



THE BOOK OF 2 THESSALONIANS



Mike Glover

INTRODUCTION

For the background information, date time, author etc. please go to the study of 1 Thessalonians.

CHAPTER 1

“Paul, Silas and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ”. 2 Thessalonians 1:1

As we saw in our introduction to the Thessalonian letters, 1 Thessalonians was written shortly after the establishment of the church in Thessalonica, [Acts 17:1-9](#), around 50-52 A.D. We also saw that the coming of Christ was mentioned in each chapter. The second letter appears to have been written just a few months, perhaps a year later whilst Paul was in Corinth.

We know that he stayed in Corinth for eighteen months, [Acts 18:11](#) and so Paul can have written the first letter at the beginning of his stay, and written the second letter toward the end of his stay, around 53 A.D.

2 Thessalonians contains three short chapters and again the theme of the return of Christ runs throughout. After reading through 2 Thessalonians you would have noticed that the church in Thessalonica seemed to remain strong in the Lord despite the persecution they were receiving, [2 Thessalonians 1:3-4](#), even though there was a lot of misunderstanding concerning Jesus' return.

Some were troubled by false reports concerning the Lord's return, [2 Thessalonians 2:1-2](#) and there were other members who simply thought that Jesus' return was so imminent, they actually stopped working because they thought they didn't have to work anymore, [2 Thessalonians 3:11-12](#).

Paul wanted to encourage the saints in a time of persecution whilst also warning them about the many false conceptions concerning the Lord's return and so inform the church on what they should do in terms of discipline, about those who refuse to work.

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

As Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians and most of his letters, along with much more, grace and peace are what a Christian has when they are in Christ. χάρις ‘charis’ which is the Greek word for ‘grace’ is that unmerited favour that we receive from God; it cannot be earned, deserved or merited. As we don't have anything to pay for it, it is a gift from God. Grace is God's active favour by which he bestows his greatest gift on those who deserve the greatest punishment. Remember grace isn't just about saving us, grace also sustains us.

εἰρήνη ‘eirene’ is the Greek word for ‘peace’, in Hebrew, it would be ‘shalom,’ which is what all Christians have because of that grace that God gives us. It means a lot more than just being in the absence of trouble in our lives although that would be included, it also means being at peace within ourselves, with God and our fellow man.

Remember that grace and peace both come from God and cannot be found anywhere else. [1 Peter 5:10](#) reminds us that God is the Father of grace and [Hebrews 13:20](#) reminds us that God is a God of peace. We know that grace and truth are from Christ according to [John 1:17](#) and Jesus Himself is our peace according to [Ephesians 2:14](#). As Paul writes ‘from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ’, he reminds us again that grace and peace ultimately come from God above.

“We ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love all of you have for one another is increasing. Therefore, among God's churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring.” 2 Thessalonians 1:3-4

Ask yourself, when was the last time you stopped to thank God for your brothers and sisters in Christ? If it's been a while why not stop what you're doing and do so now.

Paul says he 'ought always to thank God,' the KJV uses the word 'bound' which is the Greek word ὀφείλω 'opheilo' and this carries with it the idea of being under obligation. In other words, he felt it was his duty to thank God for his brothers and sisters in Thessalonica. Why? Because their faith and love were growing.

Remember that Paul had already encouraged them in this way back in 1 Thessalonians 1:3 and so now their faith was growing more and more, in other words, they were growing beyond measure.

They had come so far in the Christian faith in such a short time, this very young church, full of young Christians had turned from idols to serve the living, true God and they were growing. 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10. Their growth was also an answered prayer of Paul's 1 Thessalonians 3:12, no wonder he thanked God.

Concerning the words faith and love Lightfoot writes: "The words hyperauxanei and pleonaxei are carefully chosen; the former implying an internal, organic growth as of a tree; the other a diffusive, or expansive character, as of a flood irrigating the land" (Notes on the Epistles of Paul, p. 98.)

'Trails' is the Greek word θλίψεις 'thlipsis' and in general terms means any trials or troubles they might meet. 'Persecutions' is the Greek word διωγμός 'diogmois' which are assaults made because of their Christian convictions.

And so this church in Thessalonica was growing and Paul was so happy about it, he couldn't help but talk about them to other churches, 1 Thessalonians 8-9, in fact, he boasted about them, he boasted about their perseverance and their faith amid persecution.

Now remember that this congregation was born in tribulation, Acts 17:1-9 and this persecution obviously continued but they remained faithful and were continuing to grow, 2 Thessalonians 1:4 / 1 Thessalonians 1:3.

If anyone ever promised you, 'become a Christian and your life will be free from problems' they have told you a lie. There are many Christians who became Christians under the false illusion that their lives will be free from trials and persecution and sadly when difficult times come, they simply fall away. Jesus Himself warned His disciples that difficult times would come, John 15:19-20 / John 16:33, the apostles themselves went on to warn other Christians that difficult times would come, Acts 14:22 / 1 Thessalonians 3:4 / 2 Timothy 3:12.

And so Christians today should also expect difficult times, after all, we're still living in a world that is filled with sin and evil and sometimes we have to suffer the consequences of the choices which others have made and ultimately because we have an enemy who seeks nothing less than to destroy us, 1 Peter 5:8-9.

Again, we should be thankful to God for the times when our lives are free from trials and persecution but at the same time, we should always be prepared for those times.

It's especially during those difficult times that faith, love and patience are needed. Our faith is that incredibly strong conviction of things which are unseen, Hebrews 11:1, knowing that God is in control and trusting Him to deliver us from those difficult times, Job 19:25-27 / Habakkuk 3:17-19.

Our love for each other is the love which was taught to us by God Himself, 1 Thessalonians 4:9, and so it's through the example of the Father's love 1 John 4:9-11 and the example of Jesus' love, 1 John 3:16 that love should increase more and more, 2 Thessalonians 1:3 / 1 Thessalonians 4:10 / 1 Thessalonians 3:12, this is the kind of sacrificial love that helps us in difficult times.

In other words, when hard times come we will be surrounded by brotherly love which will help us through those times. We also need to have patience during difficult times, this patience is based upon the hope we have, Romans 8:25, and is always strengthened when we remember others who went through hard times and when we keep our focus on Jesus, Hebrews 12:1-3. Patience makes us stronger and makes us complete, James 1:3-4.

“All this is evidence that God’s judgment is right, and as a result, you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering. God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marvelled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you.” 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10

Paul continues to tell us for those who have remained faithful and patient through those difficult times, 2 Thessalonians 1:4, that faith and patience are evidence of God’s righteous judgment to come and because we have endured trials and persecution we have been counted as worthy of the kingdom of God.

Remember that it is God who qualifies us for the kingdom, Colossians 1:12 and it is God who perfects, establishes, strengthens and settles us, 1 Peter 5:10. It is part of God’s righteous judgment to use difficult times to bring His own people to perfection, Hebrews 12:5-10.

But notice God’s protection of His own, Paul says that God will repay those who trouble His people, trouble will come upon them, which will be a righteous payment, 2 Thessalonians 1:6 / Romans 2:4-11.

Whilst those who cause trouble for Christians receive trouble in return Christians will receive relief or rest depending on your translation, the same relief enjoyed by Paul, Silas and Timothy. Also, notice that both the rest and the tribulation will be given at this time, John 5:28-29.

Take a moment to read the following passages and take a moment to think about what they are saying to those who go through persecution. Revelation 14:13 / 2 Timothy 2:12 / Romans 8:18 / Romans 12:19-21.

When will this relief be given to persecuted Christians?

When the Lord is revealed from heaven, 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, which as we know has been the theme of both letters to the Thessalonians. The word ‘revealed’ is the Greek word ἀποκάλυψις ‘apokalupsis’ which simply means an unfolding or uncovering. It is the revelation of a person who, at the present, is concealed.

Right now, Jesus is in heaven and so He is hidden from the world’s view, but one day He will be revealed by appearing, see also Colossians 3:1-4 / Titus 2:13 / Hebrews 9:28.

The use of the words, ‘blazing fire’ or ‘flaming fire’ as some translations have it, are used to indicate the Lord’s holiness which is manifested in judgement. Read the following passages, Exodus 3:2 / Exodus 19:16-20 / Isaiah 29:6 / Isaiah 66:15-16 / Psalms 50:3 / Psalms 97:3.

The apostle Paul reminds us that when Jesus is revealed from heaven He is not coming on His own, He will come with His mighty angels, Psalms 103:20. Take a moment to read the following passages which teach us the same thing. Matthew 16:27 / Matthew 24:31 / Matthew 25:31 / Mark 8:38 / Luke 9:26 / 1 Thessalonians 4:16.

Why are the angels involved in His coming?

Their function seems to be twofold: first, to gather the weeds, binding them in bundles to be burned, secondly, they will also gather the wheat into the Lord’s barn. Matthew 13:24-30 / Matthew 13:37-43.

Why is Jesus coming according to the text?

Punishment, the KJV uses the word ‘vengeance’ and we know that vengeance belongs only to God, Deuteronomy 32:35 / Romans 12:19-21 and remember what we saw in 2 Thessalonians 1:6, it is a righteous thing for God repay those who trouble Christians.

But exactly who is it that will be punished?

Those who don’t know God, Matthew 25:1-12 / Romans 1:18-23 and those who haven’t obeyed the Gospel of Jesus. Matthew 7:21-23 / Revelation 22:14-15. But what exactly is the Gospel?

The Greek word for Gospel is εὐαγγέλιον ‘euaggelion’ which simply means ‘a good message’. But what exactly is that good message? Romans 1:16-17 / 1 Corinthians 15:1-4.

The good message is simply the good news concerning Jesus' life, death, burial and resurrection, all of which point us to live by faith so we can be made right with God through faith and receive eternal life.

But as we know not everyone knows God because they don't want to know God and not everyone will do what He asks and so it is those people who will be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord Matthew 25:30 / Matthew 25:41, and from the glory of His power.

In other words, there will be a penalty to pay for all the trouble they caused Christians, for not knowing God, and for not doing as He asks.

Now some religious people have concluded from this verse that the Bible teaches that the punishment will be annihilation, a going out of existence, being burned into nothingness, but this view is contrary to the Greek word translated "destruction" and to other Scriptural teaching 1 Corinthians 5:5 / 1 Thessalonians 5:3 / 1 Timothy 6:9.

The Greek word for destruction is the word ὄλεθρος 'olethros' which literally means 'a loss of wellbeing'. Mark 9:43-48 / Matthew 25:41 / Matthew 25:46 / Revelation 14:9-11.

The very fact that this destruction is 'everlasting' shows that it does not amount to 'annihilation' or 'going out of existence'.

On the contrary, it indicates an existence 'away from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might'. This banishment from loving fellowship with Christ implies expulsion from 'the glory (radiant splendour) of his might' as it is manifested in the salvation of the saints. (New Testament commentary 1&2 Thessalonians William Hendrickson Page 160-161.)

Nobody knows when Jesus will return although many have speculated and tried to calculate the exact date, but when He does come its distinguishing characteristic will be its glory. The wicked will taste God's vengeance and the saints will reflect His glory. 2 Thessalonians 1:10 / 1 John 3:2 / Philippians 3:20 / Romans 8:18.

At the moment many people reject Him, despise Him, and use His name in vain but when He returns everyone will bow down and confess His name, Philippians 2:9-11.

Jesus will be glorified in His saints simply because of what He accomplished through His life, death, resurrection and what He is doing now in heaven.

In other words, because of His power to change people's rebellious lives around to lives that are holy and true. Philippians 1:20 / 1 Peter 2:9. Not only will Jesus be glorified in us but He will also be 'marvelled at' or held in admiration by those who believe, 1 Thessalonians 2:13.

And so, in summary, judgement day is coming 2 Corinthians 5:10, which will be a great, long-awaited day for Christians, it will be a time of relief, rest, for those who have remained faithful whilst being supported by their brethren in love and have been patient in their trials and persecution for the sake of the kingdom of God. It will be a time to enter our eternal glory in which Jesus Himself will be glorified.

For those who aren't Christians, this will be a terrible day, a day of vengeance which will be their just payment for the troubles they brought upon God's people, for not knowing God or obeying the Gospel. It will be a time of punishment that lasts forever, out of the presence and power of our Lord Jesus.

"With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may bring to fruition your every desire for goodness and your every deed prompted by faith. We pray this so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ." 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12

There is no doubt that the apostles were men of prayer and here they inform the church in Thessalonica what their prayer is, first, that 'God would make them worthy of His calling' 2 Thessalonians 2:14 / Philippians 1:27 / Ephesians 4:1

Secondly that ‘by his power he may bring to fruition your every desire for goodness’ 1 Thessalonians 1:3.

Thirdly ‘their every deed prompted by faith.’

We have to remember that the blessings we receive from God and God’s presence with them are based upon our faithful activity. James 2:24 / Galatians 5:16 / Hebrews 11.

This is important to remember because we don’t get God’s blessings and His presence in our lives simply because we do good deeds, Ephesians 2:9.

The reason for these prayers is simply to allow Jesus to be gloried in them as Christians, John 15:1-8 / Ephesians 3:21 / Romans 1:20-22, in other words, Paul wanted them to glorify God and His Son through their faith and deeds.

Paul began this chapter with an allusion to grace and he closes the chapter on the same note.

CHAPTER 2

“Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers and sisters, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by the teaching allegedly from us—whether by a prophecy or by word of mouth or by letter—asserting that the day of the Lord has already come.” 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2

In some way, Paul had learned that the return of the Lord had become the subject of intense debate in Thessalonica. It is possible that they had written to him because the Thessalonian church had become disturbed and confused by what they had been hearing concerning the Lord’s return.

Some did not believe that Jesus would return, others said that He had returned already and others were asserting that His return was imminent.

What is more, among those who were circulating these conflicting statements, some had attempted to give authority and weight to what they were saying by using Paul’s name, claiming to be quoting his words, or producing letters that they alleged were written by him.

But as we shall see in the next few verses Paul is going to refute both the false statements and the counterfeit letters, as he attempts to settle the minds of these believers, who had formerly been pagans, 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10, all of these false ideas concerning Jesus’ return by informing them that certain things have to happen first.

“Don’t let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God’s temple, proclaiming himself to be God. Don’t you remember that when I was with you I used to tell you these things? And now you know what is holding him back, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendour of his coming. The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with how Satan works. He will use all sorts of displays of power through signs and wonders that serve the lie, and all the ways that wickedness deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness. 2 Thessalonians 2:3-12

Paul tells us that BEFORE Christ returns there must be first a great rebellion or falling away. The apostle warned the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:29-30 that this would occur AFTER Paul’s death and it would happen from forces within and outside of the church.

Paul also warned Timothy that in latter times some would depart from the faith, 1 Timothy 4:1-2. The apostle Peter also warned the Christians in Asia Minor that there would be false teachers and many Christians would follow their destructive ways, 2 Peter 2:1-2.

What exactly is Paul teaching in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-12?

First of all, notice that Paul uses several expressions and phrases which need to be clarified if we are to understand his teaching.

1. The KJV uses the phrase ‘The mystery of iniquity’ in 2 Thessalonians 2:7 which simply means ‘lawlessness’. The word translated ‘iniquity’ is the Greek word, ἀνομία ‘anomias’, and is made up of ‘a’, which, as a Greek prefix means ‘without’, and ‘nomos’, which means ‘law’. Therefore, iniquity is ‘without law’, hence, ‘lawlessness’. This ‘anomia’, is the condition or state of being ‘without law’ and is the result of being ‘a theos’, and this is ‘without God’, or ‘atheist’.

2. What is lawlessness?

1 John 3:4 defines lawlessness when it states: ‘everyone who practises sin does lawlessness, and lawlessness is sin.’ Notice that this refers to ‘sin’ as a way of life, as a practice, and not as an isolated sinful act. And so, the ‘mystery of lawlessness’ is ‘the mystery of sin’.

3. What is the meaning of the word ‘Mystery’?

A word from one language sometimes has a different meaning when translated into another language. The Greek word μυστήριον ‘musterion’ certainly looks like our English word ‘mystery’, but its New Testament meaning is very different.

We think of a ‘mystery’ as something secret or hidden; something which cannot be understood; something beyond comprehension. But in Greek, the word describes something hidden, which has been revealed to and is understood by, those who have undergone initiation into the society or cult.

So, we might ask the question, ‘why does God tolerate sin?’ because this is a question often asked, and we can well imagine these former pagans in Thessalonica wondering why God does not destroy the one who is the ‘Father of lies’, the Devil, or Satan, who is behind all the wickedness the world has ever seen.

Probably, when the young Christians in Thessalonica, who had formerly been pagans, worshipping idols, 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10, received Paul’s two letters in 50-51 A.D., they had little understanding, of the history of God’s great plan of redemption, which we now know was being worked out throughout Old Testament times, and eventually culminated in the coming of Christ into the world as God’s Lamb, to ‘take away the sin of the world’, John 1:29

They had doubtlessly learned that the one true God, about whom they now worshipped, is all-powerful and all-knowing, and they may well have asked the questions which have been asked a countless number of times; why does God permit evil to exist? Why does He not destroy Satan?

Paul then attempts to resolve his readers’ confusion about the Coming of Christ and to help them to understand the working out of God’s plan of salvation. His explanation will not diminish the hardship these early Christians would encounter, as the persecution of the church spread through the Roman world, but it would, at the very least, enable them to recognize that the final outcome in the conflict between Good and Evil, lies in the hands of God, and will result in the victory of truth and righteousness.

Now notice that firstly in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 Paul does not attempt to predict the date of Christ’s return, but he does reveal that, before that return, certain events of tremendous significance must take place, and the first thing he tells

them is that, BEFORE the Lord returns, there will be what he describes as ‘the falling away’, or ‘THE apostasy’, or ‘THE rebellion’.

It is important to notice that the word used here in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 is the Greek word ἀποστασία ‘apostasia’, which, in the A.V., has not been translated, but has been ‘transliterated’, that is, turned into English, to give us the word ‘apostasy’. And notice, also, that the word is prefaced by the definite article; ‘the’, giving us ‘the apostasy’. In the course of the church’s history there have been several departures from ‘the faith,’ ‘fallings away’ followed by ‘revivals’, but nothing as significant as the ‘THE falling away’, which the Lord says must happen BEFORE His Return. This seems to be in line with the observation of the Lord Jesus Himself when He asked, the question in Luke 18:8 “When the Son of Man comes, will he find (the) faith on the earth?”

Secondly, Paul warns the church about someone. The Greek might be rendered, ‘the embodiment of evil,’ or, ‘the personification of evil’ which indicated that some person is intended here whom he variously describes as, that ‘man of sin’, ‘the son of perdition’, ‘that lawless one’, which indicated that some person is intended here.

Thirdly, his claims, his methods and also his end, are all revealed.

- a. He opposes God.
- b. He exalts himself above God.
- c. He sits ‘in the temple of God’.
- d. He shows himself as God.
- e. To achieve his goal, he performs ‘signs and lying wonders’.

But and this is important, He is called ‘the son of destruction or perdition’, and that word, ‘perdition’ indicated that he is ‘doomed to destruction’.

In 2 Thessalonians 2:5, we have an ‘aside,’ a comment; Paul reminds them that he told them this when he was with them. In 2 Thessalonians 2:6 means, “So now you know what is holding him back until the time comes for him to be revealed.”

There is great comfort in this statement because it means that the manifestation of this wicked character is not unexpected, and, furthermore, it is under the control of God, Who will allow him to make his appearance at the time of God’s choosing!

2 Thessalonians 2:7 virtually says that we see sin already at work in the world, and ‘He Who permits it,’ that is God Himself, will allow it to continue under His ‘permissive will’ until this evil being made his appearance, but the Lord will return and ‘the Lawless One’ will be ‘consumed’, ‘destroyed’, ‘annihilated’ by ‘the breath of His mouth’ i.e., ‘the Word of Christ, the Sword of the Spirit’.

Remember that these details do not come from Paul himself. This is the Holy Spirit’s revelation of what will happen at the end of the age.

1 John 2:18 refers to ‘antichrist’ and ‘the antichrist’, are Satan and the lawless man of 2 Thessalonians 2 the same? Are the events described in 2 Thessalonians 2 in the future and do some Christians face a terrible persecution? Are all people who deny the Sonship and incarnation of Jesus to be regarded as antichrists, or is the term reserved for New Testament Gnosticism and Docetism?

If we’re going to answer these questions let’s first make a statement regarding 1 John 2:18. We must notice that nowhere does John use the term ‘The Antichrist’.

In fact, in the New Testament Scriptures the word ἀντίχριστος ‘antichristos’ is unique to John’s first and second letters, and the definite article is not found in the Greek text. ‘You have heard that antichrist comes’, the word simply means ‘against Christ’, and it is used in an adjectival sense.

In other words, this is not a person or an individual, and it is not used as a title, but defines an attitude or a disposition that rejects Christ. This becomes evident if we summarize what John wrote.

John in his first letter, 1 John 2:18, introduces the subject:

1. ‘You have heard’, in these words, he implies that he is reminding them of something about which they had already been fore-warned.
2. ‘That antichrist is coming’. Notice that he uses the future tense.
3. ‘Even now there are many antichrists’, he reveals that this opposition to Christ already exists. Paul endorses this in 2 Thessalonians 2:7.
4. John then defined the word ‘antichrist’ in terms that cannot be misunderstood. ‘He, ‘anyone’ is antichrist, who denies the Father and the Son’.

This definition is expanded in 2 John 7 of his second letter, where he declared that ‘many deceivers have gone out into the world’, that is, people ‘who do not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh: any such person is a deceiver and antichrist’.

So, according to the literal definition of the word, ‘antichristos’ means contra, or against Christ. It does not describe one who claims to be the Christ or who assumes the authority of the Christ but identifies one who denies the very identity of Christ and His authority. The Lord himself said, ‘He who is not with me is against me’ in Matthew 12:30

In fact, John did not use the word ψευδόχριστος ‘pseudochristos’ in referring to those whom he described as ‘antichrist’. He was not writing about ‘false Christs’ nor was he accusing these people of claiming to be Christ.

According to Matthew 24:24 and Mark 13:22, ‘pseudochristos’ was the term used by the Lord Himself in answering His disciples’ questions about the destruction of the Temple.

How, then, has the concept of ‘The Antichrist’ arisen? Why has this attitude of opposition to Christ become ‘personified’?

To find the answer to this question it is necessary to go back to the Old Testament scriptures. After the Babylonian captivity there grew up among the Jews a belief that declared that, at some time in the future, someone or some power, would come to wage war against the people of God. They believed that this enemy of God’s people would appear before the coming of the Messiah, and would be defeated by ‘the Coming One,’ i.e., the Messiah.

There are several passages, notably in the Book of Daniel, which relate to the future of the Kingdom of Judah after the captivity and which contain references to this coming conflict and the one who would instigate it. Daniel 7:19ff / Daniel 8:20 / Daniel 8:24 / Daniel 11:36ff.

It is surely not difficult, then, to appreciate that, the early Christians, and the Jewish Christians in particular who were certainly familiar with the Old Covenant Scriptures and who recognised themselves as the truly spiritual people of God, would find it easy to relate to this idea.

When Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians, he knew that his readers were concerned about the Lord’s return, believing that it was imminent. But, in chapter 2, he points out that the return of the Christ will be preceded by a falling away from the faith, and by the revelation ἀποκάλυψις ‘apokalupsis’ of ‘the Man of Sin’, whom he further describes as ‘the son of perdition’. 2 Thessalonians 2:3. However, when we try to identify this ‘man of sin’, we run into difficulties!

Are we to look for an evil person or an evil system or organisation?

We may immediately rule out the notion that a system or organisation is indicated because Paul said that ‘the son of perdition’ would be identified by his conduct.

Notice, first that [2 Thessalonians 2:3](#) requires the recognition of a human being who is described as ‘that man of sin’. Notice, also, that personal pronouns are used; ‘he’, ‘himself’, and ‘his’; because they indicate an individual. Notice that the manner in which he behaves is that of a human despot ‘He exalts himself’. According to the A.V. ‘He, as God, sitteth in the Temple of God showing himself that he is God’ but in fact, the words ‘as God’ are not in the Greek text. The expression used is ἐστὶ ‘esti’ θεός ‘theos’ which means ‘as a god’. The original Greek is much more vivid in bringing out the terrible arrogance with which he presents himself. He assumes the attitude and posture of a god.

In fact, our English translation does not bring out the appalling blasphemous attitude of this ‘Man of Sin’. ‘He will oppose’, the word means to exalt, ‘elevate’ himself above every so-called ‘god’ or object of worship.

‘He will seat himself in the temple of God’. The word ‘naon’ which is translated as ‘temple’ does not describe the whole temple complex. It describes the ‘holy place’ or ‘the holy of holies’, the sanctuary. And the word καθίζω ‘kathizo’ means ‘sitting,’ ‘taking his seat’, suggesting the arrogant manner with which he behaves.

We should also notice that this evil being comes ‘into’ the temple, not ‘in’ the temple. It conveys the thought of ‘intrusion’ and emphasizes the intense profanity of his conduct. Not only does he not enter the temple, but forcing his way into the very heart of the temple, into its most holy places.

He will claim to be God. Although not himself Satan, he will be the tool of Satan, since his coming would be ‘by the activity of Satan’. [2 Thessalonians 2:9](#). We noted earlier that believers of the New Testament period would be familiar with the events of the Inter-Testamental Period, when the Jews were opposed by Antiochus 4th of Syria, who gave himself the title ‘Antiochus Epiphanes’, ‘Antiochus the Brightness’.

As you will see from the Daniel references already given, Paul’s description of the ‘Man of Sin’ follows very closely the description given of the Syrian tyrant.

We suggest, therefore that these identification marks certainly appear to point to an evil individual rather than to an organisation, although, some commentators have suggested a different explanation.

Let us remember that when Paul wrote these things it is understandable that, in the light of the persecution being suffered by the church, these early Christians thought that this was a reference to the power of the Roman Empire, and, even more particularly, to one or other of several Emperors personally responsible for instigating religious persecution.

It was widely known, for instance, that Emperor Caligula had planned to erect an image of himself in the temple in Jerusalem, believing himself to be a god, so the connection was not difficult to make.

But, since, Caligula was assassinated in 41 A.D., and Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians ten years later, Caligula, evil man though he undoubtedly was, could not possibly be the person to whom the passage refers. Paul clearly predicts that this person would make his appearance at some time in the future.

Closer to our own time, the Protestant Reformers were convinced that the occupant of the Vatican throne is the one concerning whom Paul spoke, and no doubt there are still some folk who hold this view.

Let’s summarise the answers to the above questions.

1. Satan and the ‘man of sin’ are not the same person. Satan is nowhere in the Scriptures described in human terms. He is never called a ‘man’. The Man of Sin is his tool.

2. Since the events described by Paul in 2 Thessalonians must happen BEFORE the Lord's return, it is reasonable to believe that there will, indeed, be a future time of persecution, and John is warning his readers that, at some time in the future, there would be an intensification of the rejection of, and opposition to, Christ, such as already existed in his own days.

3. Although it is true that the 'Docetics,' 'doko', which means to seem, denied that the Lord's body was human, and only 'seemed' to be real, and the 'Gnostics' claimed that Jesus was only 'a messenger of the supreme God', sent to bring 'gnosis,' knowledge, the Scriptures make it abundantly clear that anyone who denies the Father and the Son is 'antichrist'. 1 John 2:22, no matter the reason for the denial. After just over 2000 years the situation has not changed. By means of the preaching of the Gospel, the Holy Spirit continues to bear testimony to the fact that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God, and anyone who hears this testimony, understands it but refuses to believe it, is an antichrist and stands under condemnation.

“But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters loved by the Lord, because God chose you as firstfruits to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. So then, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold fast to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter. May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word.” 2 Thessalonians 2:13-17

After clearing up any possible misconceptions about the Lord's return, Paul told the church in Thessalonica that two events must happen BEFORE Christ returns, he told them that a great rebellion must first take place and the man of lawlessness has to be revealed.

Both these events will be the sad end of many Christians, as some would abandon the faith whilst other Christians would be deceived by the man of lawlessness.

But for those Christians who remain faithful, a great blessing would come, the blessing of sharing in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 / 2 Thessalonians 2:14, which was Paul's prayer for the church as he thanked God once again for them, 2 Thessalonians 2:13.

Now remember these are ones, 2 Thessalonians 2:13, who had heard the word proclaimed, they had believed and obeyed that word to the sanctification of their souls. These are not specific individuals chosen, but rather a type of individual.

Those individuals who would love truth and whose hearts are fertile to receive God's word, Luke 8:1-15. These are the individuals who would receive that Word, believe that Word, obey that Word and so be predestined to the adoption of children, Ephesians 1:5.

The Gospel, 2 Thessalonians 2:14, is that good news which is an invitation to the whole world that God wants to have fellowship with His greatest creation, mankind. It's this Good news that provided a way out, or a way of escape from God's coming wrath. 1 Timothy 2:4 / 2 Peter 3:9.

Through the preaching of the Gospel God calls all of mankind and those who believe the preaching of the Gospel are sanctified, set apart by the Holy Spirit in their conversion and so become God's loved ones and part of His elect.

Therefore, 2 Thessalonians 2:15, because of everything he has just said concerning the warning of the great falling away and the dangers which will come from the man of lawlessness, the apostle Paul tells them to stand firm, 1 Corinthians 16:13 / Galatians 6:9 and hold fast to the teachings the apostles gave them. It makes no difference whether the apostles taught verbally or taught through writing, they are both inspired by God. 2 Thessalonians 3:6.

The danger of falling away is a very real danger for every Christian, not only because we've all probably heard of or known someone who has fallen away but the Bible clearly tells us that falling away is a real danger, 2 Peter 2:20-22.

Imagine a husband and wife who are deeply and passionately in love with each other and they go to bed and rise in the morning only to find they don't love one another anymore. It doesn't happen like that, what you find is that love relationship has been taken for granted and over time they discover that they just don't love one another as they did in the beginning.

And so, it's the same with our love relationship with God, we take that relationship with God for granted and over time we find we just don't love Him as we did at first and so falling away indelibly begins to happen. It doesn't happen overnight, it takes time, [Revelation 2:4](#).

In order for us to help ourselves as Christians, we need to continue to do what the very first Christians did in [Acts 2:42](#) and that is 'devote ourselves to the apostle's teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.' Read again [2 Thessalonians 2:16](#) and let it sink in! What an amazing and very powerful verse this is. We are loved by God and we receive comfort from knowing that He loves us and by the blessing of His grace. How much more does God have to do to demonstrate to the world how much He wants to bless everyone?

God and Jesus have already shown their love to all of mankind but it's those Christians who have believed and obeyed the Gospel who recognise this eternal encouragement and good hope for this life and the life after.

You can imagine after all the different theories about Christ's returns and all the false accusations against Paul's teachings, these Christians certainly needed comforting or encouragement as the NIV translates it, [2 Thessalonians 2:17](#) / [1 Thessalonians 4:18](#) / [2 Corinthians 1:3-5](#).

And to be sure that they don't fall away from the faith and don't fall for the deceptions of the man of lawlessness they need to rely on the strength of God in their every good deed and word, [2 Thessalonians 2:17](#) / [1 Thessalonians 3:2](#) / [1 Peter 5:10](#).

Sharing in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ is only made possible with the help of God, as we understand the Father and Son's love for us, this should encourage us eternally as we are reminded of the sacrificial love of God through His Son which gives us hope.

What a comfort that brings to our hearts, as God always wants to encourage us in everything we do and say for His glory. No wonder we should stop and take some time out from our busy lives to give thanks to Him.

CHAPTER 3

INTRODUCTION

"As for other matters, brothers and sisters, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honoured, just as it was with you. And pray that we may be delivered from wicked and evil people, for not everyone has faith. But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one. We have confidence in the Lord that you are doing and will continue to do the things we command. May the Lord direct your hearts into God's love and Christ's perseverance." [2 Thessalonians 3:1-5](#)

As we enter chapter three we see once again that Paul expresses prayers for the saints who meet in Thessalonica, which is something he has done time and time again through these letters.

He requested that they might increase and abound in love, [1 Thessalonians 3:11](#), that the Lord might establish their hearts blameless in holiness, [1 Thessalonians 3:12](#), that God might sanctify them completely, [1 Thessalonians 5:23](#), that God might count them worthy of His calling, [2 Thessalonians 2:11](#), that the name of the Lord might be glorified

in them, and they in Him, 2 Thessalonians 2:12, that Jesus and the Father might comfort their hearts and establish them in every good word and work, 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17. And so not do we need the prayers of those who lead us but we too must be praying for them.

The word ‘pray’ in verse one is present tense in Greek, and it signifies a continuous action. Paul desires that they will continue to pray that ‘the message of the Lord may be spread rapidly and be honoured’.

We know there is power in the Word of God, Romans 1:16 / Ephesians 6:17 / Hebrews 4:12 and we know God’s word converts people, makes wise the simple, rejoices the heart and so much more. We also know that God’s word must be honoured, Acts 13:48 and must be treated with a certain great respect, Psalms 119:97.

The Thessalonian saints were doing just that, 2 Thessalonians 3:1. The word of God had changed their lives and everyone knew about it, people saw it in their lives and heard it from their lips, they practised what they preached, the word of God had truly been planted in their hearts and they were producing fruit. 1 Thessalonians 1:8 / 1 Thessalonians 2:13.

Paul continues to be specific concerning his prayer request, 2 Thessalonians 3:2. We need to understand that there will always be those who oppose truth, it comes from the world and it also comes from within our congregations, 2 Corinthians 11:26.

Remember the persecution that followed the conversion of these brethren, Acts 17:5-10, but there was also opposition from within the church. But despite all this opposition Paul reminds them that ‘the Lord is faithful’, 2 Thessalonians 3:3.

The Christians back then needed to learn the same lesson that Christians today need to learn and that is any promises made by our God are promises which we can have complete confidence. He will deliver the righteous, He will punish the wicked. Deuteronomy 7:9. He will strengthen us, He will protect us from the evil one.

Time and time again Paul has been saying to the church in Thessalonica, be strong because it is God who gives you the strength. It’s God who will protect us from the evil one but we must pray for these things to happen. Matthew 6:13 / Ephesians 6:13 / 1 Peter 5:8 / 2 Peter 2:9.

2 Thessalonians 3:4 is another amazing compliment for this young church, Paul’s confidence wasn’t just in the brethren who were doing what the apostles taught them, 2 Thessalonians 1:3-4, but in the Lord who would help them to do and continue to do what was right, Matthew 10:22 / Galatians 6:9 / 2 Thessalonians 3:13 and do to and continue to do what the apostles had commanded, Matthew 7:21 / John 14:15 / James 1:22-22.

What a beautiful prayer 2 Thessalonians 3:5 is, ‘May the Lord direct your hearts into God’s love and Christ’s perseverance’. But how was the Lord going to do this?

Simply by revelation, in the first century, God revealed Himself in Jesus through the various miracles, wonders and signs, Acts 2:22, but when the time of miracles, wonders and signs had ceased, He revealed it and continues to reveal His heart’s desire for us through His word. Romans 10:17 / James 2:18. Jesus has revealed the way to the Father because He is the Way, John 14:6, and what we call the Bible is God’s complete revelation of Himself to mankind. It’s not enough just to simply seek the Lord to guide our hearts, we need to ask Him to and allow Him to direct our lives out of love for Him, just like David of old did when he prayed for Israel and Solomon, 1 Chronicles 29:18-19, just like Solomon of old did when he prayed for himself and Israel, 1 Kings 8:57-58 and we as Christians today absolutely need God’s help when we are desiring to do what is right and good, Philippians 2:13.

What kind of love has God shown the church in Thessalonica?

1 Thessalonians 4:9 / 2 Thessalonians 1:4. The kind of love that God demonstrated through Jesus, 1 John 4:9-11 / 1 John 3:16-19. The kind of love that Jesus demonstrated to the world, Hebrews 12:1-3 / 1 Peter 2:21-23.

Not only was Paul’s prayer for the Lord to direct their hearts into God’s love, but he also wanted the Lord to direct their hearts into the patience of Christ. When we read the Old Testament, we read time and time again that the Christ

is coming, Matthew through to John declares that the Christ is here, Acts through to Revelation declares that Christ is coming again. We have already established that no one knows when the Lord will return but we do know that He will but in the meantime, we need to be patient. Philippians 3:20.

“In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers and sisters, to keep away from every believer who is idle and disruptive and does not live according to the teaching you received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone’s food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, labouring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you to imitate. For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: “The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat.” We hear that some among you are idle and disruptive. They are not busy; they are busybodies. Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the food they eat. And as for you, brothers and sisters, never tire of doing what is good. Take special note of anyone who does not obey our instruction in this letter. Do not associate with them, in order that they may feel ashamed. Yet do not regard them as an enemy, but warn them as you would a fellow believer.” 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15

What the apostle Paul is about to write about next is a topic that many churches like to stay away from as much as possible, the topic of church discipline. He introduces this topic by telling the church in Thessalonica that what he’s about to write isn’t by his own authority but by the authority of the Lord Jesus Himself. Matthew 28:18 / Colossians 3:17.

There is no getting away from the strong language which is used here which again tells us that Paul isn’t giving them a suggestion but a command.

He says the Lord commands them, ‘to keep away from every believer who is idle and disruptive and does not live according to the teaching you received from us.’

The King James Version says, ‘Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.’

The Greek word for withdraw is the word στέλλω ‘stello’ basically means ‘do not associate with’. The word disorderly is the Greek word ἀτάκτως ‘ataktos’ and it carries with it the meaning of ‘being out of rank’, as a military term.

The apostles had shown them the proper example for them to follow whilst they were amongst them, an example which was pleasing to God. They weren’t ‘out of rank’ but lived how they were supposed to live according to their calling. Philippians 1:27 / Ephesians 4:1. When they were with the saints in Thessalonica they supported themselves by working, why?

In order that they wouldn’t be open to a charge of being lazy, the apostles wanted to show them a good example. They didn’t have to do this because as preachers of the Gospel it was proper for them to receive some support from their brethren to further the Gospel, Deuteronomy 25:4 / 1 Corinthians 9:1-15 / 1 Timothy 5:18 but they chose not to burden the church at this point because the lesson in working needed to be learned by some brethren in Thessalonica. When the apostles were among them they gave the church this rule, “The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat.” Genesis 3:19 / Ephesians 4:28 / Romans 12:11

The apostles heard that some brethren were ‘out of rank’, now remember that Paul has already written to them about this in his first letter, 1 Thessalonians 5:14, and so it seems that there were some who didn’t listen to him and so here he adds it a deeper authority to it. Some were disruptive and not working at all, not busy but busybodies, 2 Thessalonians 3:11.

Although it doesn’t come across very well in our English translations of the Bible, the apostle Paul seems to be making a play on words here. ἐργάζομαι ‘ergazomai’ is the Greek word for working and περιεργάζομαι ‘periergazomai’ is the Greek word for a busybody.

Paul is saying that some brethren are going around the work as if they were actually dodging doing any work at all. They are working but working at being busy in things which are useless and almost pointless, interfering with other people's affairs etc., today we would say they would be busy 'majoring in the minors', 1 Timothy 5:13.

These people are commanded and encouraged by the Lord to work quietly, be satisfied and earn their food. 1 Thessalonians 4:11. The church is commanded not to become tired of doing what is good, Galatians 6:9 / Matthew 10:22.

Notice again the strong tone of 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15, obedience to the Word of God is always of the utmost importance, if someone doesn't listen to what has been said, the church was to 'take special note of them' 2 Thessalonians 3:6, and notice of the purpose in not associating with anyone who won't listen to these commands, 'that he may feel ashamed', Jeremiah 3:25

However and this is an important point, they were not to be seen as an enemy but to be warned as they would a fellow believer. And with what attitude was this to be done? Leviticus 19:17 / Galatians 6:1 / 1 Peter 4:8 / James 5:19-20 / Revelation 3:19.

In summary, as Paul nears the end of his second letter he gives the church in Thessalonica a series charge, to withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition received from Paul, 2 Thessalonians 3:6 / 2 Thessalonians 3:14.

The seriousness of the charge is seen in that Paul invokes the name of Jesus, 2 Thessalonians 3:6 which is something he rarely does, 1 Corinthians 1:10. The circumstances at Thessalonica that prompted such a serious charge were simply, some Christians had quit working, and had become busybodies, 2 Thessalonians 3:11-12 which was the opposite of the apostle's own example and previous commands, 2 Thessalonians 3:7-10.

It is possible that some Christians were so excited about the Lord's return and they thought it was more or less coming that day that they didn't see the need to work anymore. Nonetheless, they are commanded to work and if they refused to work to earn their own keep they were to have fellowship withdrawn from them. 2 Thessalonians 3:6 / 2 Thessalonians 3:14.

I mentioned at the start of this section that many churches like to stay away from church discipline and this could be for several reasons but I believe it would be useful to spend a few moments discussing the topic at this point.

I've heard of people being dis-fellowshipped because they never get to worship on time. I've heard of people being dis-fellowshipped because they didn't agree with the preacher. Dis-fellowshipping is all about preserving the purity of the church. The Hebrew writer reminds us that Christians must follow after holiness in Hebrews 12:14. 1 John 4:6-13 reminds us that Christians must love one another.

Ephesians 4:3 reminds us that Christians must live in the bond of peace with each other. And so the church must strive for these things and be on our guard against anything which will influence our goals. And so if we're going to preserve the purity of the church, we need to be on our guard against things like false doctrine, division, strive and impurity.

Because the ultimate goal of the church is the salvation of souls, Philippians 2:12-13, yes dis-fellowshipping someone is never a pleasant experience but there are times when it needs to be done because their soul is at stake. But what would constitute reasons for being dis-fellowshipped?

There are at least six examples within the New Testament but that doesn't mean they are the only reasons, sometimes there are principles set out within those six examples.

The first example we find within the New Testament is a passage that everyone is pretty familiar with. Matthew 18:15-17, here Jesus gives the example that a person may end up being disfellowshipped if they have malice against a fellow Christian which doesn't get solved.

The second example is found in Romans 16:17, here Paul tells us that a person who causes division and doesn't stop, may end up being disfellowshipped.

The third example is found in 1 Corinthians 5 which deals with the topic of immorality. We see a man who was living immorally, basically, he was having sexual relations with his father's wife and so he had to be disfellowshipped from the church in Corinth.

The fourth example is found in 2 Thessalonians 2:6, walking in rebellion basically means walking out of step and if we keep it in its context we see that it is applied to those who are lazy gossips.

The fifth example is found in 1 Timothy 1:20, here the apostle Paul tells us that Hymenaeus and Alexander were disfellowshipped for blasphemy.

And finally, the sixth example is found in Acts 20:30, and so anyone who teaches false doctrine may eventually be disfellowshipped. Now those are just six examples but please don't think they are the only reasons for someone being dis-fellowshipped, like I said, there are principles within those examples.

Now how we go about the process of dis-fellowshipping someone must be Scriptural because the manner of carrying out a matter often determines its effect. And so very often Scriptural discipline becomes unscriptural because it's carried out in an unscriptural manner. We need to have the right motives for carrying out our actions, for example, in personal grievances the object should be to gain a brother back, as Matthew 18:15 tells us.

IN PUBLIC GRIEVANCES

The motive should be to restore the Christian gently, Galatians 6:1 / James 5:19-20. But in all cases, the motive should be edification not destruction, Luke 9:51-56. And so disfellowshipping must be carried out with the right motives but also in a spirit of love, Colossians 3:13.

Now when I said that it needs to be carried out Scripturally, I mean it needs to be carried out strictly according to the teachings we find within the New Testament. Again, in public grievances, Paul says that the offender should be properly warned first in 1 Thessalonians 5:14. And according to Titus 3:10, the offender must be rebuked at least twice.

IN PRIVATE GRIEVANCES

If the offender thinks they have committed an offence against another, they must go and rectify it, according to Matthew 5:23-24. In Matthew 18:15-17 Jesus reminds us that the offended one must go to the offender, if he will not listen, he is to take witnesses, if this is not effective, he must take it to the church.

In other words, it then becomes a public matter and if the offender does not listen to the church, then they must be Disfellowshipped, 1 Corinthians 5:4-5. Everything needs to be carried out scripturally, with the right motives but the whole church must be involved with this decision.

Think about the effects of disfellowshipping someone, because they are far-reaching. Matthew 18:17 tells us that they are to be treated as a heathen man and a publican. Romans 16:17 tells us that they are to be avoided. 1 Corinthians 5:2 tells us that they are to be taken out of the assembly. 1 Corinthians 5:11 and 2 Thessalonians 3:14 tell us that we can't keep company or even eat with them. 2 John 9-11 tells us that we shouldn't assist them in any way. But every member of the church has to treat them the same way, why?

Because the Bible says so and we cannot and must not give them any hint that we are approving their actions.

But what's the point of dis-fellowshipping, someone? I know people who have received letters informing them that they have been disfellowshipped from the church and they haven't even been in a meeting of the Lord's church for five years. There is a huge difference between someone living sinfully, causing strife in the church and someone who just simply doesn't come anymore.

We cannot treat them with some sort of self-righteousness or malice, the motive behind it is found in 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15, "Take special note of anyone who does not obey our instruction in this letter. Do not associate with them, in order that they may feel ashamed. Yet do not regard them as an enemy, but warn them as you would a fellow believer".

Paul says the motivation behind disfellowshipping someone is simply to make the offender ashamed but with the hope of bringing them more rapidly to repentance. But at all times, and notice this, Paul says, we have to remember they are not your enemy.

Disciplining someone through means of disfellowshipping is not the end goal, restoration is the end goal. And what a joyous occasion that is when someone who has been disfellowshipped returns to the fold. Don't the angels in heaven rejoice when a sinner repents?

When the apostle Paul writes his second letter to the church in Corinth about the man who was disfellowshipped, we get an insight into the church's reaction when someone returns.

He says in 2 Corinthians 2:7-8 "Now instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. I urge you, therefore, to reaffirm your love for him."

When a person returns to the fold, there are to be no grudges or self-righteousness, just simply forgiveness and love.

Because if we don't, then Satan will have a field day, not only with those who have returned but also with the church as a whole. Paul continues in 2 Corinthians 2:10-11 "Anyone you forgive, I also forgive. And what I have forgiven—if there was anything to forgive—I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes."

A person is not dis-fellowshipped forever, it's not an eternal sentence, they need to go and realise what they have done as being wrong. And when they come to that realisation, they can repent and return and they will be saved.

"Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you. I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand, which is the distinguishing mark in all my letters. This is how I write. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." 2 Thessalonians 3:16-18

As we come to the apostle's final remarks, we need to remind ourselves that this second letter to the Thessalonian saints was designed to encourage them amid the persecution they were facing, 2 Thessalonians 1:1-12.

To give them enlightenment concerning the Lord's return, 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17 and also to urge them to live right for Christ, 2 Thessalonians 3:1-15. And as was the custom of Paul he ends this letter with a blessing and a prayer for the church.

One can only imagine amid persecution the need for peace, but this is not the kind of peace which the world thinks of in terms of everyone getting along great together or no more wars, but the kind of inner peace we can have with God, Romans 5:1 and our fellow man, 1 Timothy 2:1-2.

This is the kind of peace which was prophesied and that Jesus would guide us into, Luke 1:78-79 / Luke 2:14, the same peace with Christ came preaching, Acts 10:36, the kind of peace that the world cannot offer or give, John 14:27. A peace that wins despite tribulation, John 16:33 and peace which rules the Lord's kingdom, Romans 14:17 in which everyone can be a part of, Ephesians 2:14-18.

And how was this peace made possible?

Through the death of Jesus on the cross, Ephesians 2:15-16 / Colossians 1:20-22. But it must be pursued by all Christians, Romans 14:19 / 2 Timothy 2:22 / Hebrews 12:14 / 1 Peter 3:10-11.

In 2 Thessalonians 3:17, we find that Paul makes a brief reference to writing in his own hand.

G. K. Beale makes the following comments on this verse, ‘when we write letters, we typically conclude with a standard “sincerely” or “best wishes”, then sign our names without thinking. Not so with Paul. Just as the concluding “peace” in 3:16 is not an unconscious part of a standard farewell, so it is with the closing greeting.’

Paul does not merely greet but points out the usual manner of his greeting: I, Paul write this greeting in my own hand, which is the distinguishing mark in all my letters. This is how I write. There is something unusual in the way Paul writes his name. His signature may be atypical because of the uncommonly “large letters” (Galatians 6:11).

Some say that Paul draws attention to his signature because a secretary has written the letter and Paul wants to make sure that the recipients clearly understand that the epistle is from him and not the secretary.

But there seems to be more significance attached to his comment in 3:17 than merely his use of secretarial assistance. Paul has already used the word “epistle” three times, once to refer to his genuine first letter to the Thessalonians as a correction to the earlier mentioned spurious letter (2:15), and once to refer to his genuine second letter also as a correction of false teaching and its correlate disorderly lifestyle (3:14).

Plausibly, this final occurrence of “epistle” and Paul’s distinguishing signature on it has similar significance. He signs his letters in order to authenticate them and their teaching in contrast to fraudulent letters attributed to him, including the pseudo letter mentioned in 2:2. This suggests further that he still has the false teaching of 2:2-12 in mind, not only in 3:17 but throughout the entire chapter.

The only other epistles where he expressly mentions his signature are ones where he is writing in opposition to false teachers (1 Corinthians 16:21 / Galatians 6:11 / Colossians 4:18).

His qualification that the distinguishing mark of his signature is attached to all his letters and that he always writes in this manner indicates that the danger of circulating spurious Pauline epistles and the attendant false teaching was more widespread than merely these instances. (The IVP New Testament Commentary Series. 1-2 Thessalonians. G. K. Beale. Pages 268 and 269)

The apostle ends his second letter with a prayer blessing of grace, that unmerited favour from the Lord Himself. Just like peace, grace was also prophesied concerning this would be coming with Jesus, 1 Peter 1:10-11, we know that Jesus came full of grace, John 1:14 / John 1:16-17.

We also know that His apostles preached the Gospel of grace, Acts 20:24 / Acts 20:32. As Christians we stand in God’s grace, Romans 5:2 / 1 Peter 5:12 and like we saw earlier in this study, Christians have everlasting comfort and hope through God’s grace, 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17.

But how did we receive that grace in the first place?

Simply by obeying the Gospel of grace, Hebrews 5:9. We received that grace at our baptism, Titus 3:4-7 / Mark 16:15-16 / Acts 2:36 / Acts 22:16 and by continuing to obey the doctrine which was given to us which sets us free from sin, Romans 6:17.

We are commanded to grow in that grace, 2 Peter 3:18 and this same grace is multiplied as we grow in the knowledge of Jesus, 2 Peter 1:2 / 2 Peter 1:5-8. God will continue to give us grace when we ask for it, Hebrews 4:14-16 / James 4:6 / 1 Peter 5:5. But remember as Christians we can lose that grace, we can fall from grace, 2 Peter 2:20-22.

The Apostle Paul’s love for his brothers and sisters in Christ in Thessalonica was very evident. He wanted the Lord Himself to give them peace always and in every way. He wanted the grace of the Lord to be with them all always and in every way. And so just like he began this second letter to the church in Thessalonica, 2 Thessalonians 1:2, he closes the letter with the same blessings and prayer of peace and grace.

“But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever!
Amen”. 2 Peter 3:18