



UNTIL HE
RETURNS

A SERIES IN 2 THESSALONIANS

2 THESSALONIANS: UNTIL HE RETURNS
BIBLE STUDIES | 2023

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Guide to using this Study

1. If you are leading a small group, you do not need to go through every question. Feel free to pick and choose questions that might be relevant to your small group. With that being said, please do not avoid the application questions and do not neglect time for prayer.
2. The ***author's purpose*** questions are meant to help us grasp the purpose that the author had in mind when they wrote their letter and a particular section of their letter. It's important that we understand the purpose because if we "glean one or two insights but miss the overall purpose of what they were saying, then we haven't really understood them at all. We do not want to miss the wood for the trees." (Beynon & Sach, 2005)
3. The ***investigate/observation*** questions are meant to be quick-fire questions, so you do not need to spend a lot of time on them.

List of Abbreviations

cf.	Compare
e.g.	For example
i.e.	In other words
NIV	New International Version
v.	Verse
vv.	Verses

Background to 2 Thessalonians

Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians. This letter was written by the Apostle Paul to the church that met in Thessalonica. Thessaloniki, as it is now known, is located on the northwest corner of the Aegean Sea and it was and still is an important city. During the time of the Apostle Paul, Thessalonica was situated along the main route between Rome and the East (Via Egnatia) (Stott, 1991). It became the capital of the Roman province of Macedonia and according to Lightfoot (1893), narrowly escaped from being made capital of the world. Today, Thessaloniki is the second largest city in Greece.

The church, during the time of this letter, was still young and was going through a tumultuous time. They were facing persecution (see Acts 17) and there was a growing rift within the church. 1 Thessalonians – Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians – was written to address the issues that the church was facing and to encourage the church as they faced those issues.

The Thessalonians had written in response to that first letter and this letter is Paul's reply. Commentators speculate that this letter was written about one year after 1 Thessalonians.

2 Thessalonians is an important letter for us Christians to read because it covers important reminders for us as we face persecution, teachings on the return of our Lord Jesus and the end times (i.e. eschatology), and how we're meant to live in light of the hope that we have.

Recommended:

- 1 Thessalonians | Bible Project Guide



<https://bibleproject.com/guides/book-of-1-thessalonians/>

- 2 Thessalonians | Bible Project Guide



<https://bibleproject.com/guides/book-of-2-thessalonians/>

Study 1: 2 Thessalonians 1

Introduction

1. Have you recently heard a testimony of someone growing in their faith, or stories of people in your church family growing in their love for one another? How did you feel and respond when you heard those stories? Share.

Read: 2 Thessalonians 1:1-12

Knowing the Purpose

2. What is Paul's purpose in writing this portion of Scripture to the Thessalonians? Have a quick glance through the passage again and share your thoughts and findings.

Hint: are we made aware of any problems that need to be addressed or are there any repeated themes, or a single idea that holds everything together?

Investigate/Observation

3. Paul says that it is *right* that he thanks God for the Thessalonians. Why? (vv.3-4)

Application

4. Have you been actively sharing with someone how you have been growing in faith and love for others? If you haven't, what do you think might be stopping you from sharing with someone?

Investigate/Observation

5. Paul boasts about the Thessalonians to the other churches. What about the Thessalonians does Paul boast about? (v.4, cf. Acts 17:1-9)
6. How does Paul describe God's justice in verses 6-10?
7. How would verses 6-10 have encouraged a young, persecuted church like the Thessalonians?

Application

8. What does it look like to persevere and to continue being faithful in the face of persecution? What are some things that we can do to help us persevere in the faith?

9. Based on your response in question 8, ask yourself, are you carrying out what you have listed?

If you are, great. Keep it up!

If you are not, what's stopping you? Is sin the issue? Has there been a change in the routine of your daily life? Are you not convinced about something that Jesus has promised?

10. Despite the persecutions faced by the Thessalonians, they were still able to grow in faith and in love for one another. This is an example of God's grace in action. The actions and response of the Thessalonians in the face of persecution doesn't *make* them worthy. In fact, they have already been counted worthy and the response of the Thessalonians in the face of persecution shows *why* they have been (i.e. shown to be) counted worthy of the kingdom of God. This was the reality for the Thessalonians, and it is also the reality for us today. We have already been counted worthy.

a. What are some of your initial responses to the fact that we have already been counted worthy? Share.

b. Knowing that our present reality is a people who have been counted worthy, how should we now live?

11. We all long for justice in some way or another; not just in a *"I was wronged, so things must be made right"* sense, but we also have a deep sense that the world needs to be brought back to a *"right"* order.

How do you currently desire to see God's justice done in your life, your community, and the world?

12. How can verses 6-10 continue to encourage us to further the gospel message of Jesus despite the persecutions that will arise?

Praying in Response

- Ask God to help you to continue to understand and grasp his promises and to trust in the future justice that he has promised.
- Ask God to help you in the areas that you're struggling to persevere in faith.
- Ask God to help you live as a people that have been counted worthy of the kingdom of God, to grow in faith, to increase in love for one another, to persevere amidst the trials, and to bring to fruition our every desire for goodness and every deed prompted by faith.

Study 2: 2 Thessalonians 2

Introduction

1. The world we live in is filled with deceptions – both obvious and subtle – that are trying to pull us away from God’s truths. What are some deceptions that you can identify?

Read: 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17

Knowing the Purpose

2. What is Paul’s purpose in writing this portion of Scripture to the Thessalonians? Have a quick glance through the passage again and share your thoughts and findings.

Hint: are we made aware of any problems that need to be addressed or are there any repeated themes, or a single idea that holds everything together?

Investigate/Observation

3. Paul and his team were being impersonated and these people had spread false teachings. What had the impersonators told the Thessalonians?(v.1-2)

4. The day of the Lord and the man of lawlessness

- a. The “day of the Lord” basically refers to the coming of our Lord Jesus and us being gathered with him. In other words, Paul is talking about the end times. When will that day come according to the apostle Paul? (v.3)

- b. Paul writes that the day of the Lord will come when the *man of lawlessness* is revealed. In this context, what are the characteristics of the *man of lawlessness*? (v.4)

- c. Paul writes that the acts of the *man of lawlessness* will be in accordance with how Satan works. How does Paul describe how Satan works in the world? (vv.9-12)

- d. What will Jesus do when this *man of lawlessness* is revealed? (v.8)

5. Human Responsibility and the Sovereignty of God

- a. Why will the perishing perish? (v.10)

- b. What will God do to those who have chosen to refuse the truth? (v.11)
- c. What insights do verses 9-12 reveal about the relationship between God's sovereignty and human responsibility? Discuss.

Application

6. It's easy to get distracted and lost with attempting to figure out the details of everything that Paul has written in these past few verses. "Who is the man of lawlessness?" "Is this man of lawlessness already revealed?" "Who or what is holding back the lawless one?" And the list goes on.

Paul wasn't specific – as we would like him to be – with the details of the day of the Lord, but he was clear about what the Father and the Son will do; the things that are important for us to hear; things that would inspire hope and faithfulness and provide comfort amidst persecution.

- a. Like the Thessalonians, we too are at risk of being deceived by false teaching; lies which we can easily create and come to believe.

What lies in the world or in your own heart today are you tempted to create and believe?

- b. How does Paul's letter inspire hope and faithfulness, and provide comfort when we face persecution?

- c. In what ways can the picture of the Son and the Father that we get in verses 5-12 help you to live unashamedly and courageously as a Christian, especially in a world with growing secularism?

- d. Does your picture of the Father and the Son match up with the picture that you get in the Bible and with verses like 5-12?

Investigate/Observation

7. Paul's thanksgiving and the calling of God

- a. What about the Thessalonians is Paul thankful to God for? (vv.13)

- b. How did the Thessalonians receive this "calling"? (v.14)

- c. What is the promise that the Thessalonians have received as a result of being called by God? (v.14)

- d. What are the Thessalonians to do because they have received this “calling”? (v.15)

Application

- 8. In our world, “What is your life’s calling?” is an oft thrown around saying. Even in our Christian circles, when we’re faced with a big decision in life, we throw around sayings like, “What is God calling you to do?”. In this letter, Paul is clear that if we are in Christ, if we are Christians, God has already given us our calling and we have already received it. This is our present reality – it’s not “we are going to be called”, rather “we have been called”. What is our calling? Our calling is to be his people and we are now to live our lives as such.
 - a. Knowing that we have already received the calling to be God’s people, we have to live our lives as such. What are some ways that you are living as someone who has been called to be God’s people?

b. What are some ways that you might not be living as though you have been called by God? If you can't identify any, ask someone that you trust if there's an area in your life that you might **not** be living as someone called by God.

c. What is driving you as you seek to live as God's people in your day-to-day life?

9. We easily assume that if God is in control, we can relax; or that, if we have to struggle and work hard, it means that God isn't as powerful as we had thought. How do you see God's power being exercised as you stand firm and hold tight? (Wright, 2009)

10. Standing firm doesn't mean staying where we're at. It means ensuring that we are well rooted and built up in Christ and strengthened in the faith.

a. Why should we be rooted and built up, and strengthened in the faith?

b. What are some things that you can do to be well-rooted and to stand firm?

Think personally and for your church community.

Praying in Response

- Thank God that he is supreme even over the *man of lawlessness* and that Jesus will triumph over him.
- Ask God to help you form good habits around spiritual disciplines as you seek to stand firm in the faith.
- Ask God to help you better understand what it means to be someone that has been called to be one of his people.
- Ask God to keep helping you to trust in him amidst all the deceptions in the world that are vying for our attention and to keep encouraging us and reminding us of the hope that we do every good deed and word.

Study 3: 2 Thessalonians 3

Introduction

1. Have you had times in your life where what you hoped for really shaped the way you lived? Share.

Read: 2 Thessalonians 3:1-18

Knowing the Purpose

2. What is Paul's purpose in writing this portion of Scripture to the Thessalonians? Have a quick glance through the passage again and share your thoughts and findings.

Hint: are we made aware of any problems that need to be addressed or are there any repeated themes, or a single idea that holds everything together?

Investigate/Observation

3. What does Paul ask the Thessalonians to pray for and why does he ask them to pray for those things? (vv.1-2)

4. What aspect of God's faithfulness does Paul remind the Thessalonians of? (vv.3-5)

Application

5. How should Paul's prayer and his points on God's faithfulness shape the way we think about mission (i.e. the spread of the gospel)?
6. Think about a missionary that you're partnering with and the opposition that may come their way. How can you pray for them as the Thessalonians did for Paul?

Investigate/Observation

7. What are the challenges and problems faced by the Thessalonians as they seek to live as a "family"? (vv.6, 11)

8. How did Paul model the kind of communal life that he expects the Thessalonians to follow? (vv.7-10)

9. What do the Thessalonians need to do with believers who are idle and disruptive and do not heed Paul's instructions around this issue? (vv.6, 13-15)

Comment: idleness in this letter doesn't simply mean laziness. It refers to an irresponsible way of living – people who refuse to work or to provide for themselves – resulting in chaotic personal lives.

10. The Thessalonian church was at risk of being divided because of the issues with those who were idle.

What does Paul pray for in response to the threat of division? (vv.16-18)

Reflection

12. As we come to the end of the letter to the Thessalonians, we've been reminded of Jesus' return and the hope of final justice that we will receive. These truths were not meant to generate speculation about the timeline of the end times. Rather, these beliefs are supposed to bring hope and inspire faithfulness and devotion to Jesus. Our hopes are meant to shape what we live for.

So, as we conclude, what are you hoping for? Are the promised return of Jesus and the promise of final justice things that you are hoping for? Are you allowing those hopes to inform and shape the way that you live? Are they inspiring you to live in faithfulness and in devotion to King Jesus?

Praying in Response

- Thank God for the hope that we have in Jesus; for the promise that Jesus will overthrow the *man of lawlessness*, that we will receive final justice, and for God's grace in transforming us.
- Ask God to help you emulate Jesus' self-giving love in your church family.
- Ask God to shape your life with the hope that he has given to us as people who have been called to be God's people.
- Ask God to help you live in faithfulness and in devotion to King Jesus despite whatever that might come our way.

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Extra Notes

