

# The Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Thessalonians

## *The Apostle's Love and Prayer for the Thessalonian Church*

### **2 Thessalonians 1:1-12**

#### I. THEIR BLESSINGS IN CHRIST (2 Thessalonians 1:1-2)

##### A. Opening Comments

1. Few passages or thoughts can be properly understood independent of surrounding passages or thoughts. Part of understanding the context of a passage is to consider sentence structure.
2. Consider these facts about Second Thessalonians chapter 1 which will reveal the complexity of the sentence structure within the chapter.
  - a. This chapter contains 28.5% of the words found in the entire epistle (291 of 1,022), and 25.5% of the verses (12 of the 47); however, it *only* contains 10% of the sentences (3 of the 30).
  - b. These facts demonstrate that the first chapter contains only one tenth of the sentences, but over one fourth of the words and verses.
  - c. Needless to say, one sentence covers over one half of all the verses within the chapter. For more information, consider the following:
    - (1) It covers seven verses beginning in 2 Thessalonians 1:3 and ending in 2 Thessalonians 1:10.
    - (2) It contains 195 words, 11 commas, 3 semicolons, 3 colons, 2 parentheses, and 1 period!
  - d. While details may seem dull or tedious, it must be remembered that we are called to be workmen in our Bible study (2 Timothy 2:15).
  - e. The three semicolons found in Second Thessalonians chapter 1 are each followed by a further explanation of the statements preceding.
    - (1) Two of the three phrases ending with the semicolons are followed (directly or indirectly) by the word *when* (2 Thessalonians 1:6-7, 9-10).
    - (2) In other words, each of the first statements will be fulfilled in the future *when* the second statement happens.
    - (3) Read each of these statements together from left to right in order to understand their timing and sequence.

<i>This Shall Happen</i>	<i>When</i>	<i>This Happens</i>
<i>"it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them..." (2 Thessalonians 1:6)</i>	<i>when</i>	<i>"the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels" (2 Thessalonians 1:7)</i>
<i>"Who shall be punished with... destruction" (2 Thessalonians 1:9)</i>	<i>When</i>	<i>"he shall come to be glorified... and...admired in...them" (2 Thessalonians 1:10)</i>



## B. The Writers Named (2 Thessalonians 1:1)

1. Their identities
  - a. Paul
  - b. Silvanus
  - c. Timotheus
  - d. Note: The involvement of these men is evident in the use of plural pronouns throughout the epistle. For a sampling, consider:
    - (1) **We** are bound to thank God (2 Thessalonians 1:3)
    - (2) So that **we ourselves** glory in you (2 Thessalonians 1:4)
    - (3) Wherefore also **we** pray (2 Thessalonians 1:11)
    - (4) Now **we** beseech you (2 Thessalonians 2:1)
    - (5) Nor by letter as from **us** (2 Thessalonians 2:2)
    - (6) But **we** are bound to give thanks (2 Thessalonians 2:13)
    - (7) Whereunto he called you by **our** gospel (2 Thessalonians 2:14)
2. Their confirmation
  - a. According to the Postscript, Paul wrote this epistle from Athens.
  - b. Paul, Silas (Silvanus), and Timotheus were indeed together in Athens at the time of this writing (Acts 17:15).
  - c. Paul and Silas, at least, were together in Thessalonica (Acts 17:4, 10).
3. Their explanation
  - a. Even though God gave Paul the words to be penned
  - b. Silvanus and Timotheus likely assisted with the penning of the epistle, with the exception of the salutation.
  - c. As has been stated previously in the notes, this was a common practice for the apostle Paul.

## C. The Audience Named (2 Thessalonians 1:1)

1. The church
  - a. The word *church* means congregation (compare Psalm 22:22 with Hebrews 2:12).
  - b. That this is a local body of believers is evident by the prepositional phrase “of the Thessalonians.”
2. Of the Thessalonians
  - a. All the Thessalonians at this point belonged to one local assembly.
  - b. Imagine the unity enjoyed.

## D. The Position Stated (2 Thessalonians 1:1)

1. The dual nature
  - a. The church...which IS in God the Father
  - b. The church...which IS in the Lord Jesus Christ
2. The doctrine taught
  - a. Based upon context, this means that a local body IS IN the Lord.
  - b. We have known this to be true of individual believers (Romans 16:7).



- E. The Practical Blessing (2 Thessalonians 1:2)
  - 1. The twofold blessing
    - a. Grace unto you
    - b. Peace unto you
    - c. Note: In Paul's greetings, grace always precedes peace.
  - 2. The twofold source
    - a. From God our Father
    - b. From the Lord Jesus Christ
    - c. The Spirit was also involved (2 Peter 1:21)
  
- II. THEIR FELLOWSHIP IN CHRIST (2 Thessalonians 1:3-10)
  - A. Among the Brethren (2 Thessalonians 1:3-4a)
    - 1. Thankfulness for the Thessalonians (2 Thessalonians 1:3)
      - a. The nature of the thanks
        - (1) The people giving thanks—"we", the apostle and others
        - (2) The compelling to give thanks—"We are BOUND"
        - (3) The recipient of thanks—"God"
        - (4) The conditions of giving thanks
          - a) Always
          - b) As it is meet
      - b. The cause of the thanks
        - (1) Growing faith
        - (2) Abounding charity
    - 2. Glorifying in the Thessalonians (2 Thessalonians 1:4a)
      - a. The nature of the glorying
        - (1) The people glorying—"we ourselves", the apostle and others
        - (2) The subjects of the glorying
          - a) In you
          - b) In the churches of God
      - b. The cause of the glory
        - (1) Patience; Note: What is patience?
          - a) Have you ever heard that it is unwise to pray for patience?
          - b) Since "tribulation worketh patience" (Romans 5:3), it is thought to be dangerous to pray for patience. The idea may be quaint, but it does not make for good advice.
          - c) The word *patience* is historically connected to the word *passion* which is biblically defined as suffering (Acts 1:3).
          - d) True to its association, the word *patience* means to suffer or endure some time of trial. No wonder doctors and hospitals refer to a person suffering from health issues as a patient.
          - e) The Bible bears further testimony to these truths by associating patience with waiting (James 5:7) and enduring (2 Thessalonians 1:4; James 5:11).



- f) The Bible also combines patience with the word longsuffering (Colossians 1:11). These words may appear the same, but they are not.
  - i) Longsuffering has to do with the quantity (or length of time) of endurance
  - ii) While patience has to do with the quality of endurance

(2) Faith

B. Among the World (2 Thessalonians 1:4b-10)

1. The saints' treatment by the world (2 Thessalonians 1:4b)
  - a. Persecutions
  - b. Tribulations
  - c. Note: The Thessalonian believers chose to willingly trust Christ as Saviour and to obediently become His followers.
    - (1) According to Paul's account, these believers endured great difficulties because of their faithfulness to the Lord.
    - (2) Paul commended them for their patience and faith for enduring these persecutions and tribulations.
    - (3) Unfortunately, far too many Christians today are unwilling to live godly (2 Timothy 3:12) for fear that living the Christian life will bring persecution and ridicule.
    - (4) These believers in Thessalonica understood what it was like to have people scoff at them for their boldness in the faith.
    - (5) They understood what it felt like to be mocked and cursed for their unwillingness to compromise.
    - (6) This is why Paul praised them.
    - (7) They endured the persecutions and tribulations with patience and faith.
    - (8) The world needs more Thessalonian type believers in the church today.
2. The testimony of the world (2 Thessalonians 1:5; see Philippians 1:28)
  - a. Note: Compare this passage with Philippians 1:28. There, the source of suffering was "your adversaries" (1 Corinthians 16:9); No doubt this originates with our great adversary, the Devil (1 Peter 5:8), but in the context it is obvious it is speaking of earthly adversaries. Not only is it wise to consider this perspective, but also to consider the testimony of suffering (see 2 Thessalonians 1:5-6; 1 Peter 4:12-14).
    - (1) For your adversaries... "of perdition"
    - (2) For you... "of salvation"
  - b. The world's testimony of itself
    - (1) Their opposition to God
    - (2) The righteousness of God
      - a) Their treatment was a manifest token—a piece of evidence or a symbol
      - b) Of God's righteousness in judgment



- c. The world's testimony of the saints
  - (1) The saints were worthy of the kingdom of God
  - (2) For which they were suffering
- 3. The judgment of the world (2 Thessalonians 1:6-10)
  - a. The purpose of the judgment (2 Thessalonians 1:6)
    - (1) It is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation
    - (2) To them that trouble you
  - b. The rest of the saint (2 Thessalonians 1:7a)
    - (1) The time of resting...now
    - (2) The hope of resting...when the Lord...shall be revealed
  - c. The nature of the judgment (2 Thessalonians 1:7b-10)
    - (1) The timing established (2 Thessalonians 1:7b, 10)
      - a) When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels (2 Thessalonians 1:7b)
      - b) When He shall come to (2 Thessalonians 1:10):
        - i) Be glorified in His saints
        - ii) Be admired in all them that believe
    - (2) The purpose established (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9)
      - a) In flaming fire taking vengeance (2 Thessalonians 1:8)
      - b) Punishing with everlasting destruction (2 Thessalonians 1:9)
    - (3) The recipients established (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9)
      - a) Them that know not God (2 Thessalonians 1:8)
      - b) Them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thessalonians 1:8); Note: Before proceeding we must take some time to clarify the meaning of the word *obey*
        - i) Society has distorted the meaning of *obey* by limiting it solely to following a set of commands.
        - ii) Although obedience certainly does involve following the rules, the Bible indicates a much broader application.
        - iii) 2 Kings 18:12 sheds light on obedience and the depth of its meaning.
          - (a) The Bible says that Israel "would not hear them, nor do them" (that is, hear or do the commandments of God).
          - (b) With this context, it is easy to understand that the Bible defines disobedience as the refusal to hear and do the commandments of the Lord.
        - iv) Other similar passages teach this same truth (1 Samuel 15:22; Proverbs 5:13; Jeremiah 17:23).
        - v) Obedience is twofold:
          - (a) The individual must have an attentive ear
          - (b) He then must act by faith
      - (4) The power established (2 Thessalonians 1:9)
        - a) The presence of the Lord
        - b) The glory of His power



- d. The prophetic truth conveyed
- (1) As Paul began his second letter to the Thessalonians, he admonished them that no matter the extent of the troubles faced, they were to rest secure with him.
  - (2) Unfortunately, many Pre-wrath teachers (those teaching that the Church will go through the Tribulation and leave just prior to the onset of God's wrath) look at the first word in the second clause of verse 7 beginning with "when" to incorrectly teach that the rest mentioned will not take place until the Lord returns at the Second Coming! The truth can be ascertained only by considering the tense of each clause.
  - (3) The context advises believers to rest (present tense) who are troubled (present tense) since God will recompense (future tense) those who are presently troubling His saints.
  - (4) The Bible clearly says that God's recompense (2 Thessalonians 1:6) will take place WHEN the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven with His mighty angels (2 Thessalonians 1:7). The wicked shall be punished with everlasting destruction (2 Thessalonians 1:9) WHEN the Lord shall come to be glorified in His saints (2 Thessalonians 1:10).
  - (5) Because of these prophetic promises, the saints should no longer be troubled, but should "rest with us" (2 Thessalonians 1:7). The "us" are easily identified in the context as Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus (2 Thessalonians 1:1).
  - (6) Even a superficial application of English language principles permits the reader to understand how the Bible expresses a break in thought.
    - a) When Bible teachers ignore these breaks, passages can be skewed to teach false doctrine.
    - b) This is especially true of those who deem punctuation unimportant, irrelevant, or of no use.
    - c) In 2 Thessalonians 1:7, the punctuation breaks the thought into two independent clauses with the first clause serving as a parenthetical thought.
  - (7) Christians do not have to wait for Christ's return to rest. We can now rest knowing that God WILL repay all those who do us wrong (Romans 12:19).
  - (8) This recompense will take place when the Lord is revealed to take out His vengeance upon a rebellious world. Some of the passages which help us to understand how God's recompense takes place would be Romans 12:19, Deuteronomy 7:9-10; Deuteronomy 32:35, Ruth 2:12, Nahum 1:2, etc.
  - (9) As further proof against the teaching that there is no rest for God's children until the Second Coming (Revelation 19:11), consider Revelation chapter 6. The Bible plainly teaches that there are those who will be resting prior to the Second Coming and God's administered vengeance (Revelation 6:9-11).



### III. THEIR BENEFIT IN CHRIST (2 Thessalonians 1:11-12)

#### A. The Saint's Benefit Through Paul's Prayer (2 Thessalonians 1:11)

1. The enactor of the benefits
  - a. The reason for concern—"Wherefore"
  - b. The giving of benefit
    - (1) We pray always
    - (2) For you
2. The nature of the benefits
  - a. That God would count you worthy of THIS calling
    - (1) The question that should come to mind is "What is THIS calling?"
    - (2) Based upon the context, one would think the calling was the call to suffer.
    - (3) If this is the case, two things stand out:
      - a) God has called us to suffer
        - i) While this is true, one must distinguish between suffering for wrong doing and suffering for righteousness (1 Peter 3:14, 17; 1 Peter 4:15-19).
        - ii) The suffering is a gift from God (Philippians 1:29).
        - iii) The suffering is not worthy to be compared with the glory that comes thereafter (Romans 8:18).
      - b) Suffering is a calling to which not all believers are worthy
        - i) The apostles suffered and rejoiced that they were COUNTED worthy to suffer shame for His name (Acts 5:41).
        - ii) Suffering brings one into a special fellowship with Christ called "the fellowship of his sufferings" (Philippians 3:10).
        - iii) The world was deemed unworthy of those who suffered (Hebrews 11:38).
        - iv) This is the very truth conveyed earlier in this chapter (2 Thessalonians 1:5).
    - b. That God would fulfil:
      - (1) All the good pleasure of His goodness
      - (2) The work of faith with power

#### B. The Saviour's Benefit Through Paul's Prayer (2 Thessalonians 1:12)

1. The nature of the benefits
  - a. The name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you
  - b. You may be glorified in Him
  - c. Compare this to the accomplishment of Christ's suffering (John 17:1).
2. The enactor of the benefits
  - a. The grace of our God
  - b. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ