

AN EXPOSITION, WITH PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS, OF

THE SECOND EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL TO

THE THESSALONIANS

The second epistle to the Thessalonians was written soon after the first. The apostle was told that, from some expressions in his first letter, many expected the second coming of Christ was at hand, and that the day of judgment would arrive in their time. Some of these neglected their worldly duties. St. Paul wrote again to correct their error, which hindered the spread of the gospel. He had written agreeably to the words of the prophets of the Old Testament; and he tells them there were many counsels of the Most High yet to be fulfilled, before that day of the Lord should come, though, because it is sure, he had spoken of it as near. The subject led to a remarkable foretelling, of some of the future events which were to take place in the after-ages of the Christian church, and which show the prophetic spirit the apostle possessed.

CHAPTER 1

The apostle blesses God for the growing state of the love and patience of the Thessalonians. (1-4) And encourages them to persevere under all their sufferings for Christ, considering his coming at the great day of account. (5-12)

~~500~~ 2 Thessalonians 1:1

Vs. 1-4: Where there is the truth of grace, there will be an increase of it. The path of the just is as the shining light, which shines more and more unto the perfect day. And where there is the increase of grace, God must have all the glory. Where faith grows, love will abound, for faith works by love. It shows faith and patience, such as may be proposed as a pattern for others, when trials from God, and persecutions from men, quicken the

exercise of those graces; for the patience and faith of which the apostle gloried, bore them up, and enabled them to endure all their tribulations.

2 Thessalonians 1:5

Vs. 5-10: Religion, if worth anything, is worth every thing; and those have no religion, or none worth having, or know not how to value it, cannot find their hearts to suffer for it. We cannot by all our sufferings, any more than by our services, merit heaven; but by our patience under sufferings, we are prepared for the promised joy. Nothing more strongly marks a man for eternal ruin, than a spirit of persecution and enmity to the name and people of God. God will trouble those that trouble his people. And there is a rest for the people of God; a rest from sin and sorrow. The certainty of future recompense is proved by the righteousness of God. The thoughts of this should be terrible to wicked men, and support the righteous. Faith, looking to the great day, is enabled partly to understand the book of providence, which appears confused to unbelievers. The Lord Jesus will in that day appear from heaven. He will come in the glory and power of the upper world. His light will be piercing, and his power consuming, to all who in that day shall be found as chaff. This appearance will be terrible to those that know not God, especially to those who rebel against revelation, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the great crime of multitudes, the gospel is revealed, and they will not believe it; or if they pretend to believe, they will not obey it. Believing the truths of the gospel, is in order to our obeying the precepts of the gospel. Though sinners may be long spared, they will be punished at last. They did sin's work, and must receive sin's wages. Here God punishes sinners by creatures as instruments; but then, it will be destruction from the Almighty; and who knows the power of his anger? It will be a joyful day to some, to the saints, to those who believe and obey the gospel. In that bright and blessed day, Christ Jesus will be glorified and admired by his saints. And Christ will be glorified and admired in them. His grace and power will be shown, when it shall appear what he has purchased for, and wrought in, and bestowed upon those who believe in him. Lord, if the glory put upon thy saints shall be thus admired, how much more shalt thou be admired, as the Bestower of that glory! The glory of thy justice in the damnation of the wicked will be admired, but not as the glory of thy mercy in the salvation of believers. How will this strike the adoring angels with holy admiration,

and transport thy admiring saints with eternal rapture! The meanest believer shall enjoy more than the most enlarged heart can imagine while we are here; Christ will be admired in all those that believe, the meanest believer not excepted.

 **2 Thessalonians 1:11**

Vs. 11, 12: Believing thoughts and expectations of the second coming of Christ should lead us to pray to God more, for ourselves and others. If there is any good in us, it is owing to the good pleasure of his goodness, and therefore it is called grace. There are many purposes of grace and goodwill in God toward his people, and the apostle prays that God would complete in them the work of faith with power. This is to their doing every other good work. The power of God not only begins, but carries on the work of faith. And this is the great end and design of the grace of our God and Lord Jesus Christ, which is made known to us, and wrought in us.

CHAPTER 2

Cautions against the error that the time of Christ's coming was just at hand. There would first be a general apostasy from the faith, and a revealing of the antichristian man of sin. (1-4) His destruction, and that of those who obey him. (5-12) The security of the Thessalonians from apostasy; an exhortation to steadfastness, and prayer for them. (13-17)

2 Thessalonians 2:1

Vs. 1-4: If errors arise among Christians, we should set them right; and good men will be careful to suppress errors which rise from mistaking their words and actions. We have a cunning adversary, who watches to do mischief, and will promote errors, even by the words of Scripture. Whatever uncertainty we are in, or whatever mistakes may arise about the time of Christ's coming, that coming itself is certain. This has been the faith and hope of all Christians, in all ages of the church; it was the faith and hope of the Old Testament saints. All believers shall be gathered together to Christ, to be with him, and to be happy in his presence for ever. We should firmly believe the second coming of Christ; but there was danger lest the Thessalonians, being mistaken as to the time, should question the truth or certainty of the thing itself. False doctrines are like the winds that toss the water to and fro; and they unsettle the minds of men, which are as unstable as water. It is enough for us to know that our Lord will come, and will gather all his saints unto him. A reason why they should not expect the coming of Christ, as at hand, is given. There would be a general falling away first, such as would occasion the rise of antichrist, that man of sin. There have been great disputes who or what is intended by this man of sin and son of perdition. The man of sin not only practices wickedness, but also promotes and commands sin and wickedness in others; and is the son of perdition, because he is devoted to certain destruction, and is the instrument to destroy many others, both in soul and body. As God was in the temple of old, and worshipped there, and is in and with his church now; so the antichrist here mentioned, is a usurper of God's authority in the Christian church, who claims Divine honors.

2 Thessalonians 2:5

Vs. 5-12: Something hindered or withheld the man of sin. It is supposed to be the power of the Roman empire, which the apostle did not mention more plainly at that time. Corruption of doctrine and worship came in by degrees, and the usurping of power was gradual; thus the mystery of iniquity prevailed. Superstition and idolatry were advanced by pretended devotion, and bigotry and persecution were promoted by pretended zeal for God and his glory. This mystery of iniquity was even then begun; while the apostles were yet living, persons pretended zeal for Christ, but really opposed him. The fall or ruin of the antichristian state is declared. The pure word of God, with the Spirit of God, will discover this mystery of iniquity, and in due time it shall be destroyed by the brightness of Christ's coming. Signs and wonders, visions and miracles, are pretended; but they are false signs to support false doctrines; and lying wonders, or only pretended miracles, to cheat the people; and the diabolical deceits with which the antichristian state has been supported, are notorious. The persons are described, who are his willing subjects. Their sin is this; They did not love the truth, and therefore did not believe it; and they were pleased with false notions. God leaves them to themselves, then sin will follow of course, and spiritual judgments here, and eternal punishments hereafter. These prophecies have, in a great measure, come to pass, and confirm the truth of the Scriptures. This passage exactly agrees with the system of popery, as it prevails in the Romish church, and under the Romish popes. But though the son of perdition has been revealed, though he has opposed and exalted himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; and has spoken and acted as if he were a God upon earth, and has proclaimed his insolent pride, and supported his delusions, by lying miracles and all kinds of frauds; still the Lord has not yet fully destroyed him with the brightness of his coming; that and other prophecies remain to be fulfilled before the end shall come.

2 Thessalonians 2:13

Vs. 13-15: When we hear of the apostasy of many, it is a great comfort and joy, that there is a remnant according to the election of grace, which does and shall persevere; especially we should rejoice, if we have reason to hope that we are of that number. The preservation of the saints, is because

God loved them with an everlasting love, from the beginning of the world. The end and the means must not be separated. Faith and holiness must be joined together as well as holiness and happiness. The outward call of God is by the gospel; and this is rendered effectual by the inward working of the Spirit. The belief of the truth brings the sinner to rely on Christ, and so to love and obey him; it is sealed by the Holy Spirit upon his heart. We have no certain proof of any thing having been delivered by the apostles, more than what we find contained in the Holy Scriptures. Let us then stand fast in the doctrines taught by the apostles, and reject all additions, and vain traditions.

 **2 Thessalonians 2:16**

Vs. 16, 17: We may and should direct our prayers, not only to God the Father, through our Lord Jesus Christ, but also to our Lord Jesus Christ himself. And we should pray in his name unto God, not only as his Father, but as our Father in and through him. The love of God in Christ Jesus, is the spring and fountain of all the good we have or hope for. There is good reason for strong consolations, because the saints have good hope through grace. The free grace and mercy of God are what they hope for, and what their hopes are founded on, and not any worth or merit of their own. The more pleasure we take in the word, and works, and ways of God, the more likely we shall be to persevere therein. But, if we are wavering in faith, and of a doubtful mind, halting and faltering in our duty, no wonder that we are strangers to the joys of religion.

CHAPTER 3

The apostle expresses confidence in the Thessalonians, and prays for them. (1-5) He charges them to withdraw from disorderly walkers, particularly from the lazy and busybodies. (6-15) And concludes with a prayer for them, and a greeting. (16-18)

2 Thessalonians 3:1

Vs. 1-5: Those who are far apart still may meet together at the throne of grace; and those not able to do or receive any other kindness, may in this way do and receive real and very great kindness. Enemies to the preaching of the gospel, and persecutors of its faithful preachers, are unreasonable and wicked men. Many do not believe the gospel; and no wonder if such are restless and show malice in their endeavors to oppose it. The evil of sin is the greatest evil, but there are other evils we need to be preserved from, and we have encouragement to depend upon the grace of God. When once the promise is made, the performance is sure and certain. The apostle had confidence in them, but that was founded upon his confidence in God; for there is otherwise no confidence in man. He prays for them for spiritual blessings. It is our sin and our misery, that we place our affections upon wrong objects. There is not true love of God, without faith in Jesus Christ. If, by the special grace of God, we have that faith which multitudes have not, we should earnestly pray that we may be enabled, without reserve, to obey his commands, and that we may be enabled, without reserve, to the love of God, and the patience of Christ.

2 Thessalonians 3:6

Vs. 6-15: Those who have received the gospel, are to live according to the gospel. Such as could work, and would not, were not to be maintained in idleness. Christianity is not to countenance slothfulness, which would consume what is meant to encourage the industrious, and to support the sick and afflicted. Industry in our callings as men, is a duty required by our calling as Christians. But some expected to be maintained in idleness, and indulged a curious and conceited temper. They meddled with the concerns of others, and did much harm. It is a great error and abuse of religion, to make it a cloak for idleness or any other sin. The servant who waits for the

coming of his Lord aright, must be working as his Lord has commanded. If we are idle, the devil and a corrupt heart will soon find us somewhat to do. The mind of man is a busy thing; if it is not employed in doing good, it will be doing evil. It is an excellent, but rare union, to be active in our own business, yet quiet as to other people's. If any refused to labor with quietness, they were to note him with censure, and to separate from his company, yet they were to seek his good by loving admonitions. The Lord is with you while you are with him. Hold on your way, and hold on to the end. We must never give over, or tire in our work. It will be time enough to rest when we come to heaven.

 **2 Thessalonians 3:16**

Vs. 16-18: The apostle prays for the Thessalonians. And let us desire the same blessings for ourselves and our friends. Peace with God. This peace is desired for them always, or in every thing. Peace by all means; in every way; that, as they enjoyed the means of grace, they might use all methods to secure peace. We need nothing more to make us safe and happy, nor can we desire any thing better for ourselves and our friends, than to have God's gracious presence with us and them. No matter where we are, if God be with us; nor who is absent, if God be present. It is through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that we hope to have peace with God, and to enjoy the presence of God. This grace is all in all to make us happy; though we wish ever so much to others, there remains enough for ourselves.