

INTRODUCTION TO THE SECOND LETTER TO THE THESSALONIANS

Paul wrote this letter from Corinth, not long after his first letter to the Thessalonians, probably near the close of 53 A.D. We have no way of knowing all that happened between the writing of the two letters. But Paul learned just how the church was progressing, and he saw some things which required immediate attention. Some things were no longer a problem, such as their fears about those who had died, and their possible weakening under persecution. But some were teaching that the Day of the Lord had already come (2 *Thess.* 2:2-3). Such speculation led some to be *lazy loafers*, and much of chapter 3 is directed toward that problem.

The purpose of this letter is to: (1) thank them and praise them for their faith; (2) to *inspire* them to continue to be strong in the faith; (3) to correct wrong ideas about the Day of the Lord; (4) to discipline the *lazy loafers* in the church, and to remind the church of its responsibilities toward such as these.

The Introduction to First Thessalonians gives more detail on the church and its planting.

THE SECOND LETTER OF PAUL
TO THE
THESSALONIANS

1 From Paul, Silas, and Timothy—
1 To the people of the church in Thessalonica,
who belong to God our Father and the Lord Jesus
Christ:

2May God the Father and the Lord Jesus
Christ give you grace and peace.

The Judgment at Christ's Coming

3We must thank God at all times for you,
brothers. It is right for us to do so, because your
faith is growing so much and the love each of you
has for the others is becoming greater. 4That is
why we ourselves boast about you in the churches
of God. We boast about the way you continue to
endure and believe, through all the persecu-
tions and sufferings you are experiencing.

5Here is the proof of God's righteous judg-
ment, because as a result of all this you will
become worthy of his Kingdom, for which you
are suffering. 6God will do what is right: he will
bring suffering on those who make you suffer,

1 Paul, Silas and Timothy,
1 To the church of the
Thessalonians, who are in
God our Father and the Lord
Jesus Christ:

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

Thanksgiving and Prayer

3 We ought always to thank
God for you, brothers, and
rightly so, because your faith
is growing more and more,
and the love every one of you
has for each other is increas-
ing. Therefore, among God's
churches we boast about
your perseverance and faith
in all the persecutions and
trials you are enduring.

4 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 suffer-
ing. God is just: He will
pay back trouble to those
5
6

1-2. **From Paul, Silas, and Timothy.** See note on *1 Thess. 1:1*. The first two verses of this letter are much the same as the first verse of *1 Thessalonians*.

3-5. **We must thank God at all times for you.** In *1 Thess. 3:9-13*, Paul says he spoke to God *day and night* about them. Here he shows that his prayers were answered. Paul's messenger had come back with good news that made him happy. **Because your faith is growing so much.** This is part of the good news. Even though they were being persecuted, their faith kept growing and getting stronger. **The love each of you has for the others.** Their spiritual life was balanced. Along with stronger faith, their love was becoming greater as well (*1 John 4:17-18*). **That is why we ourselves boast.** Their spiritual progress made Paul feel like a "proud father." Hearing of other's successes spurs you on to greater things. **In the churches of God.** No one in the Bible ever used "church of God," "church of Christ," or any other name, to mean different KINDS of churches. The one and same *messianic community* is called: church of God; church of Christ; God's Household; the Family of God; Our Family in the Faith; Christ's body; The Kingdom of His Dear Son. Individual believers are called: Christians; Disciples; God's People; Brothers [this includes Sisters]; God's Children. **You continue to endure and believe.** They did not give up, but continued to live their life to please and honor Christ. **Here is the proof of God's righteous judgment.** A future judgment must come, because God is righteous. The wicked seem to have it all their way, and the righteous suffer. That's how this world is, but see the note on *Rev. 15:1*. **You will become worthy.** The things they suffer, and their faith and love, prepare them for Eternity.

6. **God will do what is right.** God will be *just* in paying back those who persecute his people.

⁷and he will give relief to you who suffer, and to us as well. He will do this when the Lord Jesus appears from heaven with his mighty angels, ⁸with a flaming fire, to punish those who do not know God and those who do not obey the Good News about our Lord Jesus. ⁹They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, separated from the presence of the Lord and from his glorious might, ¹⁰when he comes on that Day to receive glory from all his people and honor from all who believe. You too will be among them, because you have believed the message that we told you.

¹¹This is why we always pray for you. We ask our God to make you worthy of the life he called you to live. May he, by his power, fulfill all your desire for goodness and complete your work of faith. ¹²In this way the name of our Lord Jesus will receive glory from you, and you from him, by the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

who trouble you and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power 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.

With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that our God may count you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may fulfill every good purpose of yours and every act prompted by your faith. 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.

⁷ **And he will give relief to you.** God will be *just* in this as well! **He will do this when.** See notes on *Rev. 14:13; 22:11-12.*

⁸ **With a flaming fire.** Christ's Second Coming will mean brightness and glory to those who belong to Christ, but death and destruction to the ungodly (see note on *Jude 14-15*). This does not mean *annihilation*, but being *expelled eternally* from the presence of God (*Matt. 25:41,46*). **Who do not know God.** Who do not *want* to know God, and will not bring themselves to him! **Those who do not obey the Good News.** Those who rebel against God and will not reach out through faith to seize the sacrifice of Christ. Compare notes on *Acts 2:36-38*.

⁹ **They will suffer the punishment.** The human family is already under the sentence of death. Jesus offers a way to escape God's wrath! Those who refuse to escape, bring on themselves the consequences. See note on *verse 8*.

¹⁰ **When he comes on that Day.** Christ's Second Coming will be a time of jubilation for all those who belong to him! See notes on *Rev. 21:1-4*.

¹¹ **This is why we always pray for you.** Because of the *promise* God has for those who belong to Christ. **He called you to live.** See note on *Rev. 22:17*.

¹² **In this way.** Holy lives bring honor and glory to God! See notes on *Rom. 12:1-2*.

The Wicked One

2 Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to be with him: I beg you, brothers, ²do not be so easily confused in your thinking or upset by the claim that the Day of the Lord has come. Perhaps this was said by someone prophesying, or by someone preaching. Or it may have been said that we wrote this in a letter. ³Do not let anyone fool you in any way. For the Day will not come until the final Rebellion takes place and the Wicked One appears, who is destined to hell. ⁴He will oppose everything which men worship and everything which men consider divine. He will put himself above them all, and even go in and sit down in God's temple and claim to be God.

⁵Don't you remember? I told you all this while

The Man of Lawlessness

2 Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come. 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. He opposes and exalts himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, and even sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God.

Don't you remember that when I was with you I used

1. **Concerning the coming.** He had written about this in his first letter to them. See the introduction to First Thessalonians.

2. **Do not be so easily confused.** They were not thinking things through with care. **Or upset by the claim.** Some had made the claim that the "countdown" for the end of the world had already begun. The Thessalonian church was afraid of what they thought was going to happen! **Perhaps this was said.** Someone had misunderstood [deliberately?] what Paul had said in his first letter to them. **That we wrote this in a letter.** It is strongly possible that a *forged letter* using Paul's name had been circulated, saying the Day of the Lord had come. See note on *2 Thess. 3:17*.

3. **For the Day will not come until.** Paul had already told them about this (see verse 5). But no one has any way of knowing just what Paul said to them. **The final Rebellion takes place.** Protestant churchmen have traditionally identified this Rebellion as an *apostasy* to be identified with the Roman Church. But in verse 8 the appearance of the Wicked One and the Coming of the Lord Jesus seem very close in time. Verse 7 tells us the Mysterious Wickedness is already at work [over 1,900 years ago as Paul writes this]. I think the Mysterious Wickedness is to be identified with the *false prophet* (see *Rev. 13:11*); and the Wicked One and the final Rebellion to the time when Satan is *set loose for a little while* (see *Rev. 11:7; 20:7-10 and notes*).

4. **He will oppose everything which men worship.** *Lipscomb* says: "I doubt if any organization is 'the man of sin' [the Wicked One]. A principle was at work that would set aside God's order and establish one of its own in its stead. It leads to ruin and perdition [doom] - is called the son of perdition [that is, one destined to hell]." Whoever seizes the authority which belongs only to God, and substitutes their rules for God's laws (*Matt. 7:21-23; 15:9*), is guilty of this. The same principle shows itself in many forms during the history of the church. Some think Satan will concentrate all his effort through one man at the time when he is set loose for a short time. (See notes on verse 3.)

5. **Don't you remember?** No one has any way of knowing just what Paul did tell them. But it is very unlikely that he gave them any secret information. The New Testament gives us Paul's "*understanding of the secret of Christ*" (*Eph. 3:4*).

I was with you. ⁶Yet there is something that keeps this from happening now, and you know what it is. At the proper time, then, the Wicked One will appear. ⁷The Mysterious Wickedness is already at work, but what is going to happen will not happen until the one who holds it back is taken out of the way. ⁸Then the Wicked One will appear, and the Lord Jesus will kill him with the breath from his mouth and destroy him with his glorious appearing, when he comes. ⁹The Wicked One will come with the power of Satan and perform all kinds of miracles and false signs and wonders, ¹⁰and use every kind of wicked deceit on those who will perish. They will perish because they did not welcome and love the truth so as to be saved. ¹¹For this reason God sends the power of error to work in them so that they believe what is false. ¹²The result is that all who have not believed the truth, but have taken pleasure in sin, will be condemned.

to tell you these things? And ⁶ now you know what is holding him back, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. For the secret power of lawlessness is already at ⁷ work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. And then the law- ⁸ less one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming. The ⁹ coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that ¹⁰ deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this ¹¹ reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemn- ¹² ed who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.

6-7. Yet there is something that keeps this from happening now. They knew what it is [or was], because Paul had told them. *Johnson* thinks [along with many of the Christian fathers] that the "something" was the Roman Empire. *Lipscomb* [and many others] think it was Paul himself. The attitude which led people to *distort* the rules of God was already at work, but Paul used his influence and authority to prevent it from growing. When Paul died, this influence of *distortion* spread rapidly, as history shows. [Some think the chief-angel Michael and his army of angels will prevent the appearance of the Wicked One until Satan is set loose for a little while (see note on verse 3).]

8. Then the Wicked One will appear. When the one who holds back this Mysterious Wickedness is taken out of the way, the forces of change and distortion can take over. This may be the primary meaning here. But it must refer as well to the time when Satan is set loose for a little while, because in this verse, as the Wicked One appears, Jesus Comes and kills him. [This can be understood of the "cycle of Armageddon," and also the final Rebellion. See notes on *Rev. 11:7; 20:7-10*.]

9. With the power of Satan. Satan will work through this Wicked One to fool people. See notes on *Rev. 13:11-14*. Miracles and false signs and wonders. Things that seem to be from God. This will also include counterfeit "outpourings of the Holy Spirit."

10. On those who will perish. Note that this is really not directed against the faithful believer, but the "nominal church member." These are not ignorant of Truth, but they do not love it and welcome it!

11-12. For this reason. Those whom God cannot convince, he confuses! If you know the truth and will not obey it, you are in effect, calling God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit a liar! Compare *Isaiah 66:3-4*. The result is. Only Truth can make you free (*John 8:32*). Those who believe the Truth will seize it and make themselves part of it (see note on *Acts 2:38*). Those who rebel against Truth, seal their own doom (*Mark 16:16*). But God CALLS EVERYONE to come to him (see note on *Rev. 22:17*).

You Are Chosen for Salvation

¹³We must thank God at all times for you, brothers, you whom the Lord loves. For God chose you as the first to be saved, by the Spirit's power to make you God's holy people, and by your faith in the truth. ¹⁴God called you to this through the Good News we preached to you; he called you to possess your share of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹⁵So then, brothers, stand firm and hold on to those truths which we taught you, both in our preaching and in our letter.

¹⁶May our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and in his grace gave us eternal courage and a good hope, ¹⁷fill your hearts with courage and make you strong to do and say all that is good.

Pray for Us

3 Finally, brothers, pray for us, that the Lord's message may continue to spread rapidly and receive glory, just as it did among you. ²Pray also that God will rescue us from wicked and evil men. For not all people believe the message.

Stand Firm

But we ought always to ¹³thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. He called you to ¹⁴this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter.

May our Lord Jesus Christ ¹⁶himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, ¹⁷en- courage and strengthen you in every good deed and word.

Request for Prayer

3 Finally, brothers, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you. And pray that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men, for not everyone has faith. ²

13-17. **For God chose you.** In contrast to the victims of the Mysterious Wickedness, the Thessalonian Christians had been chosen to be saved! See note on *1 Thess. 1:4*. God's Plan included the Gentiles from the very beginning! See notes on *Acts 15:15-18; Rom. 9:30-33*. **By the Spirit's power.** See notes on *John 3:5; Titus 3:5; Acts 19:1-6*. On the human side, their salvation was by their faith in the truth. On the divine side, it was by the Spirit's power. [Sanctification is the believer taking justification seriously!] **God called you to this through the Good News.** This is the way God calls people to himself. Compare *John 6:45*. **So then, brothers, stand firm.** The Good News called them to share the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. They are to *hold on firmly* to this and never to let go! [The Good News is the *truth* of God's act in Christ to set men free, and all the doctrine which results from this.] **Gave us eternal courage and a good hope.** "My dear friends, we are now God's children, but it is not yet clear what we shall become. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall become like him, because we shall see him as he really is" (*1 John 3:2*). **And make you strong to do and say all that is good.** A Christian gives his life as a *living sacrifice* to God. This is a form of worship! Compare *Phil. 2:15-16*.

1. **Pray for us.** How often Paul asks this! Compare *1 Thess. 5:25*. **That the Lord's message.** He does not ask for the honor and power the world has to give. He is eager to have the Lord's message spread rapidly. "May others be blessed by the Good News as we are!" **Receive glory.** Compare *Acts 13:48*. **Just as it did among you.** See *1 Thess. 1:9*.

2. **Pray also.** The wicked and evil men Paul speaks of, are beyond the hope of winning them to Christ. For a quick answer to this prayer, see *Acts 18:9-10*. These wicked and evil men may be the same as in *1 Thess. 2:14-16*. **For not all.** Compare *Matt. 10:34-36*. People divide themselves by either believing or disbelieving Jesus Christ.

³But the Lord is faithful. he will make you strong and keep you safe from the Evil One. ⁴And the Lord gives us confidence in you; we are sure that you are doing and will continue to do what we tell you. ⁵May the Lord lead your hearts to the love for God and to the endurance that is given by Christ.

But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one. We have confidence in the Lord that you are doing and will continue to do the things we command. May the Lord direct your hearts into God's love and Christ's perseverance.

The Obligation to Work

⁶In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ we command you, brothers: keep away from all brothers who are living a lazy life, who do not follow the instructions that we gave them. ⁷You yourselves know very well that you should do just what we did. We were not lazy when we were with you. ⁸We did not accept anyone's support without paying for it. Instead, we worked and toiled; day and night we kept working so as not to be an expense to any of you. ⁹We did this, not because we do not have the right to demand our support; we did it to be an example for you to follow.

Warning Against Idleness
In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers, to keep away from every brother who is idle and does not live according to the teaching you received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, 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. We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to make ourselves a model for you to

3. **But the Lord is faithful.** "Some may be unbelievers and hostile to you, but God keeps every promise which he has made!" **Keep you safe.** From the power of Satan, who is the Evil One.

4. **Gives us confidence in you.** "The Lord's power and faithfulness gives us confidence in you - that you will continue to follow our instructions to you."

5. **That is given by Christ.** Endurance and boldness grow out of our sense of God's love, which Christ teaches us. Compare *1 John 4:18*.

6. **We command you.** Like an army officer commanding his troops, Paul gives a strong word of command *in the name of Christ!* This shows how important it is to upgrade and develop the endurance [ΗΥΠΟΜΟΝΗ] of verse 5. **Keep away from all brothers.** Just as you avoid one who is a disease-carrier (*1 Cor. 5:6*). Note this applies specifically to one who is a brother (or sister) in Christ (compare *1 Cor. 5:9-13*). A **lazy life.** Some, in their excitement over the Second Coming, which they thought was about to happen, quit working and became *lazy loafers*. This disorganized the life of the congregation, and was a serious threat to the future of the church!

7. **Just what we did.** Paul and the other apostles can point to their own self-supporting and orderly lives as examples. See note on *1 Thess. 2:9*.

8. **Instead, we worked and toiled.** Compare note on *Acts 18:3*. Paul places strong emphasis on the moral discipline of work.

9. **To be an example.** Paul had every right to be supported by the church, (and he did this some times, *2 Cor. 11:8*); but here conditions demanded he set them an example. But the Thessalonians must not misunderstand what he did!

¹⁰While we were with you we told you, "Whoever does not want to work is not allowed to eat."

¹¹We say this because we hear that there are some people among you who live lazy lives, who do nothing except meddle in other people's business. ¹²In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ we command these people and warn them: they must lead orderly lives and work to earn their own living.

¹³But you, brothers, must not get tired of doing good. ¹⁴There may be someone there who will not obey the message we send you in this letter. If so, take note of him and have nothing to do with him, so that he will be ashamed. ¹⁵But do not treat him as an enemy; instead, warn him as a brother.

Final Words

¹⁶May the Lord himself, who is our source of peace, give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with you all.

follow. For even when we 10 were with you, we gave you this rule: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat."

We hear that some among 11 you are idle. They are not busy; they are busybodies. In the name of the Lord 12 Jesus Christ, we command and urge such people to settle down and earn the bread they eat. And as for you, 13 brothers, never tire of doing what is right.

If anyone does not obey 14 our instruction in this letter, take special note of him. Do not associate with him, in order that he may feel ashamed. Yet do not regard 15 him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother.

Final Greetings

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

10. **We told you.** Some see work as a curse (*Gen. 3:19*), but it is also a blessing! "You can be so *heavenly minded* that you are no *earthly good*!" The Holy Spirit, through Paul, gives a strong *work-ethic* in *Eph. 4:28*. The original divine ideas of the Creation are given real meaning in the gospel of Christ!

11. **We say this because.** He had heard of this serious problem. Compare *verse 6*. The first persecution in Thessalonica had involved a crowd of *lazy loafers* (*Acts 17:5*). **Who do nothing except meddle.** Compare *1 Tim. 5:13*. One who does not work actively to *build up*, will develop idle, fussy habits, meddle in other people's business, and *tear down*!

12. **In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.** He is the source of Paul's authority to make this command. Paul does not speak directly to the ones living *lazy lives*. But, they know who they are. By Christ's command, they are to go to work, live quiet useful lives, and to help preserve the *life* of the messianic community.

13. **Must not get tired of doing good.** Hard-working, dependable Christians are not to covet the idle life of the *lazy loafers*. "*Don't let evil men worry you; don't be envious of them. A wicked man has no future - nothing to look forward to*" (*Prov. 24:19-20*).

14. **If so, take note of him.** This is Paul's last word on the matter. The church (as a group) must act to make him ashamed. But note Paul's word of caution in *verse 15*.

15. **Instead, warn him as a brother.** Punishment has a way of getting *out of hand*! The whole point of it, is not to *damn him to hell*, but to *save him in eternity*!

16. **Who is the source of our peace.** *Peace* - as contrasted with the fears and troubles the church is having! [*Lord: see note on Rom. 16:27.*]

¹⁷With my own hand I write this: *Greetings from Paul*. This is the way I sign every letter; this is how I write.

¹⁸May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

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

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

17. **With my own hand I write this.** This part in his own handwriting shows the whole thing is genuine. Compare notes on *2 Thess. 2:2; Rom. 16:22*.

18. **May the grace.** This is his handwritten word of benediction.