



Thoughts from Second Thessalonians ...

## Thanks for the Brethren

"It is for this purpose also I labor," Paul had written the saints in Colossae, referring to his goal "that we may present every man perfect in Christ" (Colossians 1:28,29). *Labor* is certainly the correct word. It takes tremendous effort to seek and save the lost in the first place, and tremendous effort to continue to educate, train, motivate, and exhort the saints. The apostle was not particularly desirous that all his labor be wasted, or "in vain," as he occasionally phrased it. To the brethren in Thessalonica, his second epistle dealt with the coming *apostasy*, and the persuasive deluding influence that would sweep through anything resembling original Christianity. These delusions were very strong, and the result is that only those who loved the truth spiritually survived. As

the judgment of God worked in those days following the establishment of the first century church, in the same way that judgment continues; thus all who pretend to love the truth, but who secretly take pleasure in wickedness, will be shunted aside into some false doctrine. The apostle definitely does not want this to happen, and is willing to praise and encourage the faithful brethren in Thessalonica.

- **Always give thanks** — The Holy Spirit allowed the apostle Paul to have a somewhat panoramic look at the future. Knowing about the coming massive falling away from the original faith, and the plunging of the world into spiritual darkness, he was thankful that he lived at the time that he did, and was likewise thankful for the followers of Christ in Thessalonica. "But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by God," he compliments the saints, "because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation ..." (2 Thessalonians 2:13). In God's massive orchestration of events, He knows who would decide to submit to Christ, and determined the time at which they were to be born. These thoughts are too high for our thoughts, and these ways are too high for our ways (Isaiah 55:9). The apostle believed in the faithfulness of these brethren, knowing that they were necessary as part of Christ's bringing His church into existence and spreading rapidly in those early years.
- **For salvation** — God uses the issue of eternal salvation as His beginning conversation piece. Carefully balancing His eternal plan with the responsibility of the individual's making his choices, "God has shut up all in disobedience, that He might show mercy to all" (Romans 11:32). Hence the divine analysis is that "all have sinned," and are desperately in need of being saved from their sins and the consequences thereof. Thus the gospel of Christ is presented, and those who are obedient to it are spoken of as "saved," or "redeemed." These brethren in Thessalonica are thus "chosen from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth" (2 Thessalonians 2:13). It was His plan that they would be born at the time and the location where the first century gospel would be preached and they would be among those who would obey. The scriptures often bring in the Holy Spirit as part of the discussion about salvation. This ties in with the terms given by the apostle Peter the first time the gospel was preached, that not only was forgiveness of sins mentioned, but the promise of the indwelling Spirit as well. These points were of course coupled with the concept that the individual saint needed to have faith in the truth.

God — the Holy God — from the beginning has had a plan for producing a holy people, a special new race of people set apart or sanctified by the Holy Spirit. "And it was for this," affirms the apostle to those brethren, "He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thessalonians 2:14). May we also heed the call, have faith in the truth, obey the gospel, be sanctified by the Holy Spirit, not be pulled away by deluding influences, and attain to the glory waiting for those who faithfully follow Christ.

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