5: *There be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth*. Magistrates and rulers are of several degrees; some inferior, some superior; some supreme, as kings and emperors; but he exalteth himself above them all, and that not only in spirituals, by excommunications, but in civils, by deposing kings, disposing kingdoms, yea, making emperors to wait at his gate, hold his stirrup, prostrate themselves to kiss his toe, and then to tread upon their neck, as Alexander the Third did to Frederic Barbarossa; and this not condemned as the extravagancy of some particular persons, but allowed and justified by the doctrine and doctors of the Romish Church. And Bellarmine, de Rom. Pont. lib. 5. c. 8, gives it as the reason why the pope would not come to the council of Nice, lest if the emperor should come thither he should attempt to sit above him. So that by these two words in the text, the apostle describes him both in his enmity and pride, opposition and exaltation. Observe, first: He assumeth to himself a higher power than those that are only called gods; theirs is human, his is Divine; theirs on the bodies or estates of men, his over the conscience; theirs only to the living, his to men's souls after death. Next, he makes himself like God, and is *as God*, as the king of old Babylon said, *I will be like the Most High*, Isa 14:14. As God's residence of old was in the temple of Jerusalem, so *he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God*: not that temple that was built by Solomon, and afterwards rebuilt, and to be built again, as the popish doctors speak: for it is now destroyed, and if it be built again by this man of sin, as they say, at his coming, would the apostle call that *the temple of God*? 2Co 6:16 Re 3:12, &c. But it is a spiritual temple, as the church is called, 1Co 3:16,17. So Augustine, Jerome, Hilary, Chrysostom, understand it. And he is said here to sit, to have here his *cathedra*. The apostle speaks of him as a bishop, whose episcopal see is called a seat, or *cathedra*; and here he sitteth *as God*: the popish writers give the pope that and suchlike titles, *Dominus Deus noster Papa, Idem est Dominium Dei et Papae, Tu es alter Deus in Terra*, "Thou art another God on earth." *Concil. Later. sess. 4*. And as God he maketh laws to bind the conscience, and dispenseth with laws natural and moral; pardons sin as he pleaseth, past, present, and to come; can deliver souls out of purgatory, and translate them to heaven: so that this man of sin is not to



be looked for among the Turks, pagans, or infidels. He *sitteth in the temple, the church, of God*; not that it can be the true church where he thus sitteth and acteth, but rather the synagogue of Satan; but that which he calleth so, and which beareth that name, and which before the falling away was really so, Ro 1:8. As Jerusalem is called *the holy city* after it had lost its holiness, Mt 4:5; and *the faithful city, when become an harlot*, Isa 1:21; and Mount Tabor a *holy mount*, 2Pe 1:18; because once so: or called so according to men's opinion; as idols, that are nothing, are yet called *gods*, 2Ch 28:23 1Co 8:5. Some read the words, εἰς τὸν ναόν, *in templum Dei*, as we say, *in amicum*, i.e. *velut amicus*, he sitteth for the temple of God, as if he himself was the temple and church of God. So Aug. de Civ. Dei, lib. 20. c. 19. And so some of our protestant writers, applying it to the pope, who, as the head of the church, hath the whole church virtually in himself, and doth exercise all church power.

*Showing himself that he is God*; not saying it with his mouth, as CECumenius saith, but making such a show before men; though Bellarmine interprets it of an open boasting and vaunting himself to be God, which, saith he, the pope doth not; but by pretended miracles, signs, and wonders, by pardons, indulgences, canonizing saints, dominion over princes and kingdoms, he shows himself as a God before men, and claimns a power to be judged of no man, and to be judge of all men. *A seculari potestate non solvi posse nec ligari pontificem, quem constat a Constantino Deum appellatum, cum nee Deum ab hominibus judicari manifestum sit. Decret. distinct. 96. c. 7.* Yea, lastly, he exalteth himself above God himself, when he maketh the Scriptures to derive their authority more from the pope's canonizing, than God himself; and without it no man is bound to believe them. *Decret. lib. 2. tit. 23.* Again: If the pope should err by commanding vice and forbidding virtue, the church was bound to believe vice to be good and virtue to be evil. *Bellarm. lib. 4. de Summo Pont. c. 5.* And it is frequent among their divines and canonists to say, that the pope can dispense against the apostles and the Old Testament, and the Scriptures are inferior to his decrees, and without the authority of the church are a nose of wax, paper, and parchment, &c.; so that upon the whole, as John's disciples asked concerning Christ: Art thou he that should come, or must we look for another? So, may we not say to the pope concerning antichrist: Art thou he, &c.? I will speak boldly, either there is no antichrist, or the bishop of Rome is he. *Chamier. 1.16. c. 8.*

## 2 Thessalonians 2:5

Ver. 5. The apostle tacitly upbraids them for their forgetfulness. To forget the things that have been taught us, is a great evil: Solomon often cautions against it, Pr 3:1 4:5; and it is often reproved, Heb 12:5 Jas 1:24; and the contrary required, Mal 4:4 Joh 16:4 Jude 1:17 Re 3:3. David hid the word in his heart, Ps 119:11, and the virgin Mary kept the angel's sayings, Lu 2:19. The apostles did take care to tell the churches of the apostacy that would come, and of false prophets and teachers that would arise, as Paul the elders of Ephesus, Ac 20:29,30, and Peter, 2Pe 2:1, and St. John of the coming of antichrist, 1Jo 2:18; and more fully, though obscurely, in the book of the Revelation; and the apostle here in this verse minds these Thessalonians that he told them of the coming of the man of sin before the coming of Christ, so that they should not have been shaken in their minds about Christ's coming in that present age. And they told the churches of these things, that they might not be surprised by them, or offended at them, when they came.

## 2 Thessalonians 2:6

Ver. 6. *And now ye know what withholdeth:* the apostle it seems had told them, as of his coming, so of what at present withheld the revealing of him. And what this was is difficult to know now, though it seems these Thessalonians knew it: there are many conjectures about it. This I shall say in general:

1. It was something that the apostle thought not safe openly to declare in writing; else he would not have written of it so obscurely.
2. It was both a thing, and a person; a thing, *το κατεχον*, in this verse, *that which withholdeth*; and a person, as in the next verse, *ο κατεχων*, *he who letteth*.
3. It was also such a thing and such a person as were to be removed out of the way, not totally, but as they were hinderances of this revelation.

Expositors, both popish and protestant, pitch upon the Roman emperor and

empire as most probably meant here by the apostle; and therefore he wrote not plainly, lest by writing of the taking away that empire, which the Romans thought to be eternal, he might stir up their hatred against the Christians. Some understand it of the removing only the seat of the emperor from Rome to Constantinople, whereby the bishop of Rome had opportunity to grow up into greater power. The popish writers understand it of the total destruction of the empire, which because they see not yet done they conclude the man of sin is not yet revealed. Our protestant writers understand it only of such a weakening of the empire and imperial dominion, as gave the bishop and clergy of Rome advantage to rise up into power both spiritual and secular; as some learned writers have given an account thereof. When the empire was broken into ten kingdoms, the imperial power of the emperors was much weakened; and being afterwards united in the pope as an ecclesiastical monarch, he grew up, and the imperial power declined, the grandeur of them both could not stand together. And this is the beast with the ten horns, and ten crowns upon the horns, which is spoken of, Re 13:1; whereupon this beast is worshipped, and the voice is: *Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?* 2Th 2:4. Some of the ancient fathers had this sense of the text: see Tertul. de Resurrect. 1. 4. c. 24. Chrysost. in locum. Aug. de Civ. Dei, 1. 19. c. 20. Jerome, when he heard of the taking of Rome by Alaricus, expected the coming of antichrist not far off. Whereupon the ancient church did pray that the Roman empire might continue long, that his coming might be delayed: *Tertul. Apol. c. 32,39*. But it is now evident how it is fallen from what once it was. The eastern part is under the dominion of the Turk; the western divided into ten distinct kingdoms under distinct governments; and in Germany, where it is most remaining, the empire is little more than titular; and Italy and Rome wholly in the pope's possession: and hence this man of sin hath been long since revealed.

*That he might be revealed in his time:* as God appoints seasons for all his works, so for the revealing of him, as also for his ruin.

## 2 Thessalonians 2:7

Ver. 7. *For the mystery of iniquity doth already work;* the way was prepared by degrees for the man of sin, before he came actually to be revealed, or constituted in his complete existence; and this was by the

working of the mystery of iniquity. A mystery is something in general which is abstruse, intricate, and not easily discerned. And there are mysteries in doctrine, and in practice; mysteries of godliness, and mysteries of iniquity; mysteries of the kingdom of God, and of the devil's kingdom. So there are *the deep things of God*, 1Co 2:10, and *the depths of Satan*, Re 2:24. The mystery ushering in the man of sin is a mystery of iniquity. It is not open sin and wickedness, but dissembled piety, specious errors, wickedness under a form of godliness cunningly managed, that is here meant: see the book called *The Mystery of Jesuitism*, or the *Provincial Letters*. And it is a mystery that worketh; it doth exert and put forth itself, but secretly, as a mole which worketh under ground. And its working is not against the being, providence, and attributes of God, or natural religion; but to undermine Christianity in the peculiar doctrines, worship, and practice of it. In doctrines are brought in *privily damnable heresies*, 2Pe 2:1. In worship, inventions and commandments of men, under pretences of greater reverence, devotion, and humility, Col 2:22,23. In practice, dispensations to moral impieties under colour of service to the catholic church. And this mystery, saith our apostle, already worketh; in the false doctrines of the false teachers of his time, in the traditions and inventions of men obtruding themselves into the worship of God in his time, in the affectation of pre-eminence in the church in his time, and making merchandise of the gospel in his time, and gain godliness; and in mingling philosophical notions with the simplicity of the gospel, and gratifying the flesh under a form of godliness, and pretence of gospel liberty. And it was not among the heathen, or the Jews, but among the professors of Christianity, that this mystery was then working, as I suppose the apostle meaneth. And when the man of sin was fully revealed all these corruptions did centre in him, as sinks in the common sewer; the lesser antichrists in the great antichrist.

*Only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way:* the idolatries and persecutions of the heathen emperors must be taken out of the way, to make way for those that arise under a Christian, or rather antichristian, state, the dragon giving his seat, spirit, and power to the beast. And the power that was in the Roman emperor, whether heathen or Christian, must be taken out of the way to make room for the exaltation of this man of sin. For notwithstanding all corruptions; in doctrine, worship, or practice which might be introduced before, yet he is not fully revealed till he hath his jurisdiction and secular power also in his hand. And then

this mystery of iniquity is arrived to its height; which St. John saw written in the forehead of the great whore, Re 17:5: *Mystery, Babylon the great, &c.*, and which, some have said, was written anciently in the pope's mitre.

## 2 Thessalonians 2:8

Ver. 8. *And then shall that Wicked be revealed:* this revealing I think differs from that mentioned before, 2Th 2:3; he is first revealed, as I said: *quoad existentiam*, when he comes forth into being, and then *quoad apparentiam*, when he comes to be discovered. And this I suppose is meant here, because his destruction is mentioned as following upon it; for the discovering of him is the first step to his ruin, and here is called by another name. At his first rising he is a man of sin; but after he hath violated the laws of God and the laws of Christ by setting up his own, he is well called  $\alpha\nu\omicron\mu\omicron\varsigma$ , that lawless one; and now he that pretended so highly for Christ is discovered to be antichrist. The mystery of iniquity that before lay hid comes to be revealed, God enlightening the eyes of many learned ministers and princes, yea, and of multitudes of people herein; the Scriptures, before shut up in an unknown tongue, being now translated to the understanding of the common people; those that were *made drunk with the wine of her fornication*, Re 17:2, now put away their wine from them, as Eli said to Hannah; and the kings and kingdoms that gave their power to the beast, now come to *hate the whore*, &c., the time being come for the fulfilling the words of God herein, Re 17:17. And this revelation is signified and foretold when the angel said to John, *I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her*, Re 17:7. There is need of a Divine revelation to know the mystery of iniquity, as well as the mystery of godliness. And the woman is the same with the man of sin mentioned before, once the spouse of Christ, but now by her idolatry become a whore, and divorced from him; said to be also *that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth*, Re 17:18. By the understanding these things this wicked one comes to be revealed.

*Whom the Lord shall consume;* which is not done all at once; his consumption goes before his destruction. As Jezebel, the prophetess who seduced the servants of God to commit fornication, is said to be cast into a bed of languishing, Re 2:20,22; as he rose up by degrees, so shall he be consumed gradually. His power declines by degrees, both civil and

ecclesiastical, and the authority he had got both in and over the consciences of men. The seven vials are the seven last plagues, which do gradually consume him. And this is said to be done by the Lord himself, which is the Lord Jesus. He that made war with the Lamb is overcome by the Lamb, Re 17:14; though many instruments may be employed herein; for he is said to have those with him who are called *chosen and faithful*; and it belongs to him, as all power of heaven and earth is given to him, to save his people, and to destroy his adversaries; as it is said of him, Ps 97:3: *A fire goeth before him, and burneth up his enemies round about*. As he is a refreshing, directing light to his people, so a consuming fire to his adversaries. The stone cut out of the mountain without hands, Da 2:34, smites the image in the time of the fourth monarchy, when Christ came into the world, and in the latter end of it, under the antichristian state, it is broken in pieces.

*With the spirit of his mouth*; as was prophesied of him, Isa 11:4: *With the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked*, even this wicked one here in the text, Re 18:8 19:15. And this, as some interpret, he shall do with ease, as by a word speaking; or by a word of command, saying: Let it be done, and it shall be done. Or, as we may read it, with the spirit of his lips, because of the power or spirit that goes along with his word. But this breath of Christ's mouth Cajetane and others understand of the word of the gospel, which is the breath of Christ's mouth in the mouths of his ministers, called *the everlasting gospel*, Re 14:6, which an angel flying through the midst of heaven is said to have, to preach to them that dwell upon the earth; and then followed by another angel, saying: *Babylon is fallen, is fallen*, 2Th 2:8. The mystery of iniquity will be unveiled by the clear preaching of the word; and the primitive pure institutions of Christ, and doctrines of the gospel: will be vindicated from the antichristian corruptions and innovations. And the spirit of Christ going forth with the gospel, will make it effectual hereunto. These are the rod of his strength, whereby he rules in the midst of his enemies, Ps 110:2, and whereby he shall consume this man of sin. Nations and people will fall off from him as they come to understand the truth by the word preached.

*And shall destroy*; after is consuming follows his destruction, καταργησει, the word *destroy* here signifies to abolish, enervate, to make of no force; and so used often in the New Testament: sometimes applied to the law, Ro 3:31, sometimes to the body of sin, Ro 6:6, sometimes to

persons to whom Christ will not be effectual, Ga 5:4; here to the man of sin: so that whatever remains there may be of him in the world, they shall be without any efficacy or power: his jurisdiction shall be abolished, his keys shall not be able to open or shut, the edge of both his swords shall be quite blunted, his triple crown shall fall off his head, his purgatory fire shall be put out, his images shall lose their veneration; the spell of the cross shall be detected, the intercession of saints shall be found to be a fiction, infallibility shall be found to be a deceit, supremacy of the church shall fall to the ground; the rivers of his large revenues shall be dried up, &c., and *the beast that was, and is not, and yet is*, Re 17:8, shall now utterly cease to be.

*With the brightness of his coming*: the breath of his mouth wasted him, and the brightness of his coming destroys him. Some interpret this of Christ's personal coming to judgment, which will be with great brightness, as Mt 24:27: *As the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, so shall the coming of the Son of man be*; coming in the glory of heaven, and every eye shall see him; and of his coming he spake 1Th 4:1-18, and in this chapter also, as that which was not so near at hand as some imagined. And without question his coming will destroy him, if not destroyed before, as well as the rest of the wicked, 2Th 1:9; but whether judgment may not first proceed against the antichristian state, and those that have sinned under the gospel, is a question. It is sometimes mentioned particularly with respect to them: as in the parable of the tares and wheat, Mt 13:1-30, of the ten virgins, and the talents, Mt 25:1-46. And the beast and false prophet are cast into the lake of fire, Re 19:20, before the general judgment, mentioned Re 20:12. So that at Christ's personal coming his judgment will, as some conceive, begin here, and then proceed to the rest of the world; whereupon many assign some great length of time to Christ's stay upon earth, and judging the world. Others take *the brightness of his coming* in a spiritual sense, for a clearer manifestation of Christ in the world. As the kingdom of antichrist, or of this man of sin, is founded in darkness, so the brightness of this coming will dispel and destroy it. With respect to his eternal generation, Christ is said to be *the brightness of his Father's glory*, Heb 1:2; but this is a brightness with respect to men. And though he hath come in his Spirit to enlighten his church from the beginning of the world, and more eminently after his ascension, yet this will exceed all the former, and is peculiarly styled *the brightness of his coming*. And so they expect this destruction of this man of sin before

Christ's coming to judgment; for if it be the same with the fall of Babylon, mentioned in the Revelation, many things are to be done here upon earth after that, before Christ's last coming, and they mention the calling of the Jews, the destruction of those enemies called Gog and Magog, the coming down of the new Jerusalem from heaven, which is some glorious state of the church here upon earth. However, the apostle here mentions nothing of a destruction by the material sword; what princes may do of different religions upon a civil account, I do not know, but as this man of sin rose out of the apostacy of the church, so he will not be consumed and destroyed but by a return from it, which is done by the breath of Christ's mouth, and the brightness of his coming. But yet, by some instruments or other, God will avenge the blood of his servants upon this man of sin in the time and way appointed of him.

## 2 Thessalonians 2:9

Ver. 9. The apostle still continues his discourse about this man of sin. He had declared whence he arose, and to what height of power, and the manner and place of his exercising it, and what opened him the way to it, and also his destruction, with the means of it. But he thought it needful to explain particularly the manner of his rising into all this power, and preserving himself in it, and the persons over whom he doth exercise it.

*Whose coming is after the working of Satan;* Κατ' ἐνεργειαν Christ's coming is in power, and so is his: Christ comes with the Spirit of God, and his is with a spirit also, but it is of Satan: and the Spirit of God worketh with Christ in his coming, and the spirit of Satan with the man of sin in his coming; which implies either the principle of this working in his coming, it is the devil; or the similitude of it, it is like the working of Satan. If in the first sense, it shows by what spirit the antichristian church was first formed, and by which it is still informed and acted; as in natural bodies the matter is formed and informed by the spirit within it. The true church hath the Holy Spirit, that forms it into a spiritual temple, Eph 2:21,22; the false church hath the spirit of the devil, forming it into the synagogue of Satan, Re 2:9. The dragon is said to give the beast his *power, seat, and great authority*, Re 13:2; and this dragon is the devil in the heathen empire, who being cast out of his seat and power when the emperor became Christian, found the antichristian church, and here exercised that power and authority



which he did formerly in the imperial seat of the heathen emperors; whence we may see whence all the furious zeal and bloody cruelties appearing in the popish church do spring, notwithstanding all their outward shows of devotion. If we take the words in the latter sense, then his coming is like the working of Satan; either with great power and energy, as the word imports: the Greek word is often used in a good sense; for God's working in the heart, Php 2:13, for the working of the word, 1Th 2:13, for the working of the heart in prayer, Jas 5:17: or by the same methods; by pretences of piety and devotion, as Satan transforms himself into an angel of light; or by keeping men in blindness and ignorance, so doth Satan by setting before men secular grandeur, and the pomp of the world, as thus Satan dealt with our Saviour, Mt 4:1-11; or by suggesting lies instead of truth, so he dealt with our first parents, and is called a liar from the beginning.

*With all power; εν παση δυναμει.* Besides that energy of Satan that works inwardly in this man of sin, which was mentioned before, he hath outward strength or power wherein he comes; which may be here meant. He hath the secular power to assist him, the kings of the earth giving their power to the beast; and we read of ten horns upon his head, which are the emblems of strength and power, Re 13:1; whereupon it is said: *Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?* Re 13:4.

*And signs, and lying wonders:* some, by the figure called hendyadis, read it, by the power of signs and lying wonders: but not properly. Observe how Satan is God's ape; God confirmed the gospel with *signs and wonders*, Ro 15:19; *God bearing them witness, with signs and wonders*, &c. Heb 2:4; and Satan brings this man of sin into the world in the same manner: God did it to confirm the truth, but Satan to countenance a falsehood. But though he comes with signs and wonders, yet not properly with *miracles*, as the Greek word is rendered in Heb 2:4; because though the devil can work the one, he cannot the other: he can by his great natural knowledge and experience improve natural causes to their utmost, but he cannot effect things above all possibility of nature, which is the same power as creating. The schoolmen give their distinction between wonders and miracles, which is not needful here to insert: all miracles are wonders, but all wonders are not miracles; and yet are esteemed miracles when their cause is not known. The Romish legends are full of stories of miracles wrought to confirm their false doctrines of purgatory, of relics, invocation of saints,

&c.; which might be wonders really wrought by the devil; such as were wrought by Jannes and Jambres in Egypt, and by Simon Magus, and Apollonius Tyaneus, &c.; who used magic arts, and the people, not knowing them in their causes, might judge them miracles. And being wrought for such ends, they are termed signs, for a sign is any thing that is used to make signification, whether it be a natural or artificial, an ordinary or extraordinary sign; used either for a good end, as those shown by Christ and the apostles, or for a bad end, as those used by this man of sin. People are apt to be affected with signs.

*The Jews*, saith the apostle, *require a sign*, 1Co 1:22, as they often desired Christ to show them a sign, and therefore this man of sin comes with signs. Some signs are only for representation, as the sign of the cross, and the images of Christ, and of his death and resurrection, &c.; and he comes in these: others are for confirmation, which are either real miracles, or such as seem so; and he comes in these latter also, which are here called *τερασι ψευδοις*, *lying wonders*, or wonders of a lie, Hebrew. Though the Greek word is oft used for a real miracle, yet not so, here; for miracles are the effects of a Divine power only, Ro 15:19 Heb 2:4, and not diabolical. And called *lying wonders*, either because they are used to confirm a lie, or because they are not real, but feigned wonders; impostures, to cheat the people, and make them wonder; whereof we have account in Gregory's Dialogues, and in Paulus Diaconus, and others; and yet such miracles as these the papists boast of as marks of their church to be true, though they are here by the apostle made the marks of the man of sin. And Christ foretells of false prophets that should *show great signs and wonders, to deceive, if possible, the very elect*, Mt 24:24. See De 13:1 Re 13:13,14.

## 2 Thessalonians 2:10

Ver. 10. *And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness;* or, deceit of unrighteousness, unrighteous deceit, or deceitful unrighteousness. And it is universal, *all*. It is unrighteousness managed with great subtlety to deceive; and so the same with the mystery of iniquity, mentioned before, or the mystery of unrighteousness, as we may read it. All sin is unrighteousness, whether against God or man, as all virtue is comprehended in righteousness. The apostle here means unrighteousness so cloaked and covered, that men discern it not, but are deceived by it: as the Pharisees,

who devoured widows' houses, and for pretence made long prayers; and so also they tithed mint and cummin as exactly religious, built the sepulchres of the prophets, made broad their phylacteries, would not eat with unwashen hands, &c. The like we find in the Church of Rome, as I mentioned before, where men are ambitious, covetous, cruel, superstitious, &c., and all under a pretence of righteousness, and for honour to Christ and the church: make use of Peter's keys to open rich men's coffers; and for a sum of money, to absolve men in this world, or to redeem them out of purgatory in the other world; which is a mere cheat, &c. Thus comes this man of sin, and by such ways he hath advanced himself.

*In them that perish:* this shows who they are that are deceived by him. Reprobates are often so described, 2Co 2:15 4:3; and it is the same as elsewhere signifies damnation. The word signifies men that are *lost*, so used Mt 18:11, or *destroyed*, 2Co 4:9. They are such as have not their names written in the book of life, Re 13:8; and who shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, and the smoke of their torment ascendeth for ever, Re 14:10,11.

*Because they received not the love of the truth:* and the apostle gives the reason why they are thus deceived. He saith not they had not received the truth, but the love of it, and so hold it not fast, but are carried away with the general apostacy. Truth is either natural, which the heathen had, and detained in unrighteousness, Ro 1:18; or supernatural, from Divine revelation. This is meant, for he speaks not of heathens, but Christians; not the world, but the church.

*That they might be saved:* and the truth here meant is saving truth, as the gospel is called *the word of truth*, Eph 1:13 Col 1:5; for had they received it in love they might have been saved, but for want of that they perish; so that it is unsound, notional professors that are carried away by the man of sin, and deceived by him. Truth, if it be not received into the heart as well as the head, will not secure against apostacy or popery, nor prevent perishing. And the amiableness that is in gospel truth calls for love, as the certainty of its revelation calls for faith; and had they so received the truth they might have been saved.

## 2 Thessalonians 2:11

Ver. 11. *And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion:* we had account in the former verse of such as are deceived by the man of sin, of their sin, and here of their punishment. They were first deluded, which was their sin; and God sends them strong delusion, and that is their punishment. They did not receive the truth in the love of it, which was their sin; and therefore are given up to believe a lie, which is their punishment. Had they received the truth aright, they might have been saved; but not receiving it, they are damned. And they were said to be such as perish, and their perishing is here called damnation. So that though God is not the author of sin or falsehood: *Deus non est auctor cujus est ultor*, Fulgent.; yet he may in justice give men up to them, which the apostle here calls God's sending, &c.; which imports either:

1. Tradition, delivering men to Satan to tempt and deceive.
2. Desertion, withholding or withdrawing that grace that might preserve them.
3. A judicial permission, God purposing not to hinder men to fall into that sin or delusion which he seeth their own hearts incline them to.

God concurs to evil, not *positive*, but *privative*; not *efficienter*, but *deficienter*; Schoolmen. God in Scripture is often said to do that which he permits to be done; as in the case of Joseph's selling unto Egypt, Ge 45:7, David's numbering the people, 2Sa 24:1, compared with 1Ch 21:1; and the ten kings giving their power to the beast, by God's putting it into their hearts, Re 17:17: and it is not a bare permission, for what evil God permits, he decreed to permit it; and he decreed the circumstances attending it, and the end to which he would order and dispose it, and the degree to which it should break forth. They were deceived into error, and God gave them up to it. And it did work with great efficacy; which either relates to the man of sin, that did lead them strongly into it, or to them that were led by him. When error doth vitiate the life, and one error begets another, and makes men violent against the truth, then it is the efficacy of error. And thus God doth judicially punish sin with sin, and delusion with delusion; and then they are always most operative, and most incurable. But men fall not presently under these judicial acts; men first refitse to see,

before God sends blindness, and first harden their own hearts, before God hardens them. These in the text first refused to receive the truth, before they were given up to believe a lie: see Ro 1:24. So that both God and this man of sin, and themselves also, are concerned in these evils; but they sinfully and unrighteously, but God judicially and in righteousness.

*That they should believe a lie:* and the lie they were given up to believe, is a doctrinal lie: false speaking is a lie in words, hypocrisy is a lie in fact, and error is a lie in doctrine, Ho 11:12 Ac 5:3. Some by *lie* here suppose is meant the lying wonders before mentioned; and this sense need not be excluded, but I rather interpret it of false doctrine, as that which stands opposite to the truth before mentioned, and again mentioned in this verse. Sometimes idols are called lies, Isa 44:20; sometimes, the things of the world, Ps 4:2; sometimes, the great men of the world, Ps 62:9; sometimes, false divinations, Eze 22:28 Zec 10:2; sometimes, false prophesyings and predictions, Jer 14:14 23:25,26; and sometimes, false doctrines, as 1Ti 4:1,2, where we read of false prophets, who shall arise in the last time, and speak *lies in hypocrisy*, &c. And false apostles are said to be *liars* upon that account, Re 2:2. And such are many popish doctrines, which the apostle here probably refers to. What is transubstantiation but a lie? Purgatory, infallibility of the church, mediation of saints, their *opus operatum*, &c.? Men must be strongly deluded to believe such doctrines, and it is mentioned as a great judgment of God upon them to believe such lies, as it is a great mercy to believe the truth, especially if we consider what follows upon it.

## 2 Thessalonians 2:12

Ver. 12. *That they all might be damned,* or condemned. The Greek is, judged, but often translated as in the text; the simple verb being taken for the compound: so Joh 3:17 1Co 11:29 Jude 1:4. It is true a man may be judged and not condemned, but the judgment of the wicked is condemnation; and damnation is here mentioned either as the event, or the effect of their believing lies, or as the purpose of God in sending them strong delusions. They are first justly punished with spiritual judgment, and then eternal, and God is just in both; whence we see that there are some errors in judgment which are damnable. As we read of *damnable heresies*, 2Pe 2:1, or heresies of destruction; such are many in the Romish

Church; and the apostle speaks of such, Col 2:19, *not holding the Head, &c.*; not meant of a total rejection of Christ, but of voluntary humility, and worshipping of angels, mingled with the true worship of the gospel; and such cannot be saved.

*Who believed not the truth:* where we have a further description of these persons who are to be damned, which is added by the apostle, either to clear God's justice, as in sending them strong delusions to believe a lie, so also in their condemnation; or to assign the cause why they believed a lie, because they *believed not the truth*. Those will easily be brought to believe a lie who believe not the truth; and the belief here mentioned is that of assent, yet such an assent as is operative and practical, which they had not; for it was said before, they received not the truth in the love of it.

*But had pleasure in unrighteousness;* did not only practise, but had great complacency and contentment of mind in it, as the Greek word imports, and so had rather believe a false doctrine which will countenance their practice, than the truth which doth condemn it: see Pr 10:23 Ro 1:32. By *unrighteousness* some expositors understand false doctrine, or error, because it is set in opposition here to truth, as sin is set in opposition to it, Joh 8:46; and that the apostle hath peculiar reference to the corrupt doctrines of Simon Magus and the Nicolaitanes, that gave liberty to the lusts of the flesh. But why not rather to the doctrines of the man of sin, which he had been before speaking of? I rather take the word in the largest sense, so all sin is unrighteousness; and the apostle St. John saith, *all unrighteousness is sin*, 1Jo 5:17, where unrighteousness is expressed by  $\alpha\nu\omicron\mu\iota\alpha$ , a word which imports transgression of the law, as in this text by  $\alpha\delta\iota\kappa\iota\alpha$ , a word which signifies injustice. So that we see here an erroneous mind and a vicious life going together. And when sin is come to this height, that men take pleasure in it, it makes them ripe for damnation. And how well these things agree to the antichristian church, let men consider and judge.

## 2 Thessalonians 2:13

Ver. 13. The apostle here exempts these Thessalonians out of the number of those reprobates that he had before spoken of, and speaks of them as such as should be preserved from apostacy in faith or practice, and obtain

salvation. And this he mentions for comfort to them, and with thanksgivings to God. He had often before given thanks for them, 1Th 1:2 2:13 3:9; and in 2Th 1:3; and both here and there mentions it as a debt he was bound unto, or a duty he owed, we ought to give thanks, as in the Greek. And here he styles them, not only *brethren*, as often before, but *beloved of the Lord*, such as have been and are beloved; and therefore not in the number of them that should be damned, mentioned in the former verse.

*Because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation:* which words are either to give the reason of the apostle's thanksgivings, or rather all arguments to evidence they were beloved of the Lord. And he instanceth in their election as a proof of it. There is an election to office, as David to be king, 2Sa 6:21, and Judas to be an apostle, Joh 6:70; and election to a visible church, and means of salvation, and thus the seed of Abraham were chosen, De 26:18 Ps 135:4 Ps 147:19; and election to salvation, as in the text; which is either that which follows faith, as some understand that place, Mt 22:14, or rather that which goes before it, said here to be *from the beginning*: not from the beginning of the gospel, as some say; nor from the beginning of our preaching to you, or of your effectual calling, as others say; no, nor yet is it meant from the beginning of the world, which was the beginning of time; or immediately upon Adam's fall: but by *beginning* is here meant eternity itself, as election is said to be from *before the foundation of the world*, Eph 1:4, which is from eternity. Though *beginning* seems to relate to time, yet the Scriptures often express eternity by such words as relate to time: as when God is called *the Ancient of days*, Da 7:9, it signifies his eternity; and Jude speaks of some that were of old ordained to condemnation, Jude 1:4, *παλαι προγεγραμμενοι*, God's eternal decrees being compared to a book wherein names are written. When was their ordaining but from eternity? And it is election to salvation, complete salvation, which is here meant, in the full fruition of it; not in the title to it by faith, or the first-fruits of it in sanctification, because they are here mentioned as the means that tend to it.

*Through sanctification of the Spirit:* election is to the means as well as the end, as Eph 1:4. Holiness is not the cause of God's election, but God hath decreed it to be the way to salvation; without holiness none shall ever see the Lord, Heb 12:14.

*And belief of the truth:* and therefore those were spoken of as persons to be damned who believed not the truth, in the former verse. And so it is evident, election is not upon the foresight of faith, it is through it we have salvation, but not election: but of this before, 1Th 4:1-18. And the apostle joins sanctification and faith together, for they are not and cannot be put asunder. Now by all this the apostle proves they were beloved of the Lord. He saw the fruits of election in their sanctification and belief of the truth, thence concludes they were elected, and therefore loved.

## 2 Thessalonians 2:14

Ver. 14. *Whereunto he called you by our gospel:* before, the apostle mentioned their election, now their calling; which are often in Scripture put together, Ro 8:30 2Pe 1:10; and are both applied to Christ himself, Isa 42:1,6. They are those two sovereign acts of God, prerequisite to a state of salvation; the one eternal, the other in time; the one immanent in God, the other transient upon the creature; and it is the first transient act that flows from election. And because there is an outward and inward civil mentioned in Scripture, we must here understand the apostle of both: for Εἰς ο: *Whereunto*, or to which thing, mentioned in the beginning of this verse, refers to all that he said in the former verse, which is, *salvation, sanctification, belief of the truth*, which they could not attain with a mere outward call, though they had that also; for the apostle mentions here the gospel, which he calls *our gospel*, because preached by them, and intrusted to them, though the original of it is from God, and the matter of it from Jesus Christ. And he puts them in mind of the great mercy they had received in their preaching the gospel to them, for thereby they were called into a state of salvation; as also of the way wherein they are to obtain this salvation, which is *through sanctification of the Spirit, and the belief of the truth*, that they might be careful to persevere both in faith and holiness; and not to expect it from the law, or the speculations of philosophy, which some false teachers might suggest, for as *faith cometh by hearing the gospel*, Ro 10:17, so it is that only which is *the power of God unto salvation*, Ro 1:16. And by this he confirms to them also their election, because they had been thus effectually called by the gospel: for no man can conclude his salvation from election, if he hath not been also thus called, which is by feeling the power of the gospel in the heart, and yielding obedience to it in his life. What the apostle before called



*salvation*, he here styles *the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ*. Though in 1Th 5:9, he had there also called it obtaining salvation, and by the same word here used in the text: yea, the word περιποιησις, here rendered obtaining, sometimes signifies salvation itself, Heb 10:39, and, which is equivalent, *the purchased possession*, Eph 1:14; and it may signify in the text, the obtaining the glory of Christ in a way of purchase, as also by diligent endeavours after it, by way of acquisition, as the word seems to signify. And by *the glory of Christ* is not meant the glory we give to him, as some would strain the words to that sense; but rather, the glory we shall receive from him, which is the same which the Father hath given to him, and which he hath given to his people. Joh 17:22, whereby they are co-heirs with him, Ro 8:17. And so the apostle sets forth the greatness of this salvation, to which these believers were called, it is to the obtaining the same glory with Christ, in kind at least; and shows their different state from those that perish, and will be damned, mentioned in the former verses. Or if we read the words, ye are called to be a peculiar people, as the Greek word is so rendered, 1Pe 2:9, λαος εις περιποιησιν, *a peculiar people*, and understand by *the glory of Christ*, that glory of his grace he hath manifested herein, it shows also how God hath distinguished them from those before mentioned.

## 2 Thessalonians 2:15

Ver. 15. The former verses contained consolation, this is an exhortation: the apostle had assured them of their being elected and called, yet exhorts them to their duty. Assurance of salvation doth not encourage negligence; the apostle takes his argument from thence to quicken them:

*Therefore, &c.* And that which he exhorts them to is:

1. To *stand fast*; a military word, speaking as a captain to his soldiers; so 1Co 16:13 Eph 6:14; having before foretold a great apostacy that would come. Or because he had told them of the great glory they had been called to the obtaining of by the gospel, he exhorts them to *stand fast*, which implies a firm persuasion of mind and constant purpose of will, and stands opposite to hesitation and despondency.
2. To *hold the traditions which they had been taught*. The word *tradition*

signifies any thing delivered to another; especially meant of doctrines. The Pharisees' doctrine is called *tradition*, Mt 15:3; and so the true doctrines of the gospel, being such as the apostles delivered to the people; as the doctrine of the Lord's supper is said to be *delivered*, 1Co 11:23; and so Ro 6:13.

*Whether by word, or our epistle*; by word of mouth in public preaching, or private instruction. The apostle had both preached and written to these Thessalonians, before he wrote this Second Epistle. And that the papists should hence infer that there are matters of necessary consequence in religion, not contained in the Scriptures, is without ground. These they call traditions, some whereof are concerning faith, others concerning manners, others ritual, with respect to the worship of God, or the external polity of the church. But who can assure us what these are? What a door is here opened to introduce what men please into the church, under pretence of tradition! Who were the persons the apostle intrusted to keep these traditions? Why should he not declare the whole system of gospel truths he had received from Christ in writing, as well as part? Why should he conceal some things, when he wrote others? And doth not the apostle assure Timothy that *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof for correction, for instruction; that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works?* 2Ti 3:16,17. What need then traditions? And how can we know that they are by Divine inspiration, as we are assured all Scripture is? Our Saviour reproved the Pharisees about their traditions, when from hence they would observe and impose ceremonies of washing hands, cups, and platters, Mt 15:2-6, yea, and by them make the commandments of God of none effect; which the apostle cautions the Colossians about, Col 2:8; and whereof Paul declares his zeal before his conversion, Ga 1:14; and we find men's zeal still more about them than moral duties, and express institutions of God's worship. All the apostle's doctrine, *whether by word or epistle*, he calls by the name of *traditions* in the text here, and he commends the Corinthians, 1Co 11:2, that they kept the traditions delivered to them; but were not they all committed to writing in some place or other of his Epistles? And which were, and which were not, who can be certain? And why should *traditions* be confined only to those things which the apostle did not write? He exhorts the Thessalonians to hold the traditions which they had been taught, *whether by word or epistle*. And if they hold them with strength, as the word is, by this means they would stand fast.

## 2 Thessalonians 2:16

Ver. 16. The apostle here addeth prayer to his exhortation: the word and prayer are to go together, whether it be written or preached; as the twelve told the disciples, Ac 6:4: We will give ourselves to the word and prayer. He had planted them a church, but he knew *God gave the increase*, 1Co 3:6. The persons he prays to are here, first, *our Lord Jesus Christ*; which was a good argument in Athanasius's time, for the dignity of Christ, against the Arians; and so it is still, and now against the Socinians: for God alone is the object of worship, and the bestower of those gifts which he here prays for. Only the apostle, when he mentions Christ, delights to mention him in his relation to his people; so he doth for the most part in all his Epistles, and so in this text. He useth a pronoun possessive, *our*, for it is relation and interest which commendeth and sweeteneth any good to us. And the other person is *God the Father*, who is *the Father of lights*, from whom *cometh every good and perfect gift*, Jas 1:17; and whom in his prayer he mentions together with Christ, because no access can be to God but through Christ, and no good gift descends to us but through him. And so God the Father is mentioned in his relation to his people also, *God, even our Father*; and when Christ is ours, in him God is ours also. And the apostle thus looking, and thus speaking of Christ and of God, strengthens his own and their faith, for the obtaining of the gifts he prays for.

*Which hath loved us*: another argument is from God's love: our doubts in prayer arise more from unbelief in God's will, than his power, which will vanish when we look upon him in his love to us; for the nature of love is *velle bonum*, to will good to whom we love. Another is, from gifts already received, which are, first, *everlasting consolation*; whereby it appears, that God's love is communicative, and that it is not common, but his special love he spake of. Outward comforts are common gifts, but these the apostle means not here, because they are not everlasting; they continue not beyond death; they begin in time and end with time: but this consolation begins in time, and abides to eternity; and this man cannot give, the world cannot give, nor we give it ourselves, God giveth it only; and he gives it to whom he loveth, as every man seeks to comfort those whom he loves: and though some whom God loves may not feel his

consolation, yet they have a right, and God hath it in reserve for them: *Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart*, Ps 97:11. And though sometimes it may be interrupted where it is felt, yet not so as to be destroyed in its foundation, and to hinder its return, either in the temporal or eternal world, where it will be everlasting; so that as God is styled the God of all grace, 1Pe 5:10; so, *the God of all comfort*, 2Co 1:3. And by *us* in the text he means these Thessalonians as well as himself, for he had spoken before of their *joy in the Holy Ghost*, 1Th 1:6. And the other gift is, *good hope*. Hope, as a natural affection, is the expectation of the soul; and the object of it is *bonum futurum, arduum, possibile*; good, future good, difficult, and possible. But, as a grace, it is the expectation of the good things God hath promised, and not yet exhibited. And it is called *good hope*, good by way of eminency; with respect to the objects of it, which are eminently good; the certainty of it, it will not make ashamed, Ro 5:5; compared to *an anchor sure and stedfast*, Heb 6:19: the regularness of it; things promised only, and as they are promised; else it is presumption, and not hope: the fruits of it; peace, purity, industry, and consolation also, and therefore joined with it here in the text: as the apostle speaks elsewhere of *rejoicing in hope*, Ro 5:2 Ro 12:12 Heb 3:6. Or, as some, it is called *good hope*, with respect to the degree they had attained of it in their hearts; though they had not yet the good things promised, yet they had good hope of enjoying them. And by this epithet he distinguisheth this hope from the carnal vain hope of the men of the world, and the false hope of hypocrites, Job 8:13; and themselves also from the state they were in when Gentiles, without hope, Eph 2:12. And this also is God's gift, as he is called *the God of hope*, Ro 15:13, not only as the object, but the author of it. And both these gifts are here said to be *through grace*; for else we could have had no ground either of hope or comfort. Sin had shut up our way to both, it is only grace that hath opened it to us. What we enjoy at present, and what we hope to enjoy, is all through grace. And from these gifts already received the apostle strengthens his faith about the other things he here prays for.

## 2 Thessalonians 2:17

Ver. 17. Next, we have the things prayed for:

*Comfort your hearts*; though he said before, *who hath given us everlasting*

*consolation*. The apostle means, either actual possession of what God had given title to, or a continued supply and increase of comfort already received. And he prays for this either in respect of the afflictions they suffered, that they might not faint; or to enable them the better to stand fast in the faith, and not fall away, as others. And so it agrees with the next petition for them.

*And stablish you in every good word and work: the word of truth is this good word, Pr 4:2, as the gospel is called, 2Co 6:7. And the doctrines of it are all good, 1Ti 4:6; they are good for instruction, for correction, for reproof, for doctrine, 2Ti 3:16. All truth is an intellectual good, whether natural or moral; but evangelical truth is by way of eminence good. It is a good word which is a *word of salvation*, Ac 13:26; and to be established in it, is firmly to believe it, and to hold it fast against seducing opinion, or persecutions; and by *every good word* he means all Divine truth, especially the greater truths; not to hold some truths and let others go. And to *word* the apostle adds *work*, that there may be a harmony between faith and practice. As the doctrines of the gospel are true, so the works they require are good. And good works are manifold, respecting God, our neighbour, and ourselves. A Christian should not only practise them all, but be established in them, which implies constancy, perseverance, and resolution. True religion is not word only, but work; it is not only speculative, but practical. A sound mind ought to be joined with a holy life. And to make a work good, the principle, rule, manner, and end must all be good.*

## 2 Thessalonians 3:1

### Chapter Summary

2Th 3:1,2 The apostle desireth the Thessalonians to pray for him,  
2Th 3:3,4 testifying his confidence in them,  
2Th 3:5 and praying God to direct them.  
2Th 3:6-15 He censureth the idle and disorderly, and requireth others to abstain from their company,  
2Th 3:16-18 concluding with prayer and salutation.

Ver. 1. The apostle now draws towards the close of his Epistle, as appears by the word *finally*, which he also useth in the close of other Epistles, as 2Co 13:11 Eph 6:10 Php 4:8: το λοιπον. It imports the adding of something that remains. And that which he first addeth, is the desire of their prayers; as he had desired them in the former Epistle, 1Th 5:25; and so of other churches, 2Co 1:11 Eph 6:19 Heb 13:18, &c. He had prayed for them in the foregoing chapter, and now he begs their prayers. It is a mutual duty that ministers and people owe to one another. Though the apostle gave himself to the word, and prayer also, Ac 6:4, yet the prayers of many may be more prevalent than of one, though an apostle: and they being concerned for the advancing of Christ's interest in the world, as they were Christians, were therefore engaged to pray for him. And the apostle was sensible of the greatness of the work which was in his hand, and his own insufficiency, without God, therefore he desires prayer; and it is of them whom he here calls *brethren*: he knew the prayers of the wicked and unbelievers would avail nothing; and though he was a great apostle, yet the greatest in the church may stand in need of, and be helped by, the prayers of the meanest brethren. And their prayers he desires are, first, with respect to his ministry, *that the word of the Lord may have free course*, or may run; that the course of it may not be stopped, it being as a river of the water of life. The apostle was to teach all nations, and so desires the word may pass from one nation to another, yea, and run down from one generation to another, that it may spread and diffuse itself, and disciples might be multiplied. This is called the increasing of it, Ac 6:7; the growing and multiplying of it, Ac 12:24; the growing and prevailing of it, Ac 19:20: which Christ sets forth by the parable of the mustard-seed, which grew and spread; and of the leaven, that diffused its virtue in the meal, Mt 13:31-33: the apostle referring here to the external course of the word, rather than its inward efficacy in the soul, as also Christ seems chiefly to do in those parables. There are many things that hinder the course of the gospel; sometimes wicked rulers make laws against it, sometimes great persecutions have been raised, sometimes false teachers oppose it, sometimes professors prove apostates and scandalize the world against it, sometimes reproaches are thrown in the way of it. And to the free course of it is required, on the contrary, a provision of suitable help herein, both of magistracy and ministry, and the bestowing of the Spirit, and the blessing of endeavours used herein. All these are to be prayed for, as the former to be prayed against.

*And be glorified:* he means, that it might have honour, reputation, and high esteem in the world, and not lie under reproach; as the Jews accounted it heresy, and the Gentiles foolishness: as it is said of those Gentiles, Ac 13:48, they *glorified the word of the Lord*, by their honourable respect to it, and joy in it. As also that it might produce glorious effects in the world, in subduing people to God, and making men new creatures, and bringing them out of the devil's into Christ's kingdom, &c.; that it may evidence itself to be from heaven, and the power of God to men's salvation, and not an invention of man; to which we may add, that it may be honoured in the unblamable and exemplary walking of the professors of it.

*Even as it is with you:* the glorious success of it with them he had largely shown before in both these Epistles; and he would have them pray for the like with others. Those that have felt the power of the gospel themselves to their conversion and salvation, should pray that others may partake of it with them. Herein they show their charity to men, and love to God, which the apostle here puts them upon, as that which would be acceptable to God; and the rather, because their own experience might teach them what God was able to do for others. Or else the apostle in these words sets forth these Thessalonians as a pattern of the mighty success of the word: it had its free course and was glorified among them; they received it as the word of God, and not of men. As if the apostle should say: They that would know the glorious success of the word of the Lord, let them go to Thessalonica.

## 2 Thessalonians 3:2

Ver. 2. Their prayers are here desired by the apostle with respect to their persons, which relates to the prayer desired before with respect to the word; for the apostle and his fellow labourers met with such men that did oppose them, and by that means were hindered in their work of the ministry, and the free course of the word obstructed. What were these men? Were they the persecuting Gentiles? They met with such: or the envious, malicious Jews? They met with such also; and here at Thessalonica in particular, and which followed Paul to Berea, Ac 17:1-34. Or were they false brethren crept into the church? As he complains of his perils by them, 2Co 11:26; which some think most probable, by what he adds, *for all men have not faith*, even of those that make profession. Why

may not we take in all these? But whoever they were, he styles them, first, *unreasonable men*, men out of place, as the word imports; taken either literally, for vagrants, wanderers, not keepers at home; or such as follow the apostle from place to place, to hinder his ministry. Or logically, for men that argued absurdly, and kept to no sound topics in reasoning; either false teachers among the Jews, or the heathen philosophers, such as he met with at Athens, whom he disputed with Ac 17:1-34. Or morally, for men that had corrupt principles and practices, that kept not to the duty of their place and station, (*desordonnez*, French translation), and wandered out of the path of righteousness. We render it *unreasonable men*; men transported with fury and passion against all reason, as we read of the Jews, Ac 17:5. Or such as acted contrary to reason, as the apostle speaks of such Jews in the former Epistle, who were *contrary to all men, foridding them to preach to the Gentiles, that they might be saved*, 1Th 2:15,16. Or men of sensual lives, living more like brutes than reasonable creatures. Secondly, *wicked men*; so that whoever they were, whether Jews or Gentiles, teachers or the common people, learned or unlearned, they were wicked; and whatever was meant by the former word, yet this is plain; and the word imports either men that are laborious in wickedness, or that by their wickedness create labour and trouble to others. And such the apostle met with at Thessalonica, Jews who took to them *certain lewd fellows of the baser sort*, and drew Jason and others before the rulers, assaulting his house, Ac 17:5,6: and indeed wherever they came, they met with such kind of men. Through the lusts of men's hearts, and the enmity and malice of the devil, faithful ministers will meet with opposition, and such as will hinder what they can the free course of the word. And therefore the apostle desires prayer to be *delivered from* them,  $\upsilon\alpha\ \rho\upsilon\sigma\theta\omega\mu\epsilon\nu$ , the word signifies a rescue by strength from some impending or incumbent evil, oft used, Lu 1:74 Col 1:13 1Th 1:10. And he desires deliverance rather for the gospel's sake than his own. And though it is honourable to suffer for the gospel, yet it is desirable to be kept out of the hands of such men as these. The apostle subjoins the reason why men are thus, *for all men have not faith*. He needed not say this of infidels, which all men know to be without it, and therefore it is thought the apostle here means professors. There may be true faith wanting where faith is professed. Faith is sometimes taken for fidelity, a moral virtue, and some think is meant here, because it follows in the next verse by way of antithesis: *But the Lord is faithful*. But rather, I take it for a theological grace; for that true evangelical faith which purifies the heart, and worketh by love, and brings forth the acts of obedience to all



God's commandments. Had they this faith they would not be unreasonable and wicked. But can we suppose such to be in the church? As well as those, 2Ti 3:5, whom the apostle describes to have a *form of godliness* under all that wickedness he there mentions. But let men have civility, sobriety, external devotion, and profession, yet if they oppose the gospel, in the power, purity, and progress of it, they may be styled unreasonable and wicked men; and from such men we may pray, as the apostle desired here: Good Lord, deliver us. And it is the duty of people with respect to their faithful ministers, and the work of the gospel in their hands, to pray that they may be delivered from such men.

### 2 Thessalonians 3:3

Ver. 3. These words are added by way of consolation:

1. With respect to their establishment, which the apostle had before prayed for, 2Th 2:17, and here he assures them of it. What God hath promised, yet we may and ought to pray for; and ministers should exhort people to seek that grace which they may be sure beforehand God will give. And this establishment respects either their mind, in the belief of the gospel against false doctrine; or their hearts, against inordinate fears of men; or their practice, against departing from the way of holiness. The apostle well knew the tenure of the new covenant, which contains promises of perseverance and establishment, as well as of pardoning mercy and sanctifying grace, Jer 32:40; and he grounds his confidence of their establishment upon God's faithfulness, as upon the same account he comforts the Corinthians, 1Co 10:13, and these Thessalonians, 1Th 5:24, and it may be the apostle hath here reference to what he had said before; Though we shall meet with wicked and unreasonable men, yet fear not, God will establish you, for he is faithful. As God's promises are according to his purposes, so his performances will be according to his promises, which is his faithfulness.
2. As God would *establish* them, so *keep* them *from evil*. There is moral and penal evil, of sin and suffering; the Greek word imports the former; never used but for sinful evil, or sometimes for the devil, with respect to the sin that dwells in him, and occasioned by him, Eph 6:16 1Jo 5:18. And it is true, that God will keep his people from the devil, as some

read the word. But I suppose the apostle means here by *evil*, evil work; as he speaks, 2Ti 4:18: *The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work*. But whether the evil work of others, or their own? The latter I incline to, for he could not well assure them of the former. But how could he assure them of the latter? Did he think God would keep them from all sin? The apostle doth not mean so, nor say so; God keeps his people from much evil and sin which others fall into, though not from all. And he keeps them from falling under the power of it. Though they may be tempted by Satan, the world, or their own hearts, yet not so as finally to be overcome. However, the more God doth establish his people, the more will they be kept from evil. And the apostle doth also comfort them in this from the consideration of God's faithfulness. But these promises of God's keeping us do not exclude our endeavours of keeping ourselves: *He that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not*, 1Jo 5:18. Hence those exhortations: *Keep thy heart with all diligence*, Pr 4:23, and *Keep yourselves in the love of God*, Jude 1:21, &c. And our keeping is ascribed to our own faith with the power of God, 1Pe 1:5.

## 2 Thessalonians 3:4

Ver. 4. The apostle had before declared his confidence that God would establish them and keep them from evil, and now here declares his confidence in them concerning their obedience; for he knew well that this is the way of God's keeping men; and hereby he shows that he built his confidence concerning what he had before declared about their election, calling, establishment, and preservation upon some good ground. And he describes their obedience by doing what the apostle and his fellow labourers in the gospel among them commanded them, whether they were commandments about the duties of the law of the first or second tables, or the doctrine, order, worship, or discipline of the gospel; so that their commandments were no other but the commandments of the Lord himself, Mt 28:20 1Co 14:37. Ministers are not arbitrary commanders in the church; not *lords over God's heritage*, 1Pe 5:3, or have *dominion over the people's faith*, 2Co 1:24; nor may they, as the Pharisees, teach *for doctrines the commandments of men*, Mt 15:9. And he speaks before of these Thessalonians, that they received the word preached by them, *not as the word of men, but of God*, 1Th 2:13. Both our faith and practice in

religion are to be built upon Divine authority; either upon what God hath expressly declared, or what by clear consequence may be derived from it. So that what they command the people is from the Lord, and not themselves. Their work is to search out the mind and will of Christ, as revealed in the Scripture, seeing they have not that immediate infallible inspiration that the apostles had, who were called to lay the foundation which others were to build upon. And as to those things that are but appendices, and not of the substance of religion, and for which no particular rule is or can be laid down, Christian prudence is to regulate them according to general rules, wherein the advice, appointment, and authority of the minister is to be regarded in every church. Yet nothing ought to be enjoined in these things that is uncomely, that is not for edification, that is not of good report, that hath an appearance of evil, that gives just occasion of offence, that transgresseth the general rule of mercy, that is a direction of superstition, whereby many of the commandments of the Romish Church are justly condemned. And obedience to these commandments of the apostle he describes by the universality of it, *the things that we command you*; that is, all things; the indefinite being equivalent to the universal. And by the constancy of it, *that ye both do and will do*, &c.; ye will persevere to do what commandments ye have already received, or any new commandments we shall further give you; some whereof are probably such as are mentioned in the following part of this chapter. And their present obedience gave the apostle confidence about that which was future; at least he declares to them this confidence, as an insinuating argument to persuade them thereunto.

## 2 Thessalonians 3:5

Ver. 5. Here the apostle prays for them again, as he had done a little before, 2Th 2:17; and as this shows how much they were in his heart, so the frequent mingling of prayers with his exhortations shows they could not be effectual without God. And he prays for two things:

1. To have their hearts directed *into the love of God*; which is either meant passively, for God's love to them, to have their hearts, that is, their whole soul, engaged in the study, contemplation, and admiration of this love; or rather actively, for their love to God, to have their hearts set straight into the love of God, as the Greek word imports; drawn out

towards him as a straight line to its centre, or as an arrow directed to the mark. Till man's love is set upon God, the motions of the heart are crooked and irregular; as the ways of sin are called *crooked ways*, Ps 125:5; and John Baptist's ministry was to make crooked things straight, Isa 40:4. The turning man's heart and ways towards God makes them straight. David prays, Ps 119:36: *Incline my heart unto thy testimonies*; הִט-מִנִּי or, bend my heart; as we bend a crooked stick to make it straight. Or as he prays God to unite his heart to his fear, Ps 86:11; so here Paul, to direct theirs to his love, by which some understand all religion. We learn hence, that to direct man's heart to the love of God is the work of God, and beyond our power. And the hearts of the best saints stand in need of a more perfect and constant direction unto the love of God. Patient sufferings for Christ's sake; as the apostle calls his sufferings for Christ's sake, *the sufferings of Christ*, often, 2Co 1:5 Php 3:10, &c.; and patience for his sake, is called *the patience of Christ*, Re 1:9. In this sense, the apostle prays they may have hearts ready to suffer, and patiently to suffer for Christ's sake, Heb 10:36 Jas 5:10; and suited to a suffering state, which the heart is naturally averse and disinclined unto. And the word is often used in this sense for patience under the cross. And so the apostle hath his eye in his prayer upon the suffering state these believers were in for Christ's sake. If the sense be rendered as in our translation, he prays for their hearts to be fixed upon the coming of Christ, to look towards it, and patiently to wait for it; the Greek word being often taken for the patience of expectation as well as of suffering, Ro 8:25 Heb 10:36: and so it is the same as waiting for the Son of God from heaven, mentioned 1Th 1:10, and looking for the Saviour, Php 3:20; that hereby they might not faint under his sufferings, nor be surprised by his coming. And because the hearts of the best are apt either to be remiss or secure upon the delay of Christ's coming, he therefore prays their hearts might be directed to a patient waiting for it, as the apostle Peter upon the same account exhorts believers to the girding up the loins of their mind, 1Pe 1:13.

## 2 Thessalonians 3:6

Ver. 6. Here the apostle proceeds to a discourse of another kind, which is about their carriage to disorderly members in the church. And having before declared his confidence, 2Th 3:4, that they did and would do the

things he commanded them, he now tells them what he commands; and because either it is a matter of great importance, or that which they would be backward in, he therefore speaks with great vehemence. When he spake in the former Epistle, 1Th 5:14, of warning the unruly, he then spake with greater mildness:

*We exhort you, brethren, &c.;* but now to withdraw from them is a harsher duty; or they having first warned them, if they reform not, next they are to proceed to withdraw from them. And this he now commands as that which he supposeth they might be backward to. παραγγελλομεν the word properly signifies a command conveyed from another, so the apostle commands here *in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ*. Though he had authority to command as an apostle, yet it was derived to him from Christ, and therefore he usually conjoins Christ with his exhortations and commands.

*That ye withdraw yourselves from every brother;* or avoid, as the word signifies, and is so rendered, 2Co 8:20. The word is used also, Ga 2:12, of Peter's withdrawing himself from eating with the Gentiles; and rendered drawing back, Heb 10:38, alluding, as some think, there to a soldier that draws back from the battle; but here in the text to a mariner that steers his ship from the rocks; and so it implies the danger of not withdrawing, which may be the reason of the apostle's so solemn command about it. And it is not from a heathen man, but a *brother*, one that is of the church; and it is *every brother*, let him be rich or poor, high or low, &c.; as he writes to the Corinthians, 1Co 5:11: *If any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, &c.*

*That walketh disorderly:* alluding, as some think, to soldiers who keep not their rank, not walking according to rule, or, as he expresseth it, *not after the tradition which he received of us*. What is to be meant by *tradition*, is explained in the former chapter. And he cannot be understood to speak here of rites and ceremonies relating to church worship or order, as some imagine; the apostle doth in the following verses explain himself otherwise. But what is this withdrawing? Is it excommunication, the greater or the less? In a general sense it may be so called, for it is an abstaining from communion; but it is not so properly, for that is called putting away a person, a purging out the old leaven, 1Co 5:7, this is only a withdrawing from him; much less is it a delivering up to Satan, which the

apostle required, 1Co 5:5, and himself inflicted upon Hymeneus and Alexander, 1Ti 1:20. The nature of the crime here mentioned will not bear that. It was not incest or blasphemy, as in the former instances, but only disorderly walking, which he specifies afterwards. And with respect to such the apostle required in the former Epistle warning only: *Warn the unruly*. And though this is something more, yet it implies not a casting a man out of the church, which is Christ's visible kingdom, into Satan's kingdom, for he is still to be admonished *as a brother*, as 2Th 3:15. And excommunication is the exerting an act of church power, as 1Co 5:4, whereof no mention is made here; or of an absolute rejection, which is elsewhere required, Tit 3:10. It seems then to be only a withdrawing from familiar converse and society, as 1Co 5:11: *If any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, covetous, &c.; with such an one no not to eat*; alluding to the custom of the Jews, who would not eat with the Gentiles; and by eating is expressed communion in Scripture, and profane writers also. And such communion is forbidden to such a brother, which the apostle allowed them to have with such sinners that were of the world, and not of the church, as 2Th 3:10, which cannot be meant of sacred communion. And familiarity with such a brother would harden him in his sins, and reflect dishonour upon religion, and endanger their infection, more than with a pagan, or infidel: which therefore the apostle forbids them to a brother, as he did the Corinthians mentioned before, as also the Romans, Ro 16:17. And which may be a step towards excommunication from spiritual communion, which is the greater punishment, especially if the brother be not hereby made ashamed, and reform his course, and doth not only now and then do a disorderly action, but *walketh disorderly*, and that after warning also. Others think it is meant of excommunication, and judge not the reason against it to be cogent.

## 2 Thessalonians 3:7

Ver. 7. Whereby the apostle intimates the aggravation of their crime who did walk disorderly, and so justifies the withdrawing from them. For they would be reproved not only by his doctrine, but example: what he required of others he practised himself, and that in some cases for this end alone, that he might be an example; examples teaching more than precepts, especially in ministers. And they did not only know how the apostle and his fellow ministers walked among them, but their end therein, whereby

they knew they ought to follow them, and how to follow them; being guided as well as excited by their example. And this is expressed more generally. First, negatively: *We behaved not ourselves disorderly among you*, which he speaks not in a way of self-commendation, but for their imitation; and he useth here the same word to express his own practice which he did in theirs, being properly a military word, as was said before. He went before them as it captain before the army, and taught them order by his own example; for in the negative the positive is included.

## 2 Thessalonians 3:8

Ver. 8. *Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought:* the apostle here gives a particular positive instance of what before he speaks negatively, and in general; and brings his discourse home to the present case, and declares his orderly working in this, that he wrought for his own bread, and did not eat for nought, or live upon that which was freely given.  $\delta\omega\rho\epsilon\alpha\nu$  the word is sometimes taken for that which is without effect, as Ga 2:21, answering to the Hebrew word *Chinnam*, oft used, Ps 7:4 25:3 69:4 119:61. Or, that which is without cause; and that either with respect to injury received, as Joh 15:25, or benefit bestowed, as Ro 3:24, when it is freely given without merit. The apostle means that he preached the gospel to them freely, as he tells the Corinthians, 2Co 11:7. Though if he had received maintenance for his labour in the gospel among them, it was that which he well deserved, and he had not eaten their bread for nought; but he wrought with his own hands to maintain himself, as he did at Corinth, Ac 18:3.

*But wrought with labour and travail;* and he wrought laboriously, with wearisome and toilsome labour, as the words import; and that *night and day;* as he had told them in the former Epistle, 1Th 2:9; only he speaks of it here upon a different account; there, to clear his ministry from suspicion of covetousness, and to evidence his sincere affection to them; here, to set before them an example of industry against such who lived idly, and did eat others' bread. Had he not wrought with his hands, he had not walked disorderly; but lest any should think so, he would do it to take away all occasion of evil. For though the labour of the ministry in the exercise of the mind and study may be reckoned as the greatest, yet most people cannot judge of it, and think it such; and though he had *power to forbear*

*working*, as he tells the Corinthians, 1Co 9:6, yet he would do it rather than any good should be hindered, or any evil furthered thereby.

## 2 Thessalonians 3:9

Ver. 9. The contents of this verse are already spoken to in the former, only the apostle asserts the right of maintenance due to the ministry by the name of *power*. It may be claimed by authority from Christ, though it should not be commanded by any laws from men. As the priests under the law had their maintenance settled upon them by the law of God; *so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel*, 1Co 9:14 Ga 6:6. And though this power may be claimed, yet in some cases it is to be denied, as the apostle did, 1Co 9:12: *We have not used this power; lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ*. And so he did here, to make himself an example, τυπον, which signifies any mark that is cut or engraven to stamp things into its own likeness; oft used in the New Testament, and variously applied.

*But to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us*: it is desirable to follow good examples, but more to become a good example: and as the old verse is true, *Regis ad exemplum*, &c., so the old proverb, "Like priests, like people"; and to follow them is to imitate them, as 1Co 11:1: *Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ*. He is the first pattern, and others are to be regulated by it; and so far, and no further, to be imitated. As ministers ought to be patterns, Tit 2:7 1Pe 5:3; so the people ought to be followers, and their sin will be the greater if they follow not their doctrine, when it is exemplified in their practice.

## 2 Thessalonians 3:10

Ver. 10. The words contain a reason, as the illative *for* imports; but what it refers to is uncertain; most probably a further reason of the apostle's working with his hands, because when with them he left this command, *that if any would not work, neither should he eat*; he would therefore practise himself what he commanded them, and not be thought to be as the Pharisees, binding heavy burdens upon others, and he not touch them himself. And this is another of the commandments which the apostle gave



them, which he declared his confidence that they would do, 2Th 3:4. And this command seems grounded upon the law given to Adam: *In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread*, Ge 3:19. For when he recommends a practice not directly grounded upon some word of God, or of Christ, or from infallible inspiration, he calls it a *permission*, as 1Co 7:6; but when otherwise, he saith: *I command, yet not I, but the Lord*, 1Co 7:10; and calls it *the commandment of the Lord*, 1Co 14:37. And this in the text is not his alone, but the Lord's, and is elsewhere mentioned, as Eph 4:28: *Let him that stole steal no more, but work with his hands*, &c.: see 1Co 7:20. God requires it of us as men, that we may be profitable in the commonwealth, supply our own wants and of those that depend upon us, and have wherewith also to supply the wants of the poor, Eph 4:28, to be kept from the temptations of idleness. Christianity doth not extinguish the profitable laws of nature or nations. Yet this general command admits limitations; if men have ability and opportunity to work, or if the ends of working are not otherwise supplied. For he that lives out of the reason of the law seems not bound by the law; or if the work be mental, and not manual, the law is fulfilled; and the equity of the law reacheth all men so far, as that none ought to be idle and useless in the world. And the apostle's argument for it in the text is cogent from nature itself; agreeably to that of Solomon, Pr 16:26: *He that laboureth laboureth for himself, for his mouth craveth it of him*. Whereupon some judge these believing Thessalonians to be generally a people that lived by some handicraft trade, or some other manual labour. And the eating here intended is meant of relief from the stock and charge of the church: such should not be relieved who *would not work*, as it is in the text; who could, but would not, the fault being in the will.

## 2 Thessalonians 3:11

Ver. 11. *For we hear*: the apostle gives the reason of this discourse he fell into about disorder, and commends, yea, commands, a remedy against it. He had heard of this disorderly walking, else his discourse might have been esteemed vain and needless. Reports are to obtain credit according to the quality of the person that makes them, his end therein, and probability of truth. He took notice of reports brought to him about the divisions that were at Corinth, 1Co 11:18.

*That there are some among you:* and the persons that he here chargeth the report upon, are not all, but some only, and he nameth none; for as to the body of the church, he had confidence they did, and would do, the things he commanded, 2Th 3:4. And he requires them to withdraw from the disorderly.

*Which walk among you disorderly, working not at all:* and the disorder he chargeth upon these *some* is:

1. Μηδεν εργαζομενους, that they worked not at all, at least not the work of their own place, as it follows.
2. *But are busybodies;* busy, and yet idle, and not working; περιεργαζομενους *curieusement*, French Bible; as the *curious arts* of sorcerers are called περιεργα, Ac 19:19. The word signifies working about, and denotes either vain curiosity, meddling in matters that they ought not, or going round their proper work, but not falling or fixing upon it. The same the apostle speaks of younger widows, 1Ti 5:13, who learnt *to be idle*, and yet were *busybodies*; and such are called αλλοτριεπισκοποι, 1Pe 4:15. And the one follows from the other; for they that are idle and neglect their own business will be apt to intermeddle in another's: and they that are not keepers at home, will be gadders abroad, and so not eat their own, but others' bread, which the apostle here reproves, as dishonourable to the Christian profession; and, as a further remedy, doth with much earnestness address his speech particularly to them.

## 2 Thessalonians 3:12

Ver. 12. *Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ:* he had before given command to the church to withdraw from them, 2Th 3:6; and now he lays the commandment upon themselves, and that in the name of Christ.

*That with quietness they work:* working is set opposite to their idleness, and quietness to their busy meddling where they ought not, whereby they might occasion strife. The apostle here, and in many other places, requires Christians to live peaceably, as 2Co 13:11 Col 3:15 1Th 5:13 Heb 12:14.

*And eat their own bread;* not to live as drones, upon another's labours; yet he forbids not dealing their bread to the hungry, nor requires this of the poor that are necessitated to live upon alms. And by eating *their own bread* the apostle means, maintaining themselves and families, for bread is taken in Scripture for all things that maintain the natural life: and the apostle here insinuates a blessing upon honest labour, that thereby men shall have bread of their own; and doth assert property against that community which some have pleaded for, the civil right that men have to what they honestly get and possess; but hereby condemns oppressors, pirates, robbers, cheaters, usurpers, yea, and tyrannical princes, who maintain themselves upon the spoil of others, and take their bread out of others' mouths; and why not also such as are not quiet and contented with their own portion, but either envy others, or murmur against providence?

## 2 Thessalonians 3:13

Ver. 13. *But ye, brethren:* the apostle now directs his speech to those of the church that were not guilty of the disorders before mentioned, to whom he speaks in mild and familiar language, as if the others deserved not to be so called.

*Be not weary in well doing:* and that which he speaks to them is, not to be weary of well doing. The Greek word is often used about sufferings, as 2Co 4:1 Eph 3:13; and then usually translated fainting, and which seems to be its most proper use, to shrink or faint as cowards in war; Μη εκκακησητε, *Ne segnescite, definite, defatigamini;* it signifies a receding or fainting, or tiring in our duty, because of the evil that attends it. Sometimes it is used of prayer, Lu 18:1; and sometimes generally of all duties of religion, which are generally called *well doing*, Ga 6:9, and signifies either a slothfulness in them, or weariness of them: as those whom the prophets complain of, Am 8:5 Mal 1:13. The apostle useth the same word in this sense, Ga 6:9: *Let us not be weary in well doing;* and in the text, those that did walk orderly, he exhorts them to hold on their course, either more peculiarly to the works of charity, which are called well doing, Php 4:14; though those that worked not did not deserve them, or enjoy them, yet this should not discourage them from practising them towards others: or the word may extend more generally to all good works;

we should persevere in them without fainting or weariness, notwithstanding the evils that may threaten us therein.

## 2 Thessalonians 3:14

Ver. 14. Here we have further commandments given concerning the disorderly; in case of obstinacy, to proceed further against them. The apostle had given commandments about their walking in his first preaching to them, after that he repeats them in his First Epistle, and again in this Second.

*And now if any man obey not our word by this epistle, saith he, note that man;* and he would have none excepted, either through fear or favour, and nothing done by partiality, 1Ti 5:21. What is meant by noting is disputed among expositors; more seems to be meant than marking them, Ro 16:17. Some take it for what we call excommunication; so Aug. lib. 3, Cont. Epist. Parmen. cap. 4. Theophyl. in locum; either the casting him out of the church, which is the greater, or suspension from the Lord's supper, which is the lesser. As there were degrees of church censure among the Jews, so also we read practised in the gospel church, as is evident in the councils. Others think it is no more than a withdrawing from him, as was mentioned before, 2Th 3:6; but then the apostle saith the same thing over again, which seemeth needless. And he speaks here of some greater contumacy than before, when his word in this Second Epistle is not obeyed. We may suppose the apostle may mean not only a withdrawing from familiarity with him, but exposing his name to some public notice in the church, that both his crime and his name should be publicly noticed; as the apostle speaks of Hymeneus and Alexander, and Philetus, by name in his Epistles that were made public. σημειουσθε, note him by a sign, as the word signifies, which cannot well be done by a mere withdrawing. And seeing he speaks here of one that is not only disorderly, but obstinate, some further and more signal act of discipline is to be inflicted on him. And what word the apostle refers to in this Epistle as not obeyed is not expressed, neither need we limit it, but it may be meant of all his commandments herein, to which obedience was required. And the word, as written, is the word of God, and is to be obeyed as well as that which is preached. I know there is another reading of the text: *If any man obey not our word, note that man by an epistle;* and so it is in our margins. But this

is not probable. By an epistle? To whom? To the apostle himself? And for what? To know how to proceed towards such a one? What need that, when he here gives direction about it to them; which follows.

*And have no company with him;* or be not mingled with him, which refers either to his crime, as the Greek word is so applied, Eph 5:11, or to his person also, as the word is used, 1Co 5:9. And yet some think the apostle here forbids only civil communion, not sacred, because the word in the text is generally so used, and so rendered by expositors; but sacred communion is expressed in the New Testament by another word, 1Jo 1:3. And if meant of sacred, it is then casting him out of the church, which is a delivering him up to Satan: see Estius in loc. And that seems not to agree with what follows:

*Admonish him as a brother;* and so not to be accounted as a heathen or a publican, Mt 18:17. And we know admonition goes before casting out. But to be thrust out of the company of the people of God in all civil, friendly society, is a great punishment and affliction. And some think, that the noting of him was to be done by the governors of the church, and the renouncing his company, by all the people: let the reader judge.

*That he may be ashamed:* the end of both is here expressed. This is not added before as a reason of withdrawing, and therefore some think the apostle required that only to avoid the infection of sin by familiar society; but this further proceeding here mentioned is to make the man ashamed that is obstinate in disobedience; but we need not so limit it. And this making him ashamed is not to be out of hatred to his person, but for his good, as all church censures ought to be so intended, to bring him to that shame that may be the first step to true repentance. There is a shamefulness in sin; and when sinners repent, they see it, and are ashamed, Isa 1:29 Eze 16:61 Ro 6:21; and God complains of sinners when not ashamed, Jer 3:3. Shame is a natural affection in men, and is not in the nature of beasts, neither was it in man before the fall; and though in itself it is no virtue, being the proper effect of sin, yet it is of use to restrain much open wickedness, and to keep decorum in men's outward actions: and God makes use of it also in leading men to true repentance. To shame men out of envy or hatred is sinful, and against the law of charity; but to do it to bring them to repentance, is better than by flattery or familiar society to harden them in sin.

## 2 Thessalonians 3:15

Ver. 15. They having thus proceeded against the disorderly and disobedient, the apostle directs them about their after-carriage, which either respects their inward opinion of the mind, or outward action.

*Yet count him not as an enemy;* they should not count him an enemy, putting a great difference between an offending brother and a professed enemy. They ought not to hate him as an enemy, nor look upon him as upon such who out of enmity to the gospel persecute Christianity, nor to have an unreconcilable mind towards him.

*But admonish him as a brother;* and as to outward action, should admonish him as a brother. It is either private or public, ministerial or fraternal, gentle or severe, joined with commination. The Greeks express it in the degrees of it by three words, *νουθεσια, επιτιμια, επιπληξις*. The word in the text signifies a putting in mind: they were to put the offender in mind of his sin, and in mind of his duty. Though they were to have no company with him in a way of familiarity, yet to be in his company so as to admonish him; and the admonition here meant is either public, in the church, or private; or first private, then public, as our Saviour gives the rule, Mt 18:15-17. So that his repentance is to be endeavoured not only by abstaining his company, but by admonition. And it is to be performed to him *as a brother*, which either respects the state of the person admonished: he is not an enemy, or pagan, or one out of the visible church, but a brother, whereby some conceive that the apostle had not before spoken of his excommunication. Or it respects the way of admonition: it is to be performed with love, tenderness, and compassion, as to a brother, not to upbraid him, but to gain him; as Mt 18:15: *If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother*. And for that end great prudence is to be used. The temper of the offenders, the quality of the sin, their outward condition in the world, their age, yea, the circumstances of time and place, are to be considered.

## 2 Thessalonians 3:16

Ver. 16. *Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace:* the apostle is now taking his leave, and closing up his Epistle; and this he doth with prayer; and what he prays for is peace: and though the word peace hath various acceptations, and is of comprehensive signification, yet here it is to understood of brotherly peace and unity. Whether it was occasioned by any dissensions that were actually among them, or his fears of such to arise upon the practice of their duties to the disorderly among them, that he thus prays, is uncertain. And it is that which he much presseth and prays for in his several Epistles to the churches, as being that wherein the honour of the gospel, and their own comfort and edification, were so much concerned. And the person he prays to he styles *the Lord of peace*, whereby I suppose he means Jesus Christ, who is sometimes called *the Prince of Peace*, Isa 9:6; as God is called *the God of peace*, 1Th 5:23. It is he that hath made peace between God and us, between the Jew and Gentile, and it is one of the fruits of his Spirit in the hearts of Christians, Ga 5:22. True Christian peace is the gift of Christ, and therefore the apostle prays the Lord to give it, and saith, *the Lord himself*, as intimating none but he can give it, and that it is a singular blessing to enjoy it, as we must so interpret the phrase when at any other time we find it, as 1Th 5:23.

*Always by all means:* he shows both the desirableness and difficulty of peace. It is worth the using all endeavours for it, and without such we shall hardly attain it, as Ro 12:18: *If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men;* quite contrary to the temper and practice of some men, who will live peaceably with no man: and elsewhere we read of following peace; Heb 12:14, and seeking peace and pursuing it, 1Pe 3:11, and *endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*, Eph 4:3. And the apostle prays for it in the text with much earnestness, and that they might enjoy it without interruption, *always*; that there might be no schism rise up among them at any time. And if we read the next words, in every thing, he prays that their peace might be universal with respect to opinions, words, and actions. And as a final farewell he addeth:

*The Lord be with you all;* which shows his affection to them all, though he had reprov'd sharply the disorders that some were guilty of. And a greater thing he could not desire for them, it comprehends all blessings in it, and the very blessedness of heaven itself; as a usual farewell word, Adieu, is a recommending a person to God.

## 2 Thessalonians 3:17

Ver. 17. This the apostle addeth after he had finished his Epistle, and taken his farewell, as a proof that the Epistle was genuine, and came from himself; because it may be there were some then who did counterfeit his Epistles, as there have been many since who have counterfeited creeds, liturgies, gospels, writings of the fathers, &c., and he knew it might be of dangerous consequence to the churches, to have his writings counterfeited. Heretics in several ages, and the Church of Rome particularly, have herein been deeply guilty. And though it is probable the body of this Epistle was written by some amanuensis, as is evident of the Epistle to the Romans, that it was written by one Tertius, Ro 16:22; and when he tells the Galatians, Ga 6:11, he wrote their Epistle with his own hand, so Phm 1:19, it implies sometimes he did not so; yet this salutation he wrote with his own hand, which he practised not only in this, but in all his other Epistles, as he here affirmed. And he wrote it in such characters whereby his own hand might be known; else it was an easy matter for any impostor to write the same words. And the words of it are here set down, but elsewhere explained, and therefore nothing is further needful here.