

2 Thessalonians 1:3–12

Paul's Admiration for the Thessalonians

Study 02 · 2 Thessalonians 1
Small Group Bible Study Series

Source: Dr. C. Norman Sellers ThD (SellersBibleInstitute.com; used by permission)
Editor: The Gospel Vault

① TEXT	② DEVOTIONAL	③ COMMENTARY	④ SELF-STUDY GUIDE
Foundation	Personal preparation	Teacher / Leader preparation	Group meeting
<i>Everyone</i>	<i>All group members</i>	<i>Teacher / Leader</i>	<i>Small group</i>

⑤ Application closes each study and draws from all sections above, plus FGR.docx.

① THE BIBLICAL TEXT

2 Thessalonians 1:3–12 · New King James Version (NKJV)

3 *We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other,*

4 *so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure,*

5 *which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer;*

6 *since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you,*

7 *and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels,*

8 *in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

9 *These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,*

10 *when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed.*

11 *Therefore we also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power,*

12 *that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

② DEVOTIONAL

Personal preparation · Drawn from the teaching and outline

“Your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other.” — 2 Thessalonians 1:3

An oak on a windy hilltop grows strong because the wind will not leave it alone. The Thessalonians’ faith was growing exceedingly because it was being tested exceedingly — and their love reached not just everybody in general, but each one in particular.

Paul does not promise them that the trouble will stop. He promises them that God is in control. Every trial is by His design and met by His grace; their faithfulness will be counted worthy at the Judgment Seat of Christ; their persecutors are in the hands of a righteous Judge. For today, there is rest — not giving up, but resting in Jesus, the way a child rests when someone strong has his back.

And until the Lord is revealed from heaven, Paul prays: not that they would make His name more glorious, but that by faithful living they would make His glory more well known.

For Reflection

1. What “wind” is God using right now to strengthen your faith?
2. Is there one person your love has been leaving out?
3. What would it look like this week to rest in Jesus instead of backing away?

God has your back — so stand firm, and let His name be seen in you.

③ COMMENTARY

Teacher preparation resource · Full text organized under outline headings

PROPOSITION

Paul admired the church at Thessalonica because its faith was growing under testing, its love reached each and every member, and its endurance gave him something to boast about. To such a church God gives an undisputed promise — a righteous judgment that will reward faithful sufferers, repay their persecutors, give them rest now, and display Christ in His saints at His coming — and Paul surrounds it with undefeated prayer that the name of the Lord Jesus would be glorified in them.

Outline: Paul's Admiration for the Thessalonians — 2 Thessalonians 1:1–12. The background and greeting (1:1–2) were developed in Study 01; this study develops I. A Word of Undiluted Praise (1:3–4), II. A Word of Undisputed Promise (1:5–10), and III. A Word of Undefeated Prayer (1:11–12). Shaded Study Notes are supplemental material drawn from the FGR resource library; all other text is the teacher's.

The Background of the Epistle: Paul's Introduction — 1:1–2

(The background and greeting of 1:1–2 are covered in Study 01, "Introduction and Background.")

Opening: A Church Paul Admired

And we say this to ourselves, "Well, what are we doing wrong? Our seats are empty." Well, there's a church — there's a church called the church at Thessalonica. And Paul had great admiration for this church. He thanked God for them all over the place.

And so he would tell everybody, and that's what it is with churches that are full. People get excited about what's going on, and they tell people. Soon they say, "Well, where are you going to go to church? Come to our church." "Why?" "Well, our church is great. We love our church."

Well, Paul loved this church — Thessalonica. And he tells us why. And I think that we would do well to hear what Paul has to say about that church that he admired so much. And maybe we could emulate that. Find out what it is; do it.

I. A Word of Undiluted Praise — 1:3–4

Well, first of all, Paul gives a word of praise, in verses 3 and 4.

A. What He Was Bound to Do — 1:3a

He said, "I am bound" — or "we," probably including Silvanus and Timothy — "We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren." Now, that word "bound": we find it necessary. And it's as though he had a debt to pay. In fact, that word means that: I have a debt to pay.

And he says, “And I do it always.” I thank God at all times. Now, it doesn’t mean that every minute of every day he’s praying for this church. He had so many churches, so many people, so many things that he had on his mind. But he was praying on a regular basis. I suspect that the apostle Paul had a list of churches and people and ministries that he prayed for, because everywhere you go, he says, “I pray for you, I pray for you, I pray for you.”

Well, he’s praying for these people, and he’s doing it not so much as bound to do it — but why is he bound to do it? We’ll see in a minute. “Always,” he says. “I’m praying for you, and I thank God for you” — you, that church.

Study Note — “Bound” to Give Thanks (ὀφείλομεν)

The verb *opheilō* is the ordinary word for owing a debt (Matthew 18:28, “Pay me what you owe”), and here it is in the present tense — an ongoing obligation, not a single payment. Paul uses the same expression a second time in this short letter: “But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord” (2:13). The repetition shows that the thanksgiving was not a polite opening formula; it was a debt Paul felt he owed God every time he thought of this church.

Sources (FGR): *Blue Letter Bible*, “ὀφείλω (G3784),” *Lexicon*; *Constable, Expository Notes on 2 Thessalonians*.

B. Why He Was Bound to Do It — 1:3b–4

Why them, you ask? Well, why was he bound to thank God for them?

1. For Growth — 1:3b

a. Faith That Is Tested Grows

First of all, he says, because of your growth. Verse 3a: “because your faith grows exceedingly.” Your faith grows exceedingly. The faith was growing because it was being tested. That’s when faith grows.

Faith — if you have no problems, no tests, no — you just lie back and say, “Oh, isn’t that wonderful?” It’s like your muscles. If you have SilverSneakers with Humana, and you can go to the gym and do your muscles, they know that if you go there and you stretch your muscles and work hard, then you’ll be more healthy. They won’t have to pay as much out because of your health.

Well, that’s what it is with your faith. Spiritually speaking, you have to give your faith some exercise. Paul — not Paul, the writer of the Hebrews [Hebrews 5:14] — talks about that. Take your muscles over — your spiritual muscles — to the gymnasium. That’s the word, gymnasium. And so you get exercise; it’s growing your growth.

b. Like the Oak Tree on the Hilltop

It’s like the oak tree on the top of a hill. It’s up there, and the wind blows it, and it’s banging back and forth. It’s growing; it grows; it gets muscles; it gets real strong, because it’s under that wind.

We have a tree out here. I asked Ray to put a tree on that end because the sun comes raining down on Sunday morning — on the mornings. And so he put a tree out there. And it's a nice old tree. You know what I did? I went out there and I shook that tree. "Come on, tree." And I talked to it, because I read somewhere, if you talk to it, it'll grow. "Come on, tree, get going. Come on." And had a big time with that. But that tree's growing.

If we grow, if we are tested — faith that's not tested is faith that's not growing. No.

c. Growing Exceedingly, Tested Exceedingly

Not only is their faith growing; it's growing exceedingly. Your faith is growing exceedingly — exceedingly. You know why? It was tested exceedingly.

A person that I admire very much said this: "Whatever does not kill me will make me stronger." That's it. Whatever doesn't kill you is going to make you stronger. And that's true of martyrdom, isn't it? That if it doesn't kill you, it's going to make you stronger. If it does kill you — up with the Lord. Well, that's the growth. The faith is growing.

2. For Grace — 1:3c

And their grace. They were gracious to each other. I love this section. They were gracious to each other in their attitude toward one another. Their love abounds, he says. No — love abounds.

a. Love of Every Person — "each and every one of you all"

Love to whom? Love to every person. This word could mean each or every — each and every: *hekastos*. It's a love of each and every one of you all. You should see this in the Greek text. It's "you," plural. That means all of you — you all. And it says — there's also the word "all" there. So it's "all of y'all." That's what he's saying. All of y'all are loving one another.

b. "Each" Is Different from "Every"

A friend of mine was sitting in Shibe Park in Philadelphia. You know what that is? That's too old for you. Where the Phillies used to play, and the A's as well, when they were in Philadelphia. And he was sitting there with some friends, and one of the guys said, "I'd like to have a nickel for everybody in here." And he said, "You'd have a nickel." A nickel for everybody? That's a nickel. But if you said, "I'd like to have a nickel for each one here," then you'd have a lot of money.

Well, each is different. So when we are loving one another, we need to understand that each one means each one — every individual person. We're not loving one another if we leave anybody out. Each one. That's the kind of love they had: one that covered everybody and each person.

3. For Glory — 1:4

a. Paul Boasting of Them at Corinth

And then there's glory. That kind of grace and growth brings boasting — glory, in Paul's mind. He says — and this is in verse 4 — “so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure.”

Paul is boasting to other churches. Now, if you know your history here — if you remember the introduction — Paul went from Thessalonica to Berea to Athens to Corinth, and he's now at Corinth. He wrote First Thessalonians at Corinth, and he also wrote Second. He was there the whole time. What churches was he visiting? He wasn't going around to any other churches.

But what I see here is that he was meeting people. Corinth was the hub of the whole area. And there, people come to Corinth on business trips, whatever. And Paul would see them and say, “Hey, I remember you. You're from Philippi. You're from this church, that church.” And that's apparently the way it happened. He was seeing all these different people from different churches, and he was able to tell them, and they passed the word back as well. And so, the different people in that church — he was so excited about their patience and faith, he couldn't wait to tell people.

b. Are We Spreading the Word?

Oh, that we could get that kind of excitement about our Lord, about our salvation, and about our opportunity to spread the Word. Folks, we're not spreading the Word. Who? Some are doing their thing, and that's good. But as a church, we're not doing it. We're not carrying these things. Happen to have one. No.

We're not doing this. How many of you — don't give me any hands, but ask yourself: how many of these tracts did I pass out this week? Yeah. Think about it. Did you intentionally want to do that? Do you want to? You want to now. Can't do it now — everybody here has had one. When do you do it? When you go outside. Carry them.

When I get my glasses, I make sure I put my tracts in there. And this morning I noticed that's all I had. I ran out again. Give it out wherever. Every time you go to a restaurant, you give a person a tip; then that tip includes that tract. But anyway, Paul was excited about this group, and he praised them.

II. A Word of Undisputed Promise — 1:5–10

Then he gives a word of promise, verses 5 to 10. What is the promise? God's in control. Every situation you find yourself in, God is in control.

A. As to the Proof of It — 1:5–6

And the proof of it is in verses 5 and 6.

1. Judgment of Saints — 1:5

a. Counted Worthy to Rule in the Kingdom

There's going to be a judgment of the saints, verse 5. He says, "which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer."

The suffering — you've been in persecution, you've been in tribulation, and that very tribulation tells you that God's in control, because He's going to do something about that. Every believer is going to enter the kingdom. You have that promise. But not every believer is going to rule with Christ in the kingdom. So he's saying you are worthy — counted worthy — to rule in the kingdom.

See, and he says God's judgment is just. It's God's just judgment, His righteous judgment. And He makes no exceptions. Those who accept the persecutions and tribulations that come upon them for Christ's sake will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God — worthy of rule in the kingdom of God. And that judgment will be determined at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Not judging for sin — that's been taken care of for believers — but judging for worthiness to rule in Christ's kingdom.

b. The Believer Receives the Reward; God Receives the Glory

And whoever receives that reward — God will receive the glory. He receives the reward, and serves with Christ forever, in the kingdom and the eternal state. So God will be the glory, because, you see — God's grace. It's by God's grace that the believer has believed in the first place.

By God's design, the trials come. Oh my. God designed that trial for you exactly. Why? He wants your faith to be stronger. And here it comes. And the trial — the salvation comes by grace; the design of God's trials is for grace. And it's God's grace that the believer overcomes. That's what God does. "I'll send you the trial, but I'll send you the ability within the trial to overcome, and you'll be stronger as a result."

Study Note — Entering the Kingdom and Ruling in It

The teacher's distinction — every believer enters the kingdom, but not every believer rules with Christ in it — is the heart of the Free Grace reading of 1:5. Entrance into the kingdom rests on the gift of eternal life, received by faith alone (John 3:16; 5:24). Reigning with Christ is a reward tied to faithful endurance: "If we endure, we shall also reign with Him" (2 Timothy 2:12); we are "joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him" (Romans 8:17). That evaluation takes place at the Judgment Seat of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:10), where a believer's works are tested and rewarded, "but he himself will be saved" even if his works are burned (1 Corinthians 3:12–15).

The verb in 1:5, *kataxioō*, means "to count or declare worthy," not "to make worthy." God does not make the sufferers worthy by their suffering; He pronounces faithful sufferers worthy of a share in Christ's rule — which is why the believer receives the reward but God receives the glory.

Sources (FGR): Zane C. Hodges, Grace in Eclipse: A Study on Eternal Rewards, 2nd ed. (Denton, TX: Grace Evangelical Society, 2007); Joseph C. Dillow, The Reign of the Servant Kings, 2nd ed. (Hayesville, NC: Schoettle Publishing, 2011); Robert N. Wilkin, ed., The Grace New Testament Commentary (Denton, TX: Grace Evangelical Society, 2010).

2. Judgment of Sinners — 1:6

a. God Is the Professional

And then there's going to be the judgment of sinners, verse 6: "since it is," again, "a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you." So God's just when He judges the unbeliever. He will sort out trouble to those who are troubling the believer. Wow — is that great? All these people who are troubling you are going to get the same trouble back from God, in spades.

Who knows more about giving out tribulation than God? Is it God or men? God. And so, while they are amateurs in troubling you, God is the professional. He's going to judge them, and He'll do it right.

b. Give Them the Word

So — and it seems to me that while we're doing that, we give out the Word. Someone has troubled you for your faith's sake? Give them a good dose of it. Give them their money's worth. Make sure they understand what your faith is about.

c. Paul, Stephen, and "Fightings Within, Fears Without"

Paul had that experience. Paul was one of the ones who was persecuting Stephen, remember? And Stephen gave a message. I mean, chapter 7 of Acts — just full of all the things that Stephen said — and Paul was there. He was one of the ones. He was maybe one of the sub-leaders, because he was holding the coats: "Here, hold our coats while we throw stones at him." And Paul heard the message. And that message he never forgot.

Charlotte Elliott, in the hymn "Just As I Am," got it right. "Trouble's on. Come on." "Fightings within, and fears without." Remember that section? Fighting within, fears without. That's what was happening with Paul. He heard that message, and he doubled his efforts and went up to Damascus. He was going to get to the church. And all the time — fighting within, fears without — troubling him. And the Lord got him. And off he went — well, serving the Lord.

But see, those that trouble you are going to have a message from you that's going to convict them when the Lord comes, and it's also going to trouble them as they go their way. So that's the proof of it.

B. As to the Present — 1:7a

1. Rest: Relaxation, Relief

Now, as to the present time — 7a: "and to give you who are troubled rest with us." Paul wants to give you, in this present time, rest. It's relaxation, relief. Relax. He doesn't mean stop resisting. What he means is that we are to rest in Jesus and trust in Him for the proper outcome.

2. God's Got Your Back

Suppose someone robbed you on the street. You're all in your front yard. And your son was a policeman, and he's inside. Are you going to fear that robber? "Oh, hey, come on in." And he'd come out there, and that's it; it's over. He's got your back.

Let me tell you something: God's got your back. Whatever the trouble is troubling you, whatever's in your life, whatever persecution you fought — God's got your back. And you can just say, "God's got this. Okay, fine, do what you want. God's going to take care of it. I'm not backing up one bit." So Paul encouraged them to join him in that rest — resting in God.

C. As to the Prospect — 1:7b–10

1. A Day of Revelation Is Coming — 1:7b–c

As to the prospect — the future — there's going to be a day of revelation coming, "when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels." So we need to watch closely here to know whether he's talking about the Second Coming or the Rapture. I believe here he's talking about the Second Coming. He's going to come with His mighty angels — coming with His mighty angels, not coming for His saints. So this is the Second Coming to the earth. And He's going to set things right. This will happen at the end of the Tribulation. It's a time when the persecutors will be judged.

Study Note — Rapture or Second Coming?

Dispensational writers in the DTS tradition distinguish two phases of Christ's return. At the Rapture the Lord comes for His saints, meeting them "in the air" (1 Thessalonians 4:16–17), with no mention of judgment on the world. At the Second Coming He comes with His saints and His angels to the earth, in judgment, at the close of the Tribulation (Zechariah 14:5; Matthew 25:31; Revelation 19:11–16). The marks the teacher points to in 1:7–10 — "revealed from heaven," "with His mighty angels," "in flaming fire taking vengeance" — all belong to the second phase. The word "revealed" is the noun *apokalypsis*, an unveiling: Christ, hidden from the world's sight now, will be publicly displayed.

Sources (FGR): J. Dwight Pentecost, Things to Come: A Study in Biblical Eschatology (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958); John F. Hart, ed., Evidence for the Rapture: A Biblical Case for Pretribulationism (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2015); Charles C. Ryrie, Basic Theology, rev. ed. (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1999).

2. The Day of Revenge Is Coming — 1:8–9

It's a day of revelation. It's also a day of revenge. Here it is.

a. The Essential Nature of the Wrath — 1:8

The essential nature of wrath is in verse 8. He's going to come "in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Now, there seem to be two groups here, I think — two groups. The ones are those who do not know God — never heard the gospel. Then there are those who obey not the gospel. I do that because of the Greek structure, but the two things, it seems to

me, are different. Not everybody agrees, though I couldn't find any commentator who disagreed. I think that there are two versions — out of all the versions I looked at, there are two versions that translate it as though they think that's one group. And it's strange that the two are as far removed from each other as could be ideologically: the King James and the NIV. You couldn't see more opposite there. Anyway, they see it more like one.

But this is two, I think. Those who do not know God — those have never heard the gospel, I believe. And then those who have heard the gospel and didn't obey it. But there's no difference, I take it, in the condemnation. God's going to bring a day of vengeance on them.

Study Note — The Greek Structure Behind “Two Groups”

The “Greek structure” the teacher mentions is the repeated article in 1:8: *tois mē eidosi theon kai tois mē hypakouousin tō euangeliō* — “on the ones not knowing God and on the ones not obeying the gospel.” Repeating the article before each participle is a natural way to mark two distinct groups. Paul elsewhere describes pagans as “the Gentiles who do not know God” (1 Thessalonians 4:5), which fits the first group; the second describes those who heard the gospel and refused it. Either way, as the teacher says, the outcome is the same.

Sources (FGR): Constable, *Expository Notes on 2 Thessalonians*; Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996).

b. The Eternal Nature of the Wrath — 1:9

And then the eternal nature of that wrath: “These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.” They would be punished — literally means they're going to pay the penalty. You pay the penalty with everlasting punishment. And everlasting punishment is just as long as everlasting life.

Matthew 25:46 says this: “And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into everlasting life.” Same word, same structure. One is as long as the other.

Tom Constable, a classmate of mine in Dallas, wrote in the *Bible Knowledge Commentary*: “Separation from the Lord's presence (lit., ‘face’) is the essence of eternal punishment. On the other hand being in the Lord's presence will make heaven, heaven. A Christian's hope is to see and be with the Lord; the judgment of unbelievers is to be eternally inaccessible to His presence.”

We will be with the Lord. They will be absent from the Lord, not able to enter into His presence at all. That's the difference.

— Thomas L. Constable, “2 Thessalonians,” in John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, eds., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983), 2:716.

3. The Day of Reward Is Coming — 1:10

a. Admired in His Saints

So that's the revelation, the vengeance, and then the day of reward is coming: "when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints" — verse 10 — "to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed."

When the Lord comes with His saints — not for — He will be admired in them. It struck me: in, not by. Because these saints will come with Him. We, the church, will be coming with Him when He comes the second time, and He will be admired in them. The Lord's going to be admired in you.

When we come back from heaven with Him, everybody's going to look at Him and say — we'll be admired. Why would they be admiring us? Well, there will be believers on the earth. We'll see that in a minute. Believers on the earth. And those believers will be looking at us: "Oh, look at all those people." How many billions of people who know the Lord from the church age — Pentecost to Rapture — they're all going to be with Him. And the believers on the earth — and there will be those — they will look at us, and they'll see Him in us, and He will be admired in us, the saints who came with Him. He will be admired by those on the earth who believe.

b. What He Will Do When He Comes

Now, at His coming to the earth, the Lord will defeat the Armageddon armies who are gathered around Jerusalem. He'll defeat them. He will judge the living Jews — the Jews who are on the earth, He will judge them: Ezekiel chapter 20 [20:33–38]. And He will judge the living Gentiles at a separate judgment (Matthew 24:31 to 46. Remember — separating the sheep from the goats) Well, all that is what the Lord is going to do when He comes. And then those believers will be the ones who admire Him in us.

III. A Word of Undefeated Prayer — 1:11–12

Then there's the word of prayer, 11 and 12.

A. When Paul Prayed — 1:11

1. Always, to Our God — 1:11a

When Paul prayed is in verse 11a — when he prayed: "Therefore we also pray always" — there's that word again, always — "for you." Paul and Silvanus and Timothy apparently prayed to their God, who is also the God of the Thessalonians. See, he says "our God." We pray to our God. And the "our" would be theirs — the apostles' — but also the God of the people, of the Thessalonian church. And by the way, He's the God of our church. He's praying to our God. And in praying to our God, he is praying continually — always.

2. That They Would Be Counted Worthy of Their Calling — 1:11b

And he prayed what? Well, he prayed that they would be counted worthy of their calling. God had called them. Not that they were worthy in themselves, but God called them and gave them a high calling — witnessing for Him, accepting persecution for His sake. All of that, he's saying, that they would be worthy of the calling. It's a high calling. Are they going to be worthy of that? Well, they'll be worthy in the power of the Holy Spirit, of course.

Using the spiritual gifts that the Holy Spirit gives, they will be found faithful to His calling and receive commendation from Him at His coming. That's what Paul got. Remember [2 Timothy 4:7–8]: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness" — not for me only, but for all those who love His appearing. That's it.

B. What Paul Prayed — 1:12

1. That the Name of the Lord Might Be Glorified

So he prayed for them that the name of the Lord might be glorified: "that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ."

See, we can't make His name more glorious. "Glorify" doesn't mean that you make it more glorious. His name is glorious. You look up "glory" in the dictionary — you ought to see Him. That's it. He is glorious. So you can't make Him more glorious, but you can make His glory more well-known. That's what we have to do. We can't make His name more glorious, but we can bring attention, that is, to the glorious name by our faithful living for Him.

2. Stand Firm

Don't be running away from temptation. Don't be running away from affliction, tribulation. Don't run away from it. Stand. Stand firm.

Conclusion

This is a good paragraph I found: "What was true for the church at Thessalonica is certainly the standard for all of us as well." What God expected from them and what Paul saw in them should be in us. "As we face this Scripture in modern times, God challenges us, regardless of our circumstances or difficulties, to lead a life that is faithful, well-pleasing in His sight, bringing honor and glory to the name as we look for His coming."

See you later.

Lord, thank You for this.

④ SELF-STUDY GUIDE

For use during the group meeting · Focused on the commentary text

Greek Word Study — 2 Thessalonians 1:3–12

Grammar and parsing: Blue Letter Bible. Definitions cite only the sources that add clarity (STR · THAY · VINE), with significance in context for every word.

Verse	Greek Word / English	Strong's # / Translit. / Form	Definition & Significance
v.3	ὀφείλω <i>we are bound</i>	G3784 <i>opheilō</i> Verb — Pres. Act. Ind. 1st Pl.	STR: to owe; to be under obligation. VINE: used of a debt (Matthew 18:28) and of a moral duty. Significance: thanksgiving for this church was a standing debt Paul owed God — repeated in 2:13.
v.3	ὑπεραυξάνω <i>grows exceedingly</i>	G5232 <i>hyperauxanō</i> Verb — Pres. Act. Ind. 3rd Sg.	THAY: to increase beyond measure (hyper, “over, beyond” + auxanō, “to grow”). Used only here in the NT. Significance: faith tested exceedingly was growing exceedingly — like the oak in the wind.
v.3	πλεονάζω <i>abounds</i>	G4121 <i>pleonazō</i> Verb — Pres. Act. Ind. 3rd Sg.	STR: to make or be more; to increase, abound. Significance: their love was not merely present but multiplying — and Paul had prayed for exactly this (1 Thessalonians 3:12).
v.3	ἕκαστος <i>each (one)</i>	G1538 <i>hekastos</i> Adjective — Gen. Masc. Sg.	THAY: each, every — viewed individually. Significance: “of each one of you all” — love that leaves no one out; the teacher’s nickel illustration of “each” versus “every.”
v.4	καυχάομαι <i>boast, glory</i>	G2744 <i>kauchaomai</i> Verb — Pres. Mid./Pass. (Deponent) Inf.	STR: to glory, whether rightly or wrongly. Significance: Paul’s boasting is not about himself but about God’s work in them, told to believers passing through Corinth.
v.4	ὑπομονή <i>patience, endurance</i>	G5281 <i>hypomonē</i> Noun — Gen. Fem. Sg.	VINE: lit. “an abiding under” (hypo + menō) — steadfast endurance under trial, not passive resignation. Significance: the quality that makes believers “counted worthy” in v.5.
v.5	ἐνδειγμα <i>manifest evidence</i>	G1730 <i>endeigma</i> Noun — Nom. Neut. Sg.	THAY: a token, proof, indication. Used only here in the NT. Significance: their endurance under persecution is itself the proof that God’s judgment is righteous and in control.
v.5	καταξιόω <i>counted worthy</i>	G2661 <i>kataxioō</i> Verb — Aor. Pass. Inf.	THAY: to account worthy, judge worthy (cf. Luke 20:35; Acts 5:41). Significance: to declare worthy, not to make worthy — the Free Grace distinction between entering the kingdom by faith and ruling in it as a reward.

Verse	Greek Word / English	Strong's # / Translit. / Form	Definition & Significance
v.7	ἄνεσις <i>rest</i>	G425 <i>anesis</i> Noun — Acc. Fem. Sg.	STR: a loosening, relaxation (from aniēmi, to let up). VINE: relief (2 Corinthians 2:13; 7:5). Significance: “relaxation, relief” — not ceasing to resist, but resting in Jesus for the outcome.
v.7	ἀποκάλυψις <i>revealed</i> <i>(revelation)</i>	G602 <i>apokalypsis</i> Noun — Dat. Fem. Sg.	STR: a disclosure, uncovering. Significance: the public unveiling of Christ at the Second Coming, with His mighty angels — not the Rapture, when He comes for His saints.
v.9	ὄλεθρος <i>destruction</i>	G3639 <i>olethros</i> Noun — Acc. Masc. Sg.	VINE: ruin, loss of all that gives worth to existence — not annihilation (cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:3; 1 Timothy 6:9). Significance: “from the presence of the Lord” — the essence is separation from His face.
v.9	αἰώνιος <i>everlasting</i>	G166 <i>aiōnios</i> Adjective — Acc. Masc. Sg.	THAY: without end, never to cease. The same word describes both punishment and life in Matthew 25:46. Significance: “everlasting punishment is just as long as everlasting life.”
v.10	ἐνδοξάζομαι <i>to be glorified (in)</i>	G1740 <i>endoxazomai</i> Verb — Aor. Pass. Inf.	THAY: to be glorified in. Used only in 1:10 and 1:12. Significance: Christ will be glorified in His saints — admired in them, as the teacher notes, “in, not by.”
v.11	ἀξιόω <i>count worthy</i>	G515 <i>axioō</i> Verb — Aor. Act. Subj. 3rd Sg.	STR: to deem entirely deserving. Significance: Paul prays that God would count them worthy of the high calling — faithful in the Spirit's power and commended at His coming.

Grammar Abbreviation Key

Cases: Nom. · Gen. · Dat. · Acc. · Voc. | Number: Sg. · Pl. | Gender: Masc. · Fem. · Neut.

Verb Mood: Ind. · Imp. · Subj. · Opt. · Inf. · Ptc. | Tense: Pres. · Imperf. · Fut. · Aor. · Perf. · Plpf. | Voice: Act. · Mid. · Pass. | Person: 1st/2nd/3rd Sg./Pl.

Hebrew Word Study: not included this week. The teaching cites Ezekiel 20 and Matthew 25 in passing, but no Hebrew term is a developed point of the message.

Study Questions

Part 1 — From the Commentary

Outline Point	Key Truth
Opening	Full churches are churches whose people are excited and tell others; Paul admired Thessalonica and tells us why.
I.A What he was bound to do — 1:3a	“Bound” (opheilō) — a debt to pay. Paul thanked God always, on a regular basis, likely from a prayer list.
I.B.1 For growth — 1:3b	Faith grows when tested — like exercise in a gymnasium or an oak in the wind; tested exceedingly, growing exceedingly.

Outline Point	Key Truth
I.B.2 For grace — 1:3c	Love abounded to each and every one of “you all” — each is different from every; love that leaves no one out.
I.B.3 For glory — 1:4	Paul boasted of their patience and faith to believers passing through Corinth; are we spreading the Word?
II.A.1 Judgment of saints — 1:5	Every believer enters the kingdom; faithful sufferers are counted worthy to rule, at the Judgment Seat of Christ. The believer gets the reward; God gets the glory.
II.A.2 Judgment of sinners — 1:6	God is just to repay persecutors — they are amateurs, He is the professional. Give them the Word, as Stephen gave it to Paul.
II.B As to the present — 1:7a	Rest (anesis): relaxation, relief — not stop resisting, but trust Jesus for the outcome. God’s got your back.
II.C As to the prospect — 1:7b–10	Revelation (Second Coming with His angels), revenge (two groups; everlasting separation from His presence), reward (admired in His saints).
III. A word of prayer — 1:11–12	Paul prayed always that they be counted worthy of their calling, and that the Lord’s name be glorified — made well known — in them.

Part 2 — Study Questions

1. According to the teacher, why was the Thessalonians’ faith growing “exceedingly,” and what illustrations does he use?

Leader answer: Their faith was growing because it was being tested — tested exceedingly, so growing exceedingly. He compares it to exercising muscles at the gym (the writer of Hebrews speaks of exercise, the word behind “gymnasium”) and to the oak on the hilltop that grows strong because the wind keeps bending it. “Faith that’s not tested is faith that’s not growing.”

2. What is the difference between “each” and “every,” and why does it matter for love in the church?

Leader answer: With the Shibe Park story: a nickel for “everybody” is a single nickel, but a nickel for “each one” is a lot of money. “Each” (hekastos) looks at every individual. We are not loving one another if we leave anybody out; the Thessalonians’ love covered everybody and each person.

3. How does the teacher explain being “counted worthy of the kingdom of God” (1:5)?

Leader answer: Every believer will enter the kingdom — that is a promise. But not every believer will rule with Christ. Those who accept persecutions for Christ’s sake will be counted worthy to rule, determined at the Judgment Seat of Christ — not a judgment for sin, which is settled for believers, but for worthiness to rule. The believer receives the reward; God receives the glory, since salvation, trials, and overcoming are all by His grace.

4. Why does the teacher believe 1:7–10 describes the Second Coming rather than the Rapture?

Leader answer: Because the Lord is “revealed from heaven with His mighty angels” — coming with His angels and His saints, not coming for His saints. It is the Second Coming to the earth at the end of the Tribulation, when He sets things right and judges the persecutors. The Study Note adds the dispensational two-phase distinction (1 Thessalonians 4:16–17 vs. Revelation 19:11–16).

5. What does it mean that Christ will be “glorified in” His saints (1:10, 12), and how do we glorify His name now?

Leader answer: When He returns with the church, believers on the earth will see Him in us and admire Him in us — “in, not by.” We cannot make His name more glorious; it already is. But we can make His glory more well known by faithful living — not running from temptation, affliction, or tribulation, but standing firm.

Part 3 — Passage Summary

Verse	Phrase	Summary
1:3a	“We are bound to thank God always for you”	Thanksgiving as a debt Paul owed God, paid continually.
1:3b–c	“your faith grows exceedingly ... love ... abounds”	Growth under testing; love reaching each and every one.
1:4	“we ourselves boast of you among the churches”	Their patience and faith in persecution became Paul’s glad report.
1:5	“counted worthy of the kingdom of God”	God’s righteous judgment will reward faithful sufferers with rule in the kingdom.
1:6	“repay with tribulation those who trouble you”	God is just to repay the persecutors.
1:7a	“rest with us”	Present relief: resting in Jesus for the outcome.
1:7b–9	“revealed from heaven ... everlasting destruction”	The Second Coming brings vengeance and eternal separation from the Lord’s presence.
1:10	“glorified in His saints”	Christ admired in the church that returns with Him.
1:11–12	“count you worthy of this calling ... name ... glorified”	Undefeated prayer for faithful living that makes His glory known.

⑤ APPLICATION

Closes the study · personal & corporate

1. Welcome the Wind

2 Thessalonians 1:3 — “your faith grows exceedingly.”

Source: ③ Commentary, I.B.1; ② Devotional; ④ Greek Word Study (hyperauxanō).

The teacher shook his tree and told it to grow, but it is the wind on the hilltop that really strengthens an oak. Faith works the same way. The trials that test us exceedingly are the very means God uses to make our faith grow exceedingly. By His design the trial comes, and by His grace the ability to overcome comes with it.

Reflection: *Are you asking God to remove the wind, or to use it?*

Practical Step: Name one current trial in prayer each day this week and thank God for the faith He is building through it.

2. Love Each One

2 Thessalonians 1:3 — “the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other.”

Source: ③ Commentary, I.B.2; ④ Greek Word Study (hekastōs).

A nickel for “everybody” is one nickel; a nickel for “each one” is a fortune. Love in general is easy. Love for each one — the difficult member, the quiet newcomer, the person who is easy to overlook — is the love Paul admired in Thessalonica. We are not loving one another if we leave anybody out.

Reflection: *Who in your church family has your love been leaving out?*

Practical Step: Before next Sunday, reach out personally to one person you rarely speak with — a call, a card, or a conversation.

3. Carry the Word

2 Thessalonians 1:4 — “so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God.”

Source: ③ Commentary, I.B.3.b and II.A.2.b.

The Thessalonians’ faith was talked about everywhere, and Paul could not wait to tell people. The teacher’s challenge was simple: carry the tracts, and give them out — even with the tip at a restaurant. When someone troubles you for your faith, “give them a good dose of it.” Stephen’s message, heard by a persecutor holding coats, was never forgotten.

Reflection: *When did you last intentionally share the gospel with someone?*

Practical Step: Put a few gospel tracts in your wallet, purse, or glasses case today, and give at least one away this week.

4. Rest — God’s Got Your Back

2 Thessalonians 1:7 — “and to give you who are troubled rest with us.”

Source: ③ Commentary, II.A.1 and II.B; Study Note “Entering the Kingdom and Ruling in It”; FGR — Hodges, Grace in Eclipse.

Rest does not mean stop resisting; it means trusting Jesus for the outcome. Our eternal life is already settled by faith alone in Christ alone; what remains is the opportunity to endure faithfully and be counted worthy to reign with Him. Because the righteous Judge is in control, we can stand firm without fear — “God’s got this. I’m not backing up one bit.”

Reflection: *Where are you tempted to back away from standing for Christ?*

Practical Step: Memorize 2 Thessalonians 1:7a this week and pray it whenever pressure comes.

End of Study · 2 Thessalonians 1:3–12