

Introduction

A number of years ago I invited in a young pastor to speak to our congregation. The young man was a youth pastor at another vineyard church, and I had met him at our annual men's conference which I led. The young man was full of zeal, and moved in prophetic ministry. I wanted our congregation to benefit from his prophetic ministry. I believe that it is healthy for churches to be equipped by apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. God gave these five governmental gifts to equip the saints for the work of service, and to build up the body of Christ until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man. Since I want the body to grow, and to mature, I am always looking for opportunities for our church to receive areas of ministry other than what I regularly operate in.

(Eph 4:11–13) “And He gave some *as* apostles, and some *as* prophets, and some *as* evangelists, and some *as* pastors and teachers, {12} for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; {13} until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.”

Unfortunately, the young man shared some things that needed some correction so that our congregation did not follow everything the young man shared. I took the next Sunday to give a more correct understanding about salvation. The gospel message is an extremely important message. In fact, Paul told the Galatians that if anyone preaches a different gospel, he is to be accursed. Paul was so serious about this that he repeated himself to make sure people understood the importance of the message of the gospel.

(Ga 1:6–9) “I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; {7} which is *really* not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. {8} But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! {9} As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!”

This second letter to the Thessalonians was Paul's letter of correction to give the church a better understanding, not of salvation, but of the Day of the Lord. He did not want them upset or misinformed about this doctrine, so he, Silas, and Timothy immediately addressed it. This second letter was probably written two or three months after the first letter. In the Introduction, we will look at the setting, the authors, the recipients, and the greeting.

Introduction to 2 Thessalonians

1. Setting
2. Authors
3. Recipients
4. Greeting

(2 Th 1:1–2) “Paul and Silvanus and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: {2} Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

1. Setting

When Paul, Silas, and Timothy wrote the first letter to the Thessalonians, they wrote about the coming of Christ and the day of the Lord. The Thessalonians were under heavy persecution, and one or more of the brethren had probably died, and possibly from persecution. They had questions about where those who are asleep were, and are they going to miss the resurrection or be an inferior position than those who are still alive. There were others that thought the day of the Lord was so close at hand that they were not working while they waited. Third, there were some people who had shared some things with the church that upset them. They told them that they had a prophetic message, and even a letter from Paul that the Day of the Lord has already come, and they had missed it. Paul wrote to tell them that this was not true, and the Day of the Lord had not come. Like I did after the young man spoke to our congregation, he addressed the things that needed to be corrected. Paul wanted the Thessalonians to have a better understanding of the Day of the Lord, so he immediately wrote the second letter. It was probably written two to four months after the first letter. The thrust of the letter is the correction about this erroneous understanding and teaching that sprung up, but it begins with a greeting and commendation, and ends with some exhortations on orderly conduct, and a farewell greeting.

(2 Th 2:1–2) “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.”

Depending on how you date the first letter, the dating of the second letter will follow by a few months. Many scholars date the first letter around 50-51 AD, while some date it a couple of years later. It was written from Corinth, during Paul’s eighteen months of establishing the churches in Corinth and Cenchrea. Corinth is 358 miles south of Thessalonica, so it would take several weeks to travel there by foot. For Paul to get feedback from Thessalonica and then to get a letter back to them, it would have taken a period of time, which is why scholars date this letter several months after the first letter. It was a timely response considering their means of communication at that time. Today, with cell phones, emails, zoom calls, cars, planes, and other ways to communicate and travel, we can have much more responsive and timely feedback.

2. Authors (2 Th 1:1)

The authors of this book are Paul, Silvanus (Silas), and Timothy. They wrote the first letter a few months after they had founded the church. Throughout the first letter, “we” is used, and it refers to Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy. In fact, “we” is used fifty-one times in that letter; “our” is used twenty-three times, and “us” is used twenty times. In this second letter we see the same pattern. “We” is used seventeen times; “us” is used four times; and “our” is used three times.

(2 Th 1:1) “Paul and Silvanus and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:”

Word	1 Thessalonians	2 Thessalonians
We	53	17
Our	23	3
Us	29	4
I	1	2
My	0	1

In most of Paul's letters, he mentions himself and others as the authors, and he signs the letter with his own handwriting. He is dictating to the other person, who is writing the letter on behalf of Paul. Most people believe that Paul had poor eyesight, which is why he signed it with big letters. In the first letter he did not state that, he just said, "I adjure you by the Lord to have this letter read to all the brethren." At the very end of this second letter, in 2 Thessalonians 3:17, Paul said, "I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand, and this is a distinguishing mark in every letter; this is the way I write." He did not say this in the first letter, but since they are a new congregation, he wants them to know this. There is a second reason that Paul mentions this, and that is because someone has said they have a letter from Paul about the Day of the Lord already taking place, and Paul did not send it. He authenticated all his letters by signing them himself, and this is an important thing for them to know.

(2 Th 2:1–2) "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."

After the first apostolic trip that Paul took with Barnabas, Paul suggested to Barnabas that they go back and check on all the brethren in the various churches they planted. They had a sharp disagreement about John Mark accompanying them. John Mark was Barnabas's cousin (Col 4:10), and he wanted to take him along. But John Mark had abandoned them on the first apostolic trip, and Paul did not want to bring along an unfaithful brother. . So, Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus, but Paul chose Silas and left. Silas is a nickname for Sylvanus. Paul and Silas traveled through Syria and Cilicia strengthening the churches, and they came to Derbe and to Lystra, which is where they added Timothy to the team. The three of them were now passing through the cities, and were strengthening the churches in their faith.

Paul, Silas, and Timothy passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. When they got to Troas, Paul had a vision of a man in Macedonia standing and appealing to him to come to Macedonia and to help them. The three of them concluded that God was calling them there to preach the gospel to them. They put out to sea and went past the island of Samothrace to Neapolis, a city on the coast of Thrace. Then, they went to Philippi, the leading city in the district of Macedonia.

(Ac 16:6–12) "They passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia; {7} and after they came to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them; {8} and passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. {9} A vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing and appealing to him, and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." {10} When he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them. {11} So putting out to sea from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and on the day following to Neapolis; {12} and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia, a *Roman* colony; and we were staying in this city for some days."

In Philippi, they were arrested, beaten and thrown into prison. While in prison, the jailer and his household were saved. When they were released, Paul let the chief magistrate know that they had beaten and imprisoned a Roman citizen without a trial. This was a very serious mistake that they had made and were now at Paul's mercy. The chief magistrate appealed and begged them to

leave the city, which they did. They went through Amphipolis and Apollonia, two smaller cities in Macedonia, and they finally arrived at Thessalonica.

According to Paul's custom, he went to the synagogue of the Jews and reasoned with them from the Scriptures for three Sabbaths. Some of the Jews were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, along with a large number of the God-fearing Greeks and a number of the leading women. Luke only mentions Paul and Silas, but Timothy was also with them. At this point, Timothy is an apprentice and helper. Later on, through the laying on of hands by the presbytery, he was confirmed into apostolic ministry (1 Tim 4:14). It is fitting for these two letters to come from Paul, Silas, and Timothy, the three men who brought the gospel to the Thessalonians. Because of the confusion about the first letter, it was also appropriate for the three of them to address this as a team in the second letter.

Let's take a brief look at each of these three men who authored this letter to the Thessalonians. The leader of this apostolic team is Paul. His Hebrew name was Saul, which means asked. After he became a Christian, and was ministering to Gentiles, he was called Paul, which is a Latin name, meaning little or small. He was a descendant of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin. He was a descendant of Abraham, and had been circumcised on the eighth day. He was a Hebrew of Hebrews, meaning he spoke Hebrew, and he was also a Pharisee. Paul was also the son of a Pharisee, and had been brought up and trained to be a Pharisee. He studied under Gamaliel, who was very well respected among the Pharisees.

(Php 3:4–5) “although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: {5} circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee;”

(Ac 22:3) “I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated under Gamaliel, strictly according to the law of our fathers, being zealous for God just as you all are today.”

As a zealous Pharisee, Paul was actively engaged in persecuting those that belonged to the Way, a name by which the Christians were called. While on his way to Damascus to arrest and bring back any Christians that he found, God revealed Himself to him. God appeared as a bright light and blinded Paul so that he had to be led by those that accompanied him. Jesus spoke to him and asked him, “Why are you persecuting Me?” The men heard the voice, but saw no one.

(Ac 9:1–9) “Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest, {2} and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. {3} As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; {4} and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” {5} And he said, “Who are You, Lord?” And He *said*, “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting, {6} but get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do.” {7} The men who traveled with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. {8} Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; and leading him by the hand, they brought him into Damascus. {9} And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.”

When Paul arrived at Damascus, Ananias came to Paul and laid hands on him, and when he did, something like scales fell from his eyes and he regained his sight. He got up and was baptized,

took food, and was strengthened. The Lord told Ananias that Paul “is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name’s sake.

(Ac 9:11–19) “And the Lord *said* to him, “Get up and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying, {12} and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him, so that he might regain his sight.” {13} But Ananias answered, “Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he did to Your saints at Jerusalem; {14} and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name.” {15} But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; {16} for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name’s sake.” {17} So Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” {18} And immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he regained his sight, and he got up and was baptized; {19} and he took food and was strengthened. Now for several days he was with the disciples who were at Damascus,”

Even though Paul was called to be an apostle, he did not serve in that capacity for many years. While Paul was living in Tarsus, Barnabas came to him and asked him to help him establish the church in Antioch. During the next eighteen months they preached the gospel, made disciples, and raised up a leadership team.

(Ac 11:25–26) “And he left for Tarsus to look for Saul; {26} and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And for an entire year they met with the church and taught considerable numbers; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.”

While that pastoral team was ministering to the Lord, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work which I have called them.” From that point on, they are referred to as apostles. On that first apostolic trip, Barnabas was the team leader. They were apostles, but they were not apostles of the Lamb. Many teach that Paul became the twelfth apostle, taking Judas’ place, but Paul does not meet requirements in Acts 1 to be an apostle of the Lamb. Paul was not there for the baptism of Jesus, with Him during His ministry, and a witness of His death and resurrection, which were the requirements for those twelve men. That does not however diminish his value or work as an apostle. He wrote thirteen of the books of the New Testament, more than anyone else.

(Ac 13:1–4) “Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was *there*, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. {2} While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” {3} Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. {4} So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia and from there they sailed to Cyprus.”

(Ac 1:21–22) “Therefore it is necessary that of the men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us— {22} beginning with the baptism of John until the day that He was taken up from us—one of these *must* become a witness with us of His resurrection.”

Silas was a prophet before joining Paul's apostolic team. He is called Silvanus in this letter, but he is also referred to as Silas, which is a nickname for Silvanus. Silas is the root word and means "of the woods." In Roman mythology, Silvanus was the Roman god of forests. If I had his name, I would probably want to be referred to as Silas, not Silvanus, since it was a mythological god. He is first mentioned in Acts 15, where Paul and Barnabas had gone to Jerusalem to meet with the elders and apostles about the requirements for being saved. There were those who were teaching that circumcision was necessary to be saved, but Barnabas and Paul said it is by faith and not by works. The apostles and elders in Jerusalem agreed with Barnabas and Paul, and they wrote a letter to the churches with their decision about this matter. The apostles sent Judas and Silas to verify the letter and the decision. When they arrived in Antioch, Silas encouraged the saints with a lengthy message.

(Ac 15:27-34) "Therefore we have sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will also report the same things by word *of mouth*... {30} So when they were sent away, they went down to Antioch; and having gathered the congregation together, they delivered the letter. {31} When they had read it, they rejoiced because of its encouragement. {32} Judas and Silas, also being prophets themselves, encouraged and strengthened the brethren with a lengthy message. {33} After they had spent time *there*, they were sent away from the brethren in peace to those who had sent them out. {34} But it seemed good to Silas to remain there."

Timothy joined Paul's team when he and Silas were in Derbe and Lystra. He was well spoken of by the brethren. His father was a Greek, and his mother was a Jewish believer. Since his father was Greek, Timothy had not been circumcised. Paul wanted Timothy to be able to go into the synagogues with him, and circumcision was required. Paul circumcised Timothy for ministry purposes, not as a requirement for salvation.

(Ac 16:1-4) "Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. And a disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek, {2} and he was well spoken of by the brethren who were in Lystra and Iconium. {3} Paul wanted this man to go with him; and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those parts, for they all knew that his father was a Greek. {4} Now while they were passing through the cities, they were delivering the decrees which had been decided upon by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem, for them to observe."

Timothy's name means one who honors God. Paul refers to Timothy as a brother, a fellow worker, and a beloved son. Paul mentored Timothy and helped him fulfill the calling on his life as an apostle. Many people mistakenly teach that Timothy was the pastor in Ephesus, but he was an apostle who was helping the church in Ephesus. He was there at Paul's request to help resolve some problems with false teachers. Paul's two letters to Timothy give us valuable instructions about prayer, treatment of widows, the qualifications of deacons and elders, and many other things.

3. Recipients (2 Th 1:1)

The recipients of this letter are the saints in Thessalonica. God inspired the letter to be part of the canon of Scripture, and in that sense, it is a letter to all of us.

(2 Th 1:1) "Paul and Silvanus and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:"

Thessalonica was the capital city of the Roman province of Macedonia. It was founded around 315 B.C. The main road that linked all the important cities of Macedonia was the Via Egnatia, and it passed through Thessalonica. It was a coastal city, and it was the home of a great Macedonian naval fleet. It was considered the chief port of Macedonia.

The church in Thessalonica was made up of both Jews and Gentiles. When Paul first came to Thessalonica, he went to the Jewish synagogue for three weeks and reasoned with them. Paul preached the gospel to the Jew first, and then he would turn his attention to the Gentiles, as he was an apostle to the Gentiles. It is clear that there were prominent women and other influential people that accepted Christ and became part of the church. At the same time, we know that there were some poor people in the church, and Paul encouraged them to work hard. Luke recorded that a large number of God-fearing Greeks became believers.

(Ac 17:1–4) “Now when they had traveled through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. {2} And according to Paul’s custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, {3} explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and *saying*, “This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ.” {4} And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, along with a large number of the God-fearing Greeks and a number of the leading women.”

There are differing thoughts on how long Paul, Silas, and Timothy were in Thessalonica. We know that they were there for the three Sabbaths. We do not know how long he spent preaching to the Gentiles in Thessalonica before the Jews formed a mob and set the city in an uproar. During the uproar, they attacked the house of Jason, who had welcomed Paul into his home. In Romans 16:21, Paul refers to Jason as a kinsman, so he was a Jewish believer that received the gospel message that Paul had shared in the synagogue. Jason was a peace-maker and got things settled down in Thessalonica by making a pledge to the city officials.

(Ac 17:5-9) “But the Jews, becoming jealous and taking along some wicked men from the market place, formed a mob and set the city in an uproar; and attacking the house of Jason, they were seeking to bring them out to the people. {6} When they did not find them, they *began* dragging Jason and some brethren before the city authorities, shouting, “These men who have upset the world have come here also; {7} and Jason has welcomed them, and they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus.” {8} They stirred up the crowd and the city authorities who heard these things. {9} And when they had received a pledge from Jason and the others, they released them.”

Paul and Silas left Thessalonica and went to Berea, which is about forty-five miles away. The Jews in Thessalonica heard that Paul was in Berea and they went there to agitate and stir up the crowds there. Paul went on to Athens, but Silas and Timothy stayed in Berea. In 1 Thessalonians 3, we find out that while Paul was in Athens, he and Silas sent Timothy back to Thessalonica to strengthen and encourage them. This was a very young church, and Timothy’s help was needed and appreciated.

(1 Th 3:1–2) “Therefore when we could endure it no longer, we thought it best to be left behind at Athens alone, {2} and we sent Timothy, our brother and God’s fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith,”

The first letter was written after Timothy had returned from visiting the Thessalonians. A period of one or two months have transpired, and they learn of some troubles in Thessalonica, particularly relating to the Day of the Lord. The first letter was written to strengthen and encourage the saints, to comfort them about the death of believers, and to instruct them about the day of the Lord. This letter was written to eliminate confusion and any erroneous teaching they have picked up since the first letter.

4. Greeting (2 Th 1:2)

Paul gives a greeting of grace and peace. He says, "grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." In the Hebrew culture, people did not say, "Hi, how are you." They greeted one another with a blessing of peace. Typically, they would say, "Shalom," which means peace. Having grown up in the Middle East, our normal greeting to people was "Salaam," which means peace. The full greeting is salaam malaikum, which means peace be upon you. It is customary to greet and bless people with peace. The peace that Paul blesses them with is a peace that surpasses all comprehension. It is a supernatural peace. It is not the absence of trouble, conflict, hardship, or difficulty, which are all external matters. God's peace is an internal manifestation. He gives us peace in the midst of troubles.

(2 Th 1:2) "Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

Paul not only greets them with peace, but also grace. There are two definitions of grace that I want to quickly mention. Grace can mean the unmerited favor of God. It is by this unmerited favor or grace that we are saved. Our salvation is not as a result of works that no man should boast. This is an unmerited, undeserved favor that we are given by God. We cannot earn this grace. This grace should create in us a gratefulness and should be reflected in our worship and praise to Him. We find this grace in Ephesians 2.

(Eph 2:8-9) "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; {9} not as a result of works, that no one should boast."

There is another type of grace that we have. The Lord told Paul in the midst of his afflictions that His grace was sufficient for him. This grace is not just the unmerited favor, but it is the desire and ability to carry out God's will. Grace can also mean the measure of God's provision in strength, ability, power, gifts, and resources to carry out His will.

(2 Cor 12:9) "And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me."

In Romans 12, Paul speaks about this grace a couple of times. He speaks into their lives by the grace that was given to him. Paul was doing an apostolic work and was given the grace to do this work. Paul did not have any more favor with God than you or I. Paul had a desire and ability to do a certain work that God had called him to. He alludes to this grace again at the close of his letter. He wrote them very boldly on some points and he could do that because of the grace that was given to him by God.

(Rom 12:3) "For through the grace given to me I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith."

(Rom 15:15) "But I have written very boldly to you on some points, so as to remind you again, because of the grace that was given me from God,"

In Romans 12:6, Paul says that each of them had gifts that differed according to the grace given to them. Like Paul, each of us have been given certain gifts, abilities, and resources to carry out God's call for our lives. Therefore, each of them was to exercise them accordingly.

(Rom 12:6) "And since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let each exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith;"

We need to give our grace and peace to one another. When we greet one another, we should learn to extend grace and peace. Our words should encourage and motivate one another to have more desire and ability to accomplish God's will. Our words should not bring trouble and unrest but peace. Our words should bring about a calmness and rest. Our words should bring about a trust in God and His word. Our speech needs to be seasoned with grace. This grace opens people up; it opens doors of communication. This grace endears us to people. It makes people want to be around us. It is this grace and peace that will make a difference in Rome, Georgia, or wherever God may have you.

Conclusion and Applications

The most apparent application for this letter to the Thessalonians is correction to error. The church is called by God to be the pillar and support of truth. The message that Paul, Silas, and Timothy sent to the Thessalonians got perverted by some that said they had a message or letter or something by the spirit. The Thessalonians were being disturbed and shaken up over the false teaching or words. False words and false teachings need to be corrected, and Paul, Silas, and Timothy responded immediately. They brought correction, and proper understanding.

In their first letter they had ended with a plea to not despise prophetic utterances, but at the same time they were to examine everything carefully. Prophecies that are not examined open up the church to deception, so they must be examined. We are to hold fast to what is good and abstain from every evil. Paul is helping the Thessalonians learn this lesson. We must apply this in our lives. We earnestly desire the greater gifts, especially prophecy so that the church can receive edification. But if there is error in the prophecy that is not corrected, it can disturb people and hurt the church. So, we must examine everything carefully, and be the pillar and support of the truth that God calls us to be.

(1 Th 5:19–22) "Do not quench the Spirit; {20} do not despise prophetic utterances. {21} But examine everything *carefully*; hold fast to that which is good; {22} abstain from every form of evil."

(1 Ti 3:15) "but in case I am delayed, *I write* so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth."

It is good to record prophetic messages and then to read them afterwards. It is good to hold them up to the light of God's word and see if they line up. It is good to examine them carefully. We record prophetic words, and Chad has been great about typing them out and sending them to people. It is a great service to all of us.

When we see error in a teaching or a prophetic word, we need to seek God's direction for how to handle it. In a service, the elders have a responsibility to judge the word. The congregation has a responsibility to judge and bring anything to the attention of the elders that needs correction. All of us have a part to play. Sometimes we are to bring public correction to a word. At other times, we may need to give a private word of correction in a spirit of gentleness.

After Paul had preached the gospel to the Galatians, some people came in and preached that the Gentiles needed to be circumcised to be saved. They perverted the gospel message. When Paul heard of it, he wrote the letter of Galatians to correct that false teaching. This letter to the Thessalonians is not the only example of bringing correction to false teaching.

(Ga 1:6–9) “I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; {7} which is *really* not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. {8} But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! {9} As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!”

Peter's second letter was about recognizing false teachers and false prophets. Paul's second letter to the Corinthians was about recognizing true and false apostles. The church must be discerning and prophetic words and teachings must be examined carefully. The Bereans were great about that; they examined everything carefully to make sure it lined up with the scriptures, and that is what we must also do.

(Ac 17:11) “Now these 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.”

Karen received a link to a message about Israel recently. She listened to the message, and that pastor was preaching that God was no longer concerned about Israel. The church is spiritual Israel and God is no longer concerned about natural Israel. His dealings with them are done. They blew it. This is clearly doctrinal error, and that line of teaching is called replacement theology. The Scriptures are clear that God has not rejected His people, and He is not done with them. There has been a partial hardening until the fullness of the time of the Gentiles is complete. Their hearts are being made jealous, and there will be a great harvest of Jews when the time of the Gentiles is complete. We are to pray for their salvation. The gospel is to be preached to the Jew first and then to the Greeks. Karen decided to send a word of doctrinal correction to the person that sent her the link to the message. She did not copy her word of correction to everyone who was sent the message. We have to examine everything carefully, and then bring correction when necessary and in the way that will glorify and honor God.

(Ro 10:1) “Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for *their* salvation.”

(Ro 11:1–2) “I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. {2} God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says in *the passage about* Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel?”

(Ro 11:25–26) “For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery—so that you will not be wise in your own estimation—that a partial hardening has happened to Israel

until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; {26} and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, “The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob.”

A second application is the importance of qualified leaders in the church. The qualifications for elders in the church include calling, character, and capability. We do not raise up elders to lead a church who are good old boys, and popular. We don't raise up successful business men who have the ability to give generously. We don't raise up uncalled and unqualified people of diverse backgrounds for the sake of getting a diverse representation. We raise up leaders who have been called by God, who model the character of Christ, and who are capable of leading the church. One of the areas of capability is in word ministry. In Paul's letter to Titus, he charged him with ordaining elders in every church in Crete and set things in order. Then, he gave him the qualifications of elders, which were also given by Paul to Timothy in his first letter to him. Elders are required to “hold fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that they will be able to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.” The overseers of the church must know the word so that they can teach it accurately, and bring correction when necessary.

(Tt 1:5-9) “For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint **elders** in every city as I directed you... {9} holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.”

The church in Thessalonica did not have elders in place. I am convinced that Paul did not leave the church without leaders in charge, but these temporary leaders had not been set in as elders. Paul would typically leave them in charge for a while, and then go back and ordain them at a later date. These leaders proved themselves with the flock and became approved. Paul, Silas, and Timothy had only been in Thessalonica for a few weeks, and all these were new believers. When Paul gave the requirements to Timothy, he stipulated that they must not be new converts, and all the people in Thessalonica were new converts. In Paul's letter to Titus, he used the term, elders, which is an elderly person, signifying maturity in the Lord. Therefore, he did not include that qualification in that letter. But, in 1 Timothy 3, Paul uses the term overseer, which is another of the three terms used to describe the office of overseer, but it focuses more on the work than the spiritual maturity, so it was necessary for Paul to include the statement about new believers and the importance of spiritual maturity. The Thessalonians did not have leaders who met all the qualifications, so I can assure you that Paul, Silas, and Timothy had not ordained any of them yet; They were not qualified. Therefore, Paul, Silas, and Timothy are carefully monitoring things as best they could and addressing this doctrinal problem very quickly, something qualified elders would be doing in an established church. We must have strong, qualified elders overseeing our churches, and the Thessalonians were blessed to have apostles like Paul, Silas, and Timothy working with them in their new church plant.

(1 Ti 3:1-6) “It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of **overseer**, it is a fine work he desires *to do*... {6} *and* not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil.”

At the end of 1 Thessalonians, Paul exhorted the church to appreciate those who diligently labor among them, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, and that they esteem them very highly in love because of their work. There was obviously a plurality of leaders put in place by Paul before he left Thessalonica.

(1 Th 5:12–13) “But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, {13} and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another.”

I believe the team leader was Jason. In Acts 17:5-9, we see several things that indicate he was the team leader. First, the Jews attacked the house of Jason and they dragged out Jason and some of the brethren. The church was obviously meeting in Jason’s house, an indication that he was the leader. Second, Jason is mentioned first, and a leader would typically be mentioned first. Third, the city authorities struck a deal with Jason, and he and the others gave a pledge, but his name is the only one mentioned. Jason obviously was the spokesperson and had the authority to strike the deal. Fourth, Jason is a Hebrew name, meaning healer. In Paul’s closing to his letter to the Romans, he mentioned Jason and Sosipater, his kinsmen. I believe that this is the same Jason that was in Thessalonica, and that he eventually joined Paul’s apostolic team. As a Jew, he would have been very familiar with the Old Testament law, so he would have a good Scriptural background. He would not have a good knowledge of the New Covenant and how churches were to be run, but he was probably the best qualified person to lead this new church that was full of baby Christians.

(Ac 17:5-9) “But the Jews, becoming jealous and taking along some wicked men from the market place, formed a mob and set the city in an uproar; and attacking the house of Jason, they were seeking to bring them out to the people. {6} When they did not find them, they *began* dragging Jason and some brethren before the city authorities, shouting, “These men who have upset the world have come here also; {7} and Jason has welcomed them, and they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus.” {8} They stirred up the crowd and the city authorities who heard these things. {9} And when they had received a pledge from Jason and the others, they released them.”

(Ro 16:21) “Timothy my fellow worker greets you, and *so do* Lucius and Jason and Sosipater, my kinsmen.”

Closing Prayer

Father, thank You for this letter to the Thessalonians. What a great example of how the church needs to address false prophecy and false teaching. Help us to be men and women of the word. Help us to be well-grounded in Scripture. Help us to examine everything carefully, and test it according to Your canonized word. Help us to raise up qualified leaders to oversee and pastor the church. Help all of us to grow and mature to the full measure and stature of Christ so that we are not deceived and led astray. Give us discernment and wisdom and knowledge, and may we use it to be pillars and supporters of truth. We pray these things in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Introduction to 2 Thessalonians

Introduction (Eph 4:11–13, Gal 1:6-9, 2 Th 1:1–2)

1. Setting (2 Th 2:1–2)

2. Authors (2 Th 1:1-2, Col 4:10, Ac 15:36-41, 16:6-12, 1 Tim 4:14, Php 3:4-5, Ac 22:3, 9:1–19, 11:25–26, 13:1-4, 1:21-22, 15:27-34, 16:1-4)

3. Recipients (2 Th 1:1, Ac 17:1–9, 1 Th 3:1–2)

4. Greeting (2 Th 1:2, Eph 2:8-9, 2 Cor 12:9, Rom 12:3, 15:15, 12:6)

Conclusion and Applications (1 Th 5:19–22, 1 Ti 3:15, Ga 1:6–9, Ac 17:11, Ro 10:1, 11:1-2, 11:25-26, Tit 1:5-9, 1 Ti 3:1-6, Ac 17:5-9, Ro 16:21)