



The Book Of Second Thessalonians

Paul Writes to help
Them Grow In The Faith

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2 Thessalonians

OVERVIEW:

Effective communication is difficult; often the message sent is *not* the message received in the home, marketplace, neighborhood, or church. Even when clearly stated or written, words can be misinterpreted and misunderstood, especially when filtered through the sieve of prejudices and preconceptions.

Paul faced this problem with the Thessalonians. He had written them earlier to help them grow in the faith, comforting and encouraging them by affirming the reality of Christ's return. Just a few months later, however, word came from Thessalonica that some had misunderstood Paul's teaching about the second coming. His announcement that Christ could come at any moment had caused some to stop working and just wait, rationalizing their idleness by pointing to Paul's teaching. Adding fuel to this fire was the continued persecution of the church. Many felt that indeed this must be the "day of the Lord."

Responding quickly, Paul sent a second letter to this young church. In it he gave further instruction concerning the second coming and the day of the Lord (2 Thes. 2:1-2). Second Thessalonians, therefore, continues the subject of 1 Thessalonians and is a call to continued courage and consistent conduct.

The letter begins with Paul's trademark—a personal greeting and a statement of thanksgiving for their faith (2 Thes. 1:1-3). He mentions their perseverance in spite of their persecution and trials (2 Thes. 1:4) and uses this situation to broach the subject of Christ's return. At that time, Christ will vindicate the righteous who endure and will punish the wicked (2 Thes. 1:5-12).

Paul then directly answers the misunderstanding concerning the timing of the events of the end times. He tells them not to listen to rumors and reports that the day of the Lord has already begun (2 Thes. 2:1-2), because a number of events must occur before Christ returns (2 Thes. 2:3-12). Meanwhile, they should stand firm for Christ's truth (2 Thes. 2:13-15), receive God's encouragement and hope (2 Thes. 2:16-17), pray for strength and for the spread of the Lord's message (2 Thes. 3:1-5), and warn those who are idle (2 Thes. 3:6-15). Paul ends with personal greetings and a benediction (2 Thes. 3:16-18).

Almost 2,000 years later, we stand much closer to the time of Christ's return; but we also would be wrong to see his imminent appearance as an excuse for idle waiting and heavenward gazing. Being prepared for his coming means spreading the gospel, reaching out to those in need, and building the church, his body. As you read 2 Thessalonians, then, see clearly the reality of his return and your responsibility to live for him until that day.

THE BLUEPRINT

Paul wrote to encourage those who were facing persecution and to correct a misunderstanding about the timing of Christ's return. The teaching about the Lord's return promoted idleness in this young church.

The imminent coming of Christ should never make us idle; we should be even more busy—living purely, using our time well, and working for his kingdom. We must work not only during easy times when it is convenient, but also during difficult times. Christians must patiently watch for Christ's return, and work for him while we wait.

1. The bright hope of Christ's return (2 Thes. 1:1-2:17)

This letter is from Paul, Silas, and Timothy.

It is written to the church in Thessalonica, you who belong to God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

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

[3] Dear brothers and sisters, we always thank God for you, as is right, for we are thankful that your faith is flourishing and you are all growing in love for each other. [4] We proudly tell God's other churches about your endurance and faithfulness in all the persecutions and hardships you are suffering. [5] But God will use this persecution to show his justice. For he will make you worthy of his Kingdom, for which you are suffering, [6] and in his justice he will punish those who persecute you. [7] And God will provide rest for you who are being persecuted and also for us when the Lord Jesus appears from heaven. He will come with his mighty angels, [8] in flaming fire, bringing judgment on those who don't know God and on those who refuse to obey the Good News of our Lord Jesus. [9] They will be punished with everlasting destruction, forever separated from the Lord and from his glorious power [10] when he comes to receive glory and praise from his holy people. And you will be among those praising him on that day, for you believed what we testified about him.

[11] And so we keep on praying for you, that our God will make you worthy of the life to which he called you. And we pray that God, by his power, will fulfill all your good intentions and faithful deeds. [12] Then everyone will give honor to the name of our Lord Jesus because of you, and you will be honored along with him. This is all made possible because of the undeserved favor of our God and Lord, Jesus Christ.

[2:1] And now, brothers and sisters, let us tell you about the coming again of our Lord Jesus Christ and how we will be gathered together to meet him. [2] Please don't be so easily shaken and troubled by those who say that the day of the Lord has already begun. Even if they claim to have had a vision, a revelation, or a letter supposedly from us, don't believe them. [3] Don't be fooled by what they say.

For that day will not come until there is a great rebellion against God and the man of lawlessness is revealed—the one who brings destruction. [4] He will exalt himself and defy every god there is and tear down every object of adoration and worship. He will position himself in the temple of God, claiming that he himself is God. [5] Don't you remember that I told you this when I was with you? [6] And you know what is holding him back, for he can be revealed only when his time comes.

[7] For this lawlessness is already at work secretly, and it will remain secret until the one who is holding it back steps out of the way. [8] Then the man of lawlessness will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will consume with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming. [9] This evil man will come to do the work of Satan with counterfeit power and signs and miracles. [10] He will use every kind of wicked deception to fool those who are on their way to destruction because they refuse to believe the truth that would save them. [11] So God will send great deception upon them, and they will believe all these lies. [12] Then they will be condemned for not believing the truth and for enjoying the evil they do.

[13] As for us, we always thank God for you, dear brothers and sisters loved by the Lord. We are thankful that God chose you to be among the first to experience salvation, a salvation that came through the Spirit who makes you holy and by your belief in the truth. [14] He called you to salvation when we told you the Good News; now you can share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[15] With all these things in mind, dear brothers and sisters, stand firm and keep a strong grip on everything we taught you both in person and by letter. [16] May our Lord Jesus Christ and God our Father, who loved us and in his special favor

gave us everlasting comfort and good hope, [17] comfort your hearts and give you strength in every good thing you do and say.

2. Living in the light of Christ's return (2 Thes. 3:1-18)

Finally, dear brothers and sisters, I ask you to pray for us. Pray first that the Lord's message will spread rapidly and be honored wherever it goes, just as when it came to you. [2] Pray, too, that we will be saved from wicked and evil people, for not everyone believes in the Lord. [3] But the Lord is faithful; he will make you strong and guard you from the evil one. [4] And we are confident in the Lord that you are practicing the things we commanded you, and that you always will. [5] May the Lord bring you into an ever deeper understanding of the love of God and the endurance that comes from Christ.

[6] And now, dear brothers and sisters, we give you this command with the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ: Stay away from any Christian who lives in idleness and doesn't follow the tradition of hard work we gave you. [7] For you know that you ought to follow our example. We were never lazy when we were with you. [8] We never accepted food from anyone without paying for it. We worked hard day and night so that we would not be a burden to any of you. [9] It wasn't that we didn't have the right to ask you to feed us, but we wanted to give you an example to follow. [10] Even while we were with you, we gave you this rule: "Whoever does not work should not eat."

[11] Yet we hear that some of you are living idle lives, refusing to work and wasting time meddling in other people's business. [12] In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we appeal to such people—no, we command them: Settle down and get to work. Earn your own living. [13] And I say to the rest of you, dear brothers and sisters, never get tired of doing good.

[14] Take note of those who refuse to obey what we say in this letter. Stay away from them so they will be ashamed. [15] Don't think of them as enemies, but speak to them as you would to a Christian who needs to be warned.

[16] May the Lord of peace himself always give you his peace no matter what happens. The Lord be with you all.

[17] Now here is my greeting, which I write with my own hand—Paul. I do this at the end of all my letters to prove that they really are from me.

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

MEGATHEMES

THEME: Persecution

EXPLANATION:

Paul encouraged the church to persevere in spite of troubles and trials. God will bring victory to his faithful followers and judge those who persecute them.

IMPORTANCE:

God promises to reward our faith by giving us his power and helping us bear persecution. Suffering for our faith will strengthen us to serve Christ. We must be faithful to him.

THEME: Christ's return

EXPLANATION:

Since Paul had said that the Lord could come at any moment, some of the Thessalonian believers had stopped working in order to wait for Christ.

IMPORTANCE:

Christ will return and bring total victory to all who trust in him. If we are ready, we need not be concerned about *when* he will return. We should stand firm, keep working, and wait for Christ.

THEME: Great rebellion

EXPLANATION:

Before Christ's return, there will be a great rebellion against God led by the man of lawlessness (the antichrist). God will remove all the restraints on evil before he brings judgment on the rebels. The antichrist will attempt to deceive many.

IMPORTANCE:

We should not be afraid when we see evil increase. God is in control, no matter how evil the world becomes. God guards us during Satan's attacks. We can have victory over evil by remaining faithful to God.

THEME: Persistence

EXPLANATION:

Because church members had quit working and become disorderly and disobedient, Paul chastised them for their idleness. He called them to show courage and true Christian conduct.

IMPORTANCE:

We must never get so tired of doing right that we quit. We can be persistent by making the most of our time and talent. Our endurance will be rewarded.

An invitation is given to open your heart's door.

Rev. 3:20

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

References:

Holy Bible: King James Translation

Holy Bible: Living Bible Translation

Additional comments and charts are taken from: *Life Application Study Bible*. Illinois: Tyndale House 2007. Print