

ELIM ABERYSTWYTH, 2024

STAND FIRM

Learning from the Letters to the
Church of the Thessalonians

2 Thessalonians 1





MACEDONIA

PHILIPPI

TH

THESSALONICA

BEREA

ATHENS

CORINTH

AEGEAN SEA

CRETE

**PAUL KNEW AND LOVED
THIS GROUP OF NEW
BELIEVERS PERSONALLY**

**HE WROTE TO ENCOURAGE
AND CHALLENGE THEM TO:**

- © **STAND FIRM IN THE FACE
OF PERSECUTION,
CULTURAL ANTAGONISM
AND RELIGIOUS
JEALOUSY**
- © **CONTINUE SEEKING TO
LIVE WHOLLY HOLY LIVES**
- © **HOLD ON TO THE HOPE
OF CHRIST'S RETURN
AND FUTURE KINGDOM**

**THE REALITY OF THESE ARE
AS TRUE FOR US TODAY AS
THEY WERE IN THE FIRST
CENTURY ANO DOMINI**

Previously...

- **1 Thess 1**

- Paul affirmed them, celebrating their turning to the one true God by the work of the Spirit
- Celebrated how their hospitality, their work (faith), patience (hope) and toil (love) had had a resounding impact
- Reminded them of the future hope in Jesus

- **1 Thess 2**

- Living and ministering to please God, not people
- Encouragement in suffering for and with Christ in the truth
- Looking to the eternal treasure of people won for Christ

Previously...

- **1 Thess 3**

- **Ensure we have the right foundations**
- **Suffering for Christ is to turn our hearts to, not from God**
- **Pursuing what God wants us to do is always for our best**

- **1 Thess 4**

- **Living to please God, not people**
- **Continue to love one another as a sign to others**
- **Our future hope - we will be with the Lord forever!**

- **1 Thess 5**

- **Christ will return like a thief in the night, but we already live in the light**
- **Respect your leaders, love one another, work hard, rejoice, pray and give thanks**
- **Dont quench the Spirit**
- **"The one who calls you is faithful and He will do it"**

Context

- 1 Thessalonians was written to affirm and encourage the young church, strengthen their foundations and urge holy living and to encourage them in enduring persecution in the faithful hope of the return of Jesus
- Paul was delighted to celebrate their progress as evidence for the gospel

Context

- Most scholars believe it was also written from Corinth within a few years of the first letter
- Authorship is questioned by some but the similar themes suggest it is a direct follow on from Paul
- 2 Thessalonians was written in response to some specific concerns...

"Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians (1) to reassure those terrified that the day of the Lord had already come; (2) to strengthen the Thessalonians in the face of continuing persecution; and (3) to deal with the problem of some of the church members refusing to earn their own living."

**[WWW.BIBLES.NET/BOOK-BACKGROUND/
BACKGROUND-OF-2-THESSALONIANS/](http://WWW.BIBLES.NET/BOOK-BACKGROUND/BACKGROUND-OF-2-THESSALONIANS/)**

**Paul, Silas and
Timothy, To the
church of the
Thessalonians in
God our Father
and the Lord
Jesus Christ:
2 Grace and
peace to you
from God the
Father and the
Lord Jesus Christ.**

2 THESSALONIANS 1

Team Paul!

- Paul, Silas and Timothy... and maybe a scribe and potentially others!
- These aren't actually just Epistles of the Apostle... it is a team effort
- Be rooted in the identity of God the Father and of Jesus Christ as Lord - the Messiah who was, and is, and is to come

3 We ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love all of you have for one another is increasing. 4 Therefore, among God's churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring.

Boasting in Him

- What better to be thankful for than evidence of the fruit of the gospel at work in someone's life?!
- This is not about boasting in anything other than Jesus (Gal 6:14) - the boast is Jesus
- The connotation of the word boast here is about holding one's head high - confidence, not arrogance

The Tough Get Growing!

- Perseverance and faith are the fruit and the evidence of the gospel at work
- Not only are they surviving, they are growing in faith and in love for one another
- The difficulties we may face can increase our faith and our ability to love

**WILL OUR FAITH
STAND THE
STRAIN OF TRIAL,
TEMPTATION AND
TRIBULATION?**

**WILL WE STAND
STRONG LIKE THE
FLEDGELING
THESSALONIAN
CHURCH STOOD
FIRM?**

**5 All this is evidence
that God's
judgment is right,
and as a result you
will be counted
worthy of the
kingdom of God,
for which you are
suffering. 6 God is
just: He will pay
back trouble to
those who trouble
you**

7 and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. 8 He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

**9 They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might
10 on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marvelled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you.**

To be with God or not to be with God, that is the real question!

- The ultimate punishment is to be shut out from the presence of God - from all that is good**
- We may not understand fully what hell is or isn't, but it is certainly the absence of God**
- As we see glimpses of goodness and glory (heaven on earth), so we see evidence of anguish and evil (hell on earth)**

Hope of Heaven

- For many in the world the experience of living is like hell on earth - the level of abuse and suffering humankind can cause each other is beyond comprehension
- We can be those who bring or facilitate relief
- For many the hope of relief from suffering that eternity offers is very real

**HAVE WE BECOME
SO COMFORTABLE
IN OUR
RELATIVELY FREE
AND JUST
SOCIETIES THAT
WE FAIL TO
RECOGNISE THE
NECESSARY AND
RIGHTEOUS
CONSEQUENCES
OF SIN AND
INJUSTICE?**

Just His Heart

- The need for justice is also very real
- God is not motivated by revenge, but by justice - if we have His heart we will seek justice too
- Even in our own life experience we can't imagine letting injustice go unpunished

"... the desire to see justice done is quite different from the desire to hurt someone because one has been hurt oneself. There is a deep sense the world needs to be brought back into balance....

Wrongs must be righted. Evil cannot forever triumph and mock what is good"

TOM WRIGHT, PAUL FOR EVERYONE: GALATIANS AND THESSALONIANS

Judge Dread?

- We must not become complacent in the light of coming judgement even though we can be confident in our faith
- We have a duty to warn the world that Jesus will return from heaven in blazing fire
- Judgement forms lays a foundation for mercy and perfect love drives out fear

**THE
ONGOING
WORK OF
GOD IN OUR
LIVES IS
JOURNEY OF
GROWING IN
GOODNESS
AND FAITH**

11 With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may bring to fruition your every desire for goodness and your every deed prompted by faith. 12 We pray this so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ

Worthy of His Name

- Let us pray for ourselves and for those we know that God will make us worthy of His calling
- ... That Jesus may be glorified in us and we may be glorified in Him
- This whole story is for His glory

"In that bright and blessed day, Christ Jesus will be glorified and admired by his saints. And Christ will be glorified and admired in them. His grace and power will be shown, when it shall appear what he has purchased for, and wrought in, and bestowed upon those who believe in him. Lord, if the glory put upon thy saints shall be thus admired, how much more shalt thou be admired, as the Bestower of that glory! The glory of thy justice in the damnation of the wicked will be admired, but not as the glory of thy mercy in the salvation of believers. How will this strike the adoring angels with holy admiration, and transport thy admiring saints with eternal rapture!"

HE IS IN US

WE ARE IN HIM

LET'S SHARE THE LORD'S TABLE TOGETHER