

What It Takes For a Church to Survive in a Hostile World

Characteristics of a Faithful Church. Pt. 2

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:

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

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, ⁴ 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, 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;

Introduction:

This last year and half has been challenging to the church in many ways, more than most years in recent history.

Much of it has centered around a virus that was unleashed on the world from the Wuhan lab in China, that called for lockdowns and isolation. The threat and fear of this virus saturated the world and the church. But as time went on more and more churches began to open back up and with that came criticisms of carelessness and concerns of continuing the spread of the virus. Debates and arguments ensued among many within the church as to how we should meet together or even if we should meet together at all. Many churches were faced with government overreach, like in California and Canada that attempted and in some cases succeeded in closing churches, even to the point of placing fences around the church building and putting the pastors in jail.

At the very beginning of this, I received phone calls from family and friends alike, as to whether this might be the end of the world.

Well, we know now that it's not the end of the world, but it just might be the beginnings of

something much more sinister and nefarious that we want to believe.

What concerns me the most, however, is not where this may lead as far as the world is concerned but how this affected the very heart to the church. What we often took for granted was very thing that was taken away from us, at least at the very beginnings of this and remains that way for some even today.

And that one thing is critical for the spiritual health and vitality of the church. It is essential for growth. It is necessary for the promotion of good works. It is expedient for the accountability in the purity of Gods people. It is a means of grace for the conviction of sin and the encouragement of the saints. It is the place where the unique presence of God meets with His people around the Lord's Table and the preaching of the Word.

That one thing is the Assembly of God's people on the Lord's Day. That beautiful time on the Lord's day when all the redeemed of God gather in one place to sing praises to His name and to exalt Christ through the proclamation of His Word..... There is not time like it all week and there is not place on earth that is so unique as the corporate worship of God's people.

When and if we get past this virus, and that remains to be seen, we are going to face much more dangerous times than a coronavirus. This among many things is just the beginning of a very hostile and evil attempt to silence the church.

Sadly, many churches will not be affected by this at all because they compromised long ago. But the faithful churches, the ones that herald forth all of the Word of God and have a people who believe the Bible and live the Bible are going to be assaulted by the culture, and threatened with various means of persecution. It's not going to come in the form of being tied to a stake and set on fire. It will come in the form of your wallet, your means of providing for your family. The ability to provide the basic necessities. You will be directly affected by the church you choose to be member of.

Threats will come when they find out that you attend and worship at a certain local assembly.

And sadly, some will fall away, some will give in to the threats and some will stop coming to church because the price is too high.

These are perilous times we live in today, and it will get worse. I believe John MacArthur was right when he recently said, that America is under the judgment of God and there was nothing you could to stop it, once it begins, it cannot be reversed. This

has come because of a blatant refusal of Americans to acknowledge the God of the Bible and to submit to His word. America is Romans 1 in living color.

But in a number of ways, judgement has come to the church too. The church in many places has refused to acknowledge the God of the Bible and has created a god in its own image.

Its refusal to declare and to obey the whole counsel of God has led to a weak, and deficient church that has been seduced by the world and is full of false teachers and compromised preachers.

2 Timothy 4:3–4 (NKJV)

³ For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, *because* they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; ⁴ and they will turn *their* ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

But lest I be all negative, These have been good days for the church too. And difficult days for the church are days that purify the church. They sift the church.

What has come out in the last 18 months has been good in many ways

1. We have been reminded just how important corporate worship is.
2. We have learned, that our Christian faith is much more than academic.
3. We have been driven to our knees in prayer
4. We have seen that doctrine matters. That preaching the whole counsel of God is important and necessary.
5. We now know that the days of ease for the Christian faith are over.
6. We now believe more than ever that Christ is our Life, the Word of God is our Light, the church assembled in worship is absolutely essential, not optional.

As we go forward, into the turbulent days ahead, It is important that I challenge all of us to stand and be counted as men and women of God.

It is a great thing to be sovereignly called to be a part of the Church of Jesus Christ. It is a marvelous thing to know that as Jesus said in Matthew 16, that the Gates of Hell will not prevail against the church. But it is equally important that we realize that just because Hell can't stop the church, that does not mean that we won't feel the heat.

The Devil and its evil forces will not stop their relentless assault against the Church. If the last 18 months have proven anything, it has proven that the Devil and his demons along with evil men, have been emboldened against the Church. This is why we must do as Paul commanded us in...

Ephesians 6:11–12 (NKJV)

¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*.

So with this context in mind, in order to be a faithful church like the Thessalonian Church was I want to exhort you to be strong men and women of God by having 5 qualities or characteristics.

We need to be men and women of:

Clarity

Conviction

Courage

Commitment

Communion

We need to be men and women of God that have:

1. Clarity

That means we know what we believe and why we believe it. We have perspicuity of doctrine. It is absolutely essential that we know what the Bible teaches and why it teaches it. This is no time for foggy theology or daily bread discernment.

There is an increasing population of Christians who seem to think that the Scripture is too mysterious to know for sure what God really means.

Brian McLaren epitomizes this mentality in the introduction to his book *A New Kind of Christian*:

I drive my car and listen to the Christian radio station. . . . There I hear preacher after preacher be so absolutely sure of his bombproof answers and his foolproof biblical interpretations. . . . And the more sure he seems, the less I find myself wanting to be a Christian, because on this side of the microphone, antennas, and speaker, life isn't that simple, answers aren't that clear, and nothing is that sure.

[1]

Thus “evangelical” postmodernism has transformed doubt, uncertainty, and qualms about practically every teaching of Scripture into high virtue. Strong convictions plainly stated are invariably labeled “arrogance” by those who favor postmodern dialogue. <https://www.gty.org/library/blog/B161010/~>

The clarity of Scripture and its teaching is also attacked today by saying “that’s your interpretation” as if there are as many interpretations of the bible as as there are people. But there is only one interpretation and either you have it or you don’t.

Admittedly there are some difficult areas of the Bible to understand, but the vast majority is not and it is abundantly clear. The clarity has nothing to do with the Bible, but rather, it has everything to do with out laziness.

We have 2000 years of scholarship and study and great movements of God like the Reformation that brought great clarity to the Scripture.

This is foundational to everything.

Ephesians 4:11–14 (NKJV)

¹¹ And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, ¹³ till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; ¹⁴ that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,

Once you know and believe what the Word of God says, it will lead to

2. Conviction

Here I am not talking about the conviction of sin but rather that we would be men and women of Conviction. You don't hear that much these days do you? Wow that man is a man of Conviction. Sadly most people today have convictions of Jello. It is impossible to pin to the wall.

I believe most of this comes from a lack of clarity in what the Bible says and a lack of modeling it by the leaders.

When I talk of this kind of Conviction, I'm referring to the kind of conviction that will get you killed. The kind that will cost you your job. The kind that cause you to be excommunicated from your family. The kind of Conviction that will cause you to leave a church or lose a ministry.

This is the kind of conviction of the Prophets of old that lost there lives for proclaiming the truth.

The kind that causes a young men to refuse to bow down to statue of Nebuchadnezzar and to be willing to be cast into the fiery furnace

The kind that would stop Daniel from Compromise and put him in the lions den.

The kind that would make John the Baptist refuse to keep quiet to the point that he would be beheaded.

The kind that would cause Peter to draw sword to stop the soldiers coming for Jesus

The kind that would cause Peter to stand in front of 1000s of Jews and say they are responsible of killing Jesus and call them to Repent.

This is the kind that would lead Paul to be beaten and imprisoned and falsely accused most of his ministry for the Cause of Christ.

This is the same conviction that would lead John the apostle to be banished to isle of Patmos, left there to die.

The is the Conviction of John Wycliff, Jon Huss, Martin Luther, John Calvin, George Whitfield, Jonathan Edwards, and Puritans.

This is the conviction of every man woman and child who would rather die than compromise what they believe.

1 Corinthians 16:13 (NKJV)

¹³ Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong.

① **to be in a standing position, *stand* Mk 11:25;**
 ἔξω στ. *stand outside* **3:31**. μέσος ὑμῶν στήκει
there is one standing in your midst **J 1:26** v.l. ὁ

δράκων ἔστηκεν ἐνώπιον τῆς γυναικός **Rv 12:4**
v.l. (s. above).

② **to be firmly committed in conviction or**

belief, fig. ext of 1: *stand firm, be steadfast* ἐν τινι *in someth.*: ἐν τῇ πίστει **1 Cor 16:13**. ἐν κυρίῳ **Phil 4:1**; **1 Th 3:8**. ἐν ἐνὶ πνεύματι *in one spirit* **Phil 1:27**. τῷ ἰδίῳ κυρίῳ στήκειν ἢ πίπτειν *stand or fall to the advantage or disadvantage of his own master or to be his own master's concern whether he stands or falls* **Ro 14:4**. Abs. **2 Th 2:15**; **Gal 5:1** ('in freedom' is to be supplied).—M-M. TW.

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., pp. 944–945). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

to stand (maintain) v. — to hold one's ground; maintain a position; be steadfast or upright.

Galatians 5:1 (NKJV)

5 Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.

Philippians 1:27 (NKJV)

²⁷ Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel,

Philippians 4:1 (NKJV)

Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved.

1 Thessalonians 3:7–8 (NKJV)

⁷ therefore, brethren, in all our affliction and distress we were comforted concerning you by your faith.

⁸ For now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord.

2 Thessalonians 2:15 (NKJV)

¹⁵ Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle.

1. Clarity
2. Conviction
3. Courage

It is the Convictions based on the clarity of Scripture the the Holy Spirit gives us unnatural Courage.

Courage to face the enemy, Courage to face the sin and temptation, Courage to face the hatred and hostility of the World.

Darrel Harrison wrote,

God's people must not collapse or compromise in the face of the fear and intimidation that dominate the world.

1 Corinthians 16:13 (NKJV)

¹³ Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong.

andrizó: to behave like a man, to play the man

Original Word: ἀνδρίζομαι

Part of Speech: Verb

Transliteration: andrizó

Phonetic Spelling: (an-drid'-zom-ahee)

Definition: to behave like a man, to play the man

Usage: I act like a man, am brave.

407 andrízomai (from 435 /anḗr, "man") – properly, "to act as a man," i.e. as a full-grown, mature man; (figuratively) to be responsible and courageous by taking the initiatives God reveals through faith (used only in 1 Cor 16:13)

to be courageous ⇔ to be manly v. — to be

courageous, conceived of as possessing qualities befitting a man.

Psalm 27:1–3 (NKJV)

- 1 The Lord *is* my light and my salvation;
Whom shall I fear?
The Lord *is* the strength of my life;
Of whom shall I be afraid?
- 2 When the wicked came against me
To eat up my flesh,
My enemies and foes,
They stumbled and fell.
- 3 Though an army may encamp against me,
My heart shall not fear;
Though war may rise against me,
In this I *will be* confident.

1 Chronicles 28:20 (NKJV)

²⁰ And David said to his son Solomon, “Be strong and of good courage, and do *it*; do not fear nor be dismayed, for the Lord God—my God—*will be* with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you, until you have finished all the work for the service of the house of the Lord.

Psalms 56:3–4 (NKJV)

- 3 Whenever I am afraid,
I will trust in You.
- 4 In God (I will praise His word),

In God I have put my trust;
I will not fear.
What can flesh do to me?

When the fight becomes more intense, when cost is high for the stand you take, when its only you standing while all others have fled away. Be strong Be courageous.

No what you believe, Why you believe and stand from on the Conviction of the Word of God.

When the world and and work place says no more to your biblical view of marriage. When it says no more to the fact of there is only male and female. When they say that you are a bigot and a unloving for telling the truth. When the come to shut you down and shut you up.

Stand. Stand Firm grounded in the Clarity of the Word of God, and bound to your Convictions of the Truth.

Stand men and women of God Stand.

1. Clarity
2. Conviction
3. Courage

All of these will lead to the 4th quality of a Man or woman of God
...an unwavering Commitment

4. Commitment

This is commitment to God, to Christ, to His Word and His Church and its mission.

Romans 12:1 (NKJV)

12 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is your* reasonable service.

God is not asking you for a donation. He is asking for a sacrifice.

A donation is you giving some

A sacrifice is you giving all.

He wants, and commands absolute commitment.

2 Timothy 1:13–15 (NKJV)

¹³ Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁴ That good thing which was

committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.

¹⁵ This you know, that all those in Asia have turned away from me, among whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes.

2 Timothy 2:3 (NKJV)

³ You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

The Thessalonians had clarity

1 Thessalonians 2:13–15 (NKJV)

¹³ For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed *it* not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.

1 Thessalonians 4:2 (NKJV)

² for you know what commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus.

The Thessalonians had Conviction

¹⁴ For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus.

The Thessalonians had Courage

v14b For you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen, just as they *did* from the Judeans, ¹⁵ who killed both the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they do not please God and are contrary to all men,

The Thessalonians had Commitment

Their Commitment is seen through the First and Second letter by the myriad of commands and exhortations by Paul with not explanations of reasons. He know all he had to do is tell them and they were committed to do it.

Here in our passage we see that commitment worked our in the Characteristics of this Faithful Church.

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^b, α, ον; ἀξίως^b: 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 υπερ αυξανω, from υπερ, 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)

²⁰ But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; ²¹ 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)

²⁸ 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)

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

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

³⁷ 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)

⁶⁷ Before I was afflicted I went astray,
But now I keep Your word.

Psalm 119:71 (NKJV)

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

Psalm 119:75 (NKJV)

⁷⁵ 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)

²⁰ 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)

³ 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)

⁹ 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; ¹⁰ 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)

¹² And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we *do* to you, ¹³ 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)

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

John 13:34–35 (NKJV)

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

John 15:17 (NKJV)

¹⁷ These things I command you, that you love one another.

Paul told the Romans

Romans 12:10 (NKJV)

¹⁰ *Be* kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another;

Ephesians 5:2 (NKJV)

² 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)

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

Galatians 5:22 (NKJV)

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

Philippians 2:2–4 (NKJV)

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

Hebrews 13:1 (NKJV)

¹ Let brotherly love continue.

1 Peter 1:22 (NKJV)

²² 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)

⁷ Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. ⁸ 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

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,

⁴ 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, ἡ, *pressure*, Arist. *Mete.*382^a13, *Pr.*890^a2; τῶν νεφῶν Epicur. *Ep.*2p.49 U.; ἀντέρεισις 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*, πώλων *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)

³ 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)

⁶ 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)

²⁹ 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)

²⁸ 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)

⁶ In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷ 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.

ένδειγμα (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)

⁶ 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 *krísis* (a feminine noun derived from 2919 / *krínō*, "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)

² 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)

²¹ And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, ²² 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)

⁹ 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? ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ 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)

⁶ 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)

²⁸ 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)

¹⁴ 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. ¹⁵ But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters. ¹⁶ Yet if *anyone suffers* as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.

¹⁷ 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? ¹⁸ Now

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

¹⁹ 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.

On March 21st 1556. Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Cranmer was executed by being burned at the stake.

Depending on who who read, some believe was a coward and a compromiser, while others believe he was an example of courage and conviction.

He is probably best known for his involvement in helping build the case for the annulment of Henry's marriage to [Catherine of Aragon](#),

But he is also known as a leader of the English Reformation.

When Edward VI came to the throne, Cranmer was able to promote major reforms. He wrote and compiled the first two editions of the *[Book of Common Prayer](#)*, a complete liturgy for the English Church. With the assistance of several Continental reformers to whom he gave refuge, he changed doctrine or discipline in areas such as the [Eucharist](#), [clerical celibacy](#), the role of [images](#) in places of worship, and the [veneration](#) of saints. Cranmer [promulgated](#) the new doctrines through the Prayer Book, the *[Homilies](#)* and other publications.

His drift toward the doctrines of the Protestant Reformation was notable.

After the accession of the [Catholic](#) Mary I, Cranmer was put on trial for treason and [heresy](#). Imprisoned for over two years and under pressure from Church authorities, and having been taken up on the roof

where he was made to watch the execution of Hugh Latimer and Nicholas Ridley but being burned at the stake, he made several **recantations** submitting himself to the authority of the monarch and recognizing the Pope as the head of the church.

Cranmer then made a fifth recantation, fully accepting Catholic theology, repudiating Reformist theology, stating that there was no salvation outside of the Catholic Church and announcing that he was happy to return to the Catholic fold. He participated in the mass and asked for sacramental absolution, which he received.

So apparently he reconciled himself with the Catholic Church. While this would have normally absolved him, Mary wanted him executed anyway.

Some believe that Mary did this for Revenge

- Cranmer was the one who had annulled Mary's parents' marriage and allowed her father to marry Anne Boleyn. Mary and her mother had been treated harshly by Henry VIII after the annulment.

On March 21st, the day of his execution he was given one last opportunity to publicly recant at the University Church, Oxford. Instead of recanting, Cranmer opened with the expected prayer weeping as he prayed and after giving an exhortation to

obey the King and Queen, He then read a written prayer for himself while standing, then he kneeled down and said the Lord's Prayer; and all the people on their knees devoutly praying with him....

And then rising, he said, 'Every man desireth, good people, at the time of their deaths, to give some good exhortation, that other may remember after their deaths, and be the better thereby. So I beseech God grant me grace, that I may speak something, at this my departing, whereby God may be glorified, and you edified....

And now I come to the great thing that troubleth my conscience more than nay other thing that ever I said or did in my life: and that is, the setting abroad of writings contrary to the truth. Which here now I renounce and refuse, as things written with my hand, contrary to the truth which I thought in my heart, and written for fear of death, and to save my life, if it might be: and that is, all such bills, which I have written or signed with mine own hand since my degradation: wherein I have written many things untrue. And forasmuch as my hand offended in writing contrary to my heart, therefore my hand shall first be punished: for if I may come to the fire, it shall be first burned. And as for the pope, I refuse him, as Christ's enemy and antichrist, with all his false doctrine.'

Because of his words, he was physically pulled down from the platform and brought to the stake where he came with a cheerful countenance and willing mind, he put off his garments with haste, and stood upright in his shirt:

Two Spanish friars attempted to get him to embrace his former catholic faith, but with no success.

And when the friars saw his constancy, they said in Latin to one another 'Let us go from him: we ought not to be nigh him: for the devil is with him.'

Fire being now put to him, he stretched out his right hand, and thrust it into the flame, and held it there a good space, before the fire came to any other part of his body; where his hand was seen of every man sensibly burning, crying with a loud voice, 'This hand hath offended.' As soon as the fire got up, he was very soon dead, never stirring or crying all the while.

Cranmer's execution was unlawful because he was executed even though he had recanted. He had repented and accepted the Catholic Faith and even though Bonner had not been satisfied with his first four recantations

his fifth seems to have been acceptable. However, Mary would not budge and Cranmer was executed. So why was Cranmer executed when he had quite clearly recanted? Possible reasons include:

- Revenge - Cranmer was the one who had annulled Mary's parents' marriage and allowed her father to marry Anne Boleyn. Mary and her mother had been treated harshly by Henry VIII after the annulment.
- An example - Was Cranmer used as an example to show how far the Church was willing to go to rid the country of heretics.
- Theology - Did Mary see it as her job to punish and remove the man who could be held responsible for the English Reformation? Did she see herself as doing God's work by getting rid of someone who was doing the Devil's work?
- Politics - Cranmer had been an influential political figure for two decades so perhaps Mary and her Council thought that it was dangerous to leave him alive.
-
-

It is easy for us to criticise a man for recanting, for denying his faith instead of remaining strong, but what would we do in the face of an horrific punishment? Thomas Cranmer became a broken man after his recantations and he must have thought of St Peter who denied Christ three times before the cock crowed and who then broke down and wept as he realised what he had done.

Some may label Cranmer as a coward but he used his final opportunity to recant to take back his recantations and to be true to his faith. He died bravely, thrusting his right hand, the hand that had signed the recantations, into the flames saying "This hand hath offended".

Being burned at the stake was a horrible death. A Wikipedia article on "Death by Burning" says:-

"If the fire was small...the convict would burn for some time until death from heatstroke and loss of blood plasma. When this method of execution was applied with skill, the condemned's body would burn progressively in the following sequence: calves, thighs and hands, torso and forearms, breasts, upper chest, face; and then finally death. On other occasions, people died from suffocation with only their calves on fire. Several records report that victims took over 2 hours to die."