

**From the Pen of  
Pastor Paul**

**1-2 Thessalonians**

*Daniel R. Hyde*



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Danny Hyde unpacks the teaching of Paul's letters to the Thessalonians with a keen eye on the text, a sure grip on the witness of the scriptures as a whole, an awareness of the history of interpretation in the church, and above all with a pastoral heart for people. I warmly commend this stimulating exposition.

—**Dr. Lee Gatiss, Director of the Church Society, Cambridge, U.K.**

The Reverend Danny Hyde has given us what should be expected from him: attention to the text of Scripture with attention to the church and world to which the gospel is addressed. This volume offers a welcome addition to books on 1 & 2 Thessalonians for its care to be true to Scripture, its regard to lean on exegetical masters, and its devotion to apply the Word of God to a needy and hurting pew. It also stirs up many useful ideas for teaching and preaching these materials. Pastors will especially want this volume on their shelf to assist them in preaching and teaching these two letters of Paul.

—**Dr. J. Mark Beach, Professor of Ministerial and Doctrinal Studies, Mid-America Reformed Seminary, Dyer, IN**

Danny Hyde's new book on Paul's letters to the Thessalonians strikes a unique balance. It has depth so as to assist the pastor as he prepares to preach but is also accessible to any Christian seeking to understand and apply God's Word to their daily lives. *From the Pen of Pastor Paul* will be a great blessing to all who read it!

—**Dr. Tim Witmer, Professor of Practical Theology, Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, PA**

The best commentaries on New Testament Epistles are often those that were born the same way as the Epistles themselves: out of the womb of real pastoral concern and ministry. That is what you find in this highly readable book on 1 and 2 Thessalonians. It has an aroma of authenticity about it. Read it and you will sense the heart of the apostle Paul for the 1st century church brought with fresh power into the 21st century.

—**Dr. Conrad Mbewe, Pastor of Kabwata Baptist Church and Chancellor of the African Christian University, Lusaka, Zambia**

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# I

## From the Pen of Pastor Paul

*1 Thessalonians 1:1*



**F**irst and Second Thessalonians are two of the least known of the New Testament letters of the apostle Paul. Yet it is quite possible that 1 Thessalonians was his first letter, written after his labors in Thessalonica in AD 49–50.<sup>1</sup> This lesser known letter to a church planted by Paul has many parallels to what those involved in the ministry of church planting and missions have known and experienced.

The church in Thessalonica was planted by Paul, along with his ministry partners Silas (given his Latin name here, Silvanus) and Timothy (1:1).<sup>2</sup> This occurred during what we call Paul’s second missionary journey, as we read in Acts 17:1–15. As was Paul’s custom, he found the local synagogue and “on three Sabbath days he reasoned

with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ" (Acts 17:2-3). The core group of this church plant (to use our modern terminology) began with "some" of those from the synagogue, some "devout Greeks," and many "leading women" from Thessalonica (Acts 17:4). This caused the Jews to form a mob and storm the house of Jameson (Acts 17:5). When Paul and Silas were not found, they hauled Jameson and some believers before the *politarchas*, the five to six magistrates of the city.<sup>3</sup> When they did so they uttered some of the most famous words to describe the church: "These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also" (Acts 17:6). Christianity was an unwelcome intrusion to the *status quo* of Thessalonica. The Thessalonian Jews' description echoed that of the Emperor Claudius (AD 41-54), who in the year AD 41 described the spread of the gospel as "a general plague which infests the whole world."<sup>4</sup>

Like those new believers in first century Thessalonica, what we know today is this: Jesus has utterly revolutionized our lives. To the world, we turn everything upside down. To the believer, God is making everything right side up. The world has fallen and it is God who is picking it up. The world is like a shattered vase and it is God who is restoring it. The world is like a filthy mirror and it is God who is renovating its luster.

This charge of "turn[ing] the world upside down" caused the ears of the city rulers to perk up: "They are all acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king, Jesus" (Acts 17:7). The church, then, sent Paul and Silas "away by night to Berea" (Acts 17:10). The Jews, though, followed them there, causing Paul to flee even further into Athens while Silas and Timothy stayed behind (Acts 17:14-15).

As a persecuted pastor himself, Paul's great pastoral desire in his

first letter back to the persecuted Thessalonian Christians was that they would persevere in their faith, hope, and love. He said in his second letter to them, “do not grow weary in doing good” (2 Thessalonians 3:13), but he wanted them to rekindle their zeal (cf. Hebrews 12:1). 1 Thessalonians is a book that challenges us today. As with Paul, a pastor’s desire for his people is that they would continually rekindle their passion for the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because the Thessalonian congregation began and continued to exist under such duress, Paul wrote to spur them on to continue persevering. You notice this in what is really the occasion for his writing as well as the theme for his exhortation: “Remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ” (1:3).

1 Thessalonians is also a book that challenges us as pastors. Paul writes about his ministry in such personal and passionate ways that the Holy Spirit should break us down as we meditate upon it. I’ve always been told that to be a successful pastor I need to have the thick skin of a rhino to encase my heart within. I do not see this in Paul. We should be changed men after reading Paul’s message. And members of local congregations should pray for their pastor to be transformed into a “shepherd [...] after [God’s] own heart” (Jeremiah 3:15). In the words of Robert Murray M’Cheyne, “My people’s greatest need is my personal holiness.”<sup>5</sup> The apostle Paul wrote elsewhere to young pastor Timothy, that he was to “keep a close watch on [himself] and on the teaching ... for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers” (1 Timothy 4:16).<sup>6</sup> Pray that you would not only hear more of Jesus through your pastor but that you would see more of Jesus in him.

1 Thessalonians exhorts a new congregation to be steadfast in faith,



hope, and love in a very pastoral and personal way and it exhorts pastors concerning the duties of the pastoral ministry.

### **Ministering for Progress**

It is not only the duty of a minister, like Paul, to labor in the planting of a church but to continue to labor in the cultivating of that church over time. Whereas in Corinth, Paul planted but it was Apollos who watered (1 Corinthians 3:6), here Paul says the same minister may be called to do both in a local church. After initially planting the church (Acts 17:1–9), he was forced to leave because, as he goes on to say, he, Silvanus, and Timothy “were torn away from you” (2:17). This is why he also writes, “we sent Timothy . . . to establish and exhort you in your faith” (3:1). Through this inspired letter Paul is now checking in on his spiritual children’s progress.

What kind of progress should we be seeking to cultivate? In 1 Thessalonians Paul has the particular theme of his people’s steadfastness in the faith. He praises them for their “steadfastness of hope” (1:3) and that they were “standing fast in the Lord” (3:8). What does Paul mean by “steadfastness?” One great illustration is at the very end of *The Pilgrim’s Progress*. Just before Christiana and her companions were about to cross the river and enter through the beautiful gate we read these great lines: “Then there came forth a summons for Mr. Standfast. This Mr. Standfast was he whom the rest of the pilgrims found upon his knees in the Enchanted Ground.”<sup>7</sup> This character stood up to all the temptations of the Christian’s three enemies: the world, the flesh, and the devil (HC, Q&A 127). And having stood up to them, he resisted them. At the end of his life he entered into the celestial city. The minister is to labor that his people would stand fast against everything all the enemies of Christ throw at them for the sake of the Lord. As John Calvin said, as a minister, Paul’s purpose