

2 Thessalonians

Authorship: Apostle Paul. “Paul, Silas and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace and peace to you from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thessalonians 1:1-2).

Date: About six months after 1 Thessalonians was written (AD 50-51 most likely from Corinth).

Key Passage: “May the Lord direct your hearts into God’s love and Christ’s perseverance” (3:5).

Purpose: To clear up the confusion about the second coming of Christ. To assure the Thessalonians that the Tribulation was not already taking place (1:1-2:12). To show that Christ’s second advent would deliver them from their persecutions and result in the judgment of their enemies (1:5-12). To instruct them on church discipline (3:6-15).

Unique Feature: 2 Thessalonians gives the Bible’s most detailed description of the Antichrist (2:1-12).

Background & Historical Situation: Much of what has been said about 1 Thessalonians sheds light on 2 Thessalonians since the two letters were written only a few months apart. Paul continues to commend their faith and love (1:3) and their perseverance under trial (1:4). He continues to speak of Christ’s return (1:5-10) and other eschatological matters (2:1-12). In these areas Paul’s second letter to them is in some ways a shortened restatement of his first one. Yet he does touch on other subjects. First, he takes particular pains to ensure that believers are not misled (2:1-3, 15; 3:2-4). Here Paul refers to people and writings circulating in or around the early church that somehow contradicted the true apostolic teaching. A major purpose of 2 Thessalonians is to counteract the influence of such forces. Second, Paul gives instructions on how to handle wayward brethren (3:6-15). Not all the church’s troubles come from hostile outsiders; sinful practices on the inside can also wreak havoc. Paul lays down guidelines for handling busybodies. They are to be disciplined yet not treated as enemies (3:15). Finally, a major purpose of 2 Thessalonians seems to be to assure believers of eventual victory, reward, and justice (1:4-10). Enemies of the gospel will receive their punishment in due time. Believers should rejoice that they are counted worthy to suffer indignity for Christ’s sake. All who “do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus” (1:8) will bear the consequences, while Christ’s followers will be granted a transforming vision of the Lord whom they have bravely served (1:10).

Outline:

- I. **The Greeting (1:1-2)**
- II. **The Judgment at Christ’s Coming (1:3-12)**
 - A. **Trials Preceding Christ’s Coming (1:3-5)**
 - B. **Retribution at the Time of Christ’s Coming (1:6-10)**
 - C. **A Prayer for the Church in the Light of Christ’s Coming (1:11-12)**
- III. **Events Surrounding Christ’s Coming (2:1-12)**
 - A. **The Call for Calmness (2:1-2)**
 - B. **The Coming Apostasy (2:3-7)**
 - C. **Antichrist Revealed (2:8-12)**
- IV. **Right Attitudes Encouraged (2:13-17)**
 - A. **By Recalling the Foundations of their Faith (2:13-14)**
 - B. **By Exhortations to Stand Firm (2:15)**
 - C. **By a Prayer for Spiritual Maturity (2:16-17)**
- V. **Intercessory Prayer (3:1-5)**
 - A. **Request for Prayer (3:1-2)**
 - B. **Confidence in Prayer (3:3-4)**
 - C. **A Wish-Prayer (3:5)**
- VI. **Instruction in Faith and Life (3:6-15)**
 - A. **Attitude toward the Disorderly (3:6-10)**
 - B. **Correction of the Disorderly (3:11-13)**
 - C. **Discipline of the Disorderly (3:15-15)**
- VII. **Final Greetings (3:16-18)**
 - A. **The Prayer (3:16)**
 - B. **The Authentication (3:17)**
 - C. **The Benediction (3:18)**