

## 2 Thessalonians

2 Thessalonians was most likely written within a year of 1 Thessalonians. Remember, it is impossible to determine which came first, but most scholars agree that 1 Thessalonians was written first.

**1:1** – Paul, Silas and Timothy,

To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

<sup>2</sup> Grace and peace to you from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

This greeting is almost identical to 1 Thessalonians. In 1 Thessalonians he simply says grace and peace to you. Here he adds from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

As in 1 Thessalonians, a thanksgiving follows the greeting. In fact, in all of his letters other than Galatians, Paul includes a thanksgiving. Remember in 1 Thessalonians, Paul mentioned their faith, love, and endurance. These are mentioned again.

**V. 3** – We ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love all of you have for one another is increasing. <sup>4</sup> Therefore, among God's churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring.

Remembering that all of Paul's letters were written to answer questions or issues, we quickly see that an issue the Thessalonians were facing was some kind of persecution.

**V. 5** – All this is evidence that God's judgment is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering. <sup>6</sup> God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you <sup>7</sup> and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well.

Note, they will be counted worthy because they stood firm during their persecutions. We must ask ourselves, what does it take to move us away from standing firm?

**V. 7b** – This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels.

In 1 Thessalonians, Paul used the Greek word Parousia which we translate as His coming. Remember, the word meant the arrival of a king. Here, Paul says that Jesus will be revealed from heaven.

This revelation of Jesus will be one of judgment upon the world. Most likely Paul gets this image from Daniel 10, which speaks of a man dressed in linen who would have eyes like flaming torches, a depiction of judgment.

Fire was often a depiction of judgment in the Old Testament.

**Jeremiah 4:4** – circumcise your hearts,  
you people of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem,  
or my wrath will flare up and burn like fire  
because of the evil you have done—  
burn with no one to quench it.

In his vision of judgment Ezekiel wrote in **Ezekiel 1:4** – I looked, and I saw a windstorm coming out of the north—an immense cloud with flashing lightning and surrounded by brilliant light. The center of the fire looked like glowing metal.

**V. 8** – He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel/good news of our Lord Jesus. <sup>9</sup> They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might <sup>10</sup> on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you.

Note the phrase in verse 10 – “to be glorified in his holy people.”  
Holy meant set aside for God’s use.  
Is Jesus glorified in us?

Paul prays that this would always be the case – that Jesus is glorified in them.

**V. 11** – With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may bring to fruition your every desire for goodness and your every deed prompted by faith. <sup>12</sup> We pray this so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

What does it mean, that Jesus is gloried in us?  
Strength in the face of temptation to deny Jesus. There are countless ways this temptation may come to each of us, and it probably comes to us in various way.

## **Chapter 2**

Remember, in 1 Thessalonians, it appeared that Paul was being asked about those who have died, and would they miss the return of Jesus.

**1 Thessalonians 4:13** – Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. <sup>14</sup> For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.

Chapter two touches on a similar subject. It appears that some of the Thessalonian Christians have been led to believe that the Day of the Lord has already happened.

**V. 1** – Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers and sisters, <sup>2</sup> not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by the teaching allegedly from us—whether by a prophecy or by word of mouth or by letter—asserting that the day of the Lord has already come.

The KJV has – the day of the Lord is at hand. The Greek word suggests something that has already happened.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:19, Paul wrote: Do not treat prophecies with contempt <sup>21</sup> but test them all; hold on to what is good.

Perhaps someone had prophesied this event, as verse two seems to suggest.

Now we get into the Man of Lawlessness. Exactly what and who he is has been debated for centuries. Many believe that Paul is referring to someone that he and the Thessalonians were aware of, but readers outside of Thessalonica would not know. After all, in verse five Paul asks them if they remember him teaching them about this when he was with them.

**V. 3** – Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction.

Most translations have the word rebellion. The Greek word is (ap-os-tas-ee'-ah), and we get the word apostasy, which is defined as the abandonment or renunciation of a religious belief.

While the Greek word could mean a revolt, the word was usually used in a religious connotation.

So, it seems that Paul is talking about someone who may be leading some sort of religious revolt against the Christians. Maybe a leader from the synagogue who opposed Paul and his teachings. Exactly who it was hadn't been revealed as of yet, but Paul says that he will be revealed because he is doomed for destruction.

This section about this man of lawlessness begins with Paul telling them that what they have heard about the Day of the Lord already happening is wrong. So, this man of lawlessness is somehow connected with that prophecy, and that prophecy was an apostasy.

**V. 4** – He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God.

<sup>5</sup>Don't you remember that when I was with you I used to tell you these things? <sup>6</sup>And now you know what is holding him back, so that he may be revealed at the proper time.

What was holding him back? Paul, very much a Jew, was familiar with the Jewish eschatology which would maintain that there would be a great rebellion before the Day of the Lord. This, of course, has become part of many Christians view of the end.

So, what was holding him back in verse six would be simply this – it wasn't time for the Day of the Lord.

**V. 7** – For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. <sup>8</sup> And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming. <sup>9</sup> The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with how Satan works. He will use all sorts of displays of power through signs and wonders that serve the lie, <sup>10</sup> and all the ways that wickedness deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.

The period of the rebellion – the apostasy, has been much longer than Paul had thought.

I believe that we have many men and women of lawlessness today. These are people who are influencing Christians to believe things that are not true. I believe that the man of lawlessness is very much in line with the term that John gives to this rebellion/apostasy in 1 & 2 John.

**1 John 2:21** – I do not write to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it and because no lie comes from the truth. <sup>22</sup> Who is the liar? It is whoever denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a person is the antichrist—denying the Father and the Son.

Paul, like John, had someone in mind. Neither were writing about some historical figure who would someday be in the world. However, what they wrote has applied to some historical figures throughout history.

John said there were many antichrists:

**2 John 1:7** – I say this because many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist.

So there have been, and continue to be many antichrists and many men of lawlessness.

**V. 10b** – They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.

<sup>11</sup>For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie <sup>12</sup>and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.

This is a difficult passage. But, so is God hardening Pharaoh's heart in Exodus. I think we might gain a little better understanding if we consider what Paul would write at a later time about people who have rejected God.

**Romans 1:24** – Therefore **God gave them over** in the sinful desires of their hearts

**Romans 1:26** – Because of this, **God gave them over** to shameful lusts.

**Romans 1:28** – Furthermore, just as they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, so **God gave them over** to a depraved mind, so that they do what ought not to be done.

God let it be, let it happen. He wouldn't fight them any longer.

**V. 13** – But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters loved by the Lord, because God chose you as first fruits to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth.

Paul doesn't write Holy Spirit, just Spirit. While there have been a few people who have written that he meant the work of their human spirit, that just doesn't fit in with what we know about Paul and his letters. He's writing about the Holy Spirit.

**V. 14** – He called you to this through our gospel/good news, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

<sup>15</sup> So then, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold fast to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter.

My NIV read teachings. The Greek word is traditions. Many modern translation don't like to use that word because in our modern English language, traditions and teachings can have vastly different meanings.

The Greek word literally meant – something we handed down to you. So, that could be translated either way.

**V. 16** – May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, <sup>17</sup> encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word.

### **Chapter 3**

2 Thessalonians is shorter than the first, so Paul begins winding down here in chapter 3.

My NIV begins with – as for other matters. Most translations have – finally.

**V. 1** – As for other matters, brothers and sisters, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you.

Spread rapidly. Other translations say – speed on. He uses a figure of speech that would refer to a race, or a race track. Remember, Paul uses such images throughout his letters.

**V. 2** – And pray that we may be delivered from wicked and evil people, for not everyone has faith.

All who stand for the Good News of Jesus Christ will face trial, as we read in 1 Thessalonians. Here, Paul is asking for prayers for himself and Silas and Timothy, for as leaders of the Christian movement, they would receive an even greater attack from those who opposed them/Jesus.

Yet, Paul is confident that the Lord would strengthen them to get through any trials.

**V. 3** – But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one. <sup>4</sup>We have confidence in the Lord that you are doing and will continue to do the things we command. <sup>5</sup>May the Lord direct your hearts into God’s love and Christ’s perseverance.

We read – direct your hearts. The word is straighten. The way of a Christian is straight towards the love of God and Christ perseverance.

We like the love of God stuff, but we must strive to persevere as Christ did, as well.

Paul returns to an issue that was addressed in his first letter. Obviously, it was a matter of no small concern for the Thessalonians. As an early Christian community, one that loved one another like family, it is probable that they lived very closely. They shared much, and held things in common.

Of course, that would be attractive to some who didn’t want to work. They would become part of the ‘family’ and then expect the ‘family’ to take care of them.

**V. 6** – In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers and sisters, to keep away from every believer who is idle and disruptive and does not live according to the teaching you received from us.

Remember the word we translate as teaching was tradition, and tradition would be a better translation here.

**V. 7** – For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, <sup>8</sup> nor did we eat anyone’s food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. <sup>9</sup> We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you to imitate. <sup>10</sup> For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: “The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat.”

Some translations have: “If anyone would not work, they should not eat.” That’s not a good translation. Here we have the Greek verb ( eth-el'-o,) which is unwilling, or lacks desire. So, the NIV and others are more correct with: “The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat.”

Some may have been willing but unable. This verse does not speak about them.

Next, we have a Greek play on words, which doesn’t exactly translate into English, but the NIV and others do a fairly good job of expressing the thought.

**V. 11** – We hear that some among you are idle and disruptive. They are not busy; they are busybodies. <sup>12</sup> Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the food they eat. <sup>13</sup> And as for you, brothers and sisters, never tire of doing what is good.

Remember, some were expecting Jesus to return any day. Why work? It would all be over soon was their thinking. Others, simply liked being taken care of.

**V. 14** – Take special note of anyone who does not obey our instruction in this letter. Do not associate with them, in order that they may feel ashamed. <sup>15</sup> Yet do not regard them as an enemy, but warn them as you would a fellow believer.

Sounds harsh, but the Greek word (soon-an-am-ig'-noo-mee) meant not to mingle/hang out with them. In other words, don’t be idle with them.

So, don’t be idle with them but don’t treat them like an enemy.

“Warn them as you would a fellow believer.” - So we are not to be busybodies (1 Thessalonians), but we should have a level of concern where we gently warn our fellow Christians if they are in the wrong.

**V. 16** – Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you.

Consider **2 Thessalonians 2:2** – Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers and sisters,<sup>2</sup> not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by the teaching allegedly from us—whether by a prophecy or by word of mouth or by letter.

It would appear that there were letters reportedly from Paul, but they weren't. This could be a problem as Paul would dictate his letters. So, in hopes of deterring such letters, he would add some lines with what seems to be distinctive writing.

**V. 17** – I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand, which is the distinguishing mark in all my letters. This is how I write.

Some have surmised that Paul had poor vision, and therefore wrote with large letters. He refers to his large letter in Galatians 6. Perhaps. Or, maybe he simply had distinctive handwriting

As he ended 1 Thessalonians, he ends here, as well.

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