

### 2 Thessalonians - The Situation

1. Shortly after the first letter Paul received information of the need to deal with two problems. The first is an error of teaching, and the second is a practical misuse which springs from the error.

[1] That the "day of the Lord has come". He answers this in the negative by showing that there are two matters which must happen before that which have not happened.

[a] the apostasy, the falling away

[b] and the appearance of the lawless one

[2] The practical error was that the gentle rebuke of 1 Thessalonians had failed to bring about change in the restless individuals who were not working, on the grounds that they were waiting. Paul says, if folks do not work they should not eat.

### 2 Thessalonians - The Argument Flow

#### 1.1-2 Greeting

1. The senders are Paul, Silas [Silvanus] and Timothy

2. The receivers are the church in Thessalonika whom they describe as belonging to the God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

3. The normal Pauline greeting is given around the two normal words used, grace and peace.

#### 1.3-4 The endurance of the Thessalonians under pressure

1. It is right for the apostles to give thanks to God because the Thessalonians faith is constantly increasing and their love to each other is growing as well.

2. They have actually become a source of pride for the apostles for the other churches speak of the Thessalonian steadfastness under persecution; their endurance is legendary.

#### 1.5-10 The justice of God in its future manifestation

1. Such a situation in Thessalonika will make for opportunity to see God's justice and his judgment.

2. The Thessalonians will be proved worthy of the kingdom of God, for this is the real cause for which they suffer.

This pictures the church there as representative of the reign of God in that place. What is happening is that the enemies of God are venting their malice against the church, which is now embroiled in the power struggle that is normally hidden, but now is being manifest in this persecution.

3. The justice of God will be seen when the Lord Jesus returns, revealed from heaven with mighty angels and flaming fire [of judgment]. This event marks the relief for the Thessalonians from persecution and the beginning of the avenging of their suffering on those who caused it. This vengeance is punishment worked on those who are described as refusing to acknowledge God and will not obey the gospel of the Lord Jesus.

That is, these folks deny God his worship and they refuse his gracious offer of salvation in Christ which would constitute an "obedience of the good news of the Lord Jesus".

The picture of the Old Testament go'el, the kinsman redeemer, entailed two functions for his kinsman. The first was to redeem him from the slavery of owing his labour to another because he had fallen on bad commercial situations and was deeply in debt and unable to release himself. The second responsibility was that, if his kinsman lost his life to foul play, the go'el was to avenge his blood and seek out the murderer and kill him. This was his clear right of duty. The cities of refuge were explicitly designed and provided for the occasion when a person, guilty of taking a life but not by premeditation, could flee to the city of refuge from the avenger kinsman. We see a similar requirement of the Lord Jesus in heaven asked by those who have come out of the pressure of persecution by losing their life; they ask, "How long till you avenge our blood ...?" [Rev. 6.10-11].

4. The penalty [punishment] is eternal destruction, which is to be cut off from the presence of the Lord and his glorious majesty. This presence and majesty happens on the great day that he comes to:

[a] reveal his glory among his own

The revelation of glory can only be seen in relation to others. This relational glory, such as is seen in the Trinitarian relationships of the Godhead, requires the Lord to be among his church to be treated as the Lord who He really is. His subjects, who have shown themselves worthy of his kingdom, will, in his presence react and live towards him so as to manifest his glory.

[b] reveal his majesty among the believers among the Thessalonians, who have received the gospel, the testimony of the apostles.

The revelation of his majesty is expressly a matter of the obedience of the believers; these are said to be those who “obey” the gospel – they live out the obligations of grace that are drawn from them by such a gracious King, This is the revelation of his majesty. These things are seen when the Lord and his people are together in one place.

### 1.11-12 Motivation for their prayer

1. It is this sense of the justice of God and the future arrival of the Lord Jesus from heaven that motivates the prayer of the apostles.
2. Their prayer is that God would count them worthy of their calling, with all that this entails for the Thessalonians at the future coming of the Lord. This is where their holding under persecution finds its fulfilment.
3. This would mean that the Lord would be glorified in the Thessalonians and they in Him. As we have seen above, a situation of mutual glorifying is taking place.

### 2.1-2 Warning

1. The senders want to speak to the Thessalonians about two future happenings: [a] the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and [b] our coming together to as He gathers us to Himself
2. The senders seem to be aware that the Thessalonians have become disturbed by a prophetic utterance or pronouncement, or a letter purporting to be from the apostles which alleges that the “day of the Lord” is already here.

### 2.3-5 Two things that precede the “day of the Lord”

1. So that the Thessalonians might not be deceived into thinking the day of the Lord has already come, they mention two things that are going to precede that day.  
The implication of the argument is that since these two things have not happened yet, then the day of the Lord has not yet arrived.
2. The two things are that there will be, before the day of the Lord
  - [i] a great apostasy from Christ;
  - [ii] a final rebellion against God, when wickedness is to be revealed in human form – a man of sin.
3. This man of sin is described as to his destiny - he is doomed to destruction.
4. Also by what he does:
  - [a] exalts himself
  - [b] opposes all that is called god
  - [c] opposes all that is worshipped
  - [d] usurps the place of God
  - [e] falsely claims to be God, enthroning himself ‘in the temple’.
5. The apostles have already taught the Thessalonians about all this while they were with them.

### 2.6 -12 There is a difference between lawlessness as we know it now and as it will be before the day of the Lord

1. The senders appeal to the knowledge that the Thessalonians already have about the “restrainer”. This restraining power, currently at work, holds back this man of sin’s appearance until the appointed time.
2. There are secret forces already at work – but they remain secret until the restraining power is removed. Once that restraining power is removed, then the work of these secret forces will become manifest.
3. The man of sin will then be revealed, but his destruction will come when the Lord appears. His word and his radiance will destroy this man.
4. The man of sin is a work of Satan; he is at the back of this man. This man, this work of Satan, comes with signs and miracles that falsehood can devise. Under its impact those who did not find their salvation through loving the truth will be doomed to destruction.
5. God Himself allows them to come under this compelling delusion to believe what is false. In this way, all who have not believed the truth, but made sin their choice, will be brought to judgment.

### 2.13 -17 The encouraging contrast of the Thessalonians to this scene of future judgment

1. The senders re-iterate what they said in the first letter, that they are so sure of the election of the Thessalonians to salvation on account of the reception they had among them, and of their consecration by the

- Holy Spirit in the who has consecrated them to the truth that they believe.
2. The Thessalonians are to stand firm in the apostolic tradition known through their own words or letters.
  3. They pray that the Lord Jesus and God the Father, through whom so much encouragement has come to them, would strengthen them in every good deed.

### **3.1-5 How the Thessalonians might pray for the apostles**

1. The senders want the Thessalonians to pray for them  
[a] that the Word of the Lord may have swift and glorious success,  
[b] and that they might be delivered from wrong-headed people. Not everyone has faith.
2. The senders are sure that the Lord will keep faith with the Thessalonians, strengthening and guarding them from the evil one. They are confident about the Thessalonians, that the Lord will direct their hearts towards the love of God and the steadfastness of Christ.

### **3.6 –15 Dealing with idle timewasters**

1. The senders want the Thessalonians to hold aloof from idle people, for they disregard the apostle's own ways of working. They give some examples of their conduct in that regard.
2. The senders did not want to be a burden to the converts – they had the right, but waived it.
3. People who do not work should not eat. It appears some are ceasing to work. They should settle down and earn a living
4. If people won't obey this instruction, then they should single him out, yet as a family member, not an enemy.

### **3.16-18 Paul's greeting and signature, and benediction**

1. Paul signs the letter with his own hand, and makes sure of its genuineness.
2. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ is to be with them all.