

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION
2 Thessalonians: Comforting Troubled New Christians With Correct End Times Theology
Part I: Comforting Persecuted New Christians With God's Coming Just Judgment
(2 Thessalonians 1:1-12)

I. Introduction

- A. It is easy for especially new Christians to become concerned about the rising tide of not only apostasy, but of strong opposition to Biblical Christianity in its varied forms of persecution, both mental and physical.
- B. This is not a new problem: Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians to believers who were experiencing ongoing, severe opposition from the lost world around them (2 Thessalonians 1:5-6 with Acts 17:1-13), and his second letter to the Thessalonians starts with an encouragement of these believers regarding such trials.
- C. We thus view 2 Thessalonians 1:1-12 for encouragement in our era regarding foes to the Christian faith:

II. Comforting Persecuted New Christians With God's Coming Just Judgment, 2 Thessalonians 1:1-12.

- A. Paul introduced 2 Thessalonians with a salutation, thanksgiving and encouragement designed to comfort troubled new Christians who faced persecution from unbelievers for their faith, 2 Thessalonians 1:1-4:
 - 1. Having given his warm greeting (2 Thess. 1:1-2), Paul expressed thanksgiving to the Lord for the great growth of faith in God and love had toward one another expressed by his readers, 2 Thessalonians 1:3.
 - 2. Paul then added how he reported to other churches of their patience and faith in all the persecutions and tribulations they faced from unsaved opponents of the Christian faith, 2 Thess. 1:4 with 1:6, 8.
- B. After this encouragement, Paul taught the day was coming when there would be a tremendous *reversal* of his reader's current state, that their unsaved persecutors would be seriously judged by God while these Christians would find *rest* from these persecutors, 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10:
 - 1. Paul revealed that the patience and faith that his readers expressed in facing unsaved persecutors' tribulations against them gave evidence that they were righteous, and that they were to be considered worthy by God's grace to enter His blessed kingdom, 2 Thessalonians 1:5.
 - 2. In contrast to the destiny of entering God's kingdom, the godless, unsaved persecutors of Paul's readers were going to be repaid judgment from God Himself in the Great Tribulation, 2 Thessalonians 1:6.
 - 3. Conversely, Paul's readers who were now troubled by persecutors would find rest with Paul, Timothy and Silvanus when Jesus was revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, 2 Thessalonians 1:7.
 - 4. At Christ's coming, He would take vengeance on the lost world in flaming fire, and judge them to be punished with "everlasting destruction" from the presence of the Lord, 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9. The terms used in 2 Thessalonians 1:9 indicate eternal punishment in hell for rejecting Christ (as follows):
 - a. The word "everlasting" (KJV, NIV) ("eternal" ESV) comes from the Greek New Testament word *aionion*, the genitive plural of *aion* meaning "age" so that *aionion* means "of the ages, eternally," U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 715; Arndt & Ging., A Grk.-Engl. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 26-28.
 - b. The expression "will be punished" (KJV, NIV) translates two Greek New Testament words, *tinō* meaning "to pay, undergo a penalty," *Ibid.*, p. 826, and the word *dike* , "punishment," *Ibid.*, p. 197.
 - c. The word "destruction" (KJV, NIV, ESV) is *olethron*, meaning "destruction, ruin," *Ibid.*, p. 566.
 - d. Thus, for rejecting Christ, the lost will experience the everlasting punishment of destruction in hell.
 - 5. On the other hand, Christ's coming will be a time of triumph and blessing for believers of all ages as He will be glorified in his saints and be admired by all who have trusted in Him, 2 Thessalonians 1:10.
- C. Based on this insight, Paul encouraged his troubled new Christian readers by stating his prayer that God would richly bless their efforts to keep living rightly for Him before their foes, 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12.

Lesson: *To comfort new Christians who experienced persecution from the unsaved, Paul wrote that the Second Coming of Christ would begin a time of terrible eternal punishment in hell for the lost while his Christians readers would find rest with Paul, Timothy and Sylvanus. Thus, Paul's readers were not to lose heart, but to keep living by faith and hope in God and His final just judgments!*

Application: *In facing pressures from godless opponents to the Christian faith, may we remember that this current state is only temporary, that God will one day eternally, dramatically reverse the situation in our favor. In this hope, may we be encouraged to keep living righteously by faith and hope in God!*