

# Second Thessalonians

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Not long after Paul wrote his first letter to the Thessalonians, he received news about the church. He heard that the problems he wrote about had remained and even had become worse. Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians is similar to his first letter, but he delivers the message with stronger words. Paul likely sent this second letter only a few months after the first letter. Paul writes again using stronger words while teaching about the persecution of believers, Jesus' return, and work.

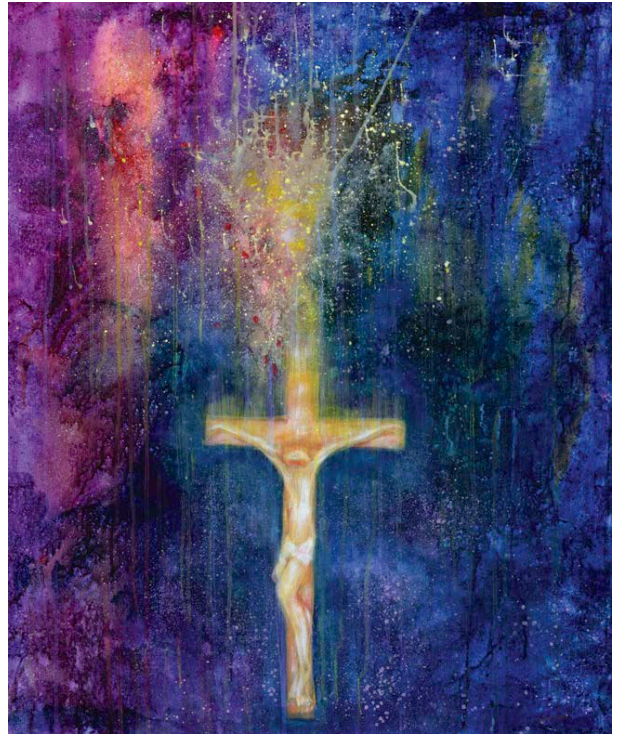
**Writer:** The Apostle Paul, along with Silas and Timothy

**Date of writing:** Around 50 AD.

**Original Audience:** Followers of Jesus in the city of Thessalonica.

**The Reason for the Letter:** After Paul sent his first letter to the Thessalonians, he heard that the persecution of followers of Jesus had gotten worse, there was even more confusion about Jesus' return, and some believers were still not working. Paul writes this second letter to address these three issues again.

**The Main Message of the Letter:** Paul begins the letter by praising and thanking God for giving the Thessalonian believers perseverance of faith during a time of severe persecution. Paul continues to encourage the believers saying that "God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you" (1:6). Paul's encouragement is that God sees the persecution and will punish those who persecute them. He says, "they will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might" (1:9). This is the ultimate punishment for those who reject Jesus. Paul concludes this section by praying for the believers, asking, "that our God may make you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may bring to fruition your every desire for goodness and your every deed prompted by faith" (1:11).



## The Day of the Lord

In chapter two, Paul talks about the day of the Lord. The "Day of the Lord" refers to Jesus' second coming. When Jesus comes again, he will destroy evil (2:8) and make all things new (2 Peter 3:13). Some people were saying the Day of the Lord had already come, which confused the believers. Paul attempts to clear the confusion again and concludes the section by praying for the Thessalonian believers. He prays, "May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word." (2:16–17).

## Warning Against Idleness

In chapter three, Paul starts by asking for prayer and praying for the Thessalonians (3:1-5). He then addresses the third and final problem: idleness. Some of the believers were not being responsible and refused to work. He tells them to follow his example saying, “we were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone’s food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you.” (3:7–8). Paul addressed this issue in his first letter saying “warn those who are idle and disruptive, encourage the disheartened, help the weak” (1 Thessalonians 5:14). That didn’t work and now Paul says “The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat.” (3:10).

## Outline of Second Thessalonians:

1. Prayer and encouragement to endure persecution (Chapter 1)
2. Teaching about the Day of the Lord (Chapter 2)
3. Warning against Idleness (Chapter 3)

## The Coming of the “Lawless One”

The most significant new teaching in 2 Thessalonians is about the day of the Lord. Paul says the second coming of Jesus Christ will not occur until after “the rebellion comes” and “the lawless one is revealed” (2:1-3). He says that the “secret power of lawlessness is already at work” (2:7). However, he is being restrained by someone or something (2:6–7). After this restraint is removed, the lawless one will be revealed. He will take his seat in the temple of God and falsely declare himself to be God (2:4). And then the Lord Jesus will blow him away! (2:8) These words are similar to those of the prophet Isaiah when talking about the coming Messiah. God spoke about the Messiah through Isaiah, saying, “He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked.” (Isaiah 11:4). We don’t know when this will happen or what it will look like, but God calls us to stand firm in our faith until Jesus comes again.

Like all letters, it is best to read or listen to the whole letter from beginning to end. Then go back and reread each chapter and discuss the following questions:

1. What do you learn about God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit?
2. What do you learn about people?
3. Is there a belief that I need to change after reading this Scripture?
4. What do we need to do after reading these verses?
5. Who can I share this letter with?

## One Letter, Three Authors

Both the first and second letters to the Thessalonians have three authors mentioned in the opening of the letter: Paul, Timothy, and Silas. Although Paul is probably the main author, it is clear that the letter is from all three of them. Throughout the letters to the Thessalonians Paul says “we” not “I.” Paul, Timothy, and Silas went to Thessalonica and started the church there together, and the teaching in the letters is from all three of them. Paul usually worked with several co-workers in everything he did. Many of his other letters are also from Paul and one of his co-workers. Paul and a brother named Sosthenes wrote 1 Corinthians. Paul and Timothy wrote 2 Corinthians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon together.