



# International Bible Lessons Commentary

Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series

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## **2 Thessalonians 3:1-5 & 2 John 1:1-13** **New Revised Standard Version** **January 6, 2019**

The [International Bible Lesson](#) (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, January 6**, is from **2 Thessalonians 3:1-5 & 2 John 1:1-13** (some will only study 2 John 1:4-11). **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow this verse-by-verse *International Bible Lesson Commentary*. **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** will help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the [International Bible Lessons Commentary](#) website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. You can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [International Bible Lesson Forum](#). One week before your study on this lesson, you may want to give your class the [Student Class Preparation Guide](#) for this lesson.

### **2 Thessalonians 3:1-5**

**(2 Thessalonians 3:1) Finally, brothers and sisters, pray for us, so that the word of the Lord may spread rapidly and be glorified everywhere, just as it is among you,**

The “us” includes Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy (2 Thessalonians 1:1). In this letter, the most important prayer request they made of the Thessalonians was that the word of the Lord (that is, the gospel or good news of Jesus Christ regarding His coming as the Savior of the world, which included His virgin birth, teaching, living, dying for our sins, and rising again from the dead—see 1 Corinthians 15:1-11) would speedily move ahead without resistance as they worked as missionaries and teachers inside and outside the Church. They did not pray that they themselves would be honored; instead, they prayed that the good news of Jesus Christ would be honored by those who heard them speak. The good news would be honored when their listeners believed the good news about Jesus and then repented of their sins and accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. Paul’s Thessalonian Christian readers had honored the good news by believing the good news and becoming a congregation in Thessalonica, and Paul wanted those who met them (and him) to come to faith in Jesus Christ too.

**(2 Thessalonians 3:2) and that we may be rescued from wicked and evil people; for not all have faith.**

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy faced and fought evil spiritual powers. In Ephesians 6:12, Paul wrote, “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.” In this verse, we learn that they also

fought wicked and evil people who were inspired by these evil spiritual powers to act as they often did. However, notice that in his letter to the Thessalonians Paul notes that wicked and evil people can often act as they do without the aid and inspiration of demonic powers. The devil doesn't make or influence wicked people to do all the evil they do. No one can truthfully claim, "The devil made me do it." Wicked people have become slaves to the world, the flesh, and the devil. Many evil deeds committed, and many evil words spoken inside and outside the Church can be explained because "not all have faith." We too often expect those who are not Christians to behave as Christians.

**(2 Thessalonians 3:3) But the Lord is faithful; he will strengthen you and guard you from the evil one.**

In 2 Thessalonians 1:3, Paul cited two of the Bible's most important virtues (faith and love): "We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers, as is right, because your *faith* is growing abundantly, and the *love* of every one of you for one another is increasing." Their faith was growing, and their love was increasing. These virtues can grow from the study of and the application of the Bible's teachings—especially during times of testing and persecution. Love for others and the church can increase as believers pray for one another and look for opportunities to serve one another—especially in troubled times. Not everyone has faith, but the Lord is faithful; so,

Christians can trust in Jesus Christ to answer their prayers, establish (or strengthen) their faith in God even during persecution, and guard them against spiritual defeat by the evil one (whether a person or a devil).

Because the Lord Jesus guards Christians, in Romans 8:38-39, Paul wrote, “For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

**(2 Thessalonians 3:4) And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, that you are doing and will go on doing the things that we command.**

Think of how wonderful it would be if all our churches were so Biblical that if Paul and the other apostles were here, they could boast of us among other churches. What if they could say of us, “We have confidence that you have drawn so close to the Lord Jesus that you will do all that He has commanded in the Bible.” Think of what your church would be like if it were so biblical both inwardly and outwardly that the devil and the world took enough notice to persecute and afflict you, so that your steadfast faith could be applauded by the Lord Jesus or His apostles. In such a case, we would want to pray continually and fervently, strengthen our faith and increase our love, and put on the full armor of God (see Ephesians 6:10-20).

**(2 Thessalonians 3:5) May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ.**

Now Paul prays for the Church in Thessalonica that every Christian would be directed by the Lord Jesus to love God and trust in the steadfastness of Christ. God's righteous judgment is made manifest in this present life and in the future. If we are suffering for the kingdom of God, then that suffering for our faith in Jesus should make us more worthy of the kingdom of God as we respond to that suffering according to the Bible's teachings. Persecution and suffering at the hands of unbelievers gives us the opportunity to maintain and strengthen our faith under pressure, and perhaps the opportunity to show forth the Spirit of Jesus Christ by our life if not also by our words while we are suffering.

**2 John 1:1-13**

**(2 John 1:1) The elder to the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth, and not only I but also all who know the truth,**

John was the apostle and teacher in the Church who wrote the Gospel of John, the Book of Revelation, and three letters in the Bible. The "elect lady" was a congregation or "the Church," which would have included "her children;" that is, many congregations such as those listed in the Book of Revelation. Her "children" would also include individual members of the Church, not simply other

church leaders. All who know the truth love the Church and God's children in the Church, just as John wrote that he did.

**(2 John 1:2) because of the truth that abides in us and will be with us forever:**

Jesus declared that He was the truth (John 14:6). Jesus and His truth abide in or remain in the children of God and the Church that confesses Jesus is the Christ and the Son of God (1 John 4:15; 1 John 5:1). Jesus did not promise to be forever with the person or church that refuses to believe in Him or turns from believing and loving the truth that Jesus is the Christ and the Son of God (see especially the Book of Revelation, chapters 1-3).

**(2 John 1:3) Grace, mercy, and peace will be with us from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Father's Son, in truth and love.**

John declared specifically and repeatedly that God the Father and the Father's Son, Jesus Christ, love us and have revealed the truth to us. God is love and Jesus demonstrated the love of God in truth as God's Son by all He did and said. The love of the Father and the Son for us motivates them to extend grace, mercy, and peace to us as Their children, and we are Their children if we believe the truth about the Father and the Son, which inspires us to love them—because they first loved us. Because of the grace of God, Christians receive mercy from God and forgiveness of their sins through the sacrificial death of

Jesus Christ, which gives them peace with God, peace within themselves, and peace with others insofar as the possibility of peace with others resides with them: this is the truth about how much God loves His children (us, as true believers). In God, truth and love come together and are expressed together. As examples for us, the Father and the Son always express truth in love, and never sacrifice the truth to be “loving.”

**(2 John 1:4) I was overjoyed to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as we have been commanded by the Father.**

One important word in this verse is “some.” John was overjoyed to find “some” of those in the Church “walking” or “living” in the truth and according to the truth as revealed in Jesus Christ and in the Bible (which John would help write). “Walking” is a way of life, and John rejoiced that some in the Church maintained a way of life according to the way of Jesus and lived as the Father commanded: God’s children were living in both truth and love (truth and love cannot be separated, for learning the truth about God and reality should lead to love, and those who love should speak and live in the truth of God and reality).

**(2 John 1:5) But now, dear lady, I ask you, not as though I were writing you a new commandment, but one we have had from the beginning, let us love one another.**

Because only “some” in the church were walking in the truth, John went on to emphasize a commandment that the church had from the beginning. John wrote the Church, the “dear lady,” to remind her leaders and members to love one another. Those who walked in the truth loved others in the Church just as the Father commanded them. Some were church members because at one time they had repented of their sins and professed faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God as far as the church could tell (they could not see into their hearts), but these members were not acting truthfully and with love toward others in the church, so John wanted the church to remind them to obey Jesus’ commands.

**(2 John 1:6) And this is love, that we walk according to his commandments; this is the commandment just as you have heard it from the beginning—you must walk in it.**

Love is obeying Jesus’ commandments. Love is a way of life, not just a way of feeling. Love as a way of life is a commandment of God no matter how we may feel. Love includes speaking the truth because we know and love the truth as revealed in Jesus Christ, who is THE Truth, and we can and should speak and teach the truth in love—in loving ways. Love includes how we treat others as a way of life (see 1 Corinthians 13). The fruit of the Spirit includes love for God and others, which promotes the well-being of others—a concern that they repent of their sins and follow



Jesus and His teachings, a concern that they grow in true faith, love, holiness, and happiness.

**(2 John 1:7) Many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh; any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist!**

What John saw as a problem of life and death concern in his day has continued throughout history and will remain a problem until Jesus Christ returns as John foretold in the Book of Revelation. Some refuse to confess that the Messiah has come. Some refuse to confess that Jesus is the Messiah and Jesus has come into the world and into the lives of God's children as the Bible describes. Those who refuse to believe the truth, especially the truth about Jesus, are antichrist (against Christ), and they are truly unloving people (no matter how they might appear to us) who try to deceive others—they love themselves supremely. They are deceivers who will try to lead the children of God and those who walk in love and light into hatred and darkness, into disbelief in the truth of God in Christ and into hatred for God and the children of God (which can be very subtle). John knew, just as the Church has known for centuries, that some will come into the Church and appear to be sincere Christians, and then they will go out into the world (morally and spiritually leave the church, if not physically leave the Church) and try to deceive others inside and outside the Church by leading people away

from trust in and obedience to the Word of God in the flesh (Jesus) and the Word of God written (the Bible).

**(2 John 1:8) Be on your guard, so that you do not lose what we have worked for, but may receive a full reward.**

Members of the Church who had worked hard to learn, understand, rightly apply, and obey the truth as embodied in and revealed by Jesus Christ in love could be deceived by those who were against Christ and what the Bible taught about Christ. John warned everyone in the Church to be on guard so this would not happen to them. A full reward would include our receiving fully and knowingly the loving presence of God in Christ and not needing the discipline of God to lead us back into a walk of truth in love. We can work hard to learn and rightly apply the Scriptures victoriously in this life, and we do not want to fall back and lose the progress we have made in following Christ with the Holy Spirit's help.

**(2 John 1:9) Everyone who does not abide in the teaching of Christ, but goes beyond it, does not have God; whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.**

The teaching of Christ is revealed clearly throughout the New Testament and the commands of Christ are completely consistent with the truth of God and the reality of existence as created by God. A person can “go beyond” or “go on ahead” of Christ's teachings by restricting the

right application of the Bible or by extending the application of the Bible into wrong areas that Christ never intended: to intentionally and knowingly do either can be a sign that a person does not have God. Some in the church may do this out of ignorance instead of rebellion against God, and the Christian's responsibility is to help them understand the truth of the Bible so they can once again truly walk in faith and love. The truth demands that a true child of God abide or remain true to the teachings of Christ and the Bible. If we remain true to the Bible, we have both the Father and the Son abiding in us and they will help us walk in their way of love and truth.

**(2 John 1:10) Do not receive into the house or welcome anyone who comes to you and does not bring this teaching;**

As a Church leader, the Holy Spirit inspired John to explicitly state how serious it is and can be when any child of God or Christian congregation admits into their lives someone who brings teaching that is contrary to or contradicts the teachings of Jesus Christ and the Bible. To welcome them can lead to listening to them and to being misled by them which can lead to multitudes being misled away from truth and love for generations. Churches can decline morally and spiritually over many generations as they regress and lose the love and the truth of Christ and the Scriptures: John's Book of Revelation warns about this possibility. Whereas adults and mature Christians might be wise enough not to be misled by someone who is

teaching contrary to the Bible in the Church, their children can be more easily misled (unknown to them), until they fall away from following Christ and into moral decline and spiritual apostasy.

**(2 John 1:11) for to welcome is to participate in the evil deeds of such a person.**

It is an evil deed to deceive another. It is an evil deed to deceive another about the true teachings of Jesus Christ and the Bible. When the child of God continues to love and obey God and the commandments of God in the Bible; when they pray for the Holy Spirit to help them discern the truth and walk in love, they are less likely to be deceived but not totally protected from ever being deceived. To even welcome a deceiver into a person's church, home, or life is to participate in the deceiver's evil efforts to deceive, and evil will be done.

**(2 John 1:12) Although I have much to write to you, I would rather not use paper and ink; instead I hope to come to you and talk with you face to face, so that our joy may be complete.**

John had much more to say about how a child of God can protect themselves from deceivers and being deceived. Every detail about how to remain mentally and spiritually united to Jesus Christ and the truth of Christ and the Bible needed to be discussed: questions asked could be explained and answered and John hoped to visit the church that he wrote to and other congregations to have

this joyful fellowship time of teaching. He also intended for his letter to be read to other congregations (her children).

**(2 John 1:13) The children of your elect sister send you their greetings.**

John participated fully in the life of the congregation where he lived and taught. The children of God in the Church in his congregation sent their greetings along with his to the church and other congregations that would read his letter. This letter obviously meant a great deal to the Church, and it may have been copied and circulated among many churches, because God providentially protected it so it could be saved in the Bible and read by us.

**Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further**

1. Reread 2 Thessalonians 3:1, how might the church and world be different if every Christian's first prayer request each day was the same as Paul's?
2. Reread 2 Thessalonians 3:5, what did Paul pray for the Thessalonians? How might that prayer be answered in your life?
3. How are Christians supposed to live (walk) and why should they live (walk) that way?

4. According to John, what are some characteristics of a deceiver?
5. What are some of the things people are doing when they welcome a deceiver into their home or church?

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