

ENCOURAGEMENT FOR TROUBLED BELIEVERS
2 THESSALONIANS 1:1-12

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Introduction

A few months after writing his FIRST letter to the Church at Thessalonica (which we just finished looking at), Paul wrote this SECOND letter to them!

Why was there a need for him to send a SECOND letter?

**The first letter had given rise to some additional questions.
(i.e. There were some follow up questions)**

They had gotten a letter or report from someone claiming to be Paul that was disturbing to these Christians...but that letter wasn't from Paul (2:2).

This false report claimed that Christ had already come and had already gathered out the Church to Himself, and that the world was then living in the judgments of *"the day of the LORD."*

The persecution of this Church had intensified which gave rise to some believing this false report that the Church was going through the time of judgment which Christ identified as the "great tribulation". (1:4; Matthew 24:21)

Now understand, because these believers were under such **intense persecution**, they mistakenly thought that God was displeased with them and therefore judging them with the persecution.

There are many professing Christians today who have swallowed the error of the charlatans who peddle the false prosperity Gospel!

These charlatans preach that God rewards believers in this life with prosperity and that if you're not prosperous, then you've obviously got something wrong in your life! The only problem with that philosophy is that IT IS NOT BIBLICAL! It's the same philosophy that Job's friends used against Him!

Those who fall for the prosperity Gospel get to thinking that when things go right, God is pleased with them and when things go wrong, God must be displeased with them. But that's not how God works! But that's how the Thessalonians thought God worked!

The Thessalonian believers were under severe persecution, so they thought they must be doing something wrong! So, Paul wrote this letter to help clear that up!

First we see Paul's standard greeting of "grace ... and peace"! (1:1-2) Paul knows that this is what these believers need right now:

"grace" ... to let them know that God is a *"gracious"* God! He is, as Peter calls Him in 1 Peter 5:10, *"the God of all grace"* ... God is the One Who will give them the grace they need to persevere through their persecution and be victorious in Christ.

"peace" ... to let them know that God is NOT punishing them and His peace will see them through these difficult times.

I. A NEEDED ENCOURAGEMENT! (1:3)

In the midst of this severe persecution which this Church was enduring, they were growing and abounding and increasing in faith and love! So, Paul begins by ENCOURAGING them.

Any time when we're going through a hard time, we all need ENCOURAGEMENT, don't we?

"We are bound to thank God always for you..." - Paul lets them know that they weren't a disappointment to him (or God) ... but that he thanked God for them and their faithfulness!

"...because that your faith groweth exceedingly" – that's one of God's PURPOSES for allowing trials in our life ... to grow our faith.

If everything went perfectly in our lives, we wouldn't need to trust God for anything, would we?

You've heard the expression that *"A faith that cannot be tested, cannot be trusted."*

"Faith" is like a muscle ... it has to be exercised to grow stronger!

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This is how God proves to **us** whether or not our faith is GENUINE ... is it there when you need it?

An easy life tends to lead us to have a **shallow faith** ... a life of trials and tribulations tends to lead us to have a **strong faith**.

Their strong faith was an answer to Paul's prayers for them!
(1 Thessalonians 3:10)

"...and the charity [love] of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth"

This was also an answer to Paul's prayers for them!
(1 Thessalonians 3:12)

Their suffering brought them closer to God AND to EACH OTHER!

That's WHY God allows trials and suffering into our lives.
It will do us GOOD! We need to trust Him on this one!

A NEEDED ENCOURAGEMENT...

II. A NOBLE EXAMPLE! (Vs 4)

"glory in you" ... the word *"glory"* means they *boasted* in them!
i.e. They were used as an example to other Churches!

A. **They Were An Example Of Patience! (Vs 4a)**
PATIENCE is another **BLESSING** of trials and suffering!

James 1:2-4 – 2 "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; 3 Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. 4 But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

Romans 5:3 And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience;

We learn *"patience"* when we go through hard times!

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If everything went well in our lives all the time, we would become very **IMPATIENT** every time we didn't get our way! (We'd be like a what we see in the Democratic protesters after the presidential election last week!)

This matter of **PATIENTLY WAITING** on God for our every need is developed in our lives through trials!

God was doing some great things in these believers lives **THROUGH THE TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS** that they were **PATIENTLY ENDURING!**

They Were An Example Of Patience...

B. **They Were An Example Of Faith! (Vs 4a)**

We already saw in **Verse 3** how their **FAITH** was growing exceedingly! The phrase *"groweth exceedingly"* means *"to increase above ordinary degree."*

We might use the word *"extraordinarily"* in our day and time!

So, not only is **PATIENCE** developed in our lives through trials, but this matter of **FAITH...OR LEARNING TO TRUST** God for our every need is also developed in our lives through trials...In fact, it causes it to extraordinarily increase!

What happened is this: **TRIALS** came their way, they put into action Paul's previous admonition in **1 Thessalonians 5:17-18**.

As they continued in **PRAYER AND THANKSGIVING** the LORD multiplied His **SUFFICIENT GRACE** and/or gave **HIS PROVISION** to them in the midst of their **TRIALS** which gave them **PATIENCE** to further **ENDURE THEIR TRIALS**.

This **PROVISION OF GOD** in the midst of their **TRIALS** gave them **FAITH** to **CONTINUE TRUSTING** the LORD more and more and this cycle kept feeding on itself so that their **FAITH** grew exceedingly!

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What an example! In fact, they were so much an example that is why Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy GLORIED in them in the Churches they ministered in!

Our life in times of trials, when handled correctly with **PATIENCE AND FAITH** can **ENCOURAGE** other **CHRISTIANS** as they see that God is **FAITHFUL** when the going gets tough!

The LOST will look at it and see that Christianity WORKS ... that Jesus is REAL ... that God is FAITHFUL and can be TRUSTED!

A NEEDED ENCOURAGEMENT...A NOBLE EXAMPLE...

III. A NOTABLE EVIDENCE! (Vs 5)

“Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God...”

The persecutions and tribulations which these believers were enduring in patience and faith, were evidence that God was working within their hearts as believers!

In fact, their steadfastness in the face of persecutions and tribulations **could only** be attributed to the working of God within these believers!

So, these Thessalonian believers were urged to view their endurance as a proof of God’s working in them and a guarantee that He will keep His promises concerning the righteous judgment of their persecutors as well as these believers future place in His Kingdom!

Both the sufferings of the just, and the triumphs of the wicked, in this life, are a sure proof that there will be a future judgment, in which the wicked shall be punished and the righteous rewarded.

“...that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer.”

Realize that one who is a child of God, and a partaker of the Divine nature, is worthy of God's kingdom!

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He is worthy not because he has done any thing to merit it, but because he bears the image of God!

Romans 8:17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

Because you are a child of God, following Jesus will cause you some problems that wouldn’t otherwise be there if you weren’t a Christian.

A problem-free, trouble-free, care-free Christian life is IMPOSSIBLE because you have a target on your back!

Satan WILL throw his fiery darts at you ... GUARANTEED!

IV. A NEARING END! (Vs 6-10)

A. God’s Judgment Of The Unbeliever Is Coming! (Vs 6-9)
God’s judgment on the LOST is also a ***“righteous thing”***. *Vs 6*

Paul is saying that God will repay the lost with tribulation for their part in troubling these Thessalonian believers.

It may not come in THIS LIFE ... but it WILL come!
A holy and righteous God cannot let sin go unpunished ... He CAN’T! ... or He wouldn’t be ***“righteous”***.

So, WHEN is God going to bring judgment to those who are persecuting them?—At His Second Coming! **(Vs 7-8)**

When Jesus comes at the RAPTURE (1 Thess. 4:13-18), He will come to take us away from all of our trials and suffering!

When Jesus comes at the REVELATION (at the end of the Tribulation Period), He will come to bring judgment to this wicked world!

Rom. 12:19—“Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.”

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We aren't to seek vengeance or revenge—it is GOD'S to give!

Judgment IS going to come one day! God is just and righteous and He HAS to punish the wicked!

This World cries out for justice! But we don't see a lot of JUSTICE in the world today. But JUSTICE is coming!

HOW is God going to punish the wicked? **(1:9)**
"...with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power"

The lost will be forever separated from God!
They will reap what they have sown!

They distanced themselves from God while on earth!
God will distance Himself from them for all eternity!

How do YOU see God's POWER?

The CHRISTIAN sees God's power as a "glory" in salvation—as we have the glorious presence of God in our life!

The LOST will forever be removed from that glory of God's power in salvation and they will only see God's power in judgment, wrath, and vengeance.

God's Judgment Of The Unbeliever Is Coming!

B. God's Rewarding Of The Believer Is Also Coming!

What will His coming to judge the lost mean to the Christian?

It will mean **REST** for the believer from all trials! **(Vs 7)**

"rest" = "relief from tension" or "slackening of pressure"

It will mean **RETRIBUTION** for the believer as their enemies are finally judged for their wickedness! **(Vs 8-9)**

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It will mean the **GLORY OF CHRIST IN** the believer for all eternity! **(Vs 10)**

Christ will be **GLORIFIED IN** (not by) **HIS SAINTS!**
(i.e. The **GLORY** of Christ will be mirrored in believers!)

Christ will be **ADMIRING IN** (not by) **ALL THEM THAT BELIEVE!**

(The spectators of His coming will marvel greatly at what the **LORD** has done in those who believed on Him!)

When Jesus comes at His **REVELATION** (As revealed in Revelation 19), we (who have been raptured) will come with Him to be glorified in Him!

We will come with Jesus to show off His "glory"!
The "glory" of what God has done in us through Christ!

We will be trophies of His Grace and His work in us!

RIGHT NOW, Jesus isn't very highly thought of by the world! He is ridiculed, blasphemed, and thought to be irrelevant. And those belonging to Him are denigrated and often persecuted and mistreated!

OH BUT, when Jesus comes at the **REVELATION**, the whole world will marvel at the glory and majesty of Jesus because of what He has done in us who have believed!

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Conclusion

In all that Paul has said up to this point, he shares his prayer to God for them!
(Vs 11-12)

That God would count them worthy of this calling!
(When our faith is tried, we reveal our worth as well as the nature of our
faith—whether it is genuine or not.)

That God would fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of
faith with power! (God is the one Who is at work fulfilling His purposes in us
through the power of our faith in Him!)

And the result is that the name of the LORD Jesus Christ is glorified in us and
we are glorified in Him and it is ALL according to GRACE! (Romans 8:18)