

Commentary on 2 Thessalonians Chapters 1 and 2 by Chuck Smith 6.16.24

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May memory verse Romans 6:8 (NKJV)

Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him,

June memory verse Romans 6:9 (NKJV)

knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him.

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Chapter 1

Paul had come to Thessalonica with the gospel of Jesus Christ from Philippi where, as the result of his preaching, he had been imprisoned, beaten and really ordered out of the city. There in Thessalonica, he went into the synagogue for three Sabbath days reasoning with them out of the scriptures. And the interest became so intense that on the third Sabbath day, almost the whole city had gathered together, which created a jealousy by some of the Jews that were there.

And so they began to stir up trouble against Paul. And they came to the house where Paul was staying to arrest him. And Paul had already got word of the problems, and so he had left and gone towards Berea. Trouble also developed in Berea after a few weeks. And so Paul's companions, Silas and Timothy, stayed in Berea to strengthen the brethren while Paul went to Athens. When they joined Paul in Athens, Paul sent Timothy back to Thessalonica to encourage the brethren and find out how they were doing. And he and Silas and Luke headed on down to Corinth.

While Paul was in Corinth, and Paul was there for about two years, Timothy came with word concerning the Church in Thessalonica, which prompted Paul's first epistle, dealing with some of the problems that were there. And so Timothy was sent back to Thessalonica with the first letter. And still other questions were unresolved, or problems still existed, which Timothy told Paul about when he returned again. And so Paul wrote this second letter, probably within a year from the first letter. These are the first two letters of Paul written from Corinth, in his second missionary journey back to the church that had been established in Thessalonica. And so because Silas and Timothy were with Paul in the establishing in the church, Paul joins their name with his in the greeting to the Church.

Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus [or Silas and Timothy,] unto the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (2Th 1:1-2).

This salutation is identical to the salutation in his first epistle.

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We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the love of every one of you toward each other abounds (2Th 1:3);

And so Paul, giving thanks unto God. He felt it was necessary to give thanks to God for two very positive traits and characteristics in this church. One, their faith was growing exceedingly. Secondly, their love for all of the brethren was just abounding. What tremendous characteristics to mark a church, a church of great faith and a church where God's love among the people was just abounding.

So that we ourselves [Paul said] glory in you in the churches of God (2Th 1:4)

So Paul is saying that we are actually, we glory in you when we go around and share in the other churches. We glory in what God has done in you; we love to share what the Lord is doing there for you.

for also the patience and the faith in all of your persecutions and tribulations that you endure (2Th 1:4):

So this church was a church that was experiencing a lot of persecution. It is interesting as you study church history, persecution never hurt the church. The church always thrived in persecution. The church in China has been severely persecuted as the result of the communist takeover. And yet during this period of great tribulation, when in some of the provinces they have only one Bible for every one hundred thousand believers, yet the church has grown and expanded tremendously until there are some who estimate that there are as many as one hundred million believers within the home church in China.

During the early period of the church history from the book of Acts, the result of the first persecution against the church in Jerusalem is that the church was scattered throughout the whole area, but the results of the church being scattered churches opened up all over the area. Wherever they went, they started their faith in Christ and the result of the persecution was actually just an expanding, a rapid expanding, of the ministry of the church. And the church grew exceedingly under the persecution in the first century, second and third.

So here in Thessalonica persecutions and tribulations. They were enduring them with patience, but the net effect of them in their lives was this increasing faith and the abounding love. Now these persecutions and tribulations that they were enduring was

a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God (2Th 1:5),

In other words, Paul is gonna talk here in a little bit about a period of time that is coming in which God is going to judge the world. There is gonna be a time of tremendous tribulation that is going to come to pass upon the earth. I believe that it isn't far off. This period of great tribulation is described in detail in the Book of Revelation, beginning with

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chapter six, the opening of the seven seals, and then the sounding of the seven trumpets, and then the pouring out of the seven vials of God's wrath. And as God's judgment comes forth upon the earth, it's gonna be so severe that people will be prone to challenge the fairness of God, the righteousness of God. But God will indeed be righteous in his judgment. And the persecution that they were going through when God's judgment came upon the unbelievers, it would be a manifest token of God's righteousness.

Now here Paul speaks of them as being worthy to be there in the kingdom of God, and it is for this kingdom that they are suffering.

Seeing that it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them which trouble you (2Th 1:6);

But it would not be a righteous thing with God to bring the tribulation upon His children. That was the whole premise of Abraham in dealing with the Lord over the destruction of Sodom. "Shall not the Lord of the earth be fair, be just, be righteous. Would you destroy the righteous with the wicked?" (Genesis 18:23) That wouldn't be fair, Lord, to destroy the righteous with the wicked. And so God delivered Lot before the destruction or the tribulation or the judgment came. It is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you;

And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels (2Th 1:7),

Rest in this fact, the Lord is coming for you with His mighty angels. He made mention of this in the first letter, "For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a voice of the archangel the trump of God and the dead in Christ shall rise first and we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:16). So you that are troubled over this great period of tribulation and judgment that is coming, rest with us for the Lord is going to be revealed with His mighty angels.

In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God (2Th 1:8),

Notice upon whom the vengeance is going to be taken. Not upon the children of God, not upon the church; He is going to be taking the vengeance upon those who know not God,

and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ (2Th 1:8).

They are the ones upon whom this great judgment shall fall. And I will tell you what; I surely wouldn't want to be around when God's wrath begins to be poured out. As again when we get to the details in Revelation, I am certain that you won't want to be here either. But He is talking on those that obey not the gospel.

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Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power (2Th 1:9);

Eternally separated from God.

I cannot think of anything more awful than that...

When He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all of them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day (2Th 1:10).

So the Lord is coming as far as the sinner is concerned to take vengeance, to bring judgment. As far as the saint is concerned, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired in all them that believe. And so He is coming to receive the glory and the honor and the power and the authority and the dominion that is rightfully His. Again Revelation five, "Thou art worthy to receive glory and honor, dominion, authority, thrones," the worthiness of Jesus to receive the glory, glorified in His saints, admired in all of them that believe because of our testimony among you.

Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling (2Th 1:11),

Now Jesus said, "Pray always that you'll be accounted worthy to escape these things". Paul said, "I am praying always that you will be accounted worthy of this calling".

and fulfil all the good pleasure of His goodness, and the work of faith with power (2Th 1:11):

So these are the things that Paul was praying for them. First of all, that they would be accounted worthy, that the Lord will account them worthy of being in this heavenly company, that he might fulfill all of the good pleasure of goodness in them and His work of faith with power.

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 (2Th 1:12).

And so the whole glory that shall be revealed in the church, through the church and in Christ at His coming.

Chapter 2

Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, [in virtue of this, because of this] and are gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is already present (2Th 2:1-2)

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Now there were some there who said this persecution that we are going through is the Great Tribulation; this is the day of God's vengeance. It is already here. And they even produced letters, supposedly written by Paul, saying yes, these fellows are right; this is the day of vengeance. This is the Great Tribulation. And so Paul is writing to correct this. Don't believe any supposed letters from me.

At the end of this epistle Paul makes the note that, "I have signed this in my own hand which I do with all of my epistles". These false epistles that they had been receiving weren't signed by Paul's own hand, and so he makes reference to the fact that he personally signs those epistles that he writes. It is a mark of Paul's. Though he dictated and someone else wrote them, he would sign his name to the end that they might have the authority and know that it was indeed from Paul.

So don't be troubled in your spirits, by someone's word, or by a letter that was supposedly from us, in believing that the day of the Lord is already present, or is now present.

Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition (2Th 2:3);

So two things must precede the day of the Lord's vengeance and wrath that is coming upon the earth. Number one, a great apostasy. Now this word "apostasy" has been argued by some as meaning departure. And there are some that try to relate it to the rapture of the church, referring to the departure. There are problems with that. And rather than trying to take a position on that, we only mention it as definitely a possibility. However, we do know that Jesus in speaking of His coming again said, "When the Son of man shall come again, will he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8) He questioned. And then again He said, "And because the iniquity of the earth will abound, the love of many will wax cold" (Matthew 24:12). So Jesus seemed to indicate an apostasy.

I personally believe that that apostasy is upon us. As I look at the general condition of the church of Jesus Christ, there is great apostasy. When I see these churches ordaining avowed homosexuals, we -- I see the homosexual church, the Metropolitan church and all. When I read the statements of some of these ministers who join the fight against anything that is good and decent, there is a tremendous apostasy.

Churches such as ours are the exception, not the rule. There is a great apostasy today, but then there is the second thing that must happen before the Great Tribulation, and that is that the man of sin, the son of perdition must be revealed. This man of sin, son of perdition is commonly called the anti-christ.

This title son of perdition is an interesting title because it is really son of Satan. And even as Jesus was God incarnate, in flesh, so the anti-christ will be Satan incarnate. Satan will take on a body or take over a body, probably more literally. And even as demons are able to possess bodies, so Satan himself will take residence in a body. And thus he is titled the son of perdition.

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Now there is one other person we know where Satan took over his body and that was Judas Iscariot. The Bible says, "And Satan entered into him." And it is interesting that Jesus called Judas Iscariot the son of perdition, now again Satan taking over a body. And in Revelation thirteen, he tells us that he gives to Satan, gives to this anti-christ, all of his power, all of his authority, all of his throne. Now he gives the world over to him, because the world belongs to Satan.

You remember Jesus came to redeem the world to God. And Satan took Jesus up to a high mountain and he said "Look at all of the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. I am going to give them to you, if you will just bow down and worship me. For they are mine". Satan was bragging. And he said I can give them to whomever I will. Jesus did not dispute that, but Jesus refused it. He came to redeem the world, but not by bowing down to Satan, but by paying the price of redemption upon the cross.

But Satan is going to give to this man of sin, the son of perdition, his throne, his authority, his power. And he is going to rule over the world. And the first three and a half years of his reign are going to be very prosperous times upon the earth. They are going to be singing, "Happy days are here again." This man is a miracle worker. This man has brought marvelous solutions to troubling world situations. This man has brought an end to the economic difficulties and the economic malaise that the world is in. This man has brought an end to all of these horrible wars, and he has brought peace and prosperity and everyone has jobs and things are going great. And the world is going to hail this man as its savior.

One of his exploits will be to bring a peaceful solution to the problem of the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem. Now many devote orthodox Jews desire fervently to rebuild the temple. Many other Jews really don't care. But those Orthodox Jews are really determined to rebuild the temple. A major problem exists, mainly that the Temple Mount is under Moslem control. And there almost, in the middle of the Temple Mount, stands the Dome of the Rock, a sacred site to the Moslems, for they felt that it was from this rock that Mohammed ascended into heaven after his overnight ride from Adena.

Recently there were Jews who were apprehended as they were trying to slip onto the Temple Mount site with explosives to blow up the Dome of the Rock. And there are many who are crying for a return to Israel of the Temple Mount. This has the leaders in Israel deeply concerned, for they have enough problems already and don't wish to compound them with religious problems. And they know if any overt action is taken against the Moslem control of the Temple Mount, that it will precipitate a holy war by the Moslems against the Jews. And though the Jews have been able to hold their own in their battles against Egypt and Jordan and Syria in the past, they don't want to deal with the fanaticism of the religious Moslems coming with religious fanaticism to destroy the nation of Israel. They just don't want to face that. That is a problem they believe they can live very well without. And so the official government view is to let things be. Don't create any waves. But there is that fanatic element that are determined to create waves. So, it remains a very sensitive issue.

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But this man of sin, the son of perdition, when Satan turns over to him the control of the world, one of things that he is going to have is a tremendous solution for the problem, for he is going to offer a covenant to Israel. And he will say, now look, there is plenty of room here on the north side of the Temple Mount. And you can rebuild your temple here on the north side of the Temple Mount. All we have to do is put a wall right across the center of the Temple Mount leaving the Dome of the Rock, and Aloxi Mosque on the south side. And you can have this whole ten to fifteen acres out here on the north side and you can build your temple here.

The Moslems will be satisfied because they have retained the title to their holy sites. The Jews also will be satisfied because now they have a place to build their temple on the Temple Mount. And I do believe that it is going to be shown and proven soon that Solomon's Temple actually is north of the Dome of the Rock, some three hundred and twenty-two feet, so that they will be very satisfied because they will be able to rebuild their temple right over the site of Solomon's temple.

Now there is a couple of interesting scriptures that sort of verify this whole theory. When Ezekiel was taken by the spirit through time and saw the temple that is to be rebuilt, that has not been built yet, Ezekiel gave him the measurements. The Lord gave him a ruler and says now measure this temple and the wall and the courts and so forth. And so as he was measuring the temple, he said, "and I measured the wall that was around the temple four hundred and fifty meters" and he said, "This wall was to separate the holy place from the profane place". And interesting enough, the Dome of the Rock has profanity written in Arabic around the top -- profanities against Jesus Christ. "God is not begotten, neither does He beget", a definite profanity against Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God.

There is another scripture in Revelation eleven, which is quite interesting, because John also was taken by the spirit unto the day of the Lord where he to saw the new temple which was to be rebuilt. And like Ezekiel was told to measure it. He was given a rod and said now measure the temple and the courts, but then he was instructed. "Don't measure the outer court because it has been given to the heathen". And the Dome of the Rock would stand in the outer court of the rebuilt temple.

So the anti-christ when he arises is going to make a covenant with the nation of Israel. And the covenant, no doubt, will include their privilege to rebuild their temple by building this wall and satisfying both parties and everybody in the world is going to say, "Isn't that brilliant. The man is a mastermind. Who could have thought of that solution". And they are going to worship that man as the savior.

But after three and a half years, he is going to come to that temple that is going to be rebuilt, and Paul tells us about it in just a moment here, verse four:

Who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God (2Th 2:4),

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That is this man of sin, the son of perdition. He opposes himself. He exalts himself above all that is called God.

or that is worshiped (2Th 2:4);

Now you remember in Isaiah fourteen, as he speaks of the fall of Satan, "O Lucifer, son of the morning, how art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer son of the morning, for though didst seek [really] to exalt your position. You said, I will exalt myself above the angels of heaven. I will sit in the congregation in the sides of the north. I will be like the most high. And yet God said you will be brought down to hell".

But here is the anti-christ doing the same thing, exalting himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he as God will sit in the temple of God showing himself that he is God. In other words, after three and a half years, after the temple has been rebuilt, he will return to Jerusalem, he will sit in the Holy of Holies of the rebuilt temple and declare, "I am God," and will demand to be worshiped as God.

This is called in the book of Daniel, "the abomination of desolation", Or the final abomination which will bring the desolation of the earth as God, at this point, will pour out his judgment and wrath. The cup of his indignation at this point will overflow. This is the final straw. This will start the judgment of God coming upon the earth in this three and a half-year period known in the Bible as the Great Tribulation.

So Paul said don't think that this is the tribulation, that the tribulation is now present. Don't be troubled in your spirit. Yes, it is tough. Yes, you are really going through a lot of persecution and all. But, the Great Tribulation cannot come, the day of God's judgment cannot come until first of all there be this spiritual apostasy and the man of sin, the son of perdition is revealed. And then he tells us a little bit about what this son of perdition is going to do. And so the Great Tribulation cannot happen until these things take place.

Paul said,

Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? [Now I have already instructed you in these things.] And now you know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time (2Th 2:5-6).

In other words, there is a force that is holding him back, holding back the power of darkness from taking over the world completely.

For the mystery of iniquity is already at work: only he who is now hindering will hinder, until he be taken out of the way (2Th 2:7).

So the powers and the forces of darkness are working in the world, but there is a hindering force that is keeping them from taking over complete control. The question; what is the hindering force? People say the Holy Spirit. That is probably correct. So where is the Holy Spirit dwelling? In the church. Now if you say the Holy Spirit is to be

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withdrawn from the world and the church remain, then God help us all. We are in horrible trouble. I can hardly make it with the power of the Holy Spirit and the help of the Holy Spirit. If He were withdrawn, I would be totally destitute, bereft.

I believe that the restraining power that is keeping back evil from taking over the world today is the Light that is still here, the church of Jesus Christ. That is the thing that is keeping darkness from just totally engulfing the world. "Ye are the light of the world". But when Jesus takes His church out of this earth, then there will be no longer any restraining power or force and the anti-christ will at that point take over. "But he cannot as long as he which is hindering continues to hinder until it is taken out of the way". So I really believe that the Lord is taking the church out of the way, is the next major event that must take place before the final sequences of events can happen.

So Paul said, don't be fretting in your spirit, or thinking, hey this is the day of God's judgment, the day of the Lord has come. It is now present. He said no, there are things that have to happen before that can happen, namely the great apostasy and the unveiling of this man of sin, which cannot take place until that which hinders is taken out of the way, is removed. That which hinders shall hinder until it is removed, taken out of the way.

And then shall that Wicked one be [unveiled] revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming (2Th 2:8):

So this man of sin who will have his day, and have his time will be destroyed when Jesus returns with His church to establish God's kingdom upon the earth. And when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory. "Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints to execute His judgment upon the earth."

And the first thing the Lord does as He returns to the earth is gather together the survivors for judgment to determine which ones of those that survived will be allowed to go into the kingdom age. And then He will separate them as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, chapter twenty-five. And to those on his right side he will say, "Come, ye blessed of the Lord, enter the kingdom that was prepared for you from the foundations of the earth: for I was hungry, and you fed me: thirsty, and you gave me to drink: naked, and you clothed me: sick, and in prison and you visited me". (Matthew 25:32-36) But to those on his left he will say, "Depart from me you cursed into the everlasting fire that was prepared for Satan and his angels. For I was hungry and you did not feed me: thirsty, and you did not give me to drink: naked, and you did not cloth me. Lord when did we see you like this? In as much as you have done it unto the least of these my brethren you've done it unto me".

If you give a cup of water to a prophet in the name of the Lord, you receive a prophet's reward. And so the anti-christ, when Jesus comes with His church will be destroyed

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with the brightness of his coming: even him, whose coming [the anti-christ who will be coming] after the working of Satan with power and signs and lying wonders (2Th 2:9),

There is a dangerous curiosity in man to be attracted and drawn after signs and wonders, but the fact that something is done that is scientifically or physically unexplainable, it does not necessarily follow that God's power is behind the miracle. When the anti-christ comes, he will be working miracles. He will come with signs and powers and wonders. People will wonder at the things that are being accomplished, wondering how can he do that, supernatural manifestations. And so be careful of following after miraculous phenomena just for miraculous phenomena sake. You really could be deceived if you develop a credibility in anything unexplainable, well it must be of God, because look at the miracle. I can't explain it.

Paul warns Timothy that Satan is able to transform himself into an angel of light in order to deceive, and such will be the case with the anti-christ for the first three and a half years. He will come

With all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish (2Th 2:10);

In other words, who is to be deceived? Those who are going to perish.

Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them a strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they might all be damned who believe not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness (2Th 2:10-12).

Now Paul tells us in Romans one that it was when man did not want to retain God in his mind, God gave him over to a mind that was empty of God. Because they didn't want the truth of God, then God allowed them to believe a lie. Here the same thing is declared. They don't want to believe the truth, so what does God do. He says, oh, you don't want to believe the truth, then go ahead and believe a lie, and He allows them to be deceived into believing a lie.

Now as a child of God, God won't let you believe a lie. God's spirit will warn you. I'm thrilled when some of these new babes in Christ come to me and they say, "Chuck I was watching someone on TV today and it just didn't seem right to me." All right. He won't let them believe the deception and the lies that these guys are coming off with. And I think oh, great, but you know there are some people that seem to fall for every gimmick that comes down the road. They have a penchant towards false doctrine. They have a desire almost to just gobble up anything that comes along, any new weird tangent or doctrine that comes by. Oh, there they go traipsing after it. They just seem to have a total lack of discernment. That is hurtful. As a pastor that is probably one of the most hurtful things to see your little sheep following after a lie, after a deceiver, after a fraud. But one of the most rewarding things for a pastor is for someone to come up and say, "I was just watching this fellow and it just -- something is wrong there Chuck. I can't tell you what. Something is wrong." Yes.

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Paul said,

We are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brothers beloved of the Lord, because God from the beginning has chosen you to salvation (2Th 2:13)

Hey, this is interesting. From the beginning God has chosen you, He said, for salvation. Here again this interesting doctrine that Paul taught in his book to the Ephesians is taught here again where he said, "You were chosen in Him from the foundations of the world." Isn't it exciting that of all the people God chose you to be His child? That is so thrilling to me.

For God chose you from the beginning,

Unto this sanctification of the Spirit and the belief of the truth (2Th 2:14):

The word "sanctification" is to be set apart. God has chosen you to be set apart from the world. To be set apart is an instrument through which the spirit of God might work. From the beginning God chose you; that thrills me. And because He chose you, then He called you by our gospel by our declaring to you the good news actually, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. So whom He did foreknow, He did also predestinate, and those that He predestinated, He also called. And those He called, He also justified, and those He justified, He also glorified.

Therefore, brethren, stand fast (2Th 2:15),

You're going to go through persecution. You're having tribulation but stand fast,

And hold the traditions which you have a point of, whether by our words or our epistles (2Th 2:15).

Those things that I have talked to, those truths that I have taught you, hold on to them.

Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which has loved us, and given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work (2Th 2:16-17).

So Paul's little benedictory-type of prayer for them at this point that God would comfort them and establish them in the word and in the work.

John MacArthur :: Bible Introductions - 2 Thessalonians

Title In the Greek NT, 2 Thessalonians is listed as "To the Thessalonians." This

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represents the Apostle Paul's second canonical correspondence to the fellowship of believers in the city of Thessalonica (cf. [1:1](#)).

Author and Date

Paul, as in 1 Thessalonians, identified himself twice as the author of this letter ([1:1](#); [3:17](#)). Silvanus (Silas) and Timothy, Paul's co-laborers in founding the church, were present with him when he wrote. Evidence, both within this letter and with regard to vocabulary, style, and doctrinal content, strongly supports Paul as the only possible author. The time of this writing was surely a few months after the first epistle, while Paul was still in Corinth with Silas and Timothy ([1:1](#); [Acts 18:5](#)) in late A.D. 51 or early A.D. 52 (see [Introduction to 1 Thessalonians: Author and Date](#)).

Background and Setting

Some have suggested that Paul penned this letter from Ephesus ([Acts 18:18–21](#)), but his 18 month stay in Corinth provided ample time both for the Thessalonian epistles to be authored ([Acts 18:11](#)).

Apparently, Paul had stayed apprised of the happenings in Thessalonica through correspondence and/or couriers. Perhaps the bearer of the first letter brought Paul back an update on the condition of the church, which had matured and expanded ([1:3](#)); but pressure and persecution had also increased. The seeds of false doctrine concerning the Lord had been sown, and the people were behaving disorderly. So Paul wrote to his beloved flock who were: 1) discouraged by persecution and needed incentive to persevere; 2) deceived by false teachers who confused them about the Lord's return; and 3) disobedient to divine commands, particularly by refusing to work. Paul wrote to address those 3 issues by offering: 1) comfort for the persecuted believers ([1:3–12](#)); 2) correction for the falsely taught and frightened believers ([2:1–15](#)); and 3) confrontation for the disobedient and undisciplined believers ([3:6–15](#)).

Historical and Theological Themes

Although [chaps. 1, 2](#) contain much prophetic material because the main issue was a serious misunderstanding generated by false teachers about the coming Day of the Lord (Paul reveals that the Day had not come and would not until certain other events occur), it is still best to call this "a pastoral letter." The emphasis is on how to maintain a healthy church with an effective testimony in proper response to sound eschatology and obedience to the truth.

Eschatology dominates the theological issues. One of the clearest statements on personal eschatology for unbelievers is found in [1:9](#). Church discipline is the major focus of [3:6–15](#), which needs to be considered along with [Matt. 18:15–20](#); [1 Cor. 5:1–13](#); [Gal. 6:1–5](#), and [1 Tim. 5:19, 20](#) for understanding the complete Biblical teaching on this theme.