

2Thessalonians 12-07-27a

This is Friday, the 27th of July, 2012, and we begin a new study tonight in the book of 2 Thessalonians, following hard upon our study in 1 Thessalonians, and an exciting book it is, and we will waste very little time getting into it. We'll begin in the usual manner by going to the Lord in prayer. Each of us can take the opportunity to cultivate the active and effective ministry of God's Holy Spirit.

He is the one that does the real teaching and facilitates both the presentation and the perception of the divine truth of God's Word. Shall we pray? Father, thank you for your sustaining grace this week in preserving us, providing for us, weaving together the circumstances of our lives in such a way that we have opportunities for faith and for faithfulness, for challenge, for growth, for correction and instruction in righteousness. We thank you for the ongoing presence of your Holy Spirit to lead us and to guide us, to enable us and to seal us with your presence.

We thank you for the Scriptures and this book and this passage that we will look at tonight, and we ask your blessing on us as we spend time in fellowship and study together. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

Our study begins tonight, as I said, in 2 Thessalonians, and we know the situation. You will remember the review that we did from the book of Acts, particularly in chapter 17 and looking at the visit of Paul and Silas and Timothy to that town and the rather hasty departure that ensued because of hostility and active violence that took place both during and after their departure, the scene with Jason and so forth. And, of course, this is a second letter to the same church, to the same group of believers, and very shortly after the first, there is not a great gap between the two.

The authenticity of this letter, just so you know what the wackos are thinking, the authenticity has been disputed primarily on the grounds that Paul seems to have two different views of the coming of Jesus Christ, that he presents it as imminent in the first letter and that there is going to be a delay where the man of sin is going to be revealed and that the two views do not coincide. Well, here's the thing, and at the risk of being sort of a master of the obvious, why do you think he wrote the second letter? Because they weren't real clear from the first one on what he was actually saying. Some people had taken his comments out of their context and drawn wrong inferences.

Well, we shouldn't really do anything but cut a hole in a sheet and jump up and down onto the back porch and wait for Jesus to appear in the sky because he's coming right back. And Paul says, no, don't get the idea that the day of the Lord has come already, whether you think it's a letter from us or anybody else, and so on. But because there is a clarification and a difference in emphasis, even a difference in context, really, in talking about the return of Jesus Christ and the day of the Lord in the second letter versus the first, some scholars, quote, unquote, have decided that Paul didn't write it.

And all I can say is take that for what it's worth. Paul wrote it, and we're going to see some fascinating things about it. If you look at chapter 1, verse 1, it says, Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy to the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

If you were a normal Christian, you would be immediately going to verse 3. But because you're not, and because you are long in the tooth and veteran Bible students, you know that there's a lot in these first two verses. And as you look at them, it's already beginning to form in your mind, hasn't it? You can already see, ah, what is it that you see here? Or more appropriately, can you tell me something you don't see? I'll give you all a moment for observation. This is the observation phase.

What do you not see in these two verses that you see in almost every other Pauline letter? Paul, what? An apostle. Paul, a servant, a *doulos*. Right? Or Paul, an apostle and servant.

It's not here, is it? Well, I'm really glad that Dr. Godbold is back because he's going to appreciate what I'm about to say. One of the things that's really great, one of the more useful tools that I have is a set of books called *Parallels*. There's *Gospel Parallels*, and this is *Pauline Parallels*, or as I would like to say, the *Parallels of Pauline*.

It's just for Dan. It's just to welcome Dan back. But in this, what the great thing is, they'll take a passage such as ours and then show close parallels elsewhere in Scripture.

And so it's better than just a multi-column Bible. It's unique in its own way. And I'm not saying rush out and get this.

I'm just saying that for me, when I want to see other places where a similar construction or similar verbiage or phrasing is used, I use this when we're doing the miracles, and I want to see all three or two or four accounts side by side. And they helpfully boldface things that are in common with the passage in the *Gospel Parallels*. They don't do it here.

But anyway, this is convenient because in one page, I can give you the gist of the greetings of all of Paul's other letters. And so, for example, here's Romans. Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle.

Now, the reason I'm slowing down to look at this is think about the purpose of each of these books. Let's start with Romans. We've been through Romans.

Most of you all are veterans of that study. And Lord willing, we remember that the theme and the subject and the emphasis is righteousness by faith. It's not an evangelistic book, although it's used that way, and that's not a terrible thing.

But I think in some ways it contributes to a misunderstanding of the theme and the thrust and the

real gist of the book. It is Paul writing to the saints in Rome and explaining, this is how you lay hold of your inheritance. This is what your faith does.

This is what it's for. It's not just to get you through a tough time. You lay hold of righteousness, and the glory of God is revealed in it.

And this is in opposition to those who, when they are confronted with the reality of God in nature and in their hearts, they suppress the truth of God. And when they know Him as God, they do not glorify Him as God. That great contrast begins in Romans 1, doesn't it? There are people who God is revealed to them, and they immediately suppress that truth in unrighteousness.

I don't want that. I don't want to see the glory of God. I don't want to acknowledge the glory of God.

I would rather turn and exchange that glory for worshipping four-footed beasts. Hmm, does that remind you of anything like current science curriculum? I would rather worship the creature than the creator, and so on. But that's the beginning of the book, right? And then he goes on to teach and to proclaim the gospel.

Romans 1, 16, I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. It is the power of God for deliverance to those who are trusting, to those who have faith, right? So, do we get a clue in the salutation of that letter? Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle. What is the book that says whom he called, them he also justified, glorified, right? All things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are what? The called.

So, right in the introduction, called. I know what my calling is, Paul says. My calling is to be an apostle, and I am not ashamed to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ, because it's the power of God, and I have the privilege of proclamation.

I'm a servant of God called to be an apostle, which is the highest authority in the church on earth, you know, physical presence-wise. So, all of that, that's in his greeting. So, how about 1 Corinthians? Paul called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus.

Ah, interesting. Didn't mention the will of God in Romans, but he mentions the will of God in Corinthians. What's the Corinthian letter about, the 1 Corinthians letter? I hear there are wars and divisions among you.

It shouldn't be so. This isn't the will of God for you. Don't you know that you have all things in Christ? Don't you understand the will of God? 1 Corinthians 12, 1 Corinthians 13.

I show you a better way. Love is God's will for you. Love is God's way.

Faith, hope, and love. The greatest of these is love. This is the will of God concerning you.

You're fighting and taking each other to court and splitting up and saying, I'm of Paul, I'm of Apollos. Don't you remember the will of God? And he says, I'm called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus. Do you remember who you are? Do you remember what your calling is? And this is the will of God.

You go to 2 Corinthians. Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God. Interesting.

1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians, the first thought in Paul's mind is, when I identify myself to you, I'm not just an apostle. I'm an apostle according to the will of God. It's God's will that I be the one to preach and teach these things to you.

Do you ever think about the will of God? You go to Galatians. What's Galatians about? Everybody remembers Galatians, right? Righteousness by works. You go to the works of the law.

Fallen from grace. Cut off from Christ. Oh, foolish Galatians.

Who has bewitched you that you would go back to the old mistaken belief that you can do things to please God, right? Well, what's the greeting in Galatians? Paul, an apostle, dash, not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised him from the dead. Right in the greeting. So, you begin to think Paul has already got his message on his mind when he sits down and begins dictating to his amanuensis these letters.

And he can't even get through the first sentence. Paul, an apostle, he's talking to these Galatians. Oh, foolish, bewitched Galatians.

Paul, an apostle, not from men or by man. This isn't a human endeavor that's going on. My apostleship isn't a human thing.

Just right out of the gate. First step off the starting line here. Ephesians.

Great doctrinal epistle, wonderful teaching. Ephesians and Colossians, we think they kind of traveled in the same mail bag. You guys read each other's because Ephesians is really the Laodicean letter, right? What does he say? Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God.

Ah, here's another group. By the will of God. What is the will of God for your life? In Corinthians, the will of God ought to inform them about what to stop doing.

Stop dividing. Stop fighting. Stop splitting up into factions.

In Laodicea and in Colossae, what does he say? The will of God, here's the positive side. Walk in love. Husbands, love your wives.

Children, obey your parents. And here's the positive, productive set of commands and injunctions. And it's given under the rubric of apostleship.

Every one of these so far, Romans, 1st, 2nd Corinthians, Galatians, and Ephesians, he has mentioned his apostleship. Sometimes it's its source in the will of God. Sometimes it is its source not from man, right? You come to Philippians, you think, oh yeah, Philippi, that's that retired military community of more mature believers and so on.

Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus. Do these people understand service? What do we call military people? We say they are in the what? Service. So he says, servants of Christ Jesus to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi.

Did he mention apostleship? Doesn't need to, does he? The emphasis here is on service. And as you go through the book of Philippians, there's an emphasis there on that he's going to make that appeal to that same sort of heart that so many of these people have. And the rest of the community understands because they're a military town, so to speak.

Colossians, Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God. Same as the Laodicean letter, same emphasis. 1st and 2nd Corinthians, the will of God informs us about what not to do.

Thou shalt not. Ephesians slash Laodiceans and Colossians. Here's the will of God on the positive side.

This is how to walk. This is how to live. This is how to please God.

1st Thessalonians and 2nd Thessalonians, the greeting is almost identical. 1st Thessalonians, Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy to the church of the Thessalonians, in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, to the church that's in. He says, he just gives their names.

Does he say, we're servants? No. Does he say, I'm an apostle? No. It's just their names.

Now, why would you do this? Why would you not start with a reminder of apostolic authority or of debt and dedication in service to Jesus Christ? Just give the names. Why would he do that? Well, what other letter does he do that in? Well, 2nd Thessalonians, but there is another. And this is, you would think, well, maybe Timothy? No.

He says he's an apostle when he talks to Timothy. Maybe Titus? No. Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ.

And by the way, Titus is one of the pastoral epistles, right? Writing to a young man growing up as a pastor. What does he say? Paul, a servant of God and an apostle. This is what they like to call servant leadership today.

You know, apostle is the authority, servant is the attitude of humility and putting the interests of others ahead of your own and so on. But he says, Paul, a servant of God, apostle of Jesus Christ, in order to further the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness. That's all in the first line of the letter to Titus.

What a great summary of the mission of leadership in the church, whether it's pastor, elder, deacon. What's our goal? Any authority, family authority, elders in a family. What do we want to do? Further the faith of God's chosen and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness in the hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised ages ago and at the proper time manifested in his word through the preaching with which I have been entrusted by command of God our savior.

That's the greeting for Titus. It's a paragraph. But it encapsulates the mission for an apostle, for a pastor, for anyone who has the opportunity to exercise leadership and guidance in some sort of elder capacity.

Same thing for Timothy. Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, by command of God our savior. The only place where he mentions the command.

We saw the will of God. We saw the calling of God. For Timothy, Paul says, I'm an apostle at the command of God.

Because how did Timothy get his commission? By the command of God, laying on of the hands and so on. And this is, look, it's not just the will of God for you. It's not just the calling of God for you.

This is the command of God for you. And you remember all the exhortation to Timothy to grab up some fortitude. Let's get with it.

Don't let these guys browbeat you. No man despise your youth. You've got the command of God behind you.

Right? So my whole point here in this review is these greetings are fraught. They're freighted. They have got some content to them, both in what he says and what he does not say.

Now, he doesn't say the call of God, the will of God, the command of God. He doesn't say servant. He doesn't say apostle.

He just says, Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy to the church. So what would you expect would follow in a letter of this nature? Paul does not need to correct and rebuke. He's not invoking apostolic authority.

He doesn't need to exhort or to remind his audience of particularly, not that he wouldn't cover it or refer to it, but he's not emphasizing the call of God or the will of God or these other things that we've seen. What is the purpose? What's his main goal when he writes to the Thessalonians? He loves these people, and he wants to encourage them. And in encouragement mode, you lay aside your authority.

Parents know all about this. There's a time to use a person's complete pronomen. I always knew

what it meant when my full name got used.

Samuel Curtis. That means something. There's an invocation of authority.

I named you. I brought you into this world, and I'm about to tell you how the cow ate the cabbage and where you have fallen short of the standard. Use a full name.

When your mother's kissing you goodnight, she doesn't say, Samuel Curtis, and then give you a smooch on the forehead. It's a different thing. Well, this greeting, when he just gives the names, lays aside his mantle of apostolic authority, lays aside his identity as a servant.

He's not writing to them, first and foremost, to serve them or to instruct them. He's writing to encourage them. And we see this in the content of the letter as it goes forward.

You remember in first Thessalonians, it's going to be the same way in this one. It's encouragement. We know of your faith and your patience and your persecution, and we're with you.

We're pulling for you. We're proud of you. We tell others about you.

We try to tell them, and they say, we've already heard about you. Paul is just proud of them. He loves them.

And this is sort of a very familial, very familiar letter. And so you don't have those things in the greeting. Now, he says, Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy.

This is Silas, of course. Silas refers a little closer to the Aramaic, and Silvanus is the Greek or Latin version of this name. Well, same two were invoked in the greeting in the first letter.

You remember, if you go back to Acts, that Paul had started out with a different team when he left to go on this missionary journey. He was at the Jerusalem Council back in Acts Chapter 15. Remember that? And there was the Jerusalem Decree.

Paul came back, and he gave a report about the Gentiles, and the apostles back in Jerusalem were saying, well, should we have them keep the law or not? Should they get circumcised? Should they have them go through the mikvah? Should they keep the Ten Commandments? How much of a burden from the law should we put on these Gentile converts? And they had a big discussion about it. And it pleased the apostles, this is 1522 of Acts, with the whole church to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas to deliver the fruit of their deliberations, let them know what the mucky mucks in Jerusalem had decided that they were supposed to do, right? So, namely, along with Paul and Barnabas, Judas, who was also named Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren. And they wrote a letter of introduction to accompany these men.

And if you go down a little bit in the chapter, they say, greetings, verse 24, since we have heard that some who went out from us, these are some Jerusalem legalists, have troubled you with words unsettling your soul, saying you must be circumcised and keep the law, to whom we gave no such commandment. They're kind of talking out of turn. It seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men to you with our beloved Paul and Barnabas, Barnabas and Paul, men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So one thing we know right off the bat about Barsabbas and Silas is these guys have really lived out their faith. They have been on the skyline. Their lives have been on the line for the faith.

They're not politicians. They're not weakened Christians. These guys are committed and the best representatives the Jerusalem council could pick.

And I ran across a real fascinating observation in the notes for this Bible that Dan and I have down at the bottom. But they said if you look at these names, and I think this is a brilliant observation, look at these names of the two men that the Jerusalem apostles sent with Paul and Barnabas. What do you notice about their names? One of them is named Judas Barsabbas, right? What sort of a culture do you think he represents? Barsabbas.

Sabbas, you can see is Sabbath. That's going to be son of rest or son of the Sabbath or some such thing. I can see why he might say, just call me Barsabbas.

Let's just drop the whole Judas thing. Just call me Barsabbas. But what sort of a culture, if you had to guess at what part of Israel he might come from, what would it be? He's going to be a Jew of the Jews, right? He speaks Aramaic.

His name is Aramaic. He's Barsabbas. How about Silas or Silvanus? You think he's probably maybe more of a Hellenistic Jew.

And so they kind of picked one guy from each side to go with. These are both committed men. They both put their lives on the line.

And if anybody says, well, you say this, but all you guys are on the Hellenist side anyway. I mean, you've got Paulos here, and you've got Silvanus or Barnabas. But we don't know what the Jerusalem people really think.

So they might have sent one guy from each side. They sent a Hellenistic Jew, and they sent a Judean Jew along with to vet this message and to really be witnesses to it. And so later on, you remember that there was a division.

And in that same chapter, before you get out of chapter 15, down in verse 36, after some days, Paul said to Barnabas, let's go back and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord and see how they're doing. Barnabas wanted to take John called Mark, but

Paul said they should not take him because he had abandoned them in Pamphylia and hadn't gone with them to the work. Paul said he's not reliable.

I don't want to take him and have him flake out on us again. Paul didn't have much confidence in him. So there was a contention that became so sharp that they parted from one another.

So Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus. Paul chose Silas and continued. So Judas Barsabbas didn't come along.

Nothing against him, but he didn't end up going. But Silas does. So Silas starts in Jerusalem, goes with Paul to Antioch, and continues with him when Barnabas leaves.

This is how Paul and Silas get hooked up as a team. And when they leave Antioch and go to Derbe and Lystra, there's a certain disciple there named Timothy. So the new team forms.

He started with Barnabas, and Barnabas wants to add a third guy, John Mark. And Paul says, no way. He left a bad taste in my mouth.

And so they decide the best thing to do is go their separate ways. And so now there's Silas and Timothy. And this is where it begins in chapter 16.

Of course, that sets us up for the trip that ends going through Thessalonica and Berea and on to Athens and Corinth. And with the arrival of these two, Paul gets this Macedonian call. And you can see that in verse 6 and following in chapter 16.

Well, in our letter, we have Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy writing. Paulos, of course, is Paul's Roman name. Both in Greek and in Latin, Paulos has the idea of diminution, of something being small, a small thing.

And it kind of reminds you when you see a reference to Peter, for example, when Jesus renames Peter, you know, Shimon. He says, you're the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus says, from now on, I'm going to call you Petras, which is kind of a small rock.

And on this Petra, this big boulder of the confession of who Jesus is, I will build my assembly. And so you have Paulos. But what was his original name? Shaul, Saul, right? And this has the idea in Hebrew and later in Aramaic of being asked for.

So in the same way, you have Barnabas, whose name, you know, Barnabas. You say, oh, that sounds like an Aramaic reference there. But when you think about where Paul is going, this trip through the Gentile regions, John Mark and Barnabas, Son of Encouragement, and I think his original name is actually Joseph, called Barnabas.

If you look back at the beginning of Acts, I think his name is actually Joseph, called Son of Encouragement, or Barnabas. But these guys are more of the Jewish persuasion, and, of course,

Paul having been a Pharisee. So it kind of makes sense that God uses this contention, whatever its causes or rightness, to build a new team for Paul.

And now you've got Silvanus, who is a Hellenistic Jew, and you've got Timotheus, whose father was Greek. These guys are going to have credibility just kind of built in, and God orchestrated this. So it's really kind of a nice thing to just spend a little time and look at who it is that's writing this letter and what God did to bring these men to this point and how Paul introduces the theme of his letter.

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy to the church of the Thessalonians. He doesn't have to invoke apostolic authority. He doesn't have to identify himself as a servant in sort of a cohortative, join me in service kind of way.

His purpose is encouragement and sort of a familial sense of fellowship. He says, In God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. And this is a further indication of the idea of comfort.

Just remember, with all of these slings and arrows and the opposition and the difficulties and the harassment that you're experiencing in the human realm, in the spiritual realm, you are in God the Father and you are in Jesus Christ. Now, who here does not believe that God is a trinity? Raise your hand. Anybody not think that God is the Father, Son, and Spirit? Why is it in all of these greetings it says, Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ or to the church of the Thessalonians, In God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Where's the Holy Spirit? How come the Holy Spirit's not in there? Is He just a bipartite God and not tripartite? What's going on here? How come the Holy Spirit's not mentioned? Why do you think? The Holy Spirit's just not worth mentioning? Co-equal and co-eternal. Why would He not be there? Regardless of anything else, what member of the Trinity is always with every believer? Don't have to send greetings or reminders about God the Holy Spirit, do we? He's already there. They may not have God's Word and keep it.

The Father and the Son may not come and make their home. But who's always there? Who is the seal, the arrow bone of the promise and the inheritance? Who is the one that is in their soul helping them cry out, Abba, Father? Who is the one translating prayers? Who is the one convicting of sin? Who is the one providing the spiritual gift? Who is the one accomplished regeneration and has an ongoing illuminating ministry? Paul doesn't really have to convey greetings in the name of or in recognition of or in remembrance of the Holy Spirit. If there's one thing they've got with them, it's the Holy Spirit.

Good, bad, come what may, taught, untaught, faithful, reprobate. God the Holy Spirit is always there, right? This is, I think, why he says, in many cases, grace to you and peace. And you look here, in verse 2 he says, Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

It's as though Paul is speaking on behalf of the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ in invoking

grace and peace, right? But he doesn't have to speak in the name of the Holy Spirit. They wouldn't be able to figure out what he was talking about if they didn't already have the Holy Spirit on the receiving end. Does that make sense? There is a message from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit is the one enabling the whole process. He's there. And he doesn't speak from himself.

He takes of the things of Christ and conveys them. And you never see Paul invoking the Holy Spirit in a greeting. And I think probably for that reason.

But Paul has always got his theological cap on. He never forgets his theology, never gets sloppy, never gets convenient, never just throws out a few platitudes. Every word means something.

Every line counts. You think how difficult it was to get a message to somebody in this day and age in which he lived? No wasted words. And certainly under the ministry of the Holy Spirit, infinitely more so.

Well, that's our introduction. That's the first two verses. We're going to pause here and take our break.

We're going to come back and see a real interesting compliment. C-O-M-P-L-E-M-E-N-T. Not a compliment like, oh, you're looking nice today.

Compliment as in a corresponding part, a fill-in, a balancing thing in the very next verse to something that was in the introduction. So when we come back, something is going to hook back into this introduction, and it isn't the names of Paul and Silas and Timothy, and it isn't just the fact that they are Thessalonians. There's something else.

So we'll see that when we come back.