

***Off the Shelf***  
***Sunday School Lesson***  
***2 Thessalonians 1***

**Introduction**

1. Paul is generally accepted as the author. It probably was written a few months or even weeks after 1 Thessalonians as Paul, Silas and Timothy are still together (1:1) Corinth is the only place that we have evidence of their being together (Acts 18: 5)
2. Reasons why this letter was written so soon after 1 Thessalonians:
  - A. Christians were enduring persecution and needed encouragement.
  - B. They were being misled regarding the day of the Lord. Many believed that they were living in this time of judgment. They were fearful that they were living in the Tribulation.
  - C. Some were living in idleness expecting the imminent return of Christ.
3. This letter was probably written around 51AD, which would make it the third canonical writing of Paul, with Galatians being the first.

**Salutation (1:1-2)**

***Paul, Silas and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace and peace to you from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.***

1. Paul begins this letter with a greeting that is almost identical to 1 Thessalonians. His desire is that believers would receive grace and peace. *Why?*
  - A. Grace enables the will of God to be done and the peace of God gives confidence in every circumstance. Grace precedes peace.
  - B. Paul repeats the blessing to reaffirmation that Jesus and the Father are God and the source of grace and peace.

**Thanksgiving (1:3-4)**

***We ought always to thank God for you, brothers, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love every one of you has for each other is increasing. Therefore, among God's churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring.***

1. In his earlier epistle to the Thessalonians, Paul prayed for them to grow in faith (1 Th 4:10) and to increase in love (1 Th 3:12). He now rejoices that they are doing these things. This is one clue that Paul wrote this letter after 1 Thessalonians.

- A. A sign of a healthy church is that their faith and love for each other are growing.
- B. There is also abundant joy and giving thanksgiving to God.
- C. There is steadfast faith or faithfulness in the face of trials and persecutions. Difficulties produce unity and can cause believers to become closer in their love and friendship.
- D. Healthy churches serve as examples for others. Paul boasts about them and holds them up as a model for others to follow.

## **Persecution & Judgment (1:5-12)**

*All this is evidence that God's judgment is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering. God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you. With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that our God may count you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may fulfill every good purpose of yours and every act prompted by your faith. We pray this so 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.*

1. God hates sin and everyone will be judged based on their actions. Believers in Jesus will not be condemned but their deeds will still be judged. (Rom 14:12; 1 Cor 3:12-15; 1 Pet 4:16-19) *How does persecution help us to see evil and to accept God's righteous judgment?*
2. Persecution can separate Christians from the unsaved. It shows the true character and commitment of a person deep inside. It is God's grace that qualifies a person for heaven, not suffering. It is God's grace that enables us to endure persecution. God uses persecution to bring glory to himself and to give blessings and rewards. (Mt 5:10-12)
3. Jesus will return to earth suddenly and punish those who do not have faith in him. This punishment is eternal. Jesus will be worshipped and praised by those who have faith in Jesus. His appearance will be so glorious that even believers will marvel at it. *How are believers glorified in Jesus?* (1 Pet 2:9; 1 Jn 3:2)
4. Christians are to be motivated by faith to do good works. This means we must be changed by the Holy Spirit and then be obedient to his leading. Christians do not do good works to become more like Christ. Our good works come from our becoming more like Christ. Anything else is motivated by selfish ambition and is not pleasing to God.

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***2 Thessalonians 2***

**The Man of Lawlessness (2:1-12)**

*Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come. Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshipped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God. Don't you remember that when I was with you I used to tell you these things? And now you know what is holding him back, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming. The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason, God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.*

1. There were rumors circulating in the church that the Lord Jesus had already returned to the earth. This would be unsettling to the Christians because they would have somehow missed being with Jesus at his return. Even worse was that this rumor reported that Paul was the source. Paul states that this rumor is false. He had previously taught them that they would be instantly gathered to Jesus at his return. (1 Th 4:13-18) *What are some examples of false teachings and reports that unsettle Christians today?*
2. Paul reminds them of what he previously told them: that some obvious things must happen before the return of Jesus: (2 Th 2:5)
  - A. There will be a world-wide rebellion or widespread falling away from Christianity which will set the stage for acceptance of a false messiah.
  - B. There will be an increase in lawlessness or rebellion against civil authorities instituted by God. (Rom 13:1-2)
  - C. A false Christ or messiah will appear who is the "man of lawlessness" or anti-Christ. This person will claim to be God and demand to be worshipped. (Mt 24:10-16; Jn 5:43; 1 Jn 2:18-23) He will be the first world dictator.
3. Paul says that there are forces holding back the progression of this evil rebellion that will be removed when the time comes. The Holy Spirit is likely

the one restraining evil through his presence in born again Christians. This could also include civil and national authorities that will be eliminated in the world government.

4. The “lawless one” or anti-Christ will perform many miracles to deceive the world and convince them to worship him. (Rev 13:1-10)
5. The anti-Christ will be overthrown by the breath (command?) of Jesus when he returns. (Is 11:1-4; Rev 19:15)
6. The people of the world will believe in the anti-Christ and embrace the one world system because they will be given a powerful series of deceptions that appeal to their minds. The minds of sinful men are blinded to the truth of the gospel and prefer to embrace science, technology, leaps of consciousness, space visitors or something else rather than Jesus. (2 Co 4:4) *What are some examples of how people are abandoning faith in God?*

## **Assurance of Deliverance for Believers (2:13-17)**

***But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter. May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word.***

- A. Paul reminds them that God chose them to be saved before they were born. (Jn 17:24; Eph 1:4-6) God gave them faith to believe the gospel and is working through the presence of the Holy Spirit to make them like Jesus. (Eph 2:8-9, 19-22) Paul gives them assurance and comfort in the knowledge that they are children of God. Nothing can separate us from the love of God. (Rom 8:35-39)
- B. *What does Paul mean when he says that they were called to suffer so that they could share in the glory of Jesus?* (Mt 5:11-12; 2 Tim 3:12)
- C. It is God who gives us the grace or strength to endure hardships. His presence is the source of our encouragement and hope. His love embraces us and comforts us. His peace gives us joy and assurance that we are his and nothing can separate us from him. (Jn 10:27-28)
- D. *What are some examples of good deeds that you have seen others do or that you have done because of the love of Jesus?*

# *Off the Shelf*

## *Sunday School Lesson*

### *2 Thessalonians 3*

#### **Prayer Needs (3:1-5)**

*Finally, brothers, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you. And pray that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men, for not everyone has faith. But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one. We have confidence in the Lord that you are doing and will continue to do the things we command. May the Lord direct your hearts into God's love and Christ's perseverance.*

1. Everyone needs others to pray for them. We need to share our concerns with other Christians. This brings comfort in knowing that others care about us and that God hears the prayers of his children. Paul shares his concerns that the gospel would spread quickly and be accepted. He also asks for prayer for protection from evil men who oppose the gospel. *What concerns are on your heart? Have you asked for prayers from other Christians?* This is one of many benefits from being a part of a local church or group of Christians.
2. There is great comfort in knowing that God is with us and will protect us from evil. This does not mean that bad things will not happen. It does mean that we belong to Jesus and that, no matter what happens, we can never be separated from his love or his presence within us. (Rom 8:35-39; 1 Jn 5:1-5)
3. Paul says that he is confident that the believers will continue to be obedient to God. Paul is confident because God is working within them through the power of the Holy Spirit. (Phil 1:3-6; Gal 2:20)
4. God's redemptive plan for mankind is rooted in his love and in the servanthood/perseverance of Jesus. Christians are to follow this example by loving others and seeking to serve for the salvation of souls. (Jn 3:16-18)

#### **The Importance of Work (3:6-15)**

*In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers, to keep away from every brother who is idle and does not live according to the teaching you received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to make ourselves a model for you to follow. For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat." We hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy; they are busybodies. Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread they eat.*

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Bible quotes use New International Version*

***And as for you, brothers, never tire of doing what is right. If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of him. Do not associate with him, in order that he may feel ashamed. Yet do not regard him as an enemy but warn him as a brother.***

- A. Paul stresses the importance of working diligently. Some Christians thought that the Lord would return soon and so they became idle which created a burden on other church members. The church is to take care of widows and those poor who need help. However, this was taking advantage of the charity of others. (James 1:27)
- B. Paul reminds them that he worked while he preached the gospel, even though he had the right to be supported by church members. (1 Cor 9:7-14)
- C. Idleness is the devil's workshop. Paul says that those who were idle became busy bodies and gossips. *How does work help us to avoid sin?*
- D. Paul says that Christians who refused to work should be separated from the support of the church. This would encourage them to get back to work.
- E. *Do government welfare programs encourage idleness?*

## **Conclusion (3:16-18)**

***Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you. I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand, which is the distinguishing mark in all my letters. This is how I write. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.***

1. *How can Christians have peace and joy at all times and every circumstance?*  
Jesus is called a man of sorrows who was well acquainted with grief. At the same time, he always had joy in the presence of God the Father. (Isa 53:3; Jn 5:19-20; Heb 12:2)
2. Paul concludes by giving a final blessing. He writes the final verses himself instead of dictating it. This was likely because he wanted to authenticate this message. There were false reports and letters circulating among the Thessalonians that were purported to be from Paul. (2 Th 2:2) Paul must have had very distinctive handwriting. Scholars have debated whether he wrote large letters because he might have had poor eyesight.
3. Throughout Church history, there have been false prophets who have predicted the return of Jesus. Jesus said that nobody knows the time of his return. (Mt 24:36-42) *Is there anything in your life that you would be embarrassed to be doing if the Lord returned while you were doing it?*