

# A Study of 2 Thessalonians



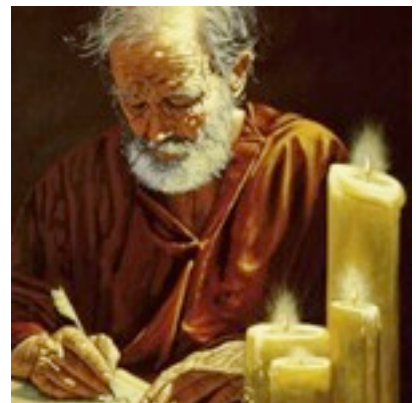
## Introduction

The problems that Paul addresses in 1 Thessalonians are still continuing as he writes 2 Thessalonians. Most scholars believe that this letter was written soon (within a few months) after the first letter.

2 Thessalonians primarily addresses “three issues: persecution of Christians, the Lord’s return, and the problem of idleness.”<sup>1</sup> The persecution addressed in 1 Thessalonians had not decreased and the church was still confused about the timing of the Lord’s return. Because some believed the Lord’s return was imminent they quit their jobs and had become idle.

## Opening Words: 1:1-4

2 Thessalonians begins almost identically to 1 Thessalonians as Paul greets the church from himself, Timothy, and Silas. It is a typical brief greeting as he acknowledges the relationship the Thessalonians share as a part of the church and their position in God and Christ. Paul’s greeting is one of grace and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.



Verse 3 includes not just a word of thanksgiving, but expresses an obligation to be thankful. Paul is thankful for the growing faith of these young Christians and their love toward one another.

### Defining the words

Steadfastness -- Active faithfulness under persecution

Persecutions -- Suffering caused by others because they are opposed to one’s beliefs

Afflictions -- Suffering that comes because of one’s faith

As in 1 Thessalonians Paul uses superlatives such as “always” and “every one” to show the level and extent of his love for the brethren. He constantly prayed for everyone in the church.

In verse 4 Paul says that he boasts to other churches about the steadfastness and faith of the Thessalonian church as they endure persecutions and afflictions.

**1. Is it right to boast of the faithfulness of another Christian or church? Why or why not?**

<sup>1</sup> Weatherly, Jon A. *The College Press NIV Commentary: 1 & 2 Thessalonians*. Joplin, Missouri: College Press, 1996, p. 206.

**2. What was the boast Paul was able to make about the Thessalonian Christians?**

**The Lord's Judgment 1:5-12**

The faithfulness of the Thessalonian Christians in the face of persecution shows that God is working with them and that they will be considered worthy of God's kingdom.

**3. Does persecution or suffering show that a person or church is or is not faithful? Explain your answer.**



**4. What will God do to those who afflict his people according to verse 6?**

**5. What will God do for those who are afflicted for their faith in him?**

God is just and will repay the wicked persecutors for their actions against Christians. For those who afflict Christians an eternity of suffering awaits. For Christians who faithfully endure relief will be granted. The word translated relief means to loosen, to relax, or to provide freedom. It was used to describe the loosening of the taunt strings of a bow.<sup>2</sup> When Jesus comes, the faithful Christians who have endured so much for the sake of Christ will find every burden loosened, every persecution lifted, every affliction removed.

The only timing that Paul (or any Scripture) gives for this relief is in the Second Coming of Christ. It is possible that Christians may need to endure persecution for the entirety of their lifetimes because the day of Christ's return is unknown. His return may or may not come during the lifetime of any Christian.

The picture of the return of Christ is amazing and dramatic. He comes from heaven accompanied by mighty angels. Jesus will come in flaming fire indicating his role as the judge who will punish the wicked with his vengeance.

Jon Weatherly writes, "Paul's concept of God's justice here is retributive: evildoers are repaid in kind for the evil they have done. This notion, once fundamental in western legal thought, is now rejected in many circles. More recently evil has been seen according to the model of disease, and so punishment has been viewed as therapy or rehabilitation."<sup>3</sup> God however is holy and a just God must repay evil with a penalty appropriate to the offense. Here the correct punishment is eternal destruction away from the presence of the Lord.

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<sup>2</sup> Thayer's Greek Lexicon, Electronic Database. Copyright © 2002, 2003, 2006, 2011 by Biblesoft, Inc

<sup>3</sup> ibid. p. 218.

The word vengeance means full and complete punishment and is the prerogative of God and God alone.<sup>4</sup> The ones of whom Paul writes are in continual rebellion against God and are viscously persecuting the church. The evildoers will suffer eternal destruction; not meaning that they will be annihilated, but rather that they will face eternal separation from God and every blessing.

**6. Should we or should we not be offended by this Scriptural idea of God's vengeance? Why or why not?**

**7. How are those opposed to God described in verse 8?**

**8. What does it mean to be put away from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his might?**

While the punishment that comes against the unfaithful will be terrible beyond measure those who have been obedient through persecution will find a rich reward. When the Lord Jesus returns he will be "glorified in this saints." Christians will receive reward, a new home, a new body, and an eternal life without pain or illness. They will experience the glory given by God.



Note the contrast: The unfaithful will be forever put away from God's glory while the Christian will be the recipient of God's glory for eternity.

The picture of the returning Christ and his glory will be so dramatic that he will be "marveled at." The word translated as "marveled at" describes the view of Christ in his glory as a wonder, an amazement, causing one to be astonished or awestruck.<sup>5</sup>

We can only try to imagine how completely awestruck all those who see him will be with the view of the glory he possesses. All those in Thessalonica (and all who follow) who believed Paul's testimony about Christ and accepted it will see this glory.

Paul prays constantly for these young Christians that they will see and experience the glory of Christ in his return. He prays that they will be worthy of their calling. The Thessalonians (as all Christians) are called to God through the proclamation of the gospel.

No one can be worthy in any sense of earning their salvation, but Christians are to live in a way that is in keeping with the salvation they have received. This verse indicates that some who claim to be Christians may not live worthy lives and may not receive his glory.

The second part of Paul's prayer is that these Christians would be able to do all the good work that they can through the power of God. It should be the desire of every believer to do all they can through the power of God to bring him glory.

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<sup>4</sup> Smith, James E. *Teacher's Commentary: The Eschatological Epistles*. Lulu, 2011, p. 100.

<sup>5</sup> Helps Word-studies: copyright © 1987, 2011 by Helps Ministries, Inc.

**9. How can the name of Jesus be glorified in the life of a Christian?**

**10. How can a Christian be glorified in Christ?**

**11. What part does grace play in this glorification?**

The Thessalonian Christians were experiencing great persecution at the hands of unbelievers. God promises to punish the wicked with destruction and banishment from his every blessing and to glorify the righteous. These words were a great encouragement to a church that was battling through severe adversity. Those who live faithfully in the midst of this conflict will experience glory from a Lord who is so awesome that those who see him will marvel at the sight of his glorious presence.