

2 Thessalonians

INTRODUCTION

First and Second Thessalonians are very similar in language, suggesting that Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians soon after 1 Thessalonians. The return of the Lord is of central importance in both letters. In the first epistle some people were concerned over the death of loved ones, and whether they might miss the return of the Lord. Some even wondered if He had already come; therefore Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians to round out the way to understand the Lord's return, and to continue in the things he had already taught.

Second Thessalonians is germane to the whole of New Testament truth, because it deals with three very specific problems which people still have trouble with today. In the first place, it deals with persecution, teaching that what the Thessalonians were going through was a normal part of being a Christian. Secondly, Paul deals with the time of the Lord's return, a question that is still asked and often answered wrongly today. Thirdly, he encouraged all the believers to get busy until the Lord does return (3:6-11). Idleness has no part in God's economy.

(The Christian Life Bible)

2 Thessalonians 1:1-6

When Paul wrote his second letter to the church at Thessalonica, they were still enduring persecutions and tribulations. Paul told them that “this is a manifest token (evidence) of the righteous judgment of God, that they may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer.” (2 Thess. 1:5) Paul certainly knew the concept of going through manifold trials in order to be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, as is clearly shown in Philippians 3:8-11. Therefore this pathway of persecutions only caused Paul to have a clearer Spirit-led path toward his goal of sharing with Christ in His glory.

Can we, in times of trouble and suffering, say with our Lord (and truly also with Paul as well), “Not my will, but Thine be done”? Can this be followed by our expectant trust for God’s good and perfect leading in whatever way He chooses?

1 Cor. 11:31, 32 Phil. 4:4-7 1 Thess. 5:16-18 Heb. 12:5-13 1 Pet. 1:6-9 1 Pet. 4:1,2 Ps. 138:7, 8 1 Pet. 4:16-19 1 Pet. 5:10

2 Thessalonians 1:7-10

The Lord’s coming will have a very different aspect for the righteous and the wicked. In the second epistle, chapter 1, verses 7 to 10, we have the vivid picture of the other side of the advent—the coming of the day of God as it will appear to the unbelieving and ungodly. It shall be rest with us “on the day He comes to be glorified in His holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed” (2 Thessalonians 1:10), but for “those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1:8), it will be “everlasting destruction . . . shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power” (1:9). This doubtless describes the latter phase of the Lord’s coming when He shall be revealed and openly manifested to all the world. This is not His coming for His saints, but His coming with His glorified Bride and His mighty angels to judge the nations and establish His kingdom on the millennial earth. It is in view of the terrors of that day that God’s mercy now pleads with men to meet Him as a Savior and Friend, and not as a sovereign Judge.

(The Christ in the Bible Commentary, A. B. Simpson)

What are the two major punishments that unbelievers will have to endure after their death?

First Major Punishment

Luke 13:27, 28 2 Thess. 1:9 1 John 1:5-7

Second Major Punishment

Isa. 33:14 Mal. 4:1 Matt. 3:12 Matt. 8:11, 12 2 Pet. 2:17 Rev. 14:10, 11 Rev. 20:10, 15 Rev. 21:8

2 Thessalonians 1:11, 12

How shall we glorify God? By doing something for Him that will make Him our debtor, and show how loving, faithful and capable we are? That would glorify us, not Him. God needs no addition to His happiness from our little store. He is richer by far than we, and all we call our own belongs to Him. The true way to glorify God is for God to show His glory through us, to shine through us as empty vessels reflecting His fullness of grace and power. The sun is glorified when it has a chance to show its light through the crystal window, or reflect it from the spotless mirror or the glassy sea.

There is nothing that glorifies God so much as for a weak and helpless man or woman to be able to triumph, through His strength, in places where the highest human qualities fail us. When carried in divine power, through every form of toil and suffering, a spirit that is naturally weak, irresolute, selfish and sinful, is transformed into sweetness, purity and power, and stands victorious amid circumstances for which its natural qualities must utterly unfit it, a mind not naturally wise or strong, directed by divine wisdom, and carried along the line of a great and mighty plan—this is what glorifies God.

He does not want to see us reflecting our own glory; but, like the heavenly blue and the celestial constellations reflected from the glassy bosom of the lake, He wants to see His own face and His own grace shining through our lives and saying to the world, "I can do everything through him who gives me strength" (Philippians 4:13).

(The Christ in the Bible Commentary, A. B. Simpson)

Why does God place us in circumstances in which our human abilities are totally inadequate for us to cope or to handle? And—before we spiritually come to “the end of ourselves,” can we ever truly “see” God?

Phil. 3:7-14

From 2 Corinthians 12:7 why was Paul given a thorn in the flesh?

2 Thessalonians 2:1-17

The apostle sets himself to correct certain erroneous impressions which had unsettled the church in Thessalonica. Notice how reverently he speaks of our Savior. Once and again he alludes to Him as the Lord Jesus Christ. He is surely coming, and as surely will His saints be gathered to Him as are drops of moisture drawn up from ponds and oceans to cluster in the clouds in radiant beauty around the sun.

But certain events must take place first. There must be a great apostasy and the unveiling of "the mystery of iniquity," which even at that time was already at work. First, the man of sin; then, the Son of man. First, he that set himself forth as God; then, God manifest in the flesh. First, the revelation of sin; then, the revelation of perfect salvation. Let us be warned by the doom of those that are involved in this great apostasy, and ever cherish the love of the truth of Christ, that we may be saved.

(Through the Bible Day by Day, F. B. Meyer)

The Thessalonian believers were troubled thinking that possibly the day of the Lord had already past. But Paul says in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 "For that day shall not come, except there come the falling away first, and that man of sin revealed, the son of perdition." The primary thrust of 2 Thessalonians is to correct this error by clarifying that certain indicators—especially a great apostasy and the emergence of the Man of Sin—will precede the Day of the Lord. **What will be the signs of the antichrist when he appears?**

Gen. 3:15 Dan. 9:27 Dan. 11:21-45 Matt. 24:5, 23, 24, 26 Mark 13:6, 21, 22 Luke 21:8
1 John 2:18, 22 1 John 4:3 2 John 7 Rev. 13:11, 12 Rev. 19:20 2 Tim. 3:1-5

If people cannot recognize just who God is while Satan is being restrained, then they will surely be deceived when this restraint is taken away and Satan is allowed to practice deception with signs and lying wonders. **What are the factors that prevent a person from knowing the truth?**

Rom. 1:19-23 1 Cor. 1:18 2 Cor. 4:2-7 James 1:5-8 Prov. 2:2-6 James 5:19, 20 John 12:46-50 John 14:6
2 Tim. 2:15 Rom. 1:18

2 Thessalonians 3:1-5

Paul was now preaching at Corinth, and he asks that the gospel "may have free course," 3:1. When unreasonable and wicked men try you, turn to the Lord, who is faithful to His promises and to His saints. The stronger the gales of opposition and hatred, the deeper should we become established and rooted in the truth. The word "direct" in v. 5 may be rendered, "make a thoroughfare through;" that is, we desire that our hearts should be a highway down which the love of God and the patience of our Lord may pass to a world of sin and fear. Let us ever connect the patience and kingdom of our Lord as in Rev 1:9.

(Through the Bible Day by Day, F. B. Meyer)

Paul prays that true Christians may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men, and that they might withdraw themselves from every brother who walks disorderly. His strong encouragement follows: "But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one." (2 Thess. 3:3) He also expresses his strong confidence in the Lord's working in them that they would do the things commanded. **Is there any reason for them to think that God's faithfulness in establishing and guarding them will be diminished?**

1 Cor. 16:13, 14 2 Cor. 4:5-7 2 Cor. 4:16-18 2 Cor. 5:15-17 Phil. 2:13-16 Phil. 3:8-11

2 Thessalonians 3:6-18

From his high expectations of the Advent, the apostle turns to the prosaic commonplaces of daily toil. There was need for this, because the expectation of the speedy return of Christ was disarranging the ordinary course of life and duty. People were neglecting the common round of daily tasks, and idlers were imposing on Christian generosity. Against these the apostle sets his own example of sitting far into the night at his tent-making. See 1 Thess. 2:9. The best attitude for those that look for their Lord is not in pressing their faces against the window to behold the chariot of their returning Master, but implying their toil with deft hands and consecrated hearts.

Note that parting salutation, v. 16, and let us believe that the God of peace is causing peace for us at all times and in all ways. Even storms are forwarding our boat to its haven, and we shall be borne in with the floodtide of His mercy.

Every wind is a home wind to the child of God, setting in from the quarter of God's love. Every messenger, however garbed, brings God's salutation and benediction.

(Through the Bible Day by Day, F. B. Meyer)

In the left column below are listed some of the wrongful attitudes some people had as they expected Christ to return soon. In the column to the right, tell what you believe Paul would do in the way of discipline for such attitudes.

They withdrew from their business _____
and not work. _____

They felt they should collect wages _____
even though they did not work. _____

Some thought that not doing _____
their labor was of God. _____

They took their attitudes about _____
these matters from others, _____
not from Paul. _____

They felt they had a right to eat _____
even though they didn't feel like _____
working . _____

Finally, as you await the return of our glorious Lord, what is your
desire for your life and activities, and how may that pathway be
maintained?
