

Second Thessalonians

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Introduction

Paul's first visit to the city of Thessalonica left it in a religious uproar. His preaching in the synagogues on the Sabbath and personal evangelism for three weeks resulted in a small but dedicated number of converts, and a host of enraged Jews. The Jews caused enough trouble that the missionary team of Paul, Timothy, and Silas had to leave. They went on to Berea, then to Athens. There, Paul sent Timothy back to Thessalonica (he probably also sent Silas to Philippi, and possibly Berea), to see how the Macedonian believers were doing. Then Paul went on to Corinth, where he stayed for a year and a half, making tents with Priscilla and Aquila to support himself as he ministered to the Corinthians (Acts 18:1-3).

When Timothy and Silas returned to Paul in Corinth, they brought good news about the progress of the churches and a financial gift from them that allowed Paul to focus on ministry full time. In response, he wrote First Thessalonians to tell them how thankful he was for the report of their faithfulness, and to give them some further instruction on several general subjects, but primarily, concerning eschatology (future prophecy of events at the end of the age).

Some unknown courier (maybe Timothy or Silas) delivered First Thessalonians and returned with a report that, although the Thessalonians were still faithful to the Gospel, they were confused about the events of future prophecy. Apparently, the confusion was concerning the coming day of the Lord (2:2), which Paul had discussed in his first letter (1 Thessalonians 5:1-11). Some false teachers had taught, or even written letters as if they were representing Paul, saying that the day of the Lord had already come. This was confusing, since they understood Paul to teach that, since they were not appointed to wrath, the day of the Lord was a future event (1 Thessalonians 5:9).

But the false teachers, it seems, had convinced some that the persecution they had experienced was evidence that they were already in the day of the Lord. Because of that belief, some of them were not working, thinking: "There is no point in working because Jesus is coming soon anyway." So Paul got his pen out again and wrote this second letter to the Thessalonians, soon after the first one, probably in 51 or early 52 A.D. Although he mentions several spiritual issues, as he always does because he can't help but continue discipling the believers, the purpose of Second Thessalonians is to clarify future prophetic events, especially the day of the Lord.

The main divisions of the book are:

1. Greetings (1:1-2)
2. Encouragement in the midst of persecution (1:3-12)
3. Correction and instruction about the Day of the Lord (2:1-17)
4. Commands about love and discipline (3:1-15)
5. A concluding Benediction (3:16-18)

The theme of Second Thessalonians is: ESCHATOLOGY DEFINES MINISTRY.

In other words:

AN UNDERSTANDING OF FUTURE PROPHECY, ESPECIALLY THE DAY OF THE LORD, IS A GUIDE TO HOW WE SHOULD LIVE AND MINISTER TO OTHERS TODAY.

A Commentary on Second Thessalonians

Chapter 1

1:1 Paul and Silvanus and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

1:2 Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1:1 Παῦλος καὶ Σιλουανὸς καὶ Τιμόθεος τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ Θεσσαλονικέων ἐν θεῷ πατρὶ ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίῳ Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ,

1:2 χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς [ἡμῶν] καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

As in his first letter, Paul writes from the three-man missionary team to the church of the Thessalonians. Notice once again Paul identifies *the church of the Thessalonians* (the *ἐκκλησία*, the *called out ones*) as all the believers in the city of Thessalonica. Also notice that the three-man team is back together again. If Timothy or Silas (Silvanus) delivered First Thessalonians (and we don't know who delivered it), they have returned with the report that prompted Paul to write Second Thessalonians.

Verse 2 is Paul's signature greeting.

Question:

Since the introductory greeting is essentially the same in both epistles we can conclude:

- A. Paul wrote both letters.
- B. Silas and Timothy were with Paul when he wrote both letters.
- C. Both letters were to all the believers in the city of Thessalonica.
- D. Both letters assume the word *church* refers to all the believers in the city.
- E. All of the above.

Answer:

E is correct. All these are true statements.

1:3 We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is only fitting, because your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows ever greater;

1:4 therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure.

1:3 Εὐχαριστεῖν ὁφείλομεν τῷ θεῷ πάντοτε περὶ ὑμῶν, ἀδελφοί, καθὼς ἄξιόν ἔστιν, ὅτι ὑπεραυξάνει ἡ πίστις ὑμῶν καὶ πλεονάζει ἡ ἀγάπη ἐνὸς ἐκάστου πάντων ὑμῶν εἰς ἀλλήλους,

1:4 ὥστε αὐτοὺς ἡμᾶς ἐν ὑμῖν ἐγκαυχᾶσθαι ἐν ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις τοῦ θεοῦ ὑπὲρ τῆς ὑπομονῆς ὑμῶν καὶ πίστεως ἐν πᾶσιν τοῖς διωγμοῖς ὑμῶν καὶ ταῖς θλίψεσιν αἷς ἀνέχεσθε,

Verse 3 begins with the common word used for the Eucharist, a prayer of thanksgiving. Paul says there are two reasons for his thankfulness: their faith has greatly enlarged and so has their love for one another.

And the second enlargement is the evidence of the first. Remember, Jesus said: *By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another* (John 13:35). It is not a love for the world that identifies us, it is our selective love that labels us. I am known for the things and people and the groups I show affection for, in exclusion of other things groups and people. Fellow believers are not necessarily more lovable than other people. True, they have the conviction of the Holy Spirit, but they also have a sin nature. So they are not necessarily the people we would tend to like. Some yes, some no. But when we choose to love them, it reveals our love for God, because they are His choice, not ours.

Verse 4 is poorly translated by the NASV. The word ἐγκαυχᾶσθαι does not mean to *speak proudly*. Pride is always a sin (James 4:6), and this word is not the word for pride. The translation comes out of the false idea that there is some good forms of pride. The word means *to glory in, boast or exult*. Paul is saying he boasts about the Thessalonian believers to other churches. Boasting simply has to do with stating accomplishments. Pride is declaring value independent from God. Their faith, in the midst of persecution, revealed their dependence on God, not their independence from God.

Question:

What does Paul mean in 1:4 when he says: *we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God?*

- A. He tells the local churches he visits the accomplishments of the Thessalonians.
- B. He tells believers in other cities about what God has done in the lives of the Thessalonians.
- C. He boasts about the increased faith and love of the Thessalonians, for one another, to other churches in other cities.

Answer:

C is correct. The word often translated “pride” is best translated “boast.” The difference is, “pride” is value independent from God. In the context, that boasting is about their increased faith and love for one another. A is incorrect because “local churches,” as we understand them, are not in Paul’s thinking. B is incorrect because Paul is talking about what the Thessalonians have done, not what God has done.

1:5 This is a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering.

1:5 ἔνδειγμα τῆς δικαιίας κρίσεως τοῦ θεοῦ εἰς τὸ καταξιωθῆναι ύμᾶς τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ θεοῦ, ὑπέρ ἡς καὶ πάσχετε,

Verse 5 focuses on the eternal rewards of the Thessalonians. Here Paul writes about a significant, often ignored, attribute of God—justice. The righteous judgment of God will declare them worthy of the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is seen as something both present and future. These believers are part of that kingdom, but there is a future more specific kingdom, which they will enter. Generally, the kingdom of God is all the saints, the good angels, and God in the context of His holiness. But specifically, that will be manifested in an earthly Millennial Kingdom and a heavenly New Jerusalem.

1:6 For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you,

1:7 and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire,

1:8 dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

1:9 These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,

1:10 when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed—for our testimony to you was believed.

1:6 εἴπερ δίκαιον παρὰ θεῷ ἀνταποδούναι τοῖς θλίβουσιν ὑμᾶς θλῖψιν
1:7 καὶ ὑμῖν τοῖς θλιβομένοις ἄνεσιν μεθ' ἡμῶν, ἐν τῇ ἀποκαλύψει τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ μετ' ἀγγέλων δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ
1:8 ἐν πυρὶ φλογός, διδόντος ἐκδίκησιν τοῖς μὴ εἰδόσιν θεὸν καὶ τοῖς μὴ ὑπακούοντιν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ,
1:9 οἵτινες δίκην τίσουσιν ὅλεθρον αἰώνιον ἀπὸ προσώπου τοῦ κυρίου καὶ ἀπὸ τῆς δόξης τῆς ἴσχύος αὐτοῦ,
1:10 ὅταν ἔλθῃ ἐνδοξασθῆναι ἐν τοῖς αγίοις αὐτοῦ καὶ θαυμασθῆναι ἐν πᾶσιν τοῖς πιστεύσασιν, ὅτι ἐπιστεύθη τὸ μαρτύριον ἡμῶν ἐφ' ὑμᾶς, ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ.

Verse 6 says: *Since it is righteous [or just] with God to give back the affliction of you with affliction.* I find the word ἀνταποδούναι interesting because it is the word διδωμαι, the common word for giving (also used in verse 8) with the prefix *back*. So from God's perspective the punishment of those afflicting the Thessalonians is a gift, just as are the rewards for the believers. And both are determined, not by the acts of the people per se, but by the attribute of God known as justice.

Verse 7 repeats the assurance that the believers will receive ἄνεσιν, *rest* from this persecution. The time they will receive it is at the ἀποκαλύψει τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ, *the revelation of Jesus Christ*. These are the same words as the title of the last book of the Bible, ***The Apokalypse of Jesus Christ***. This is a reference to the Second Coming of Christ, not to the Rapture of the church. The Rapture is a time when the church age believers will receive their eternal bodies (1 Corinthians 15:50ff), but not a time of judgment for unbelievers. That comes at the Second Coming of Christ, after the seven-year Tribulation and before the Millennial Kingdom (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43; 24:29-51; 25:31-46), and also after the Millennium at the Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20:11-15). When angels come with Christ, it is generally a time of judgment (see Matthew 24: 30-31; 25:31).

Question:

From 1:5-7 we learn God is a God of:

- A. Revenge
- B. Justice
- C. Relief
- D. Revelation
- E. All of the above

Answer:

E is correct. All these can be found in 1:5-7.

Verse 8 targets the judgment of God toward *those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus*. These are probably not meant to be two groups but two ways of describing the same unbelievers. Those who are not obedient to the Gospel are also those who do not obey God. We should never be tricked into thinking that certain people who reject the Gospel are good people in that there is some other way they know about God.

Verse 9 gives us three specifics about the eternal state of unbelievers. They

1. *τίσουσιν ὅλεθρον αἰώνιον*, *experience eternal destruction*,
2. *ἀπὸ προσώπου τοῦ κυρίου*, are away from *the face of the Lord*,

3. ἀπὸ τῆς δόξης τῆς ἵσχυος αὐτοῦ, are away *from the glory and strength of Him.*

The first statement tells us that their destruction is eternal not temporary or term limited. So, the idea that they are annihilated, just burned up or something, is unlikely. The second statement has been poorly translated by the NASV. The unbelievers are removed from the Lord's *face* (*προσώπου*) not His *presence*. Christ, being God is everywhere present (omnipresent) and that includes Hell (Psalm 139:8). The *face* of Christ here represents His favor, mercy, and compassion, not His *presence*. The third statement extends that idea to say the unbelievers are also eternally separated from realm of Christ's glory and strength.

Verse 10 is another statement of the second coming of Christ. It is the most spectacular of the eschatological events, and it is held as foundational theology by all Christian denominations.

Question:

There is a theological teaching which says: "Hell is not eternal suffering, hell it is to be separated from the presence of God." Evaluate that statement from 1:8-10.

- A. It is true because the worst thing there could be is separation from God.
- B. This is false because we are not separated from God in hell and unbelievers do suffer eternally.
- C. This is partially true because unbelievers in hell are away *from the glory of His power*. But it is partially false because hell is eternal suffering.

Answer:

B is correct. We are not away from the omnipresence of God anywhere (Psalm 139:8), and hell is a place of eternal suffering. A is incorrect because it assumes separation from God is possible. C is incorrect because being away *from the glory of His power* does not mean we are away from His presence.

1:11 *To this end also we pray for you always, that our God will count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power,*

1:12 *so that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

1:11 Εἰς ὅ καὶ προσευχόμεθα πάντοτε περὶ ὑμῶν, ἵνα ὑμᾶς ἀξιώσῃ τῆς κλήσεως ὁ θεὸς ὑμῶν καὶ πληρώσῃ πᾶσαν εὐδοκίαν ἀγαθωσύνης καὶ ἔργον πίστεως ἐν δυνάμει,

1:12 ὅπως ἐνδοξασθῇ τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ κυρίου ὑμῶν Ἰησοῦ ἐν ὑμῖν, καὶ ὑμεῖς ἐν αὐτῷ, κατὰ τὴν χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ ὑμῶν καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

Verses 11 and 12 end the first section of the letter with a benediction. He prays for three things: that they would be worthy of their calling, that their good pleasures would be fulfilled, and their work of faith would be with power. The one we might think about is the prayer that God would *πληρώσῃ πᾶσαν εὐδοκίαν ἀγαθωσύνης* *fulfill all the good pleasure of goodness* of the Thessalonians. This presents the spiritual life as one of fulfilled pleasure. So there is a sense in which Christianity is a pleasure ethic. When our pleasures are in line with God's pleasures, then they are good pleasures and the pursuit of those pleasures is good. And God will ultimately give you those pleasures you desire.

Question:

Epicureanism is the pleasure ethic. It says pleasure is the ultimate good but with restrictions. It said mental pleasure is better than physical pleasure and "the ultimate pleasure was held to be free from

anxiety and mental pain, especially that resulting from needless fear of death and of the gods” (MacBook dictionary). Compare and contrast that with the pleasure ethic suggested in 1:11.

- A. Both are freedom from mental anxiety and fear of death.
- B. They are different in that Paul’s pleasure is defined by an absolute standard of what pleasure is.
- C. They are different in that the Epicureans believed pleasure was freedom from the fear of God.

Answer:

B is correct. The pleasure or desire Paul refers to is *desire for goodness* and *goodness* is defined by the character of God. So it is according to an absolute standard of pleasure. A is incorrect because mental anxiety might be a part of a desire for righteous pleasure, as, for example, with Christ’s mental anxiety before the cross. C is incorrect because Epicureans believed in freedom from the fear of many gods not one sovereign God.

Chapter 2

2:1 Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him,

2:2 that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.

2:3 Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,

2:4 who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.

2:5 Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things?

2:1 Ερωτῶμεν δὲ ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί, ὑπὲρ τῆς παρουσίας τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ ἡμῶν ἐπισυναγωγῆς ἐπ’ αὐτὸν

2:2 εἰς τὸ μὴ ταχέως σαλευθῆναι ὑμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ νοὸς μηδὲ θροεῖσθαι, μήτε διὰ πνεύματος μήτε διὰ λόγου μήτε δι’ ἐπιστολῆς ως δι’ ἡμῶν, ως ὅτι ἐνέστηκεν ἡ ἡμέρα τοῦ κυρίου

2:3 Μή τις ὑμᾶς ἔξαπατήσῃ κατὰ μηδένα τρόπον. ὅτι ἐὰν μὴ ἔλθῃ ἡ ἀποστασία πρῶτον καὶ ἀποκαλυφθῇ ὁ ἄνθρωπος τῆς ἀνομίας, ὁ υἱὸς τῆς ἀπωλείας,

2:4 ὁ ἀντικείμενος καὶ ὑπεραιρόμενος ἐπὶ πάντα λεγόμενον θεὸν ἡ σέβασμα, ὥστε αὐτὸν εἰς τὸν ναὸν τοῦ θεοῦ καθίσαι ἀποδεικνύντα ἐαυτὸν ὅτι ἔστιν θεός.

2:5 Οὐ μνημονεύετε ὅτι ἦτι ὡν πρὸς ὑμᾶς ταῦτα ἔλεγον ὑμῖν;

In verse 1, Paul says he is going to distinguish between two future events, both involving a miraculous return of Christ. One is the *παρουσία*, *coming or presence* of Christ. This term (*parousia*) is usually (though not exclusively) used of the Second Coming of Christ.

The other event Paul describes is the *ἐπισυναγωγῆς*. *gathering together* with Him. This second word is a combination of the word for *upon* and *synagogue*. Literally: *upon synagogue-ing together with Him*. The word *synagogue* is the normal Greek word for *gathering*. So this second word represents the event we call the Rapture, which Paul discussed in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 (also discussed in John 14:1-4; 1 Corinthians 15:50ff; and referred to in other places like Hebrews 10:25 and James 5: 7-8).

In verse 2, Paul separates these two events with the time known throughout Scripture as *the day of the Lord*, a future time when God takes over the events of history in a specific way to bring about His righteous judgment, pouring out His wrath upon the earth. This event starts with the beginning of Daniel’s seven-year Tribulation (Daniel 9:24-27; Matthew 24; Revelation 6-18) and goes on through the end of the Millennial Kingdom and the Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20). The Second

Coming of Christ is part of *the day of the Lord* (the *parousia* of verse 1), since it comes after the seven-year Tribulation and before the Millennial Kingdom (the *synagogue-ing together* is not part of the Day of the Lord).

So the Rapture, or gathering together (the *synagogue-ing together with Him* of verse 1), is an event which separates believers from the wrath of the Day of the Lord. Apparently, some false teachers claiming to represent the apostles were telling the Thessalonians that the Day of the Lord had already come. That was disturbing them because Paul had told them *For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ* (1 Thessalonians 5:9).

Verse 3 clarifies the issue with the fact that *it will not come unless* (1) *the apostasy comes first, and* (2) *the man of lawlessness is revealed*. Apparently, these false teachers were telling the Thessalonians that their suffering and persecution were evidence that the Day of the Lord had already begun. We have a similar thing today with amillennial and covenant theologians who teach that the Tribulation described in Matthew 24 and Revelation 6-18 already happened. They say it's the suffering of the early church in the early centuries, the 100s through the 300s up to the time when Constantine made Christianity legal in 313 A.D. This is the same sort of error being falsely taught to these Thessalonians—that *the day of the Lord has come*.

But Paul clarifies that the Day of the Lord is not about the suffering of the church. Suffering is part of the life of the church. But the suffering of the church is from unbelievers not from the wrath of God. On the contrary, Paul says that the Day of the Lord is marked by two historical events: *the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness must be revealed*.

The word ἀποστασία (*apostasia*) means *to forsake, defect, or revolt*. So the Greek word seems to refer not to the lawlessness or immorality or the world, but so called “Christianity” forsaking or defecting from the morality it once had. Of course, there has always been apostasy in the church. But Paul seems to say there will be a time when the church will be defined by apostasy. It will not be just a few people, or in some corner of the church, or one particular denomination, but apostasy will globally be accepted by the world religion known at that time as “Christianity.” *The apostasy* will be a time when the regular thinking of most Christian leaders all over the world will include things like: the Bible is not sufficient or the infallible Word of God, all religions pray to the same God, lying is normal, remarriage and couples living together is acceptable, sex is a personal preference, and truth is not absolute.

The other future event which must precede the Day of the Lord is *the man of lawlessness must be revealed*. This is a specific individual who:

- is *the son of destruction*,
- *opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship*,
- *takes his seat in the temple of God*, and
- *displaying himself as being God*.

One thing is as clear now as it was when Paul wrote this letter, no such person has yet been revealed. This could not even occur at the time of this commentary because there is no Jewish temple for the man of lawlessness to enter. There have, of course, been many destructive leaders, but this seems to be a global religious leader who claims to be God, or a superior God, and an object of everybody’s worship. No one like that has yet appeared. [Other names for this individual are the antichrist (1 John 2:18), the man of sin (an alternative translation for *man of lawlessness*, and the beast (Revelation 13).]

Verse 5 is a reminder that Paul taught this to them before, but most things need repetition before they sink in. Also, notice again that apparently teaching on the details of future prophetic events was one of the first things Paul taught new believers.

Question:

Reformed covenant theology usually teaches that the Tribulation described in Revelation 6-18 and Matthew 24:3ff has already taken place in the persecution of the first 200 years of church history after the apostles. Evaluate that from 2:1-5.

- A. That is impossible because the *man of lawlessness... the son of destruction* has not taken his seat in the Temple.
- B. That is impossible because nothing like Matthew 24:3ff or Revelation 6-18 happened in the first 200 years after the apostles.
- C. That is possible if you accept a non-literal view of interpreting prophecy.
- D. That is impossible because the suffering of the post-apostolic church was by unbelievers against Christians, the Tribulation period is God punishing the world for its sin.
- E. All of the above.
- F. All but C above.
- G. A and B above.

Answer:

E is correct. All of these statements are correct.

2:6 *And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed.*

2:7 *For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way.*

2:6 καὶ νῦν τὸ κατέχον οἴδατε εἰς τὸ ἀποκαλυφθῆναι αὐτὸν ἐν τῷ ἔαυτοῦ καιρῷ.

2:7 τὸ γὰρ μυστήριον ἡδη ἐνεργεῖται τῆς ἀνομίας· μόνον ὁ κατέχων ἄρτι ἔως ἐκ μέσου γένηται.

Verses 6 and 7 introduce another concept to this biblical eschatology, the restrainer. Paul does not explain this restrainer, only what He/it does. Many guesses have been offered. I will list them in the order which I consider most likely to least likely.

1. The Holy Spirit
2. The Holy Spirit indwelling the church
3. The providence of God
4. Michael the archangel
5. Preaching the Gospel
6. The Jewish state
7. Human government
8. Binding of Satan

I believe the best guess is that the Restrainer is the Holy Spirit. The word *κατέχον* in verse 6 is neuter and the word for *spirit* is neuter, hence the translation *what restrains*. But that is only because of the gender of the word. When the word is used as a participle in verse 7, it's masculine, *he who now restrains*.

The most common of the eight views are #1, #2, or #7. If you see #1 or #2 as the Restrainer then He would be removed by the Rapture, or at the time of the Rapture. If you see #7 as the Restrainer, then it would be removed when the man of sin becomes the world dictator at or near the beginning of the Tribulation (the seven-year Tribulation actually begins when the man of sin signs a peace treaty with Israel—Daniel 9:27).

These verses also tell us that the *mystery of lawlessness is already at work*. This makes identifying the times more difficult because the same sort of lawlessness goes on all through the ages. This has caused many to make false identifications about the antichrist. But Paul's point seems to be that throughout history, or at least during the church age, we see both an evil force and one restraining that evil force. But when the Day of the Lord arrives, the Restrainer will stop restraining the evil and all hell will break loose on earth.

2:8 Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming;

2:9 that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders,

2:10 and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.

2:8 καὶ τότε ἀποκαλυφθήσεται ὁ ἄνομος, ὃν ὁ κύριος [Ιησοῦς] ἀνελεῖ τῷ πνεύματι τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ καὶ καταργήσει τῇ ἐπιφανείᾳ τῆς παρουσίας αὐτοῦ,

2:9 οὐ ἔστιν ἡ παρουσία κατ' ἐνέργειαν τοῦ σατανᾶ ἐν πάσῃ δυνάμει καὶ σημείοις καὶ τέρασιν ψεύδοντος

2:10 καὶ ἐν πάσῃ ἀπάτῃ ἀδικίας τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις, ἀνθ' ὧν τὴν ἀγάπην τῆς ἀληθείας οὐκ ἐδέξαντο εἰς τὸ σωθῆναι αὐτούς.

Verse 8 continues the sequence of events. We are currently living in an age where lawlessness is restrained. We will probably gradually move toward the world described in Revelation 13 through 18—global prosperity in the midst of great immorality. Nonetheless, there will also be a sudden change in global immorality when what remains of the true church is Raptured, and the Restrainer of sin is removed.

Then that lawless one will be revealed. This is the antichrist, who will rule the world through financial prosperity and a global religious unity centered in himself (Revelation 13). After seven years of Tribulation, the last 3½ years of it being a *great Tribulation* (Matthew 24:9-23), *the Lord will slay [this antichrist] with the breath of His mouth and bring [him] to an end by the appearance of His [Second] Coming.*

On question we might ask is: “Why does Paul call him a “man of lawlessness” when he seems to establish a global law centered in himself?” There is nothing revealing in the word. The Greek word ἄνομος is the common word for *law* with an “a” in front of it making it a negation (like *amoral* means without morals). One possibility is that he ignores the laws of national governments to establish his own. A second possibility is that most of the world is in chaos most of the time. A third possibility is that he doesn’t believe in absolute truth, so without law would be without truth. Fourth, and I think a more likely possibility, is that he is without the law of God. He may not believe in absolute truth either, but *being lawful* in Scripture is usually a reference to keeping the law of God.

Verse 9 tells us that the man of lawlessness, the beast or antichrist, is empowered by Satan. The full story is in Revelation 13. It would be a good idea to read that chapter at this point. For example, verse 4

says: *they worshiped the dragon because he gave his authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, “Who is like the beast, and who is able to wage war with him?”*

Verse 10 says the unbelievers of that time will: *not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.* What they will receive is the mark of the beast so as to be able to be part of the antichrist's opulent immoral global economy (Revelation 13:13-18; 18:9-19).

Question:

Which are accurate statement(s) considering 2:6-10?

- A. One reason the man of lawlessness has not come yet, is that the Restrainer is still restraining sin.
- B. The antichrist will deceive people because he is able to do miracles.
- C. The Holy Spirit will no longer be working on earth when the antichrist is revealed.
- D. All of the above.
- E. A and B above.

Answer:

E is correct, that is to say, A and B are correct. A is correct because the removal of the Restrainer and the revealing of the antichrist, although they are not the same event, seem to go together. B is correct, the antichrist deceives people *with all power and signs and false wonders.* C is incorrect because the Holy Spirit is always at work and, although the church and the Restrainer are removed, the Holy Spirit is omnipresent and will be working in some mysterious way (John 3:8).

2:11 *For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false,*

2:12 *in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.*

2:11 καὶ διὰ τοῦτο πέμπει αὐτοῖς ὁ θεὸς ἐνέργειαν πλάνης εἰς τὸ πιστεῦσαι αὐτοὺς τῷ ψεύδει,

2:12 ἵνα κριθῶσιν πάντες οἱ μὴ πιστεύσαντες τῇ ἀληθείᾳ ἀλλὰ εὐδοκήσαντες τῇ ἀδικίᾳ.

In verse 11, **they** are *those who perish* in verse 10. These are the unbelievers of the Tribulation who God causes to believe what is false by sending *upon them a deluding influence.* Once again, this is consistent with the revelation given to the Apostle John. In the Apocalypse, we read: *For God has put it in their hearts to execute His purpose by having a common purpose, and by giving their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God will be fulfilled* (Revelation 17:17). This confirms that the Day of the Lord is that time where God directly controls the outcome of events to bring about judgment upon the earth.

Whereas verse 11 tells us of the sovereignty of God, verse 12 speaks of the free will of man. In verse 11, God sends *a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false*, and in verse 12, they are judged because they *did not believe the truth.* These two concepts are tied together by the word *ἵνα*, usually translated *that*, or *in order that.* So once again we see the 100% sovereignty of God and the 100% unhindered free will of man. We see both these concepts from one cover of the Bible to the other.

In verse 12, the free will of the unbeliever is emphasized by the phrase εὐδοκήσαντες τῇ ἀδικίᾳ, *they took pleasure in unrighteousness.* The reason the unbeliever is an unbeliever is he loves what God hates. He has a pleasure base which is contrary to the character of God. So his free will choice is to not believe in God but in the system of the antichrist, because the antichrist's pleasures align with his pleasures. Therefore, he will receive the judgment of God.

2:13 *But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.*

2:14 *It was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

2:15 *So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us.*

2:13 Ἡμεῖς δὲ ὄφείλομεν εὐχαριστεῖν τῷ θεῷ πάντοτε περὶ ὑμῶν, ἀδελφοὶ ἡγαπημένοι ὑπὸ κυρίου, ὅτι εἴλατο ὑμᾶς ὁ θεὸς ἀπαρχὴν εἰς σωτηρίαν ἐν αγιασμῷ πνεύματος καὶ πίστει ἀληθείας,

2:14 εἰς ὃ [καὶ] ἐκάλεσεν ὑμᾶς διὰ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου ὑμῶν εἰς περιποίησιν δόξης τοῦ κυρίου ὑμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

2:15 Αρα οὖν, ἀδελφοί, στήκετε καὶ κρατεῖτε τὰς παραδόσεις ἃς ἐδιδάχθητε εἴτε διὰ λόγου εἴτε δι᾽ ἐπιστολῆς ὑμῶν.

Verse 13 is in contrast to verses 11. There the unbelievers are destined for judgment. Here the believers are *chosen ... from the beginning for salvation*. So, again, believers are chosen by God. And, again, they are chosen by God because of their choices, namely, their *faith in the truth*.

Verse 14 gives the purpose of all this. It is for the believer to *περιποίησιν δόξης τοῦ κυρίου ὑμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ*. *Possess glory through (or of) our Lord Jesus Christ*. The point seems to be that in the end we, who believe in Christ, will somehow receive glory from Him of the same sort that He has.

Verse 15 applies this with a two-fold command: (1) *stand firm* and (2) *hold to the traditions*. And the *traditions* are not from their culture or their parents or the Jews but those *which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us*. The chapter then ends with this benediction. [See question #30 Appendix A & B.]

Question:

The difference between the believers of 2:11-12 and the unbelievers of 13-15 is:

- A. Believers are chosen by God.
- B. Unbelievers will be judged by God.
- C. Believers follow the Bible.
- D. All of the above.
- E. A and C above.

Answer:

C is correct. The difference is, believers *hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us* which, for us, is the Bible. A is incorrect because both believers and unbelievers are chosen by God at least in the sense that *God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false*. B is incorrect because both believers and unbelievers will be judged by God. Therefore D and E are incorrect.

2:16 *Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace,*

2:17 *comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word.*

2:16 Αὐτὸς δὲ ὁ κύριος ὑμῶν Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς καὶ [ό] θεὸς ὁ πατὴρ ὑμῶν ὁ ἀγαπήσας ὑμᾶς καὶ δοὺς παράκλησιν αἰωνίαν καὶ ἐλπίδα ἀγαθὴν ἐν χάριτι,

2:17 παρακαλέσαι ὑμῶν τὰς καρδίας καὶ στηρίξαι ἐν παντὶ ἔργῳ καὶ λόγῳ ἀγαθῷ.

The emphasis in the mid-letter benediction is on comfort (παράκλησιν). The word is usually translated *comfort*, *consolation*, or *encouragement*. The point is: the promise of eternal comfort should give us earthly comfort.

Chapter 3

3:1 Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified, just as it did also with you;

3:2 and that we will be rescued from perverse and evil men; for not all have faith.

3:1 Τὸ λοιπὸν προσεύχεσθε, ἀδελφοί, περὶ ὑμῶν, ἵνα ὁ λόγος τοῦ κυρίου τρέχῃ καὶ δοξάζηται καθὼς καὶ πρὸς ὑμᾶς,

3:2 καὶ ἵνα ῥυσθῶμεν ἀπὸ τῶν ἀτόπων καὶ πονηρῶν ἀνθρώπων οὐ γὰρ πάντων ἡ πίστις.

The main point of this chapter is in verses 6-15, what to do with a disobedient brother. But before he addresses that, Paul has a prayer request for his missionary team and a statement of confidence for the Thessalonians.

Verse 1 is a prayer request for the spread of the Gospel. He wants prayer for the Word of the Lord to τρέχῃ καὶ δοξάζηται, literally: *run and be glorified*. Running, of course, is a figure of speech for the rapid spread of the Gospel, and glory is to make known the value of something or someone, like our word “advertise.” So the prayer is for the Gospel to be rapidly spread and be advertised.

Verse 2 is the second prayer request, and it is about the team of Paul and Silas and Timothy, that they be *rescued* or *delivered* from perverse, evil unbelievers.

3:3 But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one.

3:4 We have confidence in the Lord concerning you, that you are doing and will continue to do what we command.

3:5 May the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the steadfastness of Christ.

3:3 Πιστὸς δέ ἐστιν ὁ κύριος, ὃς στηρίξει ὑμᾶς καὶ φυλάξει ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ.

3:4 πεποίθαμεν δὲ ἐν κυρίῳ ἐφ' ὑμᾶς, ὅτι ἡ παραγγέλλομεν [καὶ] ποιεῖτε καὶ ποιήσετε.

3:5 Ο δὲ κύριος κατευθύναι ὑμῶν τὰς καρδίας εἰς τὴν ἀγάπην τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ εἰς τὴν ὑπομονὴν τοῦ Χριστοῦ.

In verses 3-5, Paul lists four things about the Thessalonians. Because *the Lord is faithful*:

1. *He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one.*
2. *You will continue to do what we command.*
3. *Christ will direct your hearts into the love of God.*
4. *And (Christ will direct your hearts) into the steadfastness of Christ.*

Notice here, Paul is concerned about: the influence of the devil, keeping the apostles commands (the New Testament), their love of God, and their ὑπομονὴν *steadfast endurance*.

Question:

In 3:4, Paul expresses his confidence that they *are doing and will continue to do what we command*. This passage does **not** mean new believers, who we lead to Christ, should follow **our** commands because:

- A. We are not apostles.
- B. They are to follow the New Testament commands.
- C. That would be applying this passage without interpreting it.

Answer:

C is correct. To say “New converts should obey Paul, therefore, my new converts should obey me, is going directly from observation to application without interpretation. An interpretation of the passage would say Paul wanted the Thessalonians to obey their commands because they were speaking revelation from God. So the application would be that they obey revelation from God, not our own commands. A and B are true and good answers. The only thing wrong with them is they do not give the reason why **this passage** is not a command for our converts to follow us.

3:6 *Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us.*

3:6 Παραγγέλλομεν δὲ ὑμῖν, ἀδελφοί, ἐν ὀνόματι τοῦ κυρίου [ἡμῶν] Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ στέλλεσθαι ὑμᾶς ἀπὸ παντὸς ἀδελφοῦ ἀτάκτως περιπατοῦντος καὶ μὴ κατὰ τὴν παράδοσιν ἦν παρελάβοσαν παρ’ ἡμῶν.

Verse 6 has one of the two commands of the chapter concerning disobedient Christians. What is interesting about this command is it concerns being a responsible worker. He says to avoid **ἀτάκτως περιπατοῦντος**, literally: *one who walks around in idleness*. And Paul calls it a *tradition which you received from us*. This would be true in a general sense of all the apostle’s commands, but it also includes idleness. So apparently the apostles established more traditions than what we usually think of as moral commands. They also left them with a tradition of doing responsible work.

3:7 *For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you,*

3:8 *nor did we eat anyone’s bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we kept working night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you;*

3:9 *not because we do not have the right to this, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, so that you would follow our example.*

3:7 Αὐτοὶ γὰρ οἴδατε πῶς δεῖ μιμεῖσθαι ἡμᾶς, ὅτι οὐκ ἡτακτήσαμεν ἐν ὑμῖν

3:8 οὐδὲ δωρεὰν ἄρτον ἐφάγομεν παρά τινος, ἀλλ’ ἐν κόπῳ καὶ μόχθῳ νυκτὸς καὶ ἡμέρας ἔργαζόμενοι πρὸς τὸ μὴ ἐπιβαρῆσαι τινα ὑμῶν

3:9 οὐχ ὅτι οὐκ ἔχομεν ἔξουσίαν, ἀλλ’ ἵνα ἑαυτοὺς τύπον δῶμεν ὑμῖν εἰς τὸ μιμεῖσθαι ἡμᾶς.

This rather long sentence is in contrast to the *brother who leads an unruly life* in verse 6. Some believers through history have seen it as spiritually superior to do only missions work and ignore their basic financial needs, trusting God to supply those needs as they go. Paul calls this; living in *an undisciplined manner*. Paul trusted God as much as anyone but he did not define that as financial irresponsibility. Even when he stopped making tents it was because he received enough support to live on. At that point he changed his job from making tents to full-time study, prayer, evangelism, and teaching. But he did not *walk around in idleness*.

Verse 8 tells us a lot about how Paul's team lived during their missionary journeys. They worked hard, night and day, so as to not take anything without paying for it. The later full-time support Paul received was from established churches, who were participating in his ministry. But when Paul came to a new area, he did not allow his new contacts to give him financial support. All through history, religious charlatans have become wealthy from people hoping to get some mystical spiritual benefit by giving to "the holy man." That's why so many evangelists are suspected of being crooks. Paul was determined to avoid that.

Verse 9 tells us there is a bigger reason the missionary team worked hard to earn their own money. They wanted to be an example to the believers of what the normal spiritual life looked like. With an urgency for the spread of the Gospel, and a view to the soon return of Christ to gather them up in the Rapture, there could easily be a tendency to ignore daily work. Paul says, "We didn't do that." Even in the midst of an urgency for the Gospel and a heavenly perspective, they worked hard for their bread. And that's the model for the Church—to not *eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship* [keep on] *working night and day*.

Question:

What would be the best thing for a 25-year-old single man to do according to 3:7-9?

- A. Live as a monk in a cloistered monastery.
- B. Live at home with his parents.
- C. Live at a rescue mission.

Answer:

A is correct. All these are less than ideal choices, but a monk in a cloistered monastery is much like a college student earning his own support. These monks work for their keep and live responsibly and eat their own food. B is incorrect because being supported by one's parents keeps a boy from becoming a man. C is incorrect because it depends upon the rescue mission to provide one's support.

3:10 *For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either.*

3:11 *For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies.*

3:12 *Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread.*

3:13 *But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary of doing good.*

3:10 καὶ γὰρ ὅτε ἦμεν πρὸς ὑμᾶς, τοῦτο παρηγγέλλομεν ὑμῖν, ὅτι εἴ τις οὐ θέλει ἐργάζεσθαι μηδὲ ἐσθίετω.

3:11 Ἀκούομεν γάρ τινας περιπατοῦντας ἐν ὑμῖν ἀτάκτως μηδὲν ἐργαζομένους ἀλλὰ περιεργαζομένους·

3:12 τοῖς δὲ τοιούτοις παραγγέλλομεν καὶ παρακαλοῦμεν ἐν κυρίῳ Ἰησοῦν Χριστῷ, ἵνα μετὰ ἡσυχίας ἐργαζόμενοι τὸν ἔαυτῶν ἄρτον ἐσθίωσιν.

3:13 Υμεῖς δέ, ἀδελφοί, μὴ ἐγκακήσητε καλοποιοῦντες.

Verses 10-12 address the believers who are not working. Back in verse 6, Paul addressed the church in general concerning these people saying: *keep away from every brother who leads an unruly life.* The verb στέλλεσθαι (in verse 6) *to avoid*, is literally *to travel* in the sense of traveling away from someplace. It is clearly a command for a believer concerning a fellow believer (*every brother who*).

Here Paul gives a command directly to the lazy believer; *if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either.* Of course, it is also instruction for the other believers as well. They should not create an assistance, or welfare program, which encourages people to eat without working.

Paul is not suggesting that one cannot eat without working. Clearly, there are many ways to do that. You can do that by being a bum, mooching off your relatives, being an older son who lives at home so that his parents can support him, illegitimately receiving welfare money, etc. Paul is not suggesting that working and eating always go together but that they **should** go together. Healthy, normal, adult people should work for a living. Actually the *not ... eat* comment is just for emphasis because everyone must eat.

Verse 11 shows that the non-workers are not inactive. They are active busybodies. The word *περιεργαζομένους* is a participle from the verb meaning *to meddle*.

In verse 13, *do not grow weary of doing good* sounds like an isolated idea, and it may be. But in the context, it looks like an extension of the purpose of work, namely, that it is not just for being able to support yourself but also to do good. Our work provides resources which equip us to do good. [See question #33 in Appendix A & B.]

Question:

Compare the statement in 3:10, *if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either*, with the parable of “The Good Samaritan” (Luke 10: 30-37). How can we tell if someone is not willing to work and needs discipline, not gifts, or not able to work and needs gifts, not discipline?

- A. The one we should give to is the one not living an undisciplined life.
- B. We should give to anyone we come across with an urgent need no matter what their work ethic is.
- C. We should give to those believers we know well because we have a fellowship responsibility for them.
- D. We should give in such a way that it benefits more of the most needy people.
- E. All of the above.
- F. A and B above.

Answer:

F is correct, which is to say A and B are correct. A is correct because that's what it says in 3:11. B is correct because that is the basic point to the parable of the “Good Samaitan.” C is incorrect because some believers we know may be living an undisciplined life and need discipline, not gifts. D is incorrect because this is socialism and focuses charity on the masses rather than the one we come across on the path who needs help.

3:14 *If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that person and do not associate with him, so that he will be put to shame.*

3:15 *Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.*

3:14 Εἰ δέ τις οὐχ ὑπακούει τῷ λόγῳ ἡμῶν διὰ τῆς ἐπιστολῆς, τοῦτον σημειοῦσθε μὴ συναναμίγνυσθαι αὐτῷ, ἵνα ἐντραπῇ·

3:15 καὶ μὴ ως ἔχθρὸν ἡγεῖσθε, ἀλλὰ νουθετεῖτε ως ἀδελφόν.

Verses 14 and 15 complete the command of verse 6. Taken together, there are four specific things to do about an unruly brother:

1. *keep away from him* (verse 6)
2. *take special note of him* (verse 14)
3. *do not associate with him* (verse 14)
4. *admonish him* (verse 15)

Here, that is extended to include *anyone [who] does not obey our instruction* and anyone who does not live *according to the tradition which you received from us* (verse 6). This agrees with the instruction for dealing with the immoral brother in Matthew 18:15-17; 1 Corinthians 5; and Galatians 6:1-5. The perspective is to socially avoid the unrepentant sinner who refuses to change, but always leave room for him to repent and return.

Notice these three actions have nothing to do with what the unruly brother should do. They are about what **we** should do. Most Christians confronted with an unruly brother either ignore the problem or focus on what the unruly brother should do. But what the unruly brother should do is not Paul's command here. It is usually clear what the unruly brother should do—stop being unruly in whatever way he is being unruly. The question is: what should **we** do, not what should he do. And the answer is these four commands.

Believers must take action. Just telling someone they are sinning is not sufficient. But we should not punish fellow believers, and we should not create a social context that discourages repentance. We are to treat an unruly brother as a brother, not an enemy. The difference is that we want an enemy to be destroyed; we want a brother to be built up. We want an enemy to fail; we want a brother to win. [See question #34 Appendix A & B.]

Question:

Suppose a woman begins teaching the adult Sunday school class you attend. The class consists of both men and women. You approach her and point out that 1 Timothy 2:12; 1 Corinthians 11:3; and 14:34-35 forbid a woman to teach men. She says that the elders of the church have approved her for teaching that class. What should you do according to 2 Thessalonians 3:6 and 14-15?

- A. Go to the elders to confirm their approval of her teaching. If it is true, then there is nothing more you need to do. It is the elders' responsibility before God.
- B. Quit the Sunday school class, but not the rest of the church.
- C. Quit the church.
- D. Within the class and the church, take a firm verbal stand against what she is doing, but stay in the class and the church.

Answer:

C is correct. 3:6 and 14-15 tell us to: *keep away from, take special note of, not associate with, and admonish* such a person. A is incorrect because although the elders are responsible before God, so are you. You can't punt your moral responsibility to the leaders—that's the problem with every cult. B is incorrect because the elders have approved it, therefore the whole church is involved in the sin (assuming there is not a large scale objection to her teaching from the congregation in general). D is incorrect because it would violate the whole point of this passage. Paul says we must **do** something, not just **say** something.

3:16 Now may the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance. The Lord be with you all!

3:16 Αὐτὸς δὲ ὁ κύριος τῆς εἰρήνης δῷῃ ὑμῖν τὴν εἰρήνην διὰ παντὸς ἐν παντὶ τρόπῳ. ὁ κύριος μετὰ πάντων ὑμῶν.

Verse 16 is another benediction. The emphasis here is peace. The interesting phrase is *ἐν παντὶ τρόπῳ*, *in every way* (*manner*, or *circumstance*). It reminds us a bit of Philippians 4:6-7. Paul's final prayer of the letter is not for their safety or to end their persecution but for them to have peace in the midst of it all.

3:17 *I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand, and this is a distinguishing mark in every letter; this is the way I write.*

3:18 *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.*

3:17 Ὁ ἀσπασμὸς τῇ ἡμῇ χειρὶ Παύλου, ὃ ἔστιν σημεῖον ἐν πάσῃ ἐπιστολῇ· οὗτος γράφω.

3:18 Ἡ χάρις τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ μετὰ πάντων ὑμῶν.

Verse 17 literally reads: *The greeting (or salutation) in my hand of Paul, which is a sign in all letters this I write.* The idea is to point out that there was something in the letter itself that proved it was written by Paul himself. Maybe it was a signature, a symbol of some sort, or just his handwriting style. The reason is probably to let the Thessalonians know the letter was not coming from the false teachers who had written to them a *message or a letter as if from us* (2:2).

Toward the end of the epistle to the Galatians (written after the first missionary journey, and before the Thessalonian epistles), Paul says: *See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand* (Galatians 6:11). These large letters could be what he is referring to as a style which identified him as the author. They could also be because Paul had a deteriorating eye condition. He would be about 50 years old at the time. He could have had cataracts or just be very far sighted. We know he had some physical condition which he later metaphorically called *a thorn in the flesh* (2 Corinthians 12:7). All these could be references to poor eyesight or they could be disconnected. Anyway, the Thessalonians were able to recognize Paul's letter from its physical appearance.

Verse 18 ends the letter with a reference to grace, the unmerited favor of God.