

2 Thessalonians

1:2. “Silvanus.” See note on 1 Thessalonians 1:1.

1:3. “as it is fitting.” *Fitting* comes from *axios* (#514 ἄξιος). It could be rendered, “as is appropriate,” or “as is right.” The point is that the behavior of the Thessalonians is worthy of, and deserving of, thanks to God.

“is growing... is increasing.” The verbs are in the present active tense. It is the durative present, showing continual action. Their faith is growing and continues to grow; their love is increasing and continues to increase. Kistemaker translates the latter as “constantly increasing.”

1:4. “boast.” The word *boast* can have two connotations—just like English usage—one can boast in a negative way and in a positive way. Scripture uses both instances (e.g., James 4:16 and Rom. 15:17). This is the positive sense of boasting; Paul was proud of the Thessalonians in a godly way. See also 1 Thessalonians 2:19 note on “crown of boasting.”

1:5. “*which is* a clear indication of the righteous judgment of God: that you are counted worthy of the kingdom of God.” This phrase is translated differently in nearly every Bible version. The differences lie in the understanding of how the phrase “counted worthy” relates to the “judgment of God.” In the Greek “counted worthy” is an *eis* + articular infinite construction: εἰς τὸ καταξιωθῆναι. Grammatically, this construction could be understood in three different ways (Wallace, *Grammar*, p. 611):

(1) To indicate *the purpose of God’s judgment*. E.g., “This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, and is intended to make you worthy of the kingdom of God” (NRSV; cp. NASB; NET). This view makes the sufferings of the Thessalonians part of God’s judgment, intended for the purpose of counting them worthy.

(2) To indicate *the result of God’s judgment*. E.g., “All this is evidence that God’s judgment is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God” (NIV; cp. ASV). On this view the Thessalonians’ suffering could have been the judgment of God which resulted in their being counted worthy, or it could simply be that they suffered apart from God’s will and his having a judgment (i.e. legal opinion) of them resulted in their being considered worthy.

(3) The construction could also be used as *an elaboration of what God’s judgment is* (this is known as “epexegetical” usage; Wallace, *Grammar*, p. 607, 611). E.g., “It is a clear evidence of God’s righteous judgment that you will be counted worthy of God’s kingdom” (HCSB). On this view the “being counted worthy” is simply an elaboration on what the “judgment of God” is. In other words, the judgment (i.e. legal opinion) of God is one that considers the Thessalonians worthy.

Like the HCSB, the REV translation takes the third option for considering the *eis* + articular infinite construction. Rather than being the purpose or result of God’s judgment, we feel the “being counted worthy” *is* God’s judgment. “Worthy,” from *kataxioo* (#2661 καταξιόω), is in the aorist tense, showing it is the onetime consideration of God. When the Thessalonians were saved, God in a one-time action considered them worthy, which

stands in contrast to their continual perseverance of faith though persecution. Rather than judging that the Thessalonians “will be” counted worthy (HCSB), the sense is that they “are” presently counted worthy of the kingdom (REV). This judgment is said to be “righteous,” from *dikaios* (#1342 δίκαιος), meaning, right, correct, fair, and just. That God correctly judged the Thessalonians as righteous is demonstrated by the Thessalonians’ growing faith and love, and their steadfastness and faith even amidst persecutions. They would have been saved and thus righteous before God even if they had not stood faithful in persecutions because Christian salvation is guaranteed. However, the fact that the Thessalonians did stand faithful in the midst of the persecution was a *clear indication* (*endeigma* [#1730 ἐνδειγμα]) that God’s saving them was righteous.

1:6. “for indeed.” The Greek is *eiper* (#1512 εἴπερ), in what is known as a first class condition. The word literally means “if indeed,” however, there is no doubt being shed on the certainty of the condition. Hence, Kistemaker translates the verse as follows: “If indeed, (it is) righteous in God’s estimation (as it certainly is) to repay...”

“it is a righteous thing with God.” This is the meaning of the phrase *para* (with/beside) *Theos* (God). From beside where God is, i.e., from His point of view, it is a righteous, or just thing to repay evildoers. (Cp. Robertson, Word Pictures).

1:7. “powerful angels.” Genitive of character. Literally, “Angels of power,” meaning angels characterized by power.

“in flaming fire rendering vengeance.” This is one of the places in the text where the verse is broken wrong. The phrase in flaming fire obviously goes with the rendering vengeance of verse eight, and so verse 8 should have started before “in flaming fire.”

1:8. “inflicting vengeance.” “Inflicting” is from the Greek verb *didomi* (#1325 δίδωμι) and “vengeance” is from the noun *ekdikesis* (#1557 ἐκδίκησις). The word *didomi* in its basic sense means “to give.” Hence, God is going to “deal out” retribution (NASB). The translation “inflicting” comes from a consideration of the context—it is judgment, punishment, and retribution that is being dealt out; thus, *to deal out punishment* is to “inflict” vengeance (cp. ESV; NRSV; NAB).

There are two types of justice administered in the Bible: corrective (or redemptive) justice, and retributive justice. *Corrective justice* deals out punishment in the hope of reforming the punished. For instance, the rod of correction drives foolishness from a child (Prov. 22:15)—the child’s punishment is a form of justice, but it is meant to restore the child to what is right. The delivering unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so the spirit may be saved, is another example of corrective justice (1 Cor. 5:5). *Retributive justice*, on the other hand, does not intend to reform the sinner at all, but is only meant as pure punishment so the offender gets what is deserved. Old Testament capital punishment exemplifies retributive justice; if a murderer is stoned to death, there is no chance for his or her reform; the only result is that justice is paid. Likewise, when the unrepentant are thrown into the lake of fire, retributive justice will have been meted out with no hope of future reform. While it may seem that retributive justice is not loving, it is just and fair, and God is just. Also, retributive justice never has to be meted out. God tells us ahead of time that the wicked will get what they deserve so that people will not be wicked. If they ignore God’s warning, then they get the justice they deserve.

Here in 2 Thessalonians 1:8, it is clear from the context of “repaying” affliction (1:6) that what is meant is justice in the sense of retribution or vengeance. (Cp. also Romans 12:19:

“Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord’” (ESV). In English, the word *vengeance* has the connotation of a just retaliation that is in proportion to the crime committed (Webster’s *Dictionary of Synonyms*), which highlights the justice of God. Only He is qualified to exact vengeance, because only he can pay back in exact proportion, leaving the scales of justice equal in the end.

1:9. “glory of his strength.” The phrase “of his strength” is descriptive of the Lord’s glory. They are cut off from the glory of the Lord, glory that is characterized by strength.

Another interpretive option is to view the phrase as the figure of speech *antimereia*, the exchanging of parts of speech (Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*). In this case, the adjective “glorious” is put in the noun form “glory.” Cp. HCSB “glorious strength.”

1:10. “when he comes.” The subjunctive mood of this verb is due to the particle *otan* (when, whenever). It is not expressing any doubt or uncertainty as to the actuality of the coming of the Lord, rather, it refers to uncertainty of the timing—*whenever* he may come.

“marveled at.” The Greek is *thaumazo* (#2296 θαυμάζω). This word refers to both admiration and respect, as well as awe and wonder (BDAG). When Christ is seen by his believers, he will at once induce a profound awe within those present, who will feel great admiration and respect welling within them.

“*this includes you.*” Cp. NIV. The NIV captures the heart of what is meant by the parenthesis: “This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you.” Versions such as the ESV and others are wrong because they translate the *hoti* clause as causally effecting the rest of the verse: e.g., “...when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed” (ESV). This makes it sound as though the Thessalonians’ belief *causes* the Lord to come on that day—which is obviously mistaken. Rather, the *hoti* clause is the figure of speech *epitrechon*, or parenthesis, meaning to include the Thessalonians among the believers who will marvel at the Lord. For commentary on the figure *epitrechon* see note on Romans 10:6.

1:11. “will.” See commentary entry on “will live” in 1 Thess. 5:10.

“desire for goodness.” Compare the NASB, HCSB, and NET translations: “desire for goodness.” Literally, the phrase reads, “desire of goodness.” The word *goodness* is in the genitive case; it is the objective genitive. That is to say, *goodness* is the object of *desire*. Paul prays God would fulfill the Thessalonians every desire *for* goodness. This genitive phrase likely also has a secondary meaning of *a desire that flows out of goodness*, making this use of the genitive an *amphibologia*.

1:12. “will.” Not “may.” See entry on “will live” in 1 Thess. 5:10.

“in accord with.” Cp. the NAB translation. The Greek is the preposition *kata*; for this usage of *kata* see BDAG def. 5: “marker of norm of similarity or homogeneity, *according to, in accordance with, in conformity with, according to.*”

2:2. “quickly.” I.e., do not hastily, precipitously swerve from your present beliefs regarding the coming of the Lord (Cp. Morris, *New International Commentary on the New Testament*). By extension from the idea of “quickly,” this word, *taxeōs* (#5030 ταχέως), could also mean *easily* (NIV; HCSB; NET; NJB).

“*state of mind.*” Kistemaker translates: “(normal state of) mind.” The Greek reads, simply, “be not shaken from the mind (*nous* [#3563 νοῦς]).” This is the figure of speech

metonymy, where *mind* is put in place of *beliefs*, or *one's mindset* (Cp. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*).

“a spirit.” “Spirit” here could refer either to an *apparition* of a spirit-being (cp. Gal. 1:8-9) or to a *spiritual utterance*, such as a word of prophecy given by someone in the congregation. The latter is more likely. The Greek word, *pneuma* (#4151 πνεῦμα), “spirit,” is used in 1 John 4:1-3 to refer to a prophecy. And it is used in the same way in 1 Corinthians 14:12 and 32 to refer to spiritual manifestations (spiritual utterances), including prophecy. Thus Paul assures the believers in Thessalonica that no genuine prophetic word would indicate that the Day of the Lord had already arrived.

2:4. “proclaiming himself to be God.” The word for “God” in the Greek, *theos* (#2316 θεός), lacks the definite article and so could either be “God” or “a god.” The fact that there is no definite article does not demand the translation “a god,” for there are clear instances where the word lacks the article and yet refers to the true God (e.g., 2 Cor. 5:19; 1 Thess. 2:5). As Lenski points out, grammatically the word is functioning as a predicate, which is why the article is lacking here. The reason we know the antichrist proclaims himself to be *God* Himself, rather than a god, is that he sits himself in the *naos* (#3485 ναός), the holy of holies or inner sanctuary, which both early Christians and Jews would have understood to mean he was putting himself in the place of the true God (See: Earnest Best, *First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*. Black's New Testament Commentaries. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1993.).

2:5. The question posed in this verse is the figure of speech *erotēsis*, a rhetorical question (Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*). It is also a parenthesis with the continuation of thought about the man of Lawlessness flowing from verse four, picked back up in verse six.

“Used to tell you these things” cp. Williams; Kistemaker’s translation. “Used to tell” is the imperfect tense of the verb “to speak,” *lego* (#3004 λέγω). The imperfect tense highlights that Paul “was telling them,” that it was a continual or habitual practice of his while he was still with the Thessalonians. Bible preachers and teachers should take note of this: it is never enough to teach the great truths of the faith once; we must teach them over and over again, so they can sink deep into the hearts of men.

2:6. “now holding him back.” The Greek word for “now,” *nun* (#3568 νῦν), goes with “now holding back” (e.g., HCSB; ESV; NASB) not “now know” (e.g., NIV; NAB) (Lenski; Kistemaker). One of the reasons is the juxtaposition between the Antichrist “now” being held back but “will be” revealed.

“when his time comes.” Compare NRSV. This is an idiomatic translation of the Greek ἐν τῷ ἑαυτοῦ καιρῷ, literally, “in his own proper time.” This is a difficult phrase to translate, not because of its meaning, but because there are many possible English translations, each with their own set of possible misunderstandings. The meaning of the Greek is clear, that there is a proper or right time (*kairos* (#2540 καιρός)) for the man of Lawlessness to be revealed. But how to bring this into English and avoid misreadings? The translation, “in his time” (KJV; ESV; NASB) misses the important aspect of *kairos*, that the time is particularly suited for his revelation, it is the *proper* time. But to say he will be revealed at his “appointed time” (NJB) gives the sense there is a fixed date for the revealing, which is not what the Greek conveys by using *kairos*. *Kairos* is only indicating that the revealing will be at the right and proper time; this in of itself does not mean God has set an appointed date for the eschaton. Neither should we look to the translation “in his own time” (NET), for to English readers this makes it sound like it is the antichrist’s

choice of when he will be revealed, and he will do it “in his own time.” The translation that captures the sense of the Greek best for the English reader is, “he will be revealed when his time comes.” This puts the control of the revelation in God’s hands and yet recognizes that there is a proper time for him to be revealed.

2:7. “sacred secret of lawlessness.” There are multiple “sacred secrets” in scripture.

Accordingly, Paul uses the plural of *musterion* (#3466 μυστήριον) in 1 Cor. 4:1: “regard us as . . . stewards of the sacred secrets of God.” (See 1 Cor. 13:2 for another usage in the plural). Other sacred secrets spoken of in the New Testament include: the sacred secrets of the kingdom of heaven/God (Matt. 13:11; Mark 4:11; Luke 8:10;); of Israel’s partial hardening (Rom. 11:25); the content of speaking in tongues (1 Cor. 14:2); of new, transformed bodies at the return of Christ (1 Cor. 15:51); of Christ’s relationship to the church (Eph. 5:32); the sacred secret of lawlessness (2 Thess. 2:7); and of godliness (1 Tim. 3:16); as well as several mysteries in Revelation (1:20; 10:7; 17:5; 17:7).

“taken out of the way.” The Greek reads, “becomes out of the middle.” This is a Greek Idiom for saying “taken out of the way.” Thayer’s lexicon addresses this in his definition of *mesos* (#3319 μέσος), translated “middle”: i. e. out of the way, out of sight . . . γίνομαι ἐκ μέσου, to be taken out of the way, to disappear.”

“things.” This translation is purposely ambiguous as to what exactly is being held back—as the Greek is equally ambiguous. Many versions supply either *it* (e.g., ESV) or *him* (e.g., NET), thus dictating for the English reader what is being held back. If we say, “holding *it* back,” the “it” is impersonal and must refer to the sacred secret of lawlessness. If we say, “holding *him* back,” then “he” must be the man of lawlessness. However, the Greek does not specify what is being held back, it simply reads, “the one holding back.” The translation “holding *things* back” captures the ambiguous feeling of the Greek text.

“until taken out of the way.” This translation is also purposely ambiguous (see “things” above). Supplying *he is* or *it is* would designate the nature of the one holding back, putting into the translation whether this “one” is personal (“he”) or impersonal (“it”). Since the Greek is ambiguous, we have left the translation equally ambiguous: “*there is* one now holding *things* back until taken out of the way.” This leaves open what exactly is being held back and the nature of the “one” holding things back.

2:8. “the spirit from his mouth.” The word for “spirit” is *pneuma* (#4151 πνεῦμα). We retained the reading “spirit of his mouth” rather than “breath of his mouth,” feeling the former captured the phrase’s meaning more fully, and better exemplified the spirit power of the mouth. Scripture often uses the word “spirit” to refer to spiritual utterances, especially prophecy (See commentary on 1 Cor. 14:12; 14:32; and 1 John 4:1). Such is the case here; Christ pronounces destruction by the breath of his mouth. This is portrayed as a sword coming out of Christ’s mouth in Revelation 19:15, 21.

“bring to nothing *his operations*.” The verb for “bring to nothing” is *katargeo* (#2673 καταργέω), which has two primary definitions: (1) to render ineffective or powerless, and (2) to destroy or abolish. By the appearance of his coming, Christ will simultaneously *destroy* the lawless one by the prophetic utterance from his mouth and *render unproductive* all of his works on earth. The translation “bring to nothing” captures both senses. And because Paul already mentions the lawless one will be killed (seen both in this word, *katargeo*, and the word for “kill,” *anairo*), the “rendering powerless” aspect refers to any residue of influence left after the death of the lawless one—his entire

system of error is brought to nothing. Hence, Christ will “bring to nothing *his operations*.” Cp. Williams’ translation: “put a stop to his operations.”

“glorious appearance.” The word for appearance is *epiphaneia* (#2015 ἐπιφάνεια), from which we get our modern word “epiphany,” meaning, “a sudden manifestation or perception of the essential nature or meaning of something.” In Greek, the word’s base meaning is *to make visible, to shine light upon*, hence, *to appear*. *Epiphaneia* has connotations of brightness and splendor, which is brought out by several different translations (e.g., KJV: “the brightness of his coming;” see also: NIV; HCSB; NJB). To capture its full sense, we have expanded the word to “glorious coming.”

2:9. “is.” The “is” is in the present tense; it is the prophetic present, speaking of *future* events in the present tense (Kistemaker). Wallace’s grammar refers to this as the *futuristic present* (p. 535-36). The coming of the lawless one is a future event, yet Paul speaks of what his coming “is” in accord with, rather than what it “will” be in accord with. Writing in the prophetic present highlights the certainty and inevitability of lawless one’s coming (cp. Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, p. 536).

“and...and.” This repetition of the word “and” is the figure of speech *polysyndeton* (cp. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*).

2:10. “deception for those.” An alternate translation would be: “every kind of unrighteous deception *that deceives those* who are destroying themselves,” or “that reaches those.” The Greek is simply the article (“those”) in the dative case, indicating that the action of deception reaches and affects those who are destroying themselves.

“destroying themselves.” The word is in the middle voice, meaning the action of the verb comes back onto the subject itself. They are not just “perishing” (which would be passive); rather, they play a role in bringing their destruction upon themselves.

“love of the truth.” This genitive construction is amphibological, that is, it contains the figure of speech amphibologia, or multiple meanings (cp. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*). The genitive could be read as a genitive of relation (“love relating to the truth”), origin (“love that comes from the truth”), attributive genitive (“the true love”), or objective genitive (“they did not love the truth”). These people did not accept any of these possible relationships between love and truth.

“and so be saved.” In the Greek this phrase is a result clause: the *eis to* + infinitive construction. (For the *eis to* + infinitive construction and result clauses, see Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, p. 592-93, 611). These unbelievers refused the love of the truth, and by extension *refused its result*, the result that they may be saved. This result clause parallels the same expression of result in the next verse: see commentary on “so that” in 2:11.

2:11. “sends.” This verb is in the present tense, even though the sending is still a future event. This is the prophetic present; see note above on “is” in 2 Thessalonians 2:9.

“deluding influence.” Cp. NET; NASB; NAB; NJB. In Greek the phrase literally reads, he sends “a working of deception.” God does not send the lie itself, but the “working” or “power,” from *energeia* (#1753 ἐνέργεια). This power is described by the noun *plane* (#4106 πλάνη) in the genitive case. *Plane* is an “error” or “deception,” thus God sends a power that is characterized by delusion, it is a “power of delusion.” This translates into “deluding influence.”

“so that.” In the Greek this phrase is a result clause: the *eis to* + infinitive construction. (For the *eis to* + infinitive construction and result clauses, see Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, p. 592-93, 611). This result clause parallels the result clause in the

preceding verse. The unbelievers refused the love of the truth along *with the result* of being saved, and so God sends them a deluding influence *with the result* of believing what is false. These people did not love the truth but rather clung to falsehood and so God gives them what they want. They first chose the result of damnation and believing error, then God honored their decision. God does not inhibit these people's free will; they have made their free decision and now in an act of judgment God strengthens their position, much like Pharaoh who first hardened his own heart then God hardened it also.

2:12. “judged.” The Greek word is *krino* (#2919 κρίνω). Why did Paul use *krino* and not *katakrino*, which has the more obvious connotations of judicial punishment and pronouncing of a sentence? The answer is that the connotations of *krino*'s semantic range fit better with the context. *Krino* has heavy implications of making a choice or decision, having an opinion; by logical extension it is used to refer to a judicial decision, hence, “judgment.” The context of this verse centers around the *choices* of unbelievers. They “took pleasure in” (from *eudokeo*, (#2106 εὐδοκέω), which also means “to choose”) unrighteousness, and they did not accept the love of the truth but opted for falsehood. The unbelievers have made their choice, they have deemed what seems good to them and now in this verse God is making a choice in the word *krino*—He shows his divine, judicial opinion of those who did not choose Him.

2:13. “firstfruits.” We have the firstfruits of the spirit (Rom. 8:23), and we are the firstfruits of those who are saved. How can that be? Our salvation is guaranteed now, and it will be completed first when we are raptured, years before others are “saved.”

There is a textual variant reading “from the beginning” (*ap' arche*, composed of a contraction of *apo* [#575 ἀπό] meaning “from” and *arche* [#746 ἀρχή] meaning “beginning”) (KJV; NIV) rather than “firstfruits” (*aparche*, #536 ἀπαρχή). We agree with Metzger's arguments in the *Textual Commentary*, that the most likely reading is “firstfruits.” Although Paul uses the word for “firstfruits,” *aparche*, in six other places, he nowhere uses the term *arche* to refer to the beginning (except possibly Philippians 4:15). Furthermore, there are other instances when scribes have altered “firstfruits” to “from the beginning,” even though the changes do not fit the context (Rom. 16:5; Rev. 14:4). Given developing Christian theology and a trend towards predestination, we can see that there would be theological motives for scribes making the change to “chosen from the beginning,” but there are no such reasons for making the change to “firstfruits.” Also, the reading “firstfruits” is the more difficult reading, in that the Thessalonians were not technically the first in Europe to be brought the Gospel (Phillipi was), they were only among the first to be saved. In textual criticism there is a principle known as *lector difficilis* (“difficult reading”), which says the more difficult reading is likely the original because it would be more likely to be changed by later scribes trying to smooth out the tension in the text. Thus scribes who did not understand how the Thessalonians were chosen as firstfruits, and had a theological preference for the reading “from the beginning,” most likely changed the text here from *aparche* to *ap' arche*.

“belief in the truth.” Literally, “faith of the truth.” It is the objective genitive, where the word in the genitive case (“truth”) is the object of the head noun (“belief”), thus the idea is “belief in the truth.”

2:14. “for the obtaining.” The translation “for” comes from the Greek word *eis* (#1519 εἰς), which the KJV renders as “to.” The problem with the KJV translation is that it misses the meaning of *eis* here, which is to communicate the *purpose* of our calling from

God; namely, God called us for the purpose of obtaining the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. In Greek, *eis* is often used to communicate purpose (BDAG, def. 4f). On the other hand, if one is called “to” something, it usually means there is a standard to which one is called to meet. But this is not the meaning of the Greek here. We are not called *to* the obtaining of the Lord’s glory, rather, we are called *for* the obtaining of the Lord’s glory. **2:15.** “letter.” This refers to the letter of 1 Thessalonians, which was also sent from Paul, Silas, and Timothy (i.e., “us”). (Cp. Lenski).

“traditions.” Scripture uses the word for “traditions,” *paradosis* (#3862 παράδοσις), in both a negative and positive sense; there are good traditions and bad traditions. The word simply refers to instruction that has been passed down, whether good and true instruction, or bad instruction. In the Gospels it is always used in a negative sense of the Scribes and Pharisees’ “traditions of men,” which hinder the commands of God (Matt. 15:2, 3, 6; Mark 7:3, 5, 8, 9, 13). It is also used in the negative sense in Colossians 2:8. Paul uses the term three times, however, in a positive sense (1 Cor. 11:2; 2 Thess. 2:15; 3:6). We are told to be careful to adhere to the things passed down from Paul, and to remain in them.

2:17. “establish.” The versions are split between the translations “establish” and “strengthen” for *sterizo* (#4741 στηρίζω). The word means both; it refers to an internal strengthening which causes one to be committed and firmly in place. We prefer the translation “establish” over “strengthen” because the former better captures the full sense of the word. In other words, “establish” includes the idea of “strengthen,” but the term “strengthen” does not necessarily contain the idea of being established.

3:4. “confidence concerning you in the Lord.” The word for “concerning” comes from the Greek preposition *epi* (#1909 ἐπί). In this case *epi* does not here have its usual meaning of “over” or “upon.” Rather, it is functioning as a “marker of feelings directed toward someone” (BDAG, def. 15). Paul is expressing his feelings of confidence towards the Thessalonians.

3:6. “disorderly.” The word “disorderly” comes from the Greek *ataktos* (#814 ἀτάκτως). The term has been translated numerous ways: “idleness,” “unruly,” “responsively,” “undisciplined,” and “disorderly.” Etymologically, it comes from the prefix *a-*, meaning “not”, and *taktos*, meaning “in order,” “proper”; and so literally, the word means “not in order,” or “not proper.” The word does not specifically refer to “idleness,” as many versions translate it (E.g., ESV; NRSV), but rather speaks more of improper behavior generally. Although, from the context of the epistle we can see that the disorderly behavior was idleness: “the specific manner in which the irresponsible behavior manifests itself is described in the context: freeloading, sponging” (BDAG, *ataktos*).

3:10. “and indeed.” The Greek reads *kai gar*. The word *gar* is often used as a logical connection, “for,” but here it is not so used. There is more of a break intended. Lenski calls this the “confirmatory *gar*,” which does not imply a logical connection from what proceeds, rather it simply confirms it—hence the translation “indeed.”

“used to give.” Compare the NASB and NET translations. The rendering “used to” comes out of the imperfect tense of the verb. The imperfect tense denotes continual past action—we gave and kept on giving the command—and thus frequently implies habitual, customary behavior. By employing the imperfect tense here Paul is saying, “It was our custom to give you this command while we were with you.” This is a good reminder that

we ought to continuously teach and reteach the truths of proper Christian living—we must relay the commands of the Lord again and again.

3:11. “not busy at work, but busybodies.” The Greek of this phrase contains a play on words—it is the figure of speech *paregmenon*, the repetition of words derived from the same root (Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*). In Greek, the words “busy at work” and “bushybodies” have the same root word meaning “work,” but the word “bushybodies” adds *peri* as a prefix—*ergazomai* (#2038 ἐργάζομαι) and *peri-ergazomai* (#4020 περιεργάζομαι). The word *ergazomai* is usually translated simply “work,” however, in this case, to capture the play on words, it was translated “busy at work.” It is fitting that Paul writes this admonition to the Thessalonian church, for it was precisely said to be “bushybodies” who fomented the mob against Paul and company in Acts 17:5.

3:12. “busy working.” This is the same word in 3:11, see commentary there.

“in a quiet fashion.” The description “quiet” is adverbial, describing how they are to work. The term does not literally mean there is to be no talking during work hours, but, referring to the previous verse, they are not to be bushybodies.

“to eat their own bread.” This is an idiomatic way of saying “earn your own living” (ESV; NRSV), i.e., you work, make money, buy food, and then you eat it. We might say “pay your own way.”

3:13. “do not grow weary doing what is right.” The Greek text does not have the word “in,” as most versions do; e.g., the NRSV reads, “do not be weary in doing what is right.” We felt adding the word “in” was unnecessary and slightly changes the meaning of the verse.

3:14. “in this letter.” The Greek does not read “in” but “through,” from the preposition *dia* (#1223 διὰ), which is here used to indicate *means by which* (Cp. Appendix on Greek Prepositions). The understanding is, “our word [which came] through the means of this letter.” Compare also the usage of *dia* in 2 John 1:12: “Though I have many things to write to you, I don’t want to do so **with** [Gk: *dia*] paper and ink.”

“so that.” This is a purpose-result clause; see Matt. 2:15 commentary, “resulting in...what was spoken being fulfilled.” The Thessalonians are to avoid such a brother with the *purpose* of his being shamed, and with the *result* that he is in fact shamed.

“put to shame.” This verb is in the passive voice, meaning the action of shaming comes upon the brother, rather than describing his internal state. It is not “be ashamed,” which would imply the feelings rise up in the person himself; rather, the shaming comes upon him, he is “put to shame.”

3:16. “may.” The verb translated “may...give” is in the optative mood, which expresses Paul’s wish—thus the translation “may.” Though the Western text also has the optative mood of this verb, the KJV does not render it correctly, but puts the verse as a command of sorts to God: “Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace...” This translation is unfortunate because the optative does not express a command, but rather Paul’s heart for the Thessalonians.

“at all times.” This phrase is a Greek idiom comprised of the words *dia pantos*, literally meaning “through all.” When placed together, *dia pantos* has the meaning of “always” or “continually” (BDAG, *dia* def. 2a).

“in every way.” The word “way” is from the Greek *tropos* (#5158 τρόπος), meaning “manner,” “way,” or “kind.” The meaning is that Paul wishes that in every different manner God can bring peace, may he do it. Cp. the KJV, “by all means.”

“The Lord *be* with you all.” The Greek text does not have “be” in the sentence, but the sentence makes sense in Greek without the “to be” verb. This verse at the close of the epistle is a wish and prayer that the Lord would be with the Thessalonians in a powerful and evident way (see note on 1 Thess. 5:28). However, due to the way the Greek text is worded, it can also mean “The Lord *is* with you all.” While that is not the primary meaning in this context, it is a legitimate translation and meaning of the Greek, and is true. Thus, by wording the Greek the way it is, Paul expresses his prayer that the Lord be actively with the Thessalonians to help and guide them, while at the same time reminding them that the Lord is in fact with them. It is possible to look at this verse as the figure of speech *amphibologia*, where one thing is said, but two things are meant.

3:18. “*be* with you all.” This is very similar to the ending line of 1 Thessalonians (1 Thess. 5:28), see the note on that verse, and compare this verse to verse 16 above. “you all.” This is different than the way the epistle of 1 Thessalonians ends, which does not have the word “all.” Reading and comparing both the epistle of 1 Thessalonians and 2 Thessalonians shows that the divisions in the church at Thessalonica were not specifically dealt with in 1 Thessalonians. The church was seen as having persecution problems from the outside, needed knowledge on several different issues, and needed to deal with a couple issues of sin. However, 2 Thessalonians makes it clear that there were believers in the church who were disorderly busybodies (2 Thess. 3:6-12), and some who would not obey Paul’s teaching, with whom the rest of the church was not to associate (2 Thess. 3:14, 15). In light of the obvious division in the church, there may have been a temptation to assume that Paul’s wish and prayer for grace was only directed to the believers who were obedient to the doctrine, but Paul makes it clear by placing the word “all” at the end of the sentence that he desires every single Christian to live in the grace of God, and that every single Christian has the grace of God upon him.