

Adult School of Ministry
Summer 2025
Lesson 12 – August 17, 2025

Live in Light of Coming Judgment

The hope of Christ's return should embolden us to live for Him.

Scriptures: (1) 2 Thessalonians 1:1-6; (2) 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10; (3) 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12;
1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

The Lesson Overview: This study from the letters to the church at Thessalonica again emphasizes Christ's return. Paul addressed this from a couple of perspectives: First, he placed this theme within the context of persecution that the Thessalonian church was enduring, which testified they were worthy of God's kingdom. Second, he spoke of the judgment awaiting their persecutors. The message of Christ's coming to judge the unrighteous and be glorified in the church was intended to encourage the Thessalonians to continue living for Christ by the power and grace of God. They could be assured God would accomplish His will for the church.

Historical Background: Throughout 2 Thessalonians 1:6-12, Paul used themes and language from the Old Testament (compare verse 9 with Isaiah 2:10, 19, 21). The Old Testament texts he used portray God as the One who will bring judgment and whose glory will be revealed among His saints. Paul rightly understood the Old Testament from the perspective of the new covenant in Christ. Paul's approach to the Old Testament is an example for all who study the Bible. He saw new covenant promises throughout the Scriptures and highlighted this in his writings. Ultimately, for Paul, the covenant of Christ is alluded to in the Books of Law, revealed in the Wisdom Literature, and anticipated in the Prophets.

Lesson Outline

1. EXEMPLIFY HOPE IN PERSECUTION - 2 Thessalonians 1:1-6
 - A. Thanksgiving and Commendation (1-4)
 - B. Worthy to Suffer for Christ (5-6)
2. PREPARE FOR THE COMING JUDGMENT - 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10
 - A. God's Judgment of Unbelievers (7-9)
 - B. God's Glory Among Believers (10)
3. LIVE IN THE POWER OF GOD - 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24
 - A. Worthy of God's Calling (2 Thessalonians 1:11-12)
 - B. God's Faithfulness to Those He Calls (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24)

Discussing The Lesson

1. EXEMPLIFY HOPE IN PERSECUTION (2 Thessalonians 1:1-6)

A. Thanksgiving and Commendation - 2 Thessalonians 1:1-4

- 1) The Apostle Paul's second letter to the church at Thessalonica was written shortly after his first letter to the church.
- 2) The topic of Christ's second coming is featured in the first letter, but it dominates the second.
- 3) Following his standard introduction (vv. 1-2), Paul thanked the Thessalonian Christians.
- 4) He was thankful for the "*faith*" of these disciples of Christ that was "*growing more and more*" (v. 3 NIV).
- 5) This was a relatively new church, but it was growing despite much persecution from their "*own countrymen*" (1 Thessalonians 2:14).
- 6) In addition, Paul gave thanks to God for the Thessalonian Christians because they were abounding in love for one another (2 Thessalonians 1:3), which evidenced they were Jesus' disciples.
- 7) Following Paul's thanksgiving to God for the abounding faith and love among the disciples in Thessalonica, Paul added a note of commendation.
- 8) The church growth in Thessalonica that he heard about was gratifying, especially when considering the circumstances under which it was happening—during "*persecutions and tribulations*" (v. 4).
- 9) When news of the church's continued faithfulness to Christ amid persecution was made known to Paul, he told them, "*We ourselves boast of you among the churches of God*" (v. 4 NKJV).
- 10) Paul and his team were proud of the faith and testimony of the Thessalonian Christians, so much so that they used the Thessalonian church as an example for others.

B. Worthy to Suffer for Christ - 2 Thessalonians 1:5-6

- 1) Verse 5 departs from Paul's typical thanksgiving and prayer at the beginning of a letter as he turns his attention to the difficulties the Thessalonian Christians were enduring (v. 4).
- 2) Rather than viewing such things as indications of God's displeasure, Paul stressed this was "*manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God*" (v. 5 NKJV).
- 3) The church's suffering for their faith in Christ was evidence that God had judged them to be "*worthy of the kingdom.*"
- 4) Because of their faithfulness in the face of hostility and continuing to grow in faith and love, they had proven themselves Kingdom worthy.
- 5) God allowed them to "*suffer*" on behalf of the Gospel partly because of their maturing faith and growth in grace.
- 6) It was a privilege they would continue to experience because God had counted them worthy (compare Acts 14:22).
- 7) With their ongoing persecution, it might have seemed to some of the Thessalonian Christians that God did not intend to punish those who were unjustly tormenting them.
- 8) However, God will punish sin, even if His judgments are not always carried out in this present age.

- 9) God is “*righteous*,” so if not during their lifetimes, then on “*that day*” (v. 10)—the time of God’s judgment upon the earth—He would “*recompense tribulation to them that trouble*” His saints (v. 6).
- 10) The penalty that God will hand out will be a response to the “*tribulation*” the evildoers were unjustly inflicting on His children.
- 11) The wicked may believe they are immune to judgment, but they “*are treasuring up ... wrath in the day of wrath*” (Romans 2:5 NKJV).

2. PREPARE FOR THE COMING JUDGMENT (2 Thessalonians 1:7-10)

A. God’s Judgment of Unbelievers - 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9

- 1) God will repay trouble on those who “*troubled*” the Thessalonian church (v. 6), but He will give “*rest*” to the redeemed when Christ comes in power “*with His mighty angels*” (v. 7).
- 2) This promise points to the Day of the Lord and the rest He will give, which includes the end of sin and its destructive effects.
- 3) It will be a never-ending “*rest*” in the Lord for those who believe and remain faithful to Him (Hebrews 4:9-11).
- 4) Although Christ’s return will usher in the perfect rest God has promised to all who love Him,
- 5) Christ’s coming again will also result in “*vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (2 Thessalonians 1:8 NKJV).
- 6) Those who do not know God “*shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power*” (v. 9).
- 7) The reason some will suffer God’s wrath when Christ returns is not because they are the worst of sinners or even that they persecuted the church of God.
- 8) The great sin for which they will be punished is their unbelief in Jesus Christ as the only Savior from sin.
- 9) To “*know God*” is to be in close fellowship with Him, which comes only through believing and obeying the Gospel.
- 10) In Romans 10:16, Paul used the terms “*obeyed*” and “*believed*” interchangeably.
- 11) Obeying the Gospel is synonymous with believing the Gospel.
- 12) The sin of unbelief will be the reason people will face “*everlasting destruction*” (1 Thessalonians 1:9) rather than experience eternal “*rest*” (v. 7).

B. God’s Glory Among Believers - 2 Thessalonians 1:10

- 1) The second coming of Christ is not only a day of judgment for those who do not know God and fail to believe the Gospel, but it will also be a day of celebration for “*all them that believe*” (v. 10).
- 2) While the punishment awaiting unbelievers is “*everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power*,” believers in Christ will “*admire*” [marvel at] the glory of Christ when He comes (vv. 9-10).
- 3) Those who do not obey the Gospel will not be permitted to dwell in the Lord’s presence to enjoy His glory and power.
- 4) However, “*the saints*” will behold His presence and see His glory.
- 5) This may be another way of saying when Christ is revealed, His disciples—both those alive at His coming and those who have died in Christ—will worship their Savior.
- 6) Paul noted this glorious experience awaits those who “*believed*” his “*testimony*” (v. 10).

- 7) This reveals and reinforces the necessity of proclaiming the Gospel.
- 8) Believing the Good News is necessary for salvation and fellowship with God (Romans 10:13).
- 9) Paul reminds us that someone must preach the Gospel.
- 10) Without Christians serving as witnesses for Christ, the lost will remain in bondage to their sins.
- 11) People must hear the story of Jesus Christ before they can believe it (Romans 10:14-15).

3. LIVE IN THE POWER OF GOD (2 Thessalonians 1:11-12; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24)

A. Worthy of God's Calling - 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12

- 1) After describing what believers in Christ can expect to experience when He comes again, Paul returned to addressing how Christians can and ought to live in anticipation of that great day.
- 2) Christ is coming again to judge the unrighteous and to be glorified in His church, so Paul and his companions prayed often for the Thessalonian Christians (v. 11).
- 3) Their prayer had a threefold focus:
 - a. First, *"that our God would count you worthy of his calling."*
 - i. Paul already stated they were worthy, given that they were suffering for Christ's name (v. 5).
 - ii. This first goal, therefore, seemed to be that, even during persecution, they would continue to be faithful to God, who had saved them.
 - b. Second, *"that our God would ... fulfill all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power"* (v. 11).
 - i. Paul's desire for the Thessalonian church was that God, by His power, would bring about every desire of the church for "goodness" to perform deeds of "faith."
 - c. Third, *"that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him"* (v. 12).
- 4) Paul had described how Christ would be "glorified" in the church at His second coming (v. 10).
- 5) Here, Paul was focusing on the present when he said Christ was to "be glorified" (v. 12).
- 6) The church of Jesus Christ in every age should worship the Savior and King through goodness and acts of charity and faith, which Paul said results in the church being glorified "in Him."
- 7) The Thessalonian church was to live out these three goals through faith; however, the ability to accomplish them was not attributed to their faith or efforts alone.
- 8) In each case, Paul was putting his confidence in God, through whom these goals would come to fruition: *"that our God would"* (v. 11) and *"according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ"* (v. 12).

B. God's Faithfulness to Those He Calls - 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

- 1) The theme of *holiness* occurs throughout Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians (2:10-12; 3:11-13; 4:3-8).
- 2) Therefore, it is no surprise that Paul's closing prayer for the church would return to this theme.
- 3) Paul's prayer was that *"the very God of peace"* would *"sanctify ... wholly"* the Christians in Thessalonica (5:23).

- 4) Previously, Paul noted God's will for His people is their "*sanctification*" (4:3), so the prayer of Paul in 5:23 is that God's will be done in the Thessalonian followers of Jesus.
- 5) The rest of this verse expands on what Paul meant by being completely ("*wholly*") sanctified.
- 6) He desired that the "*spirit and soul and body*" (spiritual, mental, and physical life) of every believer in Thessalonica would be thoroughly set apart for God (v. 23).
- 7) Because Paul said God was able to keep them "*blameless*," this prayer for sanctification appears to focus on the daily ethical demands of living for Christ.
- 8) Paul said the believers must be spiritually and morally prepared for "*the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*" (v. 23).
- 9) Paul was confident God would accomplish the work of wholly sanctifying them and presenting them before Christ as blameless at His coming.
- 10) Paul's assurance of this rested in the power of God to work in the lives of the faithful.
- 11) Paul could trust that God would bring this about because God is "*faithful*" (v. 24).

Call To Discipleship

We live for God because we know He is faithful and has given us (and will continue to give us) the power to do all He has called us to do through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Ministry In Action

Like Paul, we should pray for one another, asking God to help us maintain a faithful life, so we might receive perfect and eternal rest in His presence.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Lesson 12

UNIQUE FEATURES OF THE LETTERS TO THE THESSALONIANS

The first unique feature of Paul's letters to the Thessalonians is the salutary benediction at the beginning of each one: "*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*" (1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:2 NKJV). This became the salutation identifying as his, all of Paul's subsequent eleven letters in the New Testament (listed in Biblical order): Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:3; 2 Corinthians 1:2; Galatians 1:3; Ephesians 1:2; Philippians 1:2; Colossians 1:2; 1 Timothy 1:2; 2 Timothy 1:2; Titus 1:4; and Philemon 1:3).

Another unique feature of Paul's letters to the Thessalonians is his criticism of the Jews (1 Thessalonians 2:14-16 NKJV) for "*forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved*" (v. 16). Jews today regard this whole passage as highly offensive, but it was written against the backdrop of the recent severe persecution of Paul and Silas by Jews in Thessalonica (see Acts 17:5-13).

A special feature of Paul's letters to the Thessalonians for Christian living is this: "*Aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you*" (1 Thessalonians 4:11 NKJV).

One of the most quoted and cited passages in the New Testament is Paul's description of events when Christ comes again (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17). There is no other statement like it in the New Testament, "*by the word of the Lord*" (v. 15).

In 2 Thessalonians 2:3-6, Paul addressed a subject to which he never returned in any of his subsequent writings—"*the man of sin [lawlessness]*" (v. 3). This man is generally believed to be the Antichrist. However, Paul, when with the Thessalonians, told them something about this (v. 5) that is not in his letter, giving rise to much speculation about what that may have been.

The often quoted saying of Paul in 2 Thessalonians 3:10 NKJV, "*If any man will not work, neither shall he eat,*" was not Paul's creation, nor a quotation from the Old Testament, but an ancient proverb well-known to the Jews.

PERSISTING DESPITE PERSECUTION

1. Compare Chambers' statement with Jesus' prayer in Luke 22:42.
2. How can a church endure persecution and other trials, and what is the benefit of those experiences (2 Thessalonians 1:4-5)?
3. Who will be "punished with everlasting destruction," and why (vv. 8-9)?
4. What does it mean for "Christ [to] be glorified in [us]," and for us to be glorified "in Him" (v. 12)?
5. What does 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 declare about Christ's power and faithfulness?

"To choose to suffer means there is something wrong; to choose God's will even if it means suffering is a very different thing." —Oswald Chambers