

TRADITION & TRADITIONS



LECTURES ON 2 THESSALONIANS: A New Translation

~ St. Thomas Aquinas ~

Translated by Jeremy Holmes

Translator's note: All of Aquinas' other Pauline commentaries have been translated into English previously, so this translation makes Aquinas' complete work on Paul available to the English-speaking world at last.¹ I have based this new translation on the Marietti text of Aquinas' commentary.² In the text that follows, numbers in the Marietti edition are referred to in brackets [n.] and Aquinas' quotes from 2 Thessalonians. are rendered in italic. Because Thomas depends heavily on Peter Lombard's *Collectanea* (referred to by Aquinas as "the Gloss") I have noted a couple of points where comparison with the Lombard influenced my translation of Thomas.³

Prologue

Gather yourselves together, that I may announce what will
befall you in the last days (Gen. 49:1).

1. These words are applicable to this epistle. For they touch on two things applicable to it, namely its fruit and its matter.

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- 1 Aside from selected passages, the following Pauline commentaries have been published in book form to date: *Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians*, trans. Fabian R. Larcher, Aquinas Scripture Commentaries 1 (Albany: Magi, 1966), *Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians*, trans. Matthew L. Lamb, Aquinas Scripture Commentaries 2 (Albany: Magi, 1966), *Commentary on St. Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians and the Letter to the Philippians*, trans. Fabian R. Larcher and Michael Duffy, Aquinas Scripture Series 3 (Albany: Magi, 1969); *Commentary on Colossians*, trans. Fabian R. Larcher, (Naples, FL: Sapientia, 2006), *Commentaries on St. Paul's Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, trans. Chrysostom Baer (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's, 2007), "Exposition of Paul's Epistle to Philemon," in *Thomas Aquinas, Selected Writings*, ed. and trans. Ralph McInerny (London: Penguin, 1998), 812–821; *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, trans. Chrysostom Baer (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's, 2006).
 - 2 See Raphaelis Cai, ed. *Super Epistolas s. Pauli lectura* [Lectures on the Letters of St. Paul], 2 vols. 8th rev. ed., (Rome: Marietti, 1953).
 - 3 See Peter Lombard, *Collectanea in omnes D. Paitli epistolas* [Collection of Passages on the Letters of St. Paul], in *Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Latina*, ed. J. P. Minge (Paris: Garnier and J. P. Migne, 1844–1864), 192. Hereafter abbreviated PL. Aquinas owes not only specific insights but even the general format of his commentaries to Lombard. See Marcia L. Colish, *Peter Lombard*, 2 vols. (New York: Brill, 1994), 1:189–225.

Hence it says *that I may announce what will befall you in the last days*. This epistle treats of the three things that will happen in the last days. There will be dangers to the Church in the time of the Antichrist. "In the last days there shall come dangerous times" (2 Tim. 3:1). Likewise, the punishments of the wicked. "Until I go into the sanctuary of God, and understand concerning their last ends" (Ps. 72:17). Finally, the rewards of the good. "Strength and beauty are her clothing" (Prov. 31:25). And these things are dealt with in this epistle.

2. Its usefulness is shown by the words *Gather yourselves together*. For this epistle achieves a gathering together, namely the gathering together of those who have harmony in the truth. For they were disagreeing with one another about the future judgment on account of what the apostle said in the first epistle, "Then we who are living, who are left, shall be taken up together with them into the clouds, etc." (1 Thess. 4:17). "He will gather together the dispersed of Israel" (Ps. 146:2).

It likewise achieves a harmony of wills, because when they consider that everything temporal will perish at the last day, one is given to understand that they gather themselves together around the one thing worth seeking, namely a heavenly reward. "Gather together your heart in his holiness" (Sir. 30:24). Again, it achieves a harmony of thoughts, [because they are gathered together] around one stable truth. "But I know their works, and their thoughts: I come that I may gather them together" (Isa. 66:18).

3. And so the fruit and matter [of this epistle] are clear, for in the first [epistle] he armed them against past persecutions, while here he arms them against persecutions to come.⁴

2 Thessalonians Chapter 1

Lecture 1 (on 2 Thess. 1:1–5)

v. 1 [n. 4] *Paul and Sylvanus and Timothy to the Church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: v. 2 [n. 7] Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ. v. 3 [n. 8] We are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly and the charity of every one of you towards each other abounds. v. 4 [n. 10] So that we ourselves also glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith, and in all your persecutions and tribulations which you endure v. 5 as an example of the just judgment of*

4 As was customary in commentaries among the scholastics, Thomas introduces the work in terms of the four causes outlined by Aristotle: the formal cause is the genre of the work; the efficient cause is the author, the material cause the subject matter; and the final cause the purpose of the writing. In this case the formal cause is clear because it is an epistle, and he introduces the efficient cause, Paul, in the preface to his first Pauline commentary, that on Romans. So here he specifies only the material and final causes.

God, that you may be counted worthy of the Kingdom of God, for which also you suffer.

4. This epistle is divided into the greeting and the epistolary narration, where it says [2 Thess. 1:3, n. 8], *we are bound always*, etc. And first the persons greeting are set out; second, the persons greeted [n. 6]; third, the good things wished [n. 7].

5. Now they are the same persons as those in the first letter [to the Thessalonians]. And three persons are listed as sending greetings so that the epistle's authority may appear the stronger. "A threefold cord is not easily broken" (Eccles. 4:12).

6. *To the Church of the Thessalonians*, etc. "Church" names a congregation, which should be in God—otherwise it is bad. Psalm 50:5 says of the good congregation, "Gather his holy ones to him, etc." *In Christ*, that is, in the faith of Christ. "Through whom we have access through faith into this grace" (Rom. 5:2).

7. Then he wishes goods for them, and first of all peace. For peace is the beginning [Latin: *principium*] of all the spiritual gifts. "By the grace of God I am what I am" (1 Cor. 15:10). Similarly, he wishes for them the grace that is men's end. "Who makes your ends peace, etc" (Ps. 147:14).⁵ And this is *from God*, etc. "Every best and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, etc." (James 1:17). *And the Lord Jesus*, etc. "Through whom he has given us great and precious promises" (2 Pet. 1:4).

8. *We are bound to give thanks*, etc. This is the epistolary narration. And first he instructs them about what is to happen in the last days; second, he warns them in a friendly way about certain things in the third chapter, where [2 Thess. 3:1, n. 63] he says, *For the rest*, etc.

And first he admonishes them, as was said, regarding the rewards of the good and the punishments of the wicked; second, he admonishes them regarding the dangers of the time of the Antichrist, in chapter two where [2 Thess. 2:1, n. 27] he says, *We beg you*, etc. And first he gives thanks for [their] preparation for the future judgment; second, he describes the judgment itself, where [2 Thess. 1:6, n. 12] he says, *Seeing it is a just thing*. And first he gives thanks for [their] progress; second, he displays the fruit of [their] progress [n. 10]; third, he points to a sign of it [n. 11].

9. He says therefore, *we are bound to give thanks*, etc. For since he commended them in the first epistle for their faith and charity and for the other goods in which they abounded, he says, *we are bound to give thanks for you*, because I consider the good you have as mine. "I have no greater joy [*gratiam*] than to hear that my children walk in truth" (3 John 4). And he gives thanks *to God*, without whom nothing good can come to pass. And this is *as it is fitting*, because we give thanks for great goods. "Since God has wondrously liberated us from great dangers, let us give thanks" (2 Macc. 1:11).

5 The Latin Vulgate translation here (Ps. 147:3): *qui posuit fines tuos pacem* more probably means "who established peace on your borders."

Why? Because [their] spiritual goods *grow exceedingly*. For such goods are not safely guarded unless a man progresses in them. Now among these gifts of God the first is faith, through which God dwells in us, and our progress in faith is in connection with the understanding. "To have Christ through faith in your hearts" (Eph. 3:17). And so a man progresses through knowledge, devotion, and adherence [*inhaesio*]. The second [gift] is charity, through which God is present in us by his effect. 1 John 4:16: "God is charity, and he who abides in charity abides in God, and God in him." And for this reason he says, *the charity of every one of you towards each other abounds*. "In abundant justice there is the greatest strength, etc." (Prov. 15:5). "But concerning charity towards the brotherhood I have no need to write to you, for you yourselves have learned from God to love one another, etc." (1 Thess. 4:9).

10. And then he sets out their progress, when he says, So that I myself glory over it among others, because what is yours I consider mine. For the good of the disciples is the glory of the prelate. "A wise son brings joy to his father, etc." (Prov. 10:1). "Grandchildren are the crown of the aged, etc." (Prov. 17:6). "For which I boast about you" (2 Cor. 9:2).

11. Then he sets out a sign of their progress, namely patience, which is most of all apparent in tribulations. "Blessed the man who suffers tribulations, etc." (James 1:12). In tribulations there are two things to be safeguarded, namely patience, lest we abandon faith—"Patience has a perfect work" (James 1:4)—and faith in the midst of persecutions. "We are persecuted, and we endure it" (1 Cor. 4:12). Hence he says, *and⁶ faith, and in all your persecutions and tribulations*. These tribulations are so named from *tribuli* ["thistles"], by which we are pricked interiorly through afflictions. "Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to you" (Gen. 3:18). "The troubles of my heart are multiplied" (Ps. 24:17).

And the saints endure these tribulations for the sake of two things. One is to strike fear into the wicked: for if God does not spare the good in this world, how will he spare the wicked in the next? "And if it begins with us, what will be the end of those who do not believe in the Gospel of God, etc." (1 Pet. 4:17). "Behold, those who were not condemned to drink the cup shall drink it, and shall you escape as though innocent?" (Jer. 49:12). The second is to increase merit. Hence he says *that you may be counted worthy*, etc. For as it says in Matthew 11:12, "The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent bear it away." And Luke 24:26, "Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things, and so enter into his glory?" "But if we suffer with him, we shall also be glorified with him" (Rom. 8:17). Hence he says, *for which also you suffer*, etc. For tribulation born for God's sake makes one worthy of the Kingdom of God. "Blessed are they who suffer persecution, etc." (Matt. 5:10). "Let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or a slanderer, or a coveter of others' goods" (1 Pet. 4:15).

6 Marietti has *in* for *et*, but this appears to be a textual corruption.

2 Thessalonians Chapter 1

Lecture 2 (on 2 Thess. 1:6–12)

v. 6 [n. 12] *If nonetheless it is a just thing with God to render tribulation to those who trouble you v. 7 and to you who are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with the angels of his power. v. 8 [n. 15] in a flame of fire, giving vengeance to those who do not know God and who do not obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, v. 9 [n. 18] Who shall give⁷ eternal punishment in destruction, from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his power v. 10 [n. 19] when he shall come to be glorified in his saints and to be made astonishing in all those who have believed; because our testimony was believed over you [super vos] in that day. v. 11 [n. 23] Wherefore also we pray always for you that our God would make you worthy of his calling and fulfill all every will of goodness and the work of faith in power v. 12 [n. 25] that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified through you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.*

12. Above he spoke of how they are well prepared for the coming judgment [n. 8]; here he speaks about the form of that judgment. And first he sets out the judgment as regards the punishment of the wicked and the rewards of the good; second he speaks about each part individually, where he says [2 Thess. 1:8; n. 15], *in a flame of fire*. And first he sets out the judgment as regards the punishment of the wicked; second, as regards the rewards of the good, where he says [2 Thess. 1:10; n. 19], *when he shall come...*

13. As regards the first, he speaks above [2 Thess. 1:4–5] about *the tribulations which you endure for an example of the just judgment of God*. Here he adds next, *If nonetheless it is just; if* is written for “because.” Hence other texts have “If indeed.”⁸ Or *if nonetheless* should be taken in connection with *as an example of the just judgment*, as though to say: “It is just that you suffer these things if nonetheless you merit thereby.” But the first text and explanation is better. *It is a just thing ... to render*. “Rise up, judge of the earth, render retribution to the proud” (Ps. 93:2). “Woe to you who despoil, shall you not yourself be despoiled?” (Isa. 33:1) “Tribulation and anguish” (Rom. 8:35).

14. *And to you who are troubled, rest*. “You received good things in your life, and Lazarus likewise evil things. But now he is consoled while you suffer” (Luke

7 “Who shall give” is in the plural, that is, it refers not to Jesus Christ but to those who do not obey the Gospel.

8 Thomas says that *si* is written for *quia*, and remarks that other texts of 2 Thess. have *si quidem*, which would literally be translated “if indeed” but is a Latin idiom for “truly.” The Greek word used here can mean “if indeed” but can also mean “since,” as Thomas judges.

16:25). "Blessed are those who die in the Lord from henceforth now, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors" (Rev. 14:13). *With us*, that is, in equal glory.

But surely this is not true? I respond that there are two kinds of equality, namely the equality of absolute quantity and the equality of proportion. The first kind of equality is not equal as regards man's participation but as regards the beatitude in which he participates, which is God; for a man participates more or less according as he loves God more or less ardently. But as regards the second kind of equality there will be equality in every respect, because Peter's glory stands to the grace given him and to his merit as Linus' glory stands to his merit.

And this will happen *when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed*. "The Father has given all judgment to his Son" (John 5:22), and this insofar as he is a son of man; hence it continues "and has given him power to render judgment," because he will appear to all in human form. He does not appear now, because his humanity is hidden in the glory of God, but then he will appear. "And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed," etc. (Isa. 45:5). *With the angels of his power*, his ministers. "When the son of man comes in his majesty, and all his angels with him, etc." (Matt. 25:31).

15. Then when he says *In a flame of fire*, he treats of both, namely the punishment of the wicked and the reward of the good; but he shows the harshness, justice, and eternity of the punishment of the wicked.

16. He says therefore, *giving vengeance*, that is, judging those who are to be punished *in a flame of fire*, consuming the face of the earth, enveloping the condemned, and driving them away forever. "Fire goes before him" (Ps. 97:3).

17. And the punishment will be just on account of two kinds of guilt, namely the guilt of unbelief and the guilt of an evil life. With regard to the first he says *who do not know*, that is, who do not wish to know, God. "We do not want knowledge of your ways" (Job 21:14). "The one who does not know will not be known" (1 Cor. 14:38). With regard to the second, he says *who do not obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ*. "Not all obey the Gospel" (Rom. 10:16). Disobedience is so great a sin that death entered the world through it, as is said in Romans 5:19.

18. The punishment is likewise long lasting, for *they shall give eternal punishment in destruction*. And this can be read in two ways because there are two kinds of punishment, namely that of the sense and that of the condemned. This is how it can be understood as about the punishment of the sense: *They shall give*, that is, they shall endure eternal punishments, never to end, and this *in destruction*, because they shall be ever dying. For the punishments of this life are not like those punishments: in this life the harsher the punishments the shorter they are, because they end; but those punishments are the heaviest, because they are the punishment of death and yet they never cease. Hence it is said that they will always be as though in the throes of death. "Death shall devour them" (Ps. 48:15).⁹ "Their worm shall never die" (Isa. 66:24).

9 Or "Death shall shepherd them."

Now the punishment of the condemned has two sides to it. First, they will be deprived of the vision of God. Hence he says *from the face of the Lord*, namely removed from the face of the Lord. “No hypocrite shall come before his gaze” (Job 13:16). The second is being deprived of the vision of the glory of the saints. “Let the impious man be taken away lest he see the glory of the saints” (Isa. 66).¹⁰

One can also understand it another way, such that *from the face of the Lord* shows why the punishment of the sense is so harsh. For someone’s senses can be voided either by a higher judge or by the power of someone higher, but it will not happen in this case because this judgment comes from the face of the Lord. “May my judgment come from your face” (Ps. 16:2). And this is why he says they will *give punishments*, that is, endure them, *from the face of the Lord*.

19. Then when he says, *when he shall come*, he treats of the saints’ reward. And first he sets out the reward; second, the merit [of the saints], there [n. 21] *at those who have believed*.

20. He commends the glory of the saints as regards its essence, a participation in the glory of God, when he says *to be glorified*, etc.; and as regards its overflow, there at *and to be made astonishing*. He says therefore, *when he shall come*. Christ is most certainly glorious; “That every tongue may confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:11).¹¹ *To be glorified in his saints*, because the good is diffusive of itself; or *to be glorified in his saints*, who are his members, and in whom he dwells, and in whom he is glorified when his own glory, namely the glory of the head, flows down all the way to his members. “You are my servant, Israel, because in you I will be glorified” (Isa. 49:3).

And this will surpass all wonder, hence he says *to be made astonishing*, etc. For astonishment is a stupor that results from tremendous impressions made on the imagination.¹² But so great will be the glory of the saints that it cannot enter the thoughts of men, and this is why he says *to be made astonishing*. “They will wonder at the suddenness of an unhopd-for salvation” (Wisd. 5:2).

21. Then he sets out [the saints’] merit, there at *in all those who have believed*, etc. And he sets out first, the merit of faith; second, the support of prayer, there [2 Thess. 1:11; n. 23] at *wherefore also*.

10 No such verse appears in the last chapter of Isa. or indeed anywhere in the Vulgate, and Thomas gives this quotation only here in all his works. However, one Latin translation of Isa. 26:10, sometimes cited by Thomas (for example, in *Quaestio disputata de veritate* [Disputed Questions on the Truth], q. 12 art. 6), says “Let the impious man be taken away lest he see the glory of God.”

11 The Greek of Phil. 2:11 has “glory” in the accusative case, and modern translations well capture the sense of this construction: “that Jesus Christ [is] Lord *to the glory* of God the Father.” The Latin text Thomas worked upon had “glory” in the ablative case, which yields the meaning, “that the Lord Jesus Christ [is] *in the glory* of God the Father.” The conclusion follows in either case that Jesus Christ is one in divinity with the Father, but the mistranslation in the Vulgate provides Thomas with a text that emphasizes the glory of Christ himself.

12 “Impressions made on the imagination” attempts to render the Latin *phantasia*.

22. He says therefore: There will be this glory *because our testimony was believed over you*, [the testimony] we believed concerning Christ, *in that day*, that is, for the sake of that day, since the good things we do are done for the sake of that day. And he says this testimony is *over you* [*super vos*],¹³ that is, beyond human understanding. "Many things are shown you beyond the understanding of man" (Sir. 3:25). For faith has no merit where human reason offers proof. Unless it were *over you*, there would be no great merit in believing. Or he says *over you*, that is, for you who submit it rules over your intellect so that it humbly believes. "Bringing into captivity every intellect unto the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5). Thus the Gloss explains it.

Or it can be understood in another way that is more according to the letter: I say that Christ will be glorified in you, who have believed, on the day of judgment, when the apostles will stand as judges. And then the *testimony* which is *over you*, that is, the testimony concerning the promptitude of your faith, will be certain and *believed*, that is, believable.

23. Then when he says, *wherefore also we pray*, he adds the support of prayer, and first he sets out what he prays; second, to what purpose he prays, there [2 Thess. 1:12; n. 25] at *that the name*; third, how he can obtain what he prays for, there [n. 26] at *according to the grace*.

24. He prays for one thing on God's part and two things on our part. He says therefore, *wherefore*, that is, on account of that day, *also we pray always*. "Without ceasing I remember you always in my prayers" (Rom. 1:9); "Far be this sin from me in the Lord, that I should cease to pray for you" (1 Kings 13:23). But for what? *That our God would make you worthy of his calling*, that is, that he might cause you to live in the world in a manner worthy of his calling. "I beseech you that you walk in a manner worthy of the calling by which you have been called" (Eph. 4:1).

And on our part he asks for two things: on the part of the will, that may fully enjoy every goodness; hence he says *and fulfill every will of goodness*, that is, fulfill in you [your] desire for every good thing. "Who works in us both to will and to accomplish, according to his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13). And on the part of the understanding, that it may perfectly believe. And so he says *and the work of faith*. "For with the heart one believes unto justice, while with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. 10:10). And you accomplish this *in power*, that is, in constancy and fortitude, so that no fear causes you to stop confessing him.

Or it can be understood this way: *wherefore*, that is, on account of that day, *we pray* that God may deign to give you that to which he has called you. "To this you were called, that you should possess the blessing by inheritance" (1 Pet. 3:9).

13 The Latin preposition *super* can mean either "above" in a spatial or metaphorical sense or it can mean "about," as when we say in English that we are worried "over" the news, meaning "about" the news. The first two interpretations Thomas gives, taken from Lombard's commentary, depend on taking *super* to mean "over," while the third, which Thomas prefers, depends on taking *super* to mean "about." The Greek word translated by *super* bears the same ambiguity.

And that he might fulfill every good thing you desire, which [he does] in eternal life, when we will have God. "Who satisfies your desires with good things" (Ps. 102:5). Similarly, that he may fulfill the *work of faith*, which will happen when we see then face to face what we see now through a mirror and in an enigma (1 Cor. 13:12).

25. But to what purpose? *That the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you*, etc., that is, that it be to the glory of Christ. And that *through you*,¹⁴ both in the present and in the future, the name of Christ may be glorified by your good [deeds]. "That they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16). The opposite is said of the wicked in Isaiah 52[:5] and Romans 2[:24]: "The name of God is blasphemed through you."

26. But how can we obtain this? *According to the grace of our God*, which is the root of all our good [works]. "By the grace of God I am what I am" (1 Cor. 15:10).

2 Thessalonians Chapter 2

Lecture 1 (on 2 Thess. 2:1–5)

v. 1 [n. 27] *And we beg you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and of our gathering together to him:* v. 2 [n. 29] *that you be not easily moved from your sense nor be terrified, neither by spirit nor by word nor by epistle as sent from us, as if the day of the Lord were at hand.* v. 3 [n. 32] *Let no man deceive you by any means: for unless there come a revolt first, and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition* v. 4 [n. 38] *who opposes and is lifted up above all that is called God or that is worshipped, so that he sits in the temple of God, displaying himself as if he were God.* v. 5 [n. 41] *Do you not remember that when I was yet with you I told you these things?*

27. Above, the apostle taught what will happen in the future regarding the punishments of the wicked and the rewards of the good [n. 8]. Here he announces what will happen in the future as regards the dangers to the Church that will arise during the time of the Antichrist. And first, he sets forth the truth about future dangers; second, he admonishes [the Thessalonians] to persevere in the truth, there [2 Thess. 2:15; n. 8] *at therefore, brethren.*

14 The Vulgate text supplied by the Marietti editors has *in vobis*, but Aquinas' comment seems to indicate the text in front of him had *per vos*, as is found in some Vulgate manuscripts. I have modified the text at the beginning of the lecture to reflect this point. Aquinas' omission of the following phrase *et vos in illo* may suggest that this phrase was lacking from his text, but it may equally indicate that the student transcribing this lecture missed a line of the commentary. The otherwise unexplained phrase in Aquinas' commentary, "both in the present and in the future," represents a slight disagreement with Lombard's commentary on this verse to the effect that Christ's name is glorified in this present life *in vobis* while we ourselves [*vos*] are glorified in the future *in illo*. See Lombard, *PL* 192, 315C.

Concerning the first, he does two things, for first, he excludes a falsehood; second, he gives instruction regarding the truth, there [2 Thess. 2:3; n. 33] at *for unless*. And his exclusion of falsehood has three parts, for first, he shows that by which they should be persuaded; second, he shows that to which they should be persuaded, there [2 Thess. 2:2; n. 29] at *that you be not easily moved*; third, he forestalls that which could move them, there [n. 30] at *neither by spirit*.

28. Now he persuades them by three means. First, by means of his own prayers, there at *we beg you*, and not by commanding them. "Having complete confidence to command you in Christ Jesus to perform the necessary thing, for the sake of charity I rather beseech you" (Philem. 5:8). Second, by the coming of Christ, which is desirable to the good even though terrifying to the wicked. "Woe to those who desire the day of the Lord" (Amos 5:18); "And not only to me, but also to those who love his coming" (2 Tim. 4:8); "Come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22:20). Third, by the desire and love of the whole congregation of the saints, *to him*, namely where Christ is, for "where the body is, there will the eagles be gathered" (Matt. 24:28). Or *to him*, that is, in the same,¹⁵ for all the saints will be in the same place and glory. "Gather to him his saints" (Ps. 99:5).

29. But of what is he trying to persuade them? *That you be not easily moved from your sense*. It is one thing to be moved and another to be terrified. Now the one who is moved from his sense loses what he had previously held fast. The apostle says, in effect, "Do not easily let go my teaching." "Who easily believes is light of heart" (Sir. 19:4). But terror is a kind of trepidation with fear of what opposes one. And so he says *nor be terrified*. "The sound of terror always in his ears" (Job 15:21). And if there is peace, they always suspect treacheries. "For since wickedness is always fearful, it gives testimony for its own condemnation" (Wisd. 17:10).

30. Then when he says *neither by spirit*, he forestalls that which could move them, first in particular, second, in general, there [2 Thess. 2:3; n. 32] at *let no man*.

31. Now someone can be deceived by a false revelation. Hence he says *neither by spirit*, that is, if someone announces to you as a revelation by the Holy Spirit, or from the Holy Spirit, something contrary to my teaching, do not be *terrified*. "Do not believe every spirit" (1 John 4:1). "Woe to the foolish prophets who follow their own spirit and see nothing" (Ezek. 13:3). Sometimes even Satan transfigures himself into an angel of light, as is said in 2 Corinthians 11:14, and in 1 Kings 22:22, "I will go out, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets."

Second, someone can also be deceived by reasoning, or a false exposition of Scripture, and so he says *nor by word*. "Their word spreads like gangrene" (2 Tim. 2:17). "Let no one deceive by foolish words" (Eph. 5:6). Third, someone can

¹⁵ *To him* translates the Latin *in idipsum*, which can be either masculine or neuter. If it is masculine then it is rendered best as "him," but if it is neuter then it is best rendered as "the selfsame thing." English does not have a pronoun with a similar ambiguity between masculine and neuter. Note also that the Latin text supplied by the Marietti edition has *in ipsum*, but Aquinas' text evidently had *in idipsum*, which carries more the emphasis on sameness he brings out in his comment.

be deceived by an authority quoted but wrongly understood. "As our most beloved brother Paul has written to you in accord with the wisdom given to him, speaking as in all his letters of things in which there are certain points difficult to understand, which the unlearned and unstable twist as they do the other scriptures, etc." (2 Pet. 3:15–16). But what were they being deceived about? *As if the day of the Lord were at hand*. And he says *nor by epistle as sent from us*, because his first epistle to the Thessalonians, if it is not understood well, seems to say that the Lord's coming is at hand, as when it says "Then we who are alive, etc." (1 Thess. 4:16).

32. Then when he says, *let no man*, etc., he says the same thing more generally. "Beware lest you be deceived" (Luke 21:8); "Do not be deceived" (1 Cor. 15:33). Now the reason why the apostle forestalls this, namely [this error] concerning the Lord's coming, is that no prelate should desire that any good be achieved by a lie. "We are even found to be false witnesses" (1 Cor. 15:15). Also because the thing believed, namely that the Lord's day was at hand, was dangerous. First, it could be the occasion of a greater deception, because after the time of the apostles men were going to come who would claim to be Christ. "Many will say, 'I am he'" (Luke 21:8). And so the apostle did not want [them to believe this error regarding the Lord's coming]. Similarly, demons frequently pretend to be Christ, as is clear in the case of blessed Martin. And so lest they should be deceived, he did not want [them to believe this error].

And Augustine gives another reason, namely that it posed a danger to faith. One person would say, "The Lord will come late, and then I will prepare myself for him." Another would say, "He will come quickly, and so I am preparing myself now." Still another would say, "I don't know [when he will come]." And this person speaks best, because what he says agrees with Christ. But the one who says "quickly" errs more seriously, because with the passing of time men would despair, and would think that the Scriptures spoke falsely.

33. Then when he says *for unless there come a revolt*, etc., he proceeds to the truth. First he shows what will happen when the Antichrist comes. And two things will happen, one of which will precede the Antichrist's coming and the other of which is itself his coming [n. 36].

34. First comes the *revolt*,¹⁶ which is explained in many different ways in the Gloss. And first [it is explained as a revolt] from faith, because later the faith would be accepted by the whole world. "And this Gospel of the Kingdom will be preached in the whole world" (Matt. 24:14). Therefore this comes before what according to Augustine has not yet been fulfilled, and afterwards many will depart from the faith, etc. "In the last times certain men will depart from the faith" (1 Tim. 4:1). "The love of many will grow cold" (Matt. 24:12).

16 The words *discessio* and *discedere* appear repeatedly in this section, and I have rendered them variously as "revolt," "withdraw," or "depart."

Or a revolt from the Roman Empire, to which the whole world was subject. And Augustine says that this is represented in Daniel 2:31 by the statues, where four kingdoms are named after whom comes Christ, and that this was a fitting sign because the Roman Empire was strengthened for this very purpose, namely that under its power the faith should be preached throughout the whole world.

35. But how can this be, since the nations have already withdrawn themselves from the Roman Empire and yet the Antichrist has still not come? The answer is that [the revolt] is not over yet, but has changed from a temporal [revolt] into a spiritual [revolt], as Pope Leo says in a sermon about the apostles. And so one should say that the revolt from the Roman Empire should be understood not only as a revolt from the temporal but from the spiritual [empire], namely from the Catholic faith of the Roman Church. And it is fitting that, as Christ came when the Roman Empire held sway over all, so conversely a sign of the Antichrist is revolt against it.

37. He says therefore: The revolt will come first, and then he will be revealed. According to the Gloss, he is said to be *the man of sin*, *the son of perdition* because as the plenitude of virtue abounded in Christ, so a multitude of all sins will abound in the Antichrist. And as Christ is better than all the saints, so that man will be worse than all the wicked. And so he is called *the man of sin*, because he will be wholly given over to sins. But he is not called *the man of sin* in such a way that there could not be a worse man, because evil never corrupts the entire good—although no man could be worse in the actual order of things.¹⁷ But there could be no man better than Christ.

He is also called the *son of perdition*, that is, consigned to the utmost perdition. “The wicked will be preserved for the day of perdition, and will be led to the day of fury” (Job 21:30). Or *son of perdition*, that is, of the devil, not by nature but by the completion of his wickedness, which will be completed in him. And he says *be revealed*, because as all the good [deeds] and virtues of the saints who came before Christ were figures of Christ, so in all the persecutions of the Church the tyrants have been so to speak figures of the Antichrist, and the Antichrist was hidden in them.¹⁸ And so that whole wickedness, which was hidden in them, will be revealed at that time.

38. Then when he says, *who opposes*, he explains what he said before. And first, he shows how he will be the man of sin; second, how he will be the son of perdition, there [2 Thess. 2:8; n. 46] at *and then that wicked one shall be revealed*. And first, he foretells his wrongdoing; second, he gives the cause for it, there [2 Thess. 2:6; n. 42] at *and now*. And first, he describes the wrongdoing; second, he says that he is not

17 “In the actual order of things” renders *quantum ad actum*, which could also mean “as regards what he does.”

18 This is a kind of parody of the well-known saying that the Old Testament is revealed in the New while the New Testament lies hidden in the Old.

announcing a new teaching, there [2 Thess. 2:5; n. 41] at *do you not remember*. And first, he sets out the wrongdoing; second, the sign of it, there [n. 40] at *so that*.

39. Now his wrongdoing has two sides to it. First, opposition to God; hence he says *who opposes* all the good spirits. "He charged against God with an upraised neck, and with a fat neck, and he is armed, as are his members" (Job 15:26). "Their tongues and their schemes are against the Lord, that they may provoke the eyes of his majesty" (Isa. 3:8). Secondly, he puts himself above Christ; and so he says *and is lifted up*. The name "God" is said in three ways. First, according to nature: "Hear, Oh Israel, the Lord your God is one God" (Deut. 4:4). Second, according to opinion: "All the gods of the nations are demons" (Ps. 95:5). Third, by way of participation: "I have said, You are gods" (Ps. 81:6). And the Antichrist would put himself over all these: "He will be lifted up and will magnify himself against every god, and against the god of Gods he will speak great things" (Dan. 11:36).

40. When he says *so that he sits in the Temple*, he gives the sign of this wrongdoing. For the Antichrist's pride is greater than the pride of all who came before him. So as it is written of Gaius Caesar that he wanted to be worshiped while he was still alive, and put statues of himself in every temple, and as Ezekiel 28[:2] says of the King of Tyre, "I have said that I am God, etc.," so it is quite believable that the Antichrist will act as they did, saying that he is both God and man. And as a sign of this he will sit in the Temple.

But in what Temple? Was it not destroyed by the Romans? This is why some say that the Antichrist is from the tribe of Dan, whose tribe is not named among the other twelve in Revelation 7[:5]. Because of this, the Jews will accept him at first, and will rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem, and thus Daniel 11[:27] will be fulfilled: "An abomination and an idol will be in the Temple." "But when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet standing in the holy place, let him who reads understand" (Matt. 24:15).

But some say that neither Jerusalem nor the Temple will ever be rebuilt, but that their desolation will last until the final consummation. And even some Jews believe this. So this text is explained to mean *in the Temple of God*, that is, in the Church, since many from the Church will accept him. Or according to Augustine, *he sits in the Temple of God*, that is, he rules and governs as though he himself with his messengers were the temple of God, as Christ is [the Temple] with his [adherents].

41. Then when he says, *do you not remember*, he shows that he is writing nothing new, as though to say: When I was with you long ago, I said this. "I do not write a new command for you, but an old command, which you have had from the beginning" (2 John 5); "as we are in word by epistles when absent, such also we will be indeed when present" (2 Cor. 10:11).

2 Thessalonians Chapter 2

Lecture 2 (on 2 Thess. 2:6–10)

v. 6 [n. 42] *And what withholds [him] now, you know, that in his time he may be revealed.* v. 7 [n. 44] *For the mystery of iniquity is already at work: only that he who now holds do hold, until he come to be from the middle.* v. 8 [n. 46] *And then that wicked one shall be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus shall kill with the spirit of his mouth and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: him* v. 9 [n. 47] *whose coming is according to the working of Satan, in all power and signs and lying prodigies* v. 10a [n. 51] *and in all deception of iniquity to those who perish.*

42. Above, the apostle foretold the coming and the wrongdoing of the Antichrist [n. 38]; here he explains the reason for its delay. And first, he shows that they know this cause; second, he sets out this cause in an obscure manner, there [2 Thess. 2:7; n. 44] *at for the mystery*.

43. He says therefore: I say that the man of sin must be revealed. *And what withholds [him] now*, that is, what is the cause of his delay, *you know*, because I spoke to you [about it], so that he is withheld in this way at the present time, *that in his time*, that is, at a fitting time, *he may be revealed*. “There is a time and an occasion for every business” (Eccles. 8:6); “God has made all things good in their time” (Eccles. 3:11).

44. Then when he says, *for the mystery*, etc., he sets out the reason for the delay. And this text has been explained in many ways, because the word *mystery* can be either in the nominative case or in the accusative case.¹⁹ If it is nominative, the meaning is this: I say that [he will be revealed] in his own time, because already the mystery, that is, a thing hidden after the manner of a figure, is at work in false men who seem good and yet are evil. And these play the role of the Antichrist. “Having the appearance of religion, but denying its power” (2 Tim. 3:5). But if it is accusative, then the meaning is this: The devil, in whose power the Antichrist will come, has already secretly begun to work his wickedness through tyrants and deceivers, because the persecutions of the Church of this time are figures of that final persecution of all good men, and are as it were imperfect by comparison with it.

45. *Only that he who now holds*, etc. This has been explained in many ways. One way is in accord with the Gloss and with Augustine,²⁰ who say that some thought that Nero, who first persecuted the Christians, was the Antichrist, and

19 The same grammatical ambiguity obtains in the Greek text of this verse.

20 *The City of God*, Bk. 20, Chap. 19. Augustine prefaces his remarks by saying, “I frankly confess I do not know what he means. I will nevertheless mention such conjectures as I have heard or read.”

that he was not killed but taken away, and that at some time he will be brought back. Hence the apostle, nullifying this, says *only that he who now holds* the Roman Empire *do hold, until he come to be from the middle*, that is, until he dies. But this way [of interpreting the text] is not fitting, because it has been many years since Nero died; he died in the same year as the apostle [Paul]. But it is better to refer it to Nero insofar as he was a public person of the Roman Empire: *until he come to be from the middle*, that is, until the Roman Empire is removed from this world. "The Lord of hosts has planned this, that he may take away the pride of every glory, and bring to disgrace, etc." (Isa. 23:9).

Or taken another way, *only that he who now holds*, that is, who now restrains the Antichrist's coming, *do hold*, lest he come. As much as to say, "It is necessary as yet for some to come to the faith and others to withdraw." He says, in effect, "As a departure or as an approach let him *who now holds* until he comes *hold* until that foul man is taken away." Or it can be taken this way: *only that he who now holds* the faith be strong in it. "Hold what you have, that no one take your crown" (Rev. 3:11). *Until he comes to be from the middle*, that is, until the intermingled congregation of the wicked be separated and come to be separate, which will happen during the Antichrist's persecution. Or *only* etc., that is, that the mystery of iniquity, that is, the secret iniquity, which now holds back, let it hold back *until it comes to be from the middle*, that is, until the iniquity is brought before the public and becomes as it were something public and common.²¹ For many now sin secretly, but at some point sin will be committed openly; for God endures sinners so long as they are hidden, until they sin publicly, and then he no longer endures them, as is clear in the case of the Sodomites (Gen. 19:24).

But Augustine confesses that he does not know what the apostle said to them, which they already knew. Hence he says *what withholds [him] now, you know*. And beyond this there was not much necessary to know.

46. Then when he says, *and then*, etc., the wicked man's coming is set out, and his punishment. First, his appearance and second his punishment. Regarding the first he says *that singularly wicked one shall be revealed*, because his wrongdoing will be manifest, *whom the Lord Jesus shall kill with the spirit of his mouth*. "The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this" (Isa. 9:7), that is, the zeal for justice, which is love. For the Spirit of Christ is the love of Christ, and this is the zeal²² of the Holy Spirit, which he has for the Church. Or *with the spirit of his mouth*, that is, his command, for Michael will kill him on Mount Olivet whence Christ ascended. So also Julian was killed by the hand of God.

21 Literally "and becomes, as it were, something existing in public and from the middle." Thomas tries to explain Paul's obscure words by staying close to Paul's phrasing, but the result is that Aquinas' own explanation is rather obscure. The translation given above is based on the parallel comment in Lombard's Gloss.

22 The Latin *zelus* can mean both "zeal" and "jealousy."

And this is his punishment in the present time, although in the future he will also be punished eternally, because [Christ] *shall destroy with the brightness of his coming*, that is, bringing all things to light at his coming. "He will bring to light the hidden things of darkness" (1 Cor. 4:5). And he *shall destroy*, I say, namely by eternal damnation. "He will destroy them, etc." (Ps. 27:5). And he says *with the brightness* because [the Antichrist] himself will seem to darken the Church, but the darkness will be driven out by brightness; for whatever the Antichrist claims will be shown to have been a lie.

47. Then when he says, *whose coming*, he foretells the Antichrist's power. And concerning this he does two things, for first, he sets out his power to deceive; second, he shows how this power has its cause in God's justice, there [2 Thess. 2:10b; n. 52] at *because they do not accept*. And the first of these is in three parts, for first, he sets out the one who stands behind this power [n. 49]; second, how he will deceive; third, he describes those who will be deceived [n. 51].

48. The one who stands behind the power is the devil, and so Christ will destroy him. "For this purpose the Son of God appeared, to destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8). And this is why he says that the Antichrist's *coming* will be *according to the working of Satan*, that is, at his inspiration. "Satan will be released from his prison, and he will go out and will deceive the nations, etc." (Rev. 20:7).

For one way something can be done *according to the working of Satan* is as in the possessed, in whom Satan not only inspires the will but also impedes the use of reason. The possessed person is not considered culpable for his actions, because he does not have the use of free will. But the Antichrist will not be like this, but will have the use of free will, and the devil will be in him making suggestions as is written of Judas: "Satan entered into him" (John 13:27), namely by inspiring him [to act].

49. Now he will deceive in this way: first by his worldly power; second, by his power of working miracles. As regards the first he says *in all power*, namely worldly power. "And he shall have power over the treasures of gold, and of silver, and all the precious things of Egypt" (Dan. 11:43). Or *power*, namely pretended power. As regards the second he says *and in signs*, etc. Signs are a kind of marvel, including small things, but prodigies are great works produced by someone prodigious, being as it were *procul a digito* ["far from the finger"]. "He works great signs, so that he even causes fire to fall from heaven, etc." (Rev. 13:13). "They will work great signs and prodigies so that they would even lead into error the elect, were it possible" (Matt. 24:24).

50. And he says *lying*. Miracles are called *lying* either because they fall short of the true nature of the [supposed] deed, or because they fall short of the true nature of a miracle, or because they fall short of the due end of a miracle. The first is what happens in illusions, when the senses are duped by demons so that things

seem other than they are, as when Simon Magus caused a ram to be decapitated and later displayed it alive. A man was also decapitated, and later the man, whom all believed had been decapitated, was shown to be alive, and was thought to have been resuscitated. And men do this by rearranging phantasms and deceiving.

In a second way, those are called “miracles” in an improper sense which are full of wonderment because although the effect is seen the cause is unknown. Therefore, things that have a cause hidden to somebody but not hidden simply speaking are called “marvels,” and not “miracles” simply speaking. But things whose cause is hidden simply speaking are called “miracles” in the proper sense of the word, and their cause is the glorious God himself, because they transcend the whole order of created nature. But sometimes marvels come to pass which are not beyond the order of nature yet have hidden causes, and this is much more the kind of thing demons do. The demons know the powers of nature, and they have determinate abilities to work particular effects. So the Antichrist will work these sorts of things, but they will not have the true nature of a miracle because the demons have no power to work what goes beyond nature.

In a third way things are called “miracles” according as they are ordered to bearing witness to the truth of the faith, to leading believers to God. “The Lord working with them and confirming their words by the accompanying signs” (Mark 16:20). But if someone has the glory of miracles and does not use them for this purpose, they are miracles indeed as regards the nature of the thing done, as regards the nature of a miracle, but they are false with respect to their due end and God’s intention. Yet the Antichrist’s works will not be of this sort, because no one works true miracles against the faith, since God is not a false witness. Hence someone preaching a false doctrine cannot work miracles, even though someone leading a bad life can.

51. Then he sets out those who will be deceived, when he says *to those who perish*, that is, among those who God foreknows will perish. “None of them was lost save the son of perdition” (John 17:12). And this is because “My sheep hear my voice” (John 10:27).

2 Thessalonians Chapter 2

Lecture 3 (on 2 Thess. 2:10–17)

v. 10b [n. 52] *because they do not accept the love of the truth, that they might be saved.* v. 11 *Therefore God shall send them the operation of error, that they might believe a lie,* v. 12 [n. 55] *that all may be judged who have not believed the truth but have consented to iniquity.* v. 13 [n. 56] *But we ought to give thanks to God always for you, brethren, beloved of God, because God has chosen us and you*

as firstfruits unto salvation, in sanctification of the spirit and faith of the truth: v. 14 [n. 58] whereunto also he has called you by our gospel, to the acquisition of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. v. 15 [n. 59] Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold to the traditions which you have learned, whether by word or by our epistle. v. 16 [n. 61] Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God and our Father, who has loved us and has given us everlasting consolation and good hope in grace v. 17 [n. 62] exhort your hearts and strengthen you in every good work and word.

52. Having described those in whom the Antichrist has power to deceive, namely those foreknown as going to suffer damnation [n. 47], here the apostle gives the reason for what he has said. And first, he gives the reason for it, and how they will be deceived; second, he explains how believers will be freed from it, there [2 Thess. 2:13; n. 56] at *but we ought*. And first he sets out their sin only; second the punishment-and-sin [n. 54]; third, the punishment only [2 Thess. 2:12; n. 55].²³ And this is the progression of sin. For first a person is abandoned by grace on account of his first sin, and then he falls into another sin, and later is punished for all eternity.

53. He says therefore that the reason why they will be deceived is because they did not want to accept the truth of love, that is, the truth of the Gospel. "If I speak the truth, why do you not believe me?" (John 8:46). "They were rebels against the light" (Job 24:13). And he says *the love of truth* because unless faith be formed by love it is nothing. "If I have faith so as to move mountains and have not love, I am nothing" (1 Cor. 13:2). "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision count for anything, but a new creature" (Gal. 6:15). And he adds something about the usefulness of truth, saying *that they might be saved*. "Having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through the Lord, etc." (Rom. 5:1).

54. But their sin-and-punishment is their deception; hence he says, *God shall send them*, that is, permit to come to them, *the operation of error*. "God has mingled in their midst a spirit of confusion" (Isa. 19:14). "I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets" (1 Kings 22:22). And this is why he says *that they might believe a lie*, that is, the false teaching of the Antichrist. "For which reason God gave them over to a reprobate mind, that they might do things which are not fitting" (Rom. 1:28).

55. But the punishment only is eternal damnation; hence he adds *that all may be judged*, namely with the judgment of condemnation. "And those who have done wickedly shall go forth to the resurrection of judgment" (John 5:29). *Who have not believed the truth*. "He who does not believe is already judged" (John 3:18).

23 In the following paragraphs, Thomas lays out a three step progression: *culpa tantum*, *culpa et poena*, *poena tantum*, "just sin, sin-and-punishment, just punishment." In the first step, the sin is just a sin and not also a punishment; in the second step, the sin is a punishment as well as a sin; in the third step, the sinner suffers a punishment which is not a sin.

56. Then when he says, *but we ought*, he shows why Christ's faithful will be freed. And first he gives thanks for them; second, he recalls the divine favors by which they are freed from such things. He speaks therefore like this: Those men will be deceived, *but we ought to give thanks*. "First indeed I give thanks to my God always for you through the Lord" (Rom. 1:8). And he sets out two favors of God, namely God's choice,²⁴ which is eternal, and his calling, which is temporal, there [2 Thess. 2:13; n. 58] at *whereunto also he has called you*.

57. He says therefore, *quod* ["because"], meaning *quia* ["because"], *God has chosen us*, namely the apostles, *and you*, namely the believers.²⁵ "He chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, etc." (Eph. 1:4). "You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you" (John 15:16). Concerning choice he touches on three things, namely the order of those chosen, the goal of the choice, and the *medium* of obtaining the goal.

All the saints are chosen from the beginning of the world. "He has loved the people, all the saints are in his hand" (Deut. 33:3). But the apostles are in a special way the firstfruits. "We ourselves having the firstfruits of the Spirit" (Rom. 8:23). And this is why he says *firstfruits* of faith. The goal of God's choice is eternal salvation, and this is why he says *unto salvation*. "He desires all men to be saved" (1 Tim. 2:4). This happens first of all on God's part by sanctifying grace; hence he says *in sanctification of the Spirit*. Secondly, on our part, there is the consent of the free will by faith; and this is why he adds *and faith of the truth*.

58. Then when he says, *whereunto also he has called you by our Gospel*, etc., he sets out the second [divine] favor, which is the temporal calling of Christ, which follows on God's choice [of the individual]. "Those whom he called, these he also justified" (Rom. 8:30). And concerning this calling, note the parable about the man who made a great dinner, etc. (Luke 14:16). And he adds *by our Gospel*, that is, the Gospel preached by me. But to what dinner [are we called]? *To the acquisition of the glory*, that is, that we may acquire the glory of Christ.

59. Then [compare n. 27] when he says, *therefore*, etc., he admonishes them to hold fast the truth. And first he sets out his admonition; second, a prayer, there [v. 16; n. 61] at *now our Lord Jesus Christ himself*. And he does the first because our works depend on free will; but he adds the second because they need the help of grace.

60. And first he admonishes them to stand fast, when he says stand in the truth. "Stand, and do not be held again under yoke of slavery" (Gal. 5:1). Second, he

24 Among the scholastics, *electio* was a technical term rather than a mere synonym for "choice," but to American ears the word "election" inevitably has a political connotation. In the following paragraphs "choice" should be understood in a technical sense as referring to God's eternal decision regarding the fate of individual men.

25 The Vulgate text provided by the Marietti editors does not have "us and you" [*nos et vos*] but simply "you" [*vos*]. This corresponds to the Greek text, but Aquinas' Bible apparently had "us and" inserted before "you."

teaches them how to stand, there at *and hold to the traditions*, that is, the instructions which have been handed down by the elders. For the instructions given by the younger should sometimes not be followed, namely when they are contrary to the instructions of the faith. "You have made void the commandment of God for your tradition" (Matt. 15:6). But those which are ordered to the commands of God should be kept. *Which you have learned*. "Paul was teaching that they should hold fast the traditions and instructions which were decreed by the apostles and the elders who were in Jerusalem, etc." (Acts 16:4).

And they delivered these traditions in two ways. Some they delivered by words, and so he says *by word*. Others they delivered in writing, and so he adds or *by epistle*. Hence it is clear that there are many things in the Church which were not written and yet were taught by the apostles and so must be followed. For there were many things which the apostles judged were best hidden, as Dionysius says. Hence the apostle says "The rest I will arrange when I come" (1 Cor. 11:34).

61. Then he sets out his prayer, there at, *now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, etc.*, as though to say: I have admonished you in this fashion, but it will avail nothing without God's help. And so he sets out first two favors from God. The first is his love for us, by which he gives other things to us; and so he says *who has loved us*. The second is spiritual consolation, there at *and has given us everlasting consolation*. "Who consoles us in our every tribulation" (2 Cor. 1:4). "Be consoled, be consoled, my people, says the Lord your God" (Isa. 40:1).

And he says *eternal consolation*, namely for all evils both at hand and in the future. And for this reason we await the *good hope*, that is, the infallibility of eternal goods. "Who in accordance with his great mercy has regenerated us unto a living hope" (1 Pet. 1:3). And this is *in grace*, namely the grace through which we hope to obtain eternal life. "The grace of God is eternal life" (Rom. 6:23).

62. And he begs for them an exhortation, which is an admonition that leads the soul to will something. And a man can do this exteriorly, but it is not efficacious unless the Spirit of God be present interiorly. Hence he says, *exhort your hearts*, that is, inspire them. "I will lead her into solitude, and I will speak to her heart" (Hos. 2:14). Similarly, he begs for a strengthening, and so he says *and strengthen*. "Strengthen, O God, what you have worked in us" (Ps. 67:29). As though to say: May he exhort us by his grace that we may will, and may he strengthen us that we may will efficaciously. And this *in every good work and word*. Work precedes word, for Jesus "began to do and to teach" (Acts 1:1).

2 Thessalonians Chapter 3

Lecture 1 (2 Thess. 3:1–9)

v. 1 [n. 63] *For the rest, brethren, pray for us that the word of God may run and may be glorified even as among you, v. 2 and that we may be delivered from importunate and evil men: for not all men have faith.* v. 3 [n. 66] *But God is faithful, who will strengthen and keep you from evil.* v. 4 *And we have confidence concerning you in the Lord that the things which we command, you both do and will do.* v. 5 [n. 68] *And may the Lord direct your hearts, in the love of God and the patience of Christ.* v. 6 [n. 69] *And we charge you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw yourselves from every brother walking in a disorderly manner and not according to the tradition that they have received from us.* v. 7 [n. 71] *For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us. For we were not troublesome among you.* v. 8 [n. 73] *Neither did we eat any man's bread for nothing, but in labor and in toil we worked night and day, lest we should burden any of you.* v. 9 [n. 74] *Not as if we did not have power, but that we might give ourselves as a pattern to you, to imitate us.*

63. Above, he instructed them about what will happen in the last days [n. 8]. Here he instructs them about certain things that they particularly needed to do. And first, he sets out his instruction; second, the conclusion of the epistle, there [2 Thess. 3:16; n. 88] at *now the God of peace himself*. And first he advises them about how they should relate to himself; second, he says what he is confident about concerning them, there [2 Thess. 3:3; n. 66] at *but God is faithful*; third, how they should relate to others who walk in a disorderly manner, there [2 Thess. 3:6; n. 69] at *and we charge you*. Concerning the first, first he speaks of prayer; second, what should be asked for in prayer, there [n. 65] at *that the word of God*.

64. He says therefore, *for the rest*, since you are sufficiently instructed, *pray for us*. “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Holy Spirit, to help me by your prayers to God on my behalf” (Rom. 15:30). And this is his due, because those in authority have the duty of tending to the advantage of the flock. “Remember those who are put over you, who have spoken to you the word of God, etc.” (Heb. 13:7).

65. Second, he states what should be prayed for, namely that impediments to preaching be removed; and so he says *that the word of God may run*. Since it cannot be entirely impeded, but can be slowed down, he says *run*. “Praying at the same time for us, that the Lord may open to us a gate for the Word, to speak the mysteries of Christ” (Col. 4:3).

Likewise that it *may be glorified* [*clarificetur*], namely by a clear [*claram*] and lucid exposition, among the simple and among the wise *as among us*.²⁶ "I am a debtor both to the wise and to the foolish" (Rom. 1:14). "The learning of the wise is easy" (Prov. 14:6). And also by miracles, which are demonstrations of the faith. For all knowledge is made glorious [*clara*] by demonstrations, and this is something to be prayed for. "Grant your servants to speak your word with all confidence, etc." (Acts 4:29).

And second, it is necessary to pray for the preachers that they may be freed *from importunate and evil men*, namely from false apostles, who are importunate in arguing and evil in deceiving. Or from persecutors, who pondered wickedness in their hearts. And the reason for this prayer is that *not all men have the faith*, for although they seem to have it, nonetheless they do not have true faith. "Lord, who has believed what we have heard?" (Isa. 53:1). "Not all obey the Gospel" (Rom. 10:16).

66. Then when he says, *but God is faithful*, he sets out the confidence he has concerning them. And first, he does this; second, he prays for them, there [2 Thess. 3:5; n. 68] at *and may the Lord*.

67. Now his confidence depends on the one who gives grace and on men who have free will, that they may be directed by grace. He says first, on the side of God: I have confidence that you will pray and will be heard because *God is faithful, who will strengthen you in the good things he has worked in you*. "God himself will perfect, confirm, and establish you, etc." (1 Pet. 5:10). *And keep you from evil*, namely the evil of sin and punishment. Yet if they do suffer the evil of punishment, it is for their good, because all things work together for the good of those who love God, as is said in Romans 8[:28].

Second, on their side he says, *and we have confidence in you*, brothers, namely based on the grace you have received, but *in the Lord*, not in your own strength. "We have confidence in you, beloved, of things better and nearer to salvation" (Heb. 6:9). *That the things which we command*, etc., that is, that you will persevere. "All the words that the Lord has spoken we will do" (Exod. 24:7).

68. Then when he says, *and may the Lord*, etc., he prays for them, saying *may the Lord direct our*²⁷ *hearts*, namely that you may reach [the goal]. "It belongs to man to prepare his soul, but to direct the tongue belongs to the Lord," as is said in Proverbs 16[:1]. And a little further down [Prov. 16:9] it says, "A man's heart arranges his way, but the Lord directs his steps," namely to his destined reward. And this is why he says *may the Lord direct our hearts*, not only our exterior works, and this *in the love of God*.

26 The Vulgate text has "among you," as does the Greek text of 2 Thess. There is no way to know whether Aquinas' Bible has "among us" or whether our text of this lecture is defective.

27 The Vulgate text has "your"; see the previous footnote.

Now there are two things through which we advance on the way of salvation, namely the good things we do and the bad things we endure. But works are not good unless they are directed to the goal of love. "The goal of the precept is love" (1 Tim. 1:5). Neither is patience good except through Christ. "In patience you will possess your souls" (Luke 21:19). "Blessed are you when men speak evil of you" (Matt. 5:11). And this is why he says *and the patience of Christ*, that is, endurance of bad things for Christ's sake, or after his example. "Christ has suffered for you, leaving you an example" (1 Pet. 2:21).

69. Then when he says *and we charge you*, he shows how they should relate to disorderly persons. And first, he sets out a rule; second, he explains it, there [2 Thess. 3:7; n. 71] at *for you yourselves*; third, he shows why the rule he has set out is necessary, there [2 Thess. 3:11; n. 78] at *for we have heard*.

70. He says therefore: Thus you live, and thus we have confidence, but because there are some wicked men among you, *we charge you*, namely you perfect, *in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*. For this has to do with prelates. "Announce to my people their wicked doings, and to the house of Jacob their sins" (Isa. 58:1). "I will require of you the blood of that man" (Ezek. 3:18).

There follows the rule: *that you withdraw yourselves*, etc. The practice of avoiding wicked men was introduced in the Church to prevent weaker men from being contaminated by associating with them. "Whoever touches pitch shall be defiled by it" (Sir. 13:1). "A little leaven leavens the whole lump" (1 Cor. 5:6). And for the healing of the sinner, so that his embarrassment might lead to his salvation. "There is an embarrassment that leads to sin, and there is an embarrassment that leads to glory" (Sir. 4:25). And this should not be done indiscriminately, but with deliberation and maturity. "Gather yourselves, and by my spirit with the power of the Lord Jesus deliver such a man to Satan for destruction" (1 Cor. 5:4). And thus it says here *that you withdraw*, etc.

But excommunication should only be inflicted because of some sin, because it says here *disorderly*. And this is when something is evil in itself and against the order of the natural law, as the Gloss explains. "But let all things be done decently and according to order" (1 Cor. 14:40). "All things that are from God are ordered" (Rom. 13:1). Or because it is forbidden and against the teaching of the Church. Hence he says *and not according to the tradition*, etc. Above, in the second chapter of this epistle [v. 15], "Hold to the traditions which you have learned, whether by word or by our epistle."

71. Then when he says *for you yourselves*, etc., he explains the last thing he said, namely *according to the traditions*, showing what this tradition is and how they received it. Now the tradition is that they were not idle or curious. And first, he shows how they received it by example [n. 72]; second, how they received it by word

[n. 76]. And first, he shows that he avoided troublesomeness; second, how he did so [n. 73]; third, he gives the reason [n. 74].

72. He says therefore, *you know* the tradition that you received, because prelates should not be imitated in every respect but in those things that are according to the rule of Christ. "Be imitators of me, even as I am of Christ" (1 Cor. 4:16). And in what respect [should they imitate the apostle]? *For we were not troublesome among you*. For the Thessalonians were very generous. "Concerning the love of the brotherhood I have no need to write to you, for you yourselves have learned from God to love one another" (1 Thess. 4:9). And for this reason poor people were living in leisure, and because of their leisure they devoted themselves to undue activities that did not pertain to them. And this was troublesomeness. And this is why he says *we were not troublesome [inquieti]*, etc. "And that you endeavor to be quiet [*quieti*]" (1 Thess. 4:11).

73. *Neither did we eat any man's bread for nothing*, etc., because he labored with the work of his hands. "You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities, and to those who were with me" (Acts 20:34). "She has not eaten her bread idle" (Prov. 31:27). "You know that I have never accepted so much as a donkey from them" (Num. 16:15). *But in labor and toil*, not just a little, but *night and day*, that is, continually, because sometimes he had to preach and teach and the rest of his time he devoted to work, *lest we should burden any of you*. "What have you had less than the others, except that we did not burden you?" (2 Cor. 12:13).

74. Then when he says, *not as if*, etc., he gives the reason he worked with his own hands. Here he first sets aside a false reason, and set he gives the true reason [n. 75]. It would be a false explanation of his manual labor to say that he was not permitted to receive some payment from them. And so he says, *not as if we did not have power*, nay rather we did have power to live off of what was received from the faithful. "He who serves the altar partakes of the altar" (1 Cor. 9:13). "The workman deserves his food" (Matt. 10:10). "Thus the Lord also ordained those who announce the Gospel to live from the Gospel" (1 Cor. 9:14). And so based on the Gospel there are two kinds of men who have power to live off of what they receive from others, namely those who serve at the altar and those who preach.

75. Then when he says, *but that we*, etc., he sets out the real reason. For we find two reasons why the apostle worked with his hands, one among the Corinthians and another here.²⁸ For the Corinthians were greedy and would have born with him only reluctantly, as is said there. But the reason why he worked here was their laziness, and so he says *that we might give ourselves as a pattern*, namely of working. "Be an example to the faithful in word, in way of life, in love, in faith, in chastity" (1 Tim. 4:12). "Being made patterns for the flock" (1 Pet. 5:3). Another reason is given in the Gloss on 1 Corinthians 4, namely that when he did not find anyone who

²⁸ Aquinas makes this same point in his comment on 2 Cor 6:5.

would give him anything, then he worked.²⁹ A fourth reason was so that, like the monks of Egypt, they might not be idle. “Idleness teaches great wickedness” (Sir. 33:29). Hence those who are not engaged in some duty, either of studying or of reading, put themselves in danger when they live in idleness.

2 Thessalonians Chapter 3

Lecture 2 (2 Thess. 3:10–18)

v. 10 [n. 76] *For also, when we were with you, we declared this to you: that if any man will not work, neither let him eat.* v. 11 [n. 78] *For we have heard there are some among you who walk in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but curiously meddling.* v. 12 [n. 80] *Now we charge those who are such and beg them by the Lord Jesus Christ that, working with silence, they would eat their own bread.* v. 13 [n. 82] *But you, brethren, do not grow weary in well doing.* v. 14 [n. 84] *And if any man does not obey our word, note this man by epistle and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed.* v. 15 [n. 87] *Yet do not esteem him as an enemy but admonish him as a brother.* v. 16 [n. 88] *Now the Lord of peace himself give you everlasting peace in every place. The Lord be with you all.* v. 17 [n. 91] *The greeting of Paul with my own hand, which is the sign in every epistle. So I write.* v. 18 *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.*

76. Above, the apostle shows what he taught them by his own example, namely that they should not be troublesome but should work [n. 71]. Here he shows how he handed this on to them by words and deeds when he was with them. Hence he says, *when we were with you*, as though to say: In order to give you a pattern to follow, we did what we taught, since *we declared this to you*, etc. As the Gloss says, and as Augustine says in his book *De operibus monachorum* (“The Works of the Monks”), some twisted these words to say that servants of God are not permitted to work with their hands, on account of what is said in Matthew 6[:34], “Be not anxious, etc.”³⁰ For they said that this work belongs to an anxious way of life. And because of this, they interpreted this passage as referring to spiritual works, as though to say: “If anyone is not willing to perform meritorious and spiritual works, he is not worthy to eat.” But this is contrary to apostle’s intention, who says *we declared* that we acted this way, namely with labor and weariness.

77. But what does he mean when he says *that if any man will not work*, etc.? Is this a counsel or a precept? And it seems to be a precept, because it says below [2 Thess. 3:14], “And if any man does not obey our word, etc.” Therefore all are

²⁹ See Lombard, *PL* 192, 1569A.

³⁰ See also St. Augustine, *Retractions*, Bk. 2, Chap. 21.

bound to work with their hands. Therefore whoever does not work with his hands, but stands about idle, sins mortally. I respond. One should say that it is a precept, but something can be laid down as a precept in two ways: either simply, or given a certain condition. Whatever is necessary for salvation is laid down as a precept simply; and these are works of the virtues. But something can be laid down as a precept under a certain condition when, for example, the situation is such that without manual labor a precept cannot be kept.

Now it is a precept for man that he sustain his own body, for otherwise he commits homicide against himself. "Eat of every tree of Paradise, etc." (Gen. 2:16). Therefore a man is bound by precept to nutrify his body, and we are similarly bound to everything without which the body cannot live. So anyone who does not have some other means of lawfully sustaining his body, whether it be possessions, or a lawful business, is bound to work, lest he turn to thievery. "Whoever was a thief, let him steal no more, but rather labor by working with his own hands" (Eph. 4:28). It is therefore a precept when a man cannot otherwise lawfully live. Hence he says *if any man will not work, neither let him eat*. Therefore one of two things is necessary for a man to be able to eat, namely that he either have possessions or that he lawfully obtain them. "You shall eat the works of your hands" (Ps. 127:2). "Work with your hands, as we commanded you" (1 Thess. 4:11).

78. Then when he says, *for we have heard*, etc., he says why this precept is necessary, for the apostle says this not so much on the basis of a duty to teach as because of the people's fault.³¹ And so first, he sets out the sin that makes the precept necessary; second, he applies a remedy, there [2 Thess. 3:12; n. 80] at *now we charge*.

79. He says therefore, *for we have heard*, etc., as though to say: The reason I do not hide this precept is that *we have heard there are some*, etc. For a man's soul must always be occupied with something, and so necessarily the idle suffer from an unrest regarding unlawful things. "Endeavor to be quiet" (1 Thess. 4:11). And he adds but *curiously meddling*, namely in the affairs of others. "Desires kill the lazy" (Prov. 21:25).

80. Then he applies a remedy, when he says, *now we charge*, etc. And first, on the side of those who are sinning; second, on the side of the others, there [2 Thess. 3:13; n. 82] at *but you, brethren*.

81. He says therefore, *now we severely charge those who are such*, speaking as a prelate, *and beg them* lovingly, as their father, *that they would eat their own bread*, not another's bread but what is due them, namely what has been lawfully acquired, *with silence*, that is, without being troublesome, without running about. "The service [cultus] of justice is silence" (Isa. 32:17). "Idleness teaches great wickedness" (Ezek. 33:29).

31 The Latin is ambiguous here: *Quia Apostolus dicit hoc non tam ex officio docentis quam propter vitium gentis*.

82. Then when he says, *but you, brethren*, etc., he applies two remedies on the side of the others who are not sinning. First, that they should not cease doing good; second, that they correct them, there [2 Thess. 3:14; n. 84] at *and if any man*, etc.

83. He says therefore, *but you*, etc., as though to say: Do not grow weary in well doing, even though the idle are abusing it. "Doing good, we do not grow weary" (Gal. 6:9). And this is necessary even if they are already working with their hands and do not lack anything, because it is necessary to bring aid to others.

84. Then when he says, *and if any man*, etc., he commands that they be corrected, and first, he shows the order in which they should be punished; second, he shows the effect of the punishment, there [n. 86] at *that he may be ashamed*; third, the goal, there [2 Thess. 3:15; n. 87] at *yet do not esteem*, etc.

85. In order therefore he sets out first the sin, second its manifestation, and third its punishment. The sin is disobedience, and so he says, *and if any man does not obey*. "Because it is like the sin of witchcraft, to rebel: and like the crime of idolatry, to refuse to obey" (1 Kings 15:23). He sets out its manifestation and proof when he says *note this man by epistle*, that is, make him known, but through a search for the truth. "The cause I did not know I diligently investigated" (Job 29:16).

Their punishment is the sentence of excommunication; hence he says *and do not keep company with him*, etc. "With such a man do not even eat" (1 Cor. 5:11). "Do not receive him in your home or say 'Hail' to him" (2 John 10). Here notice that excommunication is imposed for disobedience, but [the man punished] should be proven guilty. Hence he says *if any man does not obey*, by your *epistle* note him, that is, communicate it to us that he may be punished. And in the meantime, *do not keep company with him*.

86. But the effect of the punishment is *that he may be ashamed* and so recover. "There is an embarrassment that leads to sin, and there is an embarrassment that leads to glory" (Sir. 4:25).

87. Now the goal and intention should be his correction, which love intends, so he says, *yet do not esteem him as an enemy*,³² because [his correction] should not arise from hateful spite but from a loving eagerness. You should not avoid him out of the sort of hatred you would have for an enemy. "Love your enemies, and do good to those who hate you" (Matt. 5:44). And this is why he says *but admonish him as a brother*. This shows love. "Behold how good and pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity" (Ps. 132:1).

88. Then when he says, *now the Lord*, etc., he concludes the epistle. And first, his conclusion is set out; second, a greeting, which is a kind of seal on the epistle, there [2 Thess. 3:17; n. 91] at *the greeting*, etc. And the first is in two parts, because first he wishes God's gifts for them; second he wishes God himself for them, there [n. 90] at *the Lord be*, etc.

32 The Marietti text has *invicem* ["one another"] here, but Aquinas' comment fits better with the Vulgate text, *inimicum* ["enemy"].

89. As regards the first he says, *now the Lord of peace himself*, etc. God is said to be the God “of peace” in relation to two things. For peace consists of two things, namely that a man be in harmony with himself and that he be in harmony with others. And both can only be had sufficiently in God. For apart from God a man does not have harmony with himself, much less with others, because a man’s emotions are in harmony with themselves when what is sought to fulfill one [desire] suffices to fulfill all [desires], and nothing but God can do this. “Who satisfies your desires with good things” (Ps. 102:5). For anything else but God will not be enough for all [desires], but God is enough. “In me you have peace” (John 16:33). Similarly, men are only united amongst themselves in that which is [had] in common among them, and this is most of all God.

And this is why he says *the God of peace give*, not temporal peace, but *everlasting peace*, that is, spiritual peace, which begins here and is completed there. “Who makes your ends peace” (Ps. 147:3). And this *in every place*, and amongst the faithful in all the world.

90. As regards the second, he says, *the Lord be with you all*, because a man has nothing else well unless he has God through faith and love.

91. *The greeting*. He says this because of unbelievers who were twisting his epistles. “See with what kind of letters I write to you with my own hand” (Gal. 6:11). *Which is the sign*, etc. *The grace*, that is, God’s gratuitous gift that renders us pleasing to God, etc. “Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (John 1:17).