

# JOIN THE JOURNEY™

*A one-year journey with the early church*



## Introduction to Dr. Tom Constable and His Bible Study (Expository) Notes

Dr. Constable is one of the most respected and beloved teachers of God's Word at Dallas Theological Seminary, and he has served as a Bible teacher and elder at Plano Bible Chapel for many years. Learn more about him at: [www.soniclight.com/constable/index.htm](http://www.soniclight.com/constable/index.htm). You can explore the rest of the Sonic Light website by left-clicking in the top lighthouse graphic to return to Sonic Light's homepage, or click on one of the tabs to see other pages:

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NOTES ON

## 2 THESSALONIANS

2007 EDITION

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### INTRODUCTION

#### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

This epistle contains evidence that Paul had recently heard news about current conditions in the Thessalonian church. Probably most of this information came to him from the person who had carried 1 Thessalonians to its recipients and had returned to Paul at Corinth. Perhaps other people who had news of the church had informed Paul, Silas, and Timothy also. Some of the news was good. The majority of the Thessalonians were continuing to grow and to remain faithful to Christ in spite of persecution. Unfortunately some of the news was bad. False teaching concerning the day of the Lord had entered the church and was causing confusion and leading some of the Christians to quit their jobs in expectation of the Lord's return.

In view of these reports Paul evidently felt constrained to write this epistle. He commended his children in the faith for their growth and faithfulness, corrected the doctrinal error about the day of the Lord, and warned the idle to get back to work.

Almost all conservative scholars believe that Paul wrote 2

Thessalonians from Corinth. The basis for this conclusion is that Paul, Silas, and Timothy were present together in Corinth (Acts 18:5). The New Testament does not refer to them being together from then on, though they may have been. Paul evidently wrote 1 Thessalonians from Corinth. The topics he treated in the second epistle seem to grow out of situations he alluded to in the first epistle. They reflect a very similar situation in the Thessalonian church. Corinth, therefore, seems the probable site of composition of 2 Thessalonians.

For these reasons it appears that Paul composed 2 Thessalonians quite soon after 1 Thessalonians, perhaps within 12 months.<sup>1</sup> This would place the date of composition in the early A.D. 50s, perhaps A.D. 51, and would make this the third of Paul's canonical writings, assuming Galatians was his first.

“The external evidence for the Pauline authorship of 2 Thessalonians is stronger than for 1 Thessalonians.”<sup>2</sup>

## PURPOSE

Three purposes are evident from the contents of the epistle. Paul wrote to encourage the Thessalonian believers to continue to persevere in the face of continuing persecution (1:3-10). He also wanted to clarify events preceding the day of the Lord to dispel false teaching (2:1-12). Finally, he instructed the church how to deal with lazy Christians in their midst (3:6-15).

## OUTLINE<sup>3</sup>

- I. Salutation 1:1-2
- II. Commendation for past progress 1:3-12
  - A. Thanksgiving for growth 1:3-4
  - B. Encouragement to persevere 1:5-10
  - C. Prayer for success 1:11-12
- III. Correction of present error 2:1-12
  - A. The beginning of the day of the Lord 2:1-5
  - B. The mystery of lawlessness 2:6-12
- IV. Thanksgiving and prayer 2:13-17
  - A. Thanksgiving for calling 2:13-15
  - B. Prayer for strength 2:16-17
- V. Exhortations for future growth 3:1-15
  - A. Reciprocal prayer 3:1-5
    1. Prayer for the missionaries 3:1-2
    2. Prayer for the Thessalonians 3:3-5
  - B. Church discipline 3:6-15

1. General principles respecting disorderly conduct 3:6-10
2. Specific instructions concerning the idle 3:11-13
3. Further discipline for the unrepentant 3:14-15

## VI. Conclusion 3:16-18

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## FOOTNOTES

- 1 T. W. Manson, “St. Paul in Greece: The Letters to the Thessalonians,” *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 35 (1952-53):438-46; Charles A. Wanamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians*, pp. 37-45; and others argued that Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians before 1 Thessalonians.
- 2 Robert L. Thomas, “2 Thessalonians,” in *Ephesians-Philemon*, vol. 11 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, p. 302.
- 3 For an outline based on rhetorical analysis, see Wanamaker, p. 51.