

# Characteristics of a Faithful Church

## 2 Thessalonians 1:1-5

2 Thessalonians 1:1–5 (NKJV)

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy,

To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

<sup>2</sup> Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

<sup>3</sup> We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other, <sup>4</sup> so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure, <sup>5</sup> *which is* manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer;

### **Introduction:**

The last few decades we have seen a tremendous shift in how one views the church and its ministry. A

lot of the success of the church is determined from a pragmatic approach, rather than a purely Biblical approach.

Many churches determine the use of the program or means of worship by how successful it is. And success is determined by Budgets, Bodies and Buildings.

If it is growing in any of these three areas, it is assumed to be successful. If you are seeing an increase in giving, then it is successful. If you see an increase in attendance, then it is deemed successful. If there is a need for another building, then it must mean that God is working.

But all of these have nothing to do with what is considered successful in the eyes of God. In fact, God is not looking to the church to “make the church successful”. That has already been determined by God.

Jesus said in  
Matthew 16:18 (NKJV)

**18 .... I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.**

The Church will be successful because God has ordained it and nothing will stop that. And the

success has nothing to do with buildings and budgets, since God owns everything anyway.

In the book of Acts the church turned the world upside down for Christ with no building and no budgets.

And success has nothing to do with bodies, since the amount of bodies has already been determined by God before the world began.

God is not looking for you to make success in ministry. He is looking for faithfulness in ministry and fidelity to the Truth.

Faithful to Christ

Faithful to His Church.

And fidelity to the Truth will produces all of these

Sadly though, because of a shallow and inaccurate view of the church and a wrong view of soteriology (doctrine of Salvation), the goal as been to get a many bodies in the church as possible, by what ever means, so we can have swelling budgets and buildings.

When ever you believe that you must do whatever it takes to get bodies in the buildings and are willing to do it,... you end up with clown shows, and zip lines, rock bands and wrestling matches. You get

pastors using squirt guns and gimmicks to draw the crowds. You get church buildings that resemble dark theaters that houses of worship with light.

Whatever the culture is doing is what is brought into the church and as a result, the church ends up looking like the world as much as possible so we don't make the world uncomfortable. We offer them coffee, cake and communion and a wonderful experience if they will come and worship with us.

All of this is an attempt to evangelize the lost. It's all about making the lost comfortable in worship.

So we have reduced the power and success of the gospel to

1. The clothes the Pastor wears
2. The color of the lights on the stage
3. The theater like experience
4. And a style of music.
5. The absence of a pulpit.

It is absolutely astounding to me, that much of the evangelical church believes that the salvation of the soul, the resurrection of the dead to life, the granting of saving faith and repentance to God's elect depends on the color of the lights in the church!!!

The New Testament church had none of this and radically changed the world for Christ.

From the pattern of the N.T Church to now, there has been a major shift and not in a good direction.

We are now faithful in the non-essentials and not committed to the essentials.

We worry about the things that don't matter and discard the things that do matter.

We will do everything we are not supposed to do so that we don't have to do what we should do.

I have seen churches do everything they can to appeal to the world so that they don't offend the world while at the same time never speaking the gospel outside the church.

God cares nothing about your blue lights and stage presence. He is not moved by your theater chairs and coffee dispensers. It does not matter to Him that you purchase your clothes with holes already in them. He is not impressed with your good looks and personality. And He could care less how many follow you on social media.

Listen to Paul's approach to ministry

1 Corinthians 2:1–5 (NKJV)

**2** And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. **2** For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. **3** I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. **4** And my speech and my preaching *were* not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, **5** that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

The characteristics of a faithful church in the Bible would never catch the attention of most in the church today. We are too concerned about the glitz and the glamor.

But the faithful church is what God desires. The smallness of a church or the largeness of a church is not the issue. It's the faithfulness to Him and His Word that matters.

When we consider the church at Thessalonica, we have a faithful church that was planted by God in a sea of paganism.

The Character of Thessalonian church was a

1 Thessalonians 1:4–10 (NKJV)

## **1. Saved Church**

**4** knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God

## **2. Suffering Church**

**6** And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction

## **3. Sanctified Church**

**7** so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe...

**9.** you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God,

## **4. Sharing Church**

**8** For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything

## **5. Second Coming Church**

**10** and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, *even* Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

Some history on the Thessalonica

The European theologian Reinhold Niebuhr once wrote cynically, "The church is like Noah's ark. If it weren't for the storm outside, we couldn't stand the stink inside."

The place was first called Therma and it was called Therma because there were some warm mineral springs and people went there just to enjoy them. In the year 315 B.C., before Christ, the city of Thessalonica was founded at that place called Therma. The place is in northern Greece, once known as Macedonia. We know Greece as one country. It used to be Macedonia and Achaia. Macedonia was in the north, Achaia was in the south. The city was founded in 315 B.C. by a general, a Greek general under Alexander the Great whose name was Cassander. He chose the place because of its thermal springs. He also chose it because it was the crucial northernmost point on the Aegean Sea. He also chose it because it was right where the highway from the Orient to the West came. He chose it because the Axios River flowed into that harbor area. It was a tremendously strategic place.



Where did it get its name? Cassander happened to have married Alexander the Great's half-sister. Her name was Thessalonica. So he named the city after his wife, the half-sister of Alexander the Great.

Thessalonica was one of three key cities in Macedonia, the other two being Philippi and Berea. Paul visited all three. In Achaia, the southern part, there were two key cities which Paul visited, Corinth and Athens. When the Romans conquered the Greeks and they came in, they supplanted Greek rule in the year 168 B.C. They took that northern part, Macedonia, and they divided it into four quarters. They made Thessalonica the capital of one of those quarters and twenty years later they blurred out the division and had one Macedonia and made Thessalonica the capital. In fact, from 146 B.C. on, Thessalonica was designated the capital of the whole province of Macedonia and had the nickname, "The Mother of Macedonia." It was a very strategic city. It was declared a free city, given self-government and complete autonomy. Acts 17:6 says it was ruled by "politarchs," some group of political men who worked in some committee fashion to lead

that city. And that it grew at the time of Paul to about 200, 000 people. So it was a very strategic place.

It was along, what...what I noted a moment ago, the key east-west highway. The only way to get to the east, of course, if you didn't go on the Mediterranean Sea by water and you wanted to go on foot was just to walk along the northern coast area there and that was called the Ignatian Highway from the west to the east, to the east to the west. It became a military road for the transportation of all the troops. It became a trade route for from east to west. And it went right across the top of the Aegean Sea and right through the city of Thessalonica.

As a result, that city became a trade center. Not only that, it was the northernmost port on the Aegean Sea. It was a totally sheltered harbor, had a great river, as I said, the Axios River, and so it became a very thriving seaport. The town was filled with soldiers. The town was filled with businessmen, travelers, traders. The town was filled with sailors. It was a booming place. It became famous for vice, famous for sexual perversion, prostitution was rampant and well

organized. History tells us that people built their homes in Thessalonica with no windows because crime was so rampant and out of control. They would literally build a house with only a door. Also, one of the characteristics of Thessalonica was that they would paint obscene paintings on the walls of their houses. It was a very lascivious city. Divorce was very frequent. Babies were continually abandoned. That was the old form of abortion. You just had your baby and let it die. Murder was common. And it was in that sewage pipe that the church lived in Thessalonica and I think that's part of the reason in chapter 4 why the apostle Paul tells them in verse 3 to abstain from sexual immorality because they were in the middle of it.

Now because it was a thriving trade area, the Jews came there in great force, always enterprising. They showed up in mass in Thessalonica. In fact, there was so many of them that they had a very large synagogue in that city. And that became the starting point for Paul's evangelism. That is, by the way, unlike Philippi. You remember when Paul went to Philippi there weren't even enough Jewish men to constitute a synagogue? Well there were in

Thessalonica because that was the hot spot for trade, for business, for commerce.

You might be interested to know that the city still exists today. It is called Saloniki and it has about 300,000-plus inhabitants. You might also want to know that the Jews remained there throughout all the centuries until World War II when Hitler went to Saloniki, took 60,000 Jews out of that city and executed all of them. So the city has had a fascinating and long, long history.

The emperor of Rome at the time that Paul arrived, which would have been 350 years after the city was founded, the emperor was a man named Claudius. Claudius didn't deserve to be the emperor. He didn't deserve to be a leader of anything. He only became leader because his uncle, Gaius, was murdered. They say, about Claudius, all kinds of things. We can't be certain exactly what was true. Some writers say he was epileptic. Some say he had fits and seizures. Some say he was crazy. All agree he was a stuttering, slobbering man who had total incompetency. But he was in charge of the Roman government.

So into this world and into this city came Paul in about 49 A.D. to plant a church. How did he get there? Well he had been moving west and he came to the Aegean Sea and he wanted to go south. You remember this in Acts 16? And the Holy Spirit said, "No, you can't go south into Asia." So he wanted to go north into Bithynia and the Holy Spirit said, "No, you can't go north." So, if you can't go north and you can't go south, and you've already been east, where you going to go? You've got to go west. And so there Paul was on the edge of the Aegean Sea and the vision came to him in that night and he saw a man from where? Macedonia. And God then used that moment and that vision to take the gospel from Asia to Europe. He jumped, as it were, the Hellespont and the gospel went into Europe. The evangelization of Europe began.

<https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/52-1/identifying-the-elect-part-1>

The Calling of the Thessalonian church.

Acts 16:6–10 (NKJV)

<sup>6</sup> Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. <sup>7</sup> After they

had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them. <sup>8</sup> So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. <sup>9</sup> And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.” <sup>10</sup> Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them.

#### Acts 17:1–11 (NKJV)

**17** Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. <sup>2</sup> Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, <sup>3</sup> explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and *saying*, “This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ.” <sup>4</sup> And some of them were persuaded; and a great multitude of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women, joined Paul and Silas.

<sup>5</sup> But the Jews who were not persuaded, becoming envious, took some of the evil men from the marketplace, and gathering a mob, set all the city in

an uproar and attacked the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. <sup>6</sup> But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, “These who have turned the world upside down have come here too. <sup>7</sup> Jason has harbored them, and these are all acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king—Jesus.” <sup>8</sup> And they troubled the crowd and the rulers of the city when they heard these things. <sup>9</sup> So when they had taken security from Jason and the rest, they let them go.

<sup>10</sup> Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. <sup>11</sup> These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily *to find out* whether these things were so.

So the Thessalonian church was born in the midst of Paganism and Persecution. It might seem to us to not be the best of situations, but in fact it was a perfect place for a faithful church to be sovereignly placed by God.

Regarding many of the churches in the NT that Paul wrote to and the 7 churches of Revelations that Jesus moves thru and evaluates, the vast majority had major problems.

Like the European theologian Reinhold Niebuhr once wrote cynically, "The church is like Noah's ark. If it weren't for the storm outside, we couldn't stand the stink inside."

But that is not the case the church of Thessalonica. What a wonderful church, what a faithful church, what a God honoring church. This would be the one church that most pastors would love to shepherd. This would be the one that all should look to for modeling after.

They are not know for their buildings

They are not known for their swelling budgets

They are not known for the large crowds

They are not know for the leadership (we don't know who they were)

They are not known for the programs they had.

If anything they could be known for, it would be the fact that they were being conformed to the image of Christ and being faithful to Him and His Word.



So what are the characteristics of a Faithful Church.

## I. The Address

**v1** Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy,

Letters written in first-century Greco-Roman culture began with three statements which are found in the opening verse of 1 Thessalonians: the name(s) of the writer(s), the name(s) of the addressee(s), and a word of formal greeting.

The Apostle **Paul** was the writer of this epistle. His name appears first and he spoke of himself in the singular elsewhere in the letter (e.g., 3:5). He was Saul of Tarsus whose Hebrew name means “asked for.” His Roman name, Paul, by which he was known more commonly, means “little.”

Second Thessalonians was widely accepted by the early church as an inspired writing of Paul. In addition to the witnesses to the Pauline authorship of 1 Thessalonians (see the Introduction to 1 Thessalonians in this volume), Polycarp, Justin Martyr, and possibly the *Didache* and Ignatius affirm that Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (2002). [\*1 & 2 Thessalonians\*](#) (p. 219). Chicago: Moody Press.

**Silas and Timothy** joined Paul in sending 1 Thessalonians; that is, Paul wrote for them as well as for himself. Perhaps Silas served as Paul's amanuensis, or secretary. Frequently in 1 Thessalonians Paul wrote "we" so he was either including these brethren in his thoughts (e.g., 1:2; 2:1; etc.) or using an editorial "we." Silvanus is the Roman form of Silas which Paul used consistently in his writings, as did Peter (1 Peter 5:12). Luke called the same person Silas (Acts 15:22; etc.). Silas was Paul's primary associate on the second missionary journey (Acts 15:40). Timothy, of course, was a young man Paul led to faith in Jesus Christ (1 Tim. 1:2), probably during Paul's visit to Asia Minor on his first missionary journey (Acts 13–14). Timothy's name (which means "honored by God" or "God-honorer") was doubtless given in faith by his God-fearing mother Eunice (2 Tim. 1:5). His father may have been a pagan Greek when Timothy was born (Acts 16:1). This young man had recently returned to Paul from a trip to Thessalonica with news of conditions in that church (1 Thes. 3:1–2, 6). These three men were undoubtedly the best-known and most highly respected Christian missionaries by the believers in Thessalonica.

**v.1** To the church of the  
Thessalonians in God our  
Father and the Lord Jesus  
Christ:

**v.1** To the church of the  
Thessalonians

A few months had passed since Paul wrote

1 Thessalonians. Though unable to visit them (1 Thess. 2:18 *Satan hindered him “mine”*), the apostle had maintained contact with the church. He was generally pleased with their progress (2 Thess. 1:3–4), yet there were still some issues that needed to be resolved.

In his second inspired letter, Paul addressed three essential matters.

The persecution, which had begun while Paul was there, was still ongoing. In chapter 1, he encouraged the Thessalonians to stand firm and remain faithful to the Lord despite their suffering.

Paul had instructed the Thessalonians about **the end times** while he was with them (2 Thess. 2:5), and in 1 Thessalonians (4:13–5:11). Yet they were still confused, fearing they had missed the Rapture

and were in the Day of the Lord. Though the severity of the persecution they were undergoing contributed to that mistaken belief, the main reason for their confusion came from some false teachers who taught that the Day of the Lord had arrived. Those lying deceivers claimed Paul, Silas, and Timothy now taught that, even producing a forged letter supposedly from the apostle Paul to support their claim. Paul wrote chapter 2 to calm the Thessalonians' fears, clarify his teaching, and thus reassure them that the Day of the Lord had not arrived.

Finally, the problem of idleness Paul had addressed in his first epistle (1 Thess. 4:11–12) had escalated. Some, expecting the Lord to return at any moment, had stopped working altogether. The apostle sternly dealt with those idle loafers and the related issue of church discipline in chapter 3.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (2002). [\*1 & 2 Thessalonians\*](#) (pp. 217–218). Chicago: Moody Press.

## v1 To the church

τῆ ἐκκλησίᾳ Θεσσαλονικέων ἐν Θεῷ

the definite article, may indicate the singular nature of the church,( only one) or the church separate from the rest of the Thessalonian population

## **ekklésia: an assembly, a (religious) congregation**

**Original Word:** ἐκκλησία, ας, ἡ

**Part of Speech:** Noun, Feminine

**Transliteration:** ekklésia

**Phonetic Spelling:** (ek-klay-see'-ah)

**Definition:** an assembly, a (religious) congregation

**Usage:** an assembly, congregation, church; the Church, the whole body of Christian believers.

1577 ekklēsía (from 1537 /ek, "out from and to" and 2564 /kaléō, "to call") – properly, people called out from the world and to God, the outcome being the Church (the mystical body of Christ) – i.e. the universal (total) body of believers whom God calls out from the world and into His eternal kingdom.

[The English word "church" comes from the Greek word kyriakos, "belonging to the Lord" (kyrios).

1577 /ekklēsía ("church") is the root of the terms "ecclesiology" and "ecclesiastical."]

He is not talking about a building, or even a location, but a people. The called out ones of God.

**v.1** To the church of the  
Thessalonians in God our  
Father and the Lord Jesus  
Christ:

The key word **in** emphasizes the believers' eternal life with **God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ**. Paul's simple greeting identifies the church as a regenerate church. It is the same greeting the apostle used in his first letter except for the addition of the personal possessive pronoun **our**, which emphasizes that **God** is the **Father** of believers (cf. 1 Thess. 1:3; 3:11, 13; Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:3, 4; Eph. 1:2; Phil. 1:2; 4:20; Col. 1:2; 2 Thess. 2:16; Philem. 3). But though Paul frequently speaks of believers as being in Christ, only here and in the first verse of the first letter does he describe them as being **in God the Father**. It is, however, an appropriate reminder of the Father's care for a church undergoing severe persecution.

The truth that Christians are **in** personal, spiritual, and eternal union with **God** is unique to Christianity; adherents of other religions do not speak of being **in** their god. But the Bible teaches that those who put their faith in Christ "become partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4), sharing eternal life with God through faith and identification with His Son. "I have been crucified with Christ," Paul wrote, "and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son

of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me” (Gal. 2:20; cf. John 14:23; Rom. 6:11; 8:1; 12:5; 16:7, 9, 10; 1 Cor. 1:2; 6:17; 15:22; 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 1:1–3; 2:10; Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:2; 3:3; 2 Peter 1:4).

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (2002). *1 & 2 Thessalonians* (pp. 224–225). Chicago: Moody Press.

**2** Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Grace to you and peace

This is the common greeting of Paul

Grace is the unmerited favor of God on the Sinner that brings salvation and forgiveness

Peace is the product of Salvation and forgiveness.

This is the how the gospel comes to us by grace and what it does for us, in making peace with God.

This Grace and Peace come from God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

the clause with ἀπο which makes explicit the source of the divine favour and spiritual prosperity, God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Frame, J. E. (1912). *A critical and exegetical commentary on the Epistles of St. Paul to the Thessalonians* (p. 219). New York: C. Scribner's Sons.

Paul lack of separation for the source of Grace and Peace is indicative that He sees God the Father and Jesus Christ as Equal.

So at the very outset, Paul has Identified the church at Thessalonica as saved and In God and in Christ

This is not a church with lost and saved, These are regenerated,

## **I. The Address**

## **II. The Accolades**

1. A Growing Faith
2. An Abounding Love
3. A Perseverance in Persecution

## **II. The Accolades**

1. A Growing Faith

**3** We are **bound** to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is



**fitting**, because **your faith grows exceedingly**,

are **bound** P.A.I continually

**ὀφείλω** impf. ὀφείλον; fut. ὀφειλήσω LXX; our lit. has only the pres. and impf. (Hom.+).

① **to be indebted to someone in a financial sense,**

**Owe someth. to someone, be indebted to** τινί τι Mt 18:28a; Lk 16:5. W. acc. of debt (Appian, Bell. Civ. 2, 8 §26; Jos., Ant. 13, 56) Mt 18:28b; Lk 7:41; 16:7; Phlm 18 (CMartin, in: Persuasive Artistry, ed. DWatson, '91, 321–37). τὸ ὀφειλόμενον *the sum that is owed* (X.; Pla.; CPR I, 228, 5. In pap. the pl. is more freq. found in this mng.) Mt 18:30. πᾶν τὸ ὄφ. αὐτῷ *the whole amount that he owed him* vs. 34.

② **to be under obligation to meet certain social or moral expectations**

Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000). [A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature](#) (3rd ed., p. 743). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

**fitting**

**66.6 ἄξιος<sup>b</sup>, α, ον; ἀξίως<sup>b</sup>**: pertaining to being fitting or proper in corresponding to what should be expected —‘proper, properly, fitting, worthy of, correspond to.’

Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). [Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains](#) (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1, p. 627). New York: United Bible Societies.

**your faith**, —both the content of their faith and the exercise of their faith, in trusting God.

**grows exceedingly**, P A I

**ὑπεραυξάνω** and **-ω**, *increase above measure*:— Pass., *to be so increased*, Gal.14.226; *become over-powerful*, And.4.24, D.C.79.15.

2. Pass. also, *grow above*, ὑπεραύξονται τῶν ἀμπέλων Sch.Ar. V.1282.

Liddell, H. G., Scott, R., Jones, H. S., & McKenzie, R. (1996). [A Greek-English lexicon](#) (p. 1860). Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Paul employs a verb that is found only here in the NT, an intensive form of “grow”

Green, G. L. (2002). [The letters to the Thessalonians](#) (p. 280). Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans Pub.; Apollos.

is an intense compound word and could be translated “increased beyond measure,” or “grown beyond what could be expected.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (2002). [1 & 2 Thessalonians](#) (p. 225). Chicago: Moody Press.

*auxanō* is used in the Gospels of the growth of plants and babies, and in the epistles of spiritual growth [e.g., Eph. 4:15; Col. 1:6, 10], but in the NT *hyperauxanei* is only used here). The faith of Christians should keep **growing** all their lives; they should trust God more consistently and more extensively as they grow older in Christ. Faith in God is not a static thing. Since it is trust in a Person, it is always increasing or decreasing. A growing faith indicates a growing Christian.

Constable, T. L. (1985). [2 Thessalonians](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 714). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

The word ὑπεραυξάνω, from ὑπερ, intensive, and αυξανω, to *grow, increase*, signifies, as Dr.

*Clarke* remarks, to *grow luxuriantly*, as a good and healthy tree in a good soil; and, if a fruit tree, bearing an abundance of fruit to compensate the labour of the husbandman.

Blayney, B., Scott, T., & Torrey, R. A. with Canne, J., Browne. (n.d.). *The Treasury of Scripture knowledge* (Vol. 2, p. 149). London: Samuel Bagster and Sons.

This exponential growth in faith was directly tied to their persecution. They had grown in their understanding of God and Christ through Paul and Timothy teaching them. But the exercise and application of what they had learned in the midst of persecution, validated their faith and made them stronger in their trust and reliance on God.

According to Jesus, False faith stumbles and fails  
Matthew 13:20–21 (NKJV)

<sup>20</sup> But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; <sup>21</sup> yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles.

But true faith is proven in persecution

**Philippians 1:28** (NKJV)

<sup>28</sup> and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God.

### **Romans 8:35–37 (NKJV)**

<sup>35</sup> Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *Shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? <sup>36</sup> As it is written:

*“For Your sake we are killed all day long;  
We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.”*

<sup>37</sup> Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.

Persecution is good for the growth of our faith.

### **Psalm 119:67 (NKJV)**

<sup>67</sup> Before I was afflicted I went astray,  
But now I keep Your word.

### **Psalm 119:71 (NKJV)**

<sup>71</sup> *It is* good for me that I have been afflicted,  
That I may learn Your statutes.

### **Psalm 119:75 (NKJV)**

<sup>75</sup> I know, O Lord, that Your judgments *are* right,  
And *that* in faithfulness You have afflicted me.

## II. The Accolades

### 1. A Growing Faith

### 2. An Abounding Love

**3** We are bound to thank God  
always for you, brethren, as it is  
fitting, because your faith grows  
exceedingly, and the love of every  
one of you all **abounds** toward each  
other,

### **abounds**

pleonazó: to superabound, to make to abound

**Original Word:** πλεονάζω

**Part of Speech:** Verb

**Transliteration:** pleonazó

**Phonetic Spelling:** (pleh-on-ad'-zo)

**Definition:** to superabound, to make to abound

**Usage:** I have more than enough; I abound,  
increase.

4121 pleonázō (from 4119 /pleíōn, "greater in number") – properly, abounding in number (quantity).

Romans 5:20 (NKJV)

<sup>20</sup> Moreover the law entered that the offense might **abound**. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more,

Like their faith, Paul had already commanded them for their Love.

1 Thessalonians 1:3 (NKJV)

<sup>3</sup> remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father,

1 Thessalonians 4:9–10 (NKJV)

<sup>9</sup> But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; <sup>10</sup> and indeed you do so toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, that you increase more and more;

Even with this, Paul continued to pray for them that their Love would increase more and more.

1 Thessalonians 3:12–13 (NKJV)

<sup>12</sup> And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we *do* to you, <sup>13</sup> so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.

This is not the emotional, sentimental, fickle love the world talks about.

This is the sacrificial willful love of service to one another. A love of self denial, for my brothers need.

Its not based on condition or position, not personality or prejudice.

Rather its the kind of love that lays down his life for his friends

John 15:13 (NKJV)

<sup>13</sup> Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.

John 13:34–35 (NKJV)

<sup>34</sup> A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. <sup>35</sup> By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

John 15:17 (NKJV)

<sup>17</sup> These things I command you, that you love one another.

Paul told the Romans

**Romans 12:10** (NKJV)

<sup>10</sup> Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another;

**Ephesians 5:2** (NKJV)

<sup>2</sup> And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.

**Galatians 5:14–15** (NKJV)

<sup>14</sup> For all the law is fulfilled in one word, *even* in this: “*You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*” <sup>15</sup> But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!

**Galatians 5:22** (NKJV)



<sup>22</sup> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

### **Philippians 2:2–4 (NKJV)**

<sup>2</sup> fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, *being* of one accord, of one mind. <sup>3</sup> *Let* nothing *be done* through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. <sup>4</sup> Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

### **Hebrews 13:1 (NKJV)**

<sup>1</sup> Let brotherly love continue.

### **1 Peter 1:22 (NKJV)**

<sup>22</sup> Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart,

### **1 John 4:7–8 (NKJV)**

<sup>7</sup> Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. <sup>8</sup> He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

## II. The Accolades

1. A Growing Faith
2. An Abounding Love
3. A Perseverance in Persecution

<sup>3</sup> We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other,

<sup>4</sup> so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God

Paul, Silas, and Timothy—three of the leading figures in the early church—who expressed that pride because they were greatly encouraged by the Thessalonians' spiritual growth and the absence of significant problems in the congregation. Ironically, Paul wrote **proudly** of the Thessalonians from Corinth, site of the most troubled, spiritually immature of all Paul's churches.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (2002). [\*1 & 2 Thessalonians\*](#) (p. 228). Chicago: Moody Press.

4 for your **patience** and **faith** in all your **persecutions** and **tribulations** that you endure,

**patience Perseverance** (*hupomonē*) is not resigned, stoic acquiescence but patient, courageous enduring of trouble. The word literally speaks of “remaining under,” or sustaining hope under difficulty. It is not a grim waiting but a joyful hoping

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (2002). [\*1 & 2 Thessalonians\*](#) (p. 229). Chicago: Moody Press.

## **faith**

the sense of faith and trust in God, so that it produces faithfulness. Commitment to God in the midst of trials

## **persecution Plural many**

n. — the systemic hunting down of adherents of a particular religion to inflict pain or death upon them; especially to destroy the religion by destroying the adherent or by forcing the adherent to renounce their beliefs.

**διωγμός**, ὁ, *the chase*, X.Cyr.1.4.21, etc.

**2. pursuit**, D.S.4.13, al., Ael. *Tact.*34.4, Iamb. *VP*31.191.

## II. *persecution, harassin*

Liddell, H. G., Scott, R., Jones, H. S., & McKenzie, R. (1996). *A Greek-English lexicon* (p. 440). Oxford: Clarendon Press.

**tribulations** **distress (state)** n. — an oppressive state of physical, mental, social, or economic adversity.

**θλίψις, εως, ἥ, pressure**, Arist.*Mete.*382<sup>a</sup>13, *Pr.*890<sup>a</sup>2; τῶν νεφῶν Epicur.*Ep.*2p.49 U.; ἀντέρεις καὶ θ. Str.1.3.6; of the pulse, Ruf.ap.Orib.8.24.61, cf. Gal.7.306; θ. στομάχου Orib.*Fr.*42; ὑατερικαὶ θ. Sor.1.42.

**2. crushing, castration, πῶλων Hippiatr.**20.

**3. metaph., oppression, affliction**, LxxGe.35.3

Liddell, H. G., Scott, R., Jones, H. S., & McKenzie, R. (1996). *A Greek-English lexicon* (p. 802). Oxford: Clarendon Press.

This is the result of persecution, the hunting down and destroying

Having been truly converted,

They refused to renounce their faith, let their love grow cold, or abandon their hope.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (2002). *1 & 2 Thessalonians* (p. 229). Chicago: Moody Press.

This was proof later in the letter that they had not yet come to the Day of the Lord,

It will be characterized by a great apostasy  
**2 Thessalonians 2:3** (NKJV)

<sup>3</sup> Let no one deceive you by any means; for *that Day will not come* unless the falling away comes first,

This means that this church was not corrupted at this time with a large number of professing Christians. They were real, and willing to suffer. They did not and would not fall away.

The next statement is most amazing. Unlike some who may think God is unkind and unfair to allow or purpose that his people are persecuted. Paul reminds us that the persecution of the people of God is not small matter. Not only will it bring the wrath of God on the unbeliever who does it.

As He says in

### **2 Thessalonians 1:6 (NKJV)**

<sup>6</sup> since *it is* a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you,

But persecution is not something outside of the ordination and control of God. In fact He has destined us for it.

### **Philippians 1:29 (NKJV)**

<sup>29</sup> For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake,

It has purpose and meaning.

As

**Romans 8:28 (NKJV)**

<sup>28</sup> And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose.

**1 Peter 1:6–7 (NKJV)**

<sup>6</sup> In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, <sup>7</sup> that the genuineness of your faith, *being* much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,

**5** *which is* manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer;

This statement seems a little strange at first glance and is grammatically difficult and has been misunderstood over the years.

Its sounds like what is being said is that

our persecution is the righteous judgement of God against us as if we are being judged, condemned.

and that this suffering is allowed to make us worthy of deserving the kingdom of God.

But that is not what Paul has in mind at all.

**5** *which is* manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God

*which is-* not in the original text, but supplied to make it read smooter.

ESV and NASB have “This Is”  
(NASB95)

5 This is a plain indication of God’s righteous judgment

*original text starts with manifest evidence, or*

**manifest evidence**

**ἔνδειγμα, ατος, τό** (s. δείγμα, ἐνδείκνυμι; Pla., Critias, 110b;

Demosth. 19, 256) **the proof of something, evidence, plain**

**indication**

Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000). [A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature](#) (3rd ed., p. 331). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

‘proof, evidence, verification, indication

Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). [Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains](#) (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1, p. 340). New York: United Bible Societies.

éndeigma (a neuter noun) – A plain (undeniable) demonstration or display which is conspicuously shown, i.e. as a token of proof that is fully adequate (persuasive, validating)

“token,” “guarantee,” “positive evidence” of the righteous judgment of God

Frame, J. E. (1912). [A critical and exegetical commentary on the Epistles of St. Paul to the Thessalonians](#) (p. 226). New York: C. Scribner’s Sons.

*what does the “which is manifest evidence” or the “This is manifest evident” refer to....*

*Or what is the undeniable proof, or the clear demonstrable evidence.*

There are 3 ways this can be understood.

1. Paul is talking about the Persecutions and Tribulations are proof the righteous Judgment of God
2. The Patient and faithful endurance is proof of the righteous Judgement of God
3. the proof of the righteous judgment God refers to verse 6

2 Thessalonians 1:6 (NKJV)



<sup>6</sup> since *it is* a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you,

before we consider which one, is right, lets look at the words,

righteous judgment of God

## **krisis: a decision, judgment**

**Original Word:** κρίσις, εως, ἡ

**Part of Speech:** Noun, Feminine

**Transliteration:** krisis

**Phonetic Spelling:** (kree'-sis)

**Definition:** a decision, judgment

**Usage:** judging, judgment, decision, sentence; generally: divine judgment; accusation.

Cognate: 2920 κρίσις (a feminine noun derived from 2919 /

κρίνω, "to separate, distinguish, judge") – judgment, emphasizing its qualitative aspect that can apply either to a positive verdict (for righteousness) – or more commonly, a "negative" verdict which condemns the nature of sin that brings it on. **See 2919** (krinō).

[2917 (kríma) stresses the results that go with a particular judgment (of blessing or pain depending on the choice).]

**legal decision** *n.* — the official decision of a court on issues of fact or law.

## Revelation 19:2 (NKJV)

<sup>2</sup> For true and righteous *are His judgments*, because He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication; and He has avenged on her the blood of His servants *shed by her.*”

It does not refer to the act of judging in the is of bring punishment as much as a legal and right decision. We would say that God has righteous or true judgments between good and bad, righteousness and evil, true and false. saved and lost.

If we take the first view that

1. Paul is talking about the Persecutions and Tribulations are manifest evidence of the Judgment of God

We could understand this to mean that the persecutions and tribulations are Gods Righteous decision (judgment) bring on his people to purify them by chastisement for sin or sanctification through suffering. Thereby showing that they are His and are worthy, (because of His enabling power) to be part of His kingdom.

This is a principle taught elsewhere in Scripture. Persecutions are the righteous decision of God to

bring on his people to make them more like Christ and to purify His Bride.

Acts 14:21–22 (NKJV)

<sup>21</sup> And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, <sup>22</sup> strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting *them* to continue in the faith, and *saying*, “We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.

These are sufferings in general, all kinds, not necessarily due to sin and discipline

Hebrews 12:9–11 (NKJV)

<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected *us*, and we paid *them* respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? <sup>10</sup> For they indeed for a few days chastened *us* as seemed *best* to them, but He for *our* profit, that *we* may be partakers of His holiness.

<sup>11</sup> Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

If we consider the second view

2. The Patient and faithful endurance is evidence of the righteous Judgement of God

This would mean that the your perseverance and faithful endurance in suffering is proof that God is right in his righteous declaration of God that you are to be considered worthy of the kingdom because you did not fall away but endured.

The faint-hearted need not worry about their future salvation, for the fact of their unexceptional endurance and faith in all their persecutions is itself a “token,” “guarantee,” “positive evidence” of the righteous judgment of God

Frame, J. E. (1912). [\*A critical and exegetical commentary on the Epistles of St. Paul to the Thessalonians\*](#) (p. 226). New York: C. Scribner's Sons.

If the third view is right

3. the proof of the righteous judgment God refers to verse 4,5 and 6

**2 Thessalonians 1:6 (NKJV)**

<sup>6</sup> since *it is* a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you

This would mean that,  
First, this is plain indication and demonstration the righteous judgement (decision) of God to allow and purpose you to be persecuted , so that you will be proven real, and by grace considered worthy of the kingdom of God and

Second to judge those who persecute the people of God when He brings tribulation and wrath on those that do not know God when He comes and is revealed from Heaven in flaming fire with His Mighty Angels.

Philippians 1:28 (NKJV)

<sup>28</sup> and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God.

1 Peter 4:14–19 (NKJV)

<sup>14</sup> If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed *are you*, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. <sup>15</sup> But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a

busybody in other people's matters. <sup>16</sup> Yet if *anyone suffers* as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.

<sup>17</sup> For the time *has come* for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if *it begins* with us first, what will *be* the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? <sup>18</sup> Now

*“If the righteous one is scarcely saved,  
Where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?”*

<sup>19</sup> Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls *to Him* in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.

Leon Morris insightfully observes:

The New Testament does not look on suffering in quite the same way as do most modern people. To us it is in itself an evil, something to be avoided at all costs. Now while the New Testament does not gloss over this aspect of suffering it does not lose sight either of the fact that in the good providence of God suffering is often the means of working out God's eternal purpose. It develops in the sufferers qualities of character. It teaches valuable lessons. Suffering is not thought of as something which

may possibly be avoided by the Christian. For him it is inevitable. He is ordained to it (1 Thess. 3:3). He must live out his life and develop his Christian character in a world which is dominated by non-Christian ideas. His faith is not some fragile thing, to be kept in a kind of spiritual cotton wool, insulated from all shocks. It is robust. It is to be manifested in the fires of trouble, and in the furnace of affliction. And not only is it to be manifested there, but in part at any rate, it is to be fashioned in such places. The very troubles and afflictions which the world heaps on the believer become, under God, the means of making him what he ought to be. Suffering, when we have come to regard it in this light, is not to be thought of as evidence that God has forsaken us, but as evidence that God is with us. Paul can rejoice that he fills up “that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body’s sake, which is the church” (Col. 1:24). Such suffering is a vivid token of the presence of God.

*(The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians, The New International Commentary on the New Testament [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989], 197–98)*

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (2002). [1 & 2 Thessalonians](#) (pp. 229–230). Chicago: Moody Press.

Endurance in trials does not make one worthy of heaven; one does not earn heaven by suffering. But endurance in trials does *demonstrate* one’s worthiness. A Christian is made worthy by God’s grace, which he receives as a free gift by faith in Jesus Christ. His trials simply expose what is there already and since the character that emerges through the fire of testing is God-given, God receives all the glory. The grace of God that

makes it possible for a Christian to withstand the fires of human experience, which destroy non-Christians, is a Christian's only claim to being worthy of God's kingdom

Constable, T. L. (1985). [2 Thessalonians](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 715). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.