

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

NOVEMBER 21ST, 2021 // BOOK OF 2 THESSALONIANS

INTRODUCTION (2 THESSALONIANS) THE CITY

Thessalonica is a large port city on the Aegean Sea, originally built by Cassander, a General under Alexander the Great, in 315 B.C..

- It became a booming commercial city at the center of all trade routes leading north as well as the main east-west trade route.

Being at the center of all trade routes from the sea, the city grew to a population of 200,000.

- The ethnic and cultural diversity also brought a belief in Greek and Roman gods, pagan worship of idols, emperor worship, and devout loyalty to Caesar.

THE AUTHOR

Paul (Saul) was born in Tarsus (modern Turkey). He was a Roman citizen of Jewish decent.

- He was a highly educated Pharisee (religious leader) who persecuted Christians all the way up until his own conversion on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-21).

Paul goes on to lead three missionary journeys where he would plant churches and minister to the Gentiles.

- He would go on to write 13 letters to these churches and leaders, which make up almost half of the books contained in the NT, before being executed in Rome by Nero.

THE BIRTH OF A CHURCH

On Paul's second missionary journey, he and Silas lead a group into Thessalonica around 50 A.D..

- Preaching in the local synagogue, Paul converted many Gentiles and Jews (Acts 17:2-4). However, some Jews became jealous and caused a disturbance (Acts 17:5), accusing Paul of treason (Acts 17:7).

Before Paul could be arrested, they were sent away during the night (Acts 17:10). However, in the short time that Paul was there, he was able to establish a church.

- This young church not only started in the height of persecution, but grew despite it, all while being in a decaying culture with countless idols and false gods.

PREVIOUS LETTER

Since Paul had to leave this young church so quickly, he sent Timothy to encourage them, then report back to him how they had endured the persecution.

- Timothy returned to Corinth with a positive report about the church. Paul then writes them a letter, praising them for their faith while living righteously in a godless culture.

THIS LETTER

Shortly after Paul wrote the first letter to the Thessalonians, he wrote a second letter to further encourage these believers to stand firm in the truth despite persecution.

- The bulk of this short letter was written to assure this young church that the "day of the Lord" had not come since certain events had not taken place.

GREETINGS (2 THESSALONIANS 1:1-2)

PAUL GREETES THE THESSALONIAN CHRISTIANS

Paul's letter to the church starts by mentioning two others that they would have been familiar with.

- They would have known Silvanus (also known as Silas) from Paul's initial arrival in Thessalonica, and they would have known Timothy from him coming on behalf of Paul to encourage them.

WHO IS SILVANUS (SILAS)?

Silas was an early church leader who traveled with Paul on his second missionary journey.

- He is first seen as a leader and teacher in Jerusalem (Acts 15:22) and was invited to travel with Paul. While in Philippi with Paul, they were beaten and imprisoned, where the jailer, "having witnessed their faith," was saved and his family baptized (Acts 16:25-31).

WHO IS TIMOTHY?

Timothy was a resident of Lystra (city in the province of Galatia), where at a young age he was taught the scriptures by his mother and grandmother.

- Timothy was considered Paul's "true son in the faith (1 Timothy 1:2)." He accompanied Paul on his later missionary journeys and is mentioned in several of his letters.

GREETINGS

Paul uses his standard greeting, "grace and peace to you," when writing his letters. His greeting is loaded with truths that everything we have is a gift from God himself.

- Grace is the unmerited favor of God which we are so dependent on. Peace is another gift we experience in daily fellowship with God and eternally.

EVIDENT (2 THESSALONIANS 1:3-7A)

THANKFULNESS

Paul felt obligated to thank God for the work He had done in the Thessalonian Christians. He mentioned three things that he was thankful for and boasted about them to other churches.

- They had grown in faith, were abounding in love, and showed perseverance and faith in persecution and affliction.

"CLEAR EVIDENCE OF GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS"

Paul is saying that God's righteous judgement was at work among them to purify them ("counted worthy of God's kingdom") as followers of Jesus.

- This judgement begins with the house of God (1 Peter 4:17) where God displays His goodness, even allowing us to suffer persecutions and tribulations.

PURIFYING FIRE

We allow suffering to call God's goodness and righteousness into question. Paul insisted the opposite, that suffering was evidence of God's righteousness.

- The fires of persecution and tribulation are like the purification process where gold is placed in extreme heat to separating the impurities leaving a pure, precious metal.

NO REST FOR THE WICKED

Paul then encourages the Thessalonians that God will repay those who afflicted them and give rest to those who had been afflicted.

- God uses our afflictions for His good and Glory, but those who caused the afflictions will be repaid for their evil. God promises that affliction would not last and a day of relief is coming.

JUDGEMENT & GLORY (2 THESSALONIANS 1:7B-12)

COMING DAY OF JUDGMENT

For "those who do not know God" and "those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus," this day will be of fiery vengeance and everlasting destruction.

- In Matthew 7:21-23, Jesus makes it clear that only those who do the will of the Father will enter the kingdom of Heaven.

COMING DAY OF GLORY

In contrast, those who have believed will give glory to God and marvel at Jesus' return.

- "Our citizenship is in heaven, and we eagerly wait for a savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Philippians 3:20). "...we wait for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior" (Titus 2:13).

Paul is essentially saying that the penalty of "everlasting destruction" was replaced with glorification and admiration of Christ because "[their] testimony among [them] was believed."

- (Ephesians 2:8-9) "For you are saved by grace through faith" (Romans 10:17) "So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the message about Christ"

A HIGH CALLING

Paul's prayer for the Thessalonians is that they would live worthy of His call.

- We live worthy of His call when we live lives touched by His goodness and display His goodness, when we do a good work produced by faith, when the name of Jesus is glorified in us, and when He alone is where we find our identity.

TAKING AN INVENTORY

- **Do we resist the purifying fire of affliction?** God is not mad at you, and He is not punishing you; He is refining you!
- **Do we know that a day will come where the wheat will be separated from the tares (Matthew 13)?**
- **God desires a relationship with you!**
- **Will the "day of the Lord" be a day of judgement or of glory?**
- **If judgement, what is standing in the way of you making them the decision to change the outcome of that day?**
- **If glory, then we need to evaluate if we are living a life worthy of the call.**