

## Paul's Second Letter to Thessalonica

### Things That Must Happen Before the Second Coming

2 Thessalonians 1:1-4 Paul and Silvanus and Timothy to the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: <sup>2</sup>Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>3</sup>We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is *only* fitting, because your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows ever greater; <sup>4</sup>therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure.

This second letter by Paul was probably also written from Corinth like the first. It was written not many months after the first. The reason for this letter was the arrival of news that the first letter had been misunderstood, especially with reference to the Second Coming of Christ. The Thessalonians were teaching that "the day of Christ was at hand" and, therefore, Christ's coming was just about to happen. This error needed to be corrected and Paul adds the prophetic instruction that an apostasy must rise in the church before the Second Coming comes.

This misunderstanding does not change Paul's attitude toward the Thessalonian Church. The church was still just as faithful as always, yet they had taken a thought and run ahead of the true meaning and desire of God and Paul. It is no different today! Young zealous converts to Jesus will take a little bit of knowledge and develop a non-biblical teaching trying to be nearer to God. Then there is the need for the mature Christian to make a correction in the false teaching. It is not always an easy task since stubbornness runs rampant in man!

2 Thessalonians 1:5 *This is* a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering.

In verse 4 Paul mentioned a subject that he will now address. We see this when Paul says, "we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure." The Thessalonians are facing some sort of trouble and Paul is writing to instruct them how to respond to the people who are persecuting and afflicting them.

In verse 5 Paul states that this persecution and affliction is from God in His righteous judgment. The purpose is to cause the Thessalonians to prove themselves worthy of the kingdom of God. In today's world, we blame any persecution or affliction on Satan, yet they are always from God for a purpose.

The Bible is clear that we are not to focus on the enemy. First, it is his desire to draw our attention away from the Lord in our word and speech. Second, the enemy can not do anything without the permission of the Lord.

Job 1:6-12 Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them.

<sup>7</sup>And the LORD said to Satan, "From where do you come?" Then Satan answered the LORD and said, "From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it." <sup>8</sup>And the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil." <sup>9</sup>Then Satan answered the LORD, "Does Job fear God for nothing?" <sup>10</sup>"Hast Thou not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land." <sup>11</sup>"But put forth Thy hand now and touch all that he has; he will surely curse Thee to Thy face." <sup>12</sup>Then the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your power, only do not put forth your hand on him." So Satan departed from the presence of the LORD.

Luke 22:31 "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat;

But more than this, our theology must be sound and solid. Notice this:

Proverbs 16:4 The LORD has made everything for its own purpose, Even the wicked for the day of evil.

I hope you see that the Lord has allowed or given permission for everything that happens in this world for His own purpose. James adds to this same theology when he says:

James 1:2-12 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, <sup>3</sup>knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. <sup>4</sup>And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. <sup>5</sup>But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. <sup>6</sup>But let him ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. <sup>7</sup>For let not that man expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, <sup>8</sup>*being* a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. <sup>9</sup>But let the brother of humble circumstances glory in his high position; <sup>10</sup>and *let* the rich man *glory* in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away. <sup>11</sup>For the sun rises with a scorching wind, and withers the grass; and its flower falls off, and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed; so too the rich man in the midst of his pursuits will fade away. <sup>12</sup>Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

We must keep our theology in tune with God's word including our word, speech, and written communication. When you think the enemy is attacking, you must realize that it is only done

with God's permission, for His purpose in us. We must ask the questions: "What is God trying to communicate with us?" "What is God's purpose?"

2 Thessalonians 1:6-10 For after all it is *only* just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, <sup>7</sup>and *to give* relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, <sup>8</sup>dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. <sup>9</sup>And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, <sup>10</sup>when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed-- for our testimony to you was believed.

Continuing from verse 5, Paul admonishes the Thessalonians with encouraging words. Notice the outline of how the Thessalonians are to deal with these afflictions and persecutions.

1. God will repay with affliction those who afflict you!
2. God will give you relief!
  - a. The relief will come when Jesus is revealed!
  - b. Jesus will come with angels in flaming fire!
  - c. Jesus will deal out the retribution to non-believers
  - d. Their penalty will be eternal destruction.
    - 1) They will be out of the presence out the Lord.
    - 2) They will be away from the glory of Jesus' power.
  - e. The saints will come with him on that day.
  - f. The believers will marvel at all this!

It is clear that we are to always show that we are living proof of a loving God to a watching world, and God will take care of those who persecute us and afflict us! It is not our business to retaliate.

2 Thessalonians 1:11-12 To this end also we pray for you always that our God may count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power; <sup>12</sup>in order that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Just as with the Thessalonians, Paul's words ring true for everyone alive today. Paul's desire for us is to be counted worthy of our calling. This is the purpose that God has set before us. It is a wonder that God begins to count us worthy in Christ before our life is over here on earth.

Romans 8:29-30 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren; <sup>30</sup>and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

This is more than just for a mere desire, but it is for God's good pleasure. God's purpose of goodness is a virtue required of each person. This is also coupled with the work of faith. This is a special reliance upon Christ who is the giver of our salvation. It also includes a

consistency upon our part to remain in the fidelity of our salvation. This includes our moral convictions, religious truth, and personal persuasion. Paul is praying that each child of God works in such a way that our actions will be marked by faith, springing from faith, and sustained by faith. But all this happens in God's power, in Christ and through the Holy Spirit.

1 Thes. 1:5 for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-5 Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together to Him, <sup>2</sup>that you may not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. <sup>3</sup>Let no one in any way deceive you, for *it will not come* unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, <sup>4</sup>who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.

Paul is setting before us a good example of what we should do when error arises among Christians. It is our place to set them right! Good Godly men will be careful to stop any and all errors when their own words have been misunderstood. Such is the case here with Paul. Paul's first letter must have caused some errors in theology and this letter was sent to correct those problems. The Thessalonians believe that the day of the Lord has already happened, but they were in error. Paul states that the day of the Lord will not happen until the apostasy of the church takes place first.

What is the apostasy of the church? The apostasy is a reference to the changes in the doctrines of the church that will lead the church away from the true faith accepted by our Lord. Here is what is going to happen to the church and in the world.

#### Changes in the Church During the Apostasy

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- ? The Church will make a departure from the *Essentials of the Faith* by "paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons" - 1 Tim 4:1-3
- ? The Church will seek out ministers who do not tell the truth of God's Word - 2 Tim 4:3-4
- ? The Church members will be ungodly while acting religious - 2 Tim 3:1-5
- ? The Apostate Church will continue into the Tribulation without missing a beat - 2 Thes 2:3-4
  - 1. She will become the world church merged into all other religions.
  - 2. She will be the great harlot led by the one world religious leader.
  - 3. This must happen before the Antichrist is revealed

## Changes in the World During the Apostasy

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The United States will lose its dominance as the world power. The dominant government of the world will be a federation of 10 European states. Those 10 states will consist of the countries that occupy the land of the fallen Roman Empire. The Roman Empire fell in two segments or legs as Daniel prophesied. Five countries will arise from each segment.



The names of these countries may change before the rapture of the church; however, here we are concerned with the land masses involved. Today they are called:

The Western Toes from the fall in 476 AD	The Eastern Toes from the fall in 1453 AD
1. Great Britain	6. Syria
2. France / Gaul	7. Turkey
3. Spain	8. Egypt
4. Italy	9. Greece
5. North Africa	10. Macedonia

If the European Union is the organization of states that will become the resurrected Roman Empire, then there will have to be quite a bit of changing over the next few years to accomplish that task.

A Member State of the European Union is any one of the twenty-seven nation states that have joined the European Union (EU) since its *de facto* inception in 1958 as the European Economic Community (EEC). From an original membership of six states, there have been six successive enlargements, the largest occurring on May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2004, when ten member states joined.

Following the addition of Romania and Bulgaria in 2007, the EU's membership now stands at twenty-seven. Negotiations are also under way with a number of other states. The process of enlargement is sometimes referred to as European integration. However, this term is also used to refer to the intensification of cooperation between EU member states as national governments allow for the gradual centralizing of power within European institutions. Before being allowed to join the European Union, a state must fulfill the economic and political conditions generally known as the Copenhagen criteria: these basically require that a candidate member state must enjoy a secular, democratic system of government, together with the corresponding freedoms and institutions, and respect the rule of law. Under the terms of the Treaty on European Union, enlargement of the Union is conditional upon the agreement of each existing member state as well as approval by the European Parliament. Bulgaria and Romania comprise the second part of the EU's fifth enlargement, and joined the EU on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2007. This date was agreed upon at the Thessaloniki Summit in 2003, confirmed at Brussels on June 18, 2004, and affirmed by the country reports of October 2004 and the final report delivered on September 26, 2006. Bulgaria and Romania signed their Treaty of Accession on April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2005 at a ceremony held at Neumünster Abbey in Luxembourg.

The European Union Today with its 27 States as Members	The Roman Empire before the Division and Fall
	

In order for the current EU to be the revived Roman Empire, it will need to lose Sweden, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Czech Republic, Denmark, Netherlands, Germany, and Ireland.

It will need to add the areas of Dalmatia, Moesia Superior, Asia, Bithynia, Cappadocia, Armenia, Assyria, Mesopotamia, Syria, Judea, Lycia, Cilicia, Galatia, Arabia, Egypt, Cyrenaica, Achaia Proconsularis, Mauretania Caesariensis, Mauretania Tingitana.

In addition, all these individual states will have to join together and merge into 10 independent states before the man of lawlessness is revealed as the head of the Empire. Notice that what we call Israel today was part of the Roman Empire called Judea. Israel will have to become part of the EU too. When this happens, the signs are in place for the end of this age.

2 Thessalonians 2:5-10 Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things? <sup>6</sup>And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he may be revealed. <sup>7</sup>For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains *will do so* until he is taken out of the way. <sup>8</sup>And then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; <sup>9</sup>*that is*, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, <sup>10</sup>and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.

Paul is recalling the memory of the words that he had spoken to them when he was in Thessalonica. A charge that was against Jesus was that he was a rival king to Caesar. Paul had reasoned with them in the market place and contrasted the kingdom of this world and Rome with the kingdom of God of which Jesus Christ is the King.

Acts 17:7 and Jason has welcomed them, and they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus."

It is unfortunate that we really do not know what Paul meant by the word “restrains” in verse 6. We can only speculate that he is speaking of the Holy Spirit because it is an impersonal power that is capable of stopping the actions of humans. He is also capable of stopping the lawless messiah of Satan. Through the Holy Spirit, God overrules all of human history and action.

The mystery of the man of lawlessness means a secret purpose of Satan that was already at work in the world in Paul’s day. This mystery of lawlessness will not be revealed to the world in full array until the restrainer is taken out of the way. Then the plan of the man of lawlessness will be revealed in plain view.

This man of lawlessness will be slain by the Word of the Lord with the breath of His lips. This is the picture of the triumph of Christ over the adversary. It is a powerful picture of how the mere breath of the Lord Jesus will destroy the major enemy on one single day (the Day of the Lord.) It will be a grand fiasco that the Lord will destroy when He returns. All the works of the man of sin will come to an end. The return of Jesus will herald this man’s doom.

The “wonder of a lie” is the work of Satan just as Jesus had foretold.

Matthew 24:24 "For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect.

The master of trickery that this man will have at his command will include all the energy and skill of Satan to mislead and deceive the people of the world. This deception of unrighteousness will bring the doom of many in the world. The doom will come because they did not hear the saving love of the true Lord and Savior.

2 Thessalonians 2:11-12 And for this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false, <sup>12</sup>in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.

Sometime in the future the man of lawlessness will be revealed and have an incredible influence on the people. The people will follow his false lies and will believe them. This is a definite act of God! God will give the wicked over to the wicked one. They will have chosen this wicked one and they will follow him blindly.

Romans 1:24-28 Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, that their bodies might be dishonored among them. <sup>25</sup>For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. <sup>26</sup>For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, <sup>27</sup>and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error. <sup>28</sup>And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper.



These are the ones that have changed the truth of God into a lie. They are condemned and will see the wrath of God come upon them. Their doom is set and sealed.

2 Thessalonians 2:13-15 But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. <sup>14</sup>And it was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>15</sup>So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word *of mouth* or by letter from us.

The salvation of the beloved of the Lord at Thessalonica was because they were chosen as part of the eternal choice and purpose of God. Notice what Paul says in his letters to Corinth, Ephesus, and to Timothy.

1 Cor. 2:7 but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden *wisdom*, which God predestined before the ages to our glory;

Ephes. 1:4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love

2 Tim. 1:9 who has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity,

The ultimate goal of all of God's human creation is for mankind to find salvation which is the final salvation. Salvation comes as a result of the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. Those who have this sanctifying salvation are set apart from the rest of the world who have not received this salvation. We are different from all others.

The preservations, of all the believers stems from God's everlasting love which has always been a part of God's eternal character. It is evident that faith and holiness must join together for the purpose of God's salvation. The outward call of the gospel is the means by which faith is attained. This faith renders truth to rely on Christ and develop our love for Him. The Holy Spirit seals the salvation on our heart and soul, and we are assured of our eternal home. This is all part of the doctrines that were taught by Jesus and the apostles. In this we are to hold fast and reject all other teachings and vain traditions.

2 Thessalonians 2:16-17 Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace, <sup>17</sup>comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word.

Our prayers are to be directed to God! But more than that, our prayers are to be directed to God the Father, explicitly through the Lord Jesus Christ. It is through the name of Jesus that we are to pray to God. It is the ever present love of God through and in Jesus Christ that brings the sweet comfort and strength to our hearts through everything we do. Only the saints of God have this hope through the grace of our Lord. Grace is free and so is mercy. All of our hope is established on the free grace and mercy of the Lord. Our hope never depends on our works but in the way God works. The joy of our faith is found in the persevering ways of God.



2 Thessalonians 3:1-5 Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord may spread rapidly and be glorified, just as *it did* also with you; <sup>2</sup>and that we may be delivered from perverse and evil men; for not all have faith. <sup>3</sup>But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil *one*. <sup>4</sup>And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, that you are doing and will *continue to do* what we command. <sup>5</sup>And may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the steadfastness of Christ.

Throughout Paul's letters to the Thessalonians, he has expressed his total confidence in their faith and belief. Now Paul asks them to pray for him. Paul is at the business of spreading the gospel and he is facing many struggles. These struggles are coming from men who are totally against God and against God's true messengers. These are not just men who tolerate the message, but they are openly and outwardly opposing the message and the men who are delivering it. But Paul also knows that the Lord will protect him just as the Lord is protecting the Thessalonians. Paul has already given the Thessalonians specific instructions and Paul is sure that they will do exactly as they have directed. These commands were not Paul's however, but they are the Lord's commands.

2 Thessalonians 3:6-15 Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep aloof from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us. <sup>7</sup>For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you, <sup>8</sup>nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we *kept* working night and day so that we might not be a burden to any of you; <sup>9</sup>not because we do not have the right *to this*, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, that you might follow our example. <sup>10</sup>For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone will not work, neither let him eat. <sup>11</sup>For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. <sup>12</sup>Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread. <sup>13</sup>But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary of doing good. <sup>14</sup>And if anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that man and do not associate with him, so that he may be put to shame. <sup>15</sup>And yet do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

When you have received the gospel in your life, you are to then live by the gospel. We are to work and not be idle. Christians should not be sluggish in their life, but they are to be industrious at every point. Christians must be diligent at caring for the sick and afflicted. This is one of the callings of God on each Christian life. We are not to put our fingers into the lives of other people to stir their pots. Religious people tend to do this in the name of religion; however, it is really an un-Christian attitude. We must be working to care for ourselves as the Lord has instructed. Our minds wander with many thoughts and for the most part these thoughts may not be good. We must be active in our own business but quiet in the business of others. If someone refuses to stay out of the business of others, then we should cease

fellowship with that person. But at the same time we are to lovingly approach and admonish the person.

2 Thessalonians 3:16-18 Now may the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance. The Lord be with you all! <sup>17</sup>I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand, and this is a distinguishing mark in every letter; this is the way I write. <sup>18</sup>The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

Finally Paul prays for the Thessalonians again. His desire for them to be blessed in every circumstance! His desire for them has never changed. There can be nothing better in this life on earth than to be granted peace at all times. We pray the same for ourselves.

Paul ends by stating that he is signing the letter with his own hand and his own logo. Someone else probably penned this letter but Paul is signing it at the end. He signs it "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." This is his logo. It is in every letter that Paul dictated. It is the way the reader would know the letter was from Paul. It is through the grace of our wonderful Christ that we have the peace of God. The grace of God brings happiness and God's grace is enough for all.

