



CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

BIBLE SURVEY

THE UN-DEVOTIONAL

THESSALONIANS,
TIMOTHY, TITUS
& PHILEMON

Week 2

Introduction to 2 Thessalonians

Authorship: Some scholars doubt that Paul was the author of this epistle, since the Old Testament is not directly quoted here, as Paul often did in his writings. Nevertheless, this second epistle uses a basic knowledge of the Old Testament, as does 1 Thessalonians.

Another argument against Pauline authorship is a difference in tone—more corrective than the first epistle. However, this may have been the result of a changed situation. Paul may have been responding to reports that members were not heeding his first epistle.

Date: Early A.D. 51, from Corinth.

Setting and purpose: Believers in Thessalonica had enthusiastically received Paul's first epistle, but without adequate understanding and wisdom. The first epistle, with its instruction about the power of the resurrection, was exciting. Christ's return was assumed to be near. Many members sold their valued possessions. Some quit their jobs to await Christ's return.

Some members became idle busybodies. Those who were not working began to expect those who were employed to support them. The credibility of the gospel became threatened. Persecution increased.

Overview: Paul approached the problem by first offering thanksgiving and encouragement (2Th 1:1-12), reminding the Thessalonians that, in spite of initial persecution against them, they had responded positively through their faith, love and patience (1:1-12). In the end, God will vindicate believers and repay their persecutors (1:5-10). Paul prayed that their work of faith would remain the strength of their calling (1:11-12).

Paul moved to correct misperceptions regarding how quickly Christ would return (2:1-12). He explained that before Jesus' return, there would be an apostasy. A man of lawlessness would be revealed, along with a system of iniquity (2:1-7). Christ will

destroy this wicked leader who will deceive many by lies, lawlessness and Christ-less religion (2:8-12).

Christians were encouraged to stand fast in God's calling, holding fast to the oral and written traditions Paul had given them (2:13-15). God's love gives comfort and hope through grace, in a desire to establish Christians in word and work (2:15-17).

The epistle turns next to matters of church government (3:1-18). Paul asks members to support the ministry through prayer. He felt confident that submission to God would place them under God's loving protection (3:1-5). Disorderly conduct, idleness and taking advantage of other members are unacceptable (3:6-13). Paul's traditional conclusion calls for the peace and grace of Jesus Christ to be with them (3:16-18).

Outline:

I. THANKSGIVING AND ENCOURAGEMENT, 1:1-12

- A. Greetings, 1:1-2
- B. Thanksgiving for Faith, Love and Patience, 1:3-4
- C. The Judgment of God Vindicates Believers, 1:5-10
- D. Prayer for Strength During Persecution, 1:11-12

II. BE WARY OF DECEIVERS, 2:1-17

- A. The Return of Christ, 2:1-12
- B. The Day Has Not Yet Occurred, 2:1-2
- C. The Man of Sin Must Be Revealed, 2:3-7
- D. Christ Will Overcome the Man of Sin, 2:8
- E. The Man of Sin Will Deceive Many, 2:9-12
- F. God Chose Them for Salvation, 2:13-14
- G. Stand Fast and Hold the Traditions, 2:15-17

III. DISCIPLINE WITHIN THE CHURCH, 3:1-18

- A. Prayer for the Ministry, 3:1-5
- B. Be Active, Not Idle, 3:6-13
- C. Discipline for Brethren, 3:14-15
- D. Conclusion, 3:16-18

DAY 8

God Will Repay

2 Thessalonians 1:1-12

OPENING
up to the Word

When was the last time you were tempted to “get even”?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. Believers in Thessalonica were suffering persecution in their own community. What three attributes stabilized them during these hard times (vs. 3-4)?

2. Does suffering serve any purpose? How is God’s righteous judgment made evident?

3. How does the action of God make one worthy of the kingdom (1:5, 11; 1Th 2:12)?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Has a family member, classmate, friend, boss, coworker—or even a member of your own current or past church—ever persecuted or ridiculed you for your belief in Jesus? How did you react?

2. Do you boast about the spiritual strengths of your Christian friends? Especially when they are embroiled in troubles or afflictions (1:4)?

3. How difficult is it for you to let God take care of vengeance in his own time rather than in yours?

4. What makes us worthy? (a) our works, (b) our religion, (c) higher education, (d) service projects, (e) faithful attendance in a brick-and-mortar church, (f) God’s grace and mercy.

5. Which attitude best reflects the application of Paul’s comments? (a) it’s all up to me, (b) it’s all on God’s shoulders, (c) the devil made me do it.

WINDOW
on the Word

*The **righteous judgment of God** (v. 5) can be seen in our journey in and with Christ. Vengeance should not be our worry, for God’s judgment will see to that. His love, attributed to our lives by his grace, counts us worthy to be glorified at the return of Jesus.*

Coming Soon!

2 Thessalonians 2:1-17

Does prophecy intrigue you? How about “crystal ball” speculations?

1. Why was the subject of Christ’s return so important to the Thessalonians?
2. List the events that will occur before Jesus returns, according to this passage.
3. Apostasy (*apostasia*) means “falling away” or “rebellion” from Christ (v. 3). What other action is this rebellion coupled with?
4. What things does the “man of lawlessness” do against the truth (vs. 3-12)?
5. What is the Christian response to those who proclaim salvation in something other than the grace of God (vs. 11-17)?

1. What interests you more? Speculation about end-time events or following Christ?
2. How real is the threat of deception (2:1-3, 11)?
3. Jesus warned against predicting the day of the his return (Mt 24:36–25:13; Ac 1:7), and he also gave signs that will precede his coming (Mt 24:15). Are we supposed to know the time of his return in advance or not?

*This chapter has generated much speculation about **end-time events** and the **man of lawlessness** who was to sit in the temple, claiming divine rights. Paul believed the “secret power of lawlessness” was already working its deception, but was being held back in some way (2:7). Paul calls Christians to stand fast by holding on to Christian teachings (vs. 13-17). Decades later, the Roman Emperor Domitian claimed the right to be worshiped. Across the empire, Christians who failed to worship Domitian were sought out and killed.*

DAY 9

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word

Idle Hands

II Thessalonians 3:1-18

OPENING
up to the Word

Has someone ever taken advantage of you financially? Did it cost you more in money or emotional pain? What did it cost them?

DIGGING
into the Word

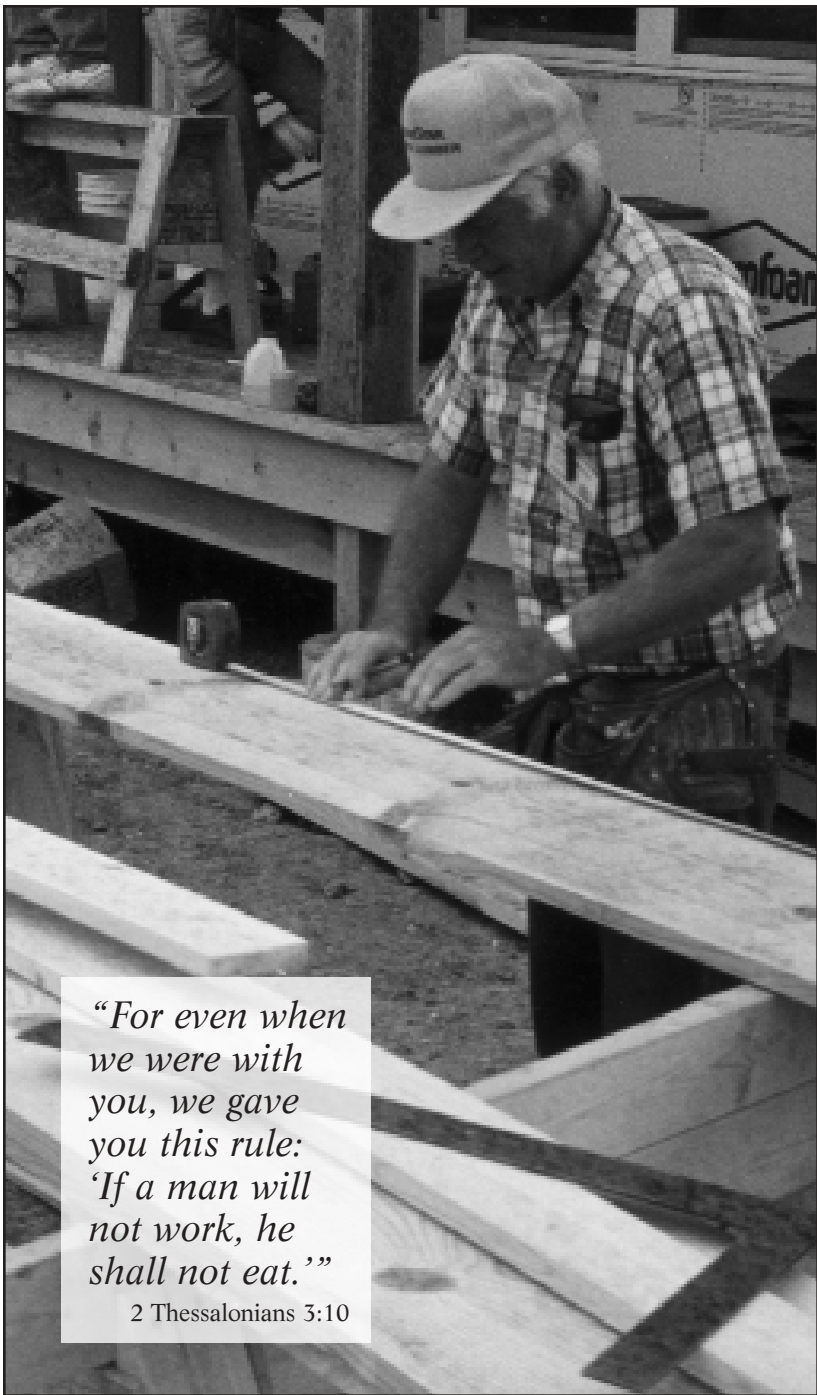
1. Why pray for pastors, teachers and ministers? Won't God help them whether or not we pray?
2. Having explained the deception of lawlessness in chapter two, Paul follows with the assurance of salvation for the faithful. How does this advice in verses 3-5 support 2:13-17?
3. Some in Thessalonica had become undisciplined because of their overeager anticipation of Jesus' return. Some had quit jobs and were sponging off their spiritual brothers and sisters. How were these misguided members to be disciplined?
4. How would you have treated those who refused Paul's sound advice? How would you treat these fellow Christians as brothers and sisters, yet not as enemies (3:15; Tit 3:10)?

LIVING
out the Word

1. What special needs do those who serve others' spiritual needs have?
2. How effective is the welfare system in your community? Do you feel it is possible to have some form of public assistance without abuses?
3. Has God given you peace in life (see Jn 16:33)? Do you accept the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ in your daily activities?

WINDOW
on the Word

*Apparently, some in Thessalonica had misunderstood Paul's teaching in his first epistle. They believed Jesus was returning so soon that they no longer needed to work and plan for the future. This chapter should be a warning to all Christians **not to be sidetracked by prophetic predictions.***



*“For even when
we were with
you, we gave
you this rule:
‘If a man will
not work, he
shall not eat.’”*

2 Thessalonians 3:10

Introduction to 1 Timothy

Authorship: Paul states that he authored this letter (1:1). Early church writers Ignatius, Polycarp, Tertullian and Clement of Alexandria all attest to Paul's authorship. However, because the Pastoral Epistles have a different vocabulary and style, many modern scholars disagree. But Paul may have changed his writing style because these letters were written at a different time and for a different purpose.

Date: Paul was imprisoned in Rome from around A.D. 60-62. He was allowed to rent a home as his place of imprisonment while he awaited trial, and there he was chained to a Roman guard (Ac 28:16). After his first imprisonment in Rome, Paul wrote this letter to Timothy sometime between A.D. 62-65.

Setting and purpose: Probably written from Macedonia to Timothy, who was in Ephesus. This letter was intended to encourage Timothy with his pastoral responsibilities. The letter was also relevant for the congregation at Ephesus.

Paul opposed doctrines that advocated religious legalism rather than love (1:5-11). He also opposed *asceticism* (4:1-5), or severe self-discipline and abstinence from pleasure. A growing problem within Christians in Ephesus at that time was the start of Jewish-Christian Gnosticism. Gnostics denied the full humanity of Jesus (2:5-6) and taught that special knowledge (*gnosis*) was necessary for salvation.

Recipient: Timothy was a native of Lystra. His mother was Jewish, his father Greek (Ac 16:1). During Paul's second missionary journey, Timothy travelled with Paul and Silas to Berea, where the two stayed while Paul went on to Athens (Ac 17:10-14). While Paul was in Corinth, Silas and Timothy brought news from Macedonia that alarmed him (18:5; 1Th 3:6), prompting Paul to write to the church in Thessalonica.

On his third journey, Paul stayed in Ephesus for two years. While there he sent Timothy and Erastus to minister in Macedonia (Ac 19:22). Timothy later spent some time with the Christ-followers

in Corinth around A.D. 55, at which time he brought a letter from Paul to them (1Co 4:17).

Soon Paul travelled from Ephesus through Macedonia to Greece (Ac 20:1-2). On Paul's return through Macedonia, Timothy was sent ahead to Troas (v. 5). Paul joined them and preached on Sunday until midnight (v. 7). The next day Paul sailed to Miletus (v. 15). It was probably then that Timothy left Paul's company to pastor the church at Ephesus. When 1 Timothy was written, six years had elapsed. Timothy was still living in Ephesus (1Ti 1:3).

Paul loved Timothy as a son (1Ti 1:2), for Paul had been instrumental in his conversion. Out of this love, coupled with his continued care for the believers, Paul sent an epistle to Timothy to instruct him in pastoral responsibility.

Outline:

I. CHARGE OF PASTORAL RESPONSIBILITY 1:1-20

- A. Greetings and Blessings, 1:1-2
- B. Stand Firm Against False Doctrine, 1:3-11
- C. Saved by Grace, 1:12-17
- D. Charge to Faithfulness, 1:18-20

II. FAITHFUL SERVICE IN WORSHIP, PRAYER AND TEACHING, 2:1-15

- A. Faithfulness in Prayer for All People, 2:1-7
- B. Faithful Lives of Prayer and Teaching, 2:8-15

III. CHARACTER OF CHRISTIAN LEADERS, 3:1-16

- A. Qualifications for Elders, 3:1-7
- B. Qualifications for Deacons, 3:8-13
- C. Creed for Faithful Conduct, 3:14-16

IV. FALSE TEACHERS AND FALSE DOCTRINE, 4:1-16

- A. Reject False Teaching, 4:1-3
- B. Proclaim Words of Faith, 4:4-11
- C. Self-discipline in Ministry Example, 4:12-16

V. CARE FOR YOUR FAMILY, 5:1-25

- A. General Pastoral Care, 5:1-2
- B. Care for Widows, 5:3-16
- C. Care for Church Elders, 5:17-20
- D. Charge of Self-discipline, 5:21-25

VI. GREEDINESS VERSUS GODLINESS, 6:1-21

- A. Concern for Christian Slaves, 6:1-2
- B. Withdraw from Greedy Ministers, 6:3-5
- C. Live in Godliness with Contentment, 6:6-10
- D. Pursue Spiritual Vitality, 6:11-21



Roman amphitheater at the city of Ephesus, where Timothy was pastor. The dramatic events involving Paul, recorded in Acts 19:28-41 may have taken place in this theater.

Stand Firm Against False Doctrine

DAY 11

1 Timothy 1:1-11

How far back can you trace your heritage? Three, four, five generations? Anyone famous? What benefits or dangers are there in genealogies?

1. Paul emphasized that the source of his authority was in God our Savior and in Jesus our Lord. How does Paul relate this authority to Timothy?

2. What religious myths influenced spiritually unhealthy teaching in the first century?

3. Doctrines that deviate from the truth in Jesus Christ are false doctrines, or heresy. Were these heresies (a) irrelevant, (b) speculative, (c) dangerous, (d) gnostic, (e) ascetic?

4. Civil and moral laws have beneficial consequences for individuals and civilization in general (v. 8). What is an appropriate use of law? What sins are specified here (vs. 9-11)?

1. How does the same authority that Paul cites in verses 1 and 2 inform your stand in God's grace?

2. What myths have influenced your thinking? Your actions? Your religion? Your teaching?

3. Does your daily life as a Christian stem from love? How is that love related to your commitment to truth?

4. How does the law of love control your daily life?

The Greek word used in verse 3, heterodidaskalein, literally means "other doctrine." In the New Testament it occurs only here and in 6:3. In Paul's context, it refers to a gospel other than the true gospel that centers on Jesus. Paul countered "false teachers" who presented an effectively Christ-less doctrine with an emphasis on legalism. They promoted obedience to the old covenant Law of Moses (1:7) as a necessity for Christians. Paul cites moral violations against the Law of Moses that are also sins against the sound teaching of the gospel (vs. 9-11), but he does not promote the Law of Moses itself as the law for Christians.

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word

DAY 12

Saved by Grace!

1 Timothy 1:12-20

OPENING
up to the Word

Think about what sins in your life you wouldn't want announced in the headlines of your daily newspaper? Has the grace of Jesus mercifully covered those sins?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. Paul maintained a humble and healthy approach to his position in the church as an apostle (1:12-14). As difficult as it must have been for Paul, what personal weaknesses did he acknowledge?

2. How is verse 15 a summary of the gospel?

3. How does Paul's life—first as a Pharisee who rejected Jesus (Ac 9:1-3) and then as a Christian—show the “unlimited patience” of Jesus?

4. How does Paul express his love and thankfulness for Jesus (1Ti 1:12, 17)?

5. Paul challenged Timothy to be faithful to Jesus. How was Timothy to “fight the good fight” (v. 18)?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Would you be willing to mention any of your weaknesses in a letter to others? What backlash could it create?

2. Can you explain God's lavish outpouring of grace with his faith and love in your life? Do you deserve it? Or is it because of his unlimited patience with you?

3. Consider writing a poem or essay of praise that expresses your thankfulness and love for Jesus.

4. What battles do you face today as Jesus lives in you, helping you fight the “good fight” for Jesus?

5. What will you do to avoid “shipwrecking your faith”? Does grace keep you afloat in the storms of life? Is it possible for an iceberg of legalism or sin to sink you?

WINDOW
on the Word

The gospel is the message of salvation from God and in Jesus (1:1, 15, 16). The center of the gospel is grace (vs. 2, 14), received in faith (vs. 4, 5, 12, 14) and lived in love (vs. 5, 14).

Prayers for All People

DAY 13

1 Timothy 2:1-15

When was the last time you either gave thanks for or asked God to inspire and use a politician with the tasks he or she has?

1. Why did Paul ask Timothy to encourage Christians to pray for kings and rulers (2:1-3)? How can the attitude of officials affect the lives of Christians?
2. Paul made a brief creed-like statement to counter heresy (vs. 3-6). How does this creed help explain the nature of God and salvation?
3. Why did Paul place importance on attitude and conduct for Christians in prayer and worship (vs. 8)?
4. With regard to salvation, do Paul's expectations for women differ from his expectations for men?

1. Do you make time in your prayers for politicians, your president or prime minister, your member of parliament or senator, and your mayor? What about prisoners, the poor, the homeless and those on the other end of the spectrum?
2. How does God's desire for everyone to be saved play itself out in your life (v. 4)?
3. Have you been angry with anyone recently? Can you pray without that anger hurting your relationship with God (v. 8)?
4. Can the attitude between a husband and wife affect their relationship with God?

*The term translated **silent** in 2:12 means "quietly" or "without disrupting influence"—not total silence. By contrast, synagogues separated men and women; women were not allowed to speak in the formal service. The creed in verse 5 makes a Christian statement against the **gnostic** idea that there were many gods and that Jesus was not really human. They could not imagine a God who, while continuing to be fully God the Son, would willingly take on a fully human life, experience suffering and death, all in order to redeem human beings who did not deserve this graciousness. Paul emphasized that one God became our Savior to ransom us and invited us to receive his grace.*

OPENING
up to the Word

DIGGING
into the Word

LIVING
out the Word

WINDOW
on the Word

QUALIFICATIONS FOR ELDERS, BISHOPS AND DEACONS

These Scriptural qualifications for ordination to ecclesiastical office are not to be taken as legalistic criteria, but as evidence of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and as gifts that enable leadership.

Self-controlled	Elder	1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8
Hospitable	Elder	1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8
Able to teach	Elder	1 Timothy 3:2; 5:17; Titus 1:9
Not violent but gentle	Elder	1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7
Not quarrelsome	Elder	1 Timothy 3:3
Not a lover of money	Elder	1 Timothy 3:3
Not a recent convert	Elder	1 Timothy 3:6
Has a good reputation with non-believers	Elder	1 Timothy 3:7
Not overbearing	Elder	Titus 1:7
Not quick-tempered	Elder	Titus 1:7
Loves what is good	Elder	Titus 1:8
Upright, holy	Elder	Titus 1:8
Disciplined	Elder	Titus 1:8
Above reproach (blameless)	Elder Deacon	1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6 1 Timothy 3:9
Married to one spouse	Elder Deacon	1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6 1 Timothy 3:12
Temperate	Elder Deacon	1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:7 1 Timothy 3:8
Respectable	Elder Deacon	1 Timothy 3:2 1 Timothy 3:8
Not given to drunkenness	Elder Deacon	1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7 1 Timothy 3:8
Manages his own family well	Elder Deacon	1 Timothy 3:4 1 Timothy 3:12
Sees that his children obey him	Elder Deacon	1 Timothy 3:4-5; Titus 1:6 1 Timothy 3:12
Does not pursue dishonest gain	Elder Deacon	Titus 1:7 1 Timothy 3:8
Keeps hold of the deep truths	Elder Deacon	Titus 1:9 1 Timothy 3:9
Sincere	Deacon	1 Timothy 3:8
Trusted	Deacon	1 Timothy 3:10

Character of Christian Leaders

DAY 14

1 Timothy 3:1-16

How do you define a leader? (a) the one with the most money, (b) the power broker, (c) the most religious, (d) the servant of all, (e) one in whom Jesus reaches out and serves.

1. The first set of qualifications (3:1-7) designate character for bishops, who were also known as elders. Notice the character traits set forth by Paul as qualifications for spiritual leadership.
2. The second set of qualifications deals with deacons, who care for the day-to-day needs of the church (vs. 8-10, 12-13; see Ac 6:1-6).
3. The third set of qualifications applies to women, meaning either deaconesses or wives of deacons (v. 11). What four traits are listed?
4. In comparing the list for elders with the lists for deacons and women, what characteristics are unique to elders? Why?

1. Are you a Christian leader? Does “leadership” mean virtually the same thing as “service”?
2. Which of the listed characteristics do you feel are the most important for ministers? For husbands? For wives?
3. List three of these characteristics that you would like God to build in you. List one specific thing you will do this week to further yield to God as he helps you grow in each of those areas.

Whereas Paul spoke of the **humanity of Jesus** in chapter two, he ends chapter three by using a church hymn or Christian creed to emphasize the **divinity of Jesus**. It speaks of his birth and baptism, the witness of angels, his ministry and his exalted nature as the object of faith and finally his ascension in glory.

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word