



PAUL'S LETTERS TO THE
THESSALONIANS

Lesson 10 • 2 Thessalonians 2:13-3:5

November 7, 2021



LESSON PLAN



Lesson	Date	Passage
1	9/5/2021	Introduction
2	9/12/2021	1 Thessalonians 1:1-10
3	9/19/2021	1 Thessalonians 2:1-16
4	9/26/2021	1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:13
5	10/3/2021	1 Thessalonians 4:1-12
6	10/10/2021	1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11
7	10/17/2021	1 Thessalonians 5:12-28
8	10/24/2021	2 Thessalonians 1:1-12
9	10/31/2021	2 Thessalonians 2:1-12
10	11/7/2021	2 Thessalonians 2:13-3:5
11	11/14/2021	2 Thessalonians 3:6-18
12	11/21/2021	Review
13	11/28/2021	Reading and Reflection

Passage Outline

- A Second Stanza of Thanksgiving (2:13-17)
- A Second Call to Prayer (3:1-5)



5 minutes – 11:10 to 11:15

- In the first twelve verses of Chapter 2, Paul addressed the coming day of the Lord. He reminded them of what they had been taught and provided details to assure them that Christ had not yet come. Paul moves on the next part of his letter returning to the familiar topics of thanksgiving and prayer. This section is short in terms of length. But there is much packed into what Paul has to say next.
- Read 2 Thes. 2:13-3:5
- Review Outline

A Second Stanza of Thanksgiving (v. 2:13-17)

- For God's choosing (v. 13)
- For God's calling (v. 14)
- Leading to a firm faith (v. 15)
- And a blessing of encouragement (v. 16-17)



10 minutes – 11:15 to 11:35

- The second stanza of thanksgiving in this letter begins almost exactly like the first in conveying the deep gratitude that Paul and his companions felt for the Thessalonians. After spending much his letter encouraging them to hold firm to what they had been taught, they offers up thanks to God. If you remember back, the motive for the first thanksgiving (found in 1:3) was their growing faith and love, that was abundantly evidenced in the Thessalonian believers. But here in this second thanksgiving Paul remembers the divine work of election that resulted in their salvation and strength of faith.
- If we look back at the previous verses on the condemnation brought upon those who reject the gospel and do not believe, it is almost as if Paul is now compelled to turn his gaze to those who love the Gospel and believe. For those who embrace the lawless one, there is a powerful delusion and belief in lies. In contrast, he looks to the Thessalonian believers who have embraces Christ as those chosen by God and believe the truth.
- **In the first part of verse 13, how does Paul word the beginning of his thanksgiving for the Thessalonians?**
 - We ought; we must or should. Similar to the first thanksgiving, there is a

sense of obligation and necessity to be thankful as we consider what God has done and is doing.

- Always; often and continued. This is not a one-time expression of gratitude. It is an on-going and constant heart filled with gratitude toward God.
- For you; the Thessalonians are the object of and the reason for their gratitude. Paul finds gratitude in the faith and faithfulness of others.
- Beloved by the Lord; they are loved by God. Paul's gratitude for them is deeply rooted in God's love for them.
- Paul gives the reason for this Thanksgiving in the last part of verse 13. Note the word, "because" here. **Why is Paul thankful?**
 - God chose them; the wording here means to take or save for oneself. There is **no** context here to say that they are selected because they were better or greater. Just that they were chosen or elected out of his great love.
 - They are first fruits; **where else have we heard this phrase in the Bible?** Paul is alluding to the first part of the harvest that were dedicated exclusively as sacred to God (Exod. 23:19; Num. 15:17–21; Deut. 12:6, 17).
 - They are "to be saved"; unto salvation. The Thessalonians are not just chosen by God for himself, but they are elected unto salvation.
 - They are sanctified by the Spirit; through salvation believers are made holy in the righteousness of Christ. While there is process of maturing and growing in Christ, Paul understands there is a sanctifying work that is the action of the Spirit of God in bringing about salvation.
 - They belief in the truth; believers enter into salvation through a belief in the truth. That is, through faith in Christ. In this we see both the divine decision and activity in bringing about our salvation as well a Spirit-enabled faith that brings about belief in the truth.
- Having chosen the Thessalonians for salvation, we see in verse 14 that God then calls them by means of the gospel. Notice the "To this" at the beginning of this verse. **What is the "To this" pointing us to?**
 - To being sanctified and believing the truth, from the previous verse. God chose them to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. And the God who chose them to be saved is the same God who makes sure that the message of salvation reached them by the proclamation of the gospel. God sent Paul to preach and bring the gospel to the city of Thessalonica. And through that proclamation the Thessalonians heard and believed it as truth.
- In the last half of verse 14 Paul explains why they were called. Note the "so that" marking the reason for their calling. **What is the purpose of God's calling?**
 - The purpose of this calling is that the Thessalonians might obtain or share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. The term there translated "obtain"

here is the same as share, which describes the process of receiving in or possessing the glory of salvation.

- For the Thessalonians, the promise of receiving glory and honor would have been a great comfort and encouragement in light of the dishonor they suffered for their faith in Christ. Just as they shared in His sufferings, they are called to share in the glory that is Christ's.
- Looking back to the previous passage, I believe there is an implicit contrast here, that those who share in the deceit of the lawless one, will also share in his dishonor and judgement.
- Paul begins verse 15, with a transition phrase – “so then”. Or, “for this reason”. In other words, as a consequence of everything previously stated concerning their election and calling, Paul exhorts them. **What is it he exhorts them to?**
 - Stand firm; to be stable and faithful. To not lose one's footing. For the Thessalonians, this would mean to stand firm in the face of opposition and suffering. To not give in to fear and doubt in the midst of uncertainty,
 - Hold fast to traditions they were taught; the sense of the word “traditions” used here is that of passing down or conveying of teachings from one generation to another. Paul uses this allusion to the handing down of sacred teachings. How did Paul pass on these teachings? By word of mouth and by their first letter. Clearly, Paul believed that remembering the truth they had been taught was important to a firm faith and the distress of false teaching that had spread among them.
- In the last two verses of Chapter 2 Paul offers up a blessing of encouragement on behalf of the Thessalonians. Note the word “Now” here. That word connects us to the previous verses. In light of God's choosing and calling leading them to a firm faith, Paul gives a Godward blessing. **Who does Paul address the blessing to?** Jesus Christ and God the Father. The use of both persons here demonstrates their unity and oneness of purpose.
- **What do we have in them?**
 - Love; God demonstrated His love for us through the sending of His Son. A balm to suffering souls.
 - Eternal comfort; inexhaustible encouragement. Heart and stamina to persevere in the face of opposition.
 - Hope through grace; belief and strength to face the future and death.
- **What does Paul ask for?**
 - Comfort for their hearts; to console or bring peace to their hearts. It conveys a sense of bringing a strength of attitude and expresses the desire that God may uplift and sustain them.
 - To be established in every good work and word; in their deeds/actions and every communication. Paul wants them to reflect the perfect will of God. Their life and conduct flows out of the past and present work of God in salvation.

- Paul's blessing is aimed at God to strengthen them both in their inner being and in their outer conduct. It is to be comprehensive; including both word and deed. Their walk was to match their talk. We are not saved by doing good things, but we are saved so that we may do good things for the glory of God.

A Second Call to Prayer (v. 3:1-5)

- A petition shared (v. 1-2)
- A divine confidence (v. 3-4)
- A petition made (v. 5)



10 minutes – 11:35 to 11:55

- Paul begins a new section of his letter in Chapter 3. Having offered up a benediction or prayer of blessing on behalf of the Thessalonians, he now turns the focus upon himself and his companions in ministry. This is the second time Paul turns to prayer as a topic in this second letter. Note the first two words of this Chapter – “Finally, brothers”. As we have noted before, for those listening to this letter being read, these words indicated the beginning of a new thought or topic. But it also serves to emphasize the importance of what is to follow. The Thessalonians would have perked up and listened even more closely to hear what came next.
- In verse 1, Paul introduces a simple, but heartfelt request. He asks the Thessalonians to pray for them. Paul not only prayed continually for them, but he recognized the importance of their prayers for himself and those on their missionary journey. Paul’s request here underlies an important dynamic of prayer in the church. Prayer is to be a mutual concern. As we pray over the requests of others, we also ask others to prayer for ours. The point here is that there is a deep appreciation for the power of prayer, both for others and for ourselves. The example of Paul here is that of church leaders praying for us and the church

praying for its leaders. Prayer is very much an act of faith where we are bound together in a mutual act of love and care for one another.

- **What is it in verse 1 that Paul is asking for them to pray for?**
 - That the word of God may spread rapidly; the imagery here is that of a messenger being sped along their way. Paul's desire is for the message of God's word, the Gospel, to quickly move along and advance in making progress. For this to happen, it must not be impeded or blocked with obstacles that would slow it down. Much like a messenger running along a firm and clear path, Paul is asking for God to clear the way so that the Gospel may be proclaimed.
 - That the word of God may spread be honored; that it would be glorified. Paul takes the imagery one step further. Not only must the Gospel be spread, it must receive the honor it is due. Paul is also concerned about how the message is received. He does not want it to be rejected or ignored. He does not want it to be dismissed. Paul wants the hearers of the message to understand its weight and importance. He wants them to understand that God is behind the message and to give it the honor and regard it deserves. We know from Paul's other letters that the wisdom of the Gospel is often viewed as foolishness. Paul is asking for prayer that God would direct the message of His word to those who will listen and heed it, just as the Thessalonians did when Paul brought the Gospel to their city.
- **What does it say about Paul that he did not first request prayer for himself?**
 - His prayer is Godward and others oriented. That his priority is the work of the word in the hearts of others.
- In verse 2, Paul makes a short personal request. **What does he ask for?**
 - Deliverance from wicked men; those who would impede the progress of the Gospel. We know from the book of Acts that Paul and those with him faced opposition and obstacles as messengers of the Gospel. So we can understand why this would have been an important and pressing request for Paul to make.
 - The request here acknowledges God's power to overcome opposition and deliver his people from danger and evil. In fact, our only hope to overcome is found in the power of Christ and the Spirit to remove obstacles that stand in the way of speeding the Gospel along and obstacles that prevent the message from being honored within the hearts of people. Opposition to the Gospel is found both in those who would prevent it from being proclaimed and those reject the truth of its message.
- Paul ends his request with an explanation. For, not all men have faith. The root of opposition is the rejection of the message of the gospel. Not everyone has faith to believe it. Faith is the believing and obeying response to the hearing of the gospel. Those who do not have faith reject the truth and believe the lie. They do not

honor or believe God's word. These wicked and evil men have not loved the word or embraced its message. They have rejected it and oppose it. For that reason, they have become evil adversaries who seek to stop the spread of the Gospel in this world.

- In verse 3 and 4, Paul expresses a divine confidence that extends to the Thessalonians. The word "but" here indicates that Paul is going to make a counterpoint. Despite the opposition of wicked men, there is something at work that will give the Thessalonians hopes. They knew what it was like to face wicked men. They were being persecuted and were suffering at that the hands of those who opposed the Gospel.
- **What three things does Paul remind them of in verse 3?**
 - The Lord is faithful; He can be relied upon, and he will not fail. He is loyal to His people. He will never leave us nor will He waver.
 - The Lord will establish you; He will strengthen and support His people. He is not weak nor unable to sustain us.
 - The Lord will guard you; He will protect and watch over His people. He will never be taken by surprise. We are not without defense.
 - This promise is not meant to convey that the church will not suffer. But rather it affirms that in the midst of our sufferings, we have an ever-faithful God who will strengthen us so that they we not fall. And He will ultimately shield and protect us from those who oppose or persecute us.
 - What should you remember when you are faced with troubles and hardship? These three things. I wonder if the biggest reason we falter and become discouraged is because we fail to remember the truth.
- Having expressed confidence in the way God will keep the Thessalonians in the midst of their troubles, we see in verse 4 that Paul also trusts the Lord that the Thessalonians both are and will be obedient to the instructions given to them.
- **What is the basis for Paul's confidence?**
 - God himself. Paul's assurance rests in the work of the Lord in the hearts. The verb translated we have confidence means "to be persuaded," but in the perfect tense here it communicates the idea of ongoing conviction and certainty that something is true. The root of this certainty about their conduct is not in the Thessalonians, nor in the effectiveness of Paul and those who taught them. It rests outside of any human element and is found in the power of the Lord.
 - It is interesting to remember that Paul is confident in spite of all kinds of reasons he could not be. They were under threat of persecution. They had believed false teachers and were distressed about the Lord's return. They had unexpectedly lost the ones who had shared the Gospel with them and were teaching them. However, in spite of these grave problems, Paul recognizes the divine power at work in their lives and is assure that they will continue to live according to what he had taught them.

- In verse 5, Paul returns back to the topic of prayer. After expressing his confidence in the Lord to sustain them, Paul makes a petition for God to help them. **What does Paul ask for?**
 - That the Lord would direct their hearts; an appeal to the work of God to lead and orient their hearts. This is an appeal to God to divinely guide them to follow all that Paul had taught them.
 - To the love **of** God; not to love God. Paul is asking that they be directed to see the love of God. We are to see God's love as an example. Paul is asking for them to love as God loved them. **What is implied here for the Thessalonians? For us?**
 - To the steadfastness of Christ; Similarly, Paul is asking that they be directed to see the steadfastness of Christ. We are to see Christ's perseverance as an example. Paul is asking for them to exhibit the steadfastness of Christ. **What is implied here for the Thessalonians? For us?**
 - The point of Paul's prayer is for believers to imitate the virtues of God the Father, who love us with a great love. And to imitate Jesus Christ, who was steadfast in the face of opposition and sufferings for the sake of others.



5 minutes – 11:55 to 12:00