



A Study in 2nd Thessalonians

In life, about the only thing that 2nd is below a 1st is in a competitive event. A 2nd child is as important and loved as much as the 1st (under normal circumstances), some 2nd marriages are more successful than the 1st, some 2nd and 3rd jobs are more applicable and enjoyable than the 1st, etc.

The second epistle to the Thessalonians begins with almost the same wording as the first epistle.

- Timothy and Silas/Silvanus who were the apostle's companions on his second missionary journey (51 to 54 AC) were with him as Paul wrote his 2nd letter.
- Paul refers to an earlier epistle (2 Tim. chap. 2:15). He reminds the Thessalonians of his habitual way of writing (chap. 3:17) and he mentions that he has received fresh news of some that walked among them (chap. 3:11).
- From these references one concludes that Paul wrote this second epistle after the first and probably still during his 18 month stay in Corinth in the year 52 AC (Acts 18:5-11).

Subject and purpose of writing

The main subject of the second epistle is the same as in the first one: the coming of the Lord and the importance of "maintaining" and holding to an unwavering faith in a world that seeks to absorb the Christian faith into a worldly culture. While the first epistle deals mainly with the rapture of the believers the second epistle centers on Christ's appearing in this world to help us understand the enemy's tactics and how to come against its strong pull.

- The Thessalonians still suffered heavy persecution from the enemies of the gospel (2 Thessalonians 1:4).
- Now, fanaticism had come in among them. These fanatics announced that the day of the Lord had already started.
- The Thessalonians who were still young in their faith had been confused and wearied in their living hope of the coming of the Lord.

Paul had heard about it and is now writing a second epistle to teach and encourage them.

Paul was straight forward with them...and he sought to clear up some uneasiness among the young Christians.

However...as always, Paul did this with a pastoral and caring attitude.

Encouragement for Persecuted Christians.

2Th 1:1-2, “Paul, Silvanus (Silas), and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

A greeting from Paul and his associates.

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy: Paul traveled with these men and together they contributed to this letter. **Silvanus** and **Timothy** were his trusted companions.

- **Silvanus** (also known as *Silas*) was a long and experienced companion of Paul.
 - ✓ He traveled with Paul on his second missionary journey and was imprisoned and set free with Paul in the Philippian jail (Acts 16:19-24).
 - ✓ When Paul first came to Thessalonica, Silas came with him (Acts 17:1-9), so the Thessalonians knew **Silvanus** well.
 - ✓ He also collaborated with Paul on the first letter to the Thessalonians (1 Thessalonians 1:1).
- **Timothy** was a resident of Lystra, a city in the province of Galatia (Acts 16:1-3).
 - ✓ He was the son of a Greek father (Acts 16:2), and a Jewish mother named Eunice (2 Timothy 2:5).
 - ✓ From his youth, he had been taught in the Scriptures by his mother and grandmother (2 Timothy 1:5; 3:15).
 - ✓ Timothy was a trusted companion and associate of Paul, and he accompanied Paul on many of his missionary journeys.
 - ✓ Paul sent Timothy to the Thessalonians on a previous occasion (1 Thessalonians 3:2).
 - ✓ Timothy was also a collaborator on Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians (1 Thessalonians 1:1).

To the church of the Thessalonians:

- Paul himself founded the church in Thessalonica on his second missionary journey (Acts 17:1-9).

- He was only in the city a short time because he was forced out by enemies of the gospel.
- **The church of the Thessalonians** was alive and active after Paul left.
- Paul's deep concern for this young church, which he had to suddenly leave, prompted this letter - following after the letter of 1 Thessalonians.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

- Paul brought his customary greeting to the Thessalonian Christians, hailing them in the **grace** and **peace** of God the Father.

2Th 1:3-4, “*We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other, so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure,...*”

We are bound to thank God always for you:

For Paul, the giving of thanks for God's great work was an *obigation*- he was **bound** to do so, and it was **fitting**, because of the work God did in them.

Just as we are obligated to express our appreciation to the soldiers who protect our home land (America) from the enemy, we are “obligated” to show an expression of appreciation to God for helping the Thessalonians (members of the church) to hold fast the fort of FAITH against those who try to break our spirits.

Note: Encouragement in the faith is always pertinent to the ones who hold fast to the truth of the gospel of Christ. It was fitting...meaning “this is not exaggerating the truth.” Expressing thanks for a job well done and for holding to the faith when the enemy is attacking is very important in keeping a good attitude amongst the troops (the Christian soldiers).

Because your faith grows exceedingly:

Paul thanked God because the Thessalonians had:

- **Exceedingly** growing **Faith**.
- Abounding **love**.
- **Patience and faith in all ... persecutions and tribulations**.

This **faith** and **love**, thriving in the midst of **persecutions and tribulations**, made Paul **boast** of the Thessalonians to other churches.

When we as a local church surround ourselves with other Christians who have lost loved ones, who have come through pain and suffering of various illnesses/surgeries/life threatening situations, it witnesses to other churches in our community and encourages them to rely on God's strength during the fiery trials of the enemy.

(2Th 1:5-7) "Which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer; since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels,..."

- God's **righteous judgment** was at work among the Thessalonians, beginning at the house of God (1 Peter 4:17), and purifying them as followers of Jesus.
- **The worthy result** - showing them **worthy of the kingdom of God** - was **manifest evidence** that God was still a good friend in allowing them to suffer the *persecutions and tribulations* described in 2 Thessalonians 1:4.

Many Christians fall in the trap of the enemy thinking that God is absent when we suffer, and that our suffering calls God's righteous judgment into question.

- *Paul took the exact opposite position and insisted that their suffering was **evidence of the righteous judgment of God**.*
- *Where suffering is coupled with righteous endurance, God's work is done. The fires of persecution and tribulation were like the purifying fires of a refiner, burning away the dross from the gold, bringing forth a pure, precious metal.*

Many people question the righteousness of God's judgment. They believe that God's love and His judgment contradict each other. But God's judgment is based on the great spiritual principle that it is a righteous thing with God to repay those who do evil. "...Vengeance is mine says the Lord." Romans 12:19

Since God is righteous, He will repay all evil, and it will all be judged and accounted for either at the cross or in hell.

- **The judgment of God means that there is nothing unimportant in my life. Everything is under the eye of the God I must answer to.**

"A world in which justice was not done at last would not be God's world at all." (Hiebert)

- “To repay with tribulation those who trouble you.” **God was also shown as righteous when those who persecuted the Thessalonians were repaid with tribulation according to their evil works. They probably believed they did God a favor when they persecuted the Christians, but the righteous God would repay them and not reward them.**

For instance, the Germans thought they were doing God a favor by killing the Jews (it was approved by some Catholic priests). Even today there are so-called Christians who despise the Jews and persecute them in various ways.

“Often retribution is pictured as overtaking men in the world to come, but there are some passages which indicate that it may operate in the here and now (e.g., Rom. 1:24, 26, 28).” (Morris)

God loves us so much...but, He hates sin.

Galatians 6:7, “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” KJV

Galatians 6:7, “Don’t be misled; remember that you can’t ignore God and get away with it: a man will always reap just the kind of crop he sows!” The Living Bible

Galatians 6:7, “Make no mistake about this: You can never make a fool out of God. Whatever you plant is what you’ll harvest.”

