
Words of Truth

Introduction Thoughts To First And Second Thessalonians

By: Brian A. Yeager

We are going to be studying through the letters written to the church of the Thessalonians. Both letters were addressed to the saints in Thessalonica by Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus (I Thessalonians 1:1 and II Thessalonians 1:1). In this study we are going to take a look at some things we can learn about the Thessalonians from Scriptures outside of the two letters. We are going to start with the first record of when the Gospel was preached in that city and what happened as a result.

“Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews: And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ. And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few. But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also; Whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus. And they troubled the people and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things. And when they had taken security of Jason, and of the other, they let them go. And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few. But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came thither also, and stirred up the people. And then immediately the brethren sent away Paul to go as it were to the sea: but Silas and Timotheus abode there still” (Acts 17:1-14).

There is a lot of information in the text quoted above. I will leave much of it for you to think about. There are a couple of things I want to address. First, the fact that the Jews which chose not to believe were violently opposed to the Gospel of Christ. When we are studying the

letters to the church of the Thessalonians we will consider the Jews opposing the Gospel. Notice: *“For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe. For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews: Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men: Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost”* (I Thessalonians 2:13-16).

From what we read in Acts 17:1-14 the Jews that were against the preaching of Christ followed Paul to Berea to oppose him there too. Think about that. They were very zealous opponents of the Gospel. Some of the Jews who persecuted Christians thought that they were serving God by doing so (John 16:1-3). Their zeal was not according to knowledge (Romans 10:1-3).

Now, think about the challenge that the zealous opponents of the Gospel posed to the Christians in Thessalonica. We read that they assaulted the house of Jason. Paul and Silas had to escape by night. We know that all faithful Christians will face some type of persecution (Matthew 5:10-12, John 16:33, Acts 14:22, II Timothy 3:12, and I Peter 4:12-19). The congregation began in Thessalonica under persecution from the Jews. So, as we are reading the letters to the saints in Thessalonica keep in mind the specifics we know they were facing regarding zealous Jewish opposition of the faith.

As you read through the New Testament you find that Paul had a close companion from Thessalonica. This man’s name was Aristarchus. The first time we read about him is here: *“And after the uproar was ceased, Paul called unto him the disciples, and embraced them, and departed for to go into Macedonia. And when he had gone over those parts, and had given them much exhortation, he came into Greece, And there abode three months. And when the Jews laid wait for him, as he was about to sail into Syria, he purposed to return through Macedonia. And there accompanied him into Asia Sopater of Berea; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timotheus; and of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus”* (Acts 20:1-4). We find that Aristarchus was a fellow prisoner of Paul (Acts 27:1-2 and Colossians 4:10). Paul referred to him as a fellow laborer (Philemon 1:24).

So, we know the church in Thessalonica existed in a hostile area. We know that at least one brother from that congregation traveled, worked with, and was imprisoned with Paul. Other congregations were involved in helping Paul to work with the saints in Thessalonica (Philippians 4:10-16). So, we can have some ideas of what the brethren in Thessalonica faced. When we study these letters we will see the affection Paul, Timothy, and Silvanus had for the Thessalonians. In next week’s article, we will begin our study of the first epistle.