



THRU the **BIBLE**

with J. Vernon McGee

2 THESSALONIANS

BIBLE COMPANION



EPISTLES

READ THIS FIRST

This Bible Companion is a summary of Dr. J. Vernon McGee's teaching of the book of 2 Thessalonians heard on THRU the BIBLE. These summarized lessons get to the heart of Bible passages and are intended to stir your own thinking, prayer, and study.



Begin with prayer. Dr. McGee said, "We are living in the day of the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the day of grace, when the Spirit of God takes the things of Christ and reveals them to us." Before you start each lesson, ask the Lord to use it to grow you up in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ as He is revealed in that section. Dr. McGee said, "This is the secret of life and of Christian living."



As you study, read the Bible passage first. Invite God to open your eyes and deepen your understanding of His Word. That's a request God loves to answer!



If you want to listen to Dr. McGee's complete teaching on any specific passage, go to TTB.org/2Thessalonians (or any book of the Bible).

The corresponding audio messages are listed at the top of the summaries. You can also use this Bible Companion to follow along and take notes while you listen to Dr. McGee teach a book of the Bible on the radio or online.



After every lesson, several questions are listed for your personal consideration or, if you're reading this as a group, for your discussion. Ask the Spirit to help you take to heart what He wants to show you.

LET THE WORD OF CHRIST DWELL IN YOU
RICHLY IN ALL WISDOM AND TEACHING....

COLOSSIANS 3:16^A

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LESSON 1

ABOUT HEAVEN AND HELL



Begin with prayer



Read **2 Thessalonians Introduction—1:9**



Listen at TTB.org/2Thessalonians to **2 Thessalonians 1:1-3** and
2 Thessalonians 1:3-12

Did Jesus already come?

That's what the Christians in Thessalonica were concerned about. Someone was spreading the rumor that Jesus had already gathered the church, and they were living in the Great Tribulation.

These young believers in the first century were suffering for the gospel's sake, so it was easy for them to think the Great Tribulation had begun (like many who have suffered through the ages). But Paul wrote them this letter to comfort them that "our gathering together to Him" (2:1) is yet future.

Certain signs will happen first, he said. First, the apostasy and the "man of sin" will take the scene. When the real Tribulation happens, the church will be gone. Nothing of it will be left but an empty shell of an organization that has a form of godliness but denies the power of it. In Luke 18:8, the Lord Himself asked, "When the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?" The way the question is phrased assumes a "no." He will *not* find faith on the earth when He comes again. We're not there yet, Paul assures the Thessalonians.

This young church had started so well. They were a model of generosity and love. But this seed of false teaching had taken root in their congregation, and their fervor was beginning to cool. So Paul stoked it back up again by encouraging them in their faith, love, and patience, just as he had in his first letter. The faith that saves us will produce works of faith in the hearts of God's children. A saving faith will produce love for each other. When you grow toward God in grace and knowledge and faith, you grow toward your brother in love.

Along with love and faith, Paul encourages them to develop patience. This isn't the patience needed for waiting in traffic; this patience willingly lives for God and accepts whatever He sends your way, knowing that all things do work together for good. The goal of this kind of patience is remembering that someday you will go into God's presence. This endurance gets you over the rough places in your life.

God uses these tough days to develop our patience. *Patience* literally means "standing under." We usually try to get out from *under* the problems and difficulties, but a patient person keeps on carrying the load. He doesn't throw it off; he doesn't get rid of his responsibility.

This discipline enables us to look into the future with hope. The church will not go through the Great Tribulation, but we will go through little tribulations. We all will have trouble down here. If you are not having any troubles, then make sure you're God's child, because the Lord disciplines His children.

These Thessalonian Christians stood for the Lord in a real way in the Roman world of that day. They were enduring a great deal of trouble, persecutions, and afflictions, yet their faith and patience was growing.

"You're suffering now," Paul says. "But when Jesus comes again, He'll set it all straight. His coming is the relief and joy we're waiting for. Those who refuse to know God and refuse to humble themselves under His hand will pay for what they've done" (v. 5).

When God judges, He'll be righteous in it. This is the first hint of the judgment of the wicked that is coming (v. 8). But whatever God does is absolutely right. He can do no wrong. We may complain about things that happen to us because we're clueless; we don't understand God's ways. But He has a very definite purpose for all that He does. And God is righteous in sending the Great Tribulation. It is a judgment of sinners.

On that day, Paul writes, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in a flame of fire, He will deal out full and complete vengeance to those who have turned their backs on Him and who ignore and refuse to obey His gospel by choosing not to respond to Him. Not only will they pay the penalty and endure the punishment of everlasting destruction, they will be banished from the Lord's presence and from the glory of His power. But the Lord will be glorified in the people whose lives have been changed by accepting Him as Savior and who have been used for His purposes. This will be a marvelous thing for believers and terrifying and awesome for those who refused to trust Him for salvation.

This letter gives us just a little peak into what waits for both those who believe in Jesus Christ and trust Him for salvation and those who refuse to. The Word of God actually says very little about heaven. It's so wonderful we can't comprehend it. The Lord also wants us to keep our eyes on our path down here. He has a purpose for our lives on earth, and He wants us to fulfill it.

Scripture not only says very little about heaven, it says /ess about the condition of the lost. It's so awful the Holy Spirit draws a veil over it. Nothing is told us to satisfy the morbid curiosity or the lust for revenge. We can be sure though, when God judges, He doesn't do it vindictively but to vindicate His righteousness and His holiness. Christ is returning to this earth someday with His own whom He took out of the world. His coming will be a terror to the wicked and a judgment on those who refused His offer of eternal life.

Scripture doesn't satisfy our curiosity about hell, but there's enough said to warn us. Actually, Christ Himself said more about hell than did anyone else. It's not any less real because so little is said or because people ridicule it today. Hell is an awful reality. Our beliefs are sometimes only wishful thinking. Face the fact—there is a hell.

Too few people today are willing to confront those who are lost with reality. Suppose you were asleep in a burning building, and a man rushed into that building to rescue you. He wakes you up, picks you up, and carries you out of that burning building. He likes you; so he makes you his son. He brings you into his lovely home and gives you many wonderful gifts. One day, you get to stand before a group and talk about this man and express your appreciation in his presence. What would you thank him for? Of course, you would thank him for making you his son, but wouldn't you really thank him most for saving you out of a burning building? Nothing else would have mattered if he had not rescued you from a flaming death.

The judgment of the lost is coming. If you want to stay in that group, you will be judged. Somebody needs to tell you the facts. The lost are those who do not know God and who refuse to believe the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These people will be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, but those who are saved will bring glory to the Lord as they have trusted in Him.

Confident of this, Paul reminds the Thessalonians that he prays for them all the time. He asks God to strengthen them to live lives worthy of this calling. He also prays that the projects they are doing for the Lord will flourish as they commit them to Him for His good purposes. And of course, he reminds them that as God's children, our lives are covered over by God's grace.

**NEXT: How will we know when the
“Day of the Lord” has come?**

LESSON 1



FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

1. A saving faith will produce works of faith and love for other Christians.
Where in your life are these marks of a saving faith present?
2. When was a time in your life when you needed to exercise true patience?
What benefit has that produced in your life today?
3. Why do you think patience and endurance in suffering can produce hope?

4. What can we learn about God by considering the certainty of judgment of the wicked?
5. Why do you think God's Word has so little to say about heaven and hell?
6. Who do you know in your life that needs to be warned of the coming judgment for those who reject Christ?

7. If you had been a member of the church in Thessalonica, how do you think the idea that you had missed out on Jesus' return would have affected your faith?

THE FAITH THAT SAVES US
WILL PRODUCE
works of faith
IN THE HEARTS
OF GOD'S CHILDREN.

A SAVING FAITH WILL PRODUCE
love for each other.



THRUtheBIBLE

LESSON 2

WHO WILL BE ABLE TO STAND?



Begin with prayer



Read **2 Thessalonians 1:10—2:12**



Listen at TTB.org/2Thessalonians to **2 Thessalonians 1:10—2:9** and **2 Thessalonians 2:7-17**

The Day of the Lord begins at night, just like every Hebrew day: “the *evening* and the morning were the first day” (Genesis 1:5). This is the terrifying day, yet future, when judgment begins on the earth.

In the first century, someone passed around a bogus letter among the Thessalonians that was supposedly from Paul, Timothy, and Silas that said “*the Day of the Lord has come, and we’re already in it.*”

The Day of the Lord speaks of the period of years beginning with the Great Tribulation and continuing through the Millennium. Many Old and New Testament books talk about the “Day of the Lord.” Peter says “the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night.” On this day, the heavens will vanish with a thunderous roar, and everything will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and the works that are on it will be burned up (see 2 Peter 3:10). Revelation 6:17 asks, “For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?”

The Thessalonians were experiencing suffering, but nothing like what Scripture describes as “the Day of the Lord.” “*Don’t let anyone deceive you about this,*” Paul says. “*Two specific things will happen first, and neither one has taken place yet.*”

First, there will be a falling away. Many interpret this as leaving true Bible teaching. The root word, *apostasía*, means “departure or removal from.” Two kinds of removing will take place. The organized church will depart from the faith (that’s what we call apostasy today), but then there will be *total* apostasy when the true church is removed. The Lord Himself asked, “When the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:8), and the answer assumes a negative response. No, He won’t find it. When the true church is gone, the rest of the organized church that is left down here will totally depart from the faith. The Day of the Lord can’t begin (nor the Great Tribulation) until the church has been raptured, what Paul taught in his first letter to the Thessalonians. (See 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17.)

The church at Laodicea, the seventh and last church described in Revelation 3, has drifted into apostasy. We are in this period of church history right now. When the true believers are gone, it will get even worse, ending in total apostasy.

From the Christian’s perspective, from the viewpoint of heaven, it is a rapture, a snatching or catching up. From the viewpoint of the earth, the removal of believers is a departure. It’s hard to know what people on earth will think or the story that will be concocted to explain our disappearance. Most likely they’ll be glad we’re gone. They don’t realize what a sad day it is for them. They think they will be entering into the blessing of the Millennium, not realizing they are actually entering into the Great Tribulation, a time of trouble like the world has never seen.

The second thing that must happen to indicate the Day of the Lord has begun is the Antichrist will be revealed. This “man of sin” has about 30 different titles in the Bible. He’ll be Satan’s man who will put the Roman Empire back together again and become a world dictator. This Antichrist will deceive the world. He could be in the public’s eye today, but he won’t appear in power or reveal who he is until after the Great Tribulation Period begins.

Paul tells us more about him. The Antichrist will exalt himself proudly and insolently above every so-called god or object of worship. He will actually publicly proclaim himself to be God.

In Revelation 13 he’s described as the beast out of the sea who brings together western Europe, and when he does this, the world will think he is Christ. That’s the big lie.

Evil will break out across the earth like never before. The only power to withhold it is the Holy Spirit. Governments can't do it, though they try. The Roman Empire couldn't do it; it was an evil force itself. "The mystery of lawlessness" had already begun to work in Paul's day, and it continues to churn.

The Lord Jesus taught a parable in Matthew 13 on the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, which reveals the condition of the world and of the church today. Picture a farmer's field. The Word of God is being sown in the field, but an enemy comes in secretly and plants a dangerous weed that looks like wheat when it's young. The weeds and the wheat grow up together—just like the Word of God and lawlessness grow together today. In our day, the world is both getting worse and getting better, because the Word of God is going out more than it ever has in the history of the world. The doors are open—the Word is growing, the wheat is growing. But the weeds are growing also.

Lawlessness will continue to get worse and worse, but the Holy Spirit will not let Satan go all the way in this age. When the Holy Spirit is removed, it will be like taking the stopper out of the bottle—the liquid of lawlessness will pour out all over the world.

When will that happen? When will the Holy Spirit be taken out? When the church is raptured, His role on earth will change. He will be in the world during the Great Tribulation, but on a different mission. Just as He was present in the days of the Old Testament, He will be present on the earth. Today, the Spirit of God is sealing us until the day of redemption when He will present us and deliver us to the Lord Jesus at the Rapture. If He didn't do that, we would never make it. After He does that, He will come back to the earth to resume His former mission down here. But He will not hinder evil—He will let the devil have his day for a while. Just imagine what life will be like here when the world is turned over to him

The Antichrist, the Man of Sin, will be a world dictator. Nobody, no power on earth, can stop him. Only the coming of Christ will be able to stop him. As God's people in Egypt were helpless and hopeless until God delivered them, so the believers during the Tribulation will be helpless under the power of the Antichrist until the Lord Jesus comes to the earth to establish His Kingdom.

How will the Lord cut the devil down? "With the breath of His mouth" (2:8), Paul assures us. All the Lord will do is speak. The Word of God, a two-edged sword that comes from His mouth, will consume the Antichrist. Afterall,

it was the Word of God that created this universe. All God had to do was speak (Genesis 1:3). The Lord Jesus Christ is the living Word of God. Today we have the Bible, which is the written Word of God. The written Word is about the living Word, and it is alive and potent. When the Lord Jesus returns, He comes as the living Word of God, and His breath will consume the Antichrist, along with the “brightness of His coming,” the epiphany of His appearing.

When you think of the coming prophetic events, think of it in two episodes. First the Lord calls for His church to meet Him in the air, and then He comes to the earth to establish His Kingdom. At that time the Antichrist will be destroyed with the brightness of His coming.

This Antichrist, Satan’s man, will continue Satan’s great lie and will come with a supernatural power and do signs and lying wonders. He will be quite a healer and a miracle worker. He may walk on water and control the wind like Jesus did. The devil will send this man to the world with power.

The Antichrist will perform “signs” that will appeal to the scientific world of that day as well as to politicians and the religious world. When you’re not rooted and grounded in the Word of God, it’s easy to fall for all kinds of signs. His “lying wonders” will amaze people (2:9). These are the same people who refused to believe the gospel. He will deceive them further with wicked deception because they refused to receive the truth.

And God will let the world believe a lie. God graciously gives them His Word, but they don’t want it. They won’t believe God. They won’t listen to the gospel. They are closed to it. After they have heard the Word of God but have refused to accept it, God will send them “strong delusion” (2:11). They wouldn’t receive the truth, and now they are open to believe the lie.

What is “the lie”? The Antichrist tells people that Jesus Christ is not the Lord, that He is not who He says He is. He will tell people they are really smart for not believing in Jesus. He’ll have some good explanation for the departure of the saints from the earth at the Rapture and will congratulate the people on having waited to build a kingdom on earth with him. The people will believe him and will believe that Antichrist will bring them the Millennium. They won’t realize they are entering into the Great Tribulation. That is the lie, and people will believe it because they refused to believe the truth.

Since they're so obsessed with evil, God gives them what they want. And since they refuse to trust God's Word, they're now living in a world of lies and illusions. But at least they're doing all the unrighteousness their hearts desire.

**NEXT: How do we live now ...
now that we know what's coming?**

LESSON 2



FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

1. What does it tell us about God's character that God, who is full of love and compassion, will also one day unleash His wrath on those who defy Him?
2. What do you think was Paul's purpose in revealing details about the future Day of the Lord?
3. Why would God remove the church before the Great Tribulation?

7. Imagine hearing 2 Thessalonians read for the first time as a member of that first century church. What do you think your reaction would have been to everything Paul is saying about the world's future?

LESSON 3

HOW DO WE LIVE NOW?



Begin with prayer



Read **2 Thessalonians 2:13—3:18**



Listen at TTB.org/2Thessalonians to **2 Thessalonians 3:1-7** and
2 Thessalonians 3:8-18

How are we to live now that we know what's coming? When you see what the world will be like under Satan's control and the Antichrist's public leadership, it sobers your spirit, doesn't it? In light of these future events, Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians now tells us how we as believers should live, believing all that God's Word says will be coming next.

Paul gets very practical and gives us three different ways we demonstrate that we believe in the coming of Christ. It will impact our attitude toward the Word, our walk, and our work.

ESTABLISHED IN THE WORD

Paul sums up the news about things to come with a blessing over believers in Christ Jesus. *"Don't forget,"* he says, *"that God loves you and gives you everlasting comfort and encouragement and well-founded hope in His salvation by grace. And remember His grace will keep your heart on course in every good work and word."* How encouraging is that?! His blessing sums up the total spectrum of salvation. In other words, it describes your salvation all the way from the past, the present, and down into the future.

“God from the beginning chose you for salvation” (2:13). (See Romans 8, and specifically verses 28-31.) That is exactly what Paul is writing here in 2 Thessalonians. This blessing looks back to the past. Yes, God chose us before we even got here. You don’t surprise God when you trust Christ. The other side of the coin is also true. “Whosoever will” may come to God (Revelation 22:17, KJV). The “whosoever wills” are the chosen ones, and the “whosoever won’ts” are the non-elect. Jesus said, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink” (John 7:37). That is a legitimate offer of salvation—a sincere, definite offer with no complications attached. If you don’t come, the reason is *not* because you’re not elected. The reason you don’t come is that you’re not thirsty; that is, you don’t think you need a Savior. If you are thirsty, then come to Christ.

God chose us in the past, but now our “sanctification by the Spirit” (2:13) looks to the present. You are sanctified both in position and in practice. When you accept Jesus Christ as your own Savior, you are *in Christ*—that is positional sanctification. Sanctification becomes practical when it describes your growing up in the faith—when your life changes to be more like Jesus’ life. This is growing in grace, and it happens as we study the Word of God and believe it and walk it out. We’ll continue doing this until we “obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2:14) when He snatches us up to be with Him in the clouds. That looks forward to the future. What a glorious, wonderful view we have in front of us! (See 1 John 3:2 and Colossians 1:27.)

Read 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14 over again any time you need encouragement. They describe the full spectrum of salvation: We *have been* saved, we *are being* saved, we *will be* saved. It is all the work of God and the Word which enable the believer to stand and be stable.

His Word brings comfort and support to our hearts. It establishes us in every good word and work and will lead to the work of the Lord. Not only that, but when we understand God’s Word, we won’t be carried away by every wind of doctrine. Our minds and hearts will be stable and centered on Him. We need to stay in God’s Word and be established in the faith.

The Word of God leads you to do the work of God. If you really believe Christ is coming, you’ll be busy working for Him. You will give an account to Him someday of how you spent your life. If He is going to be here tomorrow, we want to be busy today. We shouldn’t have our noses pressed against the window looking for Him to come. Instead, we should be looking around doing the work of the Lord down here. That is the greatest proof that we believe He is coming.

ESTABLISHED IN OUR WALK

As believers, we are responsible to “walk worthy of the calling with which you were called” (Ephesians 4:1). As Paul told Ephesian believers, now he says the same to Thessalonian believers (and also to New York believers and New Delhi believers and Moscow believers, etc.).

The Word of God helps us walk as “the called out ones” before a wicked world. The Word establishes a believer in his walk.

It is one thing to hold the truth of the coming of Christ, to love His appearing; but it is another thing to walk worthy of that great truth. If we really love His appearing, we will prove it by our relationship to the Word of God and by our walk through this life.

But we’re not doing this in our own strength, Paul reminds us. *The Lord is faithful, and He will set you on a firm foundation and will protect and guard you from the evil one.* Christians should hold tenaciously to this truth in 2 Thessalonians 3:3. The Lord is faithful. He will establish you. How does He do it? By coming to the Word of God and letting it have its influence in your life. The Lord operates through His Word. The Word of God will keep you from evil.

The believer is to walk in “the love of God” (3:5). If you walk in His love, the love of God is rooted in your heart and you know He loves you. You can demonstrate that love by the power of the Spirit, because only the Spirit of God can make God’s love real to us. Love is a fruit of the Spirit. However, God says we are to “withdraw” ourselves from the disorderly. Certainly we are to share Christ with them, but we shouldn’t hang out with them.

ESTABLISHED IN OUR WORK

We’ve seen how important our walk is and how our walk should be grounded in the Word. Now we get busy working for the Lord so the Word of God may have its way in our hearts and lives.

Paul had a tremendous work ethic. He wouldn’t let anyone pay him for his missionary work among them, especially on his first missionary journey. He paid his own way. When he was establishing churches, he supported himself by tentmaking. Once the churches were established and Paul visited them a second and third time, he did receive an offering from them.

No other doctrine in the Bible will make you work harder or more sensibly for Christ than the second coming of Christ. If you believe you're going to see Him soon, you will work for Him. You'll be putting a few seeds of the Word of God in the field of the world so they might bring forth a harvest.

"If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat" (3:10). The Thessalonians had a few fanatics who simply withdrew themselves and decided they would spend all their time looking for the Lord's return. Paul writes, *"Don't feed them. They have to go to work."* Still others weren't interested in getting out the Word of God, but they were busy—they were busybodies. They were busy as termites and just as effective in the church at Thessalonica. The best thing to do is withdraw yourselves from troublemakers and gossipers in the church. Instead, work quietly and earn your own living. This doesn't sound very spiritual, but it's certainly practical. Many problems in the average church would settle down if we quietly went to work at something constructive.

Understanding what's next in God's program, rather than fanaticism or laziness, brings peace to the family of God. He who is peace wants us to enjoy His peace and His grace as He establishes us in the Word, in our walk, and in our work as we wait for His coming.

LESSON 3



FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

1. Why would Paul say that the things to come would be an encouragement for a believer, rather than causing fear?
2. Sanctification is accomplished in the life of a believer by the Holy Spirit. How can you cooperate with His work in your life?
3. It's important for believers to understand the Word of God, but this can be a lot of work. What do you need to do to understand the Bible better?

4. The greatest indicator of our faith is our actions. What would an observer of your actions conclude about your faith?
5. In your own words, what does walking worthy of your calling look like in your life?
6. Why do you think Paul links good theology with a strong work ethic?

7. Imagine you had been one of the original recipients of the letter of 2 Thessalonians. What kind of change would this book have made in your life?

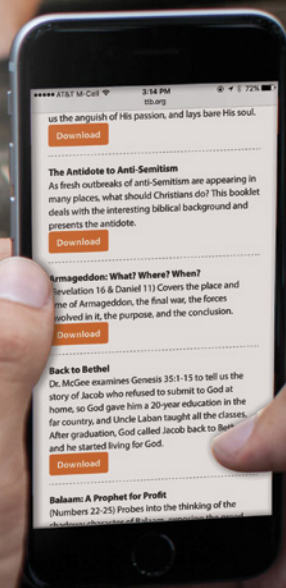
A photograph of two men, one Black and one white, smiling and talking to each other outdoors. They are both gesturing with their hands. The background is slightly blurred, showing other people and trees.

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A young woman with curly hair is looking out a train window, listening to music on white earbuds. She is holding a blue bag strap. The background shows the interior of a train car with windows and doors.

[TTB.org/listen](https://www.TTB.org/listen)

A man in a blue robe and black head covering is pointing towards a desert town. The town is built on a hillside with a church spire. The foreground is filled with palm trees and greenery. The background shows a vast desert landscape with mountains.

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