

BOOK OF FIRST AND SECOND THESSALONIANS

These 2 letters were written within a short time of about a few months. These were the early Pauline epistles. They are easy to read as these were written to address church problems.

Background of these two epistles

1. Paul, Silas and Timothy visited Thessalonica in their second missionary journey after Paul was kicked out of Philippi. This happened after Paul was released from jail in Philippi.
2. Paul went to the synagogue in Thessalonica and preached there. Amazingly many people trusted the Lord, including some rich ladies. Many Gentiles who believed in the precept of the monotheistic God (i.e. that there is only one God in the entire universe and not many gods as Greeks believed) were at the synagogue which Paul visited and these were God fearing people and so, many of them were converted. But the Jews became very jealous that Paul preached a faith without the need for circumcision. They kicked Paul out and Paul left Thessalonica and went to Berea.
3. Though Paul was only there for 3 weeks, the Thessalonian church was very strong despite persecution. Both the Philippian and Thessalonian churches grew under persecution despite their short time with their founder Paul. Persecution builds up real Christians whilst easy conditions attract many weak Christians. See Acts Chapters 16 and 17.
4. Thessalonica is in Greece which is in Europe and is a key Greek city with a major port. The Greek religion was full of idols and so the Greeks had many problems such as the culture of "idolatry" and mini-gods as well as promiscuous gods. Therefore the people in Thessalonica were very Greek in thinking and also promiscuous; they thought it was alright to contaminate the body and such actions would not affect their spiritual mind! Modern churches are also affected by such Greek thinking. The early churches were greatly influenced by the Greeks and in fact the New Testament was written in Greek.
5. Thessalonians, as Greeks, were lazy in lifestyle. They liked to meditate and look down on manual work e.g. Jesus was a carpenter's son, the apostles were fishermen, etc. and Paul was a tentmaker! Today's churches also think that thinkers are superior! Therefore, Paul had to deal with these problems.

Book of First Thessalonians**Chapter 1**

1. 1 Thessalonian 1:1. Silvanus here is also called Silas. Paul saw Silas as a team, though Paul was the key person, because they made their first visit to Thessalonica together in Acts Chapters 16 and 17.
2. 1 Thessalonian 1:5. "
 - a) "Our Gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction." The method deployed in preaching the Gospel is not just preaching by word but by the power of the Holy Spirit.
 - b) Paul said, "You know what kind of men we are". This speaks of the testimonies of their lives! Evangelism is not just with words otherwise the impact is

momentary only! Paul described his life and the work of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, walk is more powerful than talk.

- c) The wonders and miracles of God in converted lives help others to believe in Christ.
3. 1 Thessalonian 1:6. They were persecuted after conversion in the Thessalonian church. These believers had joy inside, unlike non-Christians who look happy and joyful outside but are unhappy inside! Christianity is not about being happy both inside and outside, which is what the prosperity gospel preaches.
4. 1 Thessalonian 1:9-10. These Thessalonian believers turned from idols to the true living God and were waiting for the 2nd coming of Jesus from heaven! Most of us talk about going to heaven but hardly talk about Jesus coming back again! Knowing that Jesus may come while we are still alive and find us faithful is a great motivation so that we will not idle away our time! This is the theme of the book of First Thessalonians.

Chapter 2

1. 1 Thessalonian 2:1-8. Paul was defending himself and his ministry because he was being slandered. The Devil will always attack missionaries. These slandering attacks sometimes come even from fellow Christians. Even if proven false many times, the slander sticks in the minds, and we must realise that slander is a powerful evil tool!
2. 1 Thessalonian 2:5. They accused Paul of flattery and greed!
3. 1 Thessalonian 2:9. Paul worked as a tentmaker to ensure that he was self-supporting. This teaches that we should work to support our own missionary works. Paul worked enough to pay for his missions, hence the term “tent-maker missionary”.
4. 1 Thessalonian 2:13-15. Thessalonian believers were persecuted by their own Thessalonian people because they left their original idolatry religion. Paul said this was to be expected as other churches, including Paul himself, were also persecuted! So Christians must expect your own family to persecute you as new believers!

Chapter 3

1. 1 Thessalonian 3:4. Paul already warned them and taught them to expect persecution if they turned to God! It is important to ground new believers in their faith by proper teachings. It is very different from modern evangelism which does not focus on what you have to leave behind!
2. 1 Thessalonian 3. The rest of this chapter was about Paul worrying about the Thessalonian church and the persecution they were facing, after he had left them and gone to Athens. So he sent Timothy to check on them and a good report came back. Therefore, Paul wrote this letter in response to Timothy’s report.

Chapter 4

1. 1 Thessalonian 4:1-8. Paul warned them of sexual immorality in verses 3. Paul warned them that secular life (e.g. how you treat people in office) and spiritual life were not separated. There is no such thing as Greek Christianity. Beware of our indulgence in anything that takes us away from God.
2. 1 Thessalonian 4:9-10. Paul said that everyone should work with their own hands even when they are serving. Greek thinking was focussed only on meditating, doing

spiritual things but not on serving. Paul reminded them that Christianity is not just talking and teaching.

3. 1 Thessalonian 4:13-18 teach about resurrection. Again, this is Greek thinking that the dead body is left in the grave and so they question, "When Jesus comes, where is the body?" See verse 16. To the Greeks, the body, which is the junk part, is left behind, and only the spirit goes to heaven! But Paul said that the dead will be resurrected! Eternal life is not just spirit only! So, take care of your body.

Chapter 5

1. 1 Thessalonian 5:1-6.
 - a) Jesus said He will come as a "thief in the night". But we are not in darkness because we are children of the day. We are to be sober! Therefore we will not be shocked.
 - b) Only unbelievers will be shocked because they are not expecting Him to come. So, to them, Jesus comes back like a thief coming into the house!
 - c) To believers, we will not be shocked as Jesus is no thief! We are aware of the signs of His 2nd coming. So do not misquote this verse.
2. 1 Thessalonian 5:11. The teaching of Jesus' 2nd coming is to encourage us to keep serving so that Jesus will find us faithful when He comes back! The teaching of His return is not for us to speculate when He will come, e.g. eschatology of pre-tribulation, post tribulation, etc.! Focus on what we should be doing now! Build up one another!
3. 1 Thessalonian 5:12-28. This may look like random advice to some. It is to admonish idle Christians. We think idleness is alright as long as we go to church and attend bible studies! It is also to admonish the persecuted Christians not to take revenge but to do good to everyone and rejoice even in persecution. Prayer is like the oxygen we need when we are running! We need help all the time.

Book of Second Thesalonians

The letter of First Thesalonians was sent out and then the persecution became worse! They got more confused, thinking that Jesus had already come and wondered why they were still around and not resurrected as Paul taught them in the epistle of First Thesalonians. So, Paul wrote this letter, Second Thesalonians, quickly within a few months to address this next issue.

1. 2 Thessalonian 1:9. Paul encouraged them that their persecutors would be punished by God with everlasting destruction. Even the unsaved will get their wish to be away from God fulfilled and eternally. So we should feel sorry for our persecutors! We do not need to take revenge now.
2. 2 Thessalonian 2:1-2. Paul reminded them not to be shaken by a false letter (which they claimed came from Paul) that said Jesus had already come. Everyone claims to be a prophet, even so, today. The false letter caused the Thesalonians to fear that they had been left behind with more persecution like the abandonment of a child by his father.
3. 2 Thessalonian 2:3-4. Paul assured them that Jesus will not come until the Antichrist is revealed! Therefore, the Day of Lord has not yet come. Paul quoted from Daniel

11:36-37 saying that when the Antichrist comes, he will claim to be God in the temple itself. And this has not happened yet.

4. 2 Thessalonian 2:5-12. Why has the Day not come yet? Paul explained that there is someone restraining it. Many antichrists are here already but the Antichrist is restrained and is not here yet.
5. 2 Thessalonian 2:7. Fools will believe falsehood because God sends them delusion! They are not interested in the truth (the Word of God) and have never read the Bible; they have no love for the truth! If you love truth, you will seek it. Some people read the Bible just to find verses for themselves; they love themselves, not the truth (Jesus is the truth, the way and the life as in John 14:6).
6. 2 Thessalonian 3:7-12. Paul set an example here. He said that he was not idle; he laboured though he had the right to ask the church for support. Paul even commanded that those who do not work should not eat. No busy bodies please! No idleness!

These two epistles should encourage us to focus on our work till the Lord comes! There is work to be done!