



Faithful Lord

# ETERNITY IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD

2 Thessalonians 1

The Daily Word from Laura Martin

Paul validated the faith of the Thessalonian church and the persecution and afflictions they endured. He boasted and testified about their faith to others. Paul also continued to pray and encourage the church to press on and do the work of the Lord because eternity was at stake.

You may be facing persecution right now from family members who don't understand why you are walking by faith and following Christ. You may face insults from friends who want you to join the crowd or do perverse or impure actions. Yet you choose to remain pure in your body and in your thoughts. You need to hear . . . *well done!* Even in the midst of this culture, *stay strong, friend*. Remember you are worthy of your calling. The Lord will strengthen you with power so you can press on in faith, sharing the good news with those around you. Christ is glorified in and through you. *Do not give up*. God's judgment is coming; therefore, press on, go, and share His love with others in the strength of Jesus Christ!

*"We must always thank God for you, brothers. This is right, since your faith is flourishing and the love each one of you has for one another is increasing. Therefore, we ourselves boast about you among God's churches—about your endurance and faith in all the persecutions and afflictions you endure."*

— 2 Thessalonians 1:3–4

## FURTHER SCRIPTURE

- *Matthew 5:11–12* — "You are blessed when they insult and persecute you and falsely say every kind of evil against you because of Me. Be glad and rejoice, because your reward is great in heaven. For that is how they persecuted the prophets who were before you."
- *Acts 1:8* — "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."
- *2 Thessalonians 1:11–12* — "And in view of this, we always pray for you that our God will consider you worthy of His calling, and will, by His power, fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith, so that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified by you, and you by Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ."



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Teaching Notes

## INTRO

So far we've done 556 lessons out of 730, and it's never too late to jump in and get started with this study. The Word of God is alive and active today and it brings instruction as well as encouragement into our lives. Second Thessalonians looks back at some of the issues in 1 Thessalonians but with a different perspective. Paul claimed authorship of the book twice (2 Thessalonians 1:1; 3:17). Timothy and Silas (or Silvanus) were with Paul when he wrote the letter. Second Thessalonians was written around late AD 51 or early AD 52, a few months after 1 Thessalonians was written; both were written from the city of Corinth.<sup>1</sup> Our phrase for 1 Thessalonians was *Coming Lord*, and for 2 Thessalonians, it is *Faithful Lord* (2 Thessalonians 3:3). The Lord is faithful to what He said, and He will return.

Paul was on his second missionary journey and spent three Sabbaths in Thessalonica. Paul's time there is recorded in Acts 17: his arrival (vv. 1-2); his teachings about Jesus (vv. 2-3); the response of new believers (v. 4); the response of the Jews (vv. 5-9); and him being sent out of the city to Berea by the Christian brothers (v. 10). From Berea, Paul went on to Athens alone while Timothy and Silas stayed behind. They later rejoined Paul in Athens (v. 15). From Athens Paul sent Timothy back to Thessalonica and Silas on to Philippi. In Acts 18:1, Paul left Athens to go to Corinth, and Timothy and Silas rejoined him there.

When Timothy arrived in Corinth, he made his report to Paul about what was happening in Thessalonica and Paul wrote his first letter in response to Timothy's report. Paul spent eighteen months in Corinth and wrote several letters from there. MacArthur suggests, "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's behavior was disorderly."<sup>2</sup> Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians was in response to "the seeds of false doctrine concerning the Lord [that] had been sown," and wrote to the believers 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."<sup>3</sup> Paul's desire was to offer comfort to those who had faced persecution, correction for those who had received false teachings, and confrontation for those who had been disobedient.<sup>4</sup> Paul not only addressed these issues, but he presented solutions as well.

## TEACHING

2 Thessalonians 1:1-4: Verses 1-2 hold Paul's greeting, and verse 3 expresses Paul's thanks for the Thessalonians whose faith was flourishing and their love for each other was increasing. In fact, Paul boasted about the Thessalonians to other churches, telling them of the Thessalonians endurance in their faith against the afflictions they were enduring (v. 4).

2 Thessalonians 1:5-8: Paul pointed out they would be counted worthy of God's grace and His kingdom for their suffering (v. 5), and God would repay those who had persecuted them (vv. 6-8). Some scholars quote verse 7 as support for the coming rapture of the saints before the tribulation begins. Those who have suffered from persecution and affliction will receive rest when Jesus is revealed with His angels. They will no longer fear "flaming fire on those who don't know God and on those who don't obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus" (v. 8). The tribulation will last for seven years, and these scholars say Thessalonians 1:7 shows Jesus will pull His believers out before the tribulation takes place.

Other scholars believe that 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 emphasizes that believers will be spared from the tribulation while 2 Thessalonians 1:7-8 speaks to the vengeance that will come against those who do not know God. Those that hold this interpretation believe the rapture will come at the end of the tribulation.

2 Thessalonians 1:9-12: Verses 9-10 clearly point out those who do not know Christ will face eternal destruction. Because of this eternal destruction, Paul prayed for the Thessalonians that God would find them worthy (vv. 11-12). Paul prayed they would continue the work of faith as a witness for Christ so that Christ's name would be glorified in them.

<sup>1</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2005), p. 1762.

<sup>2</sup> MacArthur, p. 1763.

<sup>3</sup> MacArthur, p. 1763.

<sup>4</sup> MacArthur, p. 1763.



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## CLOSING

Paul stressed the importance of believing in Christ. Those who do, will receive eternity in the presence of God; those who do not will receive eternal destruction.



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Reading Guide Questions

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1. In 2 Thessalonians 1, it appears the church in Thessalonica was growing by leaps and bounds. Paul says their faith grew and their love abounded in 2 Thessalonians 1:3. In this modern age, is this seen in the church anymore? Why or why not?
  2. Second Thessalonians 1:6 states not to seek revenge with someone who wronged us but to let the Lord do it. Where else in Scripture are we told the Lord fights for us? (Exodus 14:14; Deuteronomy 3:22; 20:4; Joshua 23:10; Romans 12:19)
  3. What is your definition of faith? The church in Thessalonica believed what Paul spoke of without seeing. Are they any different from you? Is their faith different from yours? Do you place all your faith in Jesus and the message of the cross? If not, what is stopping you?
  4. What did the Holy Spirit highlight to you in 2 Thessalonians 1 through the reading or the teaching?



