

2 Thessalonians

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2 Thessalonians 1:1-12

Vss. 1-2

- This is almost exactly the same greeting Paul used in the first letter, but Paul makes two important changes. The Thessalonians are very concerned about the Second Coming, about whether they are going to be good enough to make the cut. So here is the wisdom of a great leader and teacher. First, Paul makes one little but very important change in the opening line. In the first letter its "To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father..." Here in the second letter its "To the church of the Thessalonians in God **OUR** Father...". With that subtle little change Paul opens his argument that they are indeed part of God's family and nothing can snatch them out of our Father's hand. Second, he adds to vs. 2. Whereas in the first letter he simply says, "Grace to you and peace", here he adds that Grace and Peace are gifts "from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ". The key component of Paul's message is that we are saved by Grace, not by works or whether you think you are somehow good enough, and once you have received God's salvation through His Grace, He is your Father and you are His child and there *nothing* that can ever change that. So even in the opening of the letter, with two subtle little changes, Paul wants to set their minds and hearts at ease as to whether they will be received by King Jesus on the Day of the Lord.

Vss. 3-4

- As Paul quickly gets into the heart of the message he wants to communicate to the Thessalonians, he begins by building up a people who are being beaten down from the outside and feeling inadequate on the inside. He tells them he feels obligated to give thanks to God for them because their faith has grown so very much and the love they have for each other is growing just as fast and strong. In 1 Thessalonians 1:3 Paul tells them he was praying for their faith, love, and hope. Here he speaks as one whose prayers have been answered. He prayed for their faith and love to grow and these qualities have grown so much he can brag on them to other churches. And the proof is how their faith has grown and love for each other has grown, and how it all continues to grow, and that all of this has happened as they, the people of the Thessalonian church, have been enduring severe persecutions and afflictions. Nothing purifies quite like fire. Severity will sort out the real from the fake and the Thessalonians have shown faith and love that has been more than a match for all that Satan has thrown at them.
- But what of hope, the third diamond in Paul's crown of discipleship? We'll find it in vs. 10.

Vss. 5-10

- Am I worthy of Heaven? The Word here says that if strong and growing faith and the following of Christ's command to love one another are the qualities of one's life, then you can be assured of your salvation. The evidence is plain. When under persecution one's faith and love still grows and grows, then the issue is settled.
- It seems that Paul shifts here from an assessment of the Thessalonians present qualities to their future judgement, which is their primary concern. And not their judgement only but the judgement of those who are persecuting them as well.
- God is just. At the day of judgement, the righteous will be rewarded, and the rest will be afflicted as they have dished out affliction. In Matthew 25 Jesus speaks of The Judgement using the metaphor of how a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. Now in truth, its not that sheep are superior to goats. To the shepherd, both have their unique value and purpose. But in the metaphor, we should not miss the Truth. The shepherd did not make the sheep or the goats what they are and neither does God make people what they are. The Judgment is not to decide who is saved and who is lost. We have already determined that for ourselves. Are we going to accept Christ as our Savior, surrender our life to Him, and allow the Holy Spirit to work in us so that He truly does make us brand new creatures in Christ? If so, then we are blessed, and the doors of Heaven are open to us. But, if we deny Christ, refusing to answer His knock at our door and choose not to obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus (vs. 8), then we are choosing to spend eternity "away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power" (vs. 9) and eternal destruction is waiting for us at the end of that road.
- So here is **HOPE**. By faith, as we live out our lives in Christ and Christ in His, with His love permeating our lives, we can absolute HOPE in our eternal salvation through Christ.

Vss. 11-12

- Paul closes this introductory section by revealing how he has been praying for the Thessalonians. He wants them to know 1) that he prays for them always, 2) that God will indeed consider them worthy on the day of Judgement 3) and that God will answer Paul's prayers and the Thessalonians' prayers for their continued growth in Christ - His blessings, love, grace, and mercies 4) and all of this has the two-fold purpose of Christ being totally glorified in the lives of Thessalonian people who are the church and that they too will be glorified in Him, again, just as we saw over and over in John's letters, Christ in us and we in Him 5) and all of this is made possible by the grace of **OUR** God and the Lord Jesus Christ. We are not made worthy by anything in and of ourselves. We are made worthy by divine grace. And because we are saved, we are His, so even as Gentiles, He is OUR God, OUR Father, OUR Lord and Savior.