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A table of contents for *The Evangelical Quarterly* can be found here:

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THE SECOND EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS :

An Expanded Paraphrase

I. INTRODUCTION (Ch. 1: 1-12)

(a) *Salutation* (Ch. 1: 1-2)

To the church of the Thessalonians, established by faith in God as Father and Jesus Christ as Lord, this letter comes from Paul, Silvanus and Timothy. Grace and peace be yours from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord!

(b) *Thanksgiving and encouragement* (Ch. 1: 3-12)

It is our plain duty to give God fitting thanks for you continually, brothers and sisters, because your faith increases apace and each one of you abounds in love more and more to all the others. For this reason we boast about you among the churches of God, because of your patience and faithfulness amid all your persecutions and all the afflictions that you have to endure. These demonstrate the righteous judgment of God, proving your worthiness of His kingdom—for it is for His kingdom's sake that you suffer them. It is a righteous thing on God's part to mete out corresponding affliction to those who afflict you, but to grant relief to you who suffer the affliction—relief to you and us alike, when the Lord Jesus Christ makes His public appearance from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire, executing vengeance on those who have no knowledge of God and render no obedience to the gospel of our Lord Jesus. Yes, they will suffer the penalty of eternal destruction, banished from the presence of the Lord and His almighty glory, on that day when He comes to be invested with glory among His holy ones and to be the object of wonder among all who have believed—and that includes you, because you believed the testimony which we bore to you. With our eyes fixed on this consummation we keep on praying for you continually, asking our God to make you worthy of the purpose for which He called you and to fulfil in you effectively every good desire and every work of faith. Thus the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified in you, and you will be glorified in Him, so great is the grace of our God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

II. THE DAY OF THE LORD AND THE EVENTS WHICH ARE TO
 HERALD IT (Ch. 2: 1-12)

Now, my brothers, I have an earnest request to make of you: it concerns the advent of our Lord Jesus Christ and our assembling together with Him. Please do not let yourself be alarmed or shaken out of your wits by any idea that the day of the Lord has already started, no matter where the idea comes from—whether from a prophetic utterance, or a communication, oral or written, purporting to come from me. Make sure that no one misleads you in this matter. You see, that day will not come until the Great Rebellion first breaks out and the Man of Evil makes his début. He is the heir of perdition, who sets himself in opposition to anyone bearing the name of God, or anything that people worship; indeed, he exalts himself above all such, going so far as to enthrone himself in the temple of God and proclaim that he himself is God.

Do you not remember that I told you this while I was still with you? At present you know what is holding him back, until the proper time comes for him to make his début. The secret force of evil is in operation already, but at present there is one who holds it back and will do so until he is swept away. Then indeed that man who is the very incarnation of evil will make his début; but the Lord will destroy him with the breath of His mouth and bring him to naught by the bright shining of His advent. The man of evil will have an advent of his own, attended by the operation of Satan, with all kinds of deceptive mighty works and signs and wonders, with every kind of sinful delusion for those who are on the way to perdition. This will be their requital for refusing to embrace the love of truth, which would have been their salvation. For this refusal God sends them a powerful spirit of error, which makes them give credence to the Lie, as a judgment on those who gave no credence to the Truth but took pleasure in sin.

III. PRACTICAL EXHORTATION (Chs. 2: 13—3: 15)

(a) *Further thanksgiving* (Ch. 2: 13-17)

But as for you, my brothers and sisters, the Lord has set His love on you, and it is our plain duty to thank God continually for you, because He has chosen you as firstfruits for salvation by the sanctifying work of the Spirit and your believing acceptance of the truth. It was through our preaching of the gospel that He called you with a view to your ultimately obtaining the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. So then, my brothers and sisters, stand fast and hold firmly the traditions which you were taught by us, whether by word of mouth or by letter. So may our Lord Jesus

Christ Himself, and God our Father, encourage and strengthen your hearts in every good action and word—the same God who has loved us and given us eternal encouragement and good hope by His grace.

(b) *Request for prayer* (Ch. 3: 1-5)

For the rest, my brothers, pray for us. Pray that the Lord's message may speed abroad and be glorified as it was among you. Pray too that we may be delivered from perverse and wicked men. All men, alas, do not share our faith. But we trust in the faithfulness of our Lord, and He will strengthen you and guard you from evil. And we have great confidence in the Lord regarding you, that you already do the things we enjoin upon you, and will continue to do them. So may the Lord direct your hearts into the way of God's love and the fortitude of Christ.

(c) *The need for discipline* (Ch. 3: 6-15)

Now a word of warning, my brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. You must dissociate yourselves from every brother whose way of life is disorderly and not in accordance with the tradition which we delivered to you. You yourselves know very well that you ought to follow our example. *We* did not indulge in disorderly behaviour when we were with you; we did not eat bread at anyone else's expense. No, we worked and toiled hard night and day, so as not to be burdensome to any of you. Granted we were entitled to ask you to support us; but we acted so as to give you an example to follow. Indeed when we were with you we gave this rule of life: "If any one refuses to work, let him refuse to eat". I say this because I hear that some of you are leading disorderly lives, minding everybody's business but their own. To people like these this is my charge, this is my admonition by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ: let them carry out their own business quietly, and eat bread which they have earned themselves.

But do not grow weary in doing good, my brothers.

If anyone does not obey our instructions in this letter, take note of that man and do not associate with him, so that he may be ashamed of himself. I do not mean that you should treat him as an enemy, but discipline him as your brother. So may the Lord of peace give you peace at all times and in all ways. The Lord be with you all.

IV. FINAL GREETING AND BENEDICTION (Ch. 3: 17, 18)

This is my personal greeting, written by my own hand. This is the token of my authorship in every letter that I write, and I write it here—PAUL. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.