

**Chinese Martyrs Catholic Church**  
**Bible Sharing Program 2022-23 (2Thessalonians 1:1-12)**  
**Session #8: Overview of 2 Thessalonians; Thanksgiving and**  
**Encouragement Amidst Suffering**

*CSB – Ignatius Catholic Study Bible*  
*CCSS – Cath Commentary on Sacred Scriptures*  
*SN = Special Notes*  
*NAB = New American Bible*  
*SK = Chinese Bible*  
*CCC = Catholic Catechism*

<p><b>A</b></p>	<p><b><u>Overview</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This letter was completed not long after the first letter. 1Th, written in 51 A.D., was possibly Paul’s earliest epistle and earliest work in the New Testament.</li> <li>• Since the tone of the 2<sup>nd</sup> letter is not as kind as that of the 1<sup>st</sup> letter, as well, they are different in diction and sentence structure; the author deliberately clarifies that he, Paul, is the author (3:17). There are discrepancies between the 2 letters regarding the teaching about Christ’s second coming (while the 1<sup>st</sup> letter states that the time cannot be predicted, the 2<sup>nd</sup> letter discusses in detail what to expect when that happens), therefore, many modern scholars question the authorship of Paul. In fact, these queries can be satisfied with logical explanations. According to the Church’s tradition, we believe that Paul is the author. In addition, since this work is inspired by the Holy Spirit, who would have doubts about the author? One must accept the teachings in the letter.</li> <li>• Main themes – (1) God’s justice deems all those who persevere and remain faithful, even under persecutions and afflictions, worthy of God’s kingdom, and will “repay with afflictions those who are afflicting you” (1:5-10). (2) Before “The Day of the Lord”, “the lawless one is revealed”, the one “springs from the power of Satan in every mighty deed and in signs and wonders that lie”, but “the Lord Jesus will kill ... and render powerless by the manifestation of his coming” (2:1-12). Therefore, the Church must “stand firm and hold fast to the traditions” received from the apostles (2:15). (3) Condemning the freeloaders who do nothing while awaiting the Lord’s coming.</li> </ul>	<p>CCSS 20-28, CSB</p> <p>SN1 CCSS p 24</p>
<p><b>B</b></p>	<p><b><u>Greetings and Giving Thanks to God</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The opening address is almost identical to that of 1 Thess. The similarities between the two letters lead some scholars to consider possible plagiarism. Contrarily, other scholars see the similarities as confirmation of Paul’s authorship. Like 1 Thess, the letter is from Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, but it is evident throughout the letter that Paul is the main author (see 2:5, 3:17). Paul’s simple self-description suggests that the Thessalonians have accepted his</li> </ul>	<p>1:1-4</p> <p>1:1 CCSS</p> <p>2Cor 1:1, Gal 1:1</p>

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	<p>authority to teach; therefore, it is not necessary to further introduce himself.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highlighting that grace and peace are from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ; at the same time, Paul teaches this grace and peace is the fruit of the Holy Spirit =&gt; the Holy Trinity.</li> <li>• Giving thanks to God so that the faith of the Thessalonians “flourishes every more, and the love ... grows ever greater” =&gt; Both the virtues of love and faith are ultimately attributable to God, therefore, one must not boast of oneself but be thankful at all times.</li> <li>• With faith and love, the Thessalonians have shown “endurance and faith in all [their] persecutions and the afflictions [they] endure”. The precise details of these hardships are unclear, though it is clear that the trouble is coming from people outside of the church (ref. 1:6). Today’s Christians are also facing similar, if not greater, persecutions; therefore, we must be prepared to brave them with faith, hope, and love.</li> </ul>	<p>1:2 CCSS, Gal 5:22</p> <p>1:3, SN2</p>
<p><b>C</b></p>	<p><b><u>The Coming Judgment of Good and Evil</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paul generally says very little about the Final Judgment during which evildoers will be punished, this passage is an exception. Paul offers comforts to the Thessalonian church that is under persecutions, when the last day comes, God of justice will redress all injustice, “grant rest along with us to you who are undergoing afflictions”, those who do not acknowledge God and do not obey the gospel “will pay the penalty of eternal ruin, separated from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power” (1:9).</li> <li>• “You may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God for which you are suffering”. The endurance of suffering itself does not make one worthy of God’s kingdom (excellent conduct on its own cannot earn us entrance into God’s kingdom!), instead the faith that prompts the actions does. This faith comes from God (See above B3). Not only can persecutions and afflictions coexist with Christian faith, the sufferings and how we endure them, how ultimately all sufferings will be annihilated and injustice redressed; all these are key messages of God’s salvific plan.</li> </ul>	<p>1:5-10</p> <p>CCSS</p> <p>1:5 CCSS</p> <p>SN3</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “For it is surely just on God’s part to repay with afflictions those who are afflicting you” – Libertarians (including some Christians) cannot accept the Lord Jesus who proclaims love and mercy will not hesitate to punish evildoers; they fail to understand a god who does not punish evildoers is an unjust and wicked god. By the same token a just and good God will surely reward the just. “Tolerance” is deemed as the ultimate moral standard by today’s society; however, such measure is purely subjective and contradicts what the Bible teaches.</li> <li>• The Lord comes “with the voice of an archangel and with the trumpet of God”, all will be able to see “the Lord Jesus from heaven with his mighty angels”, and then, the Last Judgment will commence. “In blazing fire, inflicting punishment on those who do not acknowledge God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus”.</li> <li>• Evildoers “will pay the penalty of eternity ruin, separated from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power”; descending into a terrifying loneliness. God will be glorified and praised.</li> </ul>	<p>1:6-7 CCSS 151-152  Lk 1:53, 16:19-31  2Cor 5:10</p> <p>1:7-8 CCSS, Mt 25:31,  Ps 50:3, Is 66:4-5, 14-16, 1Cor 3:10-15</p> <p>1:9-10 CCSS  Is 2:10-11</p>
<p><b>D</b></p>	<p><b><u>Prayers for the Thessalonians</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paul prays that “God may make you worthy of his calling” – the call the invites people to be baptized and become Christians is the call that each one of us, the faithful, have received – the name of our Lord Jesus be glorified in them, in accord with the grace of God and Lord Jesus Christ.</li> </ul>	<p>5:11-12</p>

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**Special Notes:**

1. Chronological Order of Paul's Letters:

Letter	Date
1Thessalonians	51
1Thessalonians	51/90s
Galatians	54-57
Philippians	56-57
1Corinthians	57
2Corinthians	57
Romans	58
Philemon	56-57/61-63
Colossians	61-63/70-80
Ephesians	61-63/90-100
Titus	65/95-100
1Timothy	65/95-100
2Timothy	66-67/95-100

Source : New Jerome Biblical Commentary 66:56

2. Quoting 2 Thess 1:3, St. Augustine said, "This he said so that they might not be elated over this great blessing which they enjoyed from God, as if it were something they possessed of themselves. Seeing, therefore, that your faith grows exceedingly and your charity for each other increases, as the Apostle says, we ought to thank God in your regard, and not praise you as if you possessed all this of yourselves." (CCSS p.141)

3. Should Suffering Shake Our Faith (Excerpts from Bishop Robert Barron's book *Redeeming The Time – Gospel Perspectives on the Challenges of the Hour*, pp.212-214)

The apologist for atheism or naturalism quite readily asks the believer, "How could you possibly assert the existence of a loving God given the Holocaust, school shootings, tsunamis that kill hundreds of thousands of people, pandemics, etc.?" I find this argument from evil utterly unconvincing.

For I don't think that anyone who reads the Scriptures carefully could ever conclude that belief in a loving God is somehow incompatible with suffering. (Noah/ordeal of a flood, Abraham/sacrifice of beloved son, Moses/liberator prevented from entering the Promised Land, David/punished for adultery and

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murder, Jeremiah/rejected and sent into exile, Israel/enslaved, exiled by enemies, Jesus/crucified.)

The biblical authors saw no contradiction whatsoever between affirming the existence of a loving God and the fact of human suffering. Rather, they appreciated it as ingredient in the plan of God, and they proposed various schemata for understanding this: as punishment for sin; as a spiritual purification in his people; might be the only way that, given the conditions of a finite universe, God could bring about certain goods.