

Second Thessalonians 1:1-12

Introduction:

1. We completed our study of the first epistle several months ago, and now it is time to study the second.
2. Our study of Daniel, especially the little horn of Daniel 7, will help much with the second chapter.
3. Here is a church of believers with whom we should feel great affinity and receive God's word to them.

Intro: Paul encourages faithfulness based on Christ's coming and judgment of their enemies.

1. It is helpful to review the little we know of this church and city from Acts 17:1-15.
 - a. Paul's methods are important – he sought out worshippers of the true God (1-3).
 - b. And he reasoned out of the Scriptures to persuade them by the wise and logical presentation of argumentation – opening and alleging – that Jesus was Christ.
 - c. The Jews of that city were base in their contempt of Paul's preaching (5,11,13).
 - d. They were intense in their persecution of those who believed Paul (5-9,13).
 - e. And they accused them of sedition and treason, which will help later in understanding Paul's euphemistic and obscure language in chapter two (6-8).
 - f. This church was severely persecuted by enemies (I Thess 1:6; 2:2,14; 3:3-4).
2. The first epistle emphasized Christ's coming (1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:13-18; 5:1-11,23).
 - a. The apostle has more to say to this church about His coming than to all others.
 - b. With that theme in mind, he returned to it quickly in this epistle (1:7-10).
 - c. And he had to correct false views regarding the timing of that coming (2:1-4).

1:1 Paul salutes the church with a very similar salutation to that used in his first epistle.

1. The three ministers are the same three mentioned in Acts 17:14 and the first epistle.
2. The church was in God the Father – the living and true God – which was in opposition to the polytheistic idols that many of them had previously worshipped (I Thess 1:9-10).
3. The church was in the Lord Jesus Christ – the promised Messiah – which was in opposition to the unbelieving character of the Jews (I Thess 1:9-10 cp Acts 17:3).
4. Our dear relationship with God and His Son is such that we are in them both (Col 3:3).

1:2 Paul salutes the church with a very similar blessing to that used in his first epistle.

1. This verse is added to the first verse to make a longer first verse in the first epistle.
2. Grace and peace are a precious salutation used by Paul frequently (Phil 1:2; Col 1:2).
3. We need them both; we should value them both; and we should pray for them both.
4. Without the grace of God there is only condemnation and trouble; without the peace of God there is only confusion and anxiety. What a blessing saints have in Jesus Christ!
5. The world has no grace or peace, and it is evident by their many troubles and crutches!

1:3 The progress of these saints in godliness bound their ministers to thank God for them.

1. God's goodness in matters of salvation obligates us to much thanksgiving (2:13).
2. Thanksgiving for salvation is meet – fitting or proper – as God's will (I Thess 5:18).
3. Thanksgiving should be perpetual, for the Lord seeks a thankful people (Deut 28:47).
4. It will be a major part of our eternal existence in heaven (Revelation 4:9; 7:12; 11:17).
5. We do not spiritually thank hearer or preacher, for any fruit is from God (I Cor 3:4-11).
6. Their faith was not slipping or holding; it was growing, and it was growing exceedingly.
 - a. Faith is confidence in God's words and promises that we cannot prove naturally.
 - b. Great faith is not moved by persecutions of those who oppose the truth.
 - c. Great faith is the ability to forsake things of this world for things of the next.

- d. Great faith is the ability to quench the fiery darts of doubt from the devil.
- e. Great faith is the holy fear of God's word that requires absolute obedience.
- f. Great faith is the holy fear of God's word that requires perfect doctrine.
- 7. Their love abounded in every direction, which edified the church (Eph 4:15-16).

1:4 Paul and his companions rejoiced in the godliness of these saints in other churches.

- 1. Paul identifies himself and the other teachers as boasting joyfully of them (II Cor 9:2).
- 2. They were greatly persecuted, as indicated by "all" and the two plural nouns, which we may easily confirm by reading Acts 17:1-15 and the first epistle (1:6; 2:2,14; 3:3-4).
- 3. Their patience and faith in bearing persecution and tribulation obeyed Jesus (Lu 21:19).
- 4. There are many who hear with joy, but wilt and die out under opposition (Luke 8:13).

1:5 The enduring of persecutions and tribulations were evidence of God's perfect judgment.

- 1. A *token* is a sign, evidence, or proof of some thing, as 3:17 or Deuteronomy 22:13-21.
- 2. A *manifest* token is very plain and obvious evidence and proof, as in Hebrews 4:13.
- 3. The relative pronoun "which" refers us to the whole clause and conflict of verse four.
- 4. For saints of the living and true God to endure abuse at the hands of unbelieving scorners indicates clearly and forcefully that God will have a great and just judgment.
- 5. This coming judgment is most righteous by the opposite character of the antagonists and the setting right of those things not rectified from the foundation of the world.
- 6. Our apostle makes this very same argument in his epistle to the Philippians (1:27-30).
- 7. The patient bearing of suffering in this world is evidence of eternal life (I Thess 3:3-4; Matt 5:10-12; Acts 5:41; II Tim 3:12; I Pet 4:12-14).
- 8. But persecuting saints here is evidence of eternal damnation, as the next verse declares.
- 9. We do not earn heaven by suffering, nor are we worthy of it; but by evidence and character we show ourselves indeed the proper citizens.

1:6 The final judgment will rectify this unfair situation when God justly judges their enemies.

- 1. The desecration and desolation of Egypt was righteous judgment of God (Exodus 3-14).
- 2. The earth swallowing Korah, wives, and little children was righteous (Numbers 16).
- 3. Fire from heaven burning up captains and fifties was righteous judgment (II Kings 1).
- 4. The fiery furnace burning up the most mighty men of Babylon was righteous (Daniel 3).
- 5. The desecration and desolation of Jerusalem was righteous judgment (Malachi 4:1-3).
- 6. Our blessed Lord anticipated this judgment when speaking to Caiaphas (Matt 26:64).
- 7. The martyrs are right now under God's altar begging for just vengeance (Rev 6:9-11).
- 8. Vengeance is His: He will repay; and this thought is not wrong (Romans 12:18-21).

1:7 The certain coming of the Blessed and Only Potentate was to give them comforting rest.

- 1. This resting is waiting; this resting is patient enduring; this resting is certain victory!
- 2. "When" modifies their resting, for in this world we shall have tribulation (John 15:19-21; 16:33; Acts 14:22; Romans 8:35-37; II Timothy 3:12; Hebrews 11:25).
- 3. The afterlife of saints in heaven is one of peaceful rest, even before the vengeance comes (Isaiah 57:1-2; Job 3:17; Matthew 25:21; Luke 16:22; Revelation 14:13).
- 4. The martyrs under God's altar are resting and waiting for the vengeance (Rev 6:11).
- 5. And Paul comforted them by anticipating of them all taking God's rest together!
- 6. Asaph told of the coming correction of the apparent inequities in life (Ps 73:16-28).
- 7. If you knew the final outcome was total victory, could you endure temporary pain?
- 8. The Lord Jesus Christ will soon reveal Himself as never seen before (I Tim 6:13-16).
- 9. Glorious and mighty angels will accompany His glorious arrival (I Thess 4:13-18).

1:8 Our Lord Jesus will then be a consuming fire toward all His enemies and our enemies.

1. He has used fire so many times in judgment, and He is a consuming fire (Heb 12:29).
2. There is a burning hell, dear reader; and you better flee to the Refuge from it today!
3. There is no excuse not to know God from creation or revelation for any readers.
4. An evidence of not knowing God from the first epistle is concupiscence (4:5).
5. There is no excuse not to obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus, for you are hearing it.
6. The gospel includes rules for our entire lives, but here it speaks generally of Christ.

1:9 The coming righteous judgment will be horrible and permanent for the wicked.

1. It does not say final, total, or complete. It says everlasting, which is *lasting forever*.
2. It does not say annihilation, elimination, dissolution, or extinction; for it is a permanent state of torment devised by the holy God for His enemies (Matt 25:46; Rev 14:9-12).
3. They will be cast out of the presence of God with horrible words (Matthew 7:23).
4. They will miss the glory of His power, which we will glory in forever (Rom 9:22).

1:10 But His coming will also be the glorious victory and salvation of His saints.

1. "When" modifies the damnation of the wicked described in detail in verses 7-10.
2. There are not multiple resurrections – there is a single resurrection (Acts 24:15).
3. His glorious voice will call all the dead from their graves (John 5:28-29).
4. The coming of Jesus Christ involves gathering His saints (2:1) and judgment!
5. The multiple comings with a seven-year tribulation and millenium are ridiculous.
6. Believing the gospel, which they had done, was the evidence they would be saved!
7. The evidence that He will receive us is our belief of the gospel. Do you believe?

1:11 Paul now expresses his prayers for their continued perfection in godliness.

1. He had spoken of his thankfulness and joy in them (3-4), but he wanted yet more!
2. They were always thankful for these saints, but they also always prayed for them!
3. No man is worthy or deserving of heaven but by the evidence and character of it.
4. He desired their further perfection by the power of God, which is the constant goal.
5. It is God which works in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure (Phil 2:13).
6. Remember that David prayed for what God had just promised him (II Sam 7:25-29).

1:12 Paul desired these saints to use the grace of God to glorify the name of Jesus Christ.

1. The lives of saints should clearly and purely glorify the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. Not only did he seek Christ's glory by them, but their glory in Him, as earlier (4).
3. And all of it is by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ in every phase, but surely practical.

Application: The encouragement of this chapter by an inspired apostle should teach us things.

1. We must pray for grace and peace, as we need these blessings in our lives dearly (2).
2. We are obligated to be thankful for every spiritual blessing in perpetual praise (3).
3. We should be growing in faith exceedingly, not backsliding or stagnating (3).
4. We should be abounding in love universally as a church and personally as members (3).
5. We should understand bearing persecution is a manifest token of salvation (5).
6. God judges sinners in hell – to comfort us in trouble and provoke us to holiness (6-9).
7. There is a rest coming for believers in the presence of Jesus Christ and other saints (7).
8. We must confidently and with great anticipation consider His soon appearing (10).
9. We must be praying and seeking always to be perfected by His mighty power (11).
10. Our lives alone and together should glorify Jesus Christ by the grace of God (12).