In my previous post I began giving the scholarly version of why 2 Thessalonians is often considered to be non-Pauline – that is, to be forged in the name of Paul by someone wanting you to think he was Paul even though he was someone else. This discussion is taken from my book Forgery and Counterforgery. Now that I have given a (very) brief sketch of the history of the scholarship on this problem (the previous post) I can begin to discuss the actual evidence. This is where the discussion gets a bit harder to follow, both because of the level of the assumptions and because I have to use a lot of Greek. I’ve translated most of the Greek words/phrases here so you can follow easily.

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2 Thessalonians as a Forgery

One reason the case for the inauthenticity of 2 Thessalonians has occasionally seemed wanting, even to some very fine scholars, is that critics have often resorted to a shotgun approach, citing every possible argument, good or bad, in support of their position. It is all too easy to dismiss bad arguments, leaving an appearance of evidence in balance, pro and con. And so, for example, the letter is often said to lack Paul’s customary “warmth” (are all of Paul’s writings necessarily warm? Even to the same congregation? Think of the different fragments of correspondence with the Corinthians – including 2 Corinthians 10-13); the focus is on Christ as Kurios [= Lord] rather than on his cross (does Paul have to focus on the cross, in everything he says?); the letter does not employ the diatribe style (as if Paul was obliged to do so?); the letter is lacking in justification language (do we need to read every Pauline letter with Lutheran blinders?). A scholar like Malherbe can easily dismiss such claims, making the other arguments seem weak by association.

A better tack is to drive hard the compelling arguments. The two most striking involve:

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