

Study 11: 1st & 2nd Thessalonians Summary

Introduction

This summary is intended to provide a “walk through the letters” that is a readable summary of what God is saying through Paul, as well as to be a refresher of what we have studied and to help “pull it all together”

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Notes for study 11: Summary

Introduction

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Body of the Study

Introduction (Study 1)

The apostle Paul established the church after staying for only a few (probably about 12) weeks and was then forced to leave through circumstances beyond his control. His host family was arrested for treason, and there was still much for the new christians to learn. Paul had moved on to Athens, and then Corinth, where he wrote the letters out of concern for the brethren. In other cities, he left behind a co-worker to assist them becoming established in the faith. This is the first letter (that we have) that Paul wrote.

Background of Thessalonica

Thessalonica was on the Egnatian Way, the Roman road that lead from Rome to Constantinople (then called Byzantium, now Istanbul). With a sheltered harbour, it was the capital and a seaport of the second district of the Roman Province of Macedonia. Today, the modern city of Saloniki is built on the site. It was the most populous town in Macedonia, a metropolis of great magnitude. The population included a large Roman element and a Jewish colony, with estimates of a population of 200,000 at the time of Paul’s visit.

On the second journey, Luke joins Paul, Silas and Timothy at Troas, and they go to Philippi and establish the church. Luke stays behind in Philippi, and Paul, Silas and Timothy travel to Thessalonica. A synagogue provides Paul the opportunity to teach the Jews (Acts 17:2). Some Jews and a large number of the Greek proselytes were converted. The Jews stirred up a rent-a-mob and accused Paul of treason. They raided the house of Paul’s host (Jason) looking for Paul, and when they couldn’t find him, took Jason into custody. The accusation that they made was that Paul was stirring up trouble by teaching that there is another King apart from Caesar (ie treason) in the person of Jesus (Acts 17:5-7).

Paul Silas and Timothy are sent away out of the city to Berea, where they get a much fairer hearing (Acts 17:11). However, Paul is forced to leave there after the Jews from Thessalonica came down and stirred up the people, but Silas and Timothy remain (Acts 17:14).

Paul’s stay in the city was much longer than *the three sabbath days* that he taught in the Synagogue. The church at Philippi sent money to him for support on several occasions (Php 4:15-16), and he worked with his own hands to support himself (2:3:7-9). The period in Thessalonica was probably more like 3 months.

The make up of the church is Jewish, Greek proselytes, as well as Gentiles. The culture is Macedonian, under Roman influence but not Roman control.

Date and Occasion of the First letter

Silas and Timothy join Paul in Athens. Paul sends Timothy straight back to Thessalonica to find out how the brethren are doing (1:3:1-2). Silas and Timothy come back to Paul at Corinth, and report the news from Macedonia – especially Thessalonica (Acts 18:5). He then writes the first letter, and sends Timothy straight back with it to Thessalonica. Upon his return with some questions raised by the brethren, Paul immediately writes the second letter.

Paul was in Corinth from 52 to 53 AD, covering a period of 18 months. Both letters were probably written early in the period, making the date most likely late 52 AD.

Key introductory thoughts (1 Chapter 1)

Despite Paul having to leave quickly and unexpectedly, he had not forgotten about the Thessalonians and *always thanked God for them all and continually remembered them in his prayers* (1:1:2). In like manner, he requests the Thessalonians to *pray for him* (1:5:25). They had their hearts alight for the Lord with their *work produced by faith, their labour prompted by love, and their endurance inspired by hope* (1:1:3). They needed to ensure that the flame was kept alight, and that they *did not put out the Spirit’s fire* (1:5:19). When Paul was there, he was an

example to the brethren, and they knew *how he lived amongst them* (1:1:5) so much so, that *they became imitators of him* (1:1:6) and *a model to all believers* (1:1:7). They were evangelistic, since *the Lord's message rang out from them and their faith was known everywhere* (1:1:8).

However, they needed to *show respect to those who were working amongst them* (1:5:12) and *hold them in the highest regard* (1:5:13). There was some concern for the state of those who had died in the Lord, but they need not worry since *the one who calls us is faithful* (1:5:24) and we *need to keep blameless at his coming* (1:5:23), as we *wait for His Son from heaven* (1:1:10). As confirmation of His power, *the gospel did not just come with words, but also with power with the Holy Spirit* (1:1:5), the ultimate proof is *Jesus having been raised from the dead* (1:1:10). Therefore we are assured of our salvation and *Jesus rescuing us from the coming wrath* (1:1:10).

This does not mean we can rest on our laurels, and just as Paul set an example among them, so they should *warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, and be patient with everyone* (1:5:14)

Characteristics of the Thessalonian church

They were young in the faith, but active, faithful, and evangelistic. Paul describes them in terms of the three fundamental pillars of christianity: they were *working* for the Lord as a result of their *faith*; *labouring* because of their *love*, and *patient* because of their *hope* in the Lord (1:1:3).

They had quickly grasped the faith, and modelled themselves after Paul, Silas and Timothy, (1:1:6 NKJV). However, there were difficulties. The Jews pursued Paul and had him run out of town, and then pursued him in Berea (Acts 17:13) so that he was forced to leave that city as well. The Thessalonians had *“...received the word in much affliction...”* (1:1:6 NKJV). Despite the problems, they had become christians *“...with joy of the Holy Spirit...”* (1:1:6 NKJV)

Along with the church at Philippi, the Thessalonian church was strategically placed so that the gospel could spread in both directions along the Egnatian Way as far as Rome in the west and Byzantium in the East, and in all directions from the sea port.

The church had a reputation amongst all of the congregations in the area, and beyond *“...for from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place...”* (1:1:8 NKJV). Clearly, the church was active, and working hard to evangelise not only the immediate area, but using their strategic location to reach out beyond their local area. Although very young in the faith, they were active. Rather than Paul needing to tell people about the faith and action of the Thessalonians, he was hearing news about them from others *“...for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God...”* (1:1:9 NIV).

The work in Thessalonica (1 Chapter 2)

The work in Thessalonica was not without its accomplishments. When Paul came, there was no church there, but after a few weeks, he left behind a group of christians who went out to set the region on fire for the Lord (1:2:1-2) The beatings in Philippi had not diminished his enthusiasm or work for the Lord.

Paul certainly taught the gospel in the city, but their manner of life whilst they were in Thessalonica was a demonstration of the way that christians ought to live *“...we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us...”* (1:2:8 NKJV). He worked (probably as a tentmaker) so that he might present the gospel to the Thessalonians free of charge, and so removed any possibility of a charge that he had anything but selfless motives. *“...For you remember, brethren, our labour and toil; for labouring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached the gospel of God...”* (1:2:9 NKJV).

With the short time the church had been established, and their influence over the surrounding region, Paul was effective in teaching. The Thessalonians were good material with good hearts for him to work with.

The Judean churches had been persecuted (and yet remained faithful), so the Thessalonians had grown through their suffering. The Jews had persecuted God's prophets beforehand, and had killed the Saviour. *“...For you, brothers, became imitators of God's churches in Judea, which are in Christ Jesus: You suffered from your own countrymen the same things those churches suffered from the Jews, ¹⁵ who killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets and also drove us out...”* (1:2:14-15 NIV). Whilst these things were done in the name of God, their actions were in no way pleasing to Him.

God is a God of justice, and He will ensure that ensure that they receive what they deserve (1:2:16).

Separated but not forgotten

Paul had been away from Thessalonica for about 6 months. Paul had tried to return, but was unable to do so. They were still dear in Paul's heart. Although absent in the body, yet he was near to them in spirit. He looked towards the time of the Lord's return, when he would present them to the Lord, as his prize, just as an ancient mariner (discoverer) would return to the King with the prizes of his voyages of discovery.

News from Thessalonica (1 Chapter 3)

Despite the problems (and largely unsuccessful work) that Paul was going through in Athens, he was deeply concerned about the state of the Thessalonians (1:3:1). At Thessalonica the brethren are feeling *discouraged and weak* due to their circumstances of persecution. Paul emphasises "...that no one should be shaken by these afflictions..." (1:3:3 NKJV). Paul was persecuted everywhere he went, and he assures the Thessalonians that the things that happened to him were not their fault. Jason had been hauled before the authorities because they could not find Paul (Acts 17:7). Paul knew that they were suffering, and he was anxious to know how they were doing, and to ensure that they received the support and encouragement they needed "...For this reason, when I could no longer endure it, I sent to know your faith..." (1:3:5 NKJV). The news from Thessalonica upon Timothy's return was good, and despite Paul's current circumstances in Corinth his burden was eased considerably.

Paul's prayer for them

This is the first of many such prayers found in the Thessalonian letters (1:3:11; 1:5:23; 2:1:11; 2:2:16; 2:3:5). Paul's prayer is that:

- God would direct Paul's way to them (ie make it possible for Paul to visit them),
- That their love for each other would increase and abound,
- That their hearts would be blameless in holiness, and

they would be found blameless "...at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ with His saints..." (1:3:13).

Holy living – Sexual immorality (1 Chapter 4)

As in most of his letters, Paul gives specific instructions on christian behaviour. We need to keep in mind the Greek cultural background with Roman rule in Thessalonica. As a prosperous city, at the crossroads of Roman roads, and a port city with much trade, immorality would have been rife, and entrained in the culture. The brethren were new in the faith. Many of them having previously been involved in the immoral practices, and probably some still were. They needed instruction on how they ought to behave as christians.

They had been *sanctified – set apart* – especially from the worldly immoral practices. In becoming christians, we are made saints, are sanctified by God, being set apart (separately identified) by Him as His children, and made holy in His sight. Our earthly actions and behaviour needs to reflect what God has done, and we must separate ourselves from the actions of worldly behaviour (1:4:3).

The first example Paul gives is to abstain from the sexual immorality that was rife in the culture, together with temple prostitution. It is not acceptable behaviour for christians who have undergone *the new birth*, and left behind *the old man* of sin. Sexual relations outside of marriage are not acceptable to God. His law is clear "...It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality..." (1:4:3 NIV). In order to keep ourselves set apart we need to exercise self control "...that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable..." (1:4:4 NIV). Christian behaviour is to be in direct contrast to that of the world, and Paul points out the contrast "...not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God..." (1:4:5 NKJV)

Holy living – defrauding of brethren

Taking advantage of a brother in Christ is another violation of holy living "...that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him..." (1:4:6 NIV). God is an all-knowing God who will set the injustices right. He will ensure that justice will be done (1:4:6). This was not something new to the Thessalonians, since Paul had already "...forewarned you and testified..." it to them (1:4:6 NKJV). The Holy Spirit was given as a witness to the way God wants us to live.

Responsibilities for ourselves

God wants us to "...aspire to lead a quiet life..." (1:4:11). It is not always possible, as there are influences outside of our control. Some of the members had stopped work and were loafing and expecting to be

supported by the rest of the brethren, and taking advantage of others by not supporting themselves. Paul (providentially) demonstrated that a christian ought to work to support himself whilst he was amongst them (1:2:9). He now tells them “...to work with your own hands, as we commanded you...” (1:4:11 NKJV).

If those outside of the church see us *professing* to be christians, but continuing to *practice* the things of the world, then they will rightly say that we are hypocrites. In contrast, when people see us putting into practice in our lives the things that we say, then they will know that we are true to the things that we say (Aussies have a term for this: “we are Fair Dinkum about it”).

Instructions regarding the Second Coming

When Timothy came back from Thessalonica he reported some of the concerns that the brethren had. One question was:

What happens to us if we die before the Lord returns? Will we miss out on heaven?

If we think that we will miss out, then what is the point of being a christian? We would be just like “...others who have no hope...” (1:4:13 NKJV). It all comes down to a fundamental belief in the resurrection. Christianity stands or falls on the resurrection. If there is no resurrection, then Jesus was just a man, and we have no hope, because there is nothing beyond the grave. But if Jesus was resurrected, then He is who He claimed to be – the Son of God and the Messiah. So, Paul says “... We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him...” (1:4:14 NIV). Those who die in the Lord (“are asleep in Him”) are assured of their place in heaven, because of the certainty of the resurrection of the Lord.

So, the question is, “How will it all work? – What will happen when the Lord returns?” Paul answers it clearly and plainly:

- The Lord Himself will descend (It won’t be an angel coming, but the Lord. This is exactly what the angel told the apostles at Jesus ascension (Acts 1:11)).
- He will come with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God (It will be a surprise – people will not be expecting it (Mt 24:42-44)).
- The dead in Christ shall rise first (Those who are alive will witness the resurrection. In fact those who have died will not be left behind, but will have the first place!)
- Those who are alive will be caught up into the clouds to meet them in the air (We might not all die, but we will all change (1 Cor 15:50-53) We will shed our physical bodies and put on incorruptible (spiritual) bodies).
- Then we will always be with the Lord.

The Lord’s return (1 Chapter 5)

He addresses the question of *when* the Lord’s return might be. The Thessalonians appear to be sitting around and waiting for the Lord to return. It was (after all), about 20 years since He left with the promise to return. However, “...there is no need for me to write about this, for you know perfectly well that He will come like a thief in the night...” (1:5:1-2).

Whilst the thief will come in the night, as christians we are not workers of darkness. The contrast of darkness and light is often made in scripture, and we are to “...walk in the light as He is in the light...” (1 Jn 1:7). We made the transition from darkness when we went through the new birth, (1:5:4 -5).

As God’s children we ought to bring about behavioural change “...Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober...” (1:5:6 NKJV). We are to be self-controlled. We cannot continue in a lifestyle of moral deprivation (as some would have lived before they became christians, and some of them possibly still). We need to be watchful, alert, and prepared for whenever the Lord returns.

God’s armour

As in the Ephesian letter (yet to be written 10 years later), Paul discusses the christian’s armour. It will protect us and equip us for our eternal salvation (1:5:9). For the second time in the letter Paul exhorts the brethren to be encouraged and comforted by knowing that God has not forsaken us (1:4:18) and has equipped us to be with Him (1:5:11).

Admonitions for leaders

The first admonition concerns the responsibility of the congregation towards its leaders. The congregation is young, having been established for only about 6 months. Paul worked with them for around a total of 3

months, so many in the congregation had only had contact with Paul for perhaps 6 weeks. The church was then left essentially leaderless. It seems highly unlikely that elders would have been appointed at the time.

Every congregation has leaders, whether formally appointed or not. If the congregation is to grow and survive, then someone (or “someones”) must assume the role. Leaders have responsibilities to the congregation, just as the congregation has responsibilities to them. The leaders: labour among you, are over you in the Lord, and admonish you.

We can begin to understand what is happening here. Elders have not yet been appointed (in my opinion), those who have assumed the leadership role are not experienced leaders and are struggling with the role. Some in the congregation are disorderly (loafing around, refusing to work and are busybodies). They are rebelling against the leaders, and the leaders are not handling the situation well. Paul concludes with “...*be at peace among yourselves...*” (1:5:13 NKJV). Those who were unruly were to be warned.

Closing admonitions

Paul makes a series of very short exhortations to the brethren, and again reminds them of the coming day of judgement as he closes and brings out many of the things that he has discussed. Finally, as instructed by the “...*Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers...*” (1:5:27). There could be no question of the openness of the teaching and instruction, as all of the brethren were to receive it.

Introduction to the Second letter

After Timothy’s return from delivering the first letter, they still had more questions! Paul addresses these with the second letter, and sends it back with Timothy again very soon after the first letter. The situation in the church has not changed substantially. Both letters were probably written early in the period of Paul’s stay in Corinth, making the date most likely late 52 AD.

Important things in the letter

The Thessalonians were continuing their growth as christians “...*your faith is growing more and more ... the love every one of you has for each other is increasing...*” (2:1:3). This is likely linked to “...*the persecutions and trials (they were) enduring...*” and their “...*perseverance and faith...*” in facing them (2:1:4). Whilst they “...*are suffering...*” (2:1:5), they can be assured that “...*God is just...*” and “...*He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you...*” (2:1:6). In the face of all this, “...*you will be found worthy...*” (2:1:5). The time of retribution is coming, “...*when the Lord Jesus (will be) revealed from heaven ... to punish those who do not know God...*” (2:1:8). However, they would be blessed, because they were “...*among all those who have believed...*” (2:1:10), and they will be found “...*worthy of His calling...*” (2:1:11). Because of these assurances, “...*the Lord of peace ... give(s) you peace...*” (2:3:16).

The theme of peace also runs through the introduction and conclusion, and considerable portions of the letter (most of chapter 2) deal further with the Second Coming of the Lord. The idlers are still giving trouble, despite his call for correction in the first letter. It is time for them to be disciplined, and he spends quite a bit of time on the matter in the third chapter.

The Salutation (2 Chapter 1)

Paul makes strong references to “...*the Lord Jesus Christ...*” emphasising the divine and messianic nature of Jesus and His relationship to God the Father. This reinforces the assurance that we have in Jesus as the Son of God, and hence His ability to deliver on His promises.

In the short time since many of them had become christians, they had continued to grow and show themselves as active christians. Paul (and Silas and Timothy) were grateful and thankful for their response to the gospel “...*We ought always to thank God for you, brothers, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love every one of you has for each other is increasing...*” (2:1:3 NIV). Their faith was growing, and their brotherly love increasing.

Despite their persecutions, they (and us!!!) can rest assured that God is a God of justice. He will not allow His saints to suffer persecution without their accusers being held to account for their actions “...*it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you...*” (2:1:6 NKJV). The Thessalonians were suffering because of their faith. They need not worry about their salvation, and the tribulations that they were experiencing were evidence that they were standing for God.

The Lord's return

When Jesus returns, the saints will find rest and the persecutors troubles – “...*you who are troubled rest with us...*” (2:1:7 NKJV). Paul now gives an outline of the event:

- The Lord Jesus will be revealed (which implies that He is now hidden)
- He will come *from* heaven (not going *to* heaven)
- He will come with His mighty angels
- It will be with flaming fire
- Taking vengeance
 - On those who do not know God
 - And on those (who know God, but) do not obey the gospel.

The punishment will be everlasting with no end to it. These things will happen “...*when He comes, in that Day...*” (2:1:10 NKJV). The day of justice is coming, and it will come on the day that the Lord returns. It will also be the day that the Lord comes “...*to be glorified in His saints...*” (2:1:10).

The assurance is clear. The saints will be on Jesus' side “...*because you believed our testimony to you...*” (2:1:11 NIV). If we believe Jesus and the apostle's teaching, we will do what He says (Jn 14:15; Lk 6:46). There is a stark contrast between those who will be punished, and those rejoicing. The choice is ours. Just believing is not enough – we need to obey Him and do what He says, putting our faith into action.

The Lord's return (2 Chapter 2)

Paul instructs them “...*not to become easily unsettled or alarmed...*” (2:2:2 NIV). There was much speculation then (just as there is today) that the Lord was going to return soon. People were making prophecies about the time of the return, and some were even saying that Paul had given them instruction on the matter. It is indeed foolishness to attempt to speculate (and purport as knowledge) something that has been hidden from the angels in heaven (Mt 24:36).

The two precedents for the Lord's return were:

- “...*that day will not come unless the falling away comes first...*”
- “...*and, the man of sin is revealed...*” (2:2:3 NKJV)

The falling away and the man of sin

The falling away from the true religion of Christ is a desertion of God. We only have to look at church history to see the many changes to the structure and organisation of the church that came about by the second or third centuries. Once this falling away had happened, the way was open for the entrance of *the man of sin*. He was a workman of Satan. He did not originate from God, in fact quite the opposite. He is described as “...*the son of perdition...*” (2:2:3 NKJV), or “...*the man doomed to destruction...*” (NIV).

He is in an exalted position, and one that demands worship. He “...*opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped...*” (2:2:4 NKJV). To worship him is like worshipping God “...*so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God...*” (2:2:4 NKJV). This description could equally apply to Emperor worship, Papal worship, or worship of Mohamed. The reference to the Temple here could be a reference to the exalted position of this person in the religious realm, and is a common reference by Paul for the church (1 Cor 3:16-17; 2 Cor 6:16; Eph 2:21).

They should have been aware of these things “...*Don't you remember that when I was with you I used to tell you these things?...*” (2:2:5 NIV). Unfortunately we are not privileged to Paul's explanation.

The beginning of these events started very close to the first century. Paul says that there were some things that were stopping the man of lawlessness from being established (2:2:6). The restraining forces are *evident* to the Thessalonians – they could *see* the things that were stopping him from establishing himself. Paul emphasises this even further “...*for the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so...*” (2:2:7 NKJV). This lawlessness is what Paul has described as *the falling away*. The attempts by the Judaisers to bind the Law of Moses on the christians, as well as the world invading the church as emphasised in the Corinthian letters and Colossians is evidence of this falling away beginning to happen, and not very long after the Thessalonian letters.

After this, “...*then the lawless one will be revealed...*” (2:2:8) and he will continue to have effect until “...*the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming...*” (2:2:8 NIV). So, *the man of sin* will begin his reign soon after the first century, and will continue that reign until the Lord returns to overthrow him. He will come “...*with all power, signs, and*

lying wonders...” (2:2:8 NKJV) so that he is able to *appear* to perform miracles. From all appearance, he really does look like that he has the power and authority, but it is all deception and all false.

People follow him “...*because they did not receive the love of the truth that they might be saved...*” (2:2:10 NKJV). If they really had a love of the truth, then they would know that what is being shown is false. “...*for this reason, God will send them a strong delusion, that they should believe the lie...*” (2:2:11 NKJV). The strong delusion is the threefold *power, signs, and lying wonders* that Paul has already discussed (2:2:9). God is right and righteous in condemning them because of their unrepented wickedness.

Exhortation for prayers (2 Chapter 3)

As well as praying for the Thessalonians (1:1:2; 2:1:3), Paul also requests from them. His request is not for the personal profit or benefit, but rather that their work in the Gospel might prosper. The gospel had been flourishing in Thessalonica, and it was Paul’s desire that it would likewise do so in Corinth (2:3:1).

They had grown and abounded in their lives as christians, and Paul expected this to continue. Most of them had listened and taken notice of the things that Paul has said and taught. “...*And now we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, both that you do and will do the things we command you...*” (3:3:4 NKJV).

Instructions towards the disorderly

Some in the church were not pulling their weight, and apparently took the view that *the Lord is coming back soon, so why should we go out to work? Let’s just sit around and wait until He returns*. This flows on to *how are they going to be fed and supported?* Someone had to support those who refused to work.

Paul commanded the congregation to come to order. This was neither something new nor unexpected “...*for even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat...*” (2:3:10 NKJV). He had given clear instruction and emphasised it by their example. “...*For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you...nor did we eat anyone’s bread free of charge, but worked with labour and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you...to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us...*” (2:3:7-9 NKJV).

Then in the first letter he wrote “...*But we urge you, brethren...that you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands as we commanded you...*” (1:4:10-11 NKJV). And “...*Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly...*” (1:5:14 NKJV).

Despite the instructions and the warnings, those causing trouble had not changed their behaviour, and it was now time for stronger action. The purpose of discipline is not to punish the person (God will see to that), but rather to bring them back into a proper behaviour. Paul’s warning is now strong “...*But we command you brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ...*” (2:3:6 NKJV). In order to modify their behaviour, the church was to “...*withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly...*” (2:3:6). They could not remain in fellowship and continue with their inappropriate behaviour. They had to make a choice.

The command is clear “...*if anyone will not work, neither shall he eat...*” (2:3:10 NKJV). Those loafing around were looking for others for support and becoming an unnecessary burden. Paul is not condemning those who can’t work (due to age or disability etc), but those who will not work. They had too much time on their hands and started to make trouble for those who were working (2:3:11). Paul presents a play on words in describing them. In essence, he says that *they have no business of their own, but are doing everybody’s business*. Like the previous exhortation, he commands them to work in quietness, and to provide their own food. He gave these instructions whilst in Thessalonica, and in the first letter (1:4:11).

Those who continued to rebel were to be disciplined. “...*If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of him. Do not associate with him, in order that he may feel ashamed. Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother...*” (2:3:14-15 NIV). It had reached the stage where the church needed to take action. The aim was to bring him back into fellowship and *admonish him*.

Close of the letter

Paul closes the final section of the letter with a prayer “...*may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always in every way. The Lord be with you all...*” (2:3:16 NKJV). The situation in Thessalonica was not peaceful. They were persecuted by the Jews from the outside, and had turmoil on the inside. Paul understood their need for peace, and they could be assured that the Lord brings peace through reconciliation (Eph 2:15; 1 Cor 14:33).