In this commentary Gordon Fee aims first and foremost to offer a fresh exposition of the text of 1 and 2 Thessalonians. He shows the reader what is in the biblical text, what the text meant in the first century, and what it means now. Fee reveals the logic of each argument or narrative before moving on to the details of each verse, and he concludes each section with a theological-practical reflection on the meaning of the text for today. Among other things, Fee explores the occasion for Paul’s writing of each epistle, restoring 2 Thessalonians to its rightful place as a full companion to the first letter, not merely a tagalong to 1 Thessalonians. / A labor of love on Fee’s part, this commentary will serve to help rescue 1 and 2 Thessalonians from their “Cinderella” status among Paul’s letters. Fee’s primary target is the proverbial “busy pastor” who wants help in understanding the biblical text as he or she prepares to preach or teach. However, as with all his commentaries, he also provides solid exposition for students in the process of learning how to preach or teach and enough technical material (mostly in the footnotes) so that even the scholar can benefit.

My Personal Review:
Gordon Fee has long been one of our finest New Testament scholars. His numerous works in the field, including some fine commentaries along the way, have made him a much-respected expert in the area. Thus any new work by Fee is always worth obtaining.

He does not disappoint here, with another fine commentary in the NICNT series, of which he is currently the editor. He had already penned an outstanding work in the series, his 1987 commentary on 1 Corinthians. At the time it was the largest and most substantial English-speaking commentary available on the book. Also in this series he penned the commentary on Philippians (1995).

The NICNT series was started in the late 1940s, and is near completion. All that remains is the 2 Peter/Jude volume. The two Thessalonian epistles were actually covered way back in 1959 by another great NT scholar,
Australian Leon Morris. But a number of these volumes are now being replaced by more up-to-date commentaries. Thus Fee's replacement volume.

It joins several other recent conservative/evangelical commentaries on the letters, including Green (PNTC, 2002) and Witherington (2006). He is sparing on introductory matters (utilising only six pages on each epistle), and assumes Pauline authorship from around 49-50 CE. for both letters.

As to the commentary itself, it of course follows the format of the series, using an English text with more technical matters relegated to footnotes. Controversial sections, such as 1 Thess. 4:13-18 are dealt with in a careful and gracious manner. Fee argues that this passage is not about a secret rapture, as Paul was not concerned about "eschatological speculation" here.

In Paul's discussion of election in 1 Thess. 1:4-7, a corporate view is in mind, not an individual one, argues Fee. Other often difficult passages are not shirked. Fee explains 2 Thess. 2:11 (God sending a strong delusion) by noting the present tense of the verb: the failure of the people to love the truth "results in a divine response".

As with many scholars, Fee notes the "healthy tension between divine activity and human responsibility". And as a Pentecostal pastor, Fee lays heavy emphasis on the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer, as does Paul himself. The indicative and imperative must go together.

Concerning those who are idle and disruptive (2 Thess. 3:1-15), Fee follows Paul's pastoral emphasis here, which includes a very high Christology. The aim is to bring glory to God, harmony in the community, and restoration of the wayward. While Fee reminds us that the exact circumstances being addressed here are simply unknown to us, the practical treatise on church discipline is of value to all believers.

All commentators are of necessity interpreters as well. Not every direction Fee travels along in this commentary will resonate with readers. But as a model of exegetical precision, intellectual clarity and theological sensitivity, this commentary is top rate. If you can only afford to purchase one new commentary on these letters, this volume will be well worth getting.

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