

II Thessalonians 1:1-2:17

INTRODUCTION

Today we're studying part of a short letter written **by** Paul to the Church in the Mediterranean port-city of Thessalonica. We'll be spending all of our time in two places of Scripture, so if you have your Bibles, you can **mark** our primary Text, 2 Thessalonians, chapter 2 and open to Acts 17 for supplemental background.

My hope is that story will serve to encourage us as young leaders in the Body of Christ, giving us

INITIAL STATEMENT OF CORE PROPOSITIONS:

**Faith that God really does grow and strengthen the hearts of new believers,
Hope in the midst of opposition, and even
Love toward those who oppose us as we seek to minister to a needing world.**

Previous, on Paul's second missionary journey with Silas, Paul first brought the Gospel to this region and was met with *possibly* the greatest Jewish opposition we hear about in Scripture (Acts 17:1-13).

TRANSITION TO INTRO TEXT

Let's move right into our introductory Text of Acts 17:1-14 and read about Paul's relatively short stay in the region.

INTRODUCTION TEXT

[READ 1-3]

Now remember, this was in the Jewish synagogue.

[READ 4]

[READ 5-8] stress '**Jews**'

We hear about, from this Passage, a **hostile** Jewish contingent rejecting the truth presented to them and set on driving Paul from their midst. But wait, let's read just a little further.

[READ 9-14]

So, after three weeks (Acts 17:2) he was driven from the city by the Jewish leaders because of their jealousy (Acts 17:5), though *some* Jews from the synagogue believed (Acts 17:4); Indeed, there was such opposition, that when the Jews of Thessalonica heard that Paul was preaching in Berea after leaving their region, they pursued him there (Acts 17:13) and caused him to cut his ministry short in Berea, though Paul did leave Silas and Timothy in the region to strengthen the Church (Acts 17:14).

With religious leaders this hostile toward the Gospel-- not only did they refuse to accept the Message, but they pursued the bearers thereof into the next city-- what do you think happened to those in Thessalonica who accepted the truth?

This is the group of people to whom our letter is addressed.

Will you pray with me? Lord, give us your encouragement in the midst of opposition.

TRANSITION TO TEXT

II Thessalonians begins:

TEXT II Thess. 1:1-2:15

[READ II Thess. 1:1-4]

Here we get our first insights into how these early, early believers did after Paul left.

TRANSITION TO POINT ONE

Paul says that he glories in them in the churches of God.

POINT ONE Faith that God really does grow and strengthen the hearts of new believers.

Have **you ever worried about a new believer** in Christ? Someone with whom you've shared the story of Christ's love and either they prayed with you to accept Christ, or one day they casually tell you that they've been attending a church somewhere? The feelings of excitement and worry, both simultaneously hit you. Excitement for their salvation, and worry that it will 'stick'. Have they sincerely accepted Christ as their Lord and Savior? Do they truly understand what it means to be a Christian? Or is this just *something else* they are going to 'try' for a while? And then remember your excitement when you hear about true fruit in their life. Some sincere sacrifice they have made that show evidence that the Holy Spirit is truly nurturing fruit in their life. It's a wonderful blessing to be used in this process of God reconciling men to Himself. Paul sees this evidence and boasts to the other churches about the Thessalonians' steadfastness in the midst of persecution and tribulation.

TRANSITION BACK TO TEXT

And who do you think is behind this persecution? Verse 5:

TEXT CONT.

[READ 1:5-8]

What is Paul doing here? He is **accusing those Jews** who are persecuting the Thessalonian Church **of not knowing God--** something they prided themselves in-- and assuring his young congregation that God will deal out retribution to those causing trouble for them.

POINT TWO Hope in the midst of opposition.

Have you ever shared the Gospel in a small secular community where you spend time? Have you felt that the Gospel may be starting to reach one or two in that community, but there are some there who have refused to accept the Truth of Christ? They may even be hostile toward the Gospel, and perhaps even you. And they constantly try to thwart your efforts with others in the community. If so, we might begin to get a glimpse of this situation Paul was facing.

This happens with me at work constantly. There are some at my work who are beyond agnostic-- they are adamant self-proclaimed atheists. Sometimes I feel like I might even be getting through to one of them, but then we'll all go out to lunch together and get into a meaningful conversation and they will kind of huddle together and pump each other up in their opposition to God. Two of the more extreme ones who often try to thwart my conversations with other people at work about God, both have believing wives!

RESTATEMENT OF CORE PROPOSITIONS

But be encouraged! God **upheld the faith of those initial believers** in Thessalonica, under heavy persecution, and He is able to truly change the heart of those to whom we minister, **even under attack and rebuttal from the enemy. So again I say, be encouraged.** Our God is the Creator of the Universe and can establish the hearts of men and women and make them able to stand. He can **even change the hearts of those who adamantly oppose the Gospel, lest we forget the life of the one who is writing this letter.**

TRANSITION BACK TO TEXT

Now we move in to our primary text, Chapter 2 starting in verse 1:

TEXT CONT.

[READ 2:1-2]

Here, Paul reveals the probable purpose for this correspondence with the Thessalonian Church. Paul's mention of a counterfeit letter feigning to be from him, which claimed that the day of the Lord had already come. This letter may have been an attack from these

Jewish leaders in an attempt to thwart the growth of the early Church in Thessalonica. Dan Wallace proposes this speculative historical reconstruction:

“The enemies of Paul, probably from the synagogue in Thessalonica, infiltrate the church and take note of Paul’s modus operandi—viz., sending someone unknown to check on the church periodically. They take note of the contents of the letter... They forge a letter as though from Paul which includes a message which subtly discredits Paul’s eschatology, hoping to dislodge the faith of the Thessalonians (and thus, perhaps, bring them back to the synagogue). They send the letter by someone unknown by sight to the believers. Paul sends someone to check up on the Thessalonians and he finds out the present despair. Paul writes the second letter.”

This may or may not be accurate, but sound a likely candidate. Someone has deceived the new church with words falsely claiming to be from Paul. They have discouraged some by teaching that the return of Christ has already taken place.

POINT TWO Hope in the midst of opposition. REAFFIRMED WITH EXAMPLE FROM TEXT TO OUR LIFE

Again, we can relate to this somewhat by remembering in our lives when opposition has come against the Gospel to those to whom we are ministering. Often word gets back to us-- sometimes in the form of questions-- when our message of the Gospel is opposed. When we hear the story and questions from a new believer, it is easy to reconstruct the conversation of how our message has been twisted into a straw-man argument which we never presented, and often about the good deeds of Christians earning only them salvation, and how horrendous they've shown themselves to be historically. Just a seemingly subtle twist that make a huge difference between a True and a false gospel.

Paul corrects the false idea, reminding the church of his teaching when he was present with them.

[READ 2:3-5]

Paul assures his audience that Christ has indeed not yet returned, and that they should remember the prerequisites that Paul, himself told them when he was with them. Christ will indeed return, but not before the man of lawlessness is allowed to come onto the scene and blaspheme God openly, deceiving many. Paul continues his brief recounting of what he told the Thessalonian while present with them:

[READ 2:6-8]

Paul reassures his readers that Christ's victory will be swift and sure.

Now, interestingly, Paul continues with “that is...” Paul seems to be elaborating on his eschatology, and then seems to shift the topic back to those who rejected him and are now persecuting the Church. Verse 9:

[READ 9-10]

Paul seems to take this occasion of eschatological correction and use it to pastorally assure his congregation that these ones who did not accept the love of the truth so as to be saved (and presumably those who are attempting to deceived his recipient by impersonating Paul, viz. The Jewish leaders who drove Paul from the city) will receive their due punishment.

TRANSITION TO WORD STUDY

Even if these are not the ones who impersonated Paul, it would still be fair to say these Jewish leaders who did not receive Paul's message are primary antecedents of those who “did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.”

WORD STUDY

So that we are not unclear, it is very important to understand the word used here for 'receive' (“they did not receive the love of the truth”), does not mean to passively be given something. We use the word 'receive' in today's vernacular primarily in the passive-- we 'receive' packages, email, invitations (which we might or might not accept), but rather, the word used here means that something was offered, and these people actively did not accept what was offered to them. For a number of other examples of this word used in Scripture, please see the end of your handout. Browse through a few of these and then re-read verse 10.

I want to call special attention to the entry for Acts 17:11. Do you remember us reading this earlier? Who are these people in this verse?

Now, down a little farther we see the first letter we have from Paul to this Church, I Thess. 1:6. Then two verses down, we have our verse.

TRANSITION BACK TO TEXT

Paul continues with “For this reason...”. For what reason? The end of the verse 10:

TEXT CONT.

[READ 10b-12]

Paul continues to reaffirm the fate of those who do not accept the preaching of the Gospel-- apparently still condemning his attackers and those who did not accept his preaching in Thessalonica. With “for this reason,” Paul stresses the cause of God's wrath toward these people: their active rejection of the Gospel. Paul consigns their end to judgment, all “who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.”

Paul then turns to positive affirmation of his audience, and their acceptance of the message presented to them:

[READ 13-15]

The contrast is stark, here in verse 13,

“you, brothers beloved by the Lord [whom] God chose... to be saved, through... belief in the truth”, against the previous verses 10: those who “perish, because they did not accept the love of the truth so as to be saved.” and verse 12:

those who will “be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.”

All that Paul previously condemned in his opponents, he praises the opposite in his beloved Church, and affirms that God is not their enemy in things to come, but instead had chosen them for salvation through their reception of the Truth, and the purification of their spirit.

APPLICATION (CORE PROPOSITIONS RESTATED AS APPLICATION)

When we think there is no hope for the Gospel to be effective in those close to us, in the midst of such a contrary world, we have the Thessalonian Church as an example.

When we are opposed in this world and are persecuted, we have the comforting hope that this is not our end. That there will be a time when Christ returns and sets things right.

And finally, when we in the midst of battle, in our attempts to oppose the enemy in our circles who persecute the Truth, we must remember Paul, from where he came, and his interesting turn of events here in 2Thess.

POINT THREE Love toward those who oppose us as we seek to minister to a needing world.

We must remember to pray not only against the deception that comes from those hostile toward the Gospel, but pray in hope for the salvation of even these, so they too might avoid the final judgment that all who do not love His appearing will face.

TRANSITION TO CONCLUSION

Paul ends the chapter with these words:

CONCLUSION

[READ 16-17]

I pray this for us as we go out and share the Love of Christ with a needing world.

Word study: ἑδέξατο

Matthew 10:14 And whosoever **shall** not **receive** you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet.

Matthew 10:40 **He that receiveth** you **receiveth** me, and **he that receiveth** me **receiveth** him that sent me.

Matthew 10:41 **He that receiveth** a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and **he that receiveth** a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward.

Matthew 11:14 And if ye will **receive** it, this is Elias, which was for to come.

Matthew 18:5 And whoso **shall receive** one such little child in my name **receiveth** me.

Mark 6:11 And whosoever **shall** not **receive** you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrhah in the day of judgment, than for that city.

Mark 9:37 Whosoever **shall receive** one of such children in my name, **receiveth** me: and whosoever **shall receive** me, **receiveth** not me, but him that sent me.

Mark 10:15 Verily I say unto you, Whosoever **shall** not **receive** the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.

Luke 2:28 Then **took** he him **up** in his arms, and blessed God, and said,

Luke 8:13 They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, **receive** the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.

Luke 9:5 And whosoever **will** not **receive** you, when ye go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet for a testimony against them.

Luke 9:11 And the people, when they knew it, followed him: and **he received** them, and spake unto them of the kingdom of God, and healed them that had need of healing.

Luke 9:48 And said unto them, Whosoever **shall receive** this child in my name **receiveth** me: and whosoever **shall receive** me **receiveth** him that sent me: for he that is least among you all, the same shall be great.

Luke 9:53 And **they did** not **receive** him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem.

Luke 10:8 And into whatsoever city ye enter, and **they receive** you, eat such things as are set before you:

Luke 10:10 But into whatsoever city ye enter, and **they receive** you not, go your ways out into the streets of the same, and say,

Luke 16:4 I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, **they may receive** me into their houses.

Luke 16:6 And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, **Take** thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty.

Luke 16:7 Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, **Take** thy bill, and write fourscore.

Luke 16:9 And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, **they may receive** you into everlasting habitations.

Luke 18:17 Verily I say unto you, Whosoever **shall** not **receive** the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein.

Luke 22:17 And **he took** the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves:

John 4:45 Then when he was come into Galilee, the Galilæans **received** him, having seen all the things that he did at Jerusalem at the feast: for they also went unto the feast.

Acts 3:21 Whom the heaven must **receive** until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.

Acts 7:38 This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers: who **received** the lively oracles to give unto us:

Acts 7:59 And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, **receive** my spirit.

Acts 8:14 Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria **had received** the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John:

Acts 11:1 And the apostles and brethren that were in Judæa heard that the Gentiles **had** also **received** the word of God.

Acts 17:11 These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that **they received** the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

Acts 21:17 And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren **received** us gladly.

Acts 22:5 As also the high priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders: from whom also **I received** letters unto the brethren, and went to Damascus, to bring them which were there bound unto Jerusalem, for to be punished.

Acts 28:21 And they said unto him, We neither **received** letters out of Judæa concerning thee, neither any of the brethren that came shewed or spake any harm of thee.

I Corinthians 2:14 But the natural man **receiveth** not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

II Corinthians 6:1 We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye **receive** not the grace of God in vain.

II Corinthians 7:15 And his inward affection is more abundant toward you, whilst he remembereth the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling **ye received** him.

II Corinthians 8:4 Praying us with much intreaty that we **would receive** the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.

II Corinthians 8:17 For indeed **he accepted** the exhortation; but being more forward, of his own accord he went unto you.

II Corinthians 11:4 For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive (λαμβάνετε) another spirit, which ye have not received (ἐλάβετε), or another gospel, which **ye have** not **accepted**, ye might well bear with him.

II Corinthians 11:16 I say again, Let no man think me a fool; if otherwise, yet as a fool **receive** me, that I may boast myself a little.

Galatians 4:14 And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but **received** me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 6:17 And **take** the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:

Philippians 4:18 But I have all, and abound: I am full, having **received** of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God.

Clossians 4:10 Aristarchus my fellowprisoner saluteth you, and Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, (touching whom ye received commandments: if he come unto you, **receive** him;)

Thessalonians 1:6 And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having **received** the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost:

I Thessalonians 2:13 For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, **ye received** it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.

II Thessalonians 2:10 And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because **they received** not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

Hebrews 11:31 By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, **when she had received** the spies with peace.

James 1:21 Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and **receive** with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.

Background Text, Act 17:1-10:

1 Now when they had traveled through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. 2 And according to Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, 3 explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ."

4 And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, along with a large number of the God-fearing Greeks and a number of the leading women.

5 But the Jews, becoming jealous and taking along some wicked men from the market place, formed a mob and set the city in an uproar; and attacking the house of Jason, they were seeking to bring them out to the people. 6 When they did not find them, they began dragging Jason and some brethren before the city authorities, shouting, "These men who have upset the world have come here also; 7 and Jason has welcomed them, and they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus." 8 They stirred up the crowd and the city authorities who heard these things. 9 And when they had received a pledge from Jason and the others, they released them.

Paul at Berea

10 The brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. 11 Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so. 12 Therefore many of them believed, along with a number of prominent Greek women and men.

13 But when the Jews of Thessalonica found out that the word of God had been proclaimed by Paul in Berea also, they came there as well, agitating and stirring up the crowds.

14 Then immediately the brethren sent Paul out to go as far as the sea; and Silas and Timothy remained there.

Main Text II Thessalonians 1-2

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. 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.

Faith that God really does grow and strengthen the hearts of new believers.

6 For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, 7 and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, 8 dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, 10 when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed—for our testimony to you was believed.

11 To this end also we pray for you always, that our God will count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power, 12 so that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Main Text, II Thessalonians 2:1-17

1 Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, 2 that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.

Hope in the midst of opposition.

3 Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, 4 who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.

5 Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things?

6 And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed. 7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way. 8 Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming;

9 that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, 10 and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.

11 For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, 12 in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.

13 But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.

14 It was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. 15 So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us.

16 Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace, 17 comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word.

Love toward those who oppose us as we seek to minister to a needing world.