

**Book / Epistle:** 2 Thessalonians

**Author:** Paul

**To Whom Written:** The Church at Thessalonica

**When Written:** A.D. 51 (early Summer, per Dr. Harold Hoehner)

**Theme:** Justice and Judgment

**Why?:** This is a followup to the first Epistle to the Thessalonians. It deals with the obvious questions raised concerning what happens to those who are not raptured, what triggers the Rapture, and, how to live while awaiting the Rapture.

**Context and History:** See 1 Thessalonians.

**Key passages / verses:**

2:3 The "falling away" first, then the man of sin is revealed.  
2:9 Satan employs "power, signs, and lying wonders."  
3:10 "...if anyone will not work, neither shall he eat."

**Outline:**

Chapter 1: **Justice in Time**

- The Great Tribulation is coming

Chapter 2: **True Justice**

- First, the apostasy; then, the unveiling
- The Restrainer is removed
- The Man of Sin and his followers shall be judged

Chapter 3: **Living Justly**

- Meanwhile:
  - Continue faithfully
  - Withdraw from disorderly brothers

**Commentary: 2 Thessalonians**

## CHAPTER 1

1:1-2 Silvanus is the Roman form of Silas. Timothy had been sent as Paul's emissary to the Church at Thessalonica (cf: 1 Thes. 3:2ff.). God is distinguished from the Lord Jesus Christ. Yet they are seen as equally authoritative in the Church and equally capable of dispensing grace and peace.

1:3-12 Paul clearly rejoices at the faithfulness of this church. Almost every other church to whom he will write has significant problems. Yet this church is seen as devoted to Christ and growing. He does not write to chastise, but to cultivate and counsel in growth.

He recognizes the persecution they have been experiencing, which probably triggered the questions that prompted the first epistle. Paul assures them that God will definitely dispense a final justice against their oppressors, in the Great Tribulation (which commences after the Rapture). Meanwhile, their responsibility is to so live as to be worthy of His calling, by fulfilling all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power.

2:1-12 Now, Paul clarifies the events surrounding the Rapture he described in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and 5:1-9. He makes several significant statements:

- The "falling away" (apostasia) comes first, prior to the revealing of the man of sin.
- The man of sin is indeed that anti-Christ described by Daniel (Daniel 7:24-25 and 11:36-45, as 2:4 makes clear.
- At the present time (and, until the "falling away"), the unveiling of the man of sin is thwarted by the one who restrains (the Holy Spirit – in the Church).
- Once the Restraint is removed, this man of sin will show his person and his true colors. He is imbued with the power of Satan himself, and will deceive the world with power, signs, and lying wonders. And, the world will willingly accept the deceptions and delusions, choosing to believe the lie. In fact, God underscores their self-delusion by sending them strong delusion which will confirm them in their deserved condemnation.

Some explanatory comments are needed here.

- The "falling away" (apostasia) could logically refer either to the removal of the Church from the Earth, or the final, open hatred of Christ and the Church. It is my opinion that it probably refers to both, which occur more or less simultaneously. The Greek term "Apostasia" literally means: "standing off (or, away) from".
- The Restraint is the Holy Spirit. Here are some of the reasons for this assertion.
  - 2:6 speaks of the "to katexon" = that which restrains (neuter).
  - This is immediately followed by identifying the unveiling of a person ("autov" = he). This likely refers to the man of sin.
  - 2:7 speaks of the restrainer as a person ("ho katexon" = He who restrains). The format is masculine, not neuter, in gender). It is also singular, not plural.
  - Thus, this restrainer is personal and powerful and seen (grammatically speaking) as masculine and as one Person. The Greek for church (ekklesia) is feminine in gender. The Holy Spirit is referred to in the New Testament in the same gender.
  - God does not deceive the followers of the man of sin, but rather reinforces their willful welcoming of his message, since they have emphatically not welcomed ("did not receive") the love of the truth.

2:13-17 God chose these Thessalonian believers to be saved through being sanctified by the Spirit and their belief in the truth, to which He called them. This is a comfort and assurance to them that they could not be included in the group of 2:11. Therefore, they should confidently

**CHAPTER 2 (continued)**

stand fast in the faith, regardless of opposition or ridicule, that faith generated both by the Word (here, the Old Testament), and by Paul's first epistle.

Paul concludes this chapter with a wonderful benediction.

**CHAPTER 3**

3:1-5 Paul now deals with fundamental factors of Christian living. First, he asks for prayer for himself, that his proclamation of the Word might not be hindered, despite opposition. He recognizes that not all men are God's, but the Thessalonians may be certain that they are the Lord's; and Paul is confident that they will remain faithful to the Lord, Who is faithful.

3:6-15 He now turns to those who are in the fellowship, but who are causing strife and dissension. Anyone who is disorderly (ataktos = not in order, not orderly) and not in accord with the pattern Paul provided is to be shunned. Believers are to withdraw from such a person.

Paul now provides illustrations of what he means by "disorderly" or "non-traditionally". Some think they deserve a "free lunch" from the others and do not do their fair share in the fellowship. Some will not work at all, but are busybodies. He says, literally, "neither working, but 'working about'", using a term which connotes someone who is meddling or 'working about' stirring up strife.

Paul emphasizes that Christians are to work quietly (without fanfare or seeking recognition) and to be responsible for their own needs. On the other hand, they are to be diligent, not growing weary, in doing good. This would include, of course, helping those who cannot help themselves.

Again, Paul counsels that we are not to fellowship with such people, in order to shame them. Still, we must remember that he or she is a brother or sister in Christ, though they may not be living as they should. Our shunning should not include dismissing the fact of his/her relationship in Christ.

3:17-18 He concludes with a typical benediction, and emphasizes that this epistle is directly from him (not a "form letter"). To underscore this, he signs it here.