

Study 12 – Book of Second Thessalonians

Topic: Growing Faith and Love

Study text: 2 Thessalonians 1:1-5

Verse by Verse Study

Q: Why did Paul feel the need to write again? What does this show us about Paul and his concern for the Thessalonian church?

Genesis 37:14: Go now, see if it is well with your brothers and with the flock, and bring me word again.

1 Thessalonians 5:11: Therefore, encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.

Philippians 2:3–4: Do nothing from selfish ambition, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

1. 2 Thessalonians appears to have been written shortly after 1 Thessalonians. Many scholars estimate that the time gap between the epistles is only a few short weeks or months. Both of them were likely written sometime around 51-52 AD, and as such, are probably the two earliest epistles in the New Testament.

The fact that Paul writes to the Thessalonians twice in such close proximity shows us that he greatly loved them. He was not writing out of obligation. If he was, one letter was certainly enough to fulfil it. It is almost as if Paul feels compelled to **communicate with and encourage them**. He and his companions were forced to leave before he was ready, and he was truly concerned **with the Thessalonian's continued growth**. They were doing well, but they were still young in the faith.

Paul wanted to make sure they were not like the plant which grows up from the seed on the rocky soil, which would wither and fade away after facing persecution. In addition to focused prayer for them, he felt the need to write them multiple times (and later send Timothy back) to encourage them. Since they were young in the faith, he treated them with great compassion, nurturing their relationship to the Lord through encouragement rather than a heavy-handed approach which could have proved disheartening.

Application: Do you show this type of love and compassion towards brethren? Do you only fulfil your duty/obligation, or do you go above and beyond what is expected of you to help others? How can you practice this type of love and care for others in your own life?

- **Why does Paul so often give greetings like the one in verse 2? Is there anything you can learn from Paul about how to greet others? 'Grace and Peace'.**

2. Greeting – Did you ever notice Paul's greetings in his epistles? They are rich in spiritual truth. His greetings convey great warmth and concern for them. At the same time, they are deep. His greetings remind the recipients of his letters that though they are distant, God is watching over them and will be with them. Paul certainly practices what he preaches to speak in "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" (Ephesians 5:19). **Our relationship with God should seep out of everything we do and say. With Paul, it is a natural reflection of who he is rather than forced.**

- **Why was Paul thankful for them?**
- **Who among them had shown love towards each other?**

3. We ought always to give thanks to God for you – Just last week we learned that we should give thanks in everything. How did you do in this area in the past week? Did you grow in thanksgiving? Or did you revert to complaining?

The Thessalonians were not perfect. Paul undoubtedly could have thought of weaknesses or problems and complained about them. Teaching and mentoring them was certainly challenging at times. But Paul didn't fall into the trap of negativity. He instead focused on their positive attributes. This is an important lesson whether you are a pastor, small group leader, husband/wife, worker or parent. Do not get together with others and then complain about your group or your children. It is not a healthy mentality or a good testimony.

4. Your faith is greatly enlarged – The Thessalonians had displayed a faith in the Lord since the beginning. However, their faith was not stagnant; it was growing. This is the natural progression of genuine faith. When we show faith in God, He always remains faithful and keeps His promises to us. The original faith is confirmed, which then leads to a stronger faith which would also be confirmed and so the circle of growth keeps going.

But remember that faith requires action. If you don't take a leap of faith, perhaps you are not giving God an opportunity to show His power and therefore confirm your faith. For example, you know that switching jobs would be better for your spiritual life. But you like your current job, the status, or the salary. So, you hold on to it. This may deny your faith a chance to grow. If you believe that God will take care of you and give up your job, trusting that God will supply another one, then He will provide for you. When you leap and ask God to catch you, He will.

Is God asking you to take a leap of faith? If so, what?

• **How was this love progressing? What lessons can we learn from this?**

5. The love of each one of you... grows ever greater – Paul highlights the love of each individual within the Thessalonian church. **It wasn't just a select few demonstrating this type of love, but rather every single believer.** Could Paul say this about your fellowship? Could Paul truthfully say, **"the love of each one of you grows ever greater?"** Is your love growing ever greater? If Paul couldn't truthfully say this about you, what would he say?

Activity: Now is a good time to perform a routine evaluation of your love for others. Cars and computers and our bodies need regular health check ups. Our spiritual lives also need regular checkups.

Rate yourself from 1-10 on your love (remember this is not an emotion but an unconditional decision to put others interests above your own) for:

Your spouse – Your parents – Your children – Your siblings – Your friends – Your co-workers – Your church/fellowship/brethren.

Exercise: Pick someone in the service today that you will deliberately show love to and how you will show the love. There must be a report next week.

• **Why would Paul "brag" about the Thessalonian church to other churches? What did he boast about them for?**

6. We speak proudly of you – Paul used the Thessalonians as an example to other churches. The lifestyle they conducted could be a good model for others all across the continent.

It wasn't easy for them. Back in Job, Satan accused Job before God, saying that he only served God because it was beneficial for him to do so. God then proved that Job's commitment to the Lord was not because things were going smoothly for him. Instead, it was a steadfast faith that did not waver even amid the ultimate trial.

Facing persecution and adversities, the Thessalonians also proved their faith in the Lord in the middle of difficulties. When you face persecution and affliction, do you endure? Or complain and give up? We should view these experiences as an opportunity to grow closer to the Lord and depend on Him more than ever before.

- What will happen when Jesus is revealed from heaven, **vs 6**? What event does this refer to?
- What is the punishment for those who don't accept/follow the gospel? Vs 8

7. So that you will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God – See Acts 5:40-42, Ephesians 4:1, Philippians 1:27. Suffering is one type of test that believers will go through. If a believer faces suffering and renounces the Lord, he has failed the test and proved that he is not worthy. If a believer endures, then he passes the test and shows himself to be worthy (or as worthy as we ever could be).

This worthiness does not mean that we could ever earn our salvation or even pay God back for it. Basically, we can have a worthy response to God's grace, which is to believe in Him and repent. Or we can have an unworthy response, which is to reject Him

Application: Have you responded in a worthy manner to the gospel? How can you live your life more worthily? What do you need to do to be considered worthy of the kingdom of God?