

R U Ready? 1-2 Thessalonians

2 Thessalonians 1

Are you struggling with trying to be a good Christian in times of trouble? Are you thinking of all the boxes you left unchecked on the Religious Rule List, even while you suffer? Are you being built up and cheered on by those shepherding and discipling you? Or is it more of a cold dictatorship? In 2 Thessalonians 1:4 in the Message translation, it reads:

2Thessalonians 1:4

We're so proud of you; you're so steady and determined in your faith despite all the hard times that have come down on you. We tell everyone we meet in the churches all about you. (MSG)

Paul, Silas, and Timothy are going to show us how God feels about us, even in our toughest times.

We learn from today's passage in 2 Thessalonians that it is in our deepest pain and struggles that God shows Himself faithful and strong. Like a proud father, He applauds our perseverance and faith amidst trials and tribulations:

James 1:2

My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

James 1:12

Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.

*QUESTION FOR MEDITATION: In your personal seasons of suffering, how did your faith in Jesus and the truth of God's Word assuage your pain, or influence how you reconciled those hard times? Or did your faith factor into your circumstances at all? What difference could your meditation day and night on God's Word (Psalm 1:2) make?

*STUDY POINT: While we may relate to some aspects of suffering that the Thessalonian church was going through, the book of Job is also significant for teaching us how to suffer and not deny God in our pain. Search the book of Job for key verses that reflect what kind of man Job was inside and outside his suffering season. Write down the references and compile a character profile of this man of God. Be prepared to be inspired!

Knowledge of and adherence to religious rules and regulations—checklist Christianity—does nothing but puff us up (1 Corinthians 8:1). But love for God and His Word through our obedience (John 14:15) builds our faith and encourages those around us.

2 Thessalonians 1:1

(KJV) Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

(NIV) Paul, Silas and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

The leadership team of Paul, Silas, and Timothy have written a second letter to the reward-winning Thessalonians—this letter coming just a few months after the first letter. I say reward-winning because this church was centred in and founded on “God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ,” so that all the spiritual fruit borne from the believers in Thessalonica was produced after their salvation in Jesus, and through their ongoing relationship with God. They were loving and obeying God and His Word—producing much fruit, therefore glorifying God (John 15:8)—and would receive their due heavenly rewards in time and eternity. After true salvation, we each can love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mark 12:30) by obeying Him and we can also then look forward to heavenly rewards.

2 Thessalonians 1:2

(KJV) Grace unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

(NIV) Grace and peace to you from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is a blessing from Paul he loves to open his letters with. Grace is God’s undeserved favour towards his growing converts in Christ. The perfect peace of God is also theirs as they stay their minds on Him, because they trust in Him (Isaiah 26:3).

2 Thessalonians 1:3

(KJV) We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth;

(NIV) We ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love all of you have for one another is increasing.

Paul gives all the credit and thanks to God for the increasing love and faith reported among the Thessalonians. He is proud—like God is—that since he was there in person with them, they had continued to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus (2 Peter 3:18). The Thessalian believers were growing spiritually because they remained in Jesus:

John 15:4-5

Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

2 Thessalonians 1:4

(KJV) So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure:

(NIV) Therefore, among God's churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring.

Like a proud soccer dad, Paul had no problem boasting about his spiritually-prospering kids! God was understandably proud of their faithfulness amidst much persecution.

2 Thessalonians 1:5

(KJV) Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer:

(NIV) All this is evidence that God's judgment is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering.

All that God had planned (Jeremiah 29:11) in sending Paul, Silas, and Timothy to Thessalonica had come to fruition. God knows what He is doing, folks. Woe to us if we take into our own hands that which only God can do successfully—namely save souls and grow disciples!

Romans 3:4

God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, that thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.

Note in 2 Thessalonians 1:5 that it is not suffering that prevents the will of God in our lives, but rather makes us worthy of His kingdom. Hallelujah!

2 Thessalonians 1:6

(KJV) Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you;

(NIV) God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you

If any measure of our suffering comes at the hands of others, we can know for certain God will avenge and redeem us—we need only trust in His ways and timing. Our enemies will in time get a taste of their own medicine/trouble:

Matthew 13:24

Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. "The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?' "An enemy did this," he replied. "The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?' "No," he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them.

Matthew 13:30

Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn."

2 Thessalonians 1:7

(KJV) And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels,

(NIV) and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels.

As for the timing of God's avenging? This verse tells us that it's the same time as God will have completed the work He began in us (Philippians 1:6)—when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed.

2 Thessalonians 1:8-9

(KJV) In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.

(NIV) He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might.

One thing to note carefully here. God's formidable wrath will be poured out on only one kind of person—regardless of what that person thinks or says about themselves—that is, the unredeemed child of disobedience:

Colossians 3:6

For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience:

Of course, no one has to face the wrath of God or eternity apart from Him in hell. John 3:16 makes this clear:

John 3:16

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

If you haven't accepted Jesus as your Lord and Saviour, today is the day of salvation (2 Corinthians 6:2)!

2 Thessalonians 1:10

(KJV) When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.

(NIV) on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you.

Could this be our glorious theme verse for this Teaching Room series? I believe so! Sure, Paul is writing to the Thessalonians here, but he is just as much writing to each of us—who have believed and received Jesus Christ through His gospel and are now ready to behold His glory in the day He returns. All you saints, don't wait another minute—give Him praise today!

*STUDY POINT: The contrast of what unbelievers and believers will experience in the day of the Lord could not be more stark or harrowing. In 1 John, the author frames how black and white the difference is between the false prophets and the true believers. Write down all of the verses from 1 John that illustrate and parallel 1 Thessalonians 8 and 9 with 1 Thessalonians 10—namely, the horrible plight of the wicked versus the glorious destiny of the righteous in Christ.

To conclude today, I would be honoured to pray for you through these last two verses of 2 Thessalonians 1. This is Paul's prayer for the Thessalonians, and indeed all believers:

2 Thessalonians 1:11-12

(KJV) Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power: That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

(NIV) With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may bring to fruition your every desire for goodness and your every deed prompted by faith. We pray this so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.

~ Reverend Darren McClelland