



PAUL'S LETTERS TO THE  
THESSALONIANS

Lesson 8 • 2 Thessalonians 1:1-12  
October 24, 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

## Structure of the Letters

### 1 Thessalonians

- Opening
  - Greeting (1:1)
  - Thanksgiving (1:2-3)
  - Encouragement (1:4-10)
- Body
  - Fellowship in the Gospel (2:1-3:13)
  - Important Instructions (4:1-5:22)
- Closing (5:23-28)

### 2 Thessalonians

- Opening
  - Greeting (1:1-2)
  - Thanksgiving (1:3-4)
  - Encouragement (1:5-12)
- Body
  - Hold Fast to Truth (2:1-17)
  - Important Instructions (3:1-15)
- Closing (3:16-18)

5 minutes – 11:10 to 11:15

- Note the parallel structure.
- Not only is there a parallel structure to Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians, but they also share similar phrases and repeated themes. In many ways, this shorter second letter is an echo of the first. We know this is Paul's second letter because in Chapter 2 verse 15, Paul refers to a previous letter.
- However, it is hard to know how much time passes between the writing of the two letters, but the evidence within the letter would seem to indicate a fairly short time. Paul is still away from them in the midst of his second gospel mission.
- There are two likely possibilities to the timing and purpose of this second letter.
  - One, Paul wrote his first letter quickly after hearing Timothy's report. A short period of time after sending it, he wants to follow up and provide additional encouragement and clarification around the questions addressed in the first letter.
  - Two, after Paul writes his first letter, the Thessalonian leaders quickly respond with a letter back to Paul with additional questions. Paul's second letter is then a response to these follow up questions and he writes to further address them.

- I tend to favor the first, since Paul references “our letter” and not “your letter”. But either way it is just speculation since nothing is mentioned in the letters or in Acts that provides us additional detail as to the timing ~~and purpose~~ of this letter.

## Passage Outline

- Personal Greeting (1:1-2)
- Godward Thanksgiving (1:3-4)
- Encouragement in Suffering (1:5-12)



5 minutes – 11:15 to 11:20

- Read 2 Thes. 1:1-12
- Review Outline
  - Paul again opens the letter with a typical personal greeting.
  - He again offers thanks to God in gratitude for their faith and love. If you compare the first three verses of both letters, you will find that they are nearly identical.
  - The remaining verses of the letter's opening focus on bringing encouragement to the Thessalonians as they endure suffering.

## Personal Greeting (v. 1:1-2)

- Its Authors (v. 1a)
- Its Recipients (v. 1b)
- Its Spiritual Blessing (v. 2)



10 minutes – 11:15 to 11:25

- Have you ever sent an email or wrote a letter, sent it, and then wished you had worded it differently or wanted to add to what you had written? That is the sense of Paul's second letter. Paul is following up on what he had recently written to the Thessalonians. So as the letter opens, we see a great deal of repetition.
- Put your finger here in 2 Thessalonians and turn back to verse 1 of 1 Thessalonians. Flip back and forth and compare the two openings of these letters. Note how similar they are.
- As we noted last week, the opening of this letter follows the standard format by opening with a greeting in verse 1. Let's take a look at this verse. There are three parts to Paul's greeting.
- The authors are the same three principals of the first letter
  - Paul – the apostle who is the primary author and voice of the letter
  - Silas (Silvanus) – a faithful companion to Paul
  - Timothy – Paul's student who was sent to Thessalonica to provide a report on the church there
- The recipients are again the believers in Thessalonica
  - The church in Thessalonica (the people)

- The church in God the Father and Jesus the Lord (their identity)
- The last part of this greeting is the same blessing with a little added
  - Grace – A wish or hope for God’s goodness; echoes not just the blessing of the gift of salvation, but God’s enabling power to live for Him
  - Peace (Shalom) – A wish or hope for tranquility; points to the inner calm and spiritual peace that comes from salvation and living for Christ
  - **What has been added?** An acknowledgement of the blessing’s source. It is from God the Father and the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ
- The words grace and peace here summarize all of the blessings and benefits we as believers enjoy. Applied to the Thessalonians, we see a special significance relative to the persecution and suffering they are facing. And it is by God our Father and Christ our Lord that we are given grace and hope to endure. Paul’s encouragement that is to follow brings an eternal hope that allows the Thessalonian believers to stand in the face of death and hardship. As in 1 Thessalonians, the blessing of peace will appear again at the end of the letter where Paul will express his desire that “the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way”. To us, this is a great reminder that as we face adversity and trouble, whether in life or in death, we can rest in the certainty of receiving perfect grace and peace from God the Father and Jesus our Lord and Savior.

## Thanksgiving and Boasting (v. 1:3-4)

- Upward thanksgiving (v. 3)
- Horizontal encouragement (v. 4)



10 minutes – 11:35 to 11:45

- Note **the** verse 3 here is very similar to verses 2 and 3 of 1 Thessalonians. As in the first letter, these words convey the deep thanksgiving Paul and his ministry companions have for them **expressed** to God.
- Verse 3 reminds them of an upward thanksgiving offered because of their growing faith. There is a word added here that is not in 1 Thessalonians. Paul uses the word “ought”. **How does that word change the sense of Paul’s thanksgiving?**
  - There is a sense of obligation or responsibility to give God thanksgiving.
  - It is right or fitting for believers to be thankful to God for the faith of others.
- **What is it that is the reason for Paul’s thanksgiving?**
  - Their faith is growing; becoming stronger and more mature
  - Their faith is growing abundantly; idea of rapidly increasing
  - Their love is toward others is increasing;
  - Paul celebrates their virtues of faith and love with God in prayer; is this something we consciously try to do in our conversations with God. Do we celebrate the growing faith of our spouse, children, and friends? Do we love to hear testimonies of faith and endurance? **Are drawn** to baptisms in a way that will sacrifice lesser things to join the celebration of new life in



Christ?

- Not only did **the** express their thanksgiving upward, but they conveyed **in** horizontally as encouragement to others as we see in verse 4. Note the word “therefore”, at the beginning of the verse. The story of their growing faith and love was also told to other churches.
- Paul says that they “boasted” of them to the other churches they visited on their journey. **Isn’t boasting sinful? What is the boasting Paul is talking about here?** The idea is to speak well of or to take pride in.
- **What was it that Paul boasted about?**
  - Their steadfastness; holding firm
  - Their faith; trust in God
- **What is the context of steadfast faithfulness?**
  - Persecutions; hostility at the hands of others
  - Afflictions; internal distress that results
- **How would this encourage other churches?**
  - Strengthen their faith and confidence in God
  - Inspire and urge them on to do the same
  - Keep them from discouragement in the face of similar adversity and suffering

## Encouragement in Suffering (v. 1:5-12)

- Just judgement (v. 5-7a)
- Perpetual punishment (v. 7b-9)
- Believer's blessings (v 10)
- Purposed prayer (v. 11-12)



10 minutes – 11:45 to 12:00

- Having mentioned the persecution and suffering of the Thessalonians at the end of the letter's opening, Paul directly addresses **the** topic to bring them encouragement and hope. This passage is significant as it provides us with a biblical view of suffering. In God's divine plan, the suffering of his people has great worth and is not as a sign of his rejection or neglect. Let's take a look at how Paul frames suffering within the sovereignty of God.
- Beginning in verse 5 Paul points out that the judgement of God is righteous and just. Paul's thought here is a bit wordy – so let's break it down into the connected points. It starts with a statement that what Paul is about to tell them is evidence of God's righteous judgement. In other words, Paul is saying "**Here** is the evidence that God's judgement is **just**?" The word "this" here is pointing us forward that to understand suffering we must look to the large context of judgement ahead in the passage. First, Paul reminds them of the purpose of suffering following the word "that". We know God is just because in our suffering we are being counted or considered worthy for the Kingdom of God. Even as we have been made worthy in salvation, suffering is a part of being **made** worthy here in this life.
- In verse 6, Paul continues by reminding them of God's eternal perspective. He

starts with the word “since”. Not only will we be considered worthy, but God also considers it just to bring judgement upon those who persecute His own. Paul reminds them of what will happen in the end.

- **What two aspects of God’s justness are laid out in verses 6 and the first part of verse 7?**
  - That those who have afflicted them will themselves be afflicted.
  - To grant relief to those who suffer.
- So suffering is not God’s judgement upon us. God’s is not capricious nor unaware. His judgement is just and right. Our suffering here on earth is temporary and is meant to affirm **we are being made worthy.**
- In the last part of verse 7 and through verse 9, Paul continues a description of perpetual punishment that begins with the word “when”. **When will God’s judgement be realized?** When Christ is revealed (returns) with His angels in picture of flaming fire. Paul is encouraging the Thessalonians to remember that God is not absent from them or their suffering. He is just hidden from view. But a day is coming when he will be revealed; the idea here is of a veil being removed.
- **What will happen on that day?**
  - He will bring vengeance or judgement upon those who do not know Him or will not obey Him.
  - They will suffer an eternal destruction.
  - They will spend eternity away from the presence and glory of Christ.
  - Here is the severity of God’s judgement on the lost
  - While our temporary suffering here on earth seems hard, it pales in comparison to the punishment of those who are without Christ.
- Paul then speaks to the other side of God’s judgement in verse 10 starting again with the word “when”. **What is the contrast here for believers at his return? Instead of terror what will there be?**
  - We will glorify Christ
  - We will marvel at His work
  - Christ will receive the glory and honor He is due from his holy saints
  - Here is the gloriousness of Christ returning for His own
  - **The** Thessalonians can be assured that they will be with those Saints on that day because they believed the testimony of Paul and his companions
- In verses 11 and 12, Paul concludes the opening encouragement he has just provided by concluding with a purposed prayer for them. As in 1 Thessalonians we see that Paul is constantly praying for them. Paul then frames the prayer within God’s purposes for them and God’s present power in their lives. **To what end or purposes does Paul pray for them?** Note the two “thats” in these verses.
  - His prayer are linked to their being made worthy by our God (note the parallel to being considered worthy in verse 5). A top and tail of this part of the letter.
  - That by his power he may fulfill every good intent and every work of faith.

The verb translated may fulfill here has the sense of completing or finishing something already initiated. Paul's prayer recognizes that God is the ultimate source of every good that we do and the complete fulfillment of what we ought to do as those who dependent upon God's power in our lives.

- That Christ might be glorified in them according to the grace of God and Jesus our Lord. Note how Paul places special emphasis on the way the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified. The name of a person in that era was much more than a way to identify someone. The name was also a symbol of all that a person was, their qualities and characteristics. In some cultures, the family name is treated this way. To honor and dishonor the family name is more important than the individual. In this sense, Paul is praying for believers **to honor the family name of Christ** to which we belong.



5 minutes – 12:00 to 12:00