

SIMPLE STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES
PAUL'S SECOND EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS
LEADER'S STUDY GUIDE



**The modern city and harbor of Salonica,
Biblical Thessalonica, Greece**

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2 THESSALONIANS 1

Human Author: Paul

Divine Author: God the Holy Spirit

Written c. AD 51

Key Thought: Exhortation to Careful Christian Living

Introduction

The doctrine of the impending return of Jesus Christ led some believers to careless living. Some people even stopped working believing that it is not necessary to “*polish brass on a sinking ship*” to use an old expression. Paul wrote to the church to correct unworthy thoughts and behavior.

The Apostolic Salutation

1:1-2

1 Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

1:1 **God our Father.** With these words the apostle emphasizes the family relationship that exists in the church. As young believers the people knew God as Father and Christ as Savior.

2 Grace unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1:2 Grace and peace are needed to live the ethics of the Christian life. A man once said, “*I can face anything but the future—and certain parts of the past and present!*” None of us can face the pain of the past unless we know we are forgiven by the grace of God. None of us can face the present unless we know we are strengthened by the presence of God. None of us can face the future unless we are certain of the love and grace of God and live with the hope of His mercy in our hearts.

Encouragement in Tribulation

1:3-10

3 We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth;

1:3 There is a difference to be noted between rational thanksgiving and emotional thanksgiving. Emotional thanksgiving emphasizes the gift while rational thanksgiving emphasizes the giver of the gift. Paul gives thanks to God for the spiritual maturity of the believers and the genuine love and affection they express to one another.

4 So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure:

1:4 The believer's joys were constant despite persecutions and tribulations. It is easy to say, "*O happy day that fixed my choice On Thee, my Savior and my God!*" until the pressures of time press down upon the soul. When the storm clouds of life gather the heart sometimes begins to ask,

"Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I saw the Lord?
Where is that soul-refreshing view
Of Jesus and His Word?"

How good it is when the church can be happy and loving despite the dark days of affliction.

"Well may this glowing heart rejoice,
And tell its raptures all abroad."

When the heart can go on singing in the midst of personal persecution then there is a manifest token of the righteousness of God. In April, 1831, Charles Simeon was 71 years old. He had been the pastor of Trinity Church, Cambridge, England, for 49 years. He was asked one afternoon by his friend, Joseph Gurney, how he had surmounted persecution and outlasted all the great prejudice against him in his 49-year ministry. He said to Gurney, "*My dear brother, we must not mind a little suffering for Christ's sake. When I am getting through a hedge, if my head and shoulders are safely through, I can bear the pricking of my legs. Let us rejoice in the remembrance that our holy Head has surmounted all His suffering and triumphed over death. Let us follow Him patiently; we shall soon be partakers of His victory*" (H.C.G. Moule, *Charles Simeon*, London: Intersarsity, 1948, 155f.).

5 Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer:

1:5 **worthy of the kingdom.** It is a strange thought but God only allows some individuals to be worthy to suffer for the kingdom of God.

Doctrine of Retributive Judgment

1:6

6 Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you;

1:6 **recompense tribulation.** While the Christian is to endure personal insults and injuries and love their enemies God is just and will not allow the guilty to go unchallenged or unpunished. When Jesus comes again He will come as the Great Judge to destroy those who have spurned His grace and hurt His servants.

7 And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels,

8 In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:

9 Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;

1:7-9 With terrifying words Paul describes the work of Christ at the Second Advent. It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God in His wrath. While the Christian has nothing to fear the unbeliever has everything to be terrorized of, for when Jesus comes in flaming fire He will take vengeance on them that know not God and have not obeyed the gospel. Nemesis was the daughter of the Night and the Greek goddess of justice. She pursued and punished the proud, the insolent, and the criminal. This gives rise to the expression "*met his nemesis.*" What is only a story in Greek mythology is a certain event according to Christian theology. Jesus is coming again and when He does the church can "*rest*" assured retributive justice will be administered.

10 When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.

1:10 What will happen when Jesus comes?

- He will be revealed from heaven.
- His mighty angels will accompany Him.
- He will use flames of fire to judge those that know not God and have not obeyed the gospel.
- He will punish the wicked with everlasting destruction.
- He will banish the wicked from His presence and from the glory of His power.
- He will be glorified in the saints.
- All who believe will admire Him.

A Pastoral Prayer
1:11-12

11 Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power:

12 That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1:11-12 **Wherefore.** Because Jesus is coming again, because the church will one day have a rest from persecution, because there is retributive justice, Paul prays God would continue to consider the believers at Thessalonica worthy of their call to salvation and to service by fulfilling in them a work of faith with power. Paul knew that if God's power were seen in the life of the Church then others would want to come to Christ and be united with His cause and kingdom. It is one thing to witness to the world by sharing the gospel, it is another to be a witness to the world by the life that is lived. Gordon McLaughlin is a native New Zealander. That gives him the right to speak of his own nation. He has written a book about his homeland entitled *The Passionless People*. He calls modern New Zealand "*a sterile society*." Could that be said of some Christians? Are there not passionless people? Oh let the church be caught up afresh in that grand passion that first motivated the saints that followed Him.

“Come, ye that love
the Savior's Name,
And joy to make it known,
The Sovereign of
your hearts proclaim,
And bow before His throne.

Behold your Lord,
your Master, crowned
With glories all divine;
And tell the wondering
nations round
How bright those glories shine.

When, in His earthly courts,
we view
The glories of our King,
We long to love as angels do,
And wish like them to sing.

And shall we long and wish in vain?
Lord, teach our songs to rise:
Thy love can animate the strain,
And bid it reach the skies.”

Anne Steele

Leader's Study Guide

Questions and Answers on 2 Thessalonians 1

1. What is the difference between rational and emotional thanksgiving?

Answer.

Emotional thanksgiving emphasizes the gift while rational thanksgiving emphasizes the giver of the gift.

2. What was Paul thankful for in the lives of the believers?

Answer.

Paul gives thanks to God for the spiritual maturity of the believers and the genuine love and affection they express to one another.

3. Explain the doctrine of retributive justice.

Answer.

When Jesus comes again He will come as the Great Judge to destroy those who have spurned His grace and hurt His servants.

4. According to Greek mythology who was Nemesis?

Answer.

Nemesis was the daughter of the Night and the Greek goddess of justice. She pursued and punished the proud, the insolent, and the criminal.

5. List seven events associated with the Second Advent of Christ.

Answer.

- Jesus will be revealed from heaven.
- His mighty angels will accompany Him.
- He will use flames of fire to judge those that know not God and have not obeyed the gospel.
- He will punish the wicked with everlasting destruction.
- He will banish the wicked from His presence and from the glory of His power.
- He will be glorified in the saints.
- All who believe will admire Him.

Personal Application and Reflection

- How can Bible doctrine lead to careless living? Do you know of any modern day examples?
- Does the doctrine of retributive justice sound harsh? Why or why not?
- Do you have joy despite tribulation and persecution? If not what robs you of the joy of the Lord during these periods of testing?
- What is your response to the idea that God only allows some Christians He believes to be worthy to suffer for His sake?
- Should Christians ever seek persecution and martyrdom? Why?

Hiding God's Word in My Heart

1 Thessalonians 1:7 And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, 8 In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: 9 Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;

2 THESSALONIANS 2

1 Now [but] we beseech you, brethren, by [with respect to] the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ [the true view Christ's coming, which has been misinterpreted], and by our gathering together unto him, [the final gathering of the saints to Him at His coming]

2 That ye be not soon shaken [tossed as ships in an agitated sea] in mind [from your mind or from your ordinary steadfastness], or be troubled [emotionally agitated], neither by spirit [by a person professing to have the spirit of prophecy], nor by word [of mouth], nor by letter as from us [some saying alleged to be that of Paul, orally communicated], as that the day of Christ [the Lord] is at hand [is present].

3 Let no man deceive you by any means [in any manner]: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away [rebellion] first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition [John 17:12];

2:1-3 The excitement of the return of Christ led to a rumor that Christ had already returned. Such rumors abound today in a teaching called full preterism. Paul declares that Christ had not returned the second time according to promise in the same way He left (Acts 1:11; Heb. 9:28). There were two primary reasons.

First, the special day of the Lord's return could not happen "*except there come a falling away first*".

Second, the day of the Lord's return could not take place before the revealing of the "*man of sin*" who is also called "*the son of perdition.*" In AD 52 Paul did write to the Galatians saying, "*I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: 7 Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ*" (Gal 1:6-7).

This early "*falling away*" from the truth along with the rise of John of Gadara during days of great tribulation c. AD 70 has led some to believe the words of this prophecy have been fulfilled historically. Not everyone is convinced of a historical fulfillment by AD 70. The Reformers believed Paul was anticipating the rise of the papacy as an institution and was not referring to an individual per se.

It has been noted that succeeding popes have sat in the "*temple of God*", the church, declaring themselves to be the Vicar of Christ on earth. Still others look not to the past and not to the present but to the future to find fulfillment of the words of Paul. They anticipate a person yet to be revealed who will rule the world as an Anti-Christ and then be destroyed at the Second Advent by Christ.

Because the church is not united on this matter and because the Lord has warned Christians not to seek signs (Matt. 12:39) it is futile to try to identify such a person though many have made the effort. By way of example some contemporary personalities have been declared to be “*that Man of Sin*”, that “*Son of Perdition*,” and each has died within the normal lifespan apart from the Lord’s return. Associated with this name of shame is Nero, Mohammed, Napoleon, Benito Mussolini and Joseph Stalin.

A principle is established: the *Scriptures* are not to be interpreted according to current events. Much harm is done to the name of Christ and the Christian cause when dates are set for the Second Advent as William Miller did in the 1840’s and as Edgar Whisenant did in 1988. Much harm is done when people are declared by well-known church leaders to be the anti-Christ or the Man of Sin.

- Excitement is built when promises are made that Jesus will return soon or the Anti-Christ will soon appear or the mark of the beast will be forced on people and these expected results do not come to pass.
- The authority of the Bible is undermined.
- The credibility of the spokesperson is ruined.
- The world is left to mock at the Christian community.
- The words of Jesus are undervalued for He said no one would know the day or hour of His coming.
- Fanciful speculation is given free license.
- False issues are presented. Attention is taken from sin, salvation and the judgment to come to focus on prophetic themes and the “*signs of the time*” so called.
- Fear is produced in hearts for no one wants to hear the world is coming to an end.

“*Let no man deceive you*”, said Paul, even if those men speak with great authority and quote *Scripture*.

4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped [or held sacred—shrines, temples etc]; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God [the Jerusalem temple], shewing [proclaiming] himself that he is God.

2:4 Paul continued to say more about the Man of Sin. He will oppose and exalt himself above all others. He will sit, God like, and proclaim great authority for himself. John of Gadara certainly did these very things. Josephus writes how John sat “*in the temple of God*” in Jerusalem and with arrogance began by implication “*shewing himself that he is God*”. To his contemporaries of AD 70 in Jerusalem Josephus said, “*that it was evident he was setting up a monarchical power.*”

Taking a different view the Reformers of the Reformation era charged succeeding popes with sitting in the “*temple of God*”, the church, and arrogating powers to themselves that are breathtaking in scope and concept. Because of this, the matter remains inconclusive as to what Paul had in mind, a present personality, a near future personality from his day (c. AD 70) or someone in the distant future hundreds and thousands of years later.

5 Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?

2:5 What Paul had taught is not recorded.

6 And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time.

2:6 Something was holding the Man of Sin, the Son of Perdition back from being revealed. That “*something*” was known to the believers at Thessalonica for the verse can be translated, “*And now you know what is holding him back, so that he may be revealed at the proper time*” (NIV).

7 For the mystery of iniquity [transgression of the law] doth already work: only he who now letteth [holds down fast] will let, until he be taken out of the way.

2:7 **The mystery of iniquity.** Though the secret power of lawlessness was already at work and would continue to do so for many ages, someone was holding evil in check. According to Paul that someone would one day be removed or taken out of the way. Who or what is the one who holds back lawlessness?

- Was it God the Holy Spirit?
- Was it a Roman authority?
- Was it the church?

Only two facts are certain. The restraint was to continue and then be removed. Once the restraint was removed the Lord Jesus would destroy the Wicked One at His coming.

Special Note. The words “*will let*” are not in the original.

8 And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord [Vulgate, “*the Jesus*”] shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy [abolish] with the brightness of his coming:

2:8 It is unclear if there is to be a long period of time between the removing of the restraint and the destruction of the Wicked One at the coming of Christ. Nevertheless, the Church's salvation requires her foe's destruction.

9 Even him, whose coming [*parousia*] is after [according to] the working of Satan [invested] with all power and signs and lying wonders [falsehoods],

2:9 The Man of Sin, the Son of Perdition has been, is, or will be a possessor of great power. There has been, is, or will be the ability to perform miracles and lying wonders because Satan energizes his wisdom and abilities just as the magicians in the court of Pharaoh were able to duplicate the miracles of Moses (Deut. 13:1-3,5).

10 And with all deceivableness of [deceit of] unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

2:10 The only divine safeguard against error in the church is to love the truth.

11 And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion [an effectual energizing working of error], that they should believe a lie [the lie]:

2:10-11 The result of the work of the Man of Sin, the Son of Perdition is deception and damnation for all who follow him. There comes a time when those who will not repent and believe the gospel find they cannot repent and believe for their heart is hardened. The rise of the cults and the promotion of many ideas contrary to sound doctrine or the historic faith testify to the judgment of God upon religious individuals.

12 That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

2:12 might be damned. There is a harsh side to Christian theology. While the mercy of God is wide it is not inexhaustive. *Hebrews 4:7* "Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." For those who are damned there is no mercy, only divine justice and retribution. Therefore skeptic and unbelieving, flee from the wrath to come!

2:12 pleasure in unrighteousness. The concept of pleasure in unrighteousness is confirmed by other passages of *Scripture* and by human experience. Such is the essence of sin, it exhilarates the soul, exalts the mind, and stimulates the emotions so there is an eagerness to do wrong. *Romans 1: 32* speaks of those "Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." A person who honestly looks inside their own heart and finds pleasure in sin should be afraid. It is a sign of certain damnation.

2:12 beloved of the Lord. It is an astonishing thought that God would love anyone because of the far-reaching effects of the Fall. And yet, the love of God for individuals is a large and constant theme in *Scripture*. A certain medieval monk announced he would be preaching next Sunday evening on “*The Love of God*.” As the shadows fell and the light ceased to come in through the cathedral windows, the congregation gathered. In the darkness of the altar, the monk lighted a candle and carried it to the crucifix. First of all, he illumined the crown of thorns, next, the two wounded hands, then the marks of the spear wound. In the hush that fell, he blew out the candle and left the chancel. There was nothing else to say.

13 But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:

2:13 through sanctification of the Spirit. Holiness of life is through the Spirit. *Romans 8:13* “*if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.*” The Spirit mortifies or puts to death the motions and impulses of the flesh when His presence is consciously and delightfully acknowledged and His will is yielded to in the moment of temptation.

14 Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory [praise, honor and distinction] of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2:14 obtaining of the glory. As God calls souls to salvation and to sanctification through the gospel the purpose is to obtain or share the glory associated with the Lord Jesus Christ.

15 Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.

2:15 **stand fast.** While the believer is to “*stand fast*” in the faith, let grace prevail especially with others who are not so fully persuaded especially in regard to the doctrines of divine sovereignty in the same way as self. In this matter the example of Charles Simeon, a former pastor of Trinity Church, Cambridge, England, for over 49 years can help. Pastor Simeon had little sympathy for uncharitable Calvinists. In a sermon on Romans 9:16, he said, “*Many there are who cannot see these truths [the doctrines of God's sovereignty], who yet are in a state truly pleasing to God; yea many, at whose feet the best of us may be glad to be found in heaven. It is a great evil, when these doctrines are made a ground of separation one from another, and when the advocates of different systems anathematize each other. ... In reference to truths which are involved in so much obscurity as those which relate to the sovereignty of God mutual kindness and concession are far better than vehement argumentation and uncharitable discussion (Horae Homileticae, Vol. 15, p. 357).*”

An example of how he lived out this counsel is seen in the way he conversed with the elderly John Wesley. He tells the story himself:

“Sir, I understand that you are called an Arminian; and I have been sometimes called a Calvinist; and therefore I suppose we are to draw daggers. But before I consent to begin the combat, with your permission I will ask you a few questions. Pray, Sir, do you feel yourself a depraved creature, so depraved that you would never have thought of turning to God, if God had not first put it into your heart? Yes, I do indeed. And do you utterly despair of recommending yourself to God by anything you can do; and look for salvation solely through the blood and righteousness of Christ? Yes, solely through Christ. But, Sir, supposing you were at first saved by Christ, are you not somehow or other to save yourself afterwards by your own works? No, I must be saved by Christ from first to last. Allowing, then, that you were first turned by the grace of God, are you not in some way or other to keep yourself by your own power? No. What then, are you to be upheld every hour and every moment by God, as much as an infant in its mother's arms? Yes, altogether. And is all your hope in the grace and mercy of God to preserve you unto His heavenly kingdom? Yes, I have no hope but in Him. Then, Sir, with your leave I will put up my dagger again; for this is all my Calvinism; this is my election, my justification by faith, my final perseverance: it is in substance all that I hold, and as I hold it; and therefore, if you please, instead of searching out terms and phrases to be a ground of contention between us, we will cordially unite in those things wherein we agree” (Moule, 79f).

16 Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace,

2:16 hath loved us.

“He left the splendor of heaven,
knowing His destiny,
Was a lonely hill on Golgotha
There to lay down His life for me.

If that isn't love the ocean is dry,
There's no stars in the sky, and the
Sparrow can't fly!

If that isn't love, then heaven's a
myth. There's no feeling like this,
If that isn't love.

Even in death He remembered,
The thief hanging by His side.
He spoke with love and compassion;
Then He took him to Paradise.

If that isn't love the ocean is dry,
There's no stars in the sky, and the
Sparrow can't fly!

If that isn't love, then heaven's a
*myth. There's no feeling like this,
If that isn't love."*

Dottie Rambo

17 Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.

Leader's Study Guide

Questions and Answers on 2 Thessalonians 2

1. List two reasons why the return of Christ had not happened when Paul wrote to the Thessalonians.

Answer.

First, the special day of the Lord's return could not happen "*except there come a falling away first*".

Second, the day of the Lord's return could not take place before the revealing of the "*man of sin*" who is also called "*the son of perdition.*"

2. What is the only divine safeguard against error in the church (2 Thess. 2:10)?

Answer.

The only divine safeguard against error in the church is to love the truth.

3. What does 2 Thessalonians 2:12 teach about the mercy of God?

Answer.

While the mercy of God is wide it is not inexhaustive. *Hebrews 4:7* "Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts."

4. What is the twofold confirmation that there is pleasure in unrighteousness?

Answer.

The concept of pleasure in unrighteousness is confirmed by other passages of *Scripture* and by human experience. Such is the essence of sin, it exhilarates the soul, exalts the mind, and stimulates the emotions so there is an eagerness to do wrong. Romans 1: 32 speaks of those "*Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.*" A person who honestly looks inside their own heart and finds pleasure in sin should be afraid. It is a sign of certain judgment.

5. What is the ground of holiness as per 2 Thessalonians 2:13?

Answer.

Holiness of life is through the Spirit. *Romans 8:13* “if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.” The Spirit mortifies or puts to death the motions and impulses of the flesh when His presence is consciously and delightfully acknowledged and His will is yielded to in the moment of temptation.

Personal Application and Reflection

1. Do you believe the man of sin is a historical personage or a future personality?
2. List at least five religious lies you believe God has sent for individuals to believe who reject the truth.
3. The *Bible* says plainly that God hath chosen individuals to salvation (2 Thess. 2:13). Why is this divine selection so widely and emotionally rejected?
4. Are you standing fast in the sphere of faith or do you have secret doubts about certain important parts of the Christian message? If you have doubts on a fundamental *Bible* doctrine what is your area of concern and why?
5. In ten points, each one beginning with “*I believe*” write out a creed of faith that you believe.

Hiding God’s Word in My Heart

2 Thessalonians 2: 13 But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:

Leader's Study Guide

2:16 hath loved us.

The Love of God

1. The love of God for the following is declared in *Scripture*.

- God loved the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob
- God loved Israel as a nation
- God loved Solomon
- God loved the Messiah
- God the Son loved the Rich Young Ruler
- God loved the world of the lost
- God loved Martha and her sister and their brother Lazarus
- God the Son loved the disciples
- God the Son loved John
- God the Son loved the church
- God the Son loves each and every believer personally

2. When addressing the Exodus generation, Moses mentions the love of God, having in mind Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

- *Deuteronomy 4:37 And because he loved thy fathers, therefore he chose their seed after them, and brought thee out in his sight with his mighty power out of Egypt;*

“The love of God is greater far
Than tongue or pen can ever tell;
It goes beyond the highest star,
And reaches to the lowest hell;
The guilty pair, bowed down with care,
God gave His Son to win;
His erring child He reconciled,
And pardoned from his sin”.

3. The love of God for the Exodus generation moved Him to deliver the Hebrews from the land of bondage in Egypt.

- *Deuteronomy 7:8 But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.*

“O love of God, how rich and pure!
How measureless and strong!
It shall forevermore endure
The saints’ and angels’ song.”

4. Because God loved Israel He would not allow Balaam to curse them. When the greedy prophet opened His mouth to curse the nation the Lord caused his tongue to speak words of blessing.

- *Deuteronomy 23:5 Nevertheless the LORD thy God would not hearken unto Balaam; but the LORD thy God turned the curse into a blessing unto thee, because the LORD thy God loved thee.*

“When years of time shall pass away, And earthly thrones and kingdoms fall, When men, who here refuse to pray, On rocks and hills and mountains call, God’s love so sure, shall still endure, All measureless and strong; Redeeming grace to Adam’s race— The saints’ and angels’ song.”

5. The love of God was recognized by the nation and compelled them to sit at His feet in reverence and respect. The people of God are kept upon His heart and in His hands.

- *Deuteronomy 33:3 Yea, he loved the people; all his saints are in thy hand: and they sat down at thy feet; every one shall receive of thy words.*

“Could we with ink the ocean fill,
And were the skies of parchment made,
Were every stalk on earth a quill,
And every man a scribe by trade,
To write the love of God above,
Would drain the ocean dry.
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,
Though stretched from sky to sky.”

6. Others recognized the love of God for Solomon and for the people of Israel.

- *1 Kings 10:9 Blessed be the LORD thy God, which delighted in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel: because the LORD loved Israel for ever, therefore made he thee king, to do judgment and justice.*
- *2 Chronicles 2:11 Then Hiram the king of Tyre answered in writing, which he sent to Solomon, Because the LORD hath loved his people, he hath made thee king over them.*
- *2 Chronicles 9:8 Blessed be the LORD thy God, which delighted in thee to set thee on his throne, to be king for the LORD thy God: because thy God loved Israel, to establish them forever, therefore made he thee king over them, to do judgment and justice.*

7. The special love of God for Jacob was recognized and recorded. When God first came to Jacob he had just stolen the blessing from his brother Esau by deceiving their father. Such is the nature of grace. Jacob was running away to Haran when he met the Lord.

- *Psalms 47:4 He shall choose our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob whom he loved. Selah.*

“Lovingly the Shepherd,
Seeking the lost sheep,
Found it tired and hungry
On the mountain steep.

Jesus paid the price,
great the pain and loss;
To redeem the world,
at great pain and loss.

To redeem the world,
to redeem the world,
Jesus Christ laid down
His life upon the cross.

Precious is the lost coin,
Sought with love and care,
And with joy the owner
Found her treasure rare.

Tenderly the Father
Welcomes home His son;
Though once dead he liveth,
Love at last has won.”

8. The love of God for a geographical location is also recognized.

- *Psalms 78:68 But chose the tribe of Judah, the mount Zion which he loved.*

9. Because God loved His people and found them precious in His sight He moved to deliver them from their captors.

- *Isaiah 43:4 Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honorable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life.*
- *Isaiah 48:14 All ye, assemble yourselves, and hear; which among them hath declared these things? The LORD hath loved him: he will do his pleasure on Babylon, and his arm shall be on the Chaldeans.*

“Loving Savior, hear my cry,
Hear my cry, hear my cry;
Trembling to Thy arms I fly,
Oh, save me at the cross.

I have sinned, but Thou hast died,
Thou hast died, Thou hast died;
In Thy mercy let me hide,
Oh, save me at the cross.

Lord Jesus, receive me,
No more would I grieve Thee;
Now, blessèd Redeemer,
Oh, save me at the cross.

Though I perish I will pray,
I will pray, I will pray;
Thou of life the Living Way,
Oh, save me at the cross.

Thou hast said Thy grace is free,
Grace is free, grace is free;
Have compassion, Lord, on me,
Oh, save me at the cross.

Wash me in Thy cleansing blood,
Cleansing blood, cleansing blood;
Plunge me now beneath the flood,
Oh, save me at the cross.

Only faith will pardon bring,
Pardon bring, pardon bring,
In that faith to Thee I cling,
Oh, save me at the cross.”

Fanny Crosby

10. The love of God is not based on time or human merit but on the eternal decree of God.

- *Jeremiah 31:3 The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee.*

“Loved with everlasting love,
led by grace that love to know;
Gracious Spirit from above,
Thou hast taught me it is so!

O this full and perfect peace!
O this transport all divine!
In a love which cannot cease,
I am His, and He is mine.
In a love which cannot cease,
I am His, and He is mine.
Heav'n above is softer blue,
Earth around is sweeter green!

Something lives in every hue Christless
eyes have never seen;
Birds with gladder songs o'erflow,
flowers with deeper beauties shine,
Since I know, as I now know, I am His,
and He is mine.

Since I know, as I now know,
I am His, and He is mine.
Things that once were wild alarms
cannot now disturb my rest;
Closed in everlasting arms,
pillowed on the loving breast.

O to lie forever here,
doubt and care and self-resign,
While He whispers in my ear,
I am His, and He is mine.

While He whispers in my ear,
I am His, and He is mine.
His forever, only His;
Who the Lord and me shall part?
Ah, with what a rest of bliss Christ can be
For my loving heart!

Heav'n and earth may fade and flee,
firstborn light in gloom decline;
But while God and I shall be,
I am His, and He is mine.

But while God and I shall be,
I am His, and He is mine”.

11. The OT prophets anticipated the love of God for the Messiah.

- *Hosea 11:1 When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.*

12. Though the love of God can be doubted and questioned it cannot be denied.

- *Malachi 1:2 I have loved you, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? Saith the LORD: yet I loved Jacob.*

“I was sinking deep in sin,
far from the peaceful shore,
Very deeply stained within,
sinking to rise no more,
But the Master of the sea,
heard my despairing cry,
From the waters lifted me,
now safe am I.

Love lifted me! Love lifted me!
When nothing else could help
Love lifted me!

All my heart to Him I give, ever to Him I'll cling
In His blessed presence live, ever His praises sing,
Love so mighty and so true, merits my soul's best songs,
Faithful, loving service too, to Him belongs.

Souls in danger look above, Jesus completely saves,
He will lift you by His love, out of the angry waves.
He's the Master of the sea, billows His will obey,
He your Savior wants to be, be saved today”.

James Rowe

13. As the love of God can be doubted it can also be rejected. Though Jesus loved the Rich Young Ruler the Lord let him walk away after calling him to service and thus salvation.

- *Mark 10:21 Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me.*

14. The love of God is the great and the grandest theme of the Bible. All of the theology of the Scripture is summarized in the single verse of John 3:16.

- *John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

“Of the themes that men have known,
 One supremely stands alone;
 Through the ages it has shown,
 ’Tis His wonderful, wonderful love.

Love is the theme, love is supreme;
 Sweeter it grows, glory bestows;
 Bright as the sun ever it glows!
 Love is the theme, eternal theme!

Let the bells of heaven ring,
 Let the saints their tribute bring,
 Let the world true praises sing
 For His wonderful, wonderful love.

Since the Lord my soul unbound,
 I am telling all around
 Pardon, peace and joy are found
 In His wonderful, wonderful love.

As of old when blind and lame
 To the blessèd Master came,
 Sinners, call upon His Name,
 Trust His wonderful, wonderful love”.

Albert C. Fisher

15. Love found a way to help the family of Mary and Martha and Lazarus in the hour of their greatest need for the time came when Lazarus died, the sisters wept, and Jesus came to raise Lazarus from the dead. Love found a way.

16. *John 11:5 Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. John 11:36 Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him!*

“Wonderful love that rescued me, sunk deep in sin,
 Guilty and vile as I could be—no hope within;
 When every ray of light had fled, O glorious day!
 Raising my soul from out the dead, love found a way.

Love found a way, to redeem my soul,
 Love found a way, that could make me whole.
 Love sent my Lord to the cross of shame,
 Love found a way, O praise His holy Name!

Love brought my Savior here to die on Calvary,
 For such a sinful wretch as I, how can it be?

Love bridged the gulf 'twixt me and Heav'n, taught me to pray,
I am redeemed, set free, forgiv'n, love found a way.

Love opened wide the gates of light to Heav'n's domain,
Where in eternal power and might Jesus shall reign.
Love lifted me from depths of woe to endless day,
There was no help in earth below; love found a way".

Avis M. Christiansen

17. There was a unique love relationship Christ had with the disciples in general and John in particular.

- *John 13:1 Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.*
- *John 13:23 Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved.*

18. The love of Christ was displayed as an example of how Christians are to love one another.

- *John 13:34 A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.*
- *Ephesians 4:4 "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;"*

"We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord.
We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord.
And we pray that all unity may one day be restored.

And they'll know we are Christians
By our love, by our love,
Yes they'll know we are Christians by our love.

We will walk with each other, we will walk hand in hand.
We will walk with each other, we will walk hand in hand.
And together we'll spread the news that God is in our land.

And they'll know we are Christians
By our love, by our love,
Yes they'll know we are Christians by our love.

We will work with each other, we will work side by side.
We will work with each other, we will work side by side.
And we'll guard each man's dignity and save each man's pride.

And they'll know we are Christians
By our love, by our love,
Yes they'll know we are Christians by our love.”

19. One way a person can know if God the Father and God the Son is loved is through gospel obedience. God will test the heart in this matter. Temptation is a test to see if the heart loves God. If the times of testing are understood in this manner it can help the heart resist evil.

- *Deuteronomy 13:1 If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, 2 And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; 3 Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. 4 Ye shall walk after the LORD your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him.*
- *John 14:21 He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.*

“When we walk with the Lord in the light of His Word,
What a glory He sheds on our way!
While we do His good will, He abides with us still,
And with all who will trust and obey.

Trust and obey, for there's no other way
To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.

Not a shadow can rise, not a cloud in the skies,
But His smile quickly drives it away;
Not a doubt or a fear, not a sigh or a tear,
Can abide while we trust and obey.

Not a burden we bear, not a sorrow we share,
But our toil He doth richly repay;
Not a grief or a loss, not a frown or a cross,
But is blessed if we trust and obey.

But we never can prove the delights of His love
Until all on the altar we lay;
For the favor He shows, for the joy He bestows,
Are for them who will trust and obey.

Then in fellowship sweet we will sit at His feet.
Or we'll walk by His side in the way.
What He says we will do, where He sends we will go;
Never fear, only trust and obey”.

John H. Sammis, 1887

20. A second way to demonstrate love for God the Father and God the Son is by rejoicing in the will of the Lord.

- *John 14:28 Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I.*

Adelaide Pollard believed the Lord wanted her in Africa as a missionary, but she was unable to raise funds to go. In an uncertain state of mind, she attended a prayer meeting, where she heard an elderly woman pray, “*It’s all right, Lord. It doesn’t matter what You bring into our lives, just have Your own way with us.*” At home that night, much encouraged, she wrote this hymn.

“Have Thine own way, Lord!
Have Thine own way!
Thou art the Potter, I am the clay.
Mold me and make me after Thy will,
While I am waiting, yielded and still.

Have Thine own way, Lord!
Have Thine own way!
Search me and try me, Master, today!
Whiter than snow, Lord,
wash me just now,
As in Thy presence humbly I bow.

Have Thine own way, Lord!
Have Thine own way!
Wounded and weary, help me, I pray!
Power, all power, surely is Thine!
Touch me and heal me, Savior divine.

Have Thine own way, Lord!
Have Thine own way!
Hold o’er my being absolute sway!
Fill with Thy Spirit ’till all shall see
Christ only, always, living in me.”

Adelaide A. Pollard
1907

21. The love of Christ is designed to sustain the believer during the great trials of life, including temptation. The believer in turn must continue in the love of Christ by extending it to others.

- *John 15:9 As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.*

22. It is not just a nice idea or an arbitrary decision for believers to love one another, it is a royal command.

- *John 15:12 This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.*

- *1 John 4:11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.*

23. The love of God for individuals is enhanced when Jesus is loved and believed in.

- *John 16:27 For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God.*

“There is a Name I love to hear,
I love to sing its worth;
It sounds like music in my ear,
The sweetest Name on earth.

O how I love Jesus,
O how I love Jesus,
O how I love Jesus,
Because He first loved me!
It tells me of a Savior’s love,
Who died to set me free;
It tells me of His precious blood,
The sinner’s perfect plea.

It tells me of a Father’s smile
Beaming upon His child;
It cheers me through this little while,
Through desert, waste, and wild.

It tells me what my Father hath
In store for every day,
And though I tread a darksome path,
Yields sunshine all the way.

It tells of One whose loving heart
Can feel my deepest woe;
Who in each sorrow bears
A part that none can bear below.

It bids my trembling heart rejoice.
It dries each rising tear.
It tells me, in a "still small voice,"
To trust and never fear.

Jesus, the Name I love so well,
The Name I love to hear:
No saint on earth its worth can tell,
No heart conceive how dear.

This Name shall shed its fragrance still
Along this thorny road,
Shall sweetly smooth the rugged hill
That leads me up to God.

And there with all the blood-bought throng,
From sin and sorrow free,
I'll sing the new eternal song
Of Jesus' love for me".

Frederick Whitfield, 1855

24. The love of God is designed to be known by the world and to bring the heart of the believer to perfection or spiritual maturity.

- *John 17:23 I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.*

25. Christ taught the love of God to the disciples.

- *John 17:26 And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.*

26. The lessons of love were learned for the disciples knew Jesus loved them.

- *John 19:26 When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son!*

"Jesus loves me! This I know,
For the Bible tells me so.
Little ones to Him belong;
They are weak, but He is strong.

Yes, Jesus loves me!
Yes, Jesus loves me!

Yes, Jesus loves me!
The Bible tells me so.

Jesus loves me! This I know,
As He loved so long ago,
Taking children on His knee,
Saying, 'Let them come to Me.'

Jesus loves me still today,
Walking with me on my way,
Wanting as a friend to give
Light and love to all who live.

Jesus loves me! He who died
Heaven's gate to open wide;
He will wash away my sin,
Let His little child come in.

Jesus loves me! He will stay
Close beside me all the way;
Thou hast bled and died for me,
I will henceforth live for Thee."

Anna Warner

Stanzas 2-3, David Rutherford McGuire

The words to this song originally appeared as a poem inside a novel, *Say and Seal*, which Anna Warner co-authored with her sister Susan. In the book, the words are spoken to a dying child, and in that context, there is another stanza not commonly found in hymnals:

"Jesus loves me! Loves me still,
Though I'm very weak and ill,
That I might from sin be free
Bled and died upon the tree."

27. The Christian conquers sin and death through Christ who loved us.

- *Romans 8:37* Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

28. The love of God is not only general it is specific.

- *Romans 9:13* As it is written, *Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.*

- *John 20:2 Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him.*
- *John 21:7 Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea.*
- *John 21:20 Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee?*

“Jesus, lover of my soul,
let me to Thy bosom fly,
While the nearer waters roll,
while the tempest still is high.

Hide me, O my Savior,
hide, till the storm of life is past;
Safe into the haven guide;
O receive my soul at last.

Other refuge have I none, hangs my helpless soul on Thee;
Leave, ah! Leave me not alone,
Still support and comfort me.

All my trust on Thee is stayed, all my help from Thee I bring;
Cover my defenseless head with the shadow of Thy wing.
Wilt Thou not regard my call?
Wilt Thou not accept my prayer?
Lo! I sink, I faint, I fall—Lo! On Thee I cast my care;

Reach me out Thy gracious hand!
While I of Thy strength receive,
Hoping against hope I stand, dying,
and behold, I live.

Thou, O Christ,
art all I want, more than all in Thee I find;
Raise the fallen, cheer the faint,
heal the sick, and lead the blind.

Just and holy is Thy Name,
I am all unrighteousness;
False and full of sin I am;
Thou art full of truth and grace.

Plenteous grace with Thee is found,
 grace to cover all my sin;
Let the healing streams abound;
make and keep me pure within.

Thou of life the fountain art,
 freely let me take of Thee;
Spring Thou up within my heart;
 rise to all eternity”.

Charles Wesley

29. As the death of Christ demonstrates His love for individuals so the professing dies to self in order to live for Christ. What Jesus did on behalf of His own must be constantly upon the heart.

- *Galatians 2:20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*

“Walked Christ my Savior,
 weary and worn;
Facing for sinners death on the cross,
That He might save them from endless loss.

Blessèd Redeemer! Precious Redeemer!
Seems now I see Him on Calvary’s tree;
Wounded and bleeding, for sinners pleading,

“Blind and unheeding—dying for me!
‘Father forgive them!’ thus did He pray,
E’en while His lifeblood flowed fast away;
Praying for sinners while in such woe
No one but Jesus ever loved so.

O how I love Him, Savior and Friend,
How can my praises ever find end!
Through years unnumbered on Heaven’s shore,
My tongue shall praise Him forevermore.”

Avis M. Christiansen, 1920

30. The mercy of God is rich for His love is great, greater than all our sins.

- *Ephesians 2:4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,*

“Glory be to Jesus,
Who, in bitter pains,
Poured for me the lifeblood
From His sacred veins!

Grace and life eternal
In that blood I find;
Blest be His compassion,
Infinitely kind.

Blest through endless ages
Be the precious stream
Which from endless torments
Doth the world redeem.

Abel’s blood for vengeance
Pleaded to the skies;
But the blood of Jesus
For our pardon cries.

Oft as it is sprinkled
On our guilty hearts,
Satan in confusion
Terror struck departs.

Oft as earth exulting
Wafts its praise on high,
Angel hosts, rejoicing,
Make their glad reply.

Lift we then our voices,
Swell the mighty flood;
Louder still and louder
Praise the precious blood!”

S. Alfonso, 18th Century

31. The life of the believer is to be characterized by consistency in love. The believer must do the most loving act in every situation.

- *Ephesians 5:2 And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour.*

“We are traveling on with our staff in hand,
Walking in the good old way;
We are pilgrims bound for the heavenly land,

Walking in the good old way.
Walking in the blessedness of love untold,
Traveling to a country that will ne’er grow old,
Jesus our Redeemer we shall there behold,
Home in the realms of day.

We are traveling on through a world of sin,
Walking in the good old way;
Though our foes are strong we have peace within,
Walking in the good old way.

We are traveling on in the Master’s Name,
Walking in the good old way;
And we sing His praise with a loud acclaim,
Walking in the good old way.

We are traveling on to the rolling tide,
Walking in the good old way;

But we trust in Him who is still our Guide,
Walking in the good old way”.

Fanny J. Crosby

32. When Christian husbands love their wives as Christ loved the church they display for the world a word of testimony.
- *Ephesians 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; 26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, 27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.*
33. From the love of God the Father comes everlasting consolation and good hope through grace of life without end and home in heaven.
- *2 Thessalonians 2:16 Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace,*
34. The loved of God is specifically demonstrated by the death of Christ to be a propitiation for a satisfaction for our sins.

- *1 John 4:10 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*

35. Had God not first loved there could be no redemption and no hope of restoration to fellowship and service. There could have been no response to love. Now there is.

- *1 John 4:19 We love him, because he first loved us.*

Because Nazareth means "lily," the new Church of the Annunciation in Nazareth has a steeple that resembles a lily. But it is an upside-down lily; its open mouth is pointing downward to suggest God's pouring out of himself to man. That is exactly what happened when Christ came.

“My Jesus, I love Thee,
I know Thou art mine;
For Thee all the follies of sin I resign.

My gracious Redeemer, my Savior art Thou;
If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.

I love Thee because Thou has first loved me,
And purchased my pardon on Calvary's tree.
I love Thee for wearing the thorns on Thy brow;
If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.

I'll love Thee in life, I will love Thee in death,
And praise Thee as long as Thou lendest me breath;
And say when the death dew lies cold on my brow,
If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.

In mansions of glory and endless delight,
I'll ever adore Thee in heaven so bright;
I'll sing with the glittering crown on my brow;
If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.”

William Featherston, 1864
Mr. Featherston was only 16 years old at the time

36. Not only is the love of God historic and eternal it is a present reality.

- *Revelation 1:5 And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved [loves] us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,*

The Love of God

Dr. T.T. Shields was the pastor of Jarvis Street Baptist Church in Toronto, Canada. He tells this wonderful story illustrating the love of God. In the home of a friend one day, as he reclined on the lounge opposite, and I in an easy chair, we were having a pleasant chat until dinner was called, when his little boy, named Neil, about three or four years old, came in. He went to his father's side and I heard him whisper, *"Papa, get up and show Mr. Shields how much you love me."* I knew at once there was a secret between them, as it is fitting there should be between father and child, and that was a secret in which the child rejoiced. His father smiled, and said, *"Oh, run away, Neil, and play; we are busy talking, and Mr. Shields knows I love you."* *"Yes,"* said the little fellow *"but I want you to show him how much."* Again and again the father tried to put him off, but the child persisted in his plea that the visitor be shown "how much" the father loved. At length the father yielded, and as he stood, the child stood between us, and holding up his index finger, with a glance first at his father and then at me, he said, *"Now you watch, till you see how much my papa loves me."* His father was a tall and splendidly proportioned man. First, he partially extended one arm, but the child exclaimed, *"No, more than that."* The other arm was extended, but the little fellow was not content, and demanded, *"More than that."* Then one after the other both arms were outstretched to the full, only the fingers remaining closed. But still the child insisted, *"More than that."* Then—in response to his repeated demands, as he playfully stamped his little foot and clapped his hands and cried, *"No! No! It's more than that!"*—one finger after another on either hand was extended, until his father's arms were opened their utmost reach, and to each was added the full hand breadth. Then the child turned to me, and gleefully clapping his hands, exclaimed, *"See? That's how much papa loves me."* Then he ran off to his play content. I charge thee, sinner, let not thine unbelief drive thee beyond the far reach of mercy's fingertips! There is no country this side of hell which is not shadowed by that Cross. Behold, and believe how much God loves thee!

37. Revelation 3:9 Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.

"I heard an old, old story,
How a Saviour came from glory,
How He gave His life on Calvary
to save a wretch like me;

I heard about His groaning,
of His precious blood's atoning,
Then I repented of my sins
and won the victory."

2:3 **son of perdition.** From the writings of Josephus comes this information. How John Tyrannized Over the Rest; and what Mischief's the Zealots did at Masada. How Also Vespasian Took Gadara; And what Actions were Performed by Placidus

By this time John was beginning to tyrannize, and thought it beneath him to accept of barely the same honors that others had; and joining to himself by degrees a party of the wickedest of them all, he broke off from the rest of the faction. This was brought about by his still disagreeing with the opinions of others, and giving out injunctions of his own, in a very imperious manner; so that it was evident he was setting up a monarchical power. Now some submitted to him out of their fear of him, and others out of their good-will to him; for he was a shrewd man to entice men to him, both by deluding them and putting cheats upon them. Nay, many there were that thought they should be safer themselves, if the causes of their past insolent actions should now be reduced to one head, and not to a great many. His activity was so great, and that both in action and in counsel, that he had not a few guards about him; yet was there a great party of his antagonists that left him; among whom envy at him weighed a great deal, while they thought it a very heavy thing to be in subjection to one that was formerly their equal. But the main reason that moved men against him was the dread of monarchy, for they could not hope easily to put an end to his power, if he had once obtained it; and yet they knew that he would have this pretense always against them, that they had opposed him when he was first advanced; while every one chose rather to suffer any thing whatsoever in war, than that, when they had been in a voluntary slavery for some time, they should afterward perish. So the sedition was divided into two parts, and John reigned in opposition to his adversaries over one of them: but for their leaders, they watched one another, nor did they at all, or at least very little, meddle with arms in their quarrels; but they fought earnestly against the people, and contended one with another which of them should bring home the greatest prey. But because the city had to struggle with three of the greatest misfortunes, war, and tyranny, and sedition, it appeared, upon the comparison, that the war was the least troublesome to the populace of them all. Accordingly, they ran away from their own houses to foreigners, and obtained that preservation from the Romans which they despaired to obtain among their own people.

And now a fourth misfortune arose, in order to bring our nation to destruction. There was a fortress of very great strength not far from Jerusalem, which had been built by our ancient kings, both as a repository for their effects in the hazards of war, and for the preservation of their bodies at the same time. It was called Masada. Those that were called *Sicarii* had taken possession of it formerly, but at this time they overran the neighboring countries, aiming only to procure to themselves necessaries; for the fear they were then in prevented their further ravages. But when once they were informed that the Roman army lay still, and that the Jews were divided between sedition and tyranny, they boldly undertook greater matters; and at the feast of unleavened bread, which the Jews celebrate in memory of their deliverance from the Egyptian bondage, when they were sent back into the country of their forefathers, they came down by night, without being discovered by those that could have prevented them, and overran a certain small city called Engedi—in which expedition they prevented those citizens that could have stopped them, before they could arm themselves, and fight them. They also dispersed them, and cast them out of the city. As for such as could not run away, being women and children, they slew of them above seven hundred. Afterward, when they had carried every thing out of their houses, and had seized upon all the fruits that were in a flourishing condition, they brought them into Masada. And indeed these men laid all the villages that were about the fortress waste, and made the whole country desolate; while there came to them every day, from all parts, not a few men as corrupt as themselves. At that time all the other regions of Judea that had hitherto been at rest were in motion, by means of the robbers. Now as it is in a human body, if the principal part be inflamed,

all the members are subject to the same distemper; so, by means of the sedition and disorder that was in the metropolis, had the wicked men that were in the country opportunity to ravage the same. Accordingly, when every one of them had plundered their own villages, they then retired into the desert; yet were these men that now got together, and joined in the conspiracy by parties, too small for an army, and too many for a gang of thieves: and thus did they fall upon the holy places (11) and the cities; yet did it now so happen that they were sometimes very ill treated by those upon whom they fell with such violence, and were taken by them as men are taken in war: but still they prevented any further punishment as do robbers, who, as soon as their ravages [are discovered], run their way. Nor was there now any part of Judea that was not in a miserable condition, as well as its most eminent city also.

These things were told Vespasian by deserters; for although the seditious watched all the passages out of the city, and destroyed all, whosoever they were, that came thither, yet were there some that had concealed themselves, and when they had fled to the Romans, persuaded their general to come to their city's assistance, and save the remainder of the people; informing him withal, that it was upon account of the people's good-will to the Romans that many of them were already slain, and the survivors in danger of the same treatment. Vespasian did indeed already pity the calamities these men were in, and arose, in appearance, as though he was going to besiege Jerusalem, but in reality to deliver them from a [worse] siege they were already under. However, he was obliged first to overthrow what remained elsewhere, and to leave nothing out of Jerusalem behind him that might interrupt him in that siege. Accordingly, he marched against Gadara, the metropolis of Perea, which was a place of strength, and entered that city on the fourth day of the month Dystrus [Adar]; for the men of power had sent an embassy to him, without the knowledge of the seditious, to treat about a surrender; which they did out of the desire they had of peace, and for saving their effects, because many of the citizens of Gadara were rich men. This embassy the opposite party knew nothing of, but discovered it as Vespasian was approaching near the city. However, they despaired of keeping possession of the city, as being inferior in number to their enemies who were within the city, and seeing the Romans very near to the city; so they resolved to fly, but thought it dishonorable to do it without shedding some blood, and revenging themselves on the authors of this surrender; so they seized upon Dolesus, (a person not only the first in rank and family in that city, but one that seemed the occasion of sending such an embassy,) and slew him, and treated his dead body after a barbarous manner, so very violent was their anger at him, and then ran out of the city. And as now the Roman army was just upon them, the people of Gadara admitted Vespasian with joyful acclamations, and received from him the security of his right hand, as also a garrison of horsemen and footmen, to guard them against the excursions of the runagates; for as to their wall, they had pulled it down before the Romans desired them so to do, that they might thereby give them assurance that they were lovers of peace, and that, if they had a mind, they could not now make war against them.

And now Vespasian sent Placidus against those that had fled from Gadara, with five hundred horsemen, and three thousand footmen, while he returned himself to Caesarea, with the rest of the army. But as soon as these fugitives saw the horsemen that pursued them just upon their backs, and before they came to a close fight, they ran together to a certain village, which was called Bethennabris, where finding a great multitude of young men, and arming them, partly by their own consent, partly by force, they rashly and suddenly assaulted Placidus and the troops that were with him. These horsemen at the first onset gave way a little, as contriving to entice them

further off the wall; and when they had drawn them into a place fit for their purpose, they made their horse encompass them round, and threw their darts at them. So the horsemen cut off the flight of the fugitives, while the foot terribly destroyed those that fought against them; for those Jews did no more than show their courage, and then were destroyed; for as they fell upon the Romans when they were joined close together, and, as it were, walled about with their entire armor, they were not able to find any place where the darts could enter, nor were they any way able to break their ranks, while they were themselves run through by the Roman darts, and, like the wildest of wild beasts, rushed upon the point of others' swords; so some of them were destroyed, as cut with their enemies' swords upon their faces, and others were dispersed by the horsemen.

Now Placidus's concern was to exclude them in their flight from getting into the village; and causing his horse to march continually on that side of them, he then turned short upon them, and at the same time his men made use of their darts, and easily took their aim at those that were the nearest to them, as they made those that were further off turn back by the terror they were in, till at last the most courageous of them brake through those horsemen and fled to the wall of the village. And now those that guarded the wall were in great doubt what to do; for they could not bear the thoughts of excluding those that came from Gadara, because of their own people that were among them; and yet, if they should admit them, they expected to perish with them, which came to pass accordingly; for as they were crowding together at the wall, the Roman horsemen were just ready to fall in with them. However, the guards prevented them, and shut the gates, when Placidus made an assault upon them, and fighting courageously till it was dark, he got possession of the wall, and of the people that were in the city, when the useless multitude were destroyed; but those that were more potent ran away, and the soldiers plundered the houses, and set the village on fire. As for those that ran out of the village, they stirred up such as were in the country, and exaggerating their own calamities, and telling them that the whole army of the Romans were upon them, they put them into great fear on every side; so they got in great numbers together, and fled to Jericho, for they knew no other place that could afford them any hope of escaping, it being a city that had a strong wall, and a great multitude of inhabitants. But Placidus, relying much upon his horsemen, and his former good success, followed them, and slew all that he overtook, as far as Jordan; and when he had driven the whole multitude to the riverside, where they were stopped by the current, (for it had been augmented lately by rains, and was not fordable,) he put his soldiers in array over against them; so the necessity the others were in provoked them to hazard a battle, because there was no place whither they could flee. They then extended themselves a very great way along the banks of the river, and sustained the darts that were thrown at them, as well as the attacks of the horsemen, who beat many of them, and pushed them into the current. At which fight, hand to hand, fifteen thousand of them were slain, while the number of those that were unwillingly forced to leap into Jordan was prodigious. There were besides two thousand and two hundred taken prisoners. A mighty prey was taken also, consisting of asses, and sheep, and camels, and oxen.

Now this destruction that fell upon the Jews, as it was not inferior to any of the rest in itself, so did it still appear greater than it really was; and this, because not only the whole country through which they fled was filled with slaughter, and Jordan could not be passed over, by reason of the dead bodies that were in it, but because the lake Asphaltiris was also full of dead bodies, that were carried down into it by the river.

And now Placidus, after this good success that he had, fell violently upon the neighboring smaller cities and villages; when he took Abila, and Julias, and Bezemoth, and all those that lay as far as the lake Asphaltitis, and put such of the deserters into each of them as he thought proper. He then put his soldiers on board the ships, and slew such as had fled to the lake, inasmuch that all Perea had either surrendered themselves, or were taken by the Romans, as far as Macherus.

2 THESSALONIANS 3

1 Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you:

2 And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith.

3:1 pray for us.

An Apostolic Prayer Request

- Pray for freedom to disseminate the gospel.
- Pray for the gospel to be effective.
- Pray for protection from unreasonable and wicked individuals.

3 But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil.

4 And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do and will do the things which we command you.

5 And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.

6 Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.

7 For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you;

8 Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you:

9 Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us.

10 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.

11 For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies.

12 Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.

13 But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing.

14 And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note [mark] that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.

3:14 note that man.

Marked Men of Scripture

- | | |
|------------------------------------|----------------------|
| • Cain | Genesis 4:14 |
| • Those who cause division | Romans 16:17 |
| • Those who do not obey the gospel | 2 Thessalonians 3:14 |
| • The damned | Revelation 13:16 |

15 Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

16 Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means. The Lord be with you all.

17 The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write.

18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

Leader's Study Guide

Questions and Answers on 2 Thessalonians 3

1. Which verse in 2 Thessalonians 3 seems to give the church permission to practice shunning?

Answer.

2 Thessalonians 3:6 Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.

2. What twofold work has Christ laid upon Himself on behalf of the believer?

Answer.

In 2 Thessalonians 3: 3 the Lord has taken upon himself to establish the believer in the sphere of saving faith and to keep Him from evil. *But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil.*

3. What does Paul say should happen to the man who will not work.

Answer.

2 Thessalonians 3:10 gives the apostolic counsel that *“if any would not work, neither should he eat”*

4. What is to be the mental attitude toward those who walk contrary to sound doctrine and yet profess faith in Christ?

Answer.

While individuals may act badly as professing Christians they are to be counted as a believer. *2 Thessalonians 3: 15 Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.*

5. Who is the human author of this epistle and when was it written?

Answer.

The human author is the apostle Paul and it was written AD 51.

Personal Application and Reflection

- Do you think God wants the church to practice shunning? If not, why not and if so how can the church do this effectively and practically?
- Have you known a time when God kept you from doing wrong? Please share a story.
- How would you define a “*busybody*”? Have you known such a person? What can be done to not become one?
- Do you have peace with God? Please share the basis for this peace.
- On a scale of one to ten with ten being the greatest number for good, how good of an influence are you for other believers? Paul said, “*ye ought to follow us*”. Can you say that? Why or why not?

Hiding God’s Word in My Heart

2 Thessalonians 3:3 But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil.