

2 Thessalonians 6-10, 16-18

Today, our first reading concludes the final day of St. Paul's Second Letter to the Thessalonians. Second Thessalonians can be divided in three parts:

- **Part I:** St. Paul reminds the Thessalonian Christians that their sufferings conform them to Christ, who brought in the kingdom of God through suffering. His goal is to "reframe" the meaning of their sufferings to give them hope.
- **Part II:** This part concerns Christ's second coming. St. Paul corrects the error that Christ's coming already came or was imminent. He reminds them that certain things must first take place – the mass apostasy, the appearance of the lawless one, great suffering for the Church, and then Christ will come.
- **Part III:** This part is about practical implications, i.e., what the Thessalonian Christians should be doing today. They should not remain idle all day but rather imitate Paul who worked hard while in their midst. Paul never asked them for money and did a manual job to offer them the gospel free of charge.

It is most fascinating that Paul presents himself as a model of Christ. He does not claim to be perfect, i.e., without sin or error. Paul readily admitted his flaws. However, he offers his life as visible guide for new believers. They can look to him and see something of Christ.

In modern day terms, Paul presents himself as a mirror who reflects Jesus Christ. In our Catholic world, we could say that St. Paul is akin to a stained-glass window wherein the light of Christ shines through him in vibrant colors.

St. Paul encourages them to imitate his strong work ethic so as not to burden others. Paul wanted to offer the gospel "free of charge" and remove any suspicion he was there for their financial resources.

Finally, it is interesting that Paul refers to God as the "Lord of peace." The Lord is the ultimate source of inner harmony, wholeness, and reconciliation. By asking for the Lord of peace to be with them, this is yet another way that they imitate Jesus Christ, who brings reconciliation, harmony, and peace through the cross.

Those conformed to Christ know this peace well, even amidst difficult circumstances. As St. Paul concludes his letter, may *"the grace of our Lord Jesus be with you all."*

~St. Thérèse, pray for us!