

## Commentary on the Book of 2 Thessalonians

### Chapter 1

**1Paul and Silvanus and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:**

**2Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.**

We see that the authors of 2 Thessalonians are the same as that of the first letter: Paul, Timothy, and Silvanus, those who had been involved in the ministry from its foundation. They write to the church in Thessalonica which is in God and in Christ, their Lord. There is no true church that is not indwelt by God and Christ. The standard greeting of grace and peace from God and Christ to the church is given, demonstrating a desire to see continued growth, faith, and love from the brothers and sisters there.

**3We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is only fitting, because your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows ever greater;**

**4therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure.**

They are proud of this church, and they tell others of their faithfulness and love. They have great thanksgiving in their hearts toward God because of the ever-growing faith and love of these believers. They suffer much persecution and affliction, but they have persevered and kept the faith. They are a tremendous testimony to all of the surrounding churches.

**5This is a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering.**

**6For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, 7and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire,**

**8dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.**

Believers are allowed by God to suffer now for His sake, for we are blessed when we suffer for righteousness' sake and the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 5:10, Luke 6:22). Our suffering shows that we are indeed worthy of the kingdom, for all who desire to live godly in Christ will be persecuted (2 Timothy 3:12). Thus, an identifying mark of true believers is that we will suffer as a result of our allegiance to Christ. Yet our suffering points to the future suffering of those who do the persecuting. The ungodly will be repaid justly by God with affliction for their afflicting of the saints. This is why we do not need to take vengeance into our own hands, for God will deal justly with all people (Romans 12:19). One day Christ will come as King and Judge and will pour out His wrath upon the ungodly. We will find relief as we enter the presence of Christ and see

His justice meted out. Those who do not know God and who do not obey the gospel will face God's wrath. Some may know of God, but the final evaluation will be whether or not they were known by God as His children for having repented of their sins and having put their faith in the death and resurrection of Christ as the means of their righteousness (Matthew 7:23).

**9**These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,  
**10**when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed--for our testimony to you was believed.

The ungodly will suffer the wages of their sin (Romans 6:23), which is spiritual death and eternal destruction in the lake of fire. They will be forever alive in torment but apart from the presence of God, never able to bridge the gap. Those who have believed the gospel will experience the wonder, glory, majesty, and power of God firsthand in His presence forever in heaven. There is no glory to God found in the heart of the unbeliever, but in the saints, God will find great glory because Christ Himself indwells them. We are Christ's inheritance (Ephesians 1:18).

**11**To this end also we pray for you always, that our God will count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power,  
**12**so that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

They pray for the Thessalonians that every desire that they have for doing good would be fulfilled and every work that they do in faith would be backed with the power of God. Their desire is that God's name would be lifted up and glorified through the lives that they live in Christ while yet on this earth. This will enable Christ to be glorified in them, and they will find their glory, worth, and joy in Him. This is all a result of the wonderful grace of God given to those who believe.

## **2 Thessalonians 2**

**1**Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him,  
**2**that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.

They had written the Thessalonians earlier to teach them about the coming of Christ so that they would have hope and comfort that they would see their loved ones in Jesus again. Yet now there were those who were sending them misleading information, even purporting that the information was from Paul, Timothy, and Silvanus. These deceptive letters were saying that the day of the Lord had already come. Based on what they knew from the first letter from Paul, Timothy, and Silvanus, the day of the Lord comes after the rapture. Thus, they were concerned and getting alarmed that they had somehow missed the coming of Christ to meet Him in the air. Paul, Timothy, and Silvanus wanted them to

remain unshaken and composed in their hope of the gathering of believers to Christ. This had not happened yet, and neither had the day of the Lord come yet. They are going to explain some of the precursors to the day of the Lord so that, unless they see these things, they need not worry. If they were to see them, then they would be of darkness and not of light, needing to repent, for they would have missed the rapture.

**3Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,**

**4who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.**

They need not be deceived if they remember that there is a general apostasy that comes first as the world turns to pagan religion. This will include the institutional church. The antichrist, the man who defines lawlessness and breeds destruction, will be evident on the world scene, for he will exalt himself above every object of worship. He will insist that he be worshipped. He will take his seat in the temple in Jerusalem, profaning the altar (Mark 13:14, Daniel 12:11), and displaying himself as “God.” (In our time, this implies that the temple will have to be rebuilt before the last days).

**5Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things?**

When Paul was still with them, he did teach them about these things, but perhaps they had forgot, not totally understood, or been distracted and discouraged by the deceptive letters, thinking that Paul had changed his mind, which of course he had not.

**6And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed.**

**7For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way.**

Though the Thessalonians knew what restrained the advent of the antichrist on the world scene, probably because Paul had taught them about this, it is not revealed clearly to us. Regardless, the message is clear that only at God’s appointed time will this man of lawlessness be revealed. Indeed, this mystery is already at work, meaning that Satan is working to put things in place to deceive the nations (Revelation 20:3) and set up a ruler over them. “The restrainer” will hinder the culmination of this work of Satan until the ordained time in the last days. Then, he will be taken out of the way so that this work of the devil can come to its ultimate, but temporary, fruition.

**8Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming;**

**9that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders,**

**10and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.**

This ruler over much of the earth will be slayed instantly simply by the breath of the mouth of Christ at His Second Coming (Revelation 19:19-20). The advent of the antichrist will be with much power, signs, and false wonders, backed not by the power of God but by the deceptive power of the devil. Those who are wicked will be deceived and perish because they did not receive the love of the truth. They hated it, rejected it, and refused the call of the Spirit unto salvation (Mark 3:29).

**11For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false,**

**12in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.**

God is not forcing these people to be deceived, for we just saw in verse 10 that they refused to receive the gift of salvation. They choose to be deceived, and for this reason, God gave them the fruit of their decisions, a deluding influence to believe falsehood. God will allow the wicked to be deceived in the last days so that they will be judged for what was in their hearts. They refused to believe the truth about the gospel, and they found their pleasure in wickedness. The unsaved love evil, not good, and not Christ. It is not just that they do evil, but their hearts are evil (Jeremiah 17:9).

**13But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.**

**14It was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

Paul, Timothy, and Silvanus give thanks for these faithful brothers and sisters in Christ, as they did in the first epistle (1 Thessalonians 1:2). They rejoice that God had chosen them from the beginning for salvation and sanctification. They chose to put their faith in the truth, which demonstrated that God had indeed ordained these choices before the foundation of the world (Psalm 139:16), though in no way did He force the decisions, given that He still holds man responsible. The gospel preached to the Thessalonians was for the purpose of salvation and sanctification so that they could gain the glory of Christ by enjoying Him and worshipping Him forever.

**15So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us.**

The admonition is to live out practically what is true spiritually. These believers needed to live out the reality of their faith by living in holiness day to day. They needed to stand fast according to the Word of God given to them in the Old Testament, in letters from the apostles, or in words that the apostles had spoken to them.

**16Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace,**

**17comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word.**

We as Christians have an eternal comfort and good hope to look forward to with certainty because of the grace of God. We will be raptured and go to be with Christ in eternity. The wrath of God is not for us but for the wicked who refuse to receive the gospel. We have the love of God in our hearts. Paul, Timothy, and Silvanus pray that the Thessalonians will be comforted and strengthened in their hearts to honor and serve God in good works and in every word. All that they do and say is to be honoring and glorifying to God, reflective of their saved souls and changed hearts.

## **2 Thessalonians 3**

**1Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified, just as it did also with you;**

**2and that we will be rescued from perverse and evil men; for not all have faith.**

These men of God ask for prayer that God would use them to spread His Word rapidly so that He would be glorified in the faith and receptive hearts of the hearers. This is what happened at Thessalonica. The believers responded with open and soft hearts toward the gospel message. They wish to see this happen elsewhere to the glory of God. They also want prayer to be rescued from evil and perverse men. Not all are saved, for not all have faith. There are many who stand against Christ and the gospel, some who even purport to be religious, even Christian. They ask for deliverance so that they can keep serving Christ and work to further the gospel.

**3But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one.**

Their hope for themselves and for the Thessalonians is the faithfulness of God Who never changes. His mercies are new every morning, and His faithfulness is great (Lamentations 3:23). He will strengthen them and protect them from the evil one. Satan will only be able to do to them what God allows, and God will cause all things to work for their good (Romans 8:28).

**4We have confidence in the Lord concerning you, that you are doing and will continue to do what we command.**

**5May the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the steadfastness of Christ.**

They have confidence in the Lord that the Thessalonians will faithfully do and continue to do their admonitions and desires. They pray that their hearts will be directed by the grace of God into the love of God and the steadfastness of Christ. The more they see and appreciate God's love and kindness, the more they will be able to remain steadfast. If they doubt God's love or promises to them, it is easier for them to fall off track. This is why it is important for them to have a hopeful view of the future.

**6Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us.**

A professing brother or sister in Christ who leads a life of rebellion, worldliness, and unrepentant sin of any kind needs to be confronted by one, then two, and then brought before the church (Matthew 18:15-17). If such a one still does not repent, then they are to be treated as if they are not saved (Matthew 18:17). They are to not be part of the fellowship, but they are to be put out of it and turned over to Satan (1 Corinthians 5:11). We are explicitly told not to associate with such ones, for bad company corrupts good morals (1 Corinthians 15:33) and a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough (Galatians 5:9). For our own well-being in practical holiness, we must keep away from those who claim to be saved but who live nothing like it. These are dangerous influences that can drag many down because they don't hold to the commands and authority of the Scriptures (see also v. 14-15).

**7For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you,**

**8nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we kept working night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you;**

**9not because we do not have the right to this, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, so that you would follow our example.**

Paul, Timothy, and Silvanus lived among the Thessalonians without burdening them financially. They worked and labored night and day, doing ministry and earning their keep. They were extremely disciplined and not unruly in their behavior in any way. It is this example of commitment to holiness and hard work that the Thessalonians are to imitate. These servants of God could have exercised their right in the gospel to be paid for their work of the ministry, but for the sake of testimony and example, they did not demand their right. They did not want to be perceived as lazy, undisciplined, and unruly, even if such was not the case (see also 1 Thessalonians 2:9).

**10For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either.**

**11For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies.**

**12Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread.**

When Paul, Timothy, and Silvanus were among these Thessalonians ministering to them, they set up a rule that those who were unwilling (not unable) to work would not be allowed to eat. God is honored by laboring for His glory so that we earn the money that we need to live and support ourselves and/or our families. Yet some among the Thessalonians were now living an undisciplined life, refusing to work at all. These were lazy and occupying themselves with meaningless activities that intruded on the lives of others. They weren't minding their own business because they were preoccupied with

the business of others. These were doing wrong because they were offending others, distracting them from their work, causing trouble, and not being productive themselves. The exhortation is that each would tend to their own labor and then enjoy the fruit of their labor. If they wanted to eat, they needed to work and stop meddling in vain things, trying to freeload off others.

**13But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary of doing good.**

It is not only that we are to be disciplined in the work that provides our income, but we are to be steadfast and persevering in doing the good work of loving others and ministering in the name of Christ. A lack of discipline in one area typically leads to a lack of discipline in the other. God calls us to serve Him wholeheartedly at all times and in all that we do (Colossians 3:23).

**14If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that person and do not associate with him, so that he will be put to shame.**

**15Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.**

The writers now return to the theme of dealing with those who still refuse to change even after hearing these admonitions. Once church discipline is properly carried out and the person remains hardened in sin, such a one needs to be publicly identified so that all in the church can take note of their rebellion. That way, they won't be taken by them or deceived by them, but they can rather pray for them. Those who remain hardened in sin are not free to enjoy the benefits of the protection and fellowship of a church family. There is to be no association for the purpose of shaming the person. This is not cruel and unreasonably harsh because the one in rebellion must see what they have lost so that they will want to return and repent. It is not that we become enemies with the person and act in cruelty toward them, but because we believe that they are indeed a brother or sister in Christ, we are to treat them that way, admonishing them. We remind them of where things stand, and we assure them of our love and care for them. But we emphasize that we must for the sake of Christ and His church not associate with them. There is a kind way to say this, and it is important that the one in rebellion knows that they are welcome back once they repent.

**16Now may the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance The Lord be with you all!**

**17I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand, and this is a distinguishing mark in every letter; this is the way I write.**

**18The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.**

The Thessalonians are wished peace in Christ in all circumstances continually because of His constant presence with the believers. He is able and willing to work peace out of these difficult situations of conflict. The prayer is that those who are in rebellion would submit and experience the joy of fellowship and obedience.

Paul identifies himself as the one signing the letter, though it is clear from the opening verse that he co-authored it with Timothy and Silvanus. Given that there were many posing to write letters in the name of Paul, Paul made sure to give his distinct signature and distinguishing mark so that the Thessalonians could be assured that this letter was truly from Paul. Paul gives his customary closure of wishing them grace in the Lord, for we all need the grace of Christ for all things each and every day.

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