

INTRODUCTION TO 2 THESSALONIANS (2 Thessalonians 1:1-2)

I. The author.

- A. Paul identifies himself as the human author of the book.
 - 1. He also does so in 3:17.
 - 2. Along with him are Silvanus and Timothy.
 - 3. It is likely one of these two served as his stenographer as he dictated the Holy Spirit inspired message.
- B. Silvanus was also known as Silas.
 - 1. It was with Silas that Paul established the church in Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-4).
 - 2. Silas was also mentioned in the first letter as being with Paul.
- C. Timothy had been sent by Paul to Thessalonica to check on them (1 Thessalonians 3:5-6).
 - 1. We all know the tremendous amount of feeling that existed in Paul for Timothy.
 - 2. He was important and valuable to Paul and Paul loved Timothy so much that he called him his son in the faith (1 Timothy 1:2).
- D. More than likely, Paul wrote this letter from Corinth during his eighteen month stay there..
 - 1. When Paul had to suddenly leave Thessalonica, he went to Athens.
 - 2. After leaving Athens, Paul went to Corinth where he stayed for about eighteen months.
 - 3. If, as most believe, Paul wrote the first letter at the beginning of his stay in Corinth, it would have been easy for him to write this second letter while there as well.
- E. This very possibly was the second letter Paul ever wrote by inspiration.
 - 1. The work in Thessalonica was one that ended quickly.
 - 2. Paul was concerned about their strength in the faith so he soon wrote to them after he left.
 - 3. Because of their misunderstanding some of his previous letter and their ongoing persecution he wrote to them again soon after the first.
 - 4. These two letters are the first ones written by Paul according to most commentators.

II. The addressees.

- A. Paul addressed this letter to those in Thessalonica who were in God and Jesus Christ.

1. When one is in God and Jesus then one is necessarily in the church as well.
 2. The reason for this is that God the Father devised the plan of the church and Jesus the Son purchased and established the church with His blood.
 3. When one is in the church He is in the Father and the Son, and when one is in the Father and the Son he is in the church.
- B. The city of Thessalonica was located in Greece, specifically Macedonia, and it was the capital of this province.
1. It was located on a main road from Rome to her eastern provinces, thus it was a city that received many travelers.
 2. Being on that road, it was also a center for trade and commerce.
 3. There was much idol worship there as well as a large Jewish presence due to the trade and commerce.
- C. As we noticed in our series in the first letter, the church was being persecuted for their stand for Christ.
1. Paul was concerned about them and wanted them to continue growing.
 2. Timothy had brought back word to Paul that they were doing just that and it was a great relief to Paul.

III. The aim of the epistle.

- A. The aim of the epistle is found in what we might call the thesis statement of the epistle - 2:16-17.
1. Paul wanted them to have comfort of mind and to be established in the gospel and in their efforts for Christ.
 2. The comfort was necessary because of the persecution they faced and the false teachers they faced.
 3. The establishing was necessary to be pleasing to God who had given them the grace needed for these things.
- B. Paul needed to write to them with this aim for at least three reasons:
1. The first reason is they needed encouragement to face the persecution that was upon them.
 - a. This is found in chapter one.
 - b. Paul wanted them to know that God saw the way they were being treated.
 - c. The ones that were treating them harshly were not going to go unpunished.
 - d. If nothing on earth happened, then most definitely there would be punishment at the return of Jesus.
 2. The second reason is that there was a misunderstanding about the statements Paul had made in the first letter about the return of Jesus.

- a. Apparently, some in the congregation felt that Paul was saying the return of Jesus was imminent.
 - b. It may have been that false teachers were saying this about the words of Paul (2:2).
 - c. Paul had to let them know that certain things must take place before the return of Jesus, which he did in chapter two.
3. The third reason is that some were not working, but being lazy and idle.
- a. Some commentators felt this was because they were waiting the return of Jesus that they thought was imminent.
 - b. McGarvey, in his commentary, wrote that the idleness was in Thessalonica long before Paul wrote the epistle.
 - (1) He based this on the Greek belief that work was for slaves.
 - (2) The command to look out for brethren may have opened up some of the wealthier members to be preyed upon by those who were lazy.
 - c. McGarvey also pointed out that there was already idleness in the congregation (1 Thessalonians 4:11-12).
 - d. Whichever reason is correct, Paul knew that the idleness must be dealt with by him for the sake of their souls and he does this in chapter three.