

Note

1 & 2 Thessalonians – Part 1 of 1

Summary

Thessalonians - Part 1 of 12

The Thessalonian church was a persecuted church and hence a strong church. Situated in Greece, the city had many false Greek values in religion and in outlook. Word evangelism is usually not sufficient, there must be the power of the Spirit displayed in one's life. Paul was warning against a compartmentalised Christian life. There was an expectation of Christ's second coming. Anticipating Christ's imminent return is to encourage fellow Christians to persevere. While there is, and has always been, lawlessness and anti-christs, once the restraining Spirit of God is removed, the ultimate anti-christ, the lawless one, the son of perdition will appear. Paul set himself up as an example of spirit driven living to imitate and not be idle.

Transcript

1 & 2 Thessalonians – Part 1 of 1

Today, we come to 1 and 2 Thessalonians. These are two letters written in a very short gap between the first and the second Letter, maybe just a few months apart. These two letters are thought to be some of Paul's earliest Epistles.

It's a pretty easy epistle to read. It's basically written because there were some problems in the church at Thessalonica. The history is that Paul, Silas, and Timothy, on Paul's second missionary journey, visited Thessalonica after he was kicked out from Philippi. Remember how he was put in jail in Philippi, then asked to leave. And he left behind a fairly strong church, in fact, a very supportive church, in Philippi.

He then went on to the next town, Thessalonica. He went to the synagogue (that's his usual style), and preached there. Amazingly, many people trusted the Lord, including some pretty well-off ladies. In fact, it is said, the people who trusted the Lord in Thessalonica were, not the Jews, but Gentiles who knew that the God of the Jews was the true and living God. They went to the synagogue, but they were not circumcised, they were not adopted into the Jewish religion. They were there, and they heard Paul and they got saved. A few of these "God-fearers" were well-known women.

While he preached there, the Jews were very jealous, that Paul was preaching a faith that could be received without people being circumcised. The Jews in the synagogue kicked Paul out. Paul had to leave Thessalonica, because they made problems for Paul. And so, Paul went on to the next place, called Berea.

He was in Thessalonica for only about 3 weeks, but amazingly, the church became a very strong church, and under huge persecution. The church in Philippi was persecuted, and became a very strong church; the church in Thessalonica was persecuted, and also became a very strong church. In both instances, he stayed only for a very short time in the church. Persecution has a way of building up real Christians, while easy conditions

have a way of attracting all kinds of people to church, and makes the church generally, very weak and diluted.

So, that's a little background, you can read that in Acts 16 and, actually, mostly in Acts 17.

Where is Thessalonica? It is actually in Europe, or in Greece. It is on European soil. So, as a Greek city, it was very Greek in its religion. A Greek religion is nothing more than a whole bunch of idols. There was an idol for everything, almost somewhat like Chinese religion. Of course, in this church, because it was a Greek culture, there was a lot of Greek problems in the church. What do I mean by Greek problems? When people come from a culture, they bring that culture with them. And the common problem was, number one: idolatry. Their idea of God is always a little god, a mini god.

And number two, Greek gods were very promiscuous. Very promiscuous, god of love, and Venus, and all that. And so, the people here tended to be very promiscuous, and they didn't feel bad about it. Because the Greek idea is: the mind and the body are two separate issues. You could contaminate your body, without disturbing your mind too much. So, if you've had sex with a prostitute, then you go to church, it's not a big deal. They are two separate parts of your life, the mind is very separated from your body. We would call it, the secular part and the spiritual part.

Actually, we are somewhat like that in our thinking. As it's always said, "Greeks have influenced the church more than any other culture". Because the New Testament was written in Greek, it was at the time when the Greek culture was very, very strong. And our education is very Greek too, we separate things very clearly. Very little of what we know is holistic, everything is separated.

And so, for them, having sex promiscuously, and being religious were not opposite things, they were very compatible.

And then, lastly, they also tended to be very lazy. Because in the Greek mind, being intellectual –sitting down and meditating– was much better than having to do manual work. They look down on manual work, like we do also.

Actually, the Bible is exactly opposite. If you look at the key people in the Bible, in the New Testament, Jesus is the best example. He was a carpenter's Son. He was a carpenter for many, many years. Then, we have Peter and John, and all the apostles, almost all of them were manual, fishermen. And then, of course, Paul continued to be a tentmaker all his life, which is very manual. But for us, the spiritual guys are the guys who can talk a lot, and quote a lot, and think a lot, and all the rest are really inferior.

They had these problems, and actually, a lot of them are our problems too. Paul had to deal with these problems in the Thessalonian church, simply because, culture affected them.

So, with that background, let's look into 1 Thessalonians. And then, after that, we move on to 2 Thessalonians.

1 Thessalonians 1:1 ESV

[1a] Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy,

Now, some people wonder, "Who is Silvanus?"

Silvanus is the full name of Silas. Silas is the short form.

Paul was very kind to say that this letter was from the three of them, though I believe, he was the one that dictated this letter. But the three were in a team. That's the style of Paul, he's always trying to take a lower position. I think that's very Christian, rather than always trying to be the key guy.

So, the three of them had made their first visit (described in Acts 17) to Thessalonica. And this is what we have as a greeting here.

1 Thessalonians 1:5

because our gospel came to you, not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.

I want you to see, in this one verse, the method that was used to reach the Thessalonians. It was not just going there and preaching the Word, but it says, "the Word of God came to you, not only in Word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit". And then, later, "You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake".

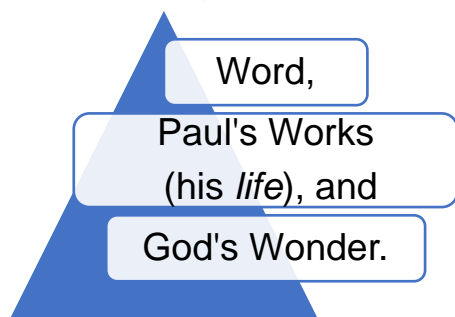
I want you to note here, the Gospel came, not just with them preaching, but it was accompanied with the power of the Holy Spirit. And it was also evidenced by their lives –please note that– “what kind of men we were among you”.

So, here, we see: evangelism, or outreach, is not just going out with words. This is the way we go out to reach out to new communities. Almost all our so-called “evangelism” is Word evangelism. There's nothing wrong with that. But it's just that, it's often inadequate, as we know by experience. We go out, we preach, Gospel rally, send hundreds of people to some place. And the impact is, maybe momentary, temporary, or nothing at all, in the long run. Why? Because it seems to lack the other ingredients.

We see here, the Word. We see Paul's life, later we'll see his life described. “You see what manner of men we were” - Our Works.

And then, the work of the Holy Spirit - the Wonder. Probably, some amazing things happened. Paul prayed, maybe for someone. Some lives were changed. Someone was healed from a sickness. I don't know. But the power of the Holy Spirit.

In other words, this outreach to Thessalonica was:



So, I think that's probably the secret. I wouldn't even call it a secret, that's the formula that we should all have when we go out to reach a community.

You just show them the Word. “Okay...” But words are just words.

What about your life? Talk? It's more powerful than walk?

And then, when you talk about God: “I can't see God. I might see a bit in your life. But when I see the power of God in changing lives... ‘My son, the gangster, got saved. My father, the gambler, stopped gambling. Wow.’”

That's exactly how Jesus did ministry. He went around, walking, going everywhere; showing how much He cared for the poor, He touched them, He remembered them, He went down among them. He did wonders. And then, He shared the Word.

Then, what happens in 1 Thessalonians 1:6

And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the Word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit,

They were persecuted. Now, when you go out into any community, that is not a Christian community, and you get people saved, you expect persecution.

Why should it not be? You left the faith, the faith of your fathers. You're a traitor, to your family, to your tribe, to your community. Of course, you will receive much affliction, but balanced with joy of the Holy Spirit.

That's the Christian life: suffering outside, but joy inside. As opposed to the non-Christian life, which is: joy outside; but inside, misery, emptiness, and hopelessness.

So, I hope you understand this, that Christianity is not about happy, outside, happy, inside (which is prosperity gospel).

1 Thessalonians 1:9-10:

[9] For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God,

[10] and to wait for His Son from Heaven, whom He raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

What kind of faith did they have? They had a faith that turned from their idols. They didn't see their idols as God any more, any use any more, [but as] hopeless, worthless things [compared] to the living God. That's quite normal.

But, it also goes on to say, "and to wait for His Son from Heaven whom He raised from the dead".

So, the Epistles to the Thessalonians, speaks of one aspect of our faith that is not much spoken of. It is the Second Coming of Jesus, the wait for

His Son from Heaven. We always talk about us going [to Heaven], [but] very little of our faith about Him coming. And that is very important, to give us the encouragement to live day by day, in the face of difficulty and persecution, that the Lord is coming back again for us.

Very few Christians have that in the forefront of their minds as they labor. All they think about is, "One fine day, I'm going to die and go to Heaven." But never, "One fine day, while I am still alive, the Lord may come and find me still faithful." That's the reason why many of us just idle our time, until we die. That's the Christianity of most people today, because we don't have much thoughts or teaching on the Second Coming of Christ. And if there is, we don't see or have many examples of people waiting for the Coming of the Lord.

The theme in Thessalonians is about the Second Coming of the Lord, how important it is for us to go on, day by day, not idling till we die.

Chapter 2, verses 1 to 8, shows Paul actually defending himself. We don't know what happened in Thessalonica, but the fact that he's defending his ministry means that there were people slandering him.

When a minister of God, a missionary, goes to a new place, the devil always attacks his person. Slander is a very easy thing to do, and though it is lies and soon found out to be lies, it still leaves a lot of thoughts in people's minds.

In my ministry, in the Philippines, for example, I was slandered very much by fellow Christians. I don't know what their motive was, but they slandered me. That was 30 over years ago, and up till today, some of those slanderous accusations are still brought up. Though it has been proven umpteen times, that it is false. For example, "Paul Choo baptizes infants" – which I've never done in my life. "He's a sprinkler - because they are Baptist, they said, "Paul Choo's a Presbyterian." In their mind, that's pretty bad. I've never been either an infant baptizer or a Presbyterian, but 30 over years ago, it has been proven wrong, over and over, and yet, it still sticks in many people's minds.

Slander is a very powerful tool, and politicians know how to use that very effectively. And, of course, Satan is the master of all of that.

Now, we see, Paul defending himself in

1 Thessalonians 2:5

And he says, For we never came with words of flattery, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed—God is witness.

Obviously, somebody was accusing him of coming with fancy words, big words, flattery, and also with a pretext for greed. I've been slandered, pretty much like this.

And then, 1 Thessalonians 2:9,

For you remember, brothers, our labor and toil: we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you the Gospel of God.

So, we see, Paul, when he was with them, he was, basically, self-supporting. He worked night and day, just to provide for his own needs.

Today, there is this idea, that if you are a tentmaker... We use the word “tentmaker” (that means “you serve God and you also earn a living”) because Paul made tents for a living. And that’s why, we say, “You work, to pay your own mission expenses, and then, you also do missions”. In other words, you have two jobs. Some call it “bivocational”, but “bivocational” tends to be, more like, “I have a main job, that’s my earning job, and I do a little bit for missions”.

Paul was the other way around. His job was just enough to pay the bills and then he was focused on his mission work. Nothing wrong with that.

In fact, a lot of questions always come to me. “Can we serve God, working full-time? Or working for our own living, and then, serving God at the same time?” I said, “Why not? Paul did that. And I had done that all my life. I've never even taken one cent in my life, for serving God.” So, Paul leaves that example for us.

1 Thessalonians 2:13-15, where he tells us that persecution is normal.

[13] And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the Word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the Word of God, which is at work in you believers.

[14] For you, brothers, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea. For you suffered the same things from your own countrymen as they did from the Jews,

[15] who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out, and displease God and oppose all mankind

The Thessalonians were being persecuted by their fellow Thessalonians, because they had left idolatry. Paul said, "There's nothing new. The Jews in Jerusalem have been and are being persecuted, because they left Judaism, to trust in Christ."

Jesus was even persecuted, by His own people.

And Paul said, "I'm also persecuted, by the Jews."

So, what's new, when you get persecuted by your own? There are many Christians who get very troubled when they are persecuted by their own family, "Oh, this is new. I can take it any way, except being persecuted by my own family." That's the one that will persecute you, nothing new. It is the very ones that are close to you, that are your own, that will be the main persecutors of you. Others, why should they persecute you? Or if they do, it's not so focused.

1 Thessalonians 3:4 says,
For when we were with you, we kept telling you beforehand that we were to suffer affliction, just as it has come to pass, and just as you know.

In other words, Paul had warned them, when he was with them, in that short period of time. Today's evangelism is quite different. We just tell them, "Everything will be rosy. When you receive Jesus, all your problems will be solved." Not true at all. In fact, when you receive Jesus, you have to deny something. You have to turn from something, to Christ. What do you turn from? All those people will see you as a turncoat, as someone who has left, no more a part of them, and they will attack you.

Of course, we don't bring that up as the first thing, but that's something we teach. When someone receives Jesus, we say, "You received Jesus, you have peace, you have joy, you have eternal life. You have Christ as your Partner, but let me tell you, you'll also have your family as your opposers. Are you ready?" So, that's the kind of teaching Paul had given them, he had actually warned them.

The rest of chapter 3 is about Paul, after he was chased out of Thessalonica, he went down to Berea, then Athens. And he kept worrying

about the Thessalonians. He worried that being severely persecuted, that they may be discouraged. And so, he sent his coworker, Timothy, to go and check on them. And then, when Timothy came back with news, “They’re doing good! They’re standing strong!” that Paul writes this letter. Chapter 3 describes that event.

Chapter 4 verses 1 to 8, Paul warns them about sexual immorality. Because, as I said, the Greeks compartmentalize their lives into two parts.

No surprise, we are all like that. “In the office, I behave any way I like. I’m very unchristian in my speech, in the way I treat my colleagues, I don’t care about them. But I’m dying to go for Bible studies so I can be “spiritual”.” Two compartments. A big, thick line between the two compartments.

In their case, it was sexual immorality, that was their indulgence. For some of us, it may be other things, that has nothing to do with God, but we are very focused on those things. We feel perfectly happy, spending all our money, energy, –it could be anything– traveling, eating, revelling, partying.

And then, “Bible study! I’ve got to go to Bible study, I cannot be late! Otherwise, I’d be in trouble.”

Two-part Christianity. Greek Christianity.

Paul tells them, in 1 Thessalonians 4:3,
For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality,

For the Greeks, it was sex, that was their indulgence. For other people, it could be other things that could be their indulgence. Never forget, that our body is the temple of the Holy Ghost. Even if you abuse it by overeating, that is [abuse]. They abused it by sex, you could abuse it by overeating. It’s the same thing. It’s not so visibly awful, but it’s the same thing; same principle.

1 Thessalonians 4:9-11,
[9] Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another,
[10] for that indeed is what you are doing to all the brothers throughout Macedonia. But we urge you, brothers, to do this more and more,

[11] and to aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we instructed you.

We notice here, Paul is telling them, “Go and love your brothers, serve them, and to work with your hands, as we instructed you.”

Go and serve. To me, that's quite interesting, because, I think, they spent all their time either indulging their flesh or filling their minds. And they didn't see the faith as something where their hands were very important in serving.

I always say, “Head-you get truth; Heart-after the truth comes to our heart, it is expressed with our Hands.”

Service. Serving people, not just talking and teaching.

Chapter 4 verse 13 to verse 18, it's all about the resurrection. They were confused. Greek thinking: “My husband died, his body's already in the grave. What's going to happen, if Jesus comes again, then he's there?” They separate the body and the mind so much.

So, Paul told them, in 1 Thessalonians 4:16,
For the Lord Himself will descend from Heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

He said, “The body in Christianity, is also very important. The body is not separate.” For the Greek, “the greatest moment of victory” –so to speak– when you die, your spirit is separated from your body. The body is left in the grave and the spirit goes up.

For many Christians, that's their idea of salvation too. There are many Christians who think that when we go to Heaven, we float around for eternity; we are some spirit, floating around. Greek thinking. Paul said, Let me tell you, the body will also arise. The dead in Christ will rise first, in fact.”

That's why this Book is put here, because for many people, eternal life is a bodyless spirit, so we don't bother with what we do with our body, it's not quite relevant to our eternal future.

1 Thessalonians 5:1-6,
[1] Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you.

[2] For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.

[3] While people are saying, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.

[4] But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief.

[5] For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness.

[6] So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober.

So, Paul is telling them, "the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night". For many Christians, they read that and it stops there. That means nobody knows when He is coming, right? He can come anytime He likes. But if you read on, he says, in verse 3, "While people are saying, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction..."

Who are these people?

People who are not aware that the Lord is going to come, they're going to get a shock, when Christ comes. For the world who doesn't know that there is a Second Coming of Christ, when Christ comes, it's a shock. Just like when a thief comes into your house, it's a shock, you don't expect a thief to come. To these people, it's a shock when Christ comes.

"But..." Verse 4, "But you (you and I, Christians) are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief."

You and I know the Lord is coming! It won't be a shock, to believers. [Verse 5a] "For you are all children of light, children of the day."

In other words, we are aware of what's going to happen, so when He comes, it's not like, "Oh, He came! A thief came!" No, the Lord has come! We're expecting that. And also, we are aware that there will be signs before He comes. So, the fact, that He comes as a "thief in the night", is not for you and me. It's for the others who don't know this.

Please don't quote this, as if, for Christians; "we're going to get a shock!" I've heard that over and over, quoted out of context. They read just the first few verses, and they forget to read verse 4 onwards.

1 Thessalonians 5:11,

“Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you are doing.”

What's the purpose of the teaching of the Second Coming of the Lord? To encourage us to continue serving; keep courage, serve the Lord, to keep on going. Sometimes, you get tired and just [give up]. But then, if you know the Lord's going to come back, and see us working hard and faithful until His coming, then we are encouraged to go on.

So, we see here, this is to encourage us. But for many people, eschatology is not for encouraging them to keep working; but to amuse them, to speculate. They want to learn about when, and how, rather than about what we should be doing now.

The Second Coming of the Lord is not for us to speculate about the “Coming”, but for us to be focused on the “Doing now”. I hope we get that clear. “To encourage (you) one another and build up one another, just as you are doing.” Not speculating, but building up our Christian walk, and our brother’s Christian walk, in the face of weariness, persecution, etc.

I am not good at eschatology, because I don't see that as my focus. People ask me, “When is the Lord coming?” I say, “I don't know. But I know one thing, I better do my duty well. So that when He comes, I will be found faithful.”

So, please don't use eschatology for speculation.

And then, from 1 Thessalonians 5:12-28, a lot of random advice is given. Let me give you some, quickly.

1 Thessalonians 5:14,

And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with all.

“Admonish the idle.” There’s a lot of idle Christians. They’re just waiting –I don't know for what– they hang around. You ask them to do a little bit, for the Lord, “Pastor, that’s very hard. I don't think I can do that.” But they can take care of their fish tank, they can do a lot of useless stuff.

“Admonish the idle.” Idleness is okay, as long as they attend some Bible studies, in church.

And then, in 1 Thessalonians 5:15

[15a] See that no one repays anyone evil for evil...

(Don't take revenge on your persecutors.)

[15b]...but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone.

[Verse 16] Rejoice always,

Even in persecution, that we are counted worthy to suffer for the Lord.

[Verse 17] pray without ceasing,

It's very important. Prayer is not [just] prayer time. Prayer is breath, Christian oxygen. Just like when you're running, you need oxygen; you open your mouth, you gasp, to get oxygen. Prayer is like that, all the time. You need help, all the time. Pray. Pray. Pray. That's your oxygen.

And then, he got reports, a few months later, that their persecution got worse, and they got more confused about the Second Coming. Many of them began to think, “The Lord has already come and we are still here.” So, he quickly wrote 2 Thessalonians, to them, a few months later, to help them sort out these “new” problems that he heard about.

Let's move on to 2 Thessalonians.

2 Thessalonians 1:9,

“They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His might,”

They were suffering so much, they were so discouraged. “Why, God? Why do You allow us to be persecuted? They seem to be okay, our persecutors are doing well.”

And Paul said, “Don't worry. God will judge them, one day. You don't take revenge, God will take revenge. That is very scary, it says “They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord..”

I like that he's putting that in the second part, “away...”

They wanted to have nothing to do with the Lord. Who is the Lord? that's what they said. For all eternity, their wish will be granted. They will be away from the presence of the Lord, and be with all their satanic idols, and with Satan himself.

God grants us our wish, even the unsaved get their wish. They don't want anything to do with God. So, God said, "It's okay. I will grant your wish, for all eternity."

"I'd rather live with my old friends, who are drunkards, than be with you, stupid Christians, in church. You will have your wish. You will be with all the drunks, and the cursers, and the swearers, and the brawlers, and the cheats, and the deceivers, for eternity."

God grants you your wish. Be careful what you wish for.

So, Paul assures them, "Don't worry. You are being persecuted, but, actually, when people persecute you, you should feel sorry for them. Don't take revenge. Have mercy, they're going to suffer for such a long time."

2 Thessalonians chapter 2. There's a second problem. Besides increased persecution, there's another problem.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-2,

[1] Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to Him, we ask you, brothers,

[2] not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.

Something had happened after Paul's first letter.

People were going around, saying,

"I had a dream, last night, that Jesus already came!"

"I had a word, from the Lord, that Jesus already came!"

"I have a letter, from Paul, to say that Jesus already came!"

These were all rumours, they were fake news. We live in an era of fake news. They also had fake news, in their time.

And we live in a time, where everybody is a "prophet".

"The Lord spoke to me, last night!"

“The Lord spoke to me, ‘Covid will disappear from the face of the Earth in weeks!’” “God said, to me, “Covid is illegal!”

Really? And Paul said, “That’s rubbish.”

And do you know what happened, when they said, “the day of the Lord has come”? (That’s what it says, in verse 2)

“That means we are left behind! Oh my goodness! Paul, you preached that we will be taken, with the Lord, when He comes! It’s a Great Day, but now, we are left behind, to be persecuted, more and more. And now, the Day of the Lord has come, and we are left behind!”

Nothing worse than being abandoned. For example: Your father promises to come and pick you up, and he doesn’t come. And your teacher says, “He already came, and he left without you.” What!!

2 Thessalonians 2:3-4

[3] Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,

[4] who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.

So, Paul says, “That Day of the Lord, that I’ve been telling you about, will not come, until this event takes place.”

This is quoted from Daniel 11:36-37, that there will some person –we call him the Antichrist, who will exalt himself above God, go into the temple of God, and say, “he is god”.

Only after that day, then the Day of the Lord will come.

So, Paul said, “I told you that! It hasn’t happened yet.”

2 Thessalonians 2:5-12,

[5] Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?

[6] And you know what is restraining him now so that he may be revealed in his time.

[7] For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way.

[8] And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of His mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of His coming.

[9] The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders,

[10] and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.

[11] Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false,

[12] in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

So, Paul is telling them, that Day has not come. Why?

Because there is someone restraining that event. There is lawlessness, there is antichrist-ness. And later, John (in the Epistles of John, at the end of the Bible) tells us “antichrists” are already here, but not 'the' Antichrist. Antichrists are just anyone against Christ. Everyone against Christ, those “antichrists” are already there, but the one who is really against Christ, is restrained, until God’s time. Then, when the restraint is taken away, that real Antichrist will go to the temple and says, “I am god”.

Now, there are plenty of antichrists, that say, “Jesus is not God.” But one day, the Antichrist will say, “I am god”, in the temple. When that day comes, then you and I know, the big event, the Second Coming, is going to take place.

Paul tells them, clearly, about this event. He said, “When you heard that the Day of the Lord, has already come (the Second Coming), it's not come, yet.” So, Paul had to sort this out.

You see, the moment we talk about the Second Coming, there are all kinds of speculation, all kinds of rumors. People love to talk about this, because it's very easy to inflame, very easy to excite, very easy to unstabilize many people. And the devil always loves it.

So, there are a lot of “people” who come, and claim to be the messiah, form little cults here and there, but they are not the Antichrist. They don't go to the temple, and say, “They are god”. They go to some commune, somewhere, and say, “I am god”. And then a few thousand fools will follow them.

Who are these fools?

[10] and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.

[11] Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false,

There are people who don't believe the truth.

What is truth, you say? Where is truth?

Thy Word is truth.

They're not interested in finding out what is truth in the Bible, they just like to hear rumors here, rumors there. A bit here, from some preacher. A bit there, from another preacher. Never opened their Bible, in their life. And even when they open the Bible, it's just what the preacher tells them to see. They have no clue what's in the Bible. They have no love for the truth!

You say, "You mean, there are people like that?"

Yeah, 90% of Christians don't love the truth.

"How do you know, Pastor?"

They don't read the Bible.

"What? You say, 'they don't read their Bible'? They read every night, for 10 minutes."

Really? That's called "love of the truth"? I don't think that's called "love of the truth". If you love truth, you seek it. Not just pick a gem, here and there, that you like. You love yourself, that's why you read the Bible; for most people, you want to find what suits you.

So, finally, Paul sets this example, in chapter 3, verses 7 to 12.

2 Thessalonians 3:7-12,

[7] For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we were not idle when we were with you,

[8] nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with toil and labor we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you.

[9] It was not because we do not have that right, but to give you in ourselves an example to imitate.

[10] For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat.

[11] For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies.

[12] Now such persons we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living.

Why did Paul do that? To set an example. Why? Because God knows that, one day, there will be a lot of idle Christians who do nothing, just busybodies. Paul said, “Don’t be like that, work!” Though, the context here is about work for your living, it’s about idleness too.

I hope 1 and 2 Thessalonians is not something for some people in Greece (2,000 years ago). It is for us. The Lord is coming, I hope He finds you working, not an idle busybody. I hope, the Second Coming of the Lord encourages you to work, and not waste time, neither just speculate about the time, when, and how He will come, but focus on your life -that you work, because there’s work to be done. With your hands, serve, help, do your best. And when the Lord comes, He will bless you.

That’s the purpose of 2 Thessalonians:

The Second Coming

- **in the forefront of your mind,**
- **serving in the presence,**
- **right now.**

God bless you.