

Bible Study: 2 Thes

Author: Paul with Silas and Timothy

Audience: the church of the Thessalonians

Date: early 50s A.D.

Location: Corinth

Theme: remain steadfast until the day of the Lord

Genre: exposition/epistle

Outline

Salutation (1:1-2)

Thanksgiving for growth (1:3-4)

Encouragement to persevere (1:5-10)

Prayer for success (1:11-12)

Observation

1:1 Paul includes Silvanus and Timothy; not self focused. Uses “we” 14 X, not “me” or “mine”

1:2 Paul put Jesus on an equal footing with the Father; this was new and radical

1:3 Paul thanked God for the spiritual growth of His church

1:4 Paul boasted about the Thessalonians to other churches

1:5 “Worthy of the kingdom” Saved by grace, but rewarded in the kingdom for good deeds

1:5 Christian perseverance verses outside persecution = God is righteous to condemn them

1:6 Persecutors will have no excuse; their persecution = rejecting God

1:7 “to give relief to you who are afflicted” God provides escape (1 Cor 10:13)

1:7 “when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven” (Rev 19:1-4, 11-20)

1:8 “do not know (*oida*) God” can mean honor, acknowledge the status of a person (1Th 5:12)

1:9 “away from the presence of the Lord” = out of his sight, not seen again

1:10 Christ will be “glorified in” (not *by*) His saints; His glory will be mirrored in them

1:11 “we pray for you always” = Paul prayed for their spiritual blessing, success

Interpretation

Who was Silas (1:1)?

Silas (Latin Silvanus), a leader in the early church and an associate of Paul. Silas was a prophet in the Jerusalem church and was sent with Paul and Barnabas to take the apostolic decrees from the Jerusalem conference to Antioch (Acts 15:22-35). When Paul and Barnabas quarreled over Mark (Acts 15:36-41), Paul chose Silas to accompany him on a mission tour in Asia Minor and ultimately into Macedonia and Achaia (Acts 15:41-18:5). He was an important figure in the churches in Macedonia and may have been regarded as an apostle (1 Thess. 2:6). His Roman citizenship is reported in Acts 16:37-38.

What is the background of the church of Thessalonica (1:1)?

THESSALONICA Chief city of Macedonia and the seat of Roman administration in the century before Christ. In addition to having a magnificent harbor, Thessalonica had the good fortune of being located on the overland route from Italy to the East. According to Strabo, a famous Greek geographer, Thessalonica was founded in 315 B.C. by the Macedonian general Cassander, who named it after his wife. When Macedonia was divided into four districts (167 B.C.), Thessalonica was made the capital of the second division. Paul preached in the chief synagogue of the Jews in

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that part of Macedonia on his second missionary journey and founded a church (Acts 17:1–4). The Jews drove him from the city, and he fled to Berea (Acts 17:5–10).

Why doesn't Paul mention the Holy Spirit in his salutation (1:1-2)?

- The omission of the Holy Spirit proves nothing; for example, Paul did not mention the Father in his conclusion (2 Thes 3:18), but that does not mean that he denied the deity of the Father
- Paul offered a greeting from the Father and Jesus who are in heaven, but there was no reason to offer a greeting from the Holy Spirit since He is always with Christians (John 14:16)
- Scripture is inspired by the Spirit, and He glorifies Christ, not Himself (John 16:14)

How can God condemn those who do not know Him or obey the gospel (1:8)?

- Acts 17:30-31 God “is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent”
- Rev 11:3-7 The two witnesses will warn the whole world before Jesus returns
- Rev 14:6-9 Three angels will also warn the whole world before Jesus returns

Does 2 Thes 1:9 teach eternal, conscious damnation?

The Bible Knowledge Commentary (2:716) says, “The punishment of the wicked will be neither temporary nor will it be annihilation, but it will continue throughout eternity and those being punished will be conscious.”

However, in 1988, John Stott declared publically for the first time his view of hell; while firmly rejecting universalism, he holds to the view that the ‘eternal punishment’ faced by the lost is not unending suffering but total annihilation. This caused many others to express similar views and provoked an extended debate. As a result, the ‘annihilationist’ view is generally regarded as an acceptable option for Evangelicals (Concise History of Christian Thought, Tony Lane, p. 262).

Application

1. An example to follow: we should thank God for the spiritual growth of others (1:3)
2. An example to follow: we should praise the good example of others (1:4)
3. An example to follow: we should pray for the spiritual success of the saints (1:11-12)

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Events preceding the Day of the Lord (2:1-12)

The comfort of the believer (2:13-17)

Observation

2:1 “Now we ask you, brethren” (Greek *adelphos*, brothers) = kindness, affection

2:1 “our gathering together to Him” = to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thes 4:16-17)

2:2 A command: maintain your composure regarding the Day of the Lord

2:2 “a letter as if from us” = Paul signed this letter to show it was genuine (3:17)

2:3 Specific sign #1: the apostasy (1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 Tim. 3:1-5; 4:3-4; 2 Peter 3:3-6)

2:4 Specific sign #2: the man of lawlessness, son of destruction (Dan 9:24-27, 11:35-45)

2:4 He “exalts himself above every so-called god” i.e., the beast (Rev 13:1-8)

2:5 Paul knew about many end time events in the 50s A.D. (e.g., 1 Thes 4:16-17)

2:7 “the mystery of lawlessness is already at work” = 1 Jn 2:18-19 (many antichrists)

2:8 “whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth” (Rev 19:19-21)

2:9 “whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan” (Rev 13:11-14)

2:10 “they did not receive the love of the truth” = no repentance (Rom 1:18-21)

2:11 “God will send upon them a deluding influence” = judicial hardening (Pharaoh)

2:12 Why? They “took pleasure in wickedness” = warning for us

2:13 A command: “we should always give thanks to God for you” = grateful for each other

2:13 God chose us “from the beginning” = before the foundation of the world (Eph 1:4)

2:14 “that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ” = in the resurrection

2:15 A command: “stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught”

2:16 “Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father” = Paul prayed to both

2:17 A prayer: Paul prayed that God would “comfort and strengthen your hearts”

Interpretation

What is “the apostasy” (2:3)?

This is a revolt, a departure, an abandoning of a position once held. This rebellion, which will take place within the professing church, will be a departure from the truth that God has revealed in His Word. True, apostasy has characterized the church almost from its inception, but Paul referred to a specific distinguishable apostasy that will come in the future... Some scholars believe that this apostasy (called “the” apostasy) will consist of people turning from God’s truth to worship the Antichrist, who will set himself up in God’s temple and claim to be God (v 4). If this is so, then the judgments of the day of the Lord will occur in the second half of the seven-year period preceding Christ’s second coming (Bible Knowledge Commentary, 2:718).

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Application

1. A command to obey: maintain composure regarding the Day of the Lord (2:2)
2. An error to avoid: thinking the Day of the Lord has come before the signs (2:3)
3. A command to obey: we should always give thanks to God for each other (2:13)
4. A command to obey: hold to the traditions which you were taught (2:15)
5. A prayer to repeat: that God would “comfort and strengthen” our hearts (2:16)

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Exhortations for Future Growth (3:1-5)

Discipline of the disobedient (3:6-15)

Conclusion (3:16-18)

Observation

3:1 “pray for us” = God must grant repentance for preaching to succeed (2Tim 2:24-26)

3:2 “that we will be rescued” = Paul was in constant danger (e.g., Philippi, Thessalonica)

3:3 A promise: “He will strengthen and protect you” (cf. 2 Pet 1:2-4, Isa 40:31, Ps 5:12)

3:4 Paul was confident that the Lord would work in them (Php 2:13)

3:5 An example to follow: Paul prayed for their love and steadfastness

3:6 Leadership principle: first warn, then punish; they had ignored him (1 Thes. 5:14)

3:6 Church discipline: shun a lazy brother; Greek *ataktos*, refusing to work (cf. 2Th 3:11)

3:7 Leadership principle: first set the example, then teach others (credibility)

3:8 Paul was working hard day & night while others were loafing, mooching

3:9 “not because we do not have the right” = pastoral support (1 Cor 9:14, Gal 6:6)

3:10 Not those who **could not** but those who **would not** work (Deut 14:28-29, 24:19-22)

3:11 “we hear” = continually hear; idle (*ataktos*) = not working; also busybodies

3:12 “we command and exhort” = Paul was not heavy handed but not timid either

3:13 “do not grow weary of doing good” = don’t let the others drag you down

3:14 Church discipline: avoid the disobedient to instill shame (cf. Matt 18:15-17)

3:15 admonish (*noutheteo*) = warn, advise of the consequences of a wrong action

3:16 the Lord of peace “grant you peace” (cf. John 14:27, 16:33)

3:17 Paul used a secretary, had vision problems (cf. Rom 16:22, Gal 6:11)

3:18 standard benediction

Application

A prayer to pray: that the gospel will spread rapidly and be glorified (3:1)

A prayer to pray: that we will be rescued from perverse and evil men (3:2)

A promise to claim: God will strengthen and protect us from the evil *one* (3:3)

An example to follow: Paul prayed for their love and steadfastness (3:5)