

## **Week of June 25 – July 1**

### **Second Thessalonians Overview**

Second Thessalonians was written by Paul, who referred to his signature at the end of the letter.

On his second missionary journey, Paul, along with Silas and Timothy had just left Philippi and passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia and came to Thessalonica. Paul immediately located the synagogue and discussed Jesus Christ with the Jews for three Sabbaths. Even though some of them were persuaded, including a significant number of devout Greeks and leading women, the unbelieving Jews became jealous and created an uproar in the city. Therefore, Paul and Silas needed to escape secretly by night to Berea.

Nonetheless, a healthy church was founded in Thessalonica, and its members were mostly Gentile. It had already received an earlier letter from Paul. This second letter appears to have been written just a few months after First Thessalonians, putting it during Paul's lengthy stay in Corinth, sometime around 53 A.D.

The first letter to the Thessalonians was written in response to the news brought back by Timothy, who had made a quick trip there while Paul was in Athens. Paul had encouraged them to live holy lives since Christ was coming soon.

In the second letter, it seems they had remained strong in the Lord despite persecution. But it was evident from this letter that there was a misunderstanding about the Lord's coming. Some of the members were being troubled by false reports; others had stopped working, assuming the Lord's imminent return meant they didn't need to work anymore. He tried to correct their misunderstanding, explaining that the Lord would not come right away, and they needed to get to work, earning a living.

### **Thanksgiving for Faith and Perseverance ( Second Thessalonians 1:1-12)**

Paul extended a greeting to the church at Thessalonica with a prayer for grace and peace on their behalf.

He said he always thanked God for the growth of their faith and the Way their love abounded towards one another. He was so impressed with them that he has bragged to other churches about their patience and faith during persecutions and tribulations.

Paul then reminded them of the righteous judgment of God. Because of their suffering for the kingdom of God, God would bring judgment and punishment to those who are hurting them. God would give you rest along with Paul and others when the Lord appears suddenly from Heaven in flaming fire with his mighty angels bringing judgment on those who do not wish to know God and who refuse to accept his plan to save them through Jesus Christ. They would be punished in everlasting hell, forever separated from the Lord, never to see the glory of his power when he comes to receive praise and admiration because of all he has done for his people. And the Thessalonians will be among those praising him because they have believed what was told them about him.

His prayer and desire are that God would count them worthy of His calling. Then everyone would be praising the name of the Lord Jesus Christ because of the results they saw in them, and their greatest glory would be that they belonged to him. The mercy of God and the Lord Jesus Christ had made all this possible for them.

### **The Man of Lawlessness (Second Thessalonians 2:1-17)**

Evidently, Paul received word that some of the Thessalonians had the impression that the day of Christ had already come, that is, that it was near at hand. To reassure them this was not the case, he reminded them about what he had told them when he was with them, that is, that Christ wouldn't come until two things happen: first, there will be a time of great rebellion against God, and then the man of rebellion will come-the son of hell. He would defy every god there is and tear down every object of adoration and worship. He would go in and sit as God in the temple of God, claiming that he is God. He can come only when his time is ready. As for the work this man of rebellion and hell will do when he comes, it is already going on, but he won't come until the one who is holding him back steps out of the Way. Then this wicked one will appear, whom the Lord Jesus will burn up with the breath of his mouth and destroy by his presence when he returns. This man of sin will come as Satan's tool, full of evil power, and will trick everyone with strange demonstrations, and will do great miracles. He will completely fool those who are on their way to hell because they have said no to the Truth. They have refused to believe it and love it and let it save them, so God will allow them to believe lies with all their hearts, and all of them will be judged for believing falsehood, refusing the Truth, and enjoying their sins.

Then Paul gave thanks to God for the Thessalonians, who were loved by the Lord because God chose from the beginning to give them salvation. He had cleansed them by the work of the Holy Spirit and by their trust in the Truth. They were told the Good News. They were called to share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

### **Paul's Final Appeal (Second Thessalonians 3:1-13)**

In the last chapter, Paul asks for prayer, that the Word might spread rapidly and be glorified, and that he would be protected from wicked and evil men. He is confident that the Lord will guard them from the evil one, and that they will do the things he had commanded them to do. He then prays that the Lord would direct their hearts into the love of God and the patience of Christ.

He told them to stay away from any Christian who spends his days in laziness and does not follow the ideal of hard work Paul set up for them. They knew that they ought to follow his example: you never saw him loafing; he never accepted food from anyone without buying it; he worked hard day and night for the money he needed to live on, so he would not be a burden to any of them. It wasn't that he didn't have the right to ask them to feed him, but he wanted to show them how they should work for their own living. Even while he was still there with them, he gave them this rule: "He who doesn't work shall not eat."

Paul heard some members had stopped working and had become busybodies. He encouraged them to work in quietness and eat their own bread. If they didn't, the others are to note such persons and not keep company with them, that they may be ashamed. Don't think of them as an enemy, but speak to him as you would to a brother who needs to be warned.

In closing, he acknowledges that he was writing with his own hand, as he does at the end of all his letters, proof that it was from him. Lastly, he asks that the blessing of the Lord Jesus Christ be upon them all.

### **Paul Begins His Third Missionary Journey (Acts 18:19-28)**

Paul remained in Corinth a while longer. Next, Paul, Aquila, and Priscilla set sail for Syria. As they were leaving, Paul had his hair cut off at Cenchrea as part of a vow. Then he left Aquila and Priscilla in Ephesus, as they were traveling. Paul did not remain in Ephesus because he wanted to keep the feast in Jerusalem.

The next stop was at the port of Caesarea, where he visited the church there and then sailed on to Antioch. After spending some time at Antioch, he left for Turkey again to begin his third journey, going through Galatia and Phrygia visiting all the believers, encouraging them, and helping them grow in the Lord. He sailed on to Caesarea, greeted the church there, and went on to Antioch. Apollos of Alexandria is then introduced as an "eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures." Apollos traveled to Ephesus and spoke boldly in the synagogue. He taught the Way of the Lord, but he only knew the baptism of John. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and "explained to him the way of God more accurately." Apollos then traveled to Achaia and "greatly helped" the believers. "He vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ."

### **Paul Ministers in Ephesus (Acts 19:1-20)**

When Paul arrived in Ephesus, he found some disciples who had only been baptized in John's baptism. He instructed them that they should believe in Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Paul laid his hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. They spoke in tongues and prophesied.

Paul spoke boldly about the kingdom of God in the synagogue in Ephesus for three months. Some were hardened and spoke evil of "the Way." Paul then went to the school of Tyrannus, reasoning daily with the disciples. Paul continued this for two years. [Galatians may have been written at this time.] All of Asia heard the Word of the Lord. God worked miracles through Paul. Even handkerchiefs and aprons brought from Paul drove out diseases and evil spirits.

A team of itinerant Jews who were traveling from town to town casting out demons planned to experiment by using the name of the Lord Jesus. The chant they decided on was this: "I adjure you by Jesus, whom Paul preaches, to come out!" Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish priest, were doing this. But when they tried it on a man possessed by a demon, the demon replied, "I know Jesus, and I know Paul, but who are you?" And he leaped on two of them and beat them up so that they fled out of his house naked and severely injured.

The story of what happened quickly spread all through Ephesus, to Jews and Greeks alike, and a solemn fear descended on the city, and the name of the Lord Jesus was greatly honored. Many of the believers who had been practicing black magic confessed their deeds and brought their incantation books and charms and burned them at a public bonfire. (Someone estimated the value of the books at \$10,000. ) This indicates how deeply the whole area was stirred by God's message.

### **The Riot in Ephesus Acts (9:21-41)**

Afterward, Paul felt compelled by the Holy Spirit to go across to Greece before returning to Jerusalem. "And after that," he said, "I must go on to Rome!" He sent his two assistants, Timothy and Erastus, on ahead to Greece while he stayed awhile longer in Asia Minor. (1 Corinthians may have been written at this time.)

But about that time, a big blowup developed in Ephesus concerning the Christians. It began with Demetrius, a silversmith who employed many artisans to manufacture silver shrines of the Greek goddess Diana. He called a meeting of his men, together with others engaged in related trades, and warned them that Paul was preaching that the idols were "not gods which are made with hands." He proclaimed that their business was in danger, and even the temple of the goddess Diana was in danger. He claimed this preaching was happening throughout Ephesus, and across most of Asia. The people were stirred up, became angry, and cried out, "Great is Diana of the

Ephesians!" They seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's traveling companions. Paul wanted to go into the crowd, but the disciples would not allow it. The crowd was in great confusion. The Jews put Alexander forward to speak, but when the crowd realized he was a Jew, they cried out for about two hours, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!"

At last, the mayor was able to quiet them down enough to speak. "Men of Ephesus," he said, "everyone knows that Ephesus is the center of the religion of the great Diana, whose image fell down to us from Heaven. Since this is an indisputable fact, you shouldn't be disturbed no matter what is said and should do nothing rash. Yet you have brought these men here who have stolen nothing from her temple and have not defamed her. If Demetrius and the craftsmen have a case against them, the courts are currently in session, and the judges can take the case at once. Let them go through legal channels. And if there are complaints about other matters, they can be settled at the regular City Council meetings, for we are in danger of being called to account by the Roman government for today's riot, since there is no cause for it. And if Rome demands an explanation, I don't know what to say." Then he dismissed them, and they dispersed.