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COMMENTARIES

COMMENTARY ON THE
NEW TESTAMENT, VOL 3
2 Thessalonians

By Rev. W. B. Godbey, A. M.,

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COMMENTARY ON THE NEW TESTAMENT

VOL III EPHESIANS-PHILEMON

PAUL, THE CHAMPION THEOLOGIAN

BY

REV. W. B. GODBEY, A. M.,

Author of "Commentary, Volumes I and II;" "Spiritual Gifts and Graces," "Holy Land," "Victory," "Holiness or Hell," "Christian Perfection," "Sanctification," "Baptism," and "Woman Preacher."

2 THESSALONIANS

PROLOGUE

Both of the Thessalonian letters were written at Corinth, perhaps in the fall of A.D. 52, and not far apart. The necessity of the second epistle was created by the first, which aroused them on tiptoe, developing a great excitement relative to the coming of the Lord, which was intensified by certain false reports circulated by ill-designing people that the Lord had already come and taken up his people, and they had been left. This false rumor was augmented by a counterfeit letter with Paul's signature sent to them. The effect of these false reports was to flood them with grief and mortification, thinking the Lord had come, taken up his Bride, and they had been left. Hence, Paul forthwith sent them the second epistle, in which he corrects the false reports, and fortifies them against similar intrigues of Satan in the future, by calling their attention to certain prophetic events destined to transpire before the second advent.

CHAPTER 1

1. The Apostolic Churches were all “*in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*” That excludes the masses of modern claimants altogether.

ARGUMENT 1

SANCTIFICATION SUPERINDUCES SUPERABOUNDING FAITH AND LOVE

The first epistle was heroic on entire sanctification, stirring up a sweeping revival on that line. Sin always goes out to make room for grace. Love is never perfect while mixed with depravity, and faith always imperfect till the last doubt is eliminated.

ARGUMENT 2

THE BLESSING OF PERSECUTION

5. We see here that it is a great blessing and an exalted honor to be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, so that we are permitted to suffer persecution for Christ’s sake. Hence, it says that persecution is “*a manifestation of the righteous judgment of God.*” Christ (⁴⁰⁵Matthew 5:10) catalogues persecution among the beatitudes. Have you considered that the probable reason why you are not persecuted is, because you are not worthy of the kingdom of God? The Lord give us light to examine our hearts, and consider our lives!

ARGUMENT 3

THE RAPTURE

Paul gave us the largest paragraph in the first epistle on the rapture of the saints. Here we have it again in glowing colors, describing the unearthly

splendors of that glorious revelation of the triumphant God-man in scenes of grandeur, sublimity, and glory, begging all description.

6. An awful retribution awaits the persecutors of God's saints.

7. *"To you who are troubled rest with us."* How glorious to have rest with apostles and saints in that awful day! Shall we have it? It is the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ from heaven, with the angels of his power.

8. *"In fire of flame."* Fire throughout the Bible means destruction. It is the regular symbol of sanctification, because sin is destroyed in that work. Here, as in ²⁰⁰⁰Daniel 7, it symbolizes the destruction of the wicked when our Lord comes in his glory to execute retribution on the incorrigible, to gather his saints, take up his Bride, and receive his crown at the hands of the Father, King of kings and Lord of lords. The finally incorrigible are to be destroyed, as symbolized by the fire here, and ²⁰⁰⁰Daniel 7, ⁴⁰²³Acts 3:23, ⁶¹⁸Revelation 11:18.

9. *"Eternal destruction."* *Aionion* is the strong word in the Greek language for endless punishment. It is used by the Holy Ghost to reveal the eternity of the heavenly life (⁴²⁴⁶Matthew 24:46), human redemption (³⁰⁹²Hebrews 9:12), and God (³⁶⁵⁴5:14).

10. *"When he comes to be glorified among his saints, and to be wondered at in that day among all the believers, because our testimony was believed by you."* O what a time of wonder and admiration! Immortal tongue fails to describe the ineffable glories of our King, who will be the center of adoring wonder by all his saints. Meanwhile we will be lost in utter bewilderment in contemplating God's mercy to us, and how it happened, in the wonderful providence of God, that we ever believed his Word and got saved. Shall you and I participate in the enraptured wonders and glories of God's saints in that day?

11. Well do we join Paul in his prayers in your behalf, that God may count us worthy of our high calling in Christ.

CHAPTER 2

1. *“We pray you, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering unto him.”* When our Lord comes, all the members of his Bridehood will be gathered to him, and taken up to the marriage supper in heaven.

ARGUMENT 4

THE FALSE REPORT

2. *“That you be not shaken from your mind, nor jostled, neither by a spirit nor by word nor by letter as by us, as that the day of the Lord has come.”* Paul’s first letter had wonderfully stirred on sanctification and the coming of the Lord. Their enemies had availed themselves of the opportunity to circulate the report that the Lord had already come and taken up his Bride, and they, of course, in that case had been left. This report filled them with grief and mortification, as in that case they had been left, thus forfeiting their place in the Bridehood. Their enemies had even confirmed this false report, by circulating a counterfeit letter with Paul’s signature, certifying that *“the day of the Lord has come.”* E.V. has the present tense here; *i.e.*, *“the day of the Lord is at hand.”* You know Paul frequently states *“the hour is nigh.”* The uniform testimony of the inspired writers is that the *“day of the Lord is at hand.”* But the Greek here is in the past tense. E.V. has it wrong. R.V. corrects it in a measure. Paul assures them of their happy mistake, as the Lord has not yet come, and your chances are all right. Now he proceeds in the light of prophecy to specify certain events, which will precede the advent.

ARGUMENT 5

THE MAN OF SIN, POPE AND ANTICHRIST

3. “*Let no one deceive you in any way, because unless there may first come an apostasy and the man of lawlessness, the son of destruction may be revealed.*” The spirit of prophecy on Paul reveals certain events, destined to transpire before the return of our Lord, though giving him no dates as to the time of the predicted interventions. The great apostasy here revealed transpired in the fourth century, as the immediate result from the great change in the attitude of the political and religious world toward the Church. During the first three centuries following the conflagration of Rome, martyrs’ blood flowed incessantly, each succeeding emperor enforcing the cruel edict of Nero, pursuant to which Paul was beheaded, Peter crucified; and an indiscriminate massacre of the saints, especially their ejection to the wild beasts in the Coliseum, followed in ten great persecutory epochs. at intervals of about thirty years, thus mowing down each succeeding generation with the bloody sword of martyrdom, till the conversion of Constantine, A.D. 325. This radically revolutionized the relation of the Church to the world. Constantine, by an imperial edict, proclaimed Christianity the religion of the empire, thus bringing the pagan millions into the visible Church; the effect of which was to paganize Christianity, and degenerate the Church into Roman Catholicism. Martyr blood and fire had kept the Church humble, poor, unpopular, and despised three hundred years. Meanwhile she had no creed but the Bible. Now that she was become popular, influential, and wealthy, the great Council of Nice in Bithynia convenes, the Emperor Constantine sitting in a golden chair, presiding over it, while they make the first human creed, which has been followed by others in subsequent ages, thus recognizing and inaugurating human authority, going off into ecclesiasticism, no longer content with New Testament simplicity, substituting the Antinomian heresies for the gospel of purity, thus turning over the nominal Christian dispensation to the devil as the Antediluvian, Patriarchal, and Mosaic. The “*Man of sin*” (E.V., is the man of lawlessness). Greek *Anomia*, lawlessness, is from *alpha*, not, and *nomos*, law. Hence, it means the man who ignores the law; *i.e.*, treats it with contempt. The law of God says positively and repeatedly, “The soul that sinneth, it shall die;” “The

wages of sin is death;” “He that committeth sin is of the devil.” Satan counterfeits all of God’s work, and thus duces the world, making them believe that he is God, and in this way rules earth’s millions. As the result of the great apostasy, sinning religion sailed out under the cognomen of Christianity, boldly offering the world salvation in sin in contradistinction to the Bible, which offers salvation from sin. Before the apostasy, Christianity was unpopular and terribly persecuted. As the result of the Constantinian apostasy, a system of popular Christianity, congenial to the world and provoking no persecution, has been propagated in all lands. However, God has always had a true people on the earth, and always will till he takes up his Bride. These faithful few who survived the great apostasy, soon so provoked the animosity of popular religion as again to become the victims of blood and slaughter. No wonder this Antinomian heresy of the sinning religion is denominated by the Holy Spirit, “*the Son of destruction;*” because nothing but wholesale ruin, death, and damnation can follow in its tread. Every institution is abstract before it can become concrete. Satan, in Paul’s day, was busy sowing the seed of sinning religion in the hearts of the people; which in after ages, when martyrdom abated for a season, assumed a visible organization in the fallen Church, and concrete personality in the pope.

4. “*Who opposeth and exalteth himself above everything called God, or Divinity, so that he sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself off that he is God.*” This applies directly to the pope, whose deluded votaries actually call him our lord god the pope. He exalts himself above God, in that he claims that, as the vicar of Christ and vicegerent of God, the government of the world, political and ecclesiastical, has been turned over into his hands, Christ having retreated away to heaven, and left him in the rulership of the world, to reign in his room and stead. This is the very definition of antichrist, as *anti* means instead of; hence antichrist is a person in the place of Christ. While the pope is the antichrist, all the preachers of a sinning religion offer the people salvation independently of Christ and in opposition to him, and consequently practically fall under the cognomen of antichrist, as the subordinates of the pope. The Bible positively reveals that all in sin are lost, and salvation is only possible in the eradication of sin, which none but Christ can do. Hence, the man who offers you salvation, without going to Christ and having your sins

exterminated by Omnipotent Grace, assumes the attitude of antichrist; *i.e.*, a substitute for Christ. John said there were many in his day. The world is flooded with them at the present day, just as Christ is the personal head of all true soul-savers, who faithfully hold him up as the only One competent to impart actual salvation in the utter destruction of sin; even so the pope of Rome is the personal head of all who offer salvation to the people on various lines of human substitution. While the pope is, and always has been, the antichrist in the proper sense—*i.e.*, the chief antichrist—there is no doubt but in prophetic fulfillment he will in a future day assume much greater prominence in the development and manifestation of the antichristhood. Doubtless the great tribulation will open a wide door to the assumption of the old papistical claims of a universal pontificate, which has in all ages been the climacteric dream of the papacy. A similar door was opened in the fall of the Roman Empire, when the pope did boldly arrogate to himself this universal pontificate. When all human thrones shall fall (^{20th} Daniel 7), rest assured the pope, pursuant to his long-cherished pretensions, will assume absolute autocracy, thus developing into the eighth head of the Roman beast (^{6th} Revelation 17); as John says that this eighth is one of the seven, it must be the pope, because he is the only surviving head of the seven-headed Roman beast (^{6th} Revelation 13), the other six; *i.e.*, the kingdom, the consulate, the triumvirate, the dictatorship, the tribuneship, and the empire (the empire having long ago passed away), leaving the papacy the successor of the sixth imperial head, which received the deadly wound in the destruction of the empire by the Goths, Huns, and Vandals; the only survivor, the deadly wound on the imperial head having been healed in the papacy. During the terrible confusion of the tribulation, when all human thrones shall be cast down (^{20th} Daniel 7), rely upon it the pope will endeavor to occupy and recuperate every fallen throne. For this he is making vigorous preparations in the United States of America as well as other countries. As the Christhood develops and culminates in the second Coming, doubtless Satan, the uncompromising rival of Christ, will perpetuate a corresponding development of the antichristhood. O what a grand open door for the magnification of the antichristhood, when all kingdoms shall totter and human governments collapse and fall amid the terrible revolutions of Armageddon (^{6th} Revelation 16)! Paul here describes the pope “*as sitting in the temple of God, showing himself off that he is God.*” This prophecy received a signal

fulfillment in 1870. On the day appointed to proclaim the dogma of his infallibility in presence of fifty thousand people in St. Peter's Cathedral, arrangements were made, at tremendous cost, to so encompass the multitude with concentric mirrors as to reflect the splendors of the pope's person, most gorgeously decked with gems, rubies, diamonds, and gold, so as to throw an unearthly splendor from his person, dazzling the eyes of the multitude, and impressing them with the very presence of God. All this blasphemous enterprise was signally defeated by Him who sits upon the circle of the heavens, and turns the seasons round. At the very hour appointed for the blasphemous proclamation of the pope's infallibility, God sent a terrible thunderstorm, so darkening the elements as to utterly disqualify them to use the mirrors, and thus permit the pope *"to show off himself as God."*

6. *"Now you know that which hindereth, that He should be revealed in his time."*

7. *"For already the mystery of lawlessness is working; only there is one hindering until he be taken from the midst."* In Paul's day the Satanic mystery of a sinning religion in the normal Church of Christ was at work, which in after ages developed into the papacy and Romanism, and is now rapidly developing in the swift apostasy of all the Protestant Churches outside the holiness movement. The "hindering one" here mentioned by Paul as keeping back the manifestation of "this man of lawlessness"—*i.e.*, the pope—was the Roman Emperor, who would have killed the pope if he had risen in his day. The world could not have a Caesar and a pope at the same time. Hence, Caesar must fall before the pope can rise. Paul here very judiciously in this prophecy withholds the personal mention of the Roman Emperor, as he very probably would have expedited his own martyrdom by a direct statement. It is a historic fact that the bishop of Rome, who became pope, actually did assume supremacy over the Roman world soon after the fall of the emperor, and has claimed it ever since, and is only now awaiting an opportunity to enforce his claim, which he will doubtless find in the great Tribulation.

8. *"And then that lawless one shall be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will destroy by the breath of his mouth, and annihilate by the brightness of his presence."* The *"breath of his mouth"* evidently means the Bible. (2Th 2)

Timothy 3:16.) “*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.*” The Greek says, “*All Scripture is God breathed;*” *i.e.*, the Bible from Alpha to Omega is the breath of God. O how the Bible has been destroying the power of the pope the last two hundred years! The sword of the Spirit hews the papistical pretensions all to pieces wherever it goes. If you would successfully fight the devil and the pope, take the Bible all the time. “*Will annihilate him by the brightness of His presence.*” John devotes four chapters (Revelation 16,17,18,19) to a climacteric description of the great Tribulation. In the sixteenth chapter, the bloody wars of Armageddon shake all kings from their thrones. In the seventeenth chapter, antichrist lays claim to all the vacated thrones. In the eighteenth chapter the tide turns terrifically against antichrist in the fall of Babylon, his Bride. In the nineteenth chapter there is a mighty culmination. Christ rides forth on the white horse. All the kings of the earth are marshaled against him, only to suffer signal defeat and final overthrow. Last of all the rivals of Christ on the earth (except Satan), Babylon having fallen and the kings all perished, still pope and Mohammed survive upon the earth, hopeful again to raise up armies and Churches. But we see them

“both cast alive into the lake of fire that burneth with brimstone.”
(~~Rev~~ Revelation 19:20.)

The next verse says,

“The rest were slain by the sword proceeding out from the mouth
of him that sitteth upon the horse;”

i.e., all their leaders having been taken out of the world, the surviving millions inhabiting the globe at the close of the Tribulation will all be converted to God, there being no devil on the earth, either personally, through his demoniacal myrmidons, nor through human agency, to lead them.

9. “*Whose coming is according to the working o Satan in all power, signs, and wonders of falsehood.*” This is the coming of the pope; *i.e.*, antichrist. Jannes and Jambres in the days of Moses wrought miracles by the power of the devil. Satan can perform works so far superhuman as to be incomprehensible by us; *i.e.*, miraculous in our estimation. Though he is a finite being, and utterly incompetent to compete with God, yet he can do

works so far above our comprehension as to pass off currently for miracles. The Tribulation will be the great final conflict, in which, doubtless, Satan, through the pope and others, will dazzle the eyes of the world with his miracles, *“deceiving, if possible, even the elect.”*

10. *“In every delusion of unrighteousness to them that perish, because they did not receive the Divine love of the truth, that they might be saved.”* This *agape*, so prominent in the New Testament, is poured out in the heart by the Holy Ghost (☞Romans 5:5), and is the very essence of Holy Ghost religion, and the only thing that gives you the Divine nature and saves you. While the Bible is going to the ends of the earth, the division here is rapidly being drawn between the savable and unsavable people. Proportionately to the circulation of the Scriptures, infidelity is on the increase, as action always produces reaction, and Satan works wherever God works, contesting every inch of ground, and dividing the spoils with him, the calling out of the elect always revealing the non-elect.

11. *“Therefore God sends on them the working of delusion, that they may believe a lie,*

12. *“That they may all be condemned who believe not the truth, but take pleasure in unrighteousness.”* The world is all on probation, being duly tested and tried for the unchangeable state of eternity. Satan could not be in the world if God did not permit him, as in due time he is going to take him out. (☞Revelation 20.) The culmination is rapidly developing, and the gospel, with unprecedented expedition, is speeding its flight to every nation, revealing the appreciative elect in every land, and rendering conspicuous the non-elect millions, who are fast ripening for destruction. Though the Bible is in every home in many countries, how few comparatively read, believe, and obey it! It lies on every pulpit, to be insulted with the human dogmata of a sinning religion. The issues of eternity are culminating on all sides. How very few have the grit and grace to preach the Word as it is, fearless of men and devils! If God were to save people against their will, he must dehumanize them. When they do not will to receive his truth in the love of it, what can he do but leave them in the hands of the devil, to *“believe a lie (and that lie is a sinning religion), and all be damned who do not believe the truth, but take pleasure in unrighteousness.”* God’s religion is self-denial throughout. Satan’s

counterfeit offers you salvation and heaven without self-denial. The people of this world will have the pleasures of sin. If they become religious, they still hold on to the world's sinful pleasures, thus worshipping the devil instead of God, believing his lies rather than God's truth, and receiving damnation instead of salvation. We should expedite the gospel to the ends of the earth for the sake of the elect; meanwhile the non-elect, who reject and abide under the delusions of Satan, will only plunge into a hotter hell than if they had never heard the silver trumpet blow.

ARGUMENT 6

ELECTION THROUGH SANCTIFICATION OF THE SPIRIT

13. *“But we ought to give thanks to God always in your behalf, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God chose you unto salvation from the beginning through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.”* It is exceedingly consolatory to know that God elected us millions of ages before we elected him in the sanctification of the Spirit. Let us hold on to all of God's precious Word, even though it may seem to antagonize some of our creeds. Can men, by the free exercise of their will, contravene the Word of the Lord? They certainly can. David, flying from Saul like a bloodthirsty greyhound on his track, arriving at Keilah, receives an adulatory ovation by the citizens. Suspicious of their hypocrisy and their evil intention to purchase royal favor with his head, he goes to the Lord in secret prayer for the needed revelation. “Will the men of Keilah deliver me up into his hand?” “Will Saul come down?” The Lord said,

“He will come down. They will deliver thee up.”

(¹1 Samuel 23:11,12.)

Here we have a plain statement, Will come down to Keilah, and the Keilites will deliver David into his hands. But we find that neither of these events transpired, because David fled away with all possible expedition. Then Saul, close on his track, hearing that he was gone, changed his route, and did not come to Keilah. Though it is not so specified, David well understood “If I stay, Saul will come down, and they will deliver me up.

Hence, I will hasten my flight from Keilah.” The Bible is the most common-sensical book in all the world. Let us believe it all, and never saddle on it any of our creedistic interpretation. Because our little gourd-heads are incompetent to harmonize God’s sovereignty and man’s free agency, is no reason why they are not both true. So let us believe both and everything else revealed in the Bible, rejoicing on our way. The Greek word for election is *eklektoi*, from *ek*, out, and *lego*, to choose. Hence, it has a double meaning, involving both the Divine and the human; *i.e.*, God chooses us, and we choose him. We see here that this election “*is through the sanctification of the Spirit.*” Hence, if you do not get sanctified, your election is an eternal failure. Calvinists ought to be red-hot sanctificationists by the genuine route of the Holy Ghost and fire, as their doctrine all collapses without the sanctification of the Spirit. We see here that belief of the truth follows the sanctification of the Spirit. How can this be? Do I not have to get sanctified by faith? Of course, you must have faith for sanctification if you get it, as that is the only way you can obtain it. But your final election in heaven not only requires you to be sanctified by the Spirit, but to live a holy life by faith in all of God’s truth. The faith period of Christian experience is subsequent to sanctification—the faith of the unsanctified always having a large admixture of doubt, fog, and skepticism, terribly conflictious with that gigantic grasp of inspired truth necessary to heroically appropriate the Divine promises, and bring real and perpetual victory into our spiritual life. I preached fifteen years without sanctification, thinking all the time that I believed the Bible; but I now see that I was a semi-infidel. Entire sanctification must burn out all the devil’s doubt and fog before we really are prepared to live the life of faith in God

15. “*Then, therefore, brethren, stand and hold the commandments which you have been taught, whether by our word or epistle.*” “Traditions,” in E.V., is by no means a good translation, as that word in modern use conveys the idea. of something vague and shadowy transmitted to us. There is no such an idea in the original. He simply exhorts them to be steadfast, and hold pertinaciously all of his teaching, whether oral, in their presence, or epistolary in their absence.

17. “*Comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good work and word.*” This is Paul’s fervent prayer to the Father and the Son in behalf of

the Thessalonians. The Holy Ghost is the Comforter, and the only One in the universe. Human comfort being a mere sham, not only do we need the indwelling Holy Spirit as a Comforter, but his establishing grace is our only fortification against backsliding out of the sanctified experience. John Wesley said, the people in his day generally had to get sanctified two or three times before they became established in it, so as to abide. John Fletcher received the experience five times, before he became so established as to retain it in triumph to the end of his life. This establishing grace is much neglected, and consequently great and distressing defection in many localities. There is no reason why any one should ever lose the experience of holiness, as you have nothing to do but be true to God, obedient to his will, and feed on his Word, to “*grow up like calves of the stall,*” making great and rapid proficiency in all the beautiful and amiable graces of spiritual establishment.

CHAPTER 3

2. *“That we may be delivered from ungodly and wicked men.”* The Greek, which I translate “ungodly,” is *atopon*, from *alpha*, not, and *topos*, place. Hence, it literally means out of place. But man’s place is with God. He is out of place and ruined when he is away from God. How pertinent Paul’s solicitation for prayer that the Word may run and be glorified!

ARGUMENT 7

COMPLETE DELIVERANCE FROM THE DEVIL

3. *“But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and keep you from the evil one.”* Unfortunately, the E.V. translates this evil, giving the abstract; whereas the Greek gives the concrete. Instead of the prayer of Paul and Christ for all the Christians to be delivered from “evil,” the true rendering is the “evil one;” *i.e.*, the devil himself. We have this petition in the Lord’s Prayer (⁴⁰⁰⁰Matthew 6), and in his valedictory prayer for the sanctification of all that should ever follow him in this world. So, here we see Paul and Jesus both praying that their followers shall be delivered from the devil, setting forth the glorious reality that it is the happy privilege of all true Christians to get rid of the devil altogether; not that we will be free from his temptations, for they can never hurt us, but are really in the victorious grace of God made a great source of blessing to us, in the discipline of our virtues, the trial of our faith, and the development of our gifts and graces, as the soldier who fights no battles wins no victories; but while Satan roars like a lion (and his roaring can never hurt us), he is not allowed to touch us. Truly, he can never get in gunshot of us. Though he shoots at us day and night, he only wastes his ammunition. Though he fishes all day in our pond, he will never catch anything, because entire sanctification has taken everything out of our hearts that wants the devil’s bait, so he toils all day, catches nothing, and goes home at evening with weary leg and hungry stomach. You must have faith in Christ for justification as a sinner, and faith for sanctification as a Christian. But you have an awful battle to fight, if you ever stand on the mount of victory. In this war with the devil,

you have all the world against you. Hence, you are sure to fall and sink into hell, unless you turn the battle over to the Omnipotent Jesus, who is a million times stronger than the devil and all the world combined. You do this by faith after you have been sanctified. If you have faith in Jesus for victory every moment, you have victory every moment; if you have faith in Jesus to keep the devil from ever putting his black hand on you, he will never touch you. What a glorious privilege to get rid of the devil forever! Then his temptations will all be sanctified to your good, and turned into a blessing to you. The battlefield makes the hero, who wears the victor's wreath forever.

4. *“I have confidence in the Lord, that you do and will do the things which we command.”* What a glorious experience had Paul at Thessalonica! You can be there, where Paul would thus command you if he were on the earth today.

5. *“The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and the patience of Christ.”* God's love sent his Son to die for us. We can have the same love, filling us with the spirit of martyrdom. Christ was perfectly patient amid the insults and tortures of a most cruel death. He died praying for his murderers. We can have the same patience.

ARGUMENT 8

CHURCH DISCIPLINE

6. *“I command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not according to the instruction which he received from us.”* One rotten potato will rot a whole barrel. *“Truly, the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light.”* If we did not separate the rotten from the sound, all of our fruits and vegetables would rot in a pile. How sadly this was verified in the Churches! One dancing damsel will lead all of the young people into Satan's fandangos. No wonder so many Churches are rotten masses of spiritual putrefaction. The forfeiture of disciplinary power is the saddest phenomenon of the age. It simply illustrates the deplorable fact that the popular Churches are past redemption. Luther,

Wesley, and Bunyan tried it, and failed. They saved many individuals. But history is silent on the reclamation of a fallen Church. Bishop Key says that it easier for God to raise up a new one than resurrect a dead one. If all of the Churches in this city (Los Angeles, California) would obey this plain and positive commandment, it would bring a Pentecost on California. If one should try it alone, the excommunicated would simply unite with other Churches, and the effect on them for their salvation would be largely counteracted. I knew a Methodist Church where Judge J___ wore the bell, and presided over the Official Board. Still he was a notorious sinner, as all knew and frankly admitted. Revivals came and went, but could not touch him. He would feed and pay the preachers, and do everything but get religion. So eventually the Conference sent a simple-hearted little man to that circuit. On arrival, he began revivals, and went round his circuit like a fiery cyclone. When he got through, he turned and excommunicated all that did not get religion (that was in the olden time). He did not begin with the little folks, but walloped the big horse first of all. The excitement was intense. Many said, "The Church is ruined." The stewards told the preacher he would starve, as Judge J___ collected more money than all the balance. He said he would rather starve for God, than fatten for the devil. The judge roared like a lion, and said he had spent his money freely for the Church, and they had treated him like a dog. So he went out with a rage, vociferating that he would never be a Methodist again. Other Churches had their eye on him. Three years roll away. Of course, his mad spell wore off. A revival of unusual power visits the Methodist Church. Many hard reprobates are gloriously saved. The revival runs about three months. Erelong the judge, who never entered the house since his expulsion, is seen in the vestibule. He comes on, and nightly gets a little nearer, till, to the surprise of all, he comes and falls full-length at the mourner's bench. Night after night for two whole weeks he is heard groaning at the altar. Finally he comes through as a sunburst. I conversed with his widow (a paragon saint) after his death, about ten years subsequent to his conversion. She told me he passed out of the world in glorious triumph. She said she believed he would have been lost if they had not turned him out of the Church. He was not a bad man; had no evil habits. About all that could be said was, that he had no religion, and did not claim to have. He depended on the prayers of his wife, the preachers, and the good people to save him. But they turned him out. On the abatement of his wealth, he began to

soliloquize, “Who cares for poor me? They have given me over to the devil” The simple fact is, Judge J___ has to do something for himself, or the devil will get him. Conviction seized him. He cried to God night and day, and doubtless is this moment playing on his golden harp.

ARGUMENT 9

SELF-SUPPORTING EVANGELISM

7-12. Here we see that while the apostles earned their bread by manual labor, they certify (verse 9) that they have a right to their temporal support while preaching the gospel. This is certainly the feasible basis for the evangelization of the world. Delinquency in reference to our temporal support does not excuse us from the commission, “*Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.*” We are to go and preach just as if we had a bushel of gold lying in the Bank of England to draw on *ad libitum*, trusting God, with or without human agency, to feed us like he feeds the birds. Thus we are to push the conquest to the ends of the earth, evangelizing all nations under the commission,

“Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age.”

( Matthew 28:20.)

With his presence we can certainly trust him for our bread. All this so strikingly contrasts with the financial policy of modern ecclesiasticism, hiring the preacher like a rail-splitter.

10. “*For when we were with you, we commanded this to you, that if any one does not wish to work, let him not eat.*” The Bible is the plainest of all books, solving every problem of duty so clearly as to leave all without excuse. Well are we assured that “he who runs may read,” and the “wayfaring men, though fools, may not err therein.” (Isaiah.) On this great problem of material sustenance, O how plain and simple, “If any one is not willing to work, let him not eat!” When the first American settlement, founded at Jamestown, Virginia, in 1607, having consumed the supply brought over from England, and finding the Indian resources exceedingly meager, starvation began to look them in the face, their only hope is to fell the forest, and cultivate the rich virgin soils. But how can they do this,

when nearly all of their colony are goldsmiths, having come over in search of the precious metals, and their tender hands never hardened by the ax, maul, and hoe. In their emergency, fortunately they elect Captain John Smith president, whose first law proclaimed in the Colony is a transcript of this laconic mandate of the apostle Paul, “Those who do not work shall not eat.” Soon cloth coats are stacked, sleeves rolled up, and all hands blistered while the Colony is vocal with the roar of the ax, the thunder of the maul, and the crash and smash of falling trees, whose burning brush lights the firmament by night; and they are all feasting on peas, potatoes, and roasting-ears. With the enforcement of this simple law of heaven, earth teems with plenty, and beggary takes her everlasting flight; hireling preachers all transformed into shouting evangelists.

13. *“Brethren, be ye not weary doing well.”* What a salutary guarantee against dissatisfaction, and what a stimulant to indefatigable perseverance in every laudable enterprise!

ARGUMENT 10

CURE FOR HERESY

14. *“If any one does not hearken to our Word through the epistle, spot him; have no fellowship with him, in order that he may be ashamed.”* All the doctrines of grace in the Bible are beautifully focalized in the apostolical epistles. Consequently these plain, concise, inspired letters give you a miniature Bible, infinitely to your convenience and profit. Suppose this law were enforced in the Churches of the present day, what would become of bejeweled, gaudily-appareled, frolicking anti-holiness members? They would move out like a landslide, leaving the faithful few, who, like Zacharias and Elisabeth, *“are walking in all the commandments and ordinances blameless.”* We never can redeem the Church from sin, Satan, and hell, unless we enforce New Testament discipline. It is the imperative duty of every pastor this day to read these letters to every member, and see that they accept them, and govern their lives accordingly, with a distinct understanding that all recusants and delinquents forfeit their membership. Paul even obligated the Thessalonians, in a sacred oath, to read these letters to every member. What will the pastors do in judgment-

day, when God shall hold them to a strict account for the souls committed to their care, whom they, by willful neglect of known duty, have permitted to slip through their fingers into hell? Here we see a plain commandment in the New Testament, to withhold fellowship from every brother and sister who do not hearken to the plain Word of God revealed in the Bible.

15. *“Do not treat him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.”* This excommunicated man is your brother in Adam, and may, by the grace of God, become your brother in Christ. Hence, when non-fellowshipped for disobedience, do not give him up, but pray for him and admonish the more faithfully that the Lord may use the severity of Church discipline to convict him and bring him to repentance.

17. These people had been troubled with a false letter by an enemy, bearing Paul’s counterfeit signature. Therefore, when Luke wrote the letters responsive to his dictation, Paul gave his autograph.

18. This benediction is commendable for its beauty, brevity, and grace. Use it freely in the dismissal of your meetings.

APOLOGUE

This letter is really supplementary to the first, and, like it, flooded with Paul's favorite themes; *i.e.*, entire sanctification and the Lord's return to the earth; meanwhile the apostle interjects some profoundly stirring prophecies, relative to the coming of the Lord, precedent and concomitant events. However, those prophecies relative to the great Constantinian apostasy and the revelation of the "*Man of sin*" have already been fulfilled, and no longer intervene between us and the greatest and most notable event of the world's history; *i.e.*, the return of the glorified Jesus to judge the wicked, take up his saints, and be crowned king of all nations, to reign forever. Therefore, we should all be robed and ready on our watch-towers, looking out for our glorious King.