

SECOND THESSALONIANS



**Salonika Seafront and Harbour
during a visit of the author 29. 4.'97**

ARAMAIC BIBLE COMPANION

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PREFACE

I have had the good fortune to visit Thessalonica briefly in 1997 and drive along a modern stretch of the Via Egnatia that runs through the town and on to Philippi and the east. Its long anchorage is nothing if not impressive and its modern shopping quarter an emporium extraordinaire. The historic eastern tower reminds one that the development of this city has continued uninterrupted from the days of Christ. Today the city has a lively and faithful evangelical church under the leadership of elders appointed much as those Paul first engaged to serve the church here. At the time of writing Dr. Katsarkis is one of these – a fine forward looking leader with a vision and strategy for reaching young Macedonians. The good Doctor, whom I have met, has played a key role in the fine Christian hospital in the city.

INTRODUCTION

The letter was written in the Spring of A.D. 53 from Corinth and is spaced by a few months from the "winter" letter of 1 Thessalonians. Concern enveloped the church on account of the death of Christians before the return of the LORD and was heightened by a spurious letter masquerading as apostolic.

*Each chapter of the first epistle contains a reference to the "Second Coming" of Christ. In the second epistle this theme predominates. The emphasis represents the stress Christ Himself laid on the Kingdom and its future advent and also Paul's teaching. In this epistle Paul reassures the young believers that despite the death of their fellow-believers Christ has not come again secretly. He shows that not till the "apostasy" takes place and "man of sin" (cf. Daniel's 'little horn' Dan7 and 8 and John's "beast" Rev 13 & 14) appears in the last age shall the promised divine intervention of the LORD take place. The Parousia as the use of the term in Egyptian Papyri shows is to be understood as a "Royal visit". In the first epistle we have teaching on the Parousia; in the second as **Dr. Graham Scroggie** notes on the "Apocalupsis" or "advent of Christ to reign. In the first our LORD comes "to the air" in the second "to the earth."*

*The epistles are both highly practical in their second tranche of teaching. Paul commended hard work explicitly in chapter 3. It was **Tertullian** who wrote "**It is our care of the helpless, our practice of loving-kindness, that brands us in the eyes of many opponents. 'Only look' they say, 'how they love one another'**" Paul's writing is imbued with prayer and each chapter has a prayer (cf. 1 11-12, 2.16 & 3.5&16)*

CHAPTER I

THE WRATH TO COME

AUTHOR AND COMPANY GREET RECIPIENTS 1-2

Paul & Silvanus and Timothy to the Thessalonian church which is in God our Father & (in) our Lord Jesus Christ. Grace (*the gentile greeting*) and peace (*the Jewish Shalom*) from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. The greeting highlights the high priesthood of Jesus – cf. Numbers 6.22-27. **Dean Farrar** reckons the greeting originally was attached only to the second epistle.

THANKS ARE IN ORDER 3-4

At Corinth Paul acknowledges they should ever thank God for this church. It is very right-because their faith noticed a super increase, and the love of each one for all the others was beyond measure – so that

Paul and company **boast to those in the churches of God – of your patience of faith to hold yourselves up amid your many persecutions and trials.** I.e. mutual support and care kept them fervent.

GROWING FAITH LOVE AND PATIENCE 5-8

A sign that God meets every crisis right by calling out a church

This is a token or exhibit of the right judgment of God for which purpose you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God – for which you suffer-even if [Greek *ειπερ*] it is right for God to repay those who cause you tribulation with tribulation. and to give *relaxation* [Greek *ανεσις* is the ancient word for holiday – modern Greek uses *διακοπη* 'a break'] We cannot really expect a holiday from persecution till the **revelation of the Lord from heaven with His angels of power – in a flame of fire – giving summary vengeance to those who have not looked to know God and who have not listened to obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ**

TERRIBLE RETRIBUTION 9-10

Who will be requited by the destruction eternally from the Lord's presence and the glory of his strength? The two greatest losses of life are to know God is watching over me in love and to know his strength is upholding me in life.

This terrible recompense will be enacted when the Lord comes to be made glorious in his saints. This takes us back to Daniel 7 when the saints bear the master to the throne as their glorious king of the ages. The return of Christ will give us great cause to glorify Jesus and equal cause to wonder at the marvel of it all. **“You Thessalonians who believed our witness are included in that day”.**

PAUL'S VOW IN PRAYER 11-12

For which reason Paul vows always – that our God will make you worthy of the calling and that He will complete every resolve or desire after “goodness imparted” [Greek *αγαθωσυνης*] and every work of faith with increasing power – so that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified in you (*on earth*) and you in Him (*in the rapture*) according to the Grace of our God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

GRACE AND GLORY

It would be very easy to miss the point of this opening section of the letter. The context is *the high priestly ministry of Christ* at the Father's right hand – bringing patience of faith to the church under terrible stress. It is also earthed to the powerful prayer that in their lifetime the Christians of this church might experience the Glory of the Father and the Son in the coming again of Christ our King and Melchizedek. So the chapter moves from the era of grace to the kingdom of Glory. I am not inclined to delete the initial verse from 1 Thessalonians 1 as **Dean Farrar** suggests – for the reason that the same transference of thought relates to both epistles. Paul is reading the present in the light of the promised future.

BELIEVERS' ESCAPE

The present tribulations we may endure – but the “great tribulation” will not touch us. It is the time of divine wrath on those who would not look to see and listen to obey – as in 2Thessalonians 1. We **“wait for His Son from heaven whom He raised from the dead – Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.”** The Lord's agonising death does not mean that we may avoid the sufferings of the cross – but his exaltation to the throne predicts that we shall be taken home to share his joy when he comes to be glorified in His saints. This home call of the church is "away from the face" of tribulation. Scarce anywhere in scripture is the evacuation of saints set forth more plainly.

CHAPTER 2

CHRIST'S RETURN

THE LORD'S RETURN IS FUTURE

In 2 Timothy 2.17 the errorists Hymeneas and Philetus believed the resurrection of saints to have passed and they disturbed the faith of others. It is to be inferred that they taught that Christ had come and gone. Their error preserved the idea of a sudden rapture but they invented their own timing. There is proof that Paul believed in the Rapture – else he could have urged that Christ was simply coming to reign here or to end all things in judgment. Then the whole allegation about a sudden visit of the Lord would be ridiculed. Not so; Paul stays with PAROUSIA teaching which by very definition speaks of a visit of Christ – “to gather believer's home [*Greek επισυναγωγης*]. A visit predicts a starting point and a departing again. Paul and company are solicitously asking the Thessalonians, "**Are you alarmed that Christ has come and gone?**" desirous of the answer “No, certainly not – we are not changing our view! We believe He is coming to take us with Him in the skies”

He asks **1. That they are not quickly shaken or tossed like a ship at sea from their mind or knowledge**

- 2. That they do not get frightened and cry out as if they are spiritually lost/dead in such a disaster**
- 3. That neither a speech or address or letter purporting to be apostolic should persuade them that the day of Christ the Messiah is imminent.**

APOSTACY AND APOCALYPSE 1

Not even one of you should be deceived by any mode of the proposition – by any guise that deceives [*Greek τροπος*] by any tale to humour as told to a child, for: –

- 1. The apostasy must first come-people turning away. This may pre-date the rapture but will then be very marked. Apostasy may co-exist with faith in Jesus as other dogmatic religion vies with Christianity.**
- 2. The revelation of the man of sin-the son of loss and ruin-set against & exalted above every divine oracle or holy name [*the former word is middle voice speaking of God's self revelation in the word and the latter word is Greek σεβασμα – God's name*] This “man” will sit in the temple of God as God, demonstrating that he is God by that establishment- an evil sup planter So we are to expect a latter day Epiphanes who will actually command the temple area as his supreme holy site.**

PREVIOUS TEACHING ON THE RETURN OF CHRIST

When present with the Thessalonians Paul taught that Christ's return was for the future-real but yet distant. He is surprised they do not remember that he specifically noted the matters earlier spoken of. He then states – and this for us holds considerable interest!-that the Thessalonian church **knows the interruption – restraint – who is hindering or stopping-hindering until he comes out of the centre or ceases to umpire. And then that evil one will have been revealed, whom the Lord will slay with the breath of his mouth – and render him unemployed (or) abolish him (or) end his opportune time in the brightness of his Parousia. The Parousia of this one [*Satan's representative*] (or) the antichrist is proportionate to the energy of Satan in a circle of power and signs and lying wonders, and in all deceitfulness of wickedness among the circle of those who are perishing. Instead of these they did not receive the love of the truth that they might be saved. For this reason God sent among them an energetic deception, so they believed the lie, that all those who did not believe the truth but were well-pleased (or) satisfied (or) agreeable within the circle of unrighteousness might be condemned**

GRATITUDE FOR THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

It is of interest that as he writes Paul is consciously in the mode of gratitude. He says, “**We ought to give God thanks**” in 1.3 and thereafter follows a long section querying whether this is in order. Now Paul

surfaces from these considerations having reminding them of the pitfalls to say a second time "We ought to give God thanks for you". ...Why?

1. **Because you are our brothers and have shared loving commitment under the Lord – being loved by Him**

2 For **God chose you from the first to salvation in the circle of the Holy Spirit and by faith in the truth**

3 **Into that salvation by faith He called you through our gospel** – that was 2nd Missionary journey – 49-50AD.

4 **To be a possession (or) to be preserved as family of our Lord Jesus Christ – His brethren – God’s own sons**

STAND FIRM

Paul expects as a result of these benefits that the brothers will “**stand**” and “**hold fast**” to the traditions of teaching given – both that orally and now by epistle.

COMFORT

Besides the teaching the apostle adds a prayer; **that “Our Lord Jesus and God our Father who has loved us give eternal or age long consolation and good hope – i.e. ethical hope in the circle of grace-to be a comfort to their hearts in human loss – through evident death – and to make them strong in every good or ethical word & ethical energetic work.**

This is the Pauline Ethic of the faith – **a hope that will not disappoint**

– **a word** preached that will prove itself a genuine oracle

– **a work** which will root in godly intent and glorify Christ

CHAPTER 3

THE ETHIC OF WORK

PRAY FOR US 1-2

It remains, brothers, pray around us. *Prayer is like a protective wall – a shower of blessing, a radiance encircling.* Specifically **pray “that the word of the Lord may run...we are not just to pray that the word preached may be heard. Three things about running are possible – to compete with other ideas – this is not the point; second, running in a heat to survive for the finals – neither is this all that is meant. It means to run and win the hearts of men and women...and be glorified”** That happened at Thessalonica

The second topic is “**That we may be carried away in Gods rescue from 'eccentric' (or) 'monstrous'** [Greek *ατοπων*] and evil men for the faith does not belong to all.” *Here it is to be noted that Paul perhaps counts lack of the element of trustworthiness (or)credit(or)honesty a "strange" (or)odd" feature though what he is saying is that for anyone like Nero to count himself “god” is very strange indeed.*

A FAITHFUL LORD 3-4

*Paul returns to his “Buts” – this time **Requesting prayer**” but highlighting God as guard from the shadowing devil behind the scenes – and also highlighting his confidence in the Lord to whom he is praying for them that **the watchwords.** [Greek *παραγγελιατα*] he has given them are inspiring their work and as now re-stated will continue to inspire their work*

The Lord is faithful (or) trustworthy (*as opposed to these fickle ones*). He will strengthen you-give support while he prepares you for use – and He will guard you from being imprisoned by the evil one

PAUL'S ARROW PRAYER–WATCHWORD No.1 (vv.4-5)

This is yet another “but”. So Paul believes that behind all our wisdom and work there is need for the divine protection and also that there is need for the Lord to work in the heart. “**The Lord guide your hearts aright into ‘the love’ of God, and into the patience of Christ.** This not only means put all “our understanding emotions and will” in these modes but keep them there [Greek *κατευθυναι*]

AVOID THE DISORDERLY WATCHWORD No.2 (v.6)

The sixth 'but' of ten [*Greek δε*](cf Chapters 2.1,2.13,2.16,3..3,3.5, 3.6, 3.10,3.12,3.13,3.16)

We pass on to you this (further) watchword, brothers, gird yourselves [*Greek στελλεσθαι* 'draw in sail' or 'cease to use wind' meaning 'flinch from' 'rue the company of' and 'curtail your speech with'] **so as not to be involved with or ones who walk uncivilised, undisciplined or out of order and not according to the “handing down” from us.** This 'handing down' [*Greek παραδοσις*] is the gospel tradition which began on the lips of Christ – which is referred to in 1.8 and variously in 2Timothy as “my gospel” and elsewhere as “the gospel of God”. *He reminds the Thessalonians how essential it is to “mimic himself – Paul and Timothy and Silas”. They were the sole exemplars of the faith – they were its foot soldiers – living disciplined lives. He reminds them of the Christian lifestyle. We were never once undisciplined* [*Greek απακτος*-licentious] **among you – we never ate bread we did not pay for – but in work and toil to earn** [*Greek μοχθους*] **night and day we gave ourselves to work – so we might not be a burden on any of you. Not that we have not authority** (cf. *bridling the ox*) **but that we might give ourselves as a blueprint or type for you to copy.**

WATCHWORD No. 3 (v.10)

When we were with you we passed on this watchword to you “That if anyone will not work neither should he eat.” For we are hearing that certain are walking among you undisciplined, giving themselves to no work and wasting their labour (or) causing needless expense (or) acting as busybodies.(3.10)

WATCHWORD No. 4 (v.12)

To such as these we send a watchword, and call on them through our Lord Jesus Christ (cf. *His carpentry and volume of labour and cross*) – **that they give themselves to work calmly – or in a sequestered place that they may eat earned bread.**

PRAYER PREVENTS FAINTING.

But you brothers must not faint [*Greek εκακκεω* 'give up' In Luke 18.1 the LORD calls for prayer in face of difficulty – Jesus said, "Pray and do not faint" Paul often resorted in hard places to this vital key which **Bunyan** in a later age of persecution found vital to carrying on the battle for truth] in doing and inspiring good.[*Greek καλοποιεω*] **If anyone does not obey our word through all this epistle, point out (or)give a signal that you are retreating from this person, and do not remember (The Lord) along with him, that he might be ashamed and do not esteem him an enemy but counsel him as a brother** [*Greek νουθεω*].

PEACE IN ALL SEASONS

The Lord of peace give you peace right through all circumstances in every change of season (or) in every occasion of routing the enemy. [*Greek τροπος*]. **The Lord be with you all.**

GREETINGS

Greeting in my own hand, Paul. This is my confirmation (or) guarantee (or) signature in every epistle. This is how I write myself *Paul concludes by writing the greeting in his own hand. He is aware of how poorly he now writes so he can see what is written. It would indicate either the unsteadiness of his hand or perhaps the poor health of his eyes or indeed both.*

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

FINIS

**Bob Coffey /Aramaic & Greek Bible Companion
L'shuvkha Marva (To the glory of the Lord)**