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a ***Grace Notes*** course

## **2 Thessalonians**

an expositional study  
by Dr. Grant Richison

Lesson 8

### **2 Thessalonians 1**

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## 2 Thessalonians

### Lesson 8

#### 2 Thessalonians 1

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## Introduction

### WRITER

-- Paul (1:1; 3:17)

### PLACE OF WRITING

-- Corinth (Acts 18:5)

### DATE

-- A.D. 52

### OCCASION

-- Paul heard that the Thessalonians were teaching the false idea that the Day of the Lord had come. Some quit their jobs because of this.

### PURPOSES

To correct the error that the Day of the Lord had come

To give proper criteria to recognize that day.

### THEME

-- corrections about the Day of the Lord (2:2)

### KEY VERSES

-- 1:7-10; 2:3

### PECULIARITIES

A. Apocalyptic, 2:1-12

B. Emphasis on the Day of the Lord

C. Adds to the prophetic truths of 1 Thessalonians

D. Contrasts to 1 Thessalonians

1 Thessalonians deals with Christ's coming for the saints in the air while 2 Thessalonians deals with Christ's coming to the earth with the saints.

1 Thessalonians presents the coming of Christ while 2 Thessalonians sets the stage for the coming of the Antichrist.

1 Thessalonians emphasizes the Day of Christ [Rapture] while 2 Thessalonians emphasizes the Day of the Lord [tribulation].

1 Thessalonians concerns itself with the dead while 2 Thessalonians concerns itself with the living.

E. The shortest epistle that Paul ever wrote to any church: 3 chapters, 47 verses and 1,042 words.

F. Tone more formal and rigid than 1 Thessalonians.

G. Turn of events: dynamic outreach church in 1 Thessalonians has become a church turned inward.

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO MINISTRY AT THESSALONICA

A. Paul received the Macedonian vision at Troy to go to Europe, Acts 16:8-14.

This was the beginning of spreading the gospel from the continent of Asia to the continent of Europe. Going to Thessalonica transferred the ministry of the gospel to Western civilization. Macedonia was the former kingdom of Alexander the Great (he wanted one-world domination and enlightenment with the culture of Greece. He wanted to marry east and west.)

B. Paul came to minister in Thessalonica for three successive and successful weeks.

The Jews accused Paul's evangelistic team of "turning the world upside down."

Paul fled the city in the face of much opposition.

C. The principal people in the church at Thessalonica were Gentiles (1:9; Acts 17:4).

### OUTLINE FOR SECOND THESSALONIANS

A. Greeting (1:1-2)

B. Commendation (1:3-12)

1. Appreciation (1:3-4)

2. Perseverance (1:5-10)

3. Prayer (1:11-12)

C. Correction (2:1-12)

1. Day of the Lord (2:1-5)

2. Mystery of lawlessness (2:6-12)

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D. Continuing (2:13-17)

1. Thanksgiving (2:13-15)

2. Prayer (2:16-17)

E. Commandments (3:1-15)

1. To pray (3:1-2)

2. To put confidence in apostles (3:3-5)

3. To correct disorderly (3:6-10)

4. To command the idle (3:11-13)

5. To discipline the disorderly (3:14-15)

F. Conclusion (3:16-18)

## **2 Thessalonians 1:1**

"Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:"

We come now to Paul's shortest epistle.

The first two verses make up the salutation. This greeting is essentially the same as in 1 Thessalonians.

### **Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy,**

These are the same three names found in 1 Thessalonians 1:1. This was an effective and powerful team as we saw in our study of 1 Thessalonians. Paul, a leader, scholar and writer determined to spread the gospel throughout the Roman world.

Silvanus, a Hellenistic Jew, held a prominent part of the Council at Jerusalem. The Council asked him to accompany Paul and Barnabas to Antioch to strengthen the church there. He also joined Paul on his second missionary expedition. He facilitated both Paul and Peter in the writing and delivery of their epistles.

Timothy was a vest pocket edition of the apostle Paul and Paul's son in the faith. His father was a Gentile and his mother a Jew. Timothy was a pastor and a troubleshooter for Paul.

### **To the church of the Thessalonians**

Churches in the New Testament often named their churches based on the city or province where they were located (1 Corinthians 16:1; 2 Corinthians 8:1; Galatians 1:22). Paul maintained care for the Thessalonians. He did not "love 'em and leave 'em". People that we influence for the Lord require our maintenance. Everyone goes through development aches and pains. Perfection is progressive, not instant.

### **in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:**

The church at Thessalonica was in "God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." The church had its origin in a source, the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. The reason that church existed was due to the ministry of the Father and Son. The Father had a mission for the Son. The Son fulfilled that mission. The church at Thessalonica was a result. God has a plan for every church.

### **Principle**

Our church is not ours but God's.

### **Application**

Your church belongs to God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Because of this, we are under divine surveillance. We must remember that our church is not ours. When tempted to cause a problem in our church, we need to keep in mind that God keeps surveillance on it. We must keep that in mind when we want to give someone a piece of our mind. Our church is the church of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, not ours.

## **2 Thessalonians 1:2**

"Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ"

Now we come to Paul's standard "Hello" in his epistles: "grace and peace."

### **Grace to you**

Grace is God's provision for the believer without any strings attached. God's provision comes from two persons of the Trinity, the Father and Son.

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### **and peace**

Peace also comes from those same two persons of the Trinity. A person with peace is a person with a settled soul. This settled soul comes from God's grace. Grace always precedes peace.

### **from**

The word "from" indicates the source of "grace" and "peace."

### **God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ**

Paul repeats the words "God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." This says something about our strength as believers; grace and peace come from a co-fountain. We have a dynamic duo as a supernatural resource for strength.

Note the emphasis on the lordship of Christ in His role as the source for our strength.

### **Principle**

God sustains believers with no strings attached.

### **Application**

Although we may feel that we do not deserve God's sustaining grace, God gives it anyway. Although we do not feel deserving of peace, God gives it to us because of His grace, that is, His provision for those He loves. We cannot pay for our sins as believers because Christ did all the suffering that was necessary for those sins. We rest on His grace. God does not need our help.

A believer cannot function efficiently without God's grace and peace. Many of us operate on personal drive, not on grace. That is a good way to head into spiritual shipwreck. We cannot operate without God's grace anymore than a plane can fly without fuel. God's grace is our spiritual fuel for flying in the Christian life.

A Christian who rests on God's grace has a settled soul and can sit down on the inside. He knows that God provides for any situation. He has a clear mind in any problem. Is something consuming you? If you keep your mind on the Lord, He will give you composure in the middle of your commotion.

"You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You, Because he trusts in You" (Isaiah 26:3).

### **2 Thessalonians 1:3**

"We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other..."

Now we turn to the commendation section of 2nd Thessalonians (1:3-12). If Paul could find a reason to thank God for a local church, he always did. He even brought himself to thank God for the carnal Corinthian church. He could not bring himself to thank God for the Galatians, however, because they defected from the principle of the finished work of Christ.

### **We are bound to thank God**

The word "bound" means to owe. This is a word of debt or obligation. Paul owes God a debt of thanks for the Thessalonians. He views thanks as a duty because he prayed that the Thessalonians might "increase and abound in love." God heard his prayers so he owes God his thanks. This is the subjective side of thanksgiving to God. Paul's team sensed a principled obligation to give thanks.

### **always**

Paul and his team carried a constant sense of thanksgiving to God for the Thessalonians. He found many occasions whereby he could thank God for them.

### **for you, brethren,**

Paul was grateful, not just in some general fashion, but for two very specific things about the Thessalonians: 1) their increasing faith toward God and 2) their expanding love for fellow Christians. In the next verse, he boasts to other churches about other dynamics in the Thessalonian church.

### **Principle**

Churches have reputations just like individual Christians.

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### Application

Every church has a name just as every Christian has a name. Each church has a testimony. Some churches have little reputation in the non-Christian community. Some have little reputation with the Christian community. What kind of testimony does your church have?

Thanksgiving relates to our capacity of soul. The greater our appreciation for what God is doing in those to whom we minister, the more it is fitting or appropriate to give God thanks. We cannot gain God's approval so that He will do something through us. We acknowledge that what He does, He does through His grace. A thankful heart just responds to God's grace. God is not impressed with who we are or what we do. He is impressed with who Jesus is and what He did. A sense of what God does through His grace is always the basis for our thanks.

### as it is fitting,

The word "fitting" carries the ideas of weight, value, worth, befitting, becoming, right on the ground of fitness. Thanking God for fellow believers weighs something. It has some worth, therefore, it is "fitting" or right that one gives thanks. This is proper in correspondence to what God expects. This is the objective side of thanksgiving to God because it responds to God's concrete answer to prayer. This is thanksgiving based on facts, not potential. The gospel team never took for granted God's work in the lives of the people to whom they ministered. They did not attribute change in the lives of the Thessalonians to themselves.

### Principle

Giving God thanks for fellow Christians amounts to something.

### Application

Are you "bound" to thank God for what God is doing through you? Are you compelled to launch from your soul appreciation to God for what He is doing?

"For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe" (1 Thessalonians 2:13).

Some Christians respond to the exposition of the Word. They live out the principles of God's Word. They apply it to their lives. They share their faith with believers and unbelievers alike. We cannot help but give God thanks for these churches. Some people respond to God and others do not.

### because

Paul now gives the grounds for the gospel team's thanksgiving. He uses two words for the growth of the Thessalonians "grows exceedingly" and "abounds." The essential reason behind Paul's thanks is growth.

### your faith grows exceedingly,

The words "grows exceedingly" comes from two words: to increase or grow and beyond measure. This is the only time this word occurs in the New Testament. Our faith can grow internally, as the organic growth of a tree. It also can grow exceedingly. Not only had their faith grown but it flourished. Our faith should never level off at some plateau and become stationary. Our faith is never static; it either grows or shrinks in size. It never remains the same.

"...but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen" (2 Peter 3:18).

"But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit..." (Jude 20).

### Principle

The faith of some Christians grows much faster than the faith of others.

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### Application

There are two aspects to our faith: 1) saving faith 2) dynamic or forceful faith. Each Christian has saving faith but not every Christian radiates forceful faith.

The amount of faith differs with each believer. Every Christian has the same quality of saving faith but not the same quantity of dynamic faith. The faith of some Christians is the same as when they became Christians. They have not grown in their faith at all. There is little development and modest progress in their faith.

"And the apostles said to the Lord, 'Increase our faith'" (Luke 17:5 ).

The more we understand the principles of God's Word and apply them to our experience, the greater our faith grows. We should increase our spiritual capacity like we increase our mental capacity. Faith is like a muscle, the more we exercise it the more it develops. If we neglect our faith, it will atrophy and get weaker.

There is such a thing as "great faith." We can have little faith (Matthew 6:28-30), medium faith or great faith.

"When Jesus heard these things, He marveled at him, and turned around and said to the crowd that followed Him, 'I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!'" (Luke 7:9).

There is a great difference between those who believe that God can change their lives and those who do not. Do you believe that God will work to change the members of your family? Do you believe that God will use you to win many for Christ? We need more people like Abraham who was "strong in faith." (Romans 4:20-21).

### and the love of every one of you all

The Thessalonians' faith in God grew and their love for each other expanded as well. These are the two levels of their growth.

Note the word "every" and the word "all."

There were no exceptions in the Thessalonian church when it came to abounding love toward one another. They all loved each other.

### abounds toward each other

The word "abounds" is simply more [in quantity]. Sometimes this word has the idea of "superabundantly." When it comes to loving one another, we should have it in superabundance. We should not put bounds around it. We break the bounds when it comes to love. Not only did the Thessalonians faith grow but also their love grew in quantity.

When we increase the extent of our love to the point of abundance, it will create a momentum of love among the community of believers.

### Principle

Biblical love for one another can grow so that we will love everyone in our local church.

### Application

Could you classify yourself as a model of someone who loves people in your church superabundantly? How would you stand up to that standard? All of us can love the lovely. Few of us love the unlovely. It is easy to love the people we like but not very easy to love the people we dislike.

"For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?" (Matthew 5:46).

It is difficult to love those who do not treat us fairly. That should not concern us. That is their responsibility. Our responsibility is to love them. We cannot force people to love us. God does not obligate us to make others love us but He does require us to love them.

It is one thing to develop our faith and it's another thing to develop our love to others. Some people have strong faith but weak love. Others have strong love but weak faith. God expects us to reach a point of strong faith and strong love.

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## 2 Thessalonians 1:4

"...so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure..."

### so that

Because of the Thessalonians' two abounding earmarks of faith and love (1:3), Paul boasts of them to other churches.

"And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching" (Hebrews 10:24-25).

### Principle

It is legitimate to use other churches as our model for building a local church.

### Application

It is legitimate to use other churches as models for your church. This is New Testament truth. First, Paul used the Macedonians as a model to the Corinthians and then he used the Corinthians as an example to the Macedonians.

"Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality. For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing, imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. And not only as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God" (2 Corinthians 8:1-5).

Although the Macedonians were poor, they gave to the Lord liberally even in trial.

"Now concerning the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you; for I

know your willingness, about which I boast of you to the Macedonians, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal has stirred up the majority. Yet I have sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this respect, that, as I said, you may be ready; lest if some Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we (not to mention you!) should be ashamed of this confident boasting" (2 Corinthians 9:1-4).

If Paul can use a church in northern Greece as an example for a church in southern Greece and vice versa, should we not look to churches that God blesses as examples for our church? Some churches inspire us to greater things. They cut new ground because they are lead by visionary people who look to God to work in unusual ways in their churches.

It amazes me that a church can cut off their nose to spite their face because they are jealous of the church down the street.

### and faith

There is no definite article before the word "faith" in the Greek indicating quality of faith. The Thessalonian faith was no dead creed but a living dynamic whereby they applied the reality of Christianity to their experience.

### Principle

Quality of faith depends on our understanding and appropriation of God's providence.

### Application

We do not need a lot of faith when things are going well. When our health is good, we have a regular income and our family is fine, who needs God? "I can make it on my own. Everything is coming up roses. The road is smooth and straight." However, when everything comes up lemons, we need to exercise a rest in God's providence. Our faith needs to grow when nothing goes right.

"And the apostles said to the Lord, 'Increase our faith'" (Luke 17:5).



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When God increases trouble in our lives, we need to increase our faith in His sovereign power.

The growth of our faith should increase in two categories: persecutions and tribulations.

### **in all your persecutions and tribulations**

The word "persecution" means to systematically organize a program to oppress and harass people by religion. This is affliction from without the church.

"Now Saul was consenting to his death. At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles" (Acts 8:1).

"Tribulations" means pressures of any kind. The new believers in Thessalonica underwent severe as well as slight suffering. Trouble comes in all shapes and sizes both large and small. God frees none of us from trouble. Some of our troubles are small compared to others. Some of us have trouble with our husbands or wives. Some have pressures with their children. The doctor informs us that we have cancer. Some turn to alcohol. Others turn to God.

"Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16).

Notice that big little word "all." God does not ask us to exercise our faith in most persecutions and tribulations but in "all" of them.

### **that you endure**

"Endure" signifies to hold up against a thing and so to bear with again and again. Literally, it means to hold up repeatedly. They held up under persecution over and over. This is not a matter of gritting our teeth and toughing it out but a matter of orienting ourselves to God's sovereignty in our situation. A believer who understands God's providence in everything is a person who can tackle any problem. He can

hang in there because he knows God processes everything that comes into his life.

### **Principle**

God carefully designs adversity and prosperity so that we will become the kind of people He wants us to be.

### **Application**

There is one thing that we can count on: our circumstances will change. None of us can get through life with hostile humanity without trouble.

"But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra—what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:10-12).

There will come a day when we will face adversity. Life never remains the same. God does not guarantee that our circumstances will remain the same. There will be times of prosperity and times of adversity. God designs a certain amount of adversity and a certain amount of prosperity for every believer. He knows our tolerances. He wants to test us to see what kind of character we have.

Two character qualities are crucial when we enter into duress. 1) We need to develop a tough attitude and 2) we should extend our love to fellow Christians. When we develop these qualities, we do not feel sorry for ourselves or enter into a pity party.

### **2 Thessalonians 1:5**

"...which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer..."

### **which is manifest evidence**

The Thessalonian's faith and patience under pressure was plainly evident for everyone to

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see. There was plenty of evidence to give plain proof of their dynamic faith. The fact that the Thessalonians suffered for Christ's kingdom by courageous faith is a proof of the reality of their salvation.

"And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God" (1 Corinthians 2:4-5).

### **of the righteous judgment of God,**

At first appearance, the suffering of the Thessalonians seemed unjust yet their dynamic faith demonstrated very clearly that God is righteous in His dealings with them.

God is righteous in His judgments. He will justly deal with the injustices against the Thessalonians in His future judgment although He might refrain from judgment for the present.

"Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Genesis 18:25).

### **Principle**

How mature believers react to affliction is an obvious sign of God's righteous judgment in their lives.

### **Application**

In righteousness, God designed affliction to come our way. He judges us worthy for this. He metes out a certain measure of suffering designed especially for us. He is too wise to do wrong or to make a mistake in this. He knows our tolerances. He never allows suffering to come without rhyme or reason.

God's character is always 100% consistent. He never compromises his justice. Because of the death of Jesus on the cross, God is now free to deal with us fairly and still keep His character intact. There is a danger in the assumption that God can overlook His righteousness to love His creatures. If God did this, then He would not be consistent with His own attributes.

God has the good sense to know the tolerances of suffering we can endure. He knows when to prosper us and when to send adversity. He mixes both blessing and hardship in proper proportions. God's central interest is what happens to our soul in suffering. When our interest is the suffering itself, we miss the point that God tests our caliber of our souls. God tests the edification of our souls in suffering. If we have not grown sufficiently, then He introduces more pain into our lives so that we can appropriate His promises. What is your capacity of soul?

### **that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God,**

Paul's team judged the Thessalonians worthy of the kingdom of God in the light of their faithfulness to God in their suffering. In comparison to other churches, the team regarded them as worthy of the kingdom.

Endurance of trial does not make the believer worthy of heaven but it does demonstrate the worthiness of one who will rule with Christ in His kingdom (Revelation 3:21; 2:26). God makes us worthy of His kingdom by His grace. God's kingdom is His sovereign rule over all creation.

"If we endure, We shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us" (2 Timothy 2:12).

### **for which you also suffer**

The word "for" means on the behalf of. The Thessalonians suffered on behalf of God's kingdom.

"So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name" (Acts 5:41).

"For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear is in me" (Philippians 1:29-30).

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## Principle

Children of the King should live worthy of His kingdom.

## Application

God reveals that we are worthy of His kingdom by allowing us to suffer. God is righteous in sovereignly arranging affliction for our lives.

Those who react to suffering negatively do not meet God's test. God's test in suffering is to demonstrate His grace for any disaster that may come our way. There will be no opportunity for this in eternity. Time is the only occasion where we can show God's grace in suffering.

Those who suffer in a godly manner demonstrate confidence in God's sustaining grace for that suffering. Adversity can turn into blessing. No athlete develops muscles without putting his or her body through some suffering!

Adversity makes prosperity more wonderful. Christians who suffer in a godly manner demonstrate God's provisions for inner strength.

The Christian who suffers like a yo-yo, always up and down, does not have the stability that comes from understanding God's providence for his life.

You may suffer today and no one seems to care. It seems that everyone has enough trouble of his own without having any concern for you. However, God cares for you. He providentially cares for you.

"...casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7).

Christians should care for you as well, if they were spiritually minded.

"Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2)

## 2 Thessalonians 1:6

**"...since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you..."**

Verse 4 explains that persecution and tribulation were obvious signs of God's righteous judgment. God righteously measures out to each believer a certain amount of affliction while we are here on earth in time but it will get better by and by. The best is yet ahead for the believer.

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:17-18).

The worst is yet ahead for the non-believer. Paul assures the Thessalonians that God will persecute the persecutors (1:6-10). God shows the features of His future justice for both the Christian and the non-Christian. Paul begins with God dealing with the non-Christian in this verse.

## since

The word "since" means if indeed. The word "since" defends God's righteous judgment (1:5) because it assumes as true that God will make things right.

## it is a righteous thing with God

We can translate the word "righteous" by the word just. God's absolute righteousness demands justice. He can be nothing but fair and equitable so He will settle the score with those who persecute the saints.

## to repay with tribulation

The word "repay" carries the idea of recompense, give back as an equivalent, pay back in kind. God will give back to the persecutors of the Thessalonians the same kind of treatment they gave in return. They get

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correspondent treatment or retribution for persecution of the saints. Because God is righteous, He incurs an obligation to do this. His retribution is not a matter of personal vengeance but of justice. This is a future retribution whereby God will deal with those who persecuted the saints.

### **those who trouble you**

The Thessalonian persecution proves a coming judgment on the persecutors. God will requite them for their wrongs. God afflicts the afflictors.

"But if you indeed obey His voice and do all that I speak, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries" (Exodus 23:22).

"Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord" (Romans 12:19).

### **Principle**

What goes around will come around.

### **Application**

God is absolutely righteous. He cannot be anything otherwise. Because of this, He always deals justly. He cannot be anything other than just. The seeming prosperity of the wicked will end at the final judgment. God has not yet avenged the wicked. God would be unjust if there was no deferred judgment.

Christians should expect trouble in this life because we march to a different drumbeat – the drumbeat of Jesus Christ. Christians should not be surprised that they face trouble from those without Christ because people do not like Jesus to show them up for what they are. Because of this, they make the Christian a speckled bird. They ostracize Christians who take a stand. We will be misrepresented, misquoted, misunderstood and misinterpreted.

No Christian wants to be unpopular with people but there is something that transcends popularity. He wants to be popular with Jesus

first. That automatically puts him in the minority.

God will recompense those who persecute the saints. They will get theirs one day. In the mean time, man does as he pleases. He defies God, morality, and decency. He calls wrong right and right wrong. He claims that perversion is normal and morality is perversion. They say, "Let your conscience be your guide" but their conscience is like a rubber band that can stretch in any direction anyone wants it to go.

Some people have their heaven here, not hereafter. Do you want your "heaven" here or hereafter?

NOTE: 2 THESS 1:7,8 NOT AVAILABLE

### **2 Thessalonians 1:9**

"These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power..."

### **These**

The word "these" is qualitative, emphasizing the class of those described in verse 8.

### **shall be punished**

The word punished means to pay a price [by way of return], to pay a penalty. God will repay the persecutors of the church at Thessalonica by giving them "eternal destruction" in return for rejecting the gospel and persecuting the messengers of the gospel. They will not escape God's retribution.

### **with everlasting destruction**

"Destruction" means ruin, death. Because a number of evangelicals today reject the idea of eternal punishment, we need to study this word more extensively. Some say that "destruction" means annihilation. This word does not imply annihilation or temporary retribution.

The New Testament uses this word of the physical death for a believer out of fellowship (1 Corinthians 5:5). Because this person did not repent of living in adultery with his

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stepmother, Paul gave him over to Satan "for the destruction of his flesh [his physical body] that his spirit may be saved in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ."

In 1 Timothy 6:9, Paul shows the consequences of indulging the flesh. There will be irrevocable physical ruin. Indulging the flesh ruins people.

Paul uses "destruction" in our verse and 1 Thessalonians 5:3 to describe the effect of God's judgments in the Day of the Lord [the Tribulation] and the Second Coming of Christ. The nature of "destruction" in this verse is that it is "everlasting."

In a few passages (Romans 16:25; 2 Timothy 1:9; Titus 1:2) "everlasting" means duration undefined but not necessarily endless. However, we can see the dominant meaning of "everlasting" in 63 other passages, such as 2 Corinthians 4:18 where it is set in contrast to phrases such as "for a season."

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:17-18).

The New Testament uses "everlasting" for persons and things which are in themselves endless: of God (Romans 16:26), God's power (1 Timothy 6:16), God's glory (1 Peter 5:10), the Holy Spirit (Hebrews 9:14), the redemption effected by Christ (Hebrews 9:12), salvation (Hebrew 5:9), Christ's future rule (2 Peter 1:9) which the Bible declares to be without end, the life received when we believe in Christ (John 3:16) ["they shall never perish"], and the resurrection body (2 Corinthians 5:1) [elsewhere said to be "immortal" in 1 Corinthians 15:53].

"Everlasting" is something without beginning (Romans 16:25; 2 Timothy 1:9; Titus 1:2), without beginning or end (Genesis 21:33;

Isaiah 26:4; 40:28; Hebrews 9:14), and without end (2 Corinthians 5:1; 2 Thessalonians 2:16; 1 Timothy 6:16; Hebrews 9:12; 13:20; Revelations 14:6).

The use of "everlasting" here shows that God's judgment is final with no appeal (Hebrews 6:2) and is "unquenchable" (Mark 9:43). This is not remedial but retributive justice. It is not temporary but final judgment. It is of unlimited duration of time--eternal, as God's eternal power and divine nature are "everlasting" (Romans 1:20; 16:26).

Note the parallel between "everlasting punishment" and "eternal life." If heaven is to possess eternal life, then hell is everlasting punishment. Everlasting punishment lasts as long as eternal life. If we shorten hell, we shorten heaven.

"And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life" (Matthew 25:46).

"Everlasting destruction" ultimately means that those without Christ will lose everything that gives worth to our existence. We see that worth in the next two clauses.

### **Principle**

Non-Christians incur eternal destruction because of God's justice.

### **Application**

God is always consistent with Himself. He always uses proper legal procedure in passing out judgment.

The idea that there is no everlasting hell attracts men. They love the idea that God annihilates those without Christ from conscious existence because then they would not have to face their liability before Him. Men are not like horses that black out when they die. People go on forever.

The essence behind the idea of hell in the Bible is justice. God is not capricious or cruel. He must be consistent with Himself. He must be true to Himself. If He bends the policy (steps

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outside His character), He would no longer be consistent with Himself. If He were no longer consistent with Himself, He would no longer be absolute. If He were no longer absolute, He could not be the supreme God of the universe. He would be a fractured being that we could not trust.

Hell is a place we choose. If we choose to reject God's plan of salvation in Christ, then we make ourselves sovereign. We think we know what is the best way for the universe to operate. The outcome of this is eternal destruction.

Non-Christians love to say, "I want to go to hell because that is where all my friends are." They miss the essence of hell in this. Hell is a place of deep alienation, alienation from God and from other people. It is a place of loneliness.

#### **from the presence of the Lord**

We can see the nature of "everlasting destruction" in two "from" clauses. First, everlasting destruction is "from the presence of the Lord." The word "presence" means face. Those who reject Christ will have no fellowship with God for eternity. They will not meet Him in personal relationship. God will drive them far from His presence, the true life of His presence, life as it should be lived. Life wholly devoid of God Himself is life without significance.

#### **and from the glory of His power**

The second limitation in everlasting destruction is separation from the majesty of God's visible splendor and power, His majesty.

"Power" here denotes ability, force, strength. This is a strength afforded by power. In this verse, "power" indicates strength afforded by power.

God's power has a "glory." The "glory" of His power signifies the visible expression of Jesus' inherent personal power. Jesus has the exceptional ability to do what He has to do. He has the special personal ability to be the source for true, eternal, quality life. When we separate

ourselves from Him, we cannot have the quality of life God wants us to have.

Jesus has not yet manifested His power on earth. He has yet to do that. His glorious power will set things right. He will set up a worldwide kingdom where He will put everything right. His new administration will execute justice as never before in history. He will judge sin instantly by His omniscience. He will not allow judges to miscarry justice. No Philadelphia lawyer will spin things into some convoluted meaning. He will turn no criminal loose to again perpetrate his crimes on others.

"When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory" (Matthew 25:31).

#### **Principle**

God will separate non-Christians eternally from the essence of His presence, the quality of the life of God.

#### **Application**

It is difficult for fallen man to see the significance of losing fellowship with God because He knows nothing of it. The fall of man alienated him from that understanding. His only hope is to trust Christ's death for his sin and thus receive reconciliation to God's assessment on life.

God will banish those who reject Christ from His presence and majesty. They will forever lose the opportunity to connect to what gives meaning to life. This is their eternal fate.

Non-Christians suffer here and hereafter. Christians suffer only here. Non-Christians miss fellowship with God now. They will miss it for eternity after death.

"...then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment..." (2 Peter 2:9).

There is a day of reckoning for those without Christ, a day of judgment. It is inexorable and irrevocable. It comes quickly. The only hope is

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to embrace the death of Christ to pay for our sins. Do not hesitate to embrace the Savior.

### **2 Thessalonians 1:10**

"...when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed"

Verse 9 declared that Jesus' power will be put on display by His presence.

#### **when He comes,**

The time when Jesus will recompense believers will be at His Second Coming. The word "when" is indefinite for we do not know the exact time of this coming.

#### **in that Day,**

This coming of the Lord Jesus is the Second Coming, not the Rapture. At this coming, He will fight the battle of Armageddon and then establish His Kingdom on earth for 1000 years (Revelation 19:11-20:4). He will establish justice for the saints then.

#### **to be glorified in His saints**

Jesus will be glorified in, not by, the saints. The saints will mirror Jesus in that day. When Jesus comes, He will be the object of great honor because He transformed the lives of His saints. Worldwide glory for Christ is the ultimate purpose of creation. He will rule for 1000 years then He will deliver up the Kingdom to the Father so that God may be all in all (1 Corinthians 15:24). He will establish permanent glory for the Father. God's purpose for our lives is to glorify Christ.

"The glory of the LORD shall be revealed, And all flesh shall see it together; For the mouth of the LORD has spoken" (Isaiah 40:5)

#### **and to be admired among all those who believe,**

Jesus will be honored in the saints and "admired" by all those who believe. The word "admired" signifies to wonder at, marvel. They

will be astonished at who He truly is and that He made good on all His promises. Believers will marvel at His Kingdom.

#### **because our testimony among you was believed**

The Thessalonians will participate in the glory of the Second Coming because they believed the gospel. We will not share in this because of our morality but because of the work of Christ on the cross. Christians have a marvelous future because we believed the gospel.

#### **Principle**

Jesus is the celebrity for the Christian.

#### **Application**

The white heat of God's presence will blow away pretense. No superficiality will stand in God's presence. When Jesus comes, we will see the wonder of what He did very clearly. He accrued all of the merit we need for eternity. We could do nothing to gain or earn salvation. He sustains us on earth so He will receive the glory for that as well. He will overcome the problems of the world by setting up His Kingdom. We will greatly admire His wonderful person and work!

### **2 Thessalonians 1:11**

"Therefore we also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power..."

Paul now begins a prayer that the Thessalonians would develop certain qualities consistent with their calling.

#### **Therefore**

The "therefore" reaches back to the previous verse. Since the Christian is to reflect Christ's glory and admire his Savior, Paul prays that the Thessalonians would prepare themselves so that their lives would harmonize with the Lord's character.

#### **we also pray**

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The thought of the Second Coming of Christ spurs Paul to pray for the Thessalonians in their present spiritual condition so that they may have a testimony of life at the Second Coming.

### **always**

The word "always" occurs in Paul's prayer in 1:3. Paul put great and persistent effort into prayer.

"Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church" (Acts 12:5).

"...praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—..." (Ephesians 6:18).

### **for you**

Praying for others is intercessory prayer. Many of us pray for me and mine. We spend little time in prayer for others. We are quick to pray for our immediate family but slow to pray for someone else's family.

"Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you; but I will teach you the good and the right way" (1 Samuel 12:23).

"Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much" (James 5:16).

### **Principle**

We cannot pretend in prayer because God's presence exposes superficiality in our hearts.

### **Application**

Christians should be at their best when they are in prayer. When we enter prayer, we enter the presence of God. We cannot pretend in God's presence for He sees our heart. He is the only being who fully knows our hearts. He exposes all the hypocrisy of our hearts.

It is wonderful to know that we can count on certain people to pray for us in times of trouble. United intercessory prayer is even more powerful. When people mix their prayers together, something more powerful comes of their prayers. Something more happens when people pray together.

"For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20).

Paul prays for four things for the Thessalonians. First, he prays about their walk in relationship to their calling.

### **that our God would count you worthy of this calling,**

The words "count worthy" mean deem it suitable. Paul prays that God would find of the Thessalonians worthy so that He would look on them favorably.

This word does not mean make you worthy. It is a causative word in the Greek. God is the cause of worthiness, not us.

The Christian's walk should suit his salvation. The Christian is headed for heaven. The best is yet ahead but his present life should reflect his future life.

"...which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer..." (1 Thessalonians 1:5).

### **Principle**

We should live Christian lives in keeping with our eternal destiny.

### **Application**

No Christian is worthy of salvation but we can live lives consistent with our eternal future.

"I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14).

"Does your life reflect 'the upward call of God in Christ Jesus'? When you arrive in heaven,



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will God be grieved by the way you lived, or will He say, 'Well done. You have walked worthy of me'?"

"So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ" (Acts 5:41-42).

"For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God..." (Colossians 1:9-10).

"...that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory" (1 Thessalonians 2:12).

Paul's second petition was that God would enable the Thessalonians to fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness.

### **and fulfill**

God wants to "fulfill" something in us. He wants to do it to the full. He will complete the job. He will do the most for you, not the least. He wants the best for us, not the worse.

"...being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ..." (Philippians 1:6).

### **all the good pleasure of His goodness**

The Holy Spirit here declares that, through him, the Thessalonians would bring "the good pleasure of goodness" to fruition in their lives. "Goodness" is more than kindness for it can include stern qualities (Matthew 21:12,13; 23:13-29). In every case, it includes the idea of giving or generosity. This is a quality of a person filled with the Spirit.

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law" (Galatians 5:22-23).

All goodness in us comes from God's grace, not from self.

"Good pleasure" means a good desire. Paul prays that their will would line up with their calling.

### **Principle**

The spirit of generosity comes from the filling of the Holy Spirit.

### **Application**

Do you want to fulfill the purpose God has for you? Do you want to be so given to God that you will do anything that He asks? God wants our best. Our best can only come from the filling of the Holy Spirit. God will work in your life if you act in His power, allowing His Spirit to work.

The third thing Paul prays is that the Thessalonians will work their faith with power.

### **and the work of faith with power**

Faith carries power. Do we do the pleasure of God's will by faith with power? We cannot live a life of faith without God's power. We will never reach the potential of our faith without that power.

### **Principle**

Christians should walk worthy of their "work of faith with power."

### **Application**

We engage God by faith. When we do that, we receive a power that is not our own. Sin tugs at our souls. We cannot live the Christian life by logic or reason. We must draw on the resources of God. That brings power.

"Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses [those who lived by faith in chapter 11], let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily

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ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:1-2).

## **2 Thessalonians 1:12**

"...that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ"

We come to the fourth and final petition that Paul prays for the Thessalonians.

### **that**

The word "that" is a conjunction expressing purpose. The purpose of Paul's prayer is that the Thessalonians will glorify the name of Jesus with a testimony for Him on earth.

### **the name of our Lord Jesus Christ**

The word "name" here stands for all that the name of Jesus implies: character, majesty, power, excellence. It is all that He is in His person and work, His renown.

"Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2: 9-11).

"Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: 'The Lord knows those who are His,' and, 'Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity'" (2 Timothy 2:19).

### **may be glorified**

The ultimate purpose for each Christian is to glorify the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Christians should yield everything in their life

toward this end, even their own happiness. (1 Corinthians 10:31).

### **in you,**

We glorify the Lord Jesus in our person and work. If we build our spirits with the edification that comes from applying the principles of God's Word to experience, there is a capacity in us that can glorify Christ.

### **and you in Him,**

If we glorify Christ with our lives, the Lord Jesus Christ will give us glory. When the world recognizes the manifest glory of Christ as the God-man at the Second Coming, we will receive glory in association with Him. There is a glory in becoming a Christian and walking the Christian life.

### **according to**

The words "according to" mean according to the norm and standard of. Grace is our standard for glorifying the Lord Jesus. We glorify Him by who He is and what He did. We do not glorify Him by who we are and what we do, by merit.

"...who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began..." (2 Timothy 1:9).

However, our works can glorify Him but even these works come from God's grace. It is only because God accomplished something in us, do others glorify God in us.

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

### **the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ**

One definite article precedes both "God" and "Lord Jesus Christ" implying that grace comes from both in inseparable unity. No action of ourselves will bring glory to Christ. It is only by

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the grace of God that we can glorify God. We can trace answered prayer back to God's grace.

### **Principle**

God's ultimate purpose for every Christian is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **Application**

The ultimate purpose for every Christian is to hold high the glory of Jesus Christ. If we tell the world about the person and work of the Lord Jesus, we hold Him in high honor.

Christians will be held in high honor as well because their holy life glorifies the Savior. The Christian holds Christ in high honor only by grace.