

Episode: Paul's Letters Series No. 05

Narrator: Jason

Primary Scriptures: Second Thessalonians

Story Summary: Paul's second letter to the church in Thessalonica

Location: Roman Empire; Macedonia, Thessalonica

Time: AD 30 Jesus crucified and resurrected; Pentecost; Holy Spirit arrives
 AD 48 Paul's "famine visit" to Jerusalem; First Missionary Journey starts
 AD 50 Council at Jerusalem; Start of Second Missionary Journey.
 AD 51 Writing of *First* and *Second Thessalonians*

Suggested Memory Scriptures: 2 Thess. 1:8-9; 3:1, 6, 10, 13

This letter was probably written shortly after *First Thessalonians*. The church at Thessalonica seemed to be doing pretty well except for one thing, manifested in two ways: they were so focused on the second coming of Christ that they weren't maturing in other areas and were not taking care of their daily business.

It may be a little dramatic to say it this way, but in this letter, Paul is setting the stage for an "us versus them" mentality, where "us" are the believing Christians (especially the persevering true believers like the Thessalonians) and "them" are all others. Developing this type of mentality is a proven way for making people commit to a cause and keeping them committed. It is a simple way to develop distinguishing characteristics.

Unbelievers will be paid back trouble for the trouble they have caused, will be punished with everlasting destruction and kept from the presence of the Lord. This will happen when Jesus is revealed from heaven. Unbelievers are those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of Jesus. (1:6-9)

Believers are those who endure through suffering. God will give them relief, and will be glorified through their lives. (1:5-12)

Paul reassures the Thessalonians that the Day of the Lord has not yet occurred, and it will not occur until certain things happened. Paul reminds them he had told them about these things before. These things may sound mysterious and incomprehensible to modern people because we do not know what he had previously told them in person. Paul must have thought this was sufficient information for them, though, so he moves on to other matters.

Among other things, he reminds the Thessalonians they must lead holy lives while they wait for the Day of the Lord. They must work to take care of themselves and set a good example for non-Christians, so that through their attractive lives they may bring others into the kingdom of God. That message was a big key to the growth of the church for the next two hundred years, and continues to be a good message today.

Discussion Questions:

1. 2 Thessalonians 1:6-7 indicates God will punish those who are troubling the Thessalonians. Who was he talking about, and how were they troubling the Thessalonians?
2. 2 Thessalonians 1:8 says God will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the Gospel. Are these the same people he is talking about in the previous two verses, or is Paul talking about other people?
3. Look at 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12. Is it more important that we fulfill our purposes so we feel satisfaction and fulfillment or that Jesus is glorified through us? Can those two aspects be in harmony with one another?
4. 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 talks of the man of lawlessness and the circumstances around the coming of Christ. Is this a subject that seems important to modern Christians? When you read these verses, how do they make you feel?
5. Paul ends the letter by saying he is adding his own handwriting. What does that imply?
 1. That the rest of the letter was in the handwriting of a scribe since Paul dictated the letter to him.

Application Questions:

1. 2 Thess. 2:9 says the coming of the Man of Lawlessness will be displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders. How can you keep from being tricked by these? Does 2 Thess. 2:10-12 give you some things to work on now? What does it mean to love the truth?
2. Paul thanks God for the Thessalonians. Name ten different people you thank God for. Are you willing to do so now? How could you make this a regular habit?
3. Paul tells the Thessalonians in 2 Thess. 2:15 to stand firm and hold on to the teachings passed on to them. Do you know enough about the things you have been taught to hold firm to them? How can you learn more about important Biblical truths?
4. Paul warns against idleness. What do you think about when you are idle? What useful things could you do instead of being idle? What is the difference in resting and idleness? Is it possible for activity to be idleness?

Application Questions for Teens:

1. If you believe in the power of prayer, you understand the benefit of having many people praying on your behalf. Are you willing to ask someone to pray for you? You probably know somebody who needs your prayers. Will you pray for them now?
2. Paul warns the Thessalonians against idleness. What does idleness look like in your life? Can you be idle while playing video games or being on social media?
3. One of the scariest passages in the Bible is 2 Thess. 2:1-11. How can you protect yourself about being deceived by evil people?