

# *Second Thessalonians*

## Chapter 1

### Greeting

**1 Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: 2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.**

**1:1** *in God.* The Thessalonian Church has its being, foundation, source, character and very existence in God. Paul declares plainly the converts now belong to the Father and Christ. (TLSB)

**1:2** Paul's typical greeting, used within the context of a letter or within worship (liturgically). God's grace is the source of all real blessings, and peace is the result of these blessings. Cf 2:16; 3:16. (TLSB)

**1:1–2** Paul greets the Christians in Thessalonica as fellow members of the Body of Christ (the Church) and blesses them with God's grace and peace. Christian believers are called out of worldliness to lives of holiness. We are connected to the Holy One, to the Lord Himself. As such, we must act differently than the world and not according to its standards of self-centeredness (cf Rm 12:1–2); we must exhibit grace and peace to all others. Like the Thessalonians, our place as Christians "in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" is a gift from God and is assured to us by His grace alone (cf Eph 1:11–14). Jesus' death and resurrection incorporated us into His Body through Baptism and reconciled us with the Father (cf Gal 2:20; Eph 2:13–21). • "Lord Jesus Christ, Your pow'r make known, For You are Lord of lords alone; Defend Your holy Church that we May sing your praise eternally. O Comforter of priceless worth, Send peace and unity on earth." Amen. (LSB 655:2–3) (TLSB)

### Thanksgiving

**3 We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers,[a] as is right, because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing. 4 Therefore we ourselves boast about you in the churches of God for your steadfastness and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions that you are enduring.**

**1:3** *ought.* Paul is obliged to give thanks where it is due (cf. 1Th 1:7–8). (CSB)

*faith ... love.* Two virtues that Paul had been pleased to acknowledge in the Thessalonian church (see 1Th 3:6–7), but that were also somewhat lacking (1Th 3:10, 12). (CSB)

Faith is a gift from God (cf Eph 2:8), created through the means of His grace. Through these means, God also grows our faith. He matures and strengthens our confidence and trust in Jesus as our only Savior (cf Mk 9:24). "We must use the Sacraments in such a way that faith, which believes the promises offered and set forth through the Sacraments, is increased" (AC XIII 2). Faith is not completed or made better by love; faith is sufficient in and of itself to connect us with God's salvation. However, faith grows in understanding, becomes steadier in the face of persecution, and naturally produces good works (love) for the neighbor who needs them. Through faith, a person has been made a new creation, a good tree that produces more and more good fruit. Love increases as faith grows (cf Mt 7:17, 12:33–35; 2Co 5:17; LC II 57–59; III 1–3). (TLSB)

*is increasing.* The same verb Paul had used in his prayer that their love might grow (1Th 3:12). He is recording an exact answer to prayer. (CSB)

**1:4** *we*. Emphatic, “we ourselves.” Paul seems to imply that it was unusual for the founders of a church to boast about it, though others might do so (cf. 1Th 1:9). But the Thessalonians were so outstanding that Paul departed from normal practice. (CSB)

Not arrogant or self-promoting. Thessalonians are examples to the other churches (cf 2Co 8:1–7). (TLSB)

*churches of God*. In Corinth and its surrounding area, from where Paul was writing (cf 2Co 1:1). (TLSB)

*persecutions and in the afflictions*. See 1Th 1:6; 2:14; 3:3. (CSB)

Specifics of the Thessalonians’ suffering are not revealed, except that it is for “the kingdom of God” (v 5). Christian suffering is in many ways a mystery of the faith. Why should the upright and honest people of Thessalonica have to suffer? Yet, Paul gives thanks! After all, a Christian will and must suffer (2Tm 3:12). And persecution is a sign that a person is on the right way: the powers of evil are disturbed when Christ is active and when His promised coming is near. Suffering mysteriously unifies us with Jesus, the Suffering Servant (cf Is 53); it provides an opportunity for us to give glory to God (cf Jn 9:1–3); it tests and strengthens our faith (cf 1Pt 1:3–9); it teaches us to love God for His own sake, and not for the sake of prosperity; it conforms and shapes us into the image of Christ (cf Rm 8:17); it teaches us to glory in the cross (cf Lk 9:22–24; Ps 34:19–22); it humbles us, reminding us that the servant is not greater than the master and preventing self-righteousness from closing us to His gifts (cf Jn 15:20). Suffering can be thought of as one of God’s “strange” gifts (cf Ac 5:40–42; 1Pt 4:12–14). (TLSB)

**1:3–4** Paul gives thanks for God’s grace at work among the Thessalonians, by which He has created faith and love in them. Paul points to the persecuted Thessalonians as examples for other Christians of their time and ours. We, too, should “be imitators of God” (Eph 5:1). We must set an example to others in what we believe and in what we say and do for them; i.e., by living in faith and in love. In this way, we will be, as Luther puts it, little Christs, “[helping] our neighbor through our body and its works” (AE 31:367). Christ is indeed our example, but, much greater and higher than that, He is our Savior! Cf 1Pt 2:19–25. He suffered in our place, on account of our sins, for us! • Almighty God, we implore You that You would strengthen us through the Lord’s Supper in faith toward You and in fervent love toward one another. Amen. (TLSB)

*The Judgment at Christ's Coming*

**5 This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering— 6 since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, 7 and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels 8 in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, 10 when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed. 11 To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power, 12 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.**

**1:5** Paul consoles the Thessalonians: their suffering, as well as their faith and conduct in the face of tribulation, is part of God’s plan of history as the Last Day draws nearer, and it is a clear sign of His future “righteous judgment.” Faith perseveres unto eternal life (cf 1Pt 1:3–7). (TLSB)

*evidence of the righteous judgment of God.* The evidence was in the way the Thessalonians endured trials. The judgment on them was right because God did not leave them to their own resources. He provided strength to endure, and this gift in turn produced spiritual and moral character. It also proved that God was on their side and gave a warning to their persecutors (cf. Php 1:28). (CSB)

May refer to “your steadfastness and faith in all your persecutions” (v 4). (TLSB)

*kingdom of God.* Suffering is at times an aspect of the Father’s gracious discipline; it is a way in which He shapes and conforms His children, thus preparing them for the glory of His kingdom. God Himself makes us worthy through Jesus, the Lamb (cf v 11; Gal 3:27; Rv 5:6–14). (TLSB)

*for which.* That is, “in the interest of which” or “in behalf of which.” (CSB)

**1:6** *God considers it just.* The justice of God brings punishment on unrepentant sinners (cf. Mk 9:47–48; Lk 13:3–5), and it may be in the here and now (see Ro 1:24, 26, 28) as well as on judgment day. (CSB)

*repay with affliction.* At the second coming (cf vv 7–10). (TLSB)

**1:7** *grant relief.* Retribution not only involves punishment of the evil but also relief for the righteous. (CSB)

*as well as to us.* Paul was no academic theologian writing in comfort from a distance; rather, he was suffering just as they were. (CSB)

*revealed.* Many people even deny the existence of Christ. But at his second coming he will be seen by everyone for who he is. (CSB)

*flaming fire.* He comes to punish wickedness (cf. Isa 66:15; Rev 1:14). (CSB)

*his powerful angels.* Perhaps a class of angels (such a group is mentioned in apocalyptic writings) given special power to do God’s will. (CSB)

The Lord executes His powerful judgment through them (cf Ps 103:20). (TLSB)

**1:8** *in flaming fire.* Fire accompanies and reveals the Lord as He comes “to judge the living and the dead” (1Pt 4:5) in vengeance (cf Dn 7:9–10). (TLSB)

*do not know God.* Does not refer to those who have never heard of the true God but to those who refuse to recognize him (cf. 2:10, 12; Ro 1:28). (CSB)

*obey the gospel.* Faith obeys; obedience is faithful. Rejection of the Gospel is disobedience to the divine invitation to faith and life. (TLSB)

*do not obey.* The gospel invites acceptance, and rejection is disobedience to a royal invitation. (CSB)

**1:9** *destruction.* Not annihilation.. Paul uses the word in 1Co 5:5, possibly of the destruction of the “flesh” for the purpose of salvation. Since, however, salvation implies resurrection of the body, annihilation cannot be in mind. The word means something like “complete ruin.” Here it means being

shut out from Christ's presence. This eternal separation is the penalty of sin and the essence of hell. (CSB)

Everlasting fire, chastisement, ruin, punishment, and judgment describe the end of those who reject God's mercy. Not an annihilation but a complete and final separation from God, from beholding the face of Jesus. This is hell (cf Mt 25:31–46). (TLSB)

*glory of His might.* The visible glory of God's presence; it shines forth from His strength, His might. Our Lord's presence is held in tension: earthly in this time and place, and also heavenly in eternity. He is inseparably present with the faithful already now in His Body, the Church, through Word and Sacrament (cf Rm 8:30–39); at the same time, paradoxically, believers await the revelation of His presence "when He comes on that day" (v 10). Cf 2Co 4:6; 1Th 2:12. (TLSB)

**1:10** *glorified in his saints.* Not simply "among" but "in" them. His glory is seen in what they are. (CSB)

The Lord ultimately shares His glory with His followers "on that day"; He is the source of glory (cf 2:14; Rm 8:17–18; Php 3:21). (TLSB)

*our testimony.* The preaching of the gospel is essentially bearing testimony to what God has done in Christ. (CSB)

The Gospel (v 8) preached by the apostles, who were witnesses of what they had seen and heard, esp the utterly convincing fact that Jesus was raised from the dead (1Co 15:5–8). (TLSB)

**1:11** *worthy of His calling.* Only God can proclaim and make the Thessalonians or anyone worthy, and "He will surely do it" (1Th 5:24)! Here the worthiness refers to our present vocations and our holiness therein. God calls Christians in Baptism, and thus He saves them, draws them to Himself, and keeps them in His hand. (TLSB)

*resolve for good.* Lit. "resolve of goodness." God initiates every good purpose and every act prompted by faith; Paul prays accordingly that he will bring them to fulfillment. (CSB)

Wrought by God's sanctifying power; God's gift of justifying faith produces these good works. Though justification and sanctification are distinct, as are faith and works, they are never separate. We are saved through faith alone, but faith is never alone; it always produces good works. (TLSB)

*by His power.* Because of sin, we are powerless to do the good works of faith. Paul's prayer is that God would continue His work and bring it to completion (cf Jn 15:5). (TLSB)

**1:12** *name.* In ancient times one's name was often more than a personal label; it summed up what a person was. Paul looks for glory to be ascribed to Christ for all he will do in the lives of the Thessalonian Christians. (CSB)

In and through His people, the Lord is glorified and He, in turn, is their glory. "[God] has created us for this very reason, that He might redeem and sanctify us" (LC II 64). Christians glorify the Lord by serving their neighbor (cf Mt 25:40; Lk 10:25–37; Rm 12:1). This has an evangelistic effect (Mt 5:16; cf Php 1:9–11). (TLSB)

*our God and the Lord.* Paul normally uses “God” to refer to the First Person of the Holy Trinity (the Father) and “Lord” to refer to the Second Person (the Son). Both are divine; Paul is speaking here of the two persons of the Trinity, not two separate gods. (TLSB)

**1:5–12** God’s judgment will be carried out by the Lord Jesus at His second coming on the Last Day. This is bad news for those who do not believe, for those who reject God’s grace in Christ (v 8), as “they will suffer ... away from the presence of the Lord” (v 9). As believers, we live in a state of continual readiness for this day (cf Mt 24:36–51; 2Co 6:2). Jesus will be glorified in us, and we in Him (v 12); by His grace, God will judge believers worthy to inherit heaven; and by His power, He will bring our faith to its heavenly fulfillment (vv 11–12). • Gracious Father, You led Your people, ancient Israel, from bondage in Egypt to the Promised Land. Lead us, the new Israel, from this earthly vale of tears to the promised land of Your heavenly kingdom and eternal life. Amen. (TLSB)