

The Second Epistle To The Thessalonians



**A Study Guide With Introductory Comments,
Summaries, Outlines, And Review Questions**

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The Second Epistle To The Thessalonians

Table Of Contents

Introduction	3
Chapter One	7
Chapter Two	10
Chapter Three	14

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The Second Epistle To The Thessalonians

Introduction

AUTHOR

The apostle **Paul**, joined in his salutation by **Silvanus** and **Timothy (1:1)**, and with a reference to his own signature at the end of the epistle (**3:17**). Early sources in church history that attribute this letter to Paul include: Clement of Alexandria (200 A.D.), Tertullian (200 A.D.), and Irenaeus (200 A.D.).

THE CITY OF THESSALONICA

It was the capital and largest city of the Roman province of Macedonia. Located on the Egnatian Way, a major road from Rome to the eastern provinces, the city served as center of trade and commerce. Today, it is known as Thessaloniki, or Salonica.

THE CHURCH AT THESSALONICA

The establishment of the church is recorded in **Ac 17:1-9**. On his second missionary journey, Paul and his companions (Silas and Timothy) had just left Philippi and passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia to arrive at Thessalonica. As was his custom, Paul immediately located the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews for three Sabbaths concerning Jesus Christ. While some of them were persuaded, including a great number of devout Greeks and leading women, the unbelieving Jews became jealous and created an uproar in the city. Therefore it became necessary to send Paul and Silas away secretly by night to Berea.

Despite such ominous beginnings, a strong church was established in Thessalonica (cf. **1:2-10**). Mostly Gentile (cf. **1:9**), its members included Jason (**Ac 17:9**), Aristarchus, and Secundus (**Ac 20:4**). It had already been the recipient of an earlier letter (First Thessalonians).

TIME AND PLACE OF WRITING

Second Thessalonians appears to have been written just a few months, possibly a year, after First Thessalonians. This would place the writing of the epistle during Paul's extended stay at **Corinth** on his second missionary journey (cf. **Ac 18:1-11**), sometime around **53 A.D.**

PURPOSE OF THE EPISTLE

The first epistle to the Thessalonians had been written in response to news brought back by Timothy who had made a quick trip there while Paul was in Athens (cf. **1 Th 3:1-3,6**). Encouraged by their steadfastness in the face of persecution, Paul had exhorted them to holiness in view of the Lord's coming (cf. **1 Th 3:12-13; 5:23**).

From the second letter, it appears that they remained strong in the Lord despite persecution (cf. **1:3-4**). But it is apparent from this letter that misunderstanding about the Lord's coming was present in the church. Some of the members were being troubled by false reports (cf. **2:1-2**); others had stopped working, perhaps assuming that the Lord's imminent return meant one did not need to work anymore (cf. **3:11-12**).

Paul's purpose in writing this epistle, therefore, is three-fold:

- ◆ To encourage them in their steadfastness under persecution
- ◆ To correct their misunderstanding about the imminence of the Lord's return
- ◆ To instruct the congregation on what disciplinary action to take toward those who refused to work

THEME OF THE EPISTLE

In correcting their misunderstanding about the return of Christ, Paul explains that the Lord will not come right away (cf. **2:1-3**). Therefore they need to continue with steadfastness and patience for which they had been commended. A suggested theme of this epistle might therefore be:

STEADFASTNESS WHILE WAITING FOR THE COMING OF CHRIST

KEY VERSES: 2 Thessalonians 2:15-17

"Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle. Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work."

OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION (1:1-2)

1. Salutation (**1:1**)
2. Greetings (**1:2**)

I. ENCOURAGEMENT IN PERSECUTIONS (1:3-12)

A. THANKFUL FOR THEIR SPIRITUAL GROWTH (1:3-4)

1. Thanking God for their growing faith and abounding love (**1:3**)
2. Boasting to others of their patience and faith in all their persecutions (**1:4**)

B. ENCOURAGEMENT IN TRIALS IN VIEW OF THE LORD'S RETURN (1:5-10)

1. Suffering will make them worthy of the kingdom of God (**1:5**)

2. God will repay those who trouble them (1:6)
3. This will occur when Jesus is revealed from heaven (1:7-10)

C. HIS PRAYER FOR THEM (1:11-12)

1. That God would count them worthy of their calling (1:11a)
2. That God would fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power (1:11b)
3. That the name of Jesus might be glorified in them, and they in Him, according to the grace of God and Christ (1:12)

II. ENLIGHTENMENT ABOUT THE COMING OF THE LORD (2:1-17)

A. DO NOT BE TROUBLED (2:1-2)

1. Concerning the coming of the Lord and our gathering to Him (2:1)
2. By false reports, as though the day had come (2:2)

B. THE APOSTASY MUST COME FIRST (2:3-12)

1. A falling away must occur, and the man of sin revealed (2:3-5)
2. The man of sin is being restrained, though the mystery of lawlessness is already at work (2:6-7)
3. When the lawless one is revealed, the Lord will destroy him with His coming (2:8)
4. The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, and will mislead those who do not have a love for the truth (2:9-12)

C. STEADFASTNESS ENCOURAGED (2:13-17)

1. Thankful to God for their election through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in truth, having been called by the gospel to obtain glory (2:13-14)
2. A call to stand fast and hold to the traditions taught by word or epistle (2:15)
3. Prayer for their comfort and establishment in every good word and work (2:16-17)

III. EXHORTATIONS TO CHRISTIAN LIVING (3:1-15)

A. A REQUEST FOR PRAYER, AND A PRAYER FOR THEM (3:1-5)

1. Asking them to pray that the word of the Lord might have free course, and he be delivered from evil men (1-2)
2. Expressions of confidence in the Lord, and in their obedience (3-4)
3. Praying that the Lord will direct their hearts into the love of God and patience of Christ (3:5)

B. A CHARGE TO DISCIPLINE THE DISORDERLY (3:6-15)

1. To withdraw from those who do not follow apostolic tradition and example (3:6-9)
2. Especially those who will not work (3:10-12)
3. Don't grow weary in doing good, and avoid those who do not obey the words of the epistle (3:13-15)

CONCLUDING REMARKS (3:16-18)

1. A prayer that the Lord bless them with His peace and presence (**3:16**)
2. A confirmation of his authorship of this epistle (**3:17**)
3. A benediction of grace from the Lord Jesus Christ (**3:18**)

REVIEW QUESTIONS FOR THE INTRODUCTION

- 1) **On which missionary journey was the church at Thessalonica established?**
- 2) **Where can we read about the establishment of the church at Thessalonica?**
- 3) **What two letters were written to this congregation?**
- 4) **From where and when did Paul write 2nd Thessalonians?**
- 5) **What length of time had passed between the writing of the two epistles?**
- 6) **Why did Paul write 2nd Thessalonians (see Purpose Of The Epistle)?**
- 7) **What has been suggested as the theme of this epistle?**
- 8) **What are the key verses of this epistle?**
- 9) **According to the outline above, what are the three main sections of this epistle?**

The Second Epistle To The Thessalonians

Chapter One

OBJECTIVES IN STUDYING THIS CHAPTER

- 1) To note the virtues that demonstrated the spiritual growth and development of the church at Thessalonica
- 2) To glean what will happen when Christ comes again, and upon whom His vengeance will fall

SUMMARY

As in the first epistle, Paul is joined by Silvanus and Timothy as he extends a salutation to the church of the Thessalonians, along with a petition for grace and peace in their behalf **(1-2)**.

He makes mention of his obligation to always thank God for the growth of their faith and the way their love abounded towards one another. He is so impressed that he has boasted to other churches of their patience and faith in the midst of persecutions and tribulations **(3-4)**.

Paul then offers encouragement in their persecutions by reminding them of the righteous judgment of God. Because of their suffering, which made them worthy of the kingdom of God, God will be righteous to bring tribulation upon those who trouble them, and to give them rest along with Paul and others. This will happen when Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, when in flaming fire He will take vengeance on those who do not know God and who do not obey the gospel of Jesus Christ. While these are punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, Christ Himself will be glorified in that Day and admired by all those who believe **(5-10)**.

This leads to his prayer concerning them. His desire is that God would count them worthy of His calling, fulfill His good pleasure and the work of faith with power, and that the name of the Lord might be glorified in them, and they in Him, in keeping with the grace of God and the Lord Jesus Christ **(11-12)**.

OUTLINE

I. INTRODUCTION (1-2)

A. SALUTATION (1a)

1. From Paul
2. Also Silvanus and Timothy

B. GREETINGS (1b-2)

1. To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ **(1b)**
2. Grace and peace from God and Jesus **(2)**

II. ENCOURAGEMENT IN PERSECUTIONS (3-12)

A. THANKFUL FOR THEIR SPIRITUAL GROWTH (3-4)

1. Such thanksgiving is fitting in view of:
 - a. Their faith growing exceedingly (**3a**)
 - b. Their love abounding toward each other (**3b**)
2. Paul and his companions even boast of them among the churches of God (**4a**)
 - a. For their patience and faith (**4b**)
 - b. In all their persecutions and tribulations they endured (**4c**)

B. ENCOURAGEMENT IN TRIAL IN VIEW OF CHRIST'S RETURN (5-10)

1. Their persecutions are evidence of God's righteous judgment to come (**5-7a**)
 - a. In which they shall be counted worthy of the kingdom of God (**5**)
 - b. In which God will repay with tribulation those who trouble them (**6**)
 - c. In which they will receive rest (**7a**)
2. Such judgment will occur when Jesus is revealed from heaven (**7b-9**)
 - a. With His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance (**7b-8a**)
 - 1) On those who do not know God (**8b**)
 - 2) On those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ (**8c**)
 - b. Punishing such with everlasting destruction (**9a**)
 - 1) From the presence of the Lord (**9b**)
 - 2) From the glory of His power (**9c**)
3. Jesus will come in that Day... (**10a**)
 - a. To be glorified in His saints (**10b**)
 - b. To be admired among all those who believe (**10c**)
 - Because Paul's testimony among them was believed (**10d**)

C. HIS PRAYER FOR THEM (11-12)

1. That God would...
 - a. Count them worthy of His calling (**11a**)
 - b. Fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power (**11b**)
2. That according to the grace of God and the Lord Jesus Christ...
 - a. The name of the Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in them (**12a**)
 - b. And they may be glorified in Him (**12b**)

REVIEW QUESTIONS FOR THE CHAPTER

1) What are the main points of this chapter?

2) Who joins Paul in sending this letter? (1)

- 3) How does Paul identify the church? (1)**

- 4) What two reasons does Paul give for why he thanks God always for them? (3)**

- 5) What did Paul boast among the churches of God in regards to the Thessalonians? (4)**

- 6) What was one consequence of their suffering? (5)**

- 7) What does God consider it a righteous thing to do? (6)**

- 8) What will those who are troubled receive when the Lord is revealed from heaven? (7)**

- 9) Who will accompany Jesus when He is revealed from heaven? (7)**

- 10) Upon whom will Jesus take vengeance in flaming fire? (8)**

- 11) How will they be punished? (9)**

- 12) What two things will happen to Jesus when He comes? (10)**

- 13) What five things does Paul pray for in behalf of the Thessalonians? (11-12)**

The Second Epistle To The Thessalonians

Chapter Two

OBJECTIVES IN STUDYING THIS CHAPTER

- 1) To examine what is revealed about the "man of sin" whom the Lord will destroy at His coming
- 2) To consider how those who do not have a love for the truth are setting themselves up to be deceived by the man of sin
- 3) To discern why God will send a strong delusion to some that they will believe a lie

SUMMARY

Evidently Paul received word that some of the Thessalonians had the impression that the day of Christ had come, that is, it was near at hand. To reassure them such was not the case, he reminds them of those things he had told them while he was still with them. That is, Christ will not come until the falling away occurs, and the man of sin is revealed (1-3). Paul then describes this man of sin and explains that he is currently hindered from being revealed. When that which restrains him is removed, the man of sin will become apparent, whom the Lord will destroy with His coming (4-8). The coming of the lawless one is further described, whose coming will be according to the working with Satan. With all power, signs, and lying wonders, he will deceive those who do not have a love for the truth. Indeed, God will also send a strong delusion to those who do not love the truth, that they might believe the lie and be condemned for taking pleasure in unrighteousness instead of believing the truth (9-12).

As for the Thessalonians themselves, Paul is ever thankful that God has chosen them for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, having called them by the gospel to obtain the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ (13-14). He therefore exhorts them to stand fast and hold to the traditions taught by word or epistle, and prays that Jesus and God the Father will comfort their hearts and establish them in every good word and work (15-17).

OUTLINE

I. ENLIGHTENMENT ABOUT THE COMING OF THE LORD (1-12)

A. DO NOT BE TROUBLED (1-2)

1. Concerning the coming of the Lord, and our gathering to Him (1)
2. By false reports, as though the day of Christ has come (2)

B. THE APOSTASY MUST COME FIRST (3-12)

1. The Day of Christ will not come until...
 - a. A falling away comes first (3a)
 - b. The man of sin (lawlessness) is revealed (3-4)

- 1) The son of perdition (**3c**)
- 2) Who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God and that is worshipped (**4a**)
- 3) He sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God (**4b**)
- As Paul told them while he was with them (**5**)
2. The man of sin is being restrained (**6-7**)
 - a. They knew what it was that was restraining him (**6a**)
 - b. He will be revealed in his own time (**6b**)
 - c. The mystery of lawlessness is already at work (**7a**)
 - d. But the one who restrains will do so until taken out of the way (**7b**)
3. When the lawless one is revealed (**8-12**)
 - a. The Lord will...
 - 1) Consume him with the breath of His mouth (**8a**)
 - 2) Destroy him with the brightness of His coming (**8b**)
 - b. The coming of the lawless one...
 - 1) Will be according to the working of Satan (**9a**)
 - 2) With all power, signs, and lying wonders (**9b**)
 - 3) With all unrighteous deception among those who perish (**10a**)
 - a) Because they did not receive the love of the truth (**10b**)
 - b) That they might be saved (**10c**)
 - c. For this reason...
 - 1) God will send them a strong delusion (**11a**)
 - a) That they should believe the lie (**11b**)
 - b) That they may be condemned (**12a**)
 - 2) Because they did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness (**12b**)

II. STEADFASTNESS ENCOURAGED (13-17)

A. THANKSGIVING AND A CALL TO STEADFASTNESS (13-15)

1. Bound always to give thanks to God (**13a**)
 - a. Who from the beginning chose them for salvation (**13b**)
 - 1) Through sanctification by the Spirit (**13c**)
 - 2) And belief in the truth (**13d**)
 - b. To which He called them (**14a**)
 - 1) By the gospel (**14b**)
 - 2) For the obtaining of the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ (**14c**)
2. Stand fast and hold the traditions which they were taught (**15a**)
 - a. Whether by word (**15b**)
 - b. Or by his epistle (**15c**)

B. PAUL'S PRAYER FOR THE THESSALONIANS (16-17)

1. May the Lord Jesus Himself, and our God and Father (**16a**)
 - a. Who loved us (**16b**)
 - b. Who has given us... (**16c**)
 - 1) Everlasting consolation
 - 2) Good hope by grace

2. Comfort your hearts (17a)
3. Establish you in every good word and work (17b)

REVIEW QUESTIONS FOR THE CHAPTER

- 1) **What are the main points of this chapter?**
- 2) **What two related things does Paul now address them? (1)**
- 3) **About what did he not want them to be troubled? (2)**
- 4) **What two things must happen before that Day comes? (3)**
- 5) **List the various descriptions of the "man of sin" (3a-4)**
- 6) **Had Paul told the Thessalonians of these things before? (5)**
- 7) **Did they know what was restraining the "man of sin" from being revealed? (6)**
- 8) **What was already at work at the time Paul wrote the Thessalonians? (7)**
- 9) **How long would the one who restrains do so? (7)**
- 10) **What will the Lord do to the lawless one? (8)**
- 11) **According to what will the coming of the lawless one be? What will accompany his coming? (9-10)**

12) Who will be deceived by this lawless one? Why? (10)

13) What will God therefore send? (11)

14) What two purposes does Paul give for God doing this? (11-12)

15) Who is it that will suffer such things? (12)

16) How did God choose to save the Thessalonians? (13)

17) How did God call them? For what purpose? (14)

18) What two exhortations does Paul give them? (15)

19) What two things does Paul mention that God and Jesus has given to us? (16)

20) For what does Paul pray that Jesus and God will do for the Thessalonians? (17)

The Second Epistle To The Thessalonians

Chapter Three

OBJECTIVES IN STUDYING THIS CHAPTER

- 1) To notice the importance of prayer in spreading the Word and in assisting the spiritual development of brethren
- 2) To examine the purpose and methodology of discipline in a local congregation

SUMMARY

In this last chapter we first find Paul soliciting prayer in his behalf, that the word of the Lord might have free course and be glorified, and that he might be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men (1-2). Confident in the Lord to establish and guard them from the evil one, he is also confident that they will do the things he commands them (3-4). He follows with a prayer that the Lord direct their hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ (5).

One last item needs to be discussed, and that is the need for disciplinary action towards those who are walking disorderly and not according to the tradition received from Paul. Reminding them of his own example of laboring night and day while with him, he charges that if anyone will not work, neither should he eat (6-10). Paul had heard there were members who had stopped working, and had become busybodies. He exhorts such members to work in quietness and eat their own bread. If they do not, the others are to note such persons and not keep company with them, that they may be ashamed. Such disciplinary action was to be administered in a brotherly way, not as toward an enemy (11-15).

Paul closes his second epistle to the Thessalonians by first asking that the Lord of peace give them peace always in every way (16). He then offers a salutation in his own handwriting as a sign of authorship, followed with a prayer that the grace of the Lord be with them all (17-18).

OUTLINE

I. A REQUEST FOR PRAYER, AND A PRAYER FOR THEM (1-5)

A. PAUL REQUESTS THEIR PRAYERS (1-2)

1. That the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified, as it was in their case (1)
2. That Paul and his companions be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men, for not all are believers (2)

B. AN EXPRESSION OF CONFIDENCE (3-4)

1. In the faithfulness of the Lord (3)
 - a. Who would establish them (3a)
 - b. Who would guard them from the evil one (3b)

2. In them (4)
 - a. That they do the things he commands them (4a)
 - b. That they will do the things he commands them (4b)

C. A PRAYER FOR THEM (5)

1. That the Lord direct their hearts (5a)
2. Into the love of God and the patience of Christ (5b)

II. A CHARGE TO DISCIPLINE THE DISORDERLY (3:6-15)

A. WITHDRAW FROM THOSE WHO ARE DISORDERLY (6-9)

1. Commanded in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (6a)
2. To be administered toward those...
 - a. Who do not walk according to apostolic tradition (6b)
 - b. Who do not follow apostolic example (7a)
 - 1) For Paul was not disorderly among them (7b)
 - 2) For Paul was not a burden to them, but gave them an example (8-9)

B. ESPECIALLY THOSE WHO WILL NOT WORK (10-12)

1. They had been commanded: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat (10)
2. Yet there were some not working at all, but were busybodies (11)
3. Such are commanded and exhorted to work in quietness and eat their own bread (12)

C. SUMMATION CONCERNING CHURCH DISCIPLINE (13-15)

1. Do not grow weary in doing good (13)
2. For those who do not obey the apostolic teaching in this epistle... (14a)
 - a. Note that person (14b)
 - b. Do not keep company with him (14c)
 - That he may be ashamed (14d)
3. Count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother (15)

III. CONCLUDING REMARKS (16-18)

A. ANOTHER PRAYER IN THEIR BEHALF (16)

1. May the Lord of peace give them peace always in every way (16a)
2. May the Lord be with them all (16b)

B. A CONFIRMATION OF HIS AUTHORSHIP (17)

1. His own salutation with his own hand (17a)
2. As he writes in every epistle (17b)

C. FINAL BLESSING (18)

1. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with them all
2. Amen (so be it)

REVIEW QUESTIONS FOR THE CHAPTER

- 1) What are the main points of this chapter?**

- 2) For what two things does Paul ask them to pray in his behalf? (1-2)**

- 3) In what way is the Lord faithful, or trustworthy? (3)**

- 4) What confidence did Paul have in the Thessalonians? (4)**

- 5) What did Paul ask the Lord to do for the Thessalonians? (5)**

- 6) What did Paul command them to do? In whose name? (6)**

- 7) What example did Paul himself set while he was with them? (7-9)**

- 8) What had Paul commanded them, even when he was with them? (10)**

- 9) What had Paul heard was going on among the brethren at Thessalonica? (11)**

- 10) What did Paul command and exhort such busybodies to do? (12)**

- 11) What did Paul exhort the rest of the brethren to do? (13)**

- 12) What did Paul charge them to do if anyone did not obey his word in this epistle? (14)**

13) What is the reason for such disciplinary action? (14)

14) What final instructions does Paul give in regards to such disciplinary action? (15)

15) For what does Paul pray in behalf of the Thessalonians? (16)

16) What served as a sign of Paul's authorship of this epistle? (17)

17) What is Paul's final benediction to his beloved Thessalonians? (18)