
Outline of Paul's Second Epistle to the Thessalonians

I. Chapter 1

- A. Salutation (1:1-2)
- B. Assurance of Victory at God's Righteous Judgment (1:3-12)
 - 1. Commendation & praise for their perseverance in the faith
 - a. Their genuine faith in Yeshua is evident by:
 - the growing reality of their faith in Yeshua
 - demonstrated by their love for one another
 - b. Their enduring in the faith even when persecuted for openly living out their faith in Yeshua
 - 2. Their perseverance in the faith guarantees God's righteous judgment and full acceptance:
 - a. this shows that their faith is genuine
 - b. they can know assuredly that God will sustain them
 - 3. God will surely deal with those who are afflicting His chosen ones.
 - a. this offers strengthening hope for the future
 - b. knowing that when He returns, the believer's victory is assured
 - c. He will bring severe retribution to those
 - who do not know God
 - who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Yeshua
 - d. These are those who will experience
 - eternal destruction away from the presence of the Lord
 - thus separated from the glory of His power
 - 4. This will take place when Yeshua returns
 - a. fully displaying His glory
 - b. to be highly exalted by all who are His through the gift of genuine saving faith
- C. Thus, Paul and his associates:
 - 1. constantly pray for the believers in Thessalonica:
 - a. that they would truly live out a genuine life of faith
 - b. fulfill God's calling to goodness and
 - c. demonstrate the power of God to be living witnesses for Him in all circumstances of their lives.
 - 2. so that the Lord Yeshua would be glorified because:
 - a. you have honored Him
 - b. and the gift of God's grace in the Lord Yeshua Messiah, given to you, will be demonstrated to others, even as you endure persecutions and afflictions for your faith.

D. God will:

1. repay the enemies of His people with affliction.
2. give relief to His afflicted people, even eternal relief at Yeshua's coming
 - a. He will come with His mighty angels
 - b. and with "flaming fire."
3. Thus He will bring retribution upon
 - a. those who have no covenant standing with God
 - b. having rejected the Gospel in Yeshua
4. His retribution upon them will consist of:
 - a. eternal destruction away from God's presence and
 - b. not participating in the glory of His eternal power
5. The glory of His eternal power will be demonstrated
 - a. when He comes to redeem His holy ones, i.e.,
 - b. those He has redeemed, granting them saving faith in the work accomplished by their Redeemer, Yeshua.

E. Paul and his colleague's ministry continues for them...

1. praying always for them:
 - a. that they will persevere in the faith
 - b. that they will be strengthened to be witnesses of God's grace and mercy,
 - c. living out their faith with true power, so that...
2. The Lord Yeshua will be glorified
 - a. Yeshua will be glorified in their lives
 - b. they will be honored by Him
3. And all of this will be the fruit of God's abounding grace.

Introduction

It is clear that Paul's interest and concern for those who comprised the believing community in Thessalonica did not terminate after sending his first epistle to them. Indeed, his ministry was one of ongoing discipling of those who had come to faith in Yeshua through his having brought to them the true gospel message. Thus, it appears certain that he wrote this second epistle only shortly after having written his first epistle to the Thessalonica community. While he was still in Corinth he received news regarding the believing community in Thessalonica. This second epistle begins the same way as did the first epistle, i.e.

Paul and Silvanus and Timothy, to the ekklesia of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Yeshua Messiah: Grace to you and peace. (1&2 Thess 1:1)

This would indicate that it was written at a time when Paul as well as Silvanus and Timothy were in Corinth, for Paul, Silvanus (Silas), and Timothy are not known to have been together after Paul had left Corinth. Given this reality, it seems most likely that Paul sent this second letter to the Thessalonian community in A.D. 50.

Some have put forward what they consider to be data proving that 2Thessalonians was actually written earlier than 1Thessalonians. Various arguments for this perspective have been set forth:

(1) In 2Thess trials experienced by the believing community are said to be at their height, whereas in 1Thess they are past. 1Thess 3:4 is pointed to as evidence:

For indeed when we were with you, we kept telling you in advance that we were going to suffer affliction; and so it came to pass, as you know. (1Thess 3:4)

Yet this text in 1Thess is easily understood to indicate trials as present in that epistle too.

(2) In 2Thess internal difficulties (cf. 3:6–15) are a new development, but in 1Thess they are already well known (cf. 4:11, 12; 5:14). Yet there are other ways to explain this. The situation had become more aggravated in 2Thess, requiring extended discussion. In 1Thess only a passing mention was required for a problem that had not yet become serious.

(3) Three teaching sections of 1Thess begin with “now concerning”

(περὶ δὲ, *peri de*) corresponding to questions raised in 2Thess.¹ While these are interesting parallels, they may be just as easily explained by postulating the traditional order for these epistles.²

Therefore, the primary data available would clearly suggest that 2Thess is a further response to the Thessalonian community, emphasizing and even expanding upon the instructions and teaching he had given in 1Thess.

It appears that there were primarily three main developments that had occurred in the believing community in Thessalonica. These are:

- (1) that persecution of believers in Yeshua had grown worse and was leaving victims at the point of despair.
- (2) that false teachers, and even one that may have written a letter to the Thessalonian community sending it under Paul's name, were teaching that the end time was already present because of their increased suffering.
- (3) that an emphasis upon the imminent return of Messiah had been misused as a basis for people to stop attending their normal work because they had come to the conclusion that Yeshua was returning in a very short time.

The overarching purpose for Paul to write this second epistle to the Thessalonian community can be summed up in three general topics:

- (1) To provide an incentive for the Thessalonians to persevere in their faith by describing the reward and retribution related to the future judgment of God (1:3–10).
- (2) To clarify prominent events belonging to the day of the Lord to prove that those who were teaching that the day of the Lord had already taken place were false teachers (2:1–12).
- 3) To give detailed instructions regarding disciplinary steps that were to be taken in correcting those who refused to work (3:6–15).

1 Compare 1Thess 4:9–12 with 2Thess 3:12; 1Thess 4:13–18 with 2Thess 2:1–12; 1Thess 5:1–11 with 2Thess 2:1–12.

2 cf. Thomas, Robert L. *2Thessalonians* in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 11 (Zondervan, 1978), p. 303.

Chapter One

commentary

1–2 Paul and Silvanus and Timothy, to the *ekklesia* of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Yeshua Messiah: Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Yeshua Messiah.

The opening of the second letter Paul sent to the Thessalonian community is identical with his opening in the first letter he sent to them, with only two exceptions. These two differences are that (1) here Paul pens “God our Father” while in his first epistle to them in writes “God the Father,” and (2) in his first epistle he ends with “Grace to you and peace” but in this second epistle he adds “from God the Father and the Lord Yeshua Messiah.”

With regard to number 1, there are questions as to whether the possessive pronoun “our” is original or not, since there are some manuscripts which do not include it. Some scholars conclude that the word “our” is original and was later omitted on the basis that the opening salutation in 1Thess does not include it.

Taking the position that the word “our” (ἡμῶν, *hēmon*) is original, it seems very likely that Paul would have been led by the Ruach to include it, given the fact that some within the Thessalonian community may well have been struggling under the false teaching which some outside of the community had introduced, namely, that they had been forsaken by God and missed Yeshua’s return.

The second difference, i.e., the added phrase “Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Yeshua Messiah,” greatly emphasizes, both to the Thessalonian believers and to us, that the grace of God in sending Yeshua, and the price He paid to secure eternal redemption for all He has chosen, could never be lost by those He has redeemed. Thus, those who may have become down-trodden under the false teachings that they had missed the return of Yeshua, were to be greatly encouraged by Paul’s second epistle, beginning with the very opening of his letter. Paul characterizes the believers in the Thessalonian community as having been saved by God’s grace through the atonement Yeshua accomplished, which was applied to them via the gift of faith and was therefore “forever settled in heaven.” That “Lord” (κύριος, *kurios*) is included emphasizes that Yeshua is Lord, meaning He is one with the Father and the Spirit, which emphasizes that His high priestly work is certain to accomplish all that the Almighty has

ordained. Nothing God has determined to accomplish will ever fail.

What is more, this opening phrase gives added emphasis upon the fact that true peace comes to an individual as a gift of God's grace. This means first and foremost "peace with God" which, when recognized and lived out in the life of the believer, brings the foundation for "peace" even in the many difficulties one would face in this fallen world. We don't "earn peace with God" but rather it is the gift of His grace to all whom He has drawn to Himself and granted eternal life.

This emphasizes that what should be the primary motivation for the child of God, i.e., to live a life of obedience to God and His commandments, is not in order to gain something not yet possessed, but rather to demonstrate genuine love for God and a true desire to honor the One Who has redeemed us at such a great price.

... to the *ekklesia* of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Yeshua Messiah – Here (as in the commentary on 1Thess) I use the English transliteration of the Greek ἐκκλησία (*ekklēsia*) because "church" (as this Greek word is most often translated in our English Bibles) is simply too broad of a term in my mind. In our modern day, "Church" encompasses the whole realm of modern religions while the word *ekklesia* (literally "those called out"), when used as the Apostles intended, emphasizes those who have been "called out of the fallen world to belong to God" and to come together to form a true community based upon their mutual faith in Yeshua. Surely there are many "churches" that would qualify to have this definition, but there are many that do not. The *ekklesia* which Yeshua promised to build (Matt 16:18) is that which honors Him and teaches that only repentance toward God and faith in Yeshua brings true and eternal salvation.

I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. (Matt 16:18)

While there is some dispute among scholars as to how πέτρος (*petros*, masculine) and πέτρα (*petra*, feminine) differ in meaning, there is significant evidence that the masculine form, *petros*, usually denotes a common "stone" found in a field or path, etc., while the feminine form, *petra*, is used to describe a "bedrock or massive rock formations."¹

Thus, when Yeshua states "and upon this rock I will build by *ekklesia*," He is referring to Himself as the "rock" that cannot be moved.

1 Cf. BDAG, "πέτρα," p. 809.

Indeed, Paul teaches this clearly in his epistle to the Ephesians:

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Messiah Yeshua Himself being the corner stone, in Whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in Whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit. (Eph 2:19-22)

3-4 We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is only fitting, because your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows ever greater; therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the *ekklesia* of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure.

We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is only fitting – When Paul uses the plural “we” in this text, he undoubtedly is referring to his co-workers (Silvanus and Timothy). His words here show conclusively that leaders and teachers within the local assembly of believers, while surely important and, when submitted to the Chief Shepherd, carry out important duties for the good of community, they still must always give the outcome and success of their labors as coming from the “Head of the *Ekklesia*,” i.e., Yeshua.

Thus Paul begins this text by giving thanks to God “as is only fitting” (καθὼς ἄξιόν ἐστιν). Surely this is a very important “mindset” which ought to be regularly affirmed by any who are in leadership positions within a local community of believers. All too often in our modern age (and was no doubt a problem in all eras) we see leaders of churches being “put on a pedestal” and considered to be those who bring success to the local community of faith. Surely designated leaders are used of the Lord to nurture, strengthen, and enlarge the faith of those who make up the community and they therefore should be appreciated for their work. But leaders in the local assembly of believers are servants, not kings or potentates, and thus should always be pointing the people they serve to the One Who alone deserves all the people’s highest praise and honor.

This is why Paul adds “which is only fitting.” This demonstrates Paul’s own words in his epistle to the Galatians:

But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Yeshua Messiah, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. (Gal 6:14)

...because your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows ever greater – Here Paul rejoices in the success of the community, not measured on how many people attend, or if the “offerings” have increased, but on the evident growth of the people’s faith as seen in their lives being more and more conformed to the truth of God’s word. Faith is enlarged as believers desire more and more to be like their Lord, committing themselves to make the ways of the Lord real and lasting in all aspects of their lives.

The primary evidence of their “faith being greatly enlarged” is first and foremost, their genuine love for each other. The enemy is always striving to cause division within the local assembly of believers, because divisiveness is the opposite of obeying God Who commands us to care for each other and even to bear each other’s burdens.

Bear one another’s burdens, and thereby fulfill the Torah of Messiah. (Gal 6:2)

One of the most prevalent failings that stand in the way of truly loving one another as God intends, is the sin of gossip or “*lashon hara*” (evil speech). It is so easy to fall into the trap of gossip when someone has hurt us or we see someone acting in a wrong way that they hope to hide.

Do not speak against one another, brethren. He who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks against the Torah and judges the Torah; but if you judge the Torah, you are not a doer of the Torah but a judge of it. (James 4:11)

Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear. (Eph 4:29)