

# STEADFAST CHRISTIANITY

## A STUDY OF 2 THESSALONIANS

### STUDY ONE

## Affirming the Afflicted

*2 Thessalonians 1:1–4*

---

*There is one wonderful response to people who are going through affliction, and that's affirmation.*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

**A**FFIRMATION is like a cool breeze on a sweltering day. It refreshes our spirit when we feel like we're going to collapse so that we can take another step. We need the refreshment of affirmation most when we're enduring a season of affliction.

Affliction sometimes comes from *without*, perhaps by a gossipmonger at the office who spreads hurtful rumors that misrepresent our intentions and tear down our character. Or, perhaps, affliction comes from religious persecution. We may have stood up for Christ and His truth, and hateful people have launched a campaign against us on social media, maybe even hiring a lawyer to take us to court.

Sometimes affliction comes from *within* the family of God. Fellow believers undermine the leadership of our church and cause division. Sometimes affliction comes from within ourselves. We can be our own worst enemy. We heap guilt on ourselves and hear the haunting voice of shame telling us that we're not enough or we're always the one at fault.

At times like these, words of affirmation from a kindhearted, Spirit-prompted person soothe our furrowed brow. True affirmation isn't flattery. It doesn't make us proud, only grateful. It lifts us up so we can try again.

In this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study, we join Paul when he affirmed the Thessalonian believers who were afflicted *without* and *within*. They suffered persecution and hardships from outsiders, and they were shaken by insiders who were spreading false teaching. How they needed a fresh breeze of affirmation! Paul saw their need and wrote 2 Thessalonians.



INSIGHT FOR LIVING



Scan to listen to  
Chuck's message.

The Bible-Teaching Ministry of Chuck Swindoll  
Study 1 • Page 1

SEARCHING  
THE  
SCRIPTURES  
BIBLE STUDIES

# Affirming the Afflicted

## 2 Thessalonians 1:1–4

---



### PREPARE YOUR HEART

As you open the Word, invite the Holy Spirit to illumine your heart with His truth. You may wish to pray as Pastor Chuck Swindoll prays before he studies the Word: “Lord, speak to me. Help me understand what this passage is saying. I am listening. I am sensitive to Your truth. Lead me into it.”<sup>1</sup> Record your prayer below.



### TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians around AD 51 to the young church in Thessalonica that he and Silas had planted only a few months earlier. Paul was teaching in the synagogue that Jesus was the Messiah. “Many God-fearing Greek men and quite a few prominent women” believed his message (Acts 17:4). Even some Jews believed in Jesus.

Immediately, however, a wave of persecution crashed against these young believers when some troublemakers dragged them before the city council, accusing them of “treason against Caesar” (17:7). The people of the city were thrown into turmoil, and the city council threatened to toss them into prison. It was a terrifying episode, and Paul and Silas were forced to flee that night. Read the full account in [Acts 17:1–10](#).

Imagine being one of those fragile new converts buffeted by such severe winds of persecution. What distress and fear do you think surged through their hearts?

Weighed down with concern, Paul “could stand it no longer” (1 Thessalonians 3:1) and sent Timothy to check on the young church. When Timothy returned with a good report, Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians to encourage them, teach about Christ’s return, and build up their faith.

Not long after he wrote his first letter, Paul penned a second letter. Get acquainted with this short letter by taking a few minutes to read [2 Thessalonians](#). As you read, bear in mind Paul’s brief but rich and affectionate relationship with the Thessalonians. Feel free to use Pastor Chuck’s chart to orient yourself to the flow of the letter.

# Affirming the Afflicted

## 2 Thessalonians 1:1–4

### 2 THESSALONIANS OVERVIEW BIBLE CHART

	AFFIRMATION AMID AFFLICTION	EXPLANATION OF PROPHECY	CLARIFICATION REGARDING RESPONSE
	2 Thessalonians 1	2 Thessalonians 2	2 Thessalonians 3
	“We can’t help but thank God for you.” (2 Thes. 1:3) “We proudly tell God’s other churches about your endurance and faithfulness.” (2 Thes. 1:4) “So we keep on praying for you.” (2 Thes. 1:11)	“Don’t be fooled by what they say.” (2 Thes. 2:3) Secret power of lawlessness Restraint removed Man of lawlessness “With all these things in mind . . . stand firm.” (2 Thes. 2:15)	“We give you this command.” (2 Thes. 3:6) “Take note of those who refuse to obey.” (2 Thes. 3:14) “May the Lord of peace himself give you his peace at all times.” (2 Thes. 3:16)
QUESTION	Why are we suffering?	What will occur?	How do we respond?
CONTRAST	Peace despite pain	Restraint vs. lawlessness	Work while waiting
STATEMENT	The Lord knows!	The Day of the Lord has not yet come!	“Never get tired of doing good.” (2 Thes. 3:13)
EMPHASIS	Commendation	Correction	Clarification
THEME	The hope of Christ’s return encourages us in our suffering and motivates us to live responsibly for Him.		
KEY VERSES	2 Thessalonians 1:11–12; 2:13–15		
CHRIST IN 2 THESSALONIANS	Jesus is the coming Judge, who will reward the righteous and destroy the wicked, including the coming man of lawlessness in the end times (2 Thes. 1:6–2:12).		

Copyright © 1982, 1998, 2010 by Charles R. Swindoll Inc. All rights reserved worldwide.  
 Chart taken from *The Swindoll Study Bible*. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers.

Why did Paul write another letter to the Thessalonians so soon after his first? One reason was to clear up a misunderstanding. Some false teachers were saying that “the day of the Lord”—the future period of divine judgment—had already begun (2 Thessalonians 2:2). “Don’t believe them,” Paul wrote, “even if they claim to have had a spiritual vision, a revelation, or a letter supposedly from us. Don’t be fooled by what they say” (2:2–3).

But before addressing this issue, Paul, first, wanted to share his heart with these believers whom he deeply loved. Let’s look closer at Paul’s introduction as he applies soothing words of affirmation to those afflicted souls in Thessalonica.



#### Observation: Affirmation for the Afflicted

Observation is the first step in our *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method. In the observation phase, simply note what the verses say. Pay attention to action words, descriptions, contrasts, and any phrases that stand out to you. Careful observation lays the groundwork for accurate interpretation.<sup>2</sup>

# Affirming the Afflicted

## *2 Thessalonians 1:1–4*

---

### Grace and Peace—2 Thessalonians 1:1–2

Paul began his second letter in a similar way as he opened his first letter. Compare *2 Thessalonians 1:1–2* with *1 Thessalonians 1:1*. How are his greetings similar? How do they differ? What is significant about the church being “in” God . . . and “in” Jesus?

What two spiritual blessings did Paul bestow upon his hurting readers? What makes them particularly meaningful for the Thessalonians in their situation?

### Perseverance and Faith—2 Thessalonians 1:3–4

Read *2 Thessalonians 1:3–4*. In 1:3, what *two* virtues led Paul to offer thanksgiving? How is their faith toward God described? Where was their love properly directed?

The apostle commended them before God in 1:3 and, according to 1:4, before men. To whom did Paul proudly boast about the Thessalonians? What *two* things did Paul boast about? What were the *two* situations?

*It's so important to remember words of affirmation. They tie us together and remind us we're not alone in this pilgrimage from earth to heaven. As a matter of fact, we're one in a bond. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

# Affirming the Afflicted

## 2 Thessalonians 1:1–4

---



### Interpretation: Divine Perspective on Affliction

Because Paul so deeply loved the fledgling Thessalonian church, he didn't settle for communicating pious platitudes or expressing superficial sympathy. His perspective was a divine one—*God never permits testing without a purpose*. Paul affirmed them because God was actively at work in them through their persecutions and hardships. As you reflect on [2 Thessalonians 1:3–4](#), how was God at work? What was the evidence?

Despite their persecution and affliction, the Thessalonians not only were persevering, but also their faith was “flourishing” and their love was “growing” (2 Thessalonians 1:3)! What principle can you draw about the relationship between affliction and growth in the Christian life?

If you were telling someone about 2 Thessalonians 1:1–4, how would you summarize Paul's message in your own words?

*Through the eyes of the Lord Jesus Christ, who never releases a test without purpose, he saw meaning in their faith being stretched. He saw purpose in their love growing stronger. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



### Correlation: Context Offering Clarity

Earlier in our study, we referenced Paul's concern for heresy that had crept into the church. Their battered belief needed clarity and strength.

# Affirming the Afflicted

## 2 Thessalonians 1:1–4

---

Read *1 Thessalonians 4:16; 5:2–8*. What had Paul taught them about the rapture and the day of the Lord? How are those events different, and what comfort had Paul intended for them?

As a result of false teaching, however, the church was confused—the *opposite* of what Paul sought to accomplish with his first letter!

Paul’s quick response via his second letter modeled two lessons. First, if you’ve been misunderstood don’t delay in trying to clear up the misunderstanding. Second, be certain that the information you give to others is clear and factual. Let’s apply these principles as we turn to our final section.

*The full name of the Lord Jesus Christ appears three times in each of the three chapters. Paul upholds the mighty name of our Lord Jesus and focuses attention upon Him. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



### **Application: From Thessalonica to Your Town**

Though our churches may be free of mob violence and deceitful heresies, we all experience affliction. As with Paul, we must respond quickly when our loved ones in the faith feel crushed under a personal winepress of hardship.

Is there a misunderstanding that you need to clear up, just like Paul did in his second letter to the Thessalonians? Or, perhaps, have you passed along information to others that you need to correct or clarify? If so, what is the situation and how can you respond?

Are you suffering affliction from without or within? If so, in what ways?

# Affirming the Afflicted

## *2 Thessalonians 1:1–4*

---

In your Christian journey, who has God used to affirm and to encourage you in times of affliction? Who was or who is this person, and how has he or she prayed for and affirmed you?

Conversely, for whom is God nudging you to encourage in prayer? How can you practically come alongside this person, affirm him or her, and point him or her to the Savior?

Have you ever wrestled through a weighty doctrinal or theological matter? What was it? How did the Word of God aid and direct you? How has God used a brother or sister in Christ to clarify truth and strengthen you?

Three commands provide final guidelines to take with you through your day.

1. *Look around!* Our churches should serve as hospitals for hurting hearts. Ask God for discernment to see His children through His eyes.
2. *Reach out!* Paul acted quickly to dispel heresy and to address doctrinal doubt. He tenderly balanced grace with truth. We can do the same.
3. *Speak up!* Paul spoke to the Father on their behalf, and then he spoke to them with personal affirmation. Generously speak affirming words to make someone's heart glad.

Instead of retreating under pressure, allow yourself to be open and vulnerable. Let intimacy with God and love toward others send forth a cool breeze of blessing from your life!

# Affirming the Afflicted

*2 Thessalonians 1:1–4*

---



## A FINAL PRAYER

*Thank You, Father, for Your presence. I have come into it singing, and it goes with me everywhere I go. That is what worship is about. That is why corporate worship is essential. It says He knows what He's about. It says I can go on. I can make it through the rest of the day. I can even make it for a week in the strength of that affirmation. All because of Jesus Christ, in whose name I thank You. Amen.*

## ENDNOTES

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2016), 128.
2. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page, "[How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?](#)"

For the 2026 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study was developed by Marshall F. Davis in collaboration with Aaron Massey, senior vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, and Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages. Copyright © 1986, 2026 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

[insight.org](http://insight.org)

Insight for Living

Study 1 • Page 8