

## 2 Thessalonians

### I. Introduction

- A. **2 Thessalonians 1:1-12** . . . Paul and Silvanus and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: [2] Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. [3] We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is only fitting, because your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows ever greater; [4] therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure. [5] This is a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering.
- B. Pray

### II. Great truths about God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ (vs 1-2)

- A. [1] Paul and Silvanus and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: [2] Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
- B. When you are reading God's word, I want to encourage you to think beyond the verse or chapter you are reading to other scriptures that may have something to do with what you are reading – such as having a similar thought or conveying a similar truth as what you are reading. If you do this, you will gain a more comprehensive or whole Bible understanding of individual topics in God's word, and you will decrease the possibility of misunderstanding or misapplying the portion you are reading.
- For example, if you were to do this with vs 1, you would see that there is a one word difference between **1 Thess 1:1** and **2 Thess 1:1**. And you would see that the one word difference is the word "**THE**" in 1 Thess – which becomes the word "**OUR**" in 2 Thess.
    - (**1T 1:1**) Paul and Silvanus and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God **the** Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:
    - (**2T 1:1**) Paul and Silvanus and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God **our** Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:
  - Paul gives no reason for this small, yet seemingly significant change, so we can only guess its reason – if there is one.
    - One possible reason is that this second letter is being sent to a more experienced and maturing group of believers who possibly have grown from more of a head knowledge relationship with God to more of a personal and heart-felt relationship with God. And so Paul could be acknowledging this growth by changing the article "the" in his first letter to the more personal and possessive pronoun "OUR" here in **2 Thessalonians 1:1**.
  - Regardless of the reason, God is the Father of all believers. And on a more personal level, He is your father and my father.
    - Now I don't know what you think of when you think about God being your Father, but I know I am grateful He is my father.
    - My earthly father had many good qualities. In fact, he was highly regarded by many people, and there were many who greatly appreciated him and

benefitted from his work as a pastor, youth camp director, and Bible School teacher. However, my father was human, and I experienced his qualities and his not so glorious humanity.

- c. It was after repenting and coming to a genuine faith in Jesus Christ that I discovered that God is a father to me, and He is a father like no other.
  - d. When I think of God as my Father, I think of a father who is always sane, perfectly loving, perfectly patient, perfectly kind, perfectly helpful, all-knowing, all-wise, graciously forgiving, completely understanding, supportive, encouraging, and always present – who gives me everything I need for life and godliness, who shows me the path of life, who corrects me when I'm wrong, and who allows me freedom of will – all at the same time.
  - e. Without any question, I owe my heavenly Father a debt I can never repay. And I don't mean the debt I owe for His paying for my sin, but rather my indebtedness for all the love He has shown me. You see, I have been given and am still receiving more love from my heavenly Father than I could imagine, and in ways I never thought possible or even needful, and with a tenderness and intimacy that goes beyond any love I received from my earthly father, or anyone else.
4. The word of God speaks about the various ways we can experience God's fatherly love and care. And I want to point out some of them.
- a. David spoke of our Father's tender love and patience when he wrote in **Psalm 103:13-14**, "Just as a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him. [14] For He Himself knows our frame; He is mindful that we are but dust."
  - b. **Psalm 68:5-6** speaks of God as "a father of the fatherless and a judge for the widows...[He] makes a home for the lonely; He leads out the prisoners into prosperity."
  - c. Jesus spoke of our Father's care and provision for His children in **Matthew 6:26**, "Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they?"
  - d. When teaching His disciples how to pray, Jesus taught them to speak to God as their Father, who is in heaven (**Matthew 6:9**).
  - e. And Jesus said that if we forgive others for their transgressions, our heavenly Father will also forgive us (**Matthew 6:14**).
  - f. In **Romans 8:14-15**, Paul writes about the tenderness we can feel toward the Father who adopted us, "For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. [15] For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, 'Abba! Father!'"
  - g. One of the most profound statements describing our Father's love for us comes from **Romans 8:32**, "He (*God the Father*) who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?"
  - h. And one of the most reassuring statements of God's love for us comes from **Hebrews 12:5-10**, "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are reprov'd by Him; [6] for those whom the LORD loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives. [7] It is for [the outcome of] discipline that you endure [God's discipline]; [After all], God

deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? [8] But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. [9] Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? [10] For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness.”

- i. Finally, we read in **1 John 3:1-2**, “See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. [2] Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.”
5. Back in November of 2010 through March of 2011, I taught on prayer. During that time, I emphasized over and over again that prayer is a form of fellowship and communion with God. And I encouraged you to think of prayer as including both need based praying and fellowship based praying.
  - a. It is this “fellowship” mindset that led me to see prayer as talking with my heavenly Father rather than talking to God.
  - b. I know they are one and the same, but seeing God as my Father and talking to Him as my Father helps make the relationship much more personal, intimate, heartfelt, and endearing.
  - c. If you understand what I am talking about, then I am urging you think of God as your heavenly Father, to talk to Him as your Father, and to develop a “Father–adult-child” relationship with Him that treats Him as your perfect, eternal Father.
- C. Not only is God our Father, but Jesus is our Lord and Savior, or to say it with different words, our Master and Redeemer.
  1. I suspect by now you understand that since Jesus is your Lord, you are to be His obedient servant – obeying what Jesus says, going where Jesus leads, and living as Jesus wants us to live.
  2. However, there are **three addition truths** related to Jesus being our Lord that I want to remind you of.
  3. **First**, Jesus has the right to rule over us because He purchased us from the devil, from eternal doom, and from the power and practice of sin with His own blood. Therefore, Jesus our Lord owns us.
    - a. One scripture that makes this truth very clear is **1 Peter 1:17-19**, “If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth; [18] knowing that you were not redeemed (*purchased*) with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, [19] but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.”
    - b. **Titus 2:14** clearly ties together Christ's redemptive death and our being His possession: “[Jesus] gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.”

- c. The point is, we owe our lives – and that includes our obedience – to the one who purchased our freedom. And He purchased our freedom, not to set us free so we can live however we want, but so we would belong to Him and therefore live as He wants. And yet, in spite of owning us, He never forces us into slavery, but invites us to willingly and joyfully choose slavery.
- 4. The **second** additional truth makes it clear that Jesus elevated the foundational motive for obeying Him from fear of punishment or loss to love for our Lord Jesus. And He did this when He said, “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments” (**John 14:15**).
  - a. This in no way removes the fear of God as a worthy and rational motive for obeying our Lord Jesus Christ. Clearly the scripture says, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom” (**Proverbs 9:10a**).
  - b. However, there may be a difference between the beginning of wisdom and the end of wisdom, just as there is a difference between childhood and adulthood.
    - (1) For example, motivating people to obey those in authority out of fear of punishment or loss works well with children, young teens, and immature adults.
    - (2) The reason for this is because children, young teens, and immature adults are far more **self-interested** than interested in doing what is right out of love for God and those effected by their choices and behavior.
  - c. However, maturing teens and adults are able to see the wisdom of obeying Jesus their Lord from the motive of love. Why? Because they are able to see the difference in the quality of character which makes possible a quality of relationship that can only come from being motivated by love instead of self-interest. And I suspect you know what I am talking about.
  - d. My guess is, you want to feel loved. You want to know that you matter. And you can only know you are loved and that you matter if those dear to you care about you and treat you well because they love you as opposed to fearing you.
    - (1) The reality is, you cannot get that precious treasure of love and a mutually meaningful relation from those who fear punishment and loss for failing to love, because they care more about themselves and their well-being than you.
    - (2) In other words, they are not serving you or showing you love out of love for you. They are serving you well because their fear of punishment or loss is greater than their desire to do as they please. If they love you at all, and they probably do, I can assure you they love themselves more.
    - (3) If you want to put this to the test, remove the cause for fear and you will find that those who have been motivated by fear will stop doing what pleases you and return to doing what they want.
  - e. In addition, the teen or adult who serves you well out of fear of what you will do if he doesn't, is most likely appeasing you. And here again, appeasement is for the sake of the one appeasing, not the one being appeased.
    - (1) In other words, appeasement is not an expression of love for the one being appeased, but rather an expression of self-interest and self-protection for the sake of the one appeasing.

- (2) And though appeasement can produce outwardly looking godly behavior – which is good, it cannot produce or strengthen love. And that is a significant loss – especially if what you want is to be loved.
- (3) In contrast to appeasement, love not only produces godly behavior, it transforms our motives by changing our values, beliefs, and thoughts.
- (4) In other words, love transforms both the outward behavior and the heart, both the actions and the motives.
- f. This brings us to our relationship with God. He wants us to behave godly – for His sake and the sake of those around us.
  - (1) Now there is no question that being motivated to godly living out of fear of punishment or loss is far better for those effected by our choices and behavior than being selfish, self-ruled, and ungodly.
  - (2) But better than that is to be motivated by love – love for God and love for those around us – for love opens the door for truly sincere, mutually satisfying, mutually meaningful, lasting relationships. And love seeks the well-being of everyone affected by our choices and behavior, not only when it is convenient, but also when it is costly.
- 5. The **third addition truth** concerning Jesus being our Lord is that as our Lord and Master He tells us what to do and then gives us what we need to carry out His will. In other words, He enables, empowers, equips, and assists us in the doing of His will.
  - a. A clear example of our Lord assisting us to do His will comes from **Matthew 11:28-30**, “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. [29] Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. [30] For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”
  - b. And we read in **2 Peter 1:2-4**, “Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; [3] seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. [4] For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.
  - c. Once again, as our Lord and Master, Jesus not only tells us what to do, He enables, empowers, equips, and assists us as we obey Him.

### III. Conclusion

- A. In closing, I want to remind you that you have an always sane, perfectly loving, perfectly patient, perfectly kind, perfectly helpful, all-knowing, all-wise, graciously forgiving, completely under-standing, supportive, encouraging, and always present Father in God.
- B. And you have the kindest, most helpful, most enabling master in the Lord Jesus Christ.
- C. And so I urge you, see and treat God as your Father, and Jesus as your empowering and enabling Lord.