

Malcolm's Monday Musings : 12 August 2024

Greetings.

On account of the size of today's main items below, I have only a handful of individual 'Musings' for you in this covering note:

(i) Samson's father and mother 'did not know that it was of the Lord, that He was seeking an occasion against the Philistines' (Judg. 14. 4).

'When Samson's parents warn him of the consequences, he simply overrides them, and they acquiesce. True, they did not know that "this was of the Lord", in the same way that the selling of Joseph into slavery in Egypt was of the Lord; but that did not make the human actions right'.

(D. A. Carson, *'For the Love of God'*, Volume 1, meditation for 31 July.)

(ii) 'Before I was afflicted, I went astray; but now ...' (Psa. 119. 67).

'Everyone has noticed how hard it is to turn our thoughts to God when everything is going well with us. We "have all we want" is a terrible saying when "all" does not include God. We find God an interruption.

'As St. Augustine says somewhere, "God wants to give us something, but cannot, because our hands are full—there's nowhere for Him to put it". Or as a friend of mine said, "we regard God as an airman regards his parachute; it's there for emergencies but he hopes he'll never have to use it".

'Now God, who has made us, knows what we are and that our happiness lies in Him. Yet we will not seek it in Him as long as He leaves us any other resort where it can even plausibly be looked for. While what we call "our own life" remains agreeable we will not surrender it to Him.

'What then can God do in our interests but make "our own life" less agreeable to us, and take away the plausible sources of false happiness? It is just here, where God's providence seems at first to be most cruel, that ... the stooping down of the Highest most deserves praise'.

(C. S. Lewis, *'The Problem of Pain'*, 1948, page 84.)

(iii) Seven things opened.

1. 'The eyes (Isa. 42. 7).
2. 'The ears (Isa. 50. 5).
3. 'The heart (Acts 16. 14).
4. 'The mouth (Psa. 51. 15).
5. 'The Scriptures (Luke 24. 32).
6. 'The understanding (Luke 24. 45).
7. 'The door for service (1 Cor. 16. 9)'.
(S. R. Briggs and J. H. Elliott, *'Notes for Bible Readings'*, 1877, page 239.)

(iv) 'In the world you shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.' (John 16. 33).

'We are Easter people living in a Good Friday world'.

(B. Johnson, *'Splashes of Joy in the Cesspools of Life'*, page 193.)

And, finally,

(v) 'Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word' (2 Thess. 2. 16–17).

'This is another example of Thessalonian prayers addressed to Jesus as much as to God (cf. 1 Thess. 3. 11-13; 2 Thess. 3. 5, 16). The longer prayer just quoted in full, names the Son before the Father, and some of the other prayers are addressed to the Lord Jesus alone.

'The Thessalonian letters—and 2 Thessalonians in particular—add substantially to the list of biblical prayers addressed to God the Son.

'Simplistic searching often turns up only a very small number of such prayers (Acts 7. 59–60; Rev. 22. 20; likely also Acts 1. 24–25; 1 Cor. 16. 22), leading theologians and prayer manuals to insist that

biblical prayers are all but exclusively addressed to God the Father. We are indebted to 2 Thessalonians for redressing this balance’.

(Andrew Malone, ‘*What Is Distinct about the Theology of 2 Thessalonians?*’, accessed at ... [https://www.crossway.org/articles/what-is-distinct-about-the-theology-of-2-thessalonians/.](https://www.crossway.org/articles/what-is-distinct-about-the-theology-of-2-thessalonians/))

When I came across this last quotation recently, it reminded me of the concluding section of two articles which I wrote many years ago for the Precious Seed magazine. Those articles were titled, ‘**Paul’s Early Prayers**’.

I have combined those articles into a single document and (with kind permission) set out below two versions of that document:

Version 1 : a slightly adapted, monolingual (English only—no Greek!) version for easy reading;
and,

Version 2 : for the more studious, the original version (updated and expanded—principally, the Notes).

Happy reading.

Yours in our Lord Jesus,

Malcolm

Paul's Early Prayers¹

Version 1

Introduction

The major divisions in the Epistles to the Thessalonians are marked by Paul's use of two almost identical Greek expressions, rendered, in order, 'Finally then, brethren'² and 'Finally then, brethren'.³

In both Epistles, the section before the relevant expression is largely taken up with personal references, narrative and explanations and the section following is taken up with ethical demands and instructions. (Interestingly, the distinctly prophetic sections⁴ occur in the second part of 1 Thessalonians and the first part of 2 Thessalonians.)

Following the word 'Finally' in 1 Thessalonians 4. 1, there is an appeal that the saints should 'walk' in a certain way and, following the word in 2 Thessalonians 3. 1, there is a prayer request that the Word of God might 'run'.

Paul's devout desires

One of the most interesting features of Paul's letters to Thessalonica consists of the devout desires which conclude each of the four main sections indicated above.

These are not properly prayers as such, because God is not actually addressed. Nevertheless, they provide clear evidence of Paul's manner of praying. They tell us *for what* he prayed and *to whom* he prayed. For ease of reference, we will describe Paul's desires as prayers below.

The references are as follows: -

- (1) 'Now may our God and Father Himself, and our Lord Jesus Christ ...'.⁵
- (2) 'Now may the God of peace Himself ...'.⁶
- (3) 'Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father ...'.⁷
- (4) 'Now may the Lord of peace Himself ...'.⁸

It will be seen that each section of Paul's Epistles is closed by a prayer, introduced by 'Now may ... Himself,' together with a divine name/divine names. In the Greek, the word 'Himself' stands at the beginning of each sentence for emphasis. The word is used universally to distinguish one person from another, to contrast one person with another or to give somebody emphatic prominence.⁹

References (1) and (3).

Both prayers are addressed to two divine Persons and the following points should be noted.

(i) The two Persons are bound together by verbs in the singular: 'direct',¹⁰ and 'comfort' and 'establish'.¹¹ It is clear that Paul regarded the unity of the Father and the Son to be of such importance that, to safeguard it, he was prepared to set aside the simple grammatical rule that a verb must agree with its subject in number. Indeed, J. B. Lightfoot has commented that 'There is probably *no instance* in St. Paul of a *plural adjective or verb*, where these two Persons of the Godhead are mentioned'.¹²

(ii) The two Persons are also bound together by the use of the singular 'Himself', as opposed to 'themselves' (as, for example, 'they themselves did not go into the Praetorium'¹³).

(iii) 'The "Himself" binds together the two subjects, God and the Lord, as the conjunct object of Paul's prayer'.¹⁴ As in many ways,¹⁵ here God the Father and the Lord Jesus act in concert. We note also that, while 'the Lord Jesus is united with the Father in respect of His Godhead, He is distinguished from the Father in respect of His personality'.¹⁶

(iv) The order in which the two Persons is mentioned is different: in the one case the mention of the Father precedes that of the Son,¹⁷ whereas in the other case this order is reversed.¹⁸

These observations carry weighty implications for our understanding of the status and dignity of the Lord Jesus. They point convincingly to His deity and equality with the Father.

It has been pointed out that ‘here is a strict monotheist praying with ease to both the Father and the Son, focusing first on the one and then the other, and without a sense that his monotheism is being stretched or is in some kind of danger’.¹⁹

And it is well said that ‘to the mind of the apostle, God the Father and the Lord Jesus were so one that the same prayer is presented to both without distinction—there being, as the singular implies, equality of power and oneness of operation ... unity of will. But equality of power and unity of will imply a higher unity—even unity of essence’.²⁰

In every way possible the apostle showed that he thought of the Father and the Son as equal in honour and position ... he interchanged the order of the names, bound them both together in a single ‘Himself’ and then construed both cases with a singular verb!

In the light of this evidence, it cannot be doubted that ‘Christ is one with the Father in the prerogative of hearing and answering prayer’²¹ for the very same prayers were presented to both the Father and the Son without any distinction being made as to will, power or status.

We remember that only to One possessed of full deity can worship and prayer be directed: (i) ‘You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve’;²² (ii) ‘I fell down at (the angel’s) feet to worship him but he said to me, “You must not do that! ... worship God’.²³

References (2) and (4).

When taken together, these two verses²⁴ serve to reinforce the conclusions reached above as to the deity of Christ.

There is one self-evident point of contact between them. This consists of the expression ‘of peace’. The first verse refers to ‘the God of peace’²⁵ and the second to ‘the Lord of peace’.²⁶ That is, both God and the Lord are characterized by ‘peace’, in all likelihood, pointing to its source and origin.

All four references.

Taking the four references together, we find that Paul addressed (i) one prayer to God, (ii) one prayer to the Lord and (iii) two to both God and the Lord (with the order varied). Benjamin Warfield’s comment is therefore fully justified. ‘He prays thus indifferently to God or the Lord separately and to God and the Lord together’.²⁷

Let us see now how each of the four prayers reflects Paul’s conviction about the bankruptcy of all human effort apart from divine aid. We consider each prayer in turn:

1. Prayer for a Successful Journey:

‘Now may our God and Father Himself, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way to you’.²⁸

Paul had long desired to visit the Thessalonians²⁹ but Satan had ‘hindered’ him to date.³⁰ The apostle does not specify how Satan had achieved this. It may be that he ‘is thinking of an illness, or a prohibition on the part of the Thessalonian authorities, in which Paul might well see a cunning stratagem of Satan’.³¹

The Greek verb translated, ‘hindered’ is used in secular writings with the meaning ‘to impede, to arrest, from the military practice of making slits in the street to hold up a pursuing enemy. Hence the basic meaning is “to block the way”. By derivation only, a temporary hold-up is suggested’.³²

In the face of the devil’s having “broken up the road” in his path, Paul desires that God and the Lord will ‘direct’ his way (i.e. ‘make his path straight that he might pass’³³) to them. This request provides an example of the content of the frequent prayers which the apostle mentioned in the previous verse.³⁴

In the light of his previous abortive attempts to reach Thessalonica, it is, then, to God and the Lord jointly that the apostle looks to grant him a successful journey. Possibly with his mind on the Greek Old Testament rendering of Psalm 37. 23 (‘The steps of a man are rightly ordered by the Lord’),³⁵ Paul realizes that God alone can fulfil his desire. ‘Only when the *directing* is undertaken by God and Christ is its success assured, for then the hindrances of the devil are without power’.³⁶

The apostle feared that Satan's purpose was to 'tempt the believers in his absence, and so to render his labour vain.'³⁷ It should be observed that, on this occasion (as often), Satan had overreached himself. His success occasioned Paul's enforced absence from the Thessalonians, and thereby caused the apostle to write his two Epistles, 'which have enriched the churches and comforted the saints ever since'.³⁸

Take heart, fellow-saint—Satan is neither *omniscient* (hence, his bad tactical error) nor *omnipotent* (hence, Paul's confident prayer).

2. Prayer for Practical Sanctification:

'Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely'.³⁹

Paul's desire that God will 'sanctify' the believers 'wholly' (KJV) must be read in the light of the preceding section. The apostle has given detailed guidance and commands on the subject of holiness.⁴⁰ He recognizes, however, that all the Thessalonians' efforts and strivings after spirituality will prove entirely fruitless unless God Himself affords His aid and sanctifying grace. Paul, therefore, prays that God will strengthen them for the duties and work in them the virtues, which he has set before them.

His desire is that they should be sanctified 'complete in reference to amount, that in which nothing is wanting essential to aim or end'.⁴¹ It stands parallel to his demand, 'abstain from every form of evil'.⁴² Paul is confident that he does not pray in vain: 'He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it'.⁴³

'Since those addressed were already saints, i.e., "sanctified ones", the apostle must be understood here to desire for them the continuous and complete realization of this calling, that by His power they might be enabled to live consistently with the fact that every part of their complex being belonged to God'.⁴⁴

3. Prayer for Comfort and Stability:

'Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father ... comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work'.⁴⁵

Paul is writing to put the saints' minds at rest on certain prophetic matters,⁴⁶ errors concerning which he fears may cause them to be 'shaken' ('agitated', the word used of the tossing and roaring of the sea⁴⁷).⁴⁸ Paul acknowledges, however, that, in the final analysis, only God Himself can truly 'comfort' and 'establish' ('confirm') them.

'Himself', the opening word of verse 16 in the Greek text, stands in direct contrast to 'our', the closing word of verse 15, again, in the Greek text. Paul, that is, is fully aware that his exhortation there to 'stand fast' will have been in vain unless strength comes from a higher and divine source.⁴⁹ The so-called 'Church Father', John Chrysostom, paraphrased Paul's meaning well, "I indeed have spoken this; but the whole is of God ... to strengthen, to confirm you".⁵⁰

Both words 'comfort' and 'establish' figure often in Paul's correspondence with the Thessalonians.

The word translated 'comfort' occurs frequently there.⁵¹ In the majority of these cases, it means 'to exhort', but here, as in several other instances,⁵² it means 'to comfort, to console, to encourage'. It is employed largely in the Greek Old Testament as a rendering for a Hebrew word which mainly signifies comfort in grief, such as is felt during a time of bereavement.⁵³

The word translated 'establish' occurs four times in the apostle's letters to Thessalonica.⁵⁴ Derived from a stem meaning 'a prop', the word signifies 'to set fast', 'to make firm and stable' and, elsewhere, is rendered 'fixed'⁵⁵ and 'strengthen'.⁵⁶

It has been helpfully suggested that 'besides noting what Paul explicitly prays for, it might help us to notice what he *doesn't* pray for. (i) He *doesn't* pray that they will be immediately removed from the dark days in which they find themselves. **Instead**, he prays that God would comfort them in light of the eternal comfort they have in Christ. And (ii) he *doesn't* ask that they be spared the suffering they had been enduring. **Instead**, he asks that God would strengthen their hearts "in every good work and word".⁵⁷

4. Prayer for Peace:

'Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always in every way'.⁵⁸

Paul makes his final appeal to ‘the Lord of peace’.⁵⁹ The apostle ‘has done his best to tranquillize his readers’ minds, and bring them all to a sober and orderly condition. But he looks to ‘the Lord of peace Himself to shed on them His all-controlling and all-reconciling influence’.⁶⁰ Because He is “the Lord of peace”, He is uniquely qualified to “give peace”.⁶¹

In considering the Greek word for ‘peace’, ‘as used in the New Testament, we observe the influence of the Hebrew word “*shalom*”, which denotes a state of wellbeing, and only in the derivative manner “peace” in contrast with strife’.⁶² That is, in its widest and profoundest sense, the word rendered ‘peace’ embraces the ideas of wholeness, salvation and blessedness.⁶³

On occasions, the word signifies, in particular, ‘that calm of heart which comes from faith in God and is independent of circumstances’.⁶⁴ In the context here, however, it is probably to be understood as at least including the idea of peace with one another, of harmony and concord, representing the opposite of friction and division.⁶⁵

Summary and conclusion

Taking the four prayers together, (1) that open doors for service,⁶⁶ (2) that progressive sanctification,⁶⁷ (3) that comfort and stability⁶⁸ and (4) that true peace⁶⁹ come from God and the Lord Jesus.

We have noted that, of Paul’s four prayers, (i) one was addressed to God,⁷⁰ (ii) one to the Lord,⁷¹ and (iii) two to both God and the Lord (with the order varied).⁷² To my mind, this structure drives us, inescapably, to conclude the propriety of *addressing the Lord Jesus in prayer*.

As I see it, the evidence of these prayers, coming as they do from two of Paul’s earliest Epistles extant, confirms the impression which I gain from his later writings that the apostle prayed often to the Lord Jesus.⁷³

The evidence is that Paul turned to the Lord in prayer⁷⁴ with the same freedom and spontaneity as he did to ‘God the Father’. It has been well said that ‘integral to the apostle’s theology is that Paul prays to the Lord Jesus just as he prays to the Father. He does not defend or justify the practice. We can only assume that the new disciples had heard him praying to God the Father and to the Lord Jesus from the very first’.⁷⁵

It should come as no surprise, therefore, that Paul characterizes other believers as doing the same: ‘those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with *all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord*’.⁷⁶

Let us, therefore, readily make our prayers, give our thanks and ascribe our praise to the One who loves us,⁷⁷ and who gave Himself for us.

[The relevant ‘Notes’ to Version 1 are set out below—numbers 1-77.]

Paul's Early Prayers⁷⁸

Version 2

Introduction

The major divisions in the Epistles to the Thessalonians are marked by Paul's use of two almost identical Greek expressions, 'Λοιπὸν οὖν, ἀδελφοί',⁷⁹ and 'Τὸ λοιπὸν ... ἀδελφοί'.⁸⁰

In both Epistles, the section before the relevant expression is largely taken up with personal references, narrative and explanations, and the section following is taken up with ethical demands and instructions. (Interestingly, the distinctly prophetic sections⁸¹ occur in the second part of 1 Thessalonians and the first part of 2 Thessalonians.)

Following the word 'Λοιπὸν' in 1 Thessalonians 4. 1, there is an appeal that the saints should 'walk' ('περισσεύητε') in a certain way, and, following the word in 2 Thessalonians 3. 1, there is a prayer request that the Word of God might 'run' ('τρέχη').

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These are not properly prayers as such, because God is not actually addressed. Nevertheless, they provide clear evidence of Paul's manner of praying.⁸² They tell us *for what* he prayed and *to whom* he prayed. For ease of reference, we will describe Paul's desires as prayers below.

The references are as follows: -

- (1) 'Αὐτὸς δὲ ὁ θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ ἡμῶν καὶ ὁ κύριος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦς ...'.⁸³
- (2) 'Αὐτὸς δὲ ὁ θεὸς τῆς εἰρήνης ...'.⁸⁴
- (3) 'Αὐτὸς δὲ ὁ κύριος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς καὶ ὁ θεὸς ὁ πατὴρ ἡμῶν ...'.⁸⁵
- (4) 'Αὐτὸς δὲ ὁ κύριος τῆς εἰρήνης ...'.⁸⁶

It will be seen that each section of Paul's Epistles is closed by a prayer, introduced by 'Αὐτὸς δὲ' together with a divine name or with divine names. The word 'αὐτὸς' stands at the beginning of each sentence for emphasis. The word is used universally to distinguish one person from another, to contrast one person with another or to give somebody emphatic prominence.⁸⁷

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Both prayers are addressed to two divine Persons, and the following points should be noted.

(i) The two Persons are bound together by verbs in the singular: 'κατευθύναί',⁸⁸ and 'παρακαλέσαι' and 'στηρίξαι'.⁸⁹ It is clear that Paul regarded the unity of the Father and the Son to be of such importance that, to safeguard it, he was prepared to set aside the simple grammatical rule that a verb must agree with its subject in number. Indeed, J. B. Lightfoot has commented that 'There is probably *no instance* in St. Paul of a plural adjective or verb, where these two Persons of the Godhead are mentioned'.⁹⁰ We may compare in this connection, 1 Thessalonians 1. 1 and 2 Thessalonians 1. 1, where the two Persons are united after the single 'in'.

(ii) The two Persons are also bound together by the use of the singular 'αὐτὸς', as opposed to 'αὐτοί' (for which see, by way of example, 'αὐτοὶ οὐκ εἰσῆλθον εἰς τὸ πραιτώριον'⁹¹).⁹²

(iii) 'The "αὐτὸς" binds together the two subjects. God and the Lord, as the conjunct object of Paul's prayer'.⁹³ As in many ways,⁹⁴ here God the Father and the Lord Jesus act in concert. We note also that, while 'the Lord Jesus is united with the Father in respect of His Godhead, He is distinguished from the Father in respect of His personality'.⁹⁵

(iv) The order in which the two Persons is mentioned is different: in the one case the mention of the Father precedes that of the Son,⁹⁶ whereas in the other case this order is reversed.⁹⁷

These observations carry weighty implications for our understanding of the status and dignity of the Lord Jesus. They point convincingly to His deity and equality with the Father.

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And it is well said that ‘to the mind of the apostle, God the Father and the Lord Jesus were so one that the same prayer is presented to both without distinction—there being, as the singular implies, equality of power and oneness of operation ... unity of will. But equality of power and unity of will imply a higher unity—even unity of essence’.⁹⁹

In every way possible the apostle showed that he thought of the Father and the Son as equal in honour and position ... he interchanged the order of the names, bound them both together in a single ‘*Αὐτὸς*’, and then construed both cases with a singular verb!

In the light of this evidence, it cannot be doubted that ‘Christ is one with the Father in the prerogative of hearing and answering prayer’,¹⁰⁰ for the very same prayers were presented to both the Father and the Son without any distinction’s being made as to will, power or status.¹⁰¹

We remember that only to One possessed of full deity can worship and prayer be directed: (i) ‘You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve’;¹⁰² (ii) ‘I fell down at (the angel’s) feet to worship him, but he said to me, “You must not do that! ... worship God (*τῷ θεῷ προσκύνησον*)’.¹⁰³

References (2) and (4).

When taken together, these two verses¹⁰⁴ serve to reinforce the conclusions reached above as to the deity of Christ.

There is one self-evident point of contact between them. This consists of the expression *τῆς εἰρήνης*. The first verse refers to *ὁ θεὸς τῆς εἰρήνης*¹⁰⁵ and the second to *ὁ κύριος τῆς εἰρήνης*.¹⁰⁶ That is, both God and the Lord are characterized by *εἰρήνης*, in all likelihood, pointing to its source and origin.

All four references.

Taking the four references together, we find that Paul addressed (i) one prayer to God, (ii) one prayer to the Lord and (iii) two to both God and the Lord (with the order varied). Benjamin Warfield’s comment is therefore fully justified. ‘He prays thus indifferently to God or the Lord separately and to God and the Lord together’.¹⁰⁷

Let us see now how each of the four prayers reflects Paul’s conviction about the bankruptcy of all human effort apart from divine aid. We consider each prayer in turn:

1. Prayer for a Successful Journey:

*‘Αὐτὸς δὲ ὁ θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ ἡμῶν καὶ ὁ κύριος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦς κατευθύναι τὴν ὁδὸν ἡμῶν πρὸς ὑμᾶς’.*¹⁰⁸

Paul had long desired to visit the Thessalonians¹⁰⁹ but Satan had ‘hindered’ (*ἐνέκομην*) him to date.¹¹⁰ The apostle does not specify how Satan had achieved this. It may be that he ‘is thinking of an illness, or a prohibition on the part of the Thessalonian authorities, in which Paul might well see a cunning stratagem of Satan’.¹¹¹

The verb *ἐγκόπτω* is used in secular writings with the meaning ‘to impede, to arrest, from the military practice of making slits in the street to hold up a pursuing enemy. Hence the basic meaning is “to block the way”. By derivation only, a temporary hold-up is suggested’.¹¹²

In the face of the devil’s having “broken up the road” in his path, Paul desires that God and the Lord will *κατευθύναι*¹¹³ his way (i.e., ‘make his path straight that he might pass’¹¹⁴) to them.¹¹⁵ This request

provides an example of the content of the frequent prayers which the apostle mentioned in the previous verse.¹¹⁶

In the light of his previous abortive attempts to reach Thessalonica, it is, then, to God and the Lord jointly that the apostle looks to remove all barriers and to grant him a successful journey.¹¹⁷ Possibly with his mind on the Greek Old Testament rendering of Psalm 37. 23 (*‘παρὰ κυρίου τὰ διαβήματα ἀνθρώπου κατευθύνεται’*—‘The steps of a man are rightly ordered by the Lord’),¹¹⁸ Paul realizes that God alone can fulfil his desire. ‘Only when the *directing* is undertaken by God and Christ is its success assured, for then the hindrances of the devil are without power’.¹¹⁹

The apostle feared that Satan’s purpose was to ‘tempt the believers in his absence, and so to render his labour vain.’¹²⁰ It should be observed that, on this occasion (as often), Satan had overreached himself. His success occasioned Paul’s enforced absence from the Thessalonians and thereby caused the apostle to write his two Epistles, ‘which have enriched the churches and comforted the saints ever since’.¹²¹

Take heart, fellow-saint—Satan is neither *omniscient* (hence, his bad tactical error) nor *omnipotent* (hence, Paul’s confident prayer).

2. Prayer for Practical Sanctification:

‘Αὐτὸς δὲ ὁ θεὸς τῆς εἰρήνης ἀγιάσαι ὑμᾶς ὀλοτελεῖς’.¹²²

Paul’s desire that God will ‘ἀγιάσαι’ (‘sanctify’) the believers ‘wholly’ (KJV) must be read in the light of the preceding section. The apostle has given detailed guidance and commands on the subject of holiness.¹²³ He recognizes, however, that all the Thessalonians’ efforts and strivings after spirituality will prove entirely fruitless unless God Himself affords His aid and sanctifying grace. Paul, therefore, prays that God will strengthen them for the duties and work in them the virtues, which he has set before them.

The verb ‘ὀλοτελεῖς’ is ‘a compound that connotes the doing of something completely (‘ὅλος’) and carrying through to the finish (‘τέλο’).’¹²⁴ Paul’s desire, then, is that they should be sanctified ‘complete in reference to amount, that in which nothing is wanting essential to aim or end’.¹²⁵

It stands parallel to his demand, ‘abstain from every form of evil’.¹²⁶ Paul is confident that he does not pray in vain: ‘He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it’.¹²⁷

‘Since those addressed were already saints, i.e., “sanctified ones”, the apostle must be understood here to desire for them the continuous and complete realization of this calling, that by His power they might be enabled to live consistently with the fact that every part of their complex being belonged to God’.¹²⁸

It is certainly true that ‘Paul was never afraid to aim high in his prayers.’¹²⁹ His prayer for the Thessalonians was for their total sanctification’.¹³⁰

3. Prayer for Comfort and Stability:

‘Αὐτὸς δὲ ὁ κύριος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς καὶ θεὸς ὁ πατὴρ ἡμῶν ... παρακαλέσαι ὑμῶν τὰς καρδίας καὶ στηρίξαι ἐν παντὶ ἔργῳ καὶ λόγῳ ἀγαθῷ’.¹³¹

Paul is writing to put the saints’ minds at rest on certain prophetic matters,¹³² errors concerning which he fears may cause them to be ‘*θροεῖσθαι*’ (‘*shaken*’, ‘*agitated*’, the word used of the tossing and roaring of the sea¹³³).¹³⁴

Paul acknowledges, however, that, in the final analysis, not he but only God Himself can truly ‘*παρακαλέσαι*’ and ‘*στηρίξαι*’ (‘*establish*’, ‘*confirm*’) them.

‘*Αὐτὸς*’, the opening word of verse 16, ‘stands in direct contrast to ‘*ἡμῶν*’, the closing word of verse 15. Paul, that is, is fully aware that his exhortation there to ‘stand fast’ will have been in vain unless strength comes from a higher and divine source.¹³⁵ The so-called ‘Church Father’, John Chrysostom, paraphrased Paul’s meaning well, “I indeed have spoken this; but the whole is of God ... to strengthen, to confirm you’.¹³⁶

Both words ‘*παρακαλέσαι*’ and ‘*στηρίξαι*’ figure often in Paul’s correspondence with the Thessalonians.

The verb *παρακαλέω* occurs very frequently there.¹³⁷ In the majority of these cases, it means 'to exhort', but here, as in several other instances,¹³⁸ it means 'to comfort, to console, to encourage'. It is employed largely in the Greek Old Testament as a rendering for *דנה* (*'na-kham*), a Hebrew word which mainly signifies comfort in grief, such as is felt during a time of bereavement.¹³⁹

*The verb 'Στηρίξαι' occurs four times in the apostle's letters to Thessalonica.*¹⁴⁰ Derived from a stem meaning 'a prop', the word signifies 'to set fast', 'to make firm and stable' and, elsewhere, is rendered 'fixed'¹⁴¹ and 'strengthen'.¹⁴²

It has been helpfully suggested that 'besides noting what Paul explicitly prays for, it might help us to notice what he *doesn't* pray for. (i) He *doesn't* pray that they will be immediately removed from the dark days in which they find themselves. **Instead**, he prays that God would comfort them in light of the eternal comfort they have in Christ. And (ii) he *doesn't* ask that they be spared the suffering they had been enduring. **Instead**, he asks that God would strengthen their hearts "in every good work and word".¹⁴³

4. Prayer for Peace:

Ἀὐτὸς δὲ ὁ κύριος τῆς εἰρήνης δῶη ὑμῖν τὴν εἰρήνην διὰ παντὸς ἐν παντὶ τρόπῳ.¹⁴⁴

Paul makes his final appeal to *ὁ κύριος τῆς εἰρήνης*.¹⁴⁵ The apostle 'has done his best to tranquillize his readers' minds, and bring them all to a sober and orderly condition. But he looks to 'the Lord of peace Himself to shed on them His all-controlling and all-reconciling influence'.¹⁴⁶ 'Because He is "the Lord of peace", He is uniquely qualified to "give peace"'.¹⁴⁷

In considering *εἰρήνη* (*'peace*'), 'as used in the New Testament, we observe the influence of the Hebrew word *שָׁלוֹם* (*'shalom*'), which denotes a state of wellbeing, and only in the derivative manner "peace" in contrast with strife'.¹⁴⁸ That is, in its widest and profoundest sense, *εἰρήνη*, embraces the ideas of wholeness, salvation and blessedness.¹⁴⁹

On occasions, the word signifies, in particular, 'that calm of heart which comes from faith in God and is independent of circumstances'.¹⁵⁰ In the context here, however, it is probably to be understood as at least including the idea of peace with one another, of harmony and concord, representing the opposite of friction and division.¹⁵¹

"At all times" ("*διὰ παντὸς*") asks that there be no break in the flow of Christ's peace; "in every way" ("*ἐν παντὶ τρόπῳ*") asks that the prevalence of peace continue, no matter what the outward conditions'.¹⁵²

Summary and conclusion

Taking the four prayers together, we learn (1) that open doors for service,¹⁵³ (2) that progressive sanctification,¹⁵⁴ (3) that comfort and stability¹⁵⁵ and (4) that true peace¹⁵⁶ come from God and the Lord Jesus.

We have noted that, of Paul's four prayers, (i) one was addressed to God,¹⁵⁷ (ii) one to the Lord,¹⁵⁸ and (iii) two to both God and the Lord (with the order varied).¹⁵⁹ To my mind, this structure drives us, inescapably, to conclude the propriety of addressing the Lord Jesus in prayer.

As I see it, the evidence of these prayers, coming as they do from two of Paul's earliest Epistles extant, confirms the impression which I gain from his later writings that the apostle prayed often to the Lord Jesus.¹⁶⁰

The evidence is that Paul turned to the Lord in prayer¹⁶¹ with the same freedom and spontaneity as he did to 'God the Father'.¹⁶² It has been well said that 'integral to the apostle's theology is that Paul prays to the Lord Jesus just as he prays to the Father. He does not defend or justify the practice. We can only assume that the new disciples had heard him praying to God the Father and to the Lord Jesus from the very first'.¹⁶³

It should come as no surprise, therefore, that Paul characterizes other believers as doing the same: 'those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with *all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord*'.¹⁶⁴

Let us, therefore, readily make our prayers, give our thanks and ascribe our praise to the One who loves us,¹⁶⁵ and who gave Himself for us.

[The relevant 'Notes' to Version 2 are set out below—numbers 78-165.]

Notes

Version 1

¹ Reproduced, with kind permission, from the Precious Seed magazine, Volume 33 Issue 6 (1982) and Volume 34 Issue 1 (1983).

² 1 Thess. 4. 1.

³ 2 Thess. 3. 1.

⁴ 1 Thess. 4. 13 to 5. 11 and 2 Thess. 2. 1-12.

⁵ 1 Thess. 3. 11.

⁶ 1 Thess. 5. 23.

⁷ 2 Thess. 2. 16.

⁸ 2 Thess. 3. 16.

⁹ Compare, 'Now I, Paul, myself ...', 2 Cor. 10. 1, where, in the Greek, the word rendered 'myself' stands at the beginning of the sentence.

¹⁰ 1 Thess. 3. 11.

¹¹ 2 Thess. 2. 17.

¹² J. B. Lightfoot, '*Notes on Epistles of St. Paul from Unpublished Commentaries*', page 122.

¹³ John 18. 28.

¹⁴ B. B. Warfield, '*God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*', in '*Biblical and Theological Studies*', page 65.

¹⁵ See, for example, John 5. 17, 19; 7. 16; 8. 28; 12. 29; 14. 10.

¹⁶ C. F. Hogg and W. E. Vine, '*The Epistles to the Thessalonians*', Thomas Nelson, 1997, page 78.

¹⁷ 1 Thess. 3. 11.

¹⁸ 2 Thess. 2. 16. Compare the differing order of mention of the Persons in Matthew 28. 19 and 2 Cor. 13. 14.

'This means that by comparing two similar Pauline prayers, the reader arrives at a subtle but undeniable attestation of the divinity of Christ. In both cases, God the Father and the Lord Jesus are petitioned in prayer, and one or the other who might answer that prayer ... it is in prayer that (Paul) shows who he 'really thinks the Lord Jesus is', G. S. Shogren, '*1 & 2 Thessalonians: Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*', comments on 2 Thess. 2. 16.

¹⁹ G. D. Fee, '*The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians: The New International Commentary on the New Testament*', page 131.

- ²⁰ J. Eadie. 'A Commentary on the Greek text of the Epistles of Paul to the Thessalonians', page 117.
- ²¹ G. G. Findlay, 'The Epistles to the Thessalonians: Cambridge Bible', page 88.
- ²² Matt. 4. 10; cf. Deut. 6. 13.
- ²³ Rev. 19. 10 and Rev. 22. 8-9.
- ²⁴ 1 Thess. 5. 23 and 2 Thess. 3. 16.
- ²⁵ 1 Thess. 5.23; cf. Rom. 15. 33; 16. 20; 2 Cor. 13. 11; Phil. 4. 9; Heb. 13. 20.
- ²⁶ 2 Thess. 3. 16.
- ²⁷ B. B. Warfield, *ibid.*, page 66.
- ²⁸ 1 Thess. 3. 11.
- ²⁹ 1 Thess. 2. 17-18; 3. 6, 10.
- ³⁰ 1 Thess. 2. 18.
- ³¹ G. Stählin, 'Theological Dictionary of the New Testament', Volume III, page 856. Compare 'hindering', 1 Thess. 2. 16 ESV, and, in connection with the suggestion about an illness, 2 Cor. 12. 7.
- ³² G. Stählin, *op. cit.*, pages 855-856.
- ³³ Cf. Luke 1. 79.
- ³⁴ 'We pray most earnestly night and day that we may see you face to face', 1 Thess. 3. 10.
- ³⁵ Cf. Prov. 16. 9.
- ³⁶ G. Lünemann. 'The First Epistle to the Thessalonians', 'Meyer's 'Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament', page 99. The Father and the Lord Jesus can break the satanic blockade whenever it pleases them to do so.
- ³⁷ 1 Thess. 3. 5.
- ³⁸ C. F. Hogg and W. E. Vine, *ibid.*, page 102.
- ³⁹ 1 Thess. 5. 23.
- ⁴⁰ See 1 Thess. 4. 1, 3, 7; 5. 7, 8, etc.
- ⁴¹ J. Eadie, *ibid.*, page 215.
- ⁴² 1 Thess. 5. 22.
- ⁴³ 1 Thess. 5. 24.
- ⁴⁴ C. F. Hogg and W. E. Vine, *ibid.*, page 147.
- ⁴⁵ 2 Thess. 2. 16-17.
- ⁴⁶ 2 Thess. 2. 1-3.
- ⁴⁷ Luke 21. 25.
- ⁴⁸ 2 Thess. 2. 2.
- ⁴⁹ 'In contrast to the immediately preceding command, which spells out what the Thessalonians must now do, the prayer highlights what Christ Himself and God will do', J. A. D Weima, '1-2 Thessalonians: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament', comment on 2 Thess. 2. 16.
- ⁵⁰ John Chrysostom, 'Homilies on Second Thessalonians', Homily IV on 2 Thess. 2. 16-17.
- ⁵¹ 1 Thess. 2. 11; 3. 2, 7; 4. 1, 10, 18; 5. 11, 14; 2 Thess. 2. 17; 3. 12.

⁵² 1 Thess. 3. 7; 4. 18; 5. 11.

⁵³ See the use of the Hebrew word, for example, in Gen. 24. 67; 37. 35; 38. 12; and 2 Sam. 12. 24.

⁵⁴ 1 Thess. 3. 2, 13; 2 Thess. 2. 17; 3. 3. The word occurs elsewhere in Paul's writings only in Rom. 1. 11; 16. 25.

⁵⁵ Luke 16. 26.

⁵⁶ Rev. 3. 2.

⁵⁷ C. R. Swindoll, '*1 & 2 Thessalonians*', comments on 2 Thess. 2. 16-17.

⁵⁸ 2 Thess. 3. 16.

⁵⁹ Compare the expression, '*the peace of Christ*', Col. 3. 15, and the words of Jesus, 'Peace I leave with you, *my peace* I give to you', John 14. 27.

⁶⁰ G. G. Findlay, *ibid.*, page 168.

⁶¹ J. Stott, '*The Message of Thessalonians: The Bible Speaks Today*', page 197.

⁶² H. Cremer, 'Biblico-Theological Lexicon of New Testament Greek', page 244.

⁶³ 'Peace was virtually synonymous in Jewish circles with the idea of the total well-being of individuals and the community. Such peace could only come from God', C. A. Wanamaker, '*The Epistles to the Thessalonians: The New International Greek Testament Commentary*', comment on 2 Thess. 3. 16.

⁶⁴ C. F. Hogg and W. E. Vine, *ibid.*, page 293.

⁶⁵ See verses 14-15 and compare the use of the word in other passages where it stands opposed to confusion and disorder, 1 Cor. 14. 33; Heb. 12. 14.

⁶⁶ 1 Thess. 3. 11.

⁶⁷ 1 Thess. 5. 23.

⁶⁸ 2 Thess. 2. 16-17.

⁶⁹ 2 Thess. 3. 16.

⁷⁰ 1 Thess. 5. 23.

⁷¹ 2 Thess. 3. 16.

⁷² 1 Thess. 3. 11 and 2 Thess. 2.16.

⁷³ Consider, for example, 1 Tim. 1. 12; 2 Tim. 4. 17-18 and, especially, 2 Cor. 12. 8-9, where the 'Lord' of verse 8 is clearly the 'Christ' of verse 9: 'Concerning this thing, I **pleaded with the Lord** three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength/power is made perfect in weakness. Therefore, most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the strength/power of Christ may rest upon me'.

⁷⁴ Cf. Acts 7. 58.

⁷⁵ G. S. Shogren, *ibid.*, comments on 1 Thess. 3. 11.

⁷⁶ 1 Cor. 1. 2; cf. Acts 9. 14; 22. 16. As I understand it, the use of the identical expression, 'call on the name', in the Greek Old Testament rendering of Zech. 13. 9 ('they will call on my name, and I will answer them') establishes that it involves actual prayer.

⁷⁷ 'To Him who loves us ... be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen', Rev. 1. 5.

Version 2

⁷⁸ Reproduced, with kind permission, from the Precious Seed magazine, Volume 33 Issue 6 (1982) and Volume 34 Issue 1 (1983).

⁷⁹ 1 Thess. 4. 1.

⁸⁰ 2 Thess. 3. 1.

⁸¹ 1 Thess. 4. 13 to 5. 11 and 2 Thess. 2. 1-12.

⁸² They are what have been labelled as '*wish prayers*' (B. Witherington III, '*1 and 2 Thessalonians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*', comments on 1 Thess. 5. 23-24) or '*wish-prayers*' ('A "wish-prayer" is an intercessory prayer that utilizes optative verbs to express the wish or desire the person praying is voicing to God', D. M. Martin, '*1, 2 Thessalonians: The New American Commentary*', comments on 1 Thess. 3. 11-13; so, also, F. F. Bruce, '*1 and 2 Thessalonians: Word Biblical Commentary: Volume 45*', comments on 1 Thess. 3. 11 and 1 Thess. 5. 23.). 'In Paul's letters, several passages which are technically *prayer-wish expressions* are probably to be taken as reflecting prayer practices in which God and Jesus were addressed and invoked together', L. Hurtado, '*At the Origins of Christian Worship: the Context and Character of Earliest Christian Devotion*', pages 74-75.

⁸³ 1 Thess. 3. 11.

⁸⁴ 1 Thess. 5. 23.

⁸⁵ 2 Thess. 2. 16.

⁸⁶ 2 Thess. 3. 16.

⁸⁷ Compare, 'Αὐτὸς δὲ ἐγὼ Παῦλος ...', 2 Cor. 10. 1.

⁸⁸ 1 Thess. 3. 11.

⁸⁹ 2 Thess. 2. 17.

⁹⁰ J. B. Lightfoot, '*Notes on Epistles of St. Paul from Unpublished Commentaries*', page 122.

⁹¹ John 18. 28.

⁹² 'When he prays for the Thessalonians, in saying, "Now God Himself even our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ, may He direct our way unto you" (1 Thess. 3. 11), he has guarded the unity of the Father and of the Son. For he did **not** say, "May they direct", as if a double grace were given from two Sources ("This" and "That"), **but**, "May He direct", Athanasius, '*Contra Arianos*', Oratio III. Paragraph 11.

⁹³ B. B. Warfield, '*God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*', in '*Biblical and Theological Studies*', page 65.

'There is syntactical tension here that reveals something of Paul's theology; technically there is disagreement between the plural subjects "God ... our Father and the Lord Jesus" and the singular verbs of which they are the subject', G. S. Shogren, '*1 & 2 Thessalonians: Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*', comment on 1 Thess. 3. 11.

⁹⁴ See, for example, John 5. 17, 19; 7. 16; 8. 28; 12. 29; 14. 10.

⁹⁵ C. F. Hogg and W. E. Vine, '*The Epistles to the Thessalonians*', Thomas Nelson, 1997, page 78.

⁹⁶ 1 Thess. 3. 11. Note the following:

(i) 'It is worthy of notice that this ascription to our Lord of a divine power in ordering the doings of men occurs in the earliest of St Paul's Epistles, and indeed probably the earliest of the New Testament writings: thus showing that there was no time, however early, so far as we are aware, when He was not so regarded, and confirming the language of the Acts of the Apostles, which represents the first converts appealing to Him, as to One possessed of divine power', J. B. Lightfoot, *ibid.*, page 48.

(ii) 'To address prayers to the Lord Jesus in the same breath with God the Father implies a very high Christology. This prayer would be proper only if the apostle held to the divinity of Christ. This point is even clearer in the prayer of 2 Thess. 2. 16, where the order of the names is reversed', G. L. Green, 'The Letters to the Thessalonians: The Pillar New Testament Commentary', comment on 1 Thess. 3. 11.

(iii) 'Traditional Jewish prayer directed petitions to God alone. Assuming a date of composition for 1 Thessalonians of A.D. 52, this statement is one of the earliest examples of a theologically significant change in the prayer language of Jewish-Christians. It places Jesus on a par with the Father, assigning Him position and authority formerly held only by Yahweh', D. M. Martin, *ibid.*, comment on 1 Thess. 3. 11.

(iv) 'This, along with 2 Thess. 2. 16-17, is the earliest documented evidence of the profound change in prayer language that took place in Christianity as the early Christian community moved away from traditional Jewish prayers, where God alone was addressed or invoked, to the address and invocation of both God and Jesus Christ. Now both God and Jesus Christ are addressed or invoked', C. A. Wanamaker, 'The Epistles to the Thessalonians: The New International Greek Testament Commentary', comment on 1 Thess. 3. 11.

⁹⁷ 2 Thess. 2. 16. (Compare the differing order of mention of the Persons in Matthew 28. 19 and 2 Cor. 13. 14.)

Note the following:

(i) 'This has a strong parallel in 1 Thess. 3. 11-13, and one comparison in particular is instructive: in 1 Thess. 3. 11 the divine names are reversed: "our God and Father" comes first, followed by "our Lord Jesus Christ". In addition, the verbs that follow are in singular, even though the subject is plural. In the next sentence (1 Thess. 3. 12), the results for which Paul prays there are to be carried out by "the Lord" Jesus. Here in the second letter, by contrast, the "Lord Jesus Christ" is followed by "God our Father", and it is the Father who is the active person, as shown by two attribute participles "who loved us and gave us" (*ὁ ἀγαπήσας ἡμᾶς καὶ δοῦς*) ... 'This means that by comparing two similar Pauline prayers, the reader arrives at a subtle but undeniable attestation of the divinity of Christ. In both cases, God the Father and the Lord Jesus are petitioned in prayer, and one or the other who might answer that prayer. What Paul explored a few times in explicit propositions (Rom. 9. 5; Phil. 2. 6; Titus 2. 13) becomes clear when he turns to God and the Lord Jesus in prayer; it is in prayer that he shows who he really thinks the Lord Jesus is', G. S. Shogren, *ibid.*, comments on 2 Thess. 2. 16.

(ii) Gordon Fee, noting that the 'remarkable inclusion of the Son as the compound subject of the singular verb', says, 'That he (Paul) does this in such a matter-of-fact way, and without explanation or argumentation, is at the same time sure evidence that he must have previously instructed them not only on the saving work of Christ, but also on who the divine Saviour actually was', G. D. Fee, *ibid.*, page 130-131.

(iii) 'It is amazing enough, within twenty years of the resurrection, that Paul should have bracketed Jesus Christ with God; it is yet more amazing that now he brackets God with Jesus Christ', J. Stott, 'The Message of Thessalonians: The Bible Speaks Today', page 179.

(iv) 'The only theological significance to be attached to the variations in order is that there is complete equality in the apostle's mind between the Father and the Son ... For him they are One', William Neil, 'The Epistles of Paul to the Thessalonians', page 185.

(v) 'On the one hand, the repetition of the definite article for both persons (*ὁ θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ ἡμῶν καὶ ὁ κύριος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦς*) suggests that Paul views "our Lord Jesus Christ himself" and "God our Father" as two individual entities and so avoids the danger of a complete merging of the two figures to whom he prays. On the other hand, that these two individual figures are closely linked together with a singular verb suggests that Paul views Jesus as sharing the deity of God and so avoids the danger of a complete separation of these two figures to whom he prays', J. A. D. Weima, '1-2 Thessalonians: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament', comment on 2 Thess. 2. 16.

(vi) 'The association and the order of mention of the names are equally outrageous, profane, and inexplicable, except upon one hypothesis, and that is that Jesus Christ is divine', A. Maclaren, 'Paul's Prayers and Other Sermons', 1892, page 15.

⁹⁸ G. D. Fee, 'The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians: The New International Commentary on the New Testament', page 131.

⁹⁹ J. Eadie. 'A Commentary on the Greek text of the Epistles of Paul to the Thessalonians', page 117.

¹⁰⁰ G. G. Findlay, 'The Epistles to the Thessalonians: Cambridge Bible', page 88.

In considering the subject of the Lord's deity in Paul's Epistles to Thessalonica, reference can also be made to 2 Thess. 1. 12: 'τὴν χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ', which could well be translated, 'the grace of our God and Lord Jesus Christ'; see A. T. Robertson, 'Word Pictures in the New Testament', comment on 2 Thess. 1. 12. This translation would mean that Paul there called the Saviour both 'θεοῦ' and 'κυρίου'; compare 'τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ Ἰησοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν' ('our God and Saviour Jesus Christ', 2 Pet. 1. 2) and 'τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ' ('our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ', Tit. 2. 13).¹⁰¹

¹⁰² Matt. 4. 10; cf. Deut. 6. 13.

¹⁰³ Rev. 19. 10 and Rev. 22. 8-9; cf. Acts 10. 25-26; 14. 11-15.

¹⁰⁴ 1 Thess. 5. 23 and 2 Thess. 3. 16.

¹⁰⁵ 1 Thess. 5.23; cf. Rom. 15. 33; 16. 20; 2 Cor. 13. 11; Phil. 4. 9; Heb. 13. 20.

¹⁰⁶ 2 Thess. 3. 16. 'The use of "Lord" in this context rather than "God" reflects the unity of the two in the mind of Paul', D. M. Martin, *ibid.*, comment on 2 Thess. 3. 16.

¹⁰⁷ B. B. Warfield, *ibid.*, page 66.

¹⁰⁸ 1 Thess. 3. 11.

'The wish-prayer in 1 Thess. 3. 11-13 contains *three petitions* that serve to draw the first main section of the letter to a conclusion. They reiterate:

- (i) Paul's desire to visit the Thessalonians (v. 11; cf. 2. 17-3. 10);
- (ii) his hope that their Christian love would increase and abound as his love for them abounds (v. 12; cf. 2. 1-12 and 3. 6); and
- (iii) his concern that they should persevere until the *parousia* or coming of Christ (v. 13; cf. 3. 1-5)'.
C. A. Wanamaker, *ibid.*, comment on 1 Thess. 3. 11-13.

¹⁰⁹ 1 Thess. 2. 17-18; 3. 6, 10.

¹¹⁰ 1 Thess. 2. 18.

¹¹¹ G. Stählin, 'Theological Dictionary of the New Testament', Volume III, page 856. Compare 'hindering', 1 Thess. 2. 16 ESV, and, in connection with the suggestion about an illness, 2 Cor. 12. 7.

¹¹² G. Stählin, *op. cit.*, pages 855-856.

¹¹³ Rendered 'direct' in the KJV, RV, JND, ESV etc.

¹¹⁴ Cf. Luke 1. 79. "'Direct' hardly brings out the metaphor in the apostle's mind. It is the exact opposite of the word used for "hinder" in 1 Thess. 2. 18, which originally means "break up the road so as to make it impassable". So, a better translation would be "make straight" by the removal of obstacles', E. J. Bicknell, 'The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians: Westminster Commentary', page 35.

¹¹⁵ Note:

- (i) 'Paul's prayer was answered, although only (so far as we know) about five years later when he visited Macedonia twice towards the end of his third missionary journey', J. Stott, *ibid.*, page 67.
- (ii) 'This desire was only fulfilled much later when Paul returned to Corinth from Ephesus via Macedonia (cf. 1 Cor. 16. 5; 2 Cor. 2. 13; Acts 19. 21; 20. 1-2.)', C. A. Wanamaker, *ibid.*, comment on 1 Thess. 3. 11.

¹¹⁶ 'We pray most earnestly night and day that we may see you face to face', 1 Thess. 3. 10.

¹¹⁷ 'Paul recognizes the uselessness of personal efforts to revisit the church unless God "clear[s] the way for us". At the moment, the path for return is barred (cf. 1 Thess. 2. 18), but Paul prays for the removal of barriers', R. L. Thomas, '1 and 2 Thessalonians: The Expositor's Bible Commentary (Revised Edition)', comment on 1 Thess. 3. 11.

¹¹⁸ Cf. Prov. 16. 9.

¹¹⁹ G. Lünemann. 'The First Epistle to the Thessalonians', 'Meyer's 'Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament', page 99. The Father and the Lord Jesus can break the satanic blockade whenever it pleases them to do so.

¹²⁰ 1 Thess. 3. 5.

¹²¹ C. F. Hogg and W. E. Vine, *ibid.*, page 102.

¹²² 1 Thess. 5. 23.

Note the following differing expositions:

(i) 'It is striking that Paul would associate God with peace so soon after mocking those who erroneously think that there is peace (1 Thess. 5. 3). The implication is that not everything called "peace" deserves the name. The peace obtained by violence is fleeting and will be revealed as a sham on the day of the Lord. In contrast, the peace that Paul prays for is from God and is certain because it rests on God's own faithfulness (1 Thess. 5. 24)', N. Eubank, 'First and Second Thessalonians', comment on 1 Thess. 5. 23.

(ii) "'Peace" means more than that God is not a God of disorder ... To describe God as the God of peace is to view God as the source of all well-being for the people of God, an idea originating in the Old Testament understanding of *shalom* (שָׁלוֹם)', C. A. Wanamaker, *ibid.*, comment on 1 Thess. 5. 23.

(iii) 'The connexion of thought is that without the grace of God, all striving will be in vain. The title "the God of peace" gains here special point from the exhortations to love and unity which have preceded, but must not be limited to peace within the community. It also includes the thought of that peace of soul which God alone can bestow', E. J. Bicknell, *ibid.*, page 63.

¹²³ See 1 Thess. 4. 1, 3, 7; 5. 7, 8, etc.

¹²⁴ D. M. Martin, *ibid.*, comment on 1 Thess. 5. 23.

¹²⁵ J. Eadie, *ibid.*, page 215. Note the following:

(i) "'Wholly" (KJV) is found only here in the New Testament and is made up of two words, "complete" and "end". Thus, both ideas of wholeness and completion are included. This is entire sanctification, and it is the work of God,' C. C. Ryrie, 'First and Second Thessalonians: Everyman's Bible Commentary', comment on 1 Thess. 5. 23-24.

(ii) There is 'in an inscription recording Nero's announcement of "complete exemption from taxation" (*ἀνεισφορίαν ... ὀλοτελή*) to all Greeks at the Isthmian Games of AD 67', F. F. Bruce, *ibid.*, comment on 1 Thess. 5. 23.

¹²⁶ 1 Thess. 5. 22.

¹²⁷ 1 Thess. 5. 24.

¹²⁸ C. F. Hogg and W. E. Vine, *ibid.*, page 147.

¹²⁹ Compare, 'to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God', Eph. 3. 19.

¹³⁰ D. J. Williams, '1 and 2 Thessalonians: New International Biblical Commentary', page 102.

¹³¹ 2 Thess. 2. 16-17.

¹³² 2 Thess. 2. 1-3.

¹³³ Luke 21. 25.

¹³⁴ 2 Thess. 2. 2.

¹³⁵ Note the following:

(i) 'The exhortation to "stand firm and hold to the teachings" received from the apostles (2 Thess. 2. 15) is followed by a prayer requesting divine encouragement and assistance for the Thessalonians that they might do this very thing. In this way the prayer serves as a conclusion to 2 Thess. 2. 1-15', D. M. Martin, *ibid.*, comments on 2 Thess. 2. 16.

(ii) 'In contrast to the immediately preceding command, which spells out what the Thessalonians must now do, the prayer highlights what Christ Himself and God will do. The comfort available to the shaken believers in Thessalonica rests ultimately not on their human ability to obey the command to stand firm by holding fast to the traditions that they have received through Paul's oral and written teaching, but on the divine activity of both Christ and God, which makes their obedience to such a command possible', J. A. D Weima, *ibid.*, comment on 2 Thess. 2. 16.

¹³⁶ John Chrysostom, '*Homilies on Second Thessalonians*', Homily IV on 2 Thess. 2. 16-17.

¹³⁷ 1 Thess. 2. 11; 3. 2, 7; 4. 1, 10, 18; 5. 11, 14; 2 Thess. 2. 17; 3. 12.

¹³⁸ 1 Thess. 3. 7; 4. 18; 5. 11.

¹³⁹ See the use of the Hebrew word, for example, in Gen. 24. 67; 37. 35; 38. 12; and 2 Sam. 12. 24.

¹⁴⁰ 1 Thess. 3. 2, 13; 2 Thess. 2. 17; 3. 3. The word occurs elsewhere in Paul's writings only in Rom. 1. 11; 16. 25.

¹⁴¹ Luke 16. 26.

¹⁴² Rev. 3. 2.

¹⁴³ C. R. Swindoll, '*1 & 2 Thessalonians*', comments on 2 Thess. 2. 16-17.

¹⁴⁴ 2 Thess. 3. 16.

¹⁴⁵ Compare the expression, '*the peace of Christ*', Col. 3. 15, and the words of Jesus, 'Peace I leave with you, *my peace* I give to you', John 14. 27. We might say that, in one sense, the apostle invokes the Lord's intervention as peacemaker.

¹⁴⁶ G. G. Findlay, *ibid.*, page 168.

¹⁴⁷ J. Stott, *ibid.*, page 197.

'The prayer echoes the blessing of peace in Num. 6. 26 ("The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and *give you peace*"—*ἰδὲ σοὶ εἰρήνην*', Greek Old Testament) but also finds its roots in Jesus' blessing of peace upon the disciples that is recorded in John 14. 27 (assuming that Paul was familiar with this event in which Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you; *my peace I give to you*")', G. L. Green, *ibid.*, comment on 2 Thess. 3. 16.

¹⁴⁸ H. Cremer, '*Biblico-Theological Lexicon of New Testament Greek*', page 244. See, also, note 45 above.

¹⁴⁹ 'The sum total of gospel blessings can be expressed by *εἰρήνη*', F. F. Bruce, *ibid.*, comment on 1 Thess. 5. 23.

¹⁵⁰ C. F. Hogg and W. E. Vine, *ibid.*, page 212.

¹⁵¹ See verses 14-15 and compare the use of the word in other passages where it stands opposed to confusion and disorder, 1 Cor. 14. 33; Heb. 12. 14.

Note the following differing expositions:

(i) 'The prayer for peace "at all times and in every way" reflects the turmoil currently experienced by the Thessalonian church. They were suffering persecution and significant theological confusion and fear, as well as the obstinate refusal of some to follow Paul's teaching about work. In the immediately preceding lines, it became apparent that the congregation would soon experience painful tensions as they disciplined the members of the church who refused to work. Paul thus prays that they would have peace on all of these fronts', N. Eubank, *ibid.*, comments on 2 Thess. 3. 16.

(ii) 'The peace wish is important because Paul does not want enmity conventions to determine what is done in regard to the idle, which would cause mayhem and a reciprocity cycle of vituperation and further shaming, division, and alienation', B. Witherington III, *ibid.*, comment on 2 Thess. 3. 16-18.

(ii) 'At the least we may notice that the occurrence of 'peace' here is appropriate immediately following his references to the unhappy division in the church. The Lord they serve is a Lord of peace, and those who serve him should likewise be characterized by peace. **At the same time, we must bear in mind that peace in the Bible is not simply the absence of strife. It means prosperity in the completest sense,** and its association here with the Lord is a reminder that such a state comes only as the gift of God', L. Morris, 'The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians', comment on 2 Thess. 3. 16.

(iii) 'Paul's prayer involved much more than a temporary truce in the conflicts troubling the church. In Paul's Jewish heritage peace was a broad concept encompassing both the absence of conflict and the presence of well-being. That Paul prayed for a peace granted by the Lord of peace makes clear that he was thinking of a spiritual reality that goes beyond human peace, one that can exist even in the midst of temporal turmoil (cf. Phil. 4. 6-9). It arises from the knowledge that all rests in the hands of the Father', D. M. Martin, *ibid.*, comment on 2 Thess. 3.16.

(iv) 'The peace that Paul requests from the Lord here is more than the absence of conflict within the community. The Christians at Thessalonica were also troubled by external oppression (cf. 1:4-10). Even this may not be as inclusive as Paul intended. **Peace was virtually synonymous in Jewish circles with the idea of the total well-being of individuals and the community. Such peace could only come from God.** The breadth of its application in verse 16 is shown by the words "at all times, in every way" ... Just as "the Lord of peace" in the first part of the verse is unique in Paul's letters, so also is the benediction "the Lord be with all of you". Both Rom. 15. 33 and Phil. 4. 9 speak of "the God of peace" being with the readers. In all probability, the use of "the Lord of peace" in the first part of the verse led to the slightly unusual benediction in the second part of the verse. Whatever may be the reason for the unique formulation, Paul's wish-prayer had the effect of reassuring the readers of the presence of their Lord with all of them', C. A. Wanamaker, *ibid.*, comments on 2 Thess. 3. 16.

¹⁵² R. L. Thomas, *ibid.*, comment on 2 Thess. 3. 16.

¹⁵³ 1 Thess. 3. 11.

¹⁵⁴ 1 Thess. 5. 23.

¹⁵⁵ 2 Thess. 2. 16-17.

¹⁵⁶ 2 Thess. 3. 16.

¹⁵⁷ 1 Thess. 5. 23.

¹⁵⁸ 2 Thess. 3. 16.

¹⁵⁹ 1 Thess. 3. 11 and 2 Thess. 2.16.

¹⁶⁰ Consider, for example, 1 Tim. 1. 12; 2 Tim. 4. 17-18, and, especially, 2 Cor. 12. 8-9, where the 'Lord' of verse 8 is clearly the 'Christ' of verse 9: 'Concerning this thing, I **pleaded with the Lord** three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength/power is made perfect in weakness. Therefore, most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the strength/power of Christ may rest upon me'. Of 2 Cor. 12. 8-9, Larry Hurtado says, 'Paul's easy recounting of his actions suggests that he expects his readers to be familiar with prayer-appeals to Jesus', L. Hurtado, *ibid.*, page 75.

¹⁶¹ Cf. Acts 7. 58. Richard Bauckham notes, 'The New Testament evidence for personal prayer to Jesus has sometimes been underestimated', cited by L. Hurtado, *ibid.*, page 74.

¹⁶² This title occurs twelve times in the New Testament; John 6. 27; Gal. 1. 1, 3; Eph. 6. 23; Phil. 2. 11; 1 Thess. 1. 1; 2 Tim. 1. 2; Tit. 1. 4; 1 Pet. 1. 2; 2 Pet. 1. 17; 2 John 3; Jude 1.

¹⁶³ G. S. Shogren, *ibid.*, comments on 1 Thess. 3. 11.

¹⁶⁴ 1 Cor. 1. 2 (‘ἐπικαλουμένοις τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ’); cf. Acts 9. 14; 22. 16.
Note the following:

(i) As I understand it, the use of the identical expression, ‘call on the name’, in the Greek Old Testament rendering of Zech. 13. 9 (‘they will call on my name, and I will answer them’—*‘ἐπικαλέσεται τὸ ὄνομά μου, καὶ γὰρ ἐπακούσομαι αὐτῶ’*) suggests strongly that it involves actual prayer.

(ii) ‘The fact that in the Greek Old Testament ἐπικαλεῖσθαι means “to call on the Lord in prayer” and ἐπικαλεῖσθαι τὸ ὄνομα κυρίου means “to call on the name of the Lord in prayer” ... sheds a distinctive light on the New Testament passages ... What is said of the κυρίος in the Old Testament is said of Ἰησοῦς Χριστός in the New Testament ... The directing of prayer to Jesus is a mark of faith in the Messiah’, K. L. Schmidt, *‘Theological Dictionary of the New Testament’*, Volume III, page 500.

(iii) ‘I suggest that “calling upon the name of the Lord (Jesus)” connoted treating the exalted Jesus as recipient of the devotion of the Christian community through invocation, prayer and praise’, L. Hurtado, *ibid.*, page 79.

¹⁶⁵ ‘To Him who loves us ... be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen’, Rev. 1. 5-6.