

Understanding the Day of the Lord.



A book study on **Second Thessalonians**

By Tim Gibson

About the Author

Hello, my name is Rev. Tim Gibson and I am a full-time missionary / teacher / pastor based in Singapore.

Although I am English and was brought up in Northamptonshire, UK, where my parents still live, the Lord called me to be based in Singapore in 1988. I had just joined World Horizons Mission Organization at the start of that year and felt the Lord calling me to S.E. Asia. There was an opening to study in Tung Ling Bible School in Singapore which I followed and since then have felt the Lord calling me to stay based in Singapore with a vision of raising up BRIGHT ARROWS to go into the darkest parts of the world (the Unreached people groups).

I am now happily married to a Chinese Singaporean called Shendy with two kids, Melody (3) and Gideon (1). We help to Pastor a new church extension of the Church of Singapore - Jurong in Yishun, near to where we live. This church was planted earlier this year and is slowly growing (from 30 to 60 so far!). I travel as the Lord leads and minister in other Asian Countries and other churches here in Singapore bringing a prophetic message that challenges all Christians to partake in His inheritance on their lives and get involved in what He is doing in the world today!

As a family we trust in the Lord to provide financially and have been amazed at the goodness and faithfulness of our mighty Master! He promises that if we seek first His Kingdom in our everyday walk and seek to live righteous lives, then 'all these things' (pertaining to our basic needs and ministry needs) will be added to us (Matt 6:33).

If you feel led to support us financially you can send cheques to:

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Or if you want to support us in prayer or receive our regular news and prayer request then please drop us a line by e-mail (or you can go to our homepage to see the latest news and our multitudinal resources available)....

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Please take time to go through this material and may the Lord bring you abundant revelation, touching your life with His anointing as you read through this. I pray this study will be a blessing to the world, motivating many to rise up in these Last Days to accomplish great feats for and in Him, patiently and cheerfully enduring all troubles with eyes on the one we live for - the Lord Himself.

God bless you,
Rev. Tim Gibson (Aug 1998)

SECOND THESSALONIANS

This material is designed for a group study situation of around 20 students. However, it can still be used for individual study.

WORKSHEET 1: Before we start the book study it is best to familiarize yourself with the Letter.

Complete the following mini-projects.....

1. Each individual read twice straight through the letter (put hands up when finished).
2. Split into groups of four. Each person has a go at reading the letter to the other three as if they are the messenger sent by Paul to read to the Church at Thessalonica (readers and listeners should express themselves in a manner they think would be fitting).
3. Each team go through the letter again, this time answering the following questions.....
 - a. Who was it written by and to whom ?

b. This letter was written from between a few months to a year after First Thessalonians. What things seem to have happened in the church and among the people to cause Paul to write this second letter ? (these can be deduced by clues in the text)....

c. As you read through note down.....

i. The words that Paul uses the most.

ii. The main topics/ doctrines Paul covers...

iii. A list of all the things Paul mentions concerning the Day of the Lord....

COURSE OUTLINE

Second Thessalonians

After having done the preliminary reading and observations in WORKSHEET 1, we will now look more closely at the second letter of Paul to the Thessalonians. We will be following the outline below....

LESSON 1: Introduction & Book Outline

LESSON 2: Thanksgiving For Growth.

LESSON 3: Encouragement In Persecution.

LESSON 4: Prayer For God's Blessing.

LESSON 5: Events Preceding that Day

LESSON 6: Concerning the AntiChrist.

LESSON 7: The Comfort of the Believer.

LESSON 8: Prayer for His will to be done This.

LESSON 9: Withdraw From the Disorderly.

LESSON 10: Conclusion

LESSON 1: Introduction & Outline

Second Thessalonians - Historical & Literary Context.

In studying this New Testament epistle it is essential that we first determine the context in which it was written. What was the *original intention* of the author in writing this letter to the Thessalonians in the particular time they were living (which is quite different to us). In other words, what did it mean to the author and recipients at the time of writing and transmission.

Having done that we must then determine what message the inspired word is communicating to us *today* using hermeneutical principles.

Simple Questions to determine the context.....

During this lesson you are going to do the detective work, looking at the letter itself and related Scriptures to build up a picture of the setting of this letter.....

WORKSHEET 2:

(1) THE AUTHOR:

Who wrote this letter ? (See 1:1 and 3:17) _____.

To whom ? (see 1:1) _____.

Who else has been on the author's team ? _____.

Had he written them any previous letter/s ? If so what was the occasion and purpose of them ?

What was the author's interest in this group of people ?

What can you discern about the author by reading the letter ?

(2) THE RECIPIENTS:

You have already determined to whom this letter was sent. We need to find out a bit more about them. What do you know about the City they lived in ? Is there any significance in the Lord leading the author to plant a church here ?

Read Acts 17:1-9....what can you tell about them in this passage ?

Which missionary journey of Paul does this take place on (1st, 2nd or 3rd) ? _____

Despite the difficult situations surrounding the founding of this church we know that it became a strong church (1 Thess 1:2-10) made up mostly of gentiles (1 Thess 1:9).

Its members included _____ (Acts 17:9), _____ and _____ (Acts 20:1,4).

Read also Romans 16:21, Acts 19:29 and Col 4:10 and jot down the qualities of these members of the recipient church

They had had some serious problems before that the author's previous letter addressed. What were some of these problems ?

- 1 Thess 4:2-6:
- 1 Thess 4:11
- 1 Thess 4:13 :
- 1 Thess 5:12-13:
- 1 Thess 5:14:

(3) TIME AND PLACE OF WRITING:

Since First Thessalonians ,from 3 months to a year has elapsed- it seems like the previous problems had been largely overcome but new ones had emerged (see PURPOSE OF THE EPISTLE). It was written around 50-52AD during Paul's _____ missionary journey, probably from the city of _____. (See Acts 18:1-11 for the answers).

(4) PURPOSE OF THE EPISTLE:

The first epistle to the Thessalonians had been written in response to news brought back by Timothy who had made a quick trip there while Paul was in Athens (1 Th 3:1-3,6). Encouraged by their steadfastness in the face of persecution, Paul had exhorted them to holiness in view of the Lord's coming (cf. 1 Th 3:12-13;5:23) and also addressed some of the problems the church was facing (see above).

In this second letter there seem to be three main purposes for writing it. Read each passage and state what the purpose seems to be by filling in the gaps.....

PURPOSE 1: 2 Thess 1:3-4 - **To encourage them in their steadfastness under**
_____.

PURPOSE 2: 2 Thess 2:1-2 - **To correct their misunderstanding about the imminence of the Lord's return.**

PURPOSE 3: 2 Thess 3:11-12 - **To instruct the congregation on what disciplinary action to take towards those who refused to work.**

Can you see any relation of these problems with any (if at all) of the previous ones in First Thessalonians as outlined above ?

(5) THE THEME OF THE EPISTLE:

Main Theme = _____ the day of the Lord.

The theme of the epistle is an understanding of the Day of the Lord and the resulting lifestyle changes . The doctrinal error of chapter 2 has been causing the practical error of chapter 3. Some of the believers have abandoned their work and have begun to live off others, apparently assuming that the end is at hand. Paul commands them to follow his example by supporting themselves and instructs the rest of the church to discipline them if they fail to do so.

Key Verses: Second Thessalonians 2:2,3 and 3:5,6 - read these and summarize their message..

OUTLINE OF SECOND THESSALONIANS

Theme: Understanding the Day of the Lord.

CHAPTER	ONE	TWO	THREE
<i>FOCUS</i>	<i>Encouragement in Persecution.</i>	<i>Explanation of Day of the Lord.</i>	<i>Exhortation to the Church.</i>
<i>TOPIC</i>	<i>Discouraged Believers .</i>	<i>Disturbed Believers.</i>	<i>Disobedient Believers.</i>
<i>ACTIVITY</i>	<i>Thanksgiving for their life.</i>	<i>Instruction of their Doctrine.</i>	<i>Correction of their Behaviour.</i>

Second Thessalonians was written by the Apostle Paul in about 51AD from Corinth.

I. Paul's Encouragement in Persecution (1:1-12)

- A. Thanksgiving for their Growth (1:1-4)
- B. Encouragement in their Persecution (1:5-10)
- C. Prayer for God's blessing (1:11-12)

II. Paul's Explanation of the Day of The Lord (2:1-17)

- A. The Events Preceding the Day of the Lord (2:1-12)
 - 1. First a Falling Away (2:1-3)
 - 2. The Man of Sin is Revealed (2:4-5)
 - 3. The Restrainer is Taken away (2:6-7)
 - 4. The Second Coming of Christ (2:8-12)
- B. The Comfort of the Believer on the Day of the Lord (2:13-17)

III. Paul's Exhortation to the Church (3:1-18)

- A. Wait Patiently for Christ (3:1-5)
- B. Withdraw from the Disorderly (3:6-15)
- C. Conclusion (3:16-18)

The above outline is adapted from the Open Bible - Expanded Edition.

Assignment for next week: Read 2 Thess 1:1-4 and meditate on it.

LESSON 2: Thanksgiving For Their Growth.

(1) Overview Of Chapter 1: Encouragement in Persecutions.

In understanding the Day of the Lord, the first thing we must realize is that persecutions will increase up until Christ's return. We are not to flee from these troubles, but instead we are to cheerfully endure and grow spiritually in the midst of them.

Three objectives of studying this chapter are:

- (i) To note the virtues that demonstrated the spiritual growth and development of the church at Thessalonica and encourage one another to do likewise.
- (ii) To glean what will happen when Christ comes again, and upon whom His vengeance will fall.
- (iii) To learn from Paul's Prayer how we may pray effectively for the persecuted church.

THE MESSAGE of this chapter....

The believers in Thessalonica may have been discouraged in the times of persecution and Paul wrote these things to offer thanks, to encourage them (particularly concerning the righteous judgement of God) and pray for them.

We can learn important principles concerning how to counter attack discouragement in believers due to tribulations....

- (a) Give thanks to God that they are growing through this time.
- (b) Encourage them in the Lord (His perspective on events).
- (c) Pray for God's will to be accomplished in and through them.

(2) Thanksgiving For Their Growth (1:1-4)

(i) Introduction: Despite the reported problems in the church (even ongoing ones since Paul's first letter to them), Paul starts off with thanksgiving - what can we learn from this ?

He thanks God because of their SPIRITUAL growth.

In these last days it's imperative that we are not only "TRUE Christians but GROWING Christians." (Quote from Matthew Henry).

(ii) Salutations: Verses 1-2 are the same as 1 Thess 1:1 (in NIV it omits 'from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ'). Paul was not worried about repeating himself when teaching/preaching to his disciples. See Philippians 3:1 and comment...

NOTE: They write as a team - not an individual (Paul, Silvanus & Timothy).
What lessons can we glean from this ?

These three are obviously well respected missionaries who have an important role in the Thessalonian's spiritual growth. What do you know about each one ?

(1) PAUL: (Acts 9)

(2) SILVANUS (Silas):(Acts 15:22,32,40)

(3) TIMOTHY: (1 Tim 1:2-5)

The meanings of their names are: Paul = 'Little', Silas (Silvanus) = 'wooded', Timothy = 'Precious to God'. What do you get on combining these three names? (NB. Wood is used in Scripture to denote humanity.)

In our *weak* humanity we are *precious* to God.

This contrasts much with the meaning of Thessalonica - 'The Success (or victory) of Thessalos' - It was a place of apparent human success - but in this chapter God reveals that severe judgement is awaiting such ungodly success!

The word 'Church' = 'ekklesia' = 'Called out ones' - the Christians were called out from the spirit of the age prevalent in Thessalonica.

Why does Paul state that the Church is 'in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ'?

God's gifts to help us grow spiritually.... (verse 2)

God gives us *grace* and *peace* (verse 2) so that we may grow in *faith* and *love* and *patience* (verse 3-4) (cf. 1 Thess 1:2-4).

Grace = 'charis' = unmerited favour. 'God's riches at Christ's expense' and also
Peace = 'eirene' = equivalent to Hebrew 'shalom' = Wholeness in every area.

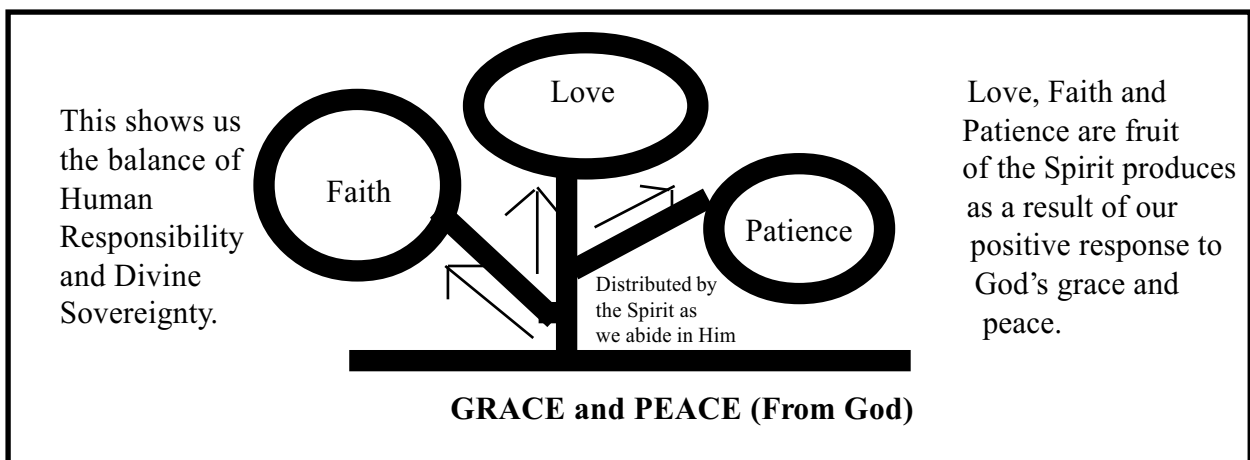


Diagram 1: Showing the process of Spiritual Growth

(iii) Thanking God For Spiritual Growth: Verses 3-4

Paul says he and his team were 'bound to thank God' for the spiritual growth seen in the Thessalonian Christians. This word 'bound' (Gk. 'opheilo') literally means that they were under obligation to do so! What two things were they under obligation to thank God for?

What would be a similar situation where we would be under obligation to Give thanks to God?

Even though people may have other defects (these Christians were lazy, had wrong doctrine concerning the End Times etc...) but they are growing in Faith and Love, then we are UNDER OBLIGATION to give thanks to God on their behalf, boast of their fruit to others and encourage them to excel! (as Paul does here).

What is true spiritual growth ?

Paul said it was fitting for them to give thanks as they deserved it due to their Spiritual growth. Spiritual growth is not how much we know of Scripture or how many years we have been a Christian . How does Paul know they have grown spiritually ?

Because their faith grew exceedingly and they demonstrated love to each other which was abounding ,and others boasted of their patience and faith in their tribulations.

Faith = ‘pistis’ = Reliance/trust in Christ in ones spiritual walk.

A GROWING FAITH = A GROWING CHRISTIAN

Love = ‘agape’ = Acts of self-sacrificial love towards others.

Patience = ‘hupomone’ = To cheerfully (hopefully) endure persecution or trouble.

If you want to determine your true spiritual growth, measure yourself against these three standards - Are you growing in your trust in Christ ? Are you growing in self-sacrificial love towards others ? Are you patiently and cheerfully enduring troubles ? How do you measure up ? Are you thanking God for those you see increasing in these areas ?

Our faith is to ‘grow exceedingly’ (‘huperauxano’ = to increase above ordinary degree’ - part of this word is used in the N.T. for the growth of babies and plants).

Our Love towards one another is to ‘abound’ (‘pleonazo’ = to superabound) - See 1 Thess 3:12 and comment....

Genuine faith in God is always accompanied by a love for one another (James 2:14-17).

In verse 4 what do Paul and his team boast of concerning the Thessalonians ?

Who do they boast to ?

We see that they endured persecutions (‘diogmos’ = ‘to be pursued’) & tribulations (‘thlipsis’ = pressure, anguish. Lit. To crowd about.) . The word for ‘endure’ is ‘anechomai’ which means ‘to hold oneself up against’. See 1 Thess 1:6;2:14 and Acts 17:5-9 to have a glimpse of what they suffered.

Can others boast about you in the same way ? Are you boasting about those you know who have patiently and cheerfully endured such affliction ?

(3) Conclusion: We learn from the first 4 verses of 1 Thessalonians that we are under obligation to give thanks to God for those that are growing spiritually. Not only that but also to boast of their patience and faith to other Christians to encourage them.

True spiritual growth springs from receiving God’s _____ and _____ and is seen in our lives by ever increasing _____, _____ and _____.

For next week, prepare by reading 1 Thessalonians 1:5-10.

LESSON 3: Encouragement in Persecution

(1) Overview Of This Section: 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10

Paul has given thanks for their spiritual growth in tribulation, and now goes on to comfort them that their patient, cheerful endurance is plain evidence of the righteous judgement of God. He shows them that because their persecutions are for the CAUSE OF CHRIST they can be comforted in knowing GOD IS JUST. (NB: Paul is following his own advice of 1 Thess 5:11 to comfort others concerning the Day of the Lord, not frighten others!).

This section can further be divided into four:

- (i) The Righteous Judgement of God (verses 5-6)
- (ii) The Reward of the Righteous' Suffering (verse 7)
- (iii) Vengeance on the Wicked at the Lord's Coming. (Verses 8-9)
- (iv) Resultant behaviour in Saints at the Lord's Coming (Verse 10)

(2) Encouragement In Persecution: That God is a JUST God.

(i) The Righteous Judgement Of God (Verses 5-6):

Verse 5: The plain (manifest) evidence of God's righteous judgement is that:

- (a) Those who SUFFER for CHRIST'S sake with patient ENDURANCE

will be counted WORTHY of the KINGDOM of God.

- (b) Those who TROUBLE those SUFFERING for Christ will be

REPAYED with tribulation.

Therefore, suffering for Christ is a manifest token that one is worthy to be counted Christian indeed.

"Religion, if it is worth anything, is worth everything; and those who either have no religion at all, or none that is worth having; or know not how to value it, that cannot find in their hearts to suffer for it." Matthew Henry

"Endurance in trials does not make one worthy of heaven; one does not earn heaven by suffering. But endurance in trials does demonstrate one's worthiness." BKC

We are only made worthy by the grace of God. Our trials only expose what is there already, and since the character that emerges through the fire is God-given, God receives all the glory.

Verse 6: How is God seen to be Just? (Read Rev 16:5-6 also)

God will BALANCE the scales of Justice: He will mete out TROUBLE

to those who TROUBLED the Righteous.

(ii) The Reward of the Suffering Righteous: Verse 7

What will the Righteous receive as their reward ? _____
See also Heb 4:1 and comment...

The word used is 'anesis' = relaxation, rest. In the N.T. it is only used five times - Acts 24:23; 2 Cor 2:13; 7:5 and 8:13; 2 Thess 1:7. Look up these verses and comment on the nature of this rest.

It is a rest from SIN and SORROW in the MILLENNIAL Kingdom - This is a future rest which will abundantly recompense all present troubles.

"If we _____ for Christ we shall also _____ with Him." 2 Tim 2:12

When will this happen ? When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven which will be the time of the revelation of the righteous judgement of God.

He will come with His **mighty angels**. Could this be referring to the seven angels that will blow the seven trumpets and pour the seven bowls of God's wrath ?

See Rev 8:2,6 and 16:1 and compare with Matthew 24:31.

See Table One for more details....

(iii) Vengeance on the Wicked at the Lord's Coming : Verses 8-9

Jesus will firstly send forth His mighty angels from His presence to execute the trumpet and bowl judgements after the BLACKOUT at the end of the seven year Tribulation. The Righteous have known the WRATH OF THE BEAST during these seven years, now those who have yielded to the Beast's Kingdom will know the WRATH OF GOD. This marks the start of the DAY OF THE LORD = JUDGEMENT for the wicked but SALVATION for the Righteous.

The Lord Jesus Christ actually only descends to the earth with His mighty army (of saints that are gathered up to Him at this time (see Matt 24:31; 1 Thess 4:16-17)) to defeat the armies of the Beast at Armageddon (Rev 16:16) AFTER the last Trumpet/Bowl (See Rev 19:11-21). Great Babylon will be totally destroyed at this time and then Satan will be bound for 1000 years (See Rev 20:1-3) and the faithful saints will rule for 1000 years (Rev 20:4-6).

Jesus comes in 'Flaming Fire' (See Ex 3:2; 19:18; 24:17 ; Ps 18:12; Isa 30:27-30; 66:15-16 Dan 7:9-10 and Rev 19:12). Indeed a fire goes before Him to consume all His enemies - Fire will be the main nature of the Trumpet/Bowl Judgements that the seven angels release before the Lord descends with His armies (although He will be revealed in the sky (like lightning - Matt 24:27,30) with eyes on fire to complete the judgement.

Read 1 Cor 3:13-15 and comment on the nature of this fiery judgement.....

According to verse 8 God will punish (take vengeance) on two groups...

(a) On those who do not KNOW God. (See Rom 1:18-32).

(b) On those who do not OBEY the Gospel (See Jn 3:36).

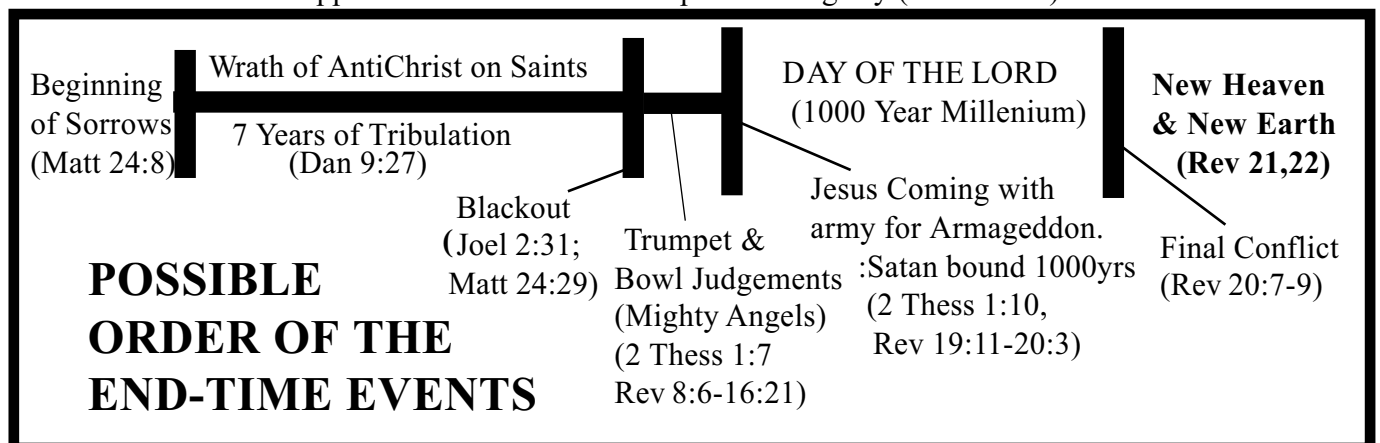
Paul paints a picture of a veil being taken away from Jesus' face; He will be revealed in BLAZING FIRE.

The effects of His appearance will be terrible to some and joyful to others.

Verse 9: What will be these two group's punishment? What does this mean?

For them to be judged, Jesus only has to SHOW UP! His presence does it!
See Deut 33:2 and compare with Jude 14-15.

Verse 10: This verse talks about His COMING ('erchomai' - to enter) which happens after His REVELATION (v7 - 'apokalupsis' - appearing, manifestation). According to Matthew 24, Jesus will first manifest Himself as lightning (Matt 24:27) and then His SIGN will appear before He COMES in power and glory (Matt 24:30).



Verse 10 is all about the revelation of Jesus Christ in power and glory (Ps 2:1-9; Matt 25:31) when He will set up His earthly Kingdom (Rev 19:11-20:4). At His return He will destroy the Armageddon armies gathered against Him (Rev 16:12-16; 19:19-21) bringing a completion to His judgements at this time.

He will be glorified IN (not 'by') His Saints - that is, His GLORY will be mirrored in them (2 Cor 3:18).

Christians will marvel in that they will admire their Lord for what He has done in them.

This glimpse of the future undoubtedly encouraged Paul's readers and should also encourage us in our trials today.

(3) Conclusion: In your own words write the main message here.....

Table 1: The Seals, Trumpets & Bowls

(1) The Seven Seals - These are happenings before Jesus is revealed in power and glory and correspond to Matthew 24:4-26.

Seal Number		Revelation	Matthew	Event/s
One	BEGINNING OF SORROWS	6:1-2	24:5	Many false Christs will come.
Two		6:3-4	24:6-7a	Wars & Rumours of War.
Three		6:5-6	24:7b	Famines
Four		6:7-8	24:7c	Pestilences & Earthquakes
Five	TRIBULATION	6:9-11	24:9-15	Martyrs in Great Tribulation etc.
Six		6:12-17	24:16-29	Tribulation ending in Blackout.
Seven		8:1-	24:30-31	The Wrath of God - Trumpet and Bowl Judgements.

(2) Trumpet & Bowl Judgements - These seem to be going together.

Number	Trumpet Judgement	Bowl Judgement
One	Hail & fire mingled with blood - third of trees burnt and all grass (Rev8:6-7)	Foul sores on men having mark of the Beast (Rev 16:2)
Two	Burning mountain thrown into sea making it blood. Third of creatures die, third of ships destroyed (Rev 8:8-9)	Sea becomes blood. Living creatures die (Rev 16:3)
Three	Burning star falls from heaven on third of rivers and springs making them poisonous (Rev 8:10-11)	Rivers & springs turn to blood (Rev 16:4)
Four	Third of sun, moon and stars struck (Rev 8:12)	Sun struck - men scorched with fire. (Rev 16:8-9)
Five	Locusts and Scorpions from pit harm those with mark of Beast Darkness due to smoke from pit. (Rev 9:1-12)	Kingdom of Beast becomes full of darkness and all have pains/sores. (Rev 16:10-11)
Six	Third mankind killed by army from Euphrates. (Rev 9:13-21)	Army marches over Euphrates against Beast at Armageddon (Rev 16:12-16)
Seven	Millennial Kingdom (Rev 11:15-19)	'It is Done' (Rev 16:17-21)

LESSON 4 : Prayer for God's Blessing

(1) Context Of This Prayer : 2 Thess 1:11-12

Prayer for spiritual success in the End Times

Paul's team pray for the Thessalonians as a direct result of the revelation of the preceding verses. This prayer is really for them to have God's perspective and not run away from the sufferings they are experiencing, but to embrace them as part of God's will for their lives - knowing the reward to come when Jesus returns.

"The believing thoughts and expectation of the Second Coming of Christ should put us upon prayer to God for ourselves and others. We should watch and pray, so our Saviour directs His disciples (Luke 21:36)" *Matthew Henry*

This prayer really shows us the importance of prayer in the light of the soon coming of Christ. Not only individually but as a team (as in this case), praying not their own agenda but for God's divine Will to be accomplished in those they have a spiritual concern for.

We can learn from Paul's prayer what CHARACTER and CONTENT our prayers should have in these critical days of human history.

(2) The Character of This Prayer:

"Therefore we also pray always for you.." 2 Thess 1:11

(a) What is the 'therefore' there for ? (i.e. in the light of what are they to pray ?)

(b) What else have they been doing that they are 'also' to pray ?

They have been giving _____ to God for their spiritual _____
and _____ of their endurance in _____ to the
other churches and now they also _____ for them.

(c) What does the word 'always' really mean here ? (i.e. what does this mean in practical, every day terms ?) . See also 1 Thess 1:2-3.

NB. the Greek word for 'always' ('pantote') means literally 'every when' or 'at all times'.

Summarise the above by stating the character of our prayers in the light of the Second Coming of Christ.....

(3) The Content of The Prayer.

This prayer has 5 elements and can be used as a model prayer when praying for others and ourselves in these End Times..... The five elements are...

(i) For them to be counted worthy of this calling.

What is 'this' calling in the context here ? (See also 2 Tim 1:10 and 1 Thess 2:12).
(NB. The Greek word for calling is 'Klesis' which means 'an invitation').

'Counted worthy' comes from the root Greek word 'axios' meaning 'due reward'.
Look again at verse 7 and state what that reward will be if we are worthy.....how are we made worthy ?

Is this talking about Salvation ? Explain.

(ii) For the Fulfilling of the Good Pleasure of His Goodness.

The word 'fulfilling' comes from 'pleroo' which means 'to accomplish to the fullest'.
The term 'good pleasure' (Gk.'eudokia') is a combination of 'eu' meaning 'well or whole' and 'dokeo' meaning 'to think'. Put these two together and you get 'wholesome thoughts'.
So this sentence could be read 'to fully accomplish His wholesome thoughts towards us manifesting His goodness'.

See also Phil 2:13 and Jer 29:11 and comment.

(iii) For the Fulfilling of the Work of Faith with Power.

Compare this with 1 Thess 11:3 and James 2:6.

Basically the 'work of faith' is that which God desires in His heart for us to do and comes through the hearing of the 'rhema' (revealed) Word of God to us (see Rom 10:17 where 'word' is 'rhema').

The word 'power' in the Greek is 'Dunamis' where we get the word 'dynamite' from. How are we to show forth the dynamic power of the Lord ?

(iv) For the Name of Jesus to be Glorified In Us.

This is the ultimate purpose of man - to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.
He is glorified in that His glory is manifested in and through His people - immediately (v12) and at the revelation of Jesus Christ (v10).

The use of 'name' here is 'the character, conduct, reputation and everything about the person'.

"In praying this, Paul was asking that God would fully glorify Jesus Christ in these Saints. This is in keeping with and springs from the grace of God, personalized again by Paul as our God, and linked with the Lord Jesus Christ as an equal." BKC

List ways that His name is glorified in us.....

(v) That they might be Glorified in Him.

When will this 'glorification' be ?

What form will it take ? (See Rom 8:30)

(4) Conclusion:

A major activity we should be engaged in in these End Times is prayer. But not just any kind of prayer - prayer that seeks to mobilize God's people in the right positions for the Lord to fulfill all His pleasurable plans in us.

This is not the kind of prayer that comes with our own agendas and says 'bless this project', but it is prayer that inquires in the Temple what the Lord would have us do.

It is prayer that realizes God uses suffering to further His Kingdom purposes and does not always lift persecutions or Tribulations from us, but may even increase them so that He may be glorified in us.

LESSON 5 : Events Preceding That Day

(1) Overview of Chapter 2: Explanation of the Day of the Lord.

Evidently Paul received word that some of the Thessalonians had the impression that the Day of Christ had come, that is, it was near at hand. To reassure them that such was not the case, he reminds them of those things he had told them while he was still with them. That is, Christ will not come until the falling away occurs, and the man of sin is revealed (verses 1-3). Paul then describes this man of sin and explains that he is currently hindered from being revealed. When that which restrains him is removed, the man of sin will become apparent, whom the Lord will destroy with His coming (verses 4-8). The coming of the lawless one is further described, whose coming will be according to the working of Satan. With all power, signs and lying wonders, he will deceive those who do not have a love for the truth. Indeed God will also send a strong delusion to those who do not love the truth, that they might believe a lie and be condemned for taking pleasure in unrighteousness instead of believing the truth (verses 9-12).

As for the Thessalonians themselves, Paul is ever thankful that God has chosen them for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, having called them by the gospel to obtain the glory of the Lord Jesus (verses 13-14). He therefore exhorts them to stand fast and hold to the traditions taught by word or epistle, and prays that Jesus and God the Father will comfort their hearts and establish them in every good word and work (verses 15-17).

The four main objectives in studying this chapter....

- (i) To examine what is revealed about the 'man of sin' whom the Lord will destroy at His coming (and the events surrounding this).
- (ii) To consider how those who do not have a love for the truth are setting themselves up to be deceived by the man of sin.
- (iii) To discern why God will send a strong delusion to some that they will believe a lie.
- (iv) To receive and give comfort to those who are troubled or shaken in mind concerning this day.

The above was taken from 'Executable Outlines - 2 Thessalonians' and may be found on the internet at:
http://churchesofchrist.net/topics/Mark_A_Copeland/2th/2th_02.htm

Chapter 2 may be divided into three part (the first two we will deal with in this lesson....

- (a) Correcting the Error (verses 1-3)
- (b) Detailing the Events leading up to the Day of the Lord (Verses 4-12)
- (c) Comfort for the believer on that Day (Verses 13-17)

(2) Correcting the Error (Verses 1-3):

What was the theological error some of the Thessalonians had fallen into ?

They believed that the day of the Lord was AT HAND / UPON THEM.

This wrong belief caused some of them to live in a manner opposite to that which was best for them and required of them as we will see in the next chapter.

Give an example of how we may have a similar faulty understanding about Christ's second coming and the resultant behaviour...

In verse 1 we see Paul appealing to two future truths the Thessalonians should keep in mind so they will not be soon shaken in mind or troubled. They are...

(a) The COMING ('parousia') of our Lord Jesus Christ (cf. 2 Thess 4:15-17)

(b) Our GATHERING ('episuogoge' - only other use in Heb 10:25) together to Him.
(See also Matt 24:31 and Rev 7).

What else will happen on that day? Why does Paul not mention that?

Paul and team 'asked' them not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled. The word 'ask' in the Greek is 'erotao' which means 'to beseech, intreat' - they were pleading as a father to a son, knowing the correct path for them to follow. What can we learn from this?

How would they be shaken in mind or troubled thinking that the Day of the Lord was upon them? (the word 'come' means more literally 'at hand' or 'upon')

It is the Day of the Lord's Vengeance (His wrath) and is NOT the Great Tribulation (that is the wrath of the Antichrist) that they thought was upon them.

Believers will be gathered to Jesus after the BLACKOUT (see Matt 24:29-31) at the end of the Great Tribulation but before the wrath of God is poured out in the Trumpet and Bowl judgements (See 1 Thess 1:10; 5:9).

This is further confirmed in that believing Jews and Gentiles are sealed and caught up to the Throne (Rev 7) on the Sixth seal, just before the wrath of God is poured out (Rev 6:17) on the seventh seal (Rev 8 onwards). Again this is seen to happen after the BLACKOUT (see Rev 6:12) at the end of the Great Tribulation (5th seal - Rev 6:9-11).

This wrong theology crept into their midst via deceiving prophecies ('by spirit'), false teaching from Scripture ('by word') and by forged letters written in the Apostle Paul's name ('by letter'). Can the same thing happen today? Explain....

Paul corrects them by stating that two specific events must first happen before the Day of the Lord comes. What are those two things?

(a) The FALLING AWAY / APOSTASY must come first.

(b) Then the man of SIN will be REVEALED, the son of PERDITION.

Firstly Paul says there will be an 'apostasia' - where we get our modern term 'apostasy'. This literally means 'a defection from the truth' that will occur from within the established church! Some scholars think that this has already been happening since the Apostle Paul's time, but it could be referring to a soon-coming world-wide event in the Church. Especially as persecution increases and Christians have to go through various trials, many will not have a good foundation and will crumble in to the pressures of the world.

A similar 'falling away' can be seen in Jesus' ministry - the moment He started preaching on His need to go to die on the Cross and the price His disciples must pay, the multitudes dwindled. Only 120 made it to the upper room to be endued with power from on high! What qualities must you have to not be part of this apostasy?

(3) Conclusion:

This first part of Chapter two outlines the theological error the Thessalonians had fallen into. They thought that the Day of the Lord's vengeance was already upon them - hence their troubled nature and shaken minds.

The main aim of Paul's writing was to bring them comfort. Indeed, if they follow the Lord's Law (of life in the Spirit), faithfully walking in His ways, they would need not fear that Day at all. For the believer it is a day of great rejoicing, a day where He will 'be admired among all who believe' (2 Thess 1:10).

The Bible never states that we will escape the wrath of man or even the AntiChrist, but we will escape God's wrath!

The Thessalonians could be assured that that Day was not near anyway because of the absence of two crucial historical events - the apostasy from within the Church and the revealing of the AntiChrist.

We are living in a time like no other - we have more reason than the Thessalonians to say that the Day is upon us. But from Paul's writings we know the time is not yet. Jesus will not come back tomorrow! Why, because the man of Sin is not yet revealed. When we see abomination of desolation standing in the Temple (which must be rebuilt first), then we will know the time is at hand (at least 3.5 years after that event!) - See Matt 24:15.

In a day where there are so many conflicting theories concerning the Second Coming of Christ, we must hear this message of comfort from Paul - if we are faith-filled believers we will not escape persecution but will be able to endure with a great Joy, knowing the glorious day that is to come when our Lord descends in great power and glory with his mighty angels, to gather us together to be with Him, forever.

Lesson 6: The AntiChrist

(1) Introduction: The AntiChrist in Scripture.

Before looking at 2 Thess 2:3b-12 let us first consider some additional insights into the person of the Antichrist in Scripture. Paul had already recounted what the Old Testament reveals about this 'man of sin' ('Gk. 'anomia' - without Law), son of perdition (Gk. 'apoleia' = 'loss (physical, spiritual or eternal)' - see 2 Thess 2:3b). In 2 Thess 2:5 he states that he had been teaching them these things. We now have a clear picture, clearer than the Thessalonians, because of the New Testament writings, especially the Apostle John's writings.

As you survey the facts presented below and look at the verses remember that the Antichrist is also called 'the beast' which is used interchangeably to mean the Antichrist system which is now in operation (see also 2 Thess 2:7, 1 Jn 2:18) and the Antichrist person to be revealed in the near future. Also there are many types of the Antichrist who have already been revealed, showing forth a shadow of the Antichrist to come (eg. Antiochus Epiphanies (Dan 8:8-14,21-27; Dan 11) - 168 BC, he destroyed the Altar in the temple and built an altar to Zeus.)

(a) The Origins of the AntiChrist: Where does he come from? Who is he?

- (i) He will be from God's people - maybe a Jew or a Christian (1 Jn 2:19; Dan 11:37).
- (ii) He will be a King/ruler of a nation (Dan 8:24).
- (iii) He will be a King that rises out of a 10 nation union stemming from the Roman Empire. He will subdue 3 of the 10 kings and take pre-eminence (Dan 2:40-44, Dan 7:24 and Rev 17:12).
- (iv) He will be the eighth King after a succession of such with the Antichrist spirit. He is the seventh revived from having been thought dead (Rev 13:1-3, 17:10-11).

(b) The Acts of the Antichrist: What will he do?

- (i) He will confirm a peace treaty (covenant) for 7 years with Israel (Dan 9:27a).
- (ii) In the midst of that time (i.e. after 3.5 years), he will break the covenant and move his armies into Jerusalem where he will defile the Temple (Dan 9:27b, Matt 24:15), demanding that people worship his image.
- (iii) He will terrorize Jerusalem and destroy Israel's power (Dan 9:27; 12:7; Luke 21:24).
- (iv) He will persecute God's people and blaspheme against God. (Rev 13:5-7).
- (v) During this time of Great Tribulation he and his false prophet will set up a cashless society where people can only buy and sell with his mark (Rev 13:16-18). He will have authority over the nations for this season. He will deceive even the Elect.
- (vi) He will gather the nations for battle against Jesus and His army at Armageddon (Rev 16:14,16) where he will be utterly destroyed (Rev 17:14; 19:19-20).

(c) The Beliefs of the Antichrist: What teaching will he propagate as a lie?

NB. This teaching is already here as the Spirit of Antichrist is, but The Antichrist will particularly stress these points (New Age philosophy).

- (i) He will deny that Jesus is the Messiah (1 Jn 2:22a).
- (ii) He will deny the Father and the Son (cannot have one without other) (1 Jn 2:22b)
- (iii) He will deny that Jesus came in the flesh (i.e. The Incarnation - Col 2:9)(1 Jn 4:3)

(2) Five Points About The Nature of the Antichrist:

In 2 Thess 2:4-12 we find five points concerning the Antichrist that Paul wishes to make to the Thessalonians and we need to take note of...

POINT 1: He will exalt himself up as God, opposing all that is called God. (Verse 4)

The word for exalt is 'huperairomai' which means 'to raise oneself over' and the word oppose is from the Greek word 'antikeimai', meaning 'to be opposite'. Infact Antichrist means 'the opposite of Christ'. Even the words used for his revelation (apokolupto), coming (parousia) and many more are the same as for Christ. He will be the complete opposite of Christ , yet appear to many as Christ!

- (a) Exalting himself - See Dan 8:9-11;11:36-38 and Rev 13:8 and comment....

- (b) Opposing other religions (especially Jews and Christians) - See Dan 7:25 & Rev 13:7 and comment.....

POINT 2: He will be revealed, a law unto himself, at the chosen time (Verse 6-8a)

He will only be revealed ('apokolupto' - 'to take away the veil') when He who restrains, the restrainer ('katecho' = 'to hold down or in place') is taken out of the way (lit. 'voluntarily removes himself from standing in the way').

- (a) Who do you think this restrainer (verses 6-7) is ?

- (b) Does this mean he (the restrainer) will not be active on the earth at this time ? Explain.....

- (c) 'That he may be revealed (apokalupto) in his own time (kairos - appointed time or season)'" is talking about who ? (see verse 6)

- (d) What is the 'mystery of lawlessness' ('anomia' - without Law (of God)

- (e) He will 'change times and law' (Dan 7:25) by setting up his own satan-inspired system - read Rev 13:3-17; 17:12-13 and comment on his lawless rule...

- (f) He will be 'revealed' as the Antichrist when he breaks the covenant with Israel and demands worship for himself. The Bible tells us that he will be a man who was thought dead but made alive again (See Rev 13:3,14;17:8).

POINT 3: He will be destroyed by the Coming of Christ (at Armageddon) - Verse 8b.

Jesus will 'consume' ('anaireo' - to violently take away) the beast and his armies by the breath ('pneuma' = spirit) of His mouth and the brightness ('epiphaneia' - where we get 'epiphany' from, meaning 'manifestation of His glory') of His coming ('parousia').

Read the following scriptures that talk about the Antichrist's destruction...

Dan 7:11,22,26-27; 8:25; 11:45 and Rev 17:14;19:19-21.

What will be the nature of that destruction ?

POINT 4: He will Receive Power From Satan and is Under his Control - Verse 9.

During the Great Tribulation , Satan will enter the Antichrist and with the false prophet they will have power and show forth signs and lying wonders.

See Rev 13:4,13; 16:13-14 and 19:20 and comment...

Read also Deut 13:1-3 and comment...

POINT 5: He will Deceive those who don't Receive the Love of the Truth -Verse10-12.

In verse 3 the word 'deceive' is 'exapatao' which means 'to seduce wholly' and now here in verse 10 the term 'unrighteous deception' literally means 'immoral, unjust and wrongful delusion'. He will delude people by his power and signs into thinking he is the Messiah, the answer to their dreams. Many Christians even will be deceived and thus damned due to their willful turning away.

Read Daniel 8:12,25; 2 Jn 7 and Rev 19:20 about this deception...

(a) What is the main truth that the Antichrist will deceive people in ?

(b) Those who are deceived will come under a 'strong delusion from the Lord'.
What does this mean ? Does God encourage them in their deception ?

(c) Those who are deceived will be condemned (judged as guilty) because they

did not TRUTH('agape') the TRUTH and took DELIGHT

('eudokeo' - to think well of') in UNRIGHTEOUSNESS. (Verse 12)

(3) Conclusion: Write out, in your own words the truth concerning the Beast...

LESSON 7: The Comfort of the Believer.

(1) INTRODUCTION: Comforted by calling & election.

2 Thessalonians 2:13-17

After having gone into detail about the horrible fate of all who follow the Antichrist system, Paul and his team thank God because they see the Thessalonians will not all share that fate. The reason for this is their calling and election from God, which, if they are faithful to it, will cause them to receive comfort from the Lord even in the midst of great tribulations - particularly The Great Tribulation during the rule of the Antichrist.

In verse 13 Paul again says 'we are bound to give thanks' (i.e. under obligation to give thanks). In chapter 1 (verse 3) we see they were obliged to give thanks to God for the Thessalonian's growth in faith and love and their patient, cheerful endurance in persecution. We gain further insight here, that walking in faith, love and patience comes as a direct result of moving faithfully in the light of our calling and election.

They give thanks because:

- (i) God from the beginning chose them for salvation through sanctification. (v13)
- and (ii) He called them by the gospel for the obtaining of glory. (v14)

Because of these truths:

- (i) They must stand fast (v15a)
- and (ii) Hold the traditions they were taught by word and letter. (v15b)

As a result of doing the above:

- (i) They will receive comfort from the Lord. (v16-17a)
- and (ii) God will establish them in every word and work. (v17b)

(2) Called, Chosen and Faithful (v13-15) cf. Rev 17:14.

According to Revelation 17:14 those saints that will be with Jesus (when He returns to fight against the armies of the Beast at Armageddon) will be those who are

CALLED, CHOSEN and FAITHFUL.

Many are called but few are chosen

Read Matthew 22:1-14, especially verse 14. This parable is talking ultimately of the

Marriage Supper of the Lamb (see Rev 19:7-8) which happens at the same time as Jesus' triumphal victory at Armageddon. This parable shows that many are called into His Kingdom (could refer to the Millennial Kingdom) but they have to be CHOSEN. Here only those who were picked from the street and had prepared themselves by wearing the wedding garments were CHOSEN.

In Revelation 19:8 we see that these garments are the 'righteous acts of the saints'.
We are not called BY our good works but we are called UNTO good works (Eph 2:8-10).

Let us look at the three stages as revealed here in Second Thessalonians...

(a) STAGE 1: CALLED (verse 14)

Even though this verse comes after the one about being chosen, in our Christian walk it is our call that comes first (See 2 Tim 1:9). The Greek word for 'call' is 'kaleo' which means 'invitation'. Just like the parable of the marriage feast we are all invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb when Jesus returns. However, we must 'make ourself ready' by walking in His ways. The man who came to the wedding banquet without any wedding garments had not prepared himself and was cast into 'outer darkness'. This may represent those who are not overcomers (Rev 17:14) and have not been faithful to His call on their lives - these will have to go through the wrath of God (literally a time of great darkness with the blackout, and a time of gnashing of teeth) - but they will be saved 'as through fire'.

According to verse 14 in the beginning where it says 'to which He called you' what is the 'to which' referring to ? (look back to verse 13)

It refers to our SALVATION (of our bodies, not Spirit or Soul - our glorification).
Is this talking about our born again experience ? Explain....

What are we called (invited) to obtain ? THE GLORY OF GOD..

(See also 1 Thess 2:12).

What is this specifically referring to ? _____.

It is interesting to note that the word for 'comfort' and 'consolation' as use in verses 16 and 17 comes from the root 'parakaleo' which combines two words 'para' and 'kaleo'. 'Para' means 'alongside' and as we have mentioned 'kaleo' is the word for 'called' or 'invited'. This shows us the operation of the Holy Spirit coming alongside to invite us into His purposes, to His Kingdom and Glory. It is the knowledge of this call that gives us great comfort.

(b) STAGE 2: CHOSEN (Verse 13b)

The word for chosen (Gk. 'haireomai') literally means 'to take for oneself'. Here Paul calls the Thessalonians 'beloved by the Lord' because they had shown themselves worthy of His call on their lives. God's choice of us is 'from the beginning' but this does not mean that he randomly picked us out of humanity to be His choice and it was the fate of others to miss out. Romans 8:29 shows us that we are chosen based on God's foreknowledge. He looked through the channels of time and saw those who would respond positively to His call and thus be the CHOSEN ones that God takes for Himself, for His good pleasure.

At the end of verse 13 Paul says that they were chosen for what ? _____

How are they to attain this goal ? Through SANCTIFICATION and by the

SPIRIT and BELIEF in the truth.

Notice that this is exactly what those who will be condemned (see verse 12) refused to do.

(c) STAGE 3: FAITHFUL (verse 15).

Those that will be in the company of saints as overcomers with Christ (Rev 17:14) will not only those who hear his call, or even those who have to some degree responded to that call and been chosen. They will be those who remain faithful to the end. In this verse we see Paul encourages the Thessalonians to remain faithful by doing two things....

- (ii) Stand Fast:** This comes from the Greek word 'steko' which means 'to persevere'. This is perseverance particularly in the face of persecution.
- (iii) Hold the Traditions:** The word 'hold' is from the Greek word 'krateo' meaning 'to seize or retain'. We are to cling onto the teachings of truth we have received from within the church by anointed teachers - whether by word (i.e. quickened, revealed word) or by letter (the written word of God). NB. This is not talking of the traditions of man which lead to legalism.

This is particularly relevant in the light of verse 10 - many will fall away from the love of the truth. The faithful ones will love His word...His truth.

These things are done in the light of our calling and election as we have seen (that is why Paul starts this verse with 'therefore').

(3) Everlasting Comfort If We Abide In Him. (Verses 16-17)

In these end times we must receive the 'anointing' and abide in that - Read 1 Jn 2:27-28 and comment.....

We will be comforted by the Lord if we heed the above stages (called, chosen and faithful). Paul reminds them that they have already received 'everlasting consolation' from the Lord - this is comfort and rest that will never be nullified. It is comfort they have already received because of their faithful walk in Him so far.

Where does their good hope come from ? It comes by GRACE. That is by receiving and ministering in His unmerited favour.

If we faithfully seek and do His will and live uprightly in these end days, we will receive such a comfort from the Lord, even in the midst of great persecution. He will 'comfort our hearts' and establish us in every good word and work.

The word for 'establish' is 'sterizo' which means 'to set fast, turn resolutely in a certain direction'. As we walk faithfully for Him He will set our faces resolutely towards His Kingdom and Glory to speak His word and do His works, and we will be greatly comforted.

(4) Conclusion:

Paul and team are obligated to give thanks to God because the Thessalonians have responded by grace to the call of God on their lives and shown they are the chosen ones. He urges them to be faithful til the end, so they can receive more comfort from the Lord, especially in times of great tribulation.

LESSON 8: Prayer for His will to be done.

(1) Overview of Chapter 3:

In this last chapter we first find Paul soliciting prayer on his behalf, that the word of the Lord might have free course and be glorified, and that he might be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men (referring ultimately to the Antichrist who he talked about in Chapter 2) (Verses 1-2). Confident in the Lord to establish and guard them from the evil one, he is also confident that they will do the things he commands them (Verses 3-4). He follows with a prayer that the Lord direct their hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ (Verse 5).

One last item needs to be discussed, and that is the need for disciplinary action towards those who are walking disorderly and not according to the tradition received from Paul. Reminding them of his own example of labouring night and day while with them, he charges that if anyone will not work, neither should he eat (Verses 6-10). Paul had heard there were members who had stopped working, and had become busybodies. He exhorts such members to work in quietness and eat their own bread. If they do not, the others are to note such persons and not keep company with them, that they may be ashamed. Such disciplinary action was to be administered in a brotherly way, not as towards an enemy (Verses 11-15).

Paul closes his second epistle to the Thessalonians by first asking that the Lord of peace give them peace always in every way (Verse 16). He then offers a salutation in his own handwriting as a sign of authorship, followed with a prayer that the grace of the Lord be with them all (Verses 17-18).

Objectives of studying this chapter.

There are two main objectives in studying this chapter...

- (i) To notice the importance of prayer in spreading the Word and in assisting the Spiritual development of brethren especially in the End Times.
- (ii) To examine the purpose and methodology of discipline in a local congregation (as relating to wrong living in the End Times as a result of wrong theology).

The above summary and outline and objectives was taken from Bible Outlines by Mark.A.Copeland and can be found on the internet at: http://churchesofchrist.net/topics/Mark_A_Copeland/2th/2th_03.htm

(2) Prayer For His Will to be Done : Verses 1-5

This section can further be divided into three sections...

- (a) Paul requests their prayers (importance of praying for His labourers in these End Times) (Verses 1-2)
- (b) An expression of confidence in the Lord (an important perspective for us to have in these End Times) (Verses 3-4).
- (c) A Prayer for them (the importance of praying for all of God's people in these End Times) (Verse 5).

Here we see Paul say what is required 'finally'. In Scripture the last words are often the most important and need particularly to be heeded. Paul is issuing a call from the heart for us all to offer up confident prayers to the Father for His purposes to be fulfilled.

(a) Paul Requests their Prayers (Verses 1-2):

Paul is effectively commanding the Thessalonians to pray for him and his apostolic team. In the light of the End-Times we are living in there is to be heightened prayer, especially for those labouring for the gospel - even prayer for more of such workers (Luke 10:2).

The content of the prayer is....

(1) That the WORD(Logos) of the Lord may have FREE COURSE

(‘trecho’ - to run or walk hastily) and be GLORIFIED (to render or esteem as glorious).

This is concerning the Message - that it can be delivered unhindered - in what ways can the Word of God not have free course in a society ? Give an example...

(2) That they might be DELIVERED (‘rhoumai’ = rescued, drawn out)

from UNREASONABLE (‘atopos’ = out of place, infurious, wicked)

and WICKED (‘poneros’ = bad,evil,grievous - as in 2 Tim 3:13) men.

This is concerning the Messengers - that they might be delivered from men who would attempt to hinder them from doing God’s work. This is particularly relevant when you consider what Paul has previously taught about the Antichrist who will certainly be unreasonable and wicked.

‘For not all have faith’ - see 2 Tim 3:1-8 for a description of the faithless generation present in these last days.

(b) An Expression of Confidence in the Lord (Verses 3-4)

Paul’s request for prayer and later prayer for them is not a hopeless cry, but is based squarely on the nature of God....

(1) The Lord is FAITHFUL (trustworthy).

(2) God will ESTABLISH (‘sterizo’ -see Ch.2:17 for the meaning of this) us.

(3) He will GUARD (‘phulasso’ - keep /preserve from trouble) us from evil (‘poneros’ - see verse 2).

This shows us that as we pray for God’s will to be accomplished in these Last Days we must pray on the grounds of who He is according to the promises of His Word.

Also, Paul not only expressed confidence in God concerning His nature, but also in what He will accomplish and has accomplished in the Thessalonians (NB. it says ‘confidence in the Lord concerning you’ not confidence in them alone!).

He has confidence in the Lord that they DO and WILL DO the things he and his team had commanded (‘paraggello’ = to transmit a message) them. See Phillipians 2:13 and state why Paul’s confidence is in the Lord and not them.....

(c) A Prayer For Them (Verse 5)

Paul not only wants them to pray for him and his team as God's labourers, but also is full of self-sacrificial prayer for them - his disciples (you can see this in 1 Thess 1:2-3).
What can we learn from this ?

Paul prays that the Lord would DIRECT ('kateuthuno' = to straighten fully)

their hearts into the LOVE of God and into the PATIENCE

('hupomone' = cheerful/hopeful endurance) of Christ.

Paul and team effectively pray that they would walk in God's ways until the end and full of the right attitude - i.e. cheerfully and expectantly awaiting the return of Christ even through great tribulations.

(3) Conclusion: Prayer is paramount.

We can conclude this section by saying that in the light of the revelation of the AntiChrist and knowing that it is vitally important for us to faithfully continue spreading the Gospel (the End will only come after all peoples have heard His word - Matt 24:14) we must be earnest in our prayers for one another. These are not vain prayers, but based firmly on a knowledge on who God is (Faithful and watchful to finish His work in a through us) and a bold confidence that He will complete His good will in us and those we pray for.

LESSON 9: Withdraw From the Disorderly.

2 Thessalonians 3:6-15

(1) INTRODUCTION: Why was discipline needed.

As we have seen there was a theological error that had crept into the church at Thessalonica and caused some of the members to disobey a command Paul had often repeated.

What was the theological error ? (2 Thess 2:2)

What was the resultant wrong behaviour ?

What was the original command Paul had given them but some are now disobeying ? (See 1 Thess 4:11-12 - see previous topic on 1 Thessalonians to see what this means)

The main reason for the discipline Paul proposes here is that some of them had deliberately and willfully disobeyed Paul's repeated command. In verse 10 here we see Paul makes it beyond doubt that they had been thus commanded.

(2) The Pattern Of Church Discipline:

(a) The People Who Deserve The Discipline:

We have seen that discipline was necessary not because they had simply done something wrong, but because they **WILLFULLY** and **DELIBERATELY** went against Paul's earlier repeated command. This should be the reason for any church discipline.

There had been false teachers propagating a false doctrine that the Day of the Lord was upon them (2 Thess 2:2). They should have realized that this lazy lifestyle that resulted went expressly against Paul's teaching and so this new theology was not right.

Verse 6: They were walking disorderly ('ataktos' = irregularly (morally)) not according to Paul's teaching (tradition) which they had originally received ('paralambano' = to receive near/ associate oneself with). They had actually shown forth an initial response of obedience by associating themselves with Paul's teaching to work hard in their calling but now are doing the opposite.

Verse 11: They were people from within the church who were walking in a disorderly manner (again 'ataktos'), not working ('ergazomai' - cf. 1 Thess 4:11) but they were busybodies ('periergazomai' = to work all about - no focus).

To summarize: Certain members of the church needed discipline as they had

_____ and _____ disobeyed

Paul's command to work hard in God's call on their life. But they

listened to false teachings that the _____ was

upon them, causing them to walk _____ and not

_____ at all, becoming _____.

(3) What The Discipline Comprises Of:

Paul commanded them (the faithful members) to WITHDRAW ('stello' = to abstain from associating with) from such people (Verse 6).

If these people don't even obey Paul and team's commands after this letter (that is to 'work in quietness and eat their own bread' Verse 12) then the other members are told to not keep company ('sunanamignumi' = to mix up together) with them (Verse 14) and yet not count them as an enemy ('echthros' = to be hateful, hostile towards), but admonish ('noutheteo' = to put in mind, to caution or reprove gently) as a brother (Verse 15).

How practically do you think this discipline is carried out? Give a possible scenario....

(4) The Authority of Their Command:

Their command is not unreasonable as they have already demonstrated it is possible by their own example amongst the Thessalonians (Verses 7-9).

Paul says that he and his team had.....

(a) Not been DISORDERLY ('akakteo' - morally irregular) among them (Verse 7) - eg. v6,11.

(b) Not taken ADVANTAGE materially of others but had EARNED their own living by hard LABOUR and toil (lit. travail, sadness, painfulness) day and night (Verse 8).

(c) Been an EXAMPLE ('tupos' = a stamp creating an indented image, a model, pattern) for them to FOLLOW ('mimeomai' = to imitate, mimic).

We see they had authority to command this of the church and demand this discipline because they had an authority that came through their EXAMPLE. They had already proven with their own self-sacrificial actions that they could keep their own command.

What can we learn from this?

(5) CONCLUSION:

Paul's basic desire was to see the Thessalonians not growing weary (discouraged) in doing good (God's will). Because certain members were threatening this from happening he felt that it was imperative to command that they be disciplined in love by the others not associating with them (as they were overly depending on the other members and enjoying idle and wasteful communication with them). These people had deliberately disobeyed Paul and team's earlier command to work hard in God's call on their lives because they thought the Day of the Lord was upon them (2 Thess 2:2). This discipline is therefore for their own good and meant as a restorative measure for them and the church as a whole (protecting it from the damage caused and preventing further damage).

LESSON 10: Paul's Conclusion.

2 Thessalonians 3:16-18

(1) The Conclusion to the Letter: Blessings on us in End Time

Let us conclude by seeing Matthew Henry's own words on this last section:

2 Thessalonians 3:16-18

In this conclusion of the epistle we have the apostle's benediction and prayers for these Thessalonians. Let us desire them for ourselves and our friend. There are three blessings pronounced upon them, or desired for them:--

I. That God would give them peace. Note,

1. Peace is the blessing pronounced or desired. By peace we may understand all manner of prosperity; here it may signify, in particular, peace with God, peace in their own minds and consciences, peace among themselves, and peace with all men.
2. This peace is desired for them always, or in every thing; and he desired they might have all good things at all times.
3. Peace by all means: that, as they enjoyed the means of grace, they might with success use all the means and methods of peace too; for peace is often difficult, as it is always desirable.
4. That God would give them peace, who is the Lord of peace. If we have any peace that is desirable, God must give it, who is the author of peace and lover of concord. We shall neither have peaceable dispositions ourselves nor find men disposed to be at peace with us, unless the God of peace give us both.

II. That the presence of God might be with them: The Lord be with you all. We need nothing more to make us safe and happy, nor can we desire any thing better for ourselves and our friends, than to have God's gracious presence with us and them. This will be a guide and guard in every way that we may go, and our comfort in every condition we may be in. It is the presence of God that makes heaven to be heaven, and this will make this earth to be like heaven. No matter where we are if God be with us, nor who is absent if God be with us, nor who is absent if God be present with us.

III. That the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ might be with them. So this apostle concluded his first epistle to these Thessalonians; and it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that we may comfortably hope to have peace with God and enjoy the presence of God, for he has made those nigh that were afar off. It is this grace that is all in all to make us happy. This is what the apostle admired and magnified on all occasions, what he delighted and trusted in; and by this salutation or benediction, written with his own hand, as the token of every epistle (when the rest was written by an amanuensis), he took care lest the churches he wrote to should be imposed on by counterfeit epistles, which he knew would be of dangerous consequence.

Let us be thankful that we have the canon of scripture complete, and by the wonderful and special care of divine Providence preserved pure and uncorrupt through so many successive ages, and not dare to add to it, nor diminish from it. Let us believe the divine original of the sacred scriptures, and conform our faith and practice to this our sufficient and only rule, which is able to make us wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. Amen.

(from Matthew Henry's Commentary)

So, in this conclusion we see Paul prays for the three most important blessings to be seen in our lives, especially as the day of the Antichrist appears. We must manifest the PEACE of God in our lives, HIS PRESENCE and the GRACE of God. With these three we'll be able to do what Paul has been exhorting the Thessalonians to do, have an attitude of joyful, hopeful endurance even in great tribulation, diligently doing the work of God He has called us to with God-given focus.

If we are to approach the Day of the Lord with the right heart we must heed Paul's message in this letter. As we catch the spirit of what he is saying we will not be easily turned away from the truth as some of the Thessalonians had been and thus needed discipline. Instead we will patiently and cheerfully await the Day of the Lord, going through persecutions with joy and much prayer for His work to be accomplished in and through His beloved Sons.

May this little letter challenge us to rise up at this time and determine to see our lives count for the kingdom and not be swept away by the ploys of the Antichrist spirit that seeks to derail us from the truth and walking in His light.

Amen.