

Dynamic Faith and Love: Proof of Genuine Christianity

Dr. Michael A. Cox

Original: 1-5-03; Revised: 6-4-17; 10-19-25

Text: 2 Thessalonians 1:1-4

2 Thessalonians: [Bibliography](#) or [Manuscripts and Greek Exegesis](#)

UBS 4th Edition Paragraph Topics: Salutation; The Judgment at Christ's Coming

Central Idea of Message: A growing faith and an enlarging love plainly indicate the genuineness of salvation. Anything less suggests a questionable Christianity.

Introduction: Second Thessalonians was written by the apostle Paul from Corinth just a few months after writing 1 Thessalonians, probably between A.D. 50-53. It was written to correct errors which had developed regarding the Thessalonians' understanding of the Second Coming of Christ.

Paul's first Thessalonian letter had not settled all the difficulties concerning this doctrine. Some were apparently teaching that the Day of the Lord had arrived. We, too, would be alarmed if the Day of the Lord had come and gone, totally escaping detection!

In his opening paragraph, Paul declares that a dynamic faith and love offer proof of genuine Christianity.

I. The Greeting of Three (vv. 1-2)

- A. The greeting from three missionaries (v. 1)
 - 1. Paul: the writer or one dictating and signing the letter
 - a) Saul of Tarsus
 - b) Apostle
 - c) Inspired author
 - 2. Silvanus: Silas; frequent amanuensis
 - 3. Timothy: means "God-valued"
- B. Grace and peace to the Thessalonian church (v. 2)
 - 1. **Grace: undeserved love, freely given, cannot be earned or retained by one's personal effort**
 - 2. Peace: reconciliation with God
 - 3. Church: called out ones
 - 4. **Thessalonica: Macedonian capital city of about 200,000**
 - 5. In God our Father

- 6. In the Lord Jesus Christ
 - a) Lord: master, boss, king
 - b) Jesus: human
 - c) Christ: divine messiah, anointed one
- 7. **God and Christ are referred to here as equal but not identical: separate persons in the Godhead**

II. The Giving of Thanks (vv. 3-4)

- A. It is obligatory to give thanks to God for the growing faith and love of Christians (v. 3)
 - 1. Thank God that their faith is enlarging
 - a) But what if it is not?
 - b) Pray that it will
 - c) **One evidence of a healthy Christian is a growing faith rather than a diminishing faith**
 - d) **One evidence of a healthy church is a growing faith rather than a diminishing faith**
 - (1) Churches and people must step out on faith, under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, and attempt great things for the furtherance of the kingdom of Christ
 - (2) **Many churches, and Christians, are stagnating because they do not attempt what they cannot accomplish**
 - (a) We must allow our faith to be stretched
 - (b) They only attempt what they can accomplish
 - (c) When they accomplish it, they can take the credit
 - (d) I sometimes wish that someone would promote a seemingly outlandish, visionary endeavor that is well beyond the normal means of this church
 - (e) **When Christians and churches attempt great things for God, they can expect great things from God!**
 - e) The faith of the Thessalonian Christians was growing, and Paul thanked God for it
 - 2. Thank God that their love toward one another is increasing
 - a) **One evidence of a healthy Christian is a growing love rather than a diminishing love**

- b) **One evidence of a healthy church is a growing love rather than a diminishing love**
 - c) **The love in a church ought to be expanding constantly to include every race and every repentant sinner, regardless of his or her past offenses**
 - (1) We should want our church to be the place where the meanest people in town are loved to Jesus
 - (2) We should want our church to be the place where the vilest drug dealer or filthiest prostitute can experience the genuine love and forgiveness of Jesus Christ!
 - d) The love of the Thessalonian Christians was growing, and Paul thanked God for it
 - e) **Faith and love are not static qualities but, rather, are dynamic features of a developing Christian disciple: something is wrong with a faith or a love which is not enlarging**
- B. It is proper to speak proudly of the enduring perseverance and faith of Christians (v. 4)
- 1. Proud testimonials were being given from church to church
 - a) Testimonials inspire others to persevere and keep the faith
 - b) Never think for a minute that even the greatest of Christians is not struggling in some way
 - (1) Some struggle with certain sins
 - (2) Some struggle with keeping the faith
 - (3) Some struggle with loving the unlovable
 - 2. **Persecution and affliction are common to the Christian**
 - a) Even though certain segments of Christianity tell us that persecution and affliction should be uncommon for the Christian
 - b) We disagree - strongly
 - c) Persecution: ridicule, abuse, imprisonment, or execution related to religious beliefs
 - d) Affliction: illness, accident, disease, death
 - e) **Being a Christian renders no person immune to persecution and affliction**

Conclusion: A growing faith and an enlarging love plainly indicate the genuineness of salvation. Anything less suggests a questionable Christianity. Hymn #332, "My Heart Looks in Faith."