

NOT SO QUICKLY SHAKEN
PREACH THROUGH THE BIBLE: I THESSALONIANS
II Thessalonians 2:1-15

I. COMPOSITION

A. PAULINE AUTHORSHIP

1. ATTRIBUTED IN TEXT

a. Greeting—**1:1**

- Written by Paul—along with Sylvanus (Silas) and Timothy

b. Closing

- **3:17**—*I, Paul write this greeting with my own hand, and this is a distinguishing mark in every letter; this is the way I write.*

1. Not a unique statement by Paul—but found in two other letters

- **I Cor 16:21**—*The greeting is in my own hand*
- **Gal 6:11**—*See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand.*

2. Why this statement is particularly important in *this* letter

- To validate its authenticity
- Contrasted to forged letter(s) they might have received—not from Paul—**2:2**

2. SOME SCHOLARS DO NOT SUPPORT PAULINE AUTHORSHIP

c. Letter repeats much of what is in I Thessalonians

d. Different approach to Parousia than what Paul said in I Thessalonians

1. I Thessalonians

- a. Parousia will come suddenly—unexpectedly
- b. Parousia is very close

2. II Thessalonians

- a. Certain apocalyptic signs will be seen first
- b. This makes it seem the Parousia is further in the future

3. SUPPORT FOR PAULINE AUTHORSHIP

a. Paul was correcting a **misconception** about the Parousia

1. Maybe some had gone too far with ‘prophetic utterances’

- Paul urged them earlier—**I Thess 5:20**—*do not despise prophetic utterances*

2. Paul urged Thessalonians not to be misled by false prophecies—not from Paul

- **II Thess 2:2**—*that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit, or a message or a letter as if from me . . .*

b. **Misconception** about the **Parousia**

1. Some were saying—*the day of the Lord has come*—or—*is at hand*—**II Thess 2:2**

2. Two possible meanings

a. The Second-coming—had **already** taken place

- ✓ One kind of ‘realized eschatology’
- ✓ Says the Second Coming was realized with the coming of the Holy Spirit
- ✓ The kingdom of God is *already* here—in all its *finality*

b. The Second-coming is **so close**—we should cease normal activities

c. Practical result of this misconception—**II Thess 3:6-13**

1. Some are leading ‘*unruly*’ lives—vv **6, 7, 11**

- **ΑΤΑΚΤΟΣ—ΑΤΑΚΤΕΩ**—‘without order’—‘deviating from the set rule’
- Lawless—disorderly conduct
- Neglectful of duty
- **Like soldiers marching out of order—or quitting ranks**

2. Specific problem—**v11**

a. Some had stopped working

b. They were eating others’ bread—without paying for it

c. Instead of being **busy at work**—they had become ‘*busy-bodies*’

- ✓ **περιεργαζομαι** = spinning around with frenetic energy
- ✓ Consumed with trifling matters
- ✓ Bustling about uselessly—spinning one’s wheels
- ✓ Butting into others’ business

d. Paul’s response

1. Whoever does not work—does not eat!—**v 10**

2. Get back to work—in quiet fashion—and mind your own business!—**v 12**

B. DATE AND PLACE OF ORIGIN

1. DATE—ABOUT 50-51 AD

- a. Not long after sending first letter to Thessalonica
 - Paul urged them not to be so *soon* (swiftly) shaken from their composure—[2:2](#)
- b. While still on the 3rd missionary journey

2. LOCATION—POSSIBLY CORINTH—LIKELY VENUE FOR I THESSALONIANS

IV. THEMES

A. MAIN THEME

1. AGAIN—CORRECT UNDERSTANDING ABOUT THE PAROUSIA
2. ESCHATOLOGY IS STILL A KEY THEME
 - a. God’s righteous **judgment**—when Jesus is revealed from heaven—[1:5-10](#)
 - b. Apocalyptic **signs**—that will appear before the End—[2:1-12](#)
 1. The ‘**apostasy**’—comes first
 2. The ‘**man of lawlessness**’ (son of destruction)—will be revealed
 - a. He will exalt himself above everyone/thing
 - b. The Mystery of lawlessness is at work even now—deception of wickedness
 3. God will send a deluding influence—so people will believe what is false
 - c. Proper **work ethic** and **behavior**—during these last days—[3:6-12](#)

B. OTHER THEMES

1. PERSEVERANCE IN MIDST OF PERSECUTION
2. STAND FIRM IN THE APOSTOLIC TEACHINGS
3. ENCOURAGEMENT AND AFFIRMATION OF FAITHFULNESS
4. DO NOT GROW WEARY IN DOING GOOD

V. OUTLINE/ORGANIZATION

1:1-2	Greeting
1:3-4	Thanksgiving and Commendation
1:5-12	God’s Righteous Judgment
2:1-12	Signs of the Second Coming
2:13-3:5	Exhortation to Stand Firm
3:6-13	Warning against Idleness
3:14-15	Call to Discipline
3:16-18	Closing

VI. BIBLICAL TEXT

II Thessalonians 2:1-2, 15

1 Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, 2 that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. . . . 15 So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us.

VII. EXPOSITION

A. SITUATION

1. IN FIRST THESSALONIANS

a. The **Problem**

- **Worry about**—what happens to those who have died before the Parousia

b. Paul's **Answer**

1. When Christ returns—the dead in Christ will rise first
2. Those who are alive will be caught up with them
3. His coming will be immediate and unexpected—people will be unprepared
4. Nobody knows when it will happen—so be prepared

2. IN SECOND THESSALONIANS

a. The **Problem**

1. New and false prophecies/teachings
 - a. Either—they have been told the Parousia has already occurred
 - b. Or—they think it is so imminent—they stop everything else—to wait on the Lord

2. Effects

- a. Shaken confidence—if the Parousia has occurred
 - ✓ Is this all there is to the Kingdom of God?
 - ✓ The problems of everyday life continue!
 - ✓ Believers are still dying—what about eternal life?
- b. Uncertainty and Unruliness—in the new Utopia
 - ✓ Who is in control—God or human government?
 - ✓ What are the new rules—of this Kingdom of God?

- ✓ Conflict and disagreement—disturbs social order
- ✓ Idealism—avoids dealing with issues of everyday life

b. Paul's **Answer**

1. Immediate answers—about the Parousia

- Christ has not already come!—[as some have said]
- There will be signs of His coming—[that have not yet occurred]
- Don't stop working in order to look for Him
- Stop meddling in others' affairs that are not your business
- Be quietly at work when He comes

2. Long-term solution—how to deal with *any* theological issue/problem

a. **Wrong** approach—addressed in **2:1-2**

1. Don't be unsettled—don't let your composure be quickly shaken or disturbed
2. Warning—false prophets and messages may seem compelling
3. Don't listen to anything not genuine

- ◇ It is not genuine—if **not from us** [Paul, Silas, Timothy]
- ◇ It is not genuine—if not of apostolic origin

b. **Right** approach—given in **2:15**

1. Stand firm
2. Hold to the traditions you have been taught
3. Listen only to what is genuine

- ◇ It is genuine—if of apostolic origin
- ◇ It is genuine—if **from us** [Paul, Silas, Timothy]

B. DO NOT BE QUICKLY SHAKEN

1 Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, 2 that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come

1. DO NOT BE QUICKLY SHAKEN FROM YOUR COMPOSURE OR BE DISTURBED

a. *quickly* = swiftly

1. A key to dating the letter
 - Paul answers a problem that arose soon after he left Thessalonica
2. Also hints at vulnerability and immaturity of readers

- Some are Hellenistic pagan converts
- With little foundation in Judeo-Christian theology
- Without knowledge of Jewish apocalyptic literature

b. *shaken in composure*

1. *shaken* = σαλεύω

a. Meaning

- ✓ Agitate—shake thoroughly
- ✓ Cause to totter—throw down
- ✓ Toss about—as by winds of storm

b. Examples

1. **John the Baptist**—was not a *reed shaken in the wind*—Mt 11:7
2. The **house built on rock**—*could not be shaken*—Lk 6:48
3. Opposite of ‘**double-minded**’ man—[though different word is used here]

Jas 1:6-8—who is *driven by the wind and tossed*

c. **Irony**—about the Jewish connection

1. Thessalonian Jews **shook up the crowds** while Paul was in **Berea**—Acts 17:3
2. Maybe—their false ideas about the Apocalypse infected the Thessalonians
3. Paul warned Titus—about Jewish false prophets—**Titus 1:10-14**

- ◇ Who upset ‘whole families’—teaching what they should not teach
- ◇ Who deceived people with their Jewish myths and man-made rules

2. [shaken] *in composure* = νοῦσ

- a. Shaken in ‘mind’—the very center of the human spirit
- b. Not just an *emotional* reaction—not a *moral* problem related to behavior
- c. But shaken—to the core of one’s foundational beliefs!

c. *or disturbed* = θροέω

1. Root word = ‘cry out’—to ‘wail’
2. Troubled—frightened—to the point of crying out

2. BY A SPIRIT OR A MESSAGE OR A LETTER AS IF FROM US

- a. Paul addresses three aspects of genuine oracles from God

1. Spirit—**πνευμα**—the **means** of communicating God’s oracles

➤ *Inspired* by The **Holy** Spirit—not just any ‘spirit’

2. Message—**λογος**—the **content** of God’s oracles

➤ *Meaning* what God intends to communicate

➤ Using **words** and ideas consistent with His living **Word**

3. Letter—**επιστολη**—the **medium** of God’s oracles

➤ *Written* by persons chosen and inspired by God

➤ *Recorded* for posterity—as normative guidance for all generations

b. *as if from us*

1. These are forgeries

a. Forgeries might claim one or more of these three aspects

1. They might *seem* inspired

2. They might *sound* right

3. They might have a long-standing *written* tradition

b. But they are not genuine—lacking full divine witness and execution

2. How to detect forgeries

a. Spirit

1. Test the ‘spirits’

I Jn 4:1-3—*Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God.*

2. Any ‘spirit’ not confessing Christ and consistent with His words—is false

b. Message

1. Examine the ‘word’

Acts 17:11—*Now these [Bereans] were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.*

2. Any ‘message’ not consistent with Scripture—is false

c. Letter

1. Is it a ‘letter’ of the Spirit—consistent with God’s heart-message

II Cor 3:2-3—*You are our letter, written in our hearts known and read by all men; being manifested that you are a letter of Christ, cared for by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.*

2. Any ‘letter’ of superficial legalism and human domination—is false
3. Apostolic authority—implied here
 - a. Paul already had defended his apostolic authority— in **I Thessalonians**
 1. Not to vindicate or justify himself
 2. But to validate—what he said was true—delivered from God

I Th 2:13—*For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.*

- b. Paul implies this again—in **II Thessalonians**
 1. If it is NOT *from us*—it is false—NOT God’s word to you—**2:2**
 2. If it IS *from us*—it is true—GENUINELY God’s word for you—**2:15**

C. STAND FIRM

15 *So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us.*

1. STAND FIRM

a. **στήκω** = stand fast

- Persevere—persist
- Standing strong
- Hold your ground

b. *brethren*

1. **Plural**—addressed to whole church
2. Not just individual believers alone
3. But—church strength—depends also on strength of members of body

c. Three important dimensions—of standing firm

1. **Foundation**—must be strong

◇ Foundation = **2:15**—*the traditions you were taught*

2. **Unity of belief** [and fellowship]

◇ **1:3**—*your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of your toward one another grows ever greater*

3. **Unified and disciplined** body

◇ **3:14-15**—*If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that person and do not associate with him, so that he will be put to shame. Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.*

2. SOURCE OF STRENGTH—IN STANDING FIRM

a. We cannot do this alone

b. God must be the source—Who **strengthens** us

1. **strengthen** = **στηρίζω**

◇ ‘stablish’—KJV

◇ To set—make firm—harden

◇ Stabilize—make constant

2. Affirmed in this letter

2:16-17—*Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace, comfort and **strengthen** your hearts in every good work and word.*

3:3—*But the Lord is faithful, and He will **strengthen** and protect you from the evil one.*

c. Just like Jesus

- When He *steadfastly set* His face to Jerusalem—**Lk 9:51**

3. TWO THINGS—THESSALONIANS NEEDED TO STAND FIRM AGAINST

a. **Persecution and affliction**

- Paul commended them for doing so
- **1:4**—*Therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure.*

b. **False doctrine**

- Paul was certain—they would respond to his direction

- **3:4**—*We have confidence in the Lord concerning you that you are doing and will continue to do what we command.*

4. STAND FIRM—ON WHAT?

a. *hold to the traditions which you were taught*

b. *traditions* = παραδοσις—from παραδιδωμι

1. That which is ‘delivered up’—transferred by word of mouth
2. Based on Jewish concept of teaching/learning how to apply the Law
 - Body of precepts—especially ritual
 - Which Jews said Moses delivered orally
 - Transmitted in unbroken succession to subsequent generations
 - Precepts that illustrated and expanded the written law
 - To be obeyed with equal reverence to OT Scripture

c. *what you have been taught*

1. διδασκω = to teach—didactically—to impart information—instill doctrine
2. Root word for διδαχη--teaching(s)
 - *they continued in the teachings of the apostles*—Acts 2:42
3. This was a foundation of the New Testament Church
 - Combined with the κερυγμα—preaching of the cross/gospel
4. Paul had already ‘taught’ them these things

2:5—*Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things?*

5. So—these were not just human traditions—not oral Jewish interpretations of the Law
6. They were specific—apostolic teachings—that became NT Scripture

d. **Summary:** *traditions which you were taught*

1. These were part of the Apostolic teachings—διδαχη
2. Based on the OT—and its fulfillment by Christ
3. Not just human tradition—but divinely inspired Scripture
4. Originally passed on orally—later written into the New Testament
5. How is this related to the idea of **Apostolic Succession**?
 - **Not** that each generation has apostolic authority to **define** scriptural meaning

➤ **But** that each generation has responsibility to **maintain** apostolic teaching

6. WE STAND FIRM ON

➤ **Important** ‘traditions’—established by **Christ** and taught by the **Apostles**

D. PAUL RAISES THIS ISSUE: WHAT IS WORTH BEING ‘DISTURBED ABOUT?’

1. NOT PERIPHERAL ISSUES

- Theology of Calvin or Arminius
- Views of the millennium
- The nature or timing of the eschaton—futurist—inaugurated—realized—eschaton
- Authorship of books
- Women in ministry
- Praying in Jesus’ name
- Offices and governance of church

2. BUT CORE ISSUES

- Nature, character and Person of God
- Person and work of Christ
- Plan of redemption and means of salvation
- Nature of Scripture—but not specific forms of inerrancy
- Identity and mission of church
- Certainty of eschaton and judgment