

Lesson 2 – 1-2 Thessalonians

Text: Acts 17:1-10; 1-2 Thessalonians

Key Passages:

- 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 – Paul wrote about the events that would take place when Christ returns.
- 2 Thessalonians 1:3-10 – Persevere through persecution; God will mete out justice to all eventually.

Background Information:

On Paul's second missionary journey, he and Silas visited the city of Thessalonica and preached there at the synagogue of the Jews for a few weeks (Acts 17:1-10). Some of the Jews and Gentiles were converted when they heard about Christ, but the Jews who were not persuaded became envious. They caused a riot and dragged some of the brethren in front of the rulers of the city, claiming that they were acting against Caesar and saying that there was another king, Jesus. This troubled the people of the city as well as the rulers. The brethren were eventually let go, but it appears that the persecution continued even after Paul and Silas left.

It seems that Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians when he was at Corinth with Silas and Timothy (still on the second missionary journey, Acts 18, AD 51-52). Given the situation at Thessalonica, it is not surprising that a large part of 1 Thessalonians addresses the persecution (thanksgiving that the brethren had turned to God and encouragement to continue their spiritual growth). The epistle also gives information regarding Jesus' ultimate return to earth (the end of the world) and some practical encouragement.

Timothy likely delivered Paul's first epistle to the Thessalonians then returned to Paul in Corinth to report on how it had been received. Paul's second epistle to the Thessalonians appears to have been written very shortly (within weeks or months) of the first. Paul, once again, encouraged the Thessalonians to persevere through the persecutions and trials that they were facing. However, the letter seems to have been written to clarify misunderstandings (particularly regarding Christ's return) and rebut false teaching they had recently received, perhaps from a letter from an imposter posing as Paul (2 Thessalonians 2:2; 3:17). Paul encouraged the Thessalonians to continue to persevere in their faith, but to continue doing their normal work.

Outline:

- I. 1 Thessalonians
 - a. Purpose: to encourage and continue instructing brethren struggling with persecution
 - b. Paul's thanksgiving and encouragement to persevere (1:1-3:13)
 - i. Thanks to God that the Thessalonians abandoned idols and turned to God (1:1-10)
 - ii. Paul's trip was not in vain; imitate Paul and the church at Judea in their determination to persevere through persecution (2:1-16)
 - iii. Paul was concerned for the Thessalonians' faith and had sent Timothy; Timothy's good report gave Paul, Silas, and Timothy great joy (2:17-3:13)
 - c. Continue to grow in your faith more and more (4:1-12)
 - d. Do not worry about those who have died in the Lord; Christ's return (4:13-18)
 - e. The time of Jesus' return is unknown and will be unexpected (5:1-11)
 - f. Various practical exhortation (5:12-28)
- II. 2 Thessalonians
 - a. Purpose: to clarify various misunderstandings and rebut false teachings amongst the brethren
 - b. Encouragement to persevere through persecution (1:1-12)
 - i. Those who persecuted them would be punished eternally (1:6, 8-9)
 - ii. The brethren would be rewarded with rest from Christ (1:7)
 - c. The day of Christ was not coming immediately, counter to false teaching they had heard (2:1-12)
 - i. An apostasy (falling away) needed to come first, related to the "man of sin" (2:3-4)
 - ii. The "man of sin" will be destroyed with Jesus' coming (2:8)
 - d. Encouragement for the brethren to hold fast what they had been taught by Paul (2:13-17)
 - e. Request for prayer and various instructions to the brethren (3:1-18)