



***A Bible Study of 1st and 2nd Thessalonians
Paul Writes the Letters to:
The Church at Thessalonica***

Why write letters to the churches in which he (Paul) helped establish?

1. Communication: Effectively communicating a message via letter/mail was by far the easiest and fastest way to ask or answer questions, chastise, discipline, and suggest or direct the corrective action necessary, as well as encourage, without personally being on location.
2. Many times, as it is today, the recipients of the letters did not appreciate what was written although, in Paul's case, was not to destroy those criticized, but to bring to reconciliation and restoration to those churches and individuals being addressed.

We have to remember...The Epistles of Paul are letters that were written by Paul to:

1. ***Glorify God.***
2. ***Teach doctrine*** (Scripture related, the Assemblies of God's 16 Fundamental Truths/doctrines line up with Paul's),
Have we succumbed to the world's culture? Does our doctrine keep up with God's cultural requirements?
3. ***Educating and equipping the church,***
4. ***Encouraging the church toward unity and spreading the Gospel.***

The Driving Force that kept Paul testifying:

- His own super-natural journey on the Damascus Road,
- His passionate theology was the illumination of his own conversion.
- His genuine transformation was profound and proved how God can change one's life.

***I believe that Paul was the interpreter of Christ, saying what Christ Himself would have said under the circumstances.
Each recipient of his letters had their own needs, problems, and reasons for encouraging praise.
Paul's letters to them were tailor-made (Holy Spirit led), and his words remain true and valuable today.***



The City of Thessalonica and Its Church

The City:

- The capital of the Roman province of Macedonia and a major Mediterranean seaport.
- Thessalonica had a population of over 100,000 at the time of Paul's arrival.
- It had a natural harbor; located on key north-south trade routes and on the busy east-west Ignatian Way, the road that linked Italy to the eastern provinces.
- People were drawn from nearby villages to this great city, which was a bustling center of trade and philosophy.
- Thessalonica's natural resources included timber, grain, continental fruits, and gold and silver (although it is questionable if the gold and silver mines were operational in the first century AD).
- Thessalonica was also notably pro-Roman and self-governing, and it enjoyed the status of a free city.
- As its citizens were Roman citizens, it was exempt from paying tribute to Rome.

The Church:

- The Thessalonian Church was founded by Paul and his co-workers Timothy and Silas during the so-called Second Missionary Journey in AD 50.
- God worked mightily through the missionaries and many became Christians.

- While some Jews believed (Acts 17:4), the majority of the church was Gentile (1 Thess. 1:9–10).
- The Church did have some relatively wealthy members—such as Jason, Aristarchus, and a number of “the leading women” (Acts 17:4, 6–7; 20:4)—
- It seems that the church consisted largely of manual laborers (1 Thess. 4:11) and presumably some slaves.

Overview of 1 and 2 Thessalonians

Historical Background

History is just that...His story!

- God’s story expressed and lived through His Son provides a way for you and me into the presence of the King of Glory and the Father who is Most High and Lifted Up above all others (past, present, and future).
- Paul, in his letters to many churches in which he helped to establish and grow, effectively communicated God’s timeless message to His loved ones, His church of believers.

To help us understand the reason for sending the two (2) letters to the church at Thessalonica, one must understand the people who make up that community. People are usually comfortable in their own setting.

Thessalonians were no different. If the culture was to enjoy life to the fullest without restraint, most people follow suit. Unless there was a person of great influence who went against particular cultural restraints, or of an influencing person with authority, the church was in a “hold” state. “Hold” meaning...staying in the same rut or same pattern they have been used to. What most stagnant people or churches don’t understand is that when you “hold” to stagnated or corrupt living, instead of “holding” they start “folding” into the societal ills of that culture.

On his second missionary journey, Paul took his message to Thessalonica. For at least three Sabbath days Paul reasoned in the synagogue with those present, and many believed the gospel message.

Those who responded to the message of Christ’s sufferings and resurrection were:

1. Jews,
2. God-fearing Greeks,
3. Some prominent women of the city, and
4. Many idol-worshipping pagans.

This angered a group of unbelieving Jews who then stirred up a gang of roughnecks to attack Paul and his followers. Convinced of the danger for Paul, the Christians sent Paul and Silas away from the city by night to nearby Berea.

Purpose for the Letters

Timothy's report of conditions in the Thessalonian church led Paul to write the first letter shortly after he arrived in Corinth about A.D. 51.

Why?

- Some of the Thessalonians apparently believed that Jesus Christ was about to return momentarily and had consequently given up their jobs and had become disorderly.
- Some worried about what had happened to their loved ones who had died before the Lord had returned.
- Persecution from the Gentiles as well as the Jews still oppressed the believers who were nevertheless holding fast to the truth and eager to see Paul again. Some outside the church remained hostile to Paul.
- Some within the church had returned to their former habits involving sexual impurity.

Paul had at least three (3) purposes in mind when he wrote 1 Thessalonians.

1. He wanted to encourage the Christians in Thessalonica who were making good progress in their new faith.
2. He desired to correct misinformation about himself and his fellow missionaries that some of his critics in Thessalonica were circulating.
3. He wrote to give additional instruction that would contribute to the Thessalonians' spiritual growth.

To get down to the nitty-gritty of Spiritual politics, Paul really dwelt on the following as he wrote to the church at Thessalonica with his second letter (he was very blunt in some of his statements as he was responding to the news reported by Timothy and others):

Upon receiving back news (good and bad) about the Thessalonian church, Paul wrote the second letter perhaps within a few months of the first one.

Good News: The majority of the Thessalonians were continuing to grow and to remain faithful to Christ in spite of persecution.

Bad News: False teaching concerning the day of the Lord had entered the church and was causing confusion and leading some of the Christians to quit their jobs in expectation of the Lord's imminent return. Also, "When the cat's away, the rats will play." Undisciplined Christians yield to their fleshly desires.

Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians to:

1. **Commend his children in the faith for their growth and faithfulness,**
2. **Correct the doctrinal error about the day of the Lord, and**
3. **Warn the idle to get back to work.**

God loves to brag on his children...

God can't stand a person who drags others to ruin

God will not tolerate a nagger and lagger.

Lagger - someone who lags behind. dawdler, laggard, do-nothing, idler, layabout, loafer, bum - person who does no work; "a lazy bum"

"For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat." 2 Thessalonians 3:10.

Laziness, lack of discipline in the church, unrest and idle chatter (slanderers) were making their way into the church.

Praise God for those who trust in the Lord and yield to the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. Lamentations 3:22-23, (ESV)

