



2 Thessalonians

Teaching Preview

Introduction¹

Authorship

The apostle Paul again identifies himself as the author (1:1). As with 1 Thessalonians, his authorship of this letter was widely accepted by the early church fathers, and the letter itself has all the hallmarks of Paul's style, theology, and vocabulary. Without doubt the apostle Paul is the author of this letter.

Audience, Date, and Provenance

While some have entertained the idea that 2 Thessalonians might have been written before 1 Thessalonians, it is clear that it was written later (in 2 Thess 2:2, 15 and 3:17 he refers to the previous letter).

Like 1 Thessalonians, this letter was written from Corinth during Paul's eighteen months of ministry there (Acts 18:1–18, esp. vv 9–11). Most likely 2 Thessalonians was written shortly after 1 Thessalonians, possibly a few months later. Thus the writing of 2 Thessalonians was also in AD 50 or 51.

Purpose

While he again took the opportunity to commend the believers in Thessalonica, his main purpose was to correct a doctrinal error that was producing practical problems. Some in the church were convinced that the day of the Lord was already here (2 Thess 2:1–5). They had stopped working and earning a living. Instead they were living off the generosity of other believers in the church who continued to work. And they became pests who were constantly getting entangled in the business of others (3:6–15).

The overarching point of 2 Thessalonians is that in light of the fact that Jesus may return soon and the day of the Lord will begin, believers must keep their jobs and earn a living. Being prepared in light of the fact that His coming might be today does not mean that believers are free to live in a financially irresponsible manner.

¹ *Grace New Testament Commentary*

Outline

11/9/25	2 Thessalonians 1:1-4	Introduction/Connection With 1 Thessalonians
11/16/25	2 Thessalonians 1:5-12	Judgment of God for Good and Evil
11/23/25	2 Thessalonians 2:1-12	The Antichrist: God's Enemy
11/30/25	2 Thessalonians 2:13-17	Standing Firm In Opposition
12/7/25	2 Thessalonians 3:1-5	Prayer For Faithfulness
12/14/25	2 Thessalonians 3:6-18	Warning Against Spiritual Idleness

Doctrine

Thanksgiving

One of the themes that is mentioned on two occasions within this letter is the attribute of thankfulness for the growth of the church. Not only is it mentioned twice, but Paul makes the case that we "ought" to be thankful for the growth of the church. This seems to imply that thankfulness for the growth of the church is not a commonly recognized or acknowledged thing and it should be pursued. There is great value for Paul and for his relationship to the church because of this thankfulness.

Suffering

Key to the motivation for Paul's writing of this letter is the issue of the persecution and suffering that the church was facing. In the particular case of the Thessalonians church, they had been faithful and were walking well, but Paul seems to have knowledge of an increasing or persisting opposition that would surely bring challenge to the church.

Along with a general challenge to remain steadfast in the midst of suffering, Paul lays out the majority of the theological emphasis of the letter around doctrinal truths which were meant to solidify the faith and perseverance of the church in their suffering.

Eternal Justice

Another important and nuanced argument that Paul introduces for the church in their suffering is the issue of their perspective concerning justice for those who opposed them. Paul introduced a detailed consideration of the end times plan of God to bring ultimate justice for those who oppose the gospel - thereby promising a reckoning for those who stand against the church. The key issue revealed by Paul is the perspective that this knowledge is to bring - a perspective of faith and trust in the *timing* of God's justice over against our personal desire expediency in that justice.

Idleness

Of last importance in this letter is the issue of idleness. Due to the previously mentioned issues, Paul is building a case for strengthening and exhorting the church against against the inevitable temptation toward idleness in the midst of suffering. This might indeed be the greatest challenge that is aimed at the church in Thessalonica - to remain faithful to their eternal calling and resist the attempts of their Enemy to render them ineffective.