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2 Thessalonians

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2 Thessalonians

A. Overview and Summary. It is believed Paul wrote this epistle shortly after he wrote 1st Thessalonians in 51 AD or early 52 AD. Please see the synopsis of that book for information about the city of Thessalonica. Paul must have been in contact with the church through messengers or disciples who traveled through the area and he received information about their condition. The book has a strong focus on end times. Apparently, there were some in Thessalonica who spread false teaching about the Lord's return. Paul wrote this to address that false teaching. The church was also experiencing persecution, so Paul also wrote to encourage the believers.

B. Chapter One.

1. Paul first praises them for their faith in persecution: "We must always thank God for you, brothers. This is right, since your faith is flourishing and the love each one of you has for one another is increasing. Therefore, we ourselves boast about you among God's churches—about your endurance and faith in all the persecutions and afflictions you endure" (1:3-4).
2. He then encourages them that their persecution will result in worthiness for the Kingdom of God: "It is a clear evidence of God's righteous judgment that you will be counted worthy of God's kingdom, for which you also are suffering, since it is righteous for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you and to reward you who are afflicted, along with us. This will take place at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with His powerful angels" (1:6-7).
3. He continues with the fact that those who are afflicting them, who don't know God and do not obey the gospel, will be judged by God with flaming fire. This will take place when the Lord returns with His powerful angels (1:7-8).
4. He closes the chapter with: "And in view of this, we always pray for you that our God will consider you worthy of His calling, and will, by His power, fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith, so the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified by you, and you by Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ" (1:11-12).

C. Chapter Two.

1. Paul then gives a word of clarification about the Lord's return and the man of sin who we commonly called the "Antichrist", here Paul calls him the man of

lawlessness: “Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to Him: We ask you, brothers, not to be easily upset in mind or troubled, either by a spirit or by a message or by a letter as if from us, alleging that the Day of the Lord has come. Don’t let anyone deceive you in any way. For that day will not come unless the apostasy comes first and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction. He opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he sits in God’s sanctuary, publicizing that he himself is God” (2:1-4). Many believe this man will be revealed before the rapture and will sit in God’s newly constructed temple in Jerusalem. Others point to the doctrine of the eminency and say that if the man of sin appears, believers will know exactly the return of Christ. Because of the Thessalonians undergoing persecution, it seemed as though the end times persecution was happening. Paul gave this word to refute that.

2. The Greek word translated as “apostacy” in 2:3 is “apostasia,” which means a turning away from a former position or abandonment of loyalties. In this usage, it is the denial of the truth of the gospel. That is happening more and more in our age, as former mainstream solid denominations are rejecting the validity of Scripture.
3. Paul then talks about the one who restrains the man of sin: “Don’t you remember that when I was still with you, I told you about this? And you know what currently restrains him, so that he will be revealed in his time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work, but the one now restraining will do so until he is out of the way, and then the lawless one will be revealed” (2:5-8a). The Thessalonians apparently knew what is meant by the “one now restraining”. There is much debate about this, but the best answer is the Holy Spirit within the church, which, when raptured, will allow the lawless one to emerge.
4. Paul continues with more information about the lawless one and why he will be exalted: “The coming of the lawless one is based on Satan’s working, with all kinds of false miracles, signs, and wonders, and with every unrighteous deception among those who are perishing. They perish because they did not accept the love of the truth in order to be saved. For this reason, God sends them a strong delusion so that they will believe what is false, so that all will be condemned—those who did not believe the truth but enjoyed unrighteousness” (2:9-12).
5. Paul encourages the believers to remain steadfast in their faith: “We must always thank God for you, brothers and sisters loved by the Lord, because from the beginning, God has chosen you for salvation through the sanctifying work of the

Spirit and through belief in the truth. He called you to this through our gospel, so that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, brothers, stand firm and hold to the traditions you were taught, whether by our message or by our letter” (2:13-15). While the phrase “chosen from the beginning” underscores God’s initiative in salvation, it should be understood in light of God’s universal offer of grace. God’s call to salvation is extended to all, but the response of faith is what makes it effective in the lives of believers. Foreknowledge is not causation. This passage encourages believers to respond to God’s calling with perseverance and hold fast to the truths they have received through the gospel.

D. Chapter Three.

1. Paul opens the final chapter with a request for prayer for them: “Finally, brothers, pray for us that the Lord’s message may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you, and that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men, for not all have faith. But the Lord is faithful; He will strengthen and guard you from the evil one” (3:1-3).
2. He continues with a warning against irresponsible behavior: “Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to keep away from every brother who walks irresponsibly and not according to the tradition received from us. For you yourselves know how you must imitate us: We were not irresponsible among you; we did not eat anyone’s food free of charge; instead, we labored and struggled, working night and day, so that we would not be a burden to any of you” (3:6-8).
3. He mentions some who are not working but depending upon others and interfering with their work. But also, not to grow weary of doing good: “In fact, when we were with you, this is what we commanded you: ‘If anyone isn’t willing to work, he should not eat’. For we hear that there are some among you who walk irresponsibly, not working at all, but interfering with the work of others. Now we command and exhort such people by the Lord Jesus Christ that quietly working, they may eat their own food. Brothers, do not grow weary in doing good” (3:10-13).
4. He then gives a strong word about avoiding such a person before closing with a blessing: “And if anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take note of that person; don’t associate with him, so he may be ashamed. Yet don’t treat him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother. May the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always in every way. The Lord be with all of you. This greeting is in my own

hand—Paul. This is a sign in every letter; this is how I write. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with all of you” (3:14-18). That he mentions a “greeting in my own hand” may indicate the “thorn in his flesh” which may be possible damage to his eyes when he was temporarily blinded (Acts 9:1-9).

E. Discussion Questions, Application and Passing it On.

1. Are you facing suffering for the gospel? If so, do you have a sense this is for your worthiness for the Kingdom of God? (1:5).
2. The difference between the rapture and the glorious appearing of Jesus Christ (Titus 2:13) at the end of the Tribulation has been a great area of disagreement between Bible teachers. What is your view based upon both epistles to the Thessalonians?
3. Do you grow weary in doing good? (3:13). How can you prevent that?

This New Testament survey was provided by Joshua Nations (JoshuaNations.org)