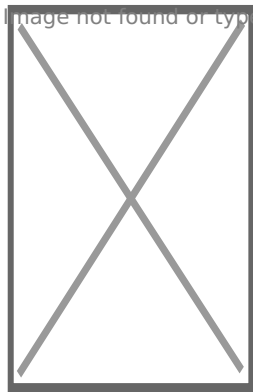


# "Peace and Safety" vs. "Conflict and Danger"

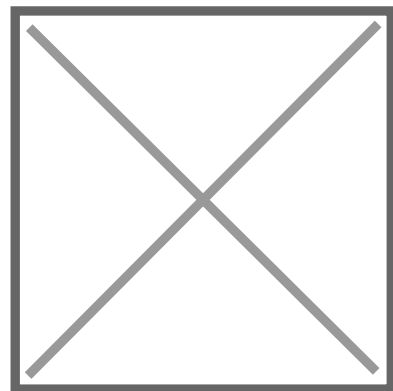
Post by "Cassius" of February 2, 2025 at 9:00 AM

I made the following post initially in response to a private conversation, and I credit Don for researching into the background of this and helping me decide to change my opinion on it. I need to go back and cite as well the parts in DeWitt where he references this, but for now I'll just include the cite that this issue derives from from I Thessalonians 5:3:

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## [1 Thessalonians 5:3 - Bible Gateway](#)



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"For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape." (KJV)

ὅταν γὰρ λέγωσιν *Εἰρήνη καὶ ἀσφάλεια* τότε αἰφνίδιος αὐτοῖς ἐφίσταται ὄλεθρος ὡσπερ ἡ ὥδιν τῇ ἐν γαστρὶ ἐχούσῃ καὶ οὐ μὴ ἐκφύγωσιν

I don't recall DeWitt praising "Peace and Safety" as a slogan that Epicureans *should* use, but I recall that he expressed the opinion that this quotation was a direct reference to Epicureans in

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/4275-peace-and-safety-vs-conflict-and-danger/?postID=33926#post33926>

fact actually using this regularly, thus leading Paul to be alluding to them in this passage. I still don't doubt that the allusion does encompass the Epicureans at least in part, but I now have a different view of the full effect of what Paul was saying.

In past years after reading that I picked up that analogy and used it myself in my writing about Epicurus. I can't go back and change the past, but if I had it to do over again given my present knowledge I would not do so, and I don't plan to use it in the future either.

In general I am fairly tolerant of DeWitt finding references to Epicureans in Paul, and I don't doubt that there might be some basis that Epicureans made statements like "Be Safe" as we do today. But in the overall context I think this "Peace and Safety" passage was intended as a non-flattering reference and isn't appropriate to be picked up positively.

Even if DeWitt is correct that the Biblical passage was intended to be a reference to Epicureans, at this point I would see the intent behind the reference be slanderous. It's effect is more like *See? All those guys are concerned about is avoiding any moment of pain!* rather than anything worth following at face value.

Yes it is true that absence of pain = pleasure, but that doesn't mean that we always choose Peace and Safety. The goal is pleasure, so just as we sometimes choose pain in pursuit of pleasure, we must sometimes choose Conflict or Confrontation and Danger when that choice will lead to greater pleasure.

Conflict and Danger is what people like Epicurus or Diogenes of Oinoanda chose when they stood up against the "... common disease, as in a plague" of "...false notions about things" which was spreading among increasing numbers of people "...for in mutual emulation they catch the disease from one another like sheep." ([fragment 3](#))

So at this point for me hearing the phrase "Peace and Safety" serves mainly as a reminder that we would not have Epicurean philosophy today if the founders and many other Epicureans along the way had not often chosen "Conflict and Danger." I don't think we can fully appreciate what the ancients thought it meant to be Epicurean unless we see that sometimes the same thing is required of us.

It's possible that "Confrontation" works better than "conflict" because "conflict" sounds more like physical combat, while "confrontation" sounds both mental and physical. For style purposes, "conflict and danger" works better, along the lines of "what doesn't kill us makes us stronger," but it needs to be made clear that the intellectual conflict is even more important than the physical. Either word works given the right context.