

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

NOVEMBER 20TH - 21ST, 2021 // BOOK OF 2 THESSALONIANS

WHY STUDY 2 THESSALONIANS?

Confusion also abounds among many modern Christians about how to respond to persecution and marginalization from the culture at large.

- Do we get angry and respond to the unbelieving world's irrational hatred of us with even more hatred and vitriol?
- Is our hope placed in us as Christians someday winning a culture war or in the Lord's return?

Confusion abounds among many modern Christians about the 2nd coming of Christ and how we are to live until that day happens.

- Are we wrapped up in speculation of timelines about the day of Christ's return or we are admitting that "no man know the day or hour" (Matt. 24:36)?
- Are we working hard to build His Kingdom here and now until that day comes?

Belief in Jesus' return and the hope of final justice is never meant to bring fear, anxiety, pride, or speculation about timelines.

- Rather, it's meant to inspire hope, faithfulness, endurance, and diligence even when it's hard to follow Jesus in this life.
- What you hope for, shapes what you live for.

GREETINGS & THANKSGIVING (2 THESSALONIANS 1:1-4)

Just like in the first letter to the Thessalonians, authorship of the book in verse 1 is actually attributed equally to Paul, Silas, and Timothy (vs. 1).

- Since the three missionaries were still together, most likely these two letters were written only a few months apart.
- "Grace" & "Peace" from God the Father and the Lord Jesus are the blessing extended to these faithful believers (vs. 2).

A GROWING FAITH (VS. 3A)

Paul is grateful for these believers for a number of reasons, but primarily because their faith was, "growing abundantly." What an encouragement for Paul to know that these young believers were maturing in their spiritual lives in spite of their challenges.

- Are we growing in our faith? Do we look more like Jesus today than we did a year ago? What are we doing to grow in our faith?

AN INCREASING LOVE (VS. 3B)

Because their faith in Jesus was growing, their love for others was increasing.

- A sign that we're growing spiritually in the Lord is that our heart is softening, and we're growing more compassionate and kinder to the people around us.
- Truth and love are not opposing forces- we can hold firm to truth and still be kind!

A STEADFAST FAITH & ENDURANCE (VS. 4)

In spite of the increasing persecution and afflictions that these believers were facing, they were enduring and had steadfastness and faith.

- The person who has genuine faith will view affliction and suffering through the lens of hope.
- That hope is grounded in the expectation that someday every trial, suffering, and affliction will come to an end because Jesus is coming back.

Genuine faith in Christ is meant to grow- if it's not growing, there's a real issue.

- Genuine faith in Christ produces in our lives love for others that grows as we grow closer to Christ - if we're unkind jerks to people and think that's ok because we're right, there's a real issue.
- Genuine faith in Christ produces hope in our lives even when things get hard - if we're constantly negative and hopeless, there's a real issue.

"WHEN THE LORD JESUS IS REVEALED FROM HEAVEN..." (2 THESSALONIANS 1:5-10)

Vs. 5 is an interesting verse - Paul says that "this" ("your steadfastness and faith in all your persecutions and afflictions," vs. 4) is the evidence of the righteous judgment of God.

- The truth of the Gospel's power, the indwelling Holy Spirit, and the certainty of God's coming future judgment was evident in the fact that these believers had an ability to withstand persecution.
- Their endurance was an apologetic for the truth of the coming Kingdom.

Not only that, their "worthiness of the Kingdom of God" was demonstrated by their ability and willingness to suffer.

- Not that they were able to somehow attain their salvation through suffering- they simply demonstrated their salvation was real by being willing to suffer because of it.
- If your faith in Jesus costs you nothing, it's probably worth nothing to you.

God will repay with affliction those who afflict His followers (vs. 6).

- Interestingly, most persecution worldwide comes through people who believe they're doing God a favor by persecuting Christians and that God will reward them.
- God will avenge and repay them justly by matching the punishment with the sin, and that vengeance belongs to God, not us (Rom. 12:19).

Not only will God righteously judge all evildoers, He will also "grant relief" to those who afflicted (vs. 7).

- The animosity, violence, and irrational hatred towards Christians will someday end and there will be relief and rewards given to those who have faithfully endured.
- When will this happen? "When the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels."

The return of Christ should be a terrifying thought for those, "who do not know God... and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus" (vs. 8).

- What Paul has in mind is probably not those who are ignorant to the Gospel, but those who heard and responded with disbelief, rebellion, and even violence towards those who did believe.
- For them, that will be a day of fire, vengeance, and judgment (vs. 8-9).

For those who refuse to obey the Gospel and know God, there will be a repayment of eternal destruction and separation from the presence of the Lord and His glory (vs. 9).

- This is simply justice - for those who want nothing to do with the Lord, His righteous commands, and His presence in this life, they will get the ultimate fulfillment of their desire in the life to come.

But to His saints, Christ's coming will not only be something we marvel at, His glory will somehow be shown in those who belong to Him ("to be glorified in His saints", vs. 10a).

- The ones who will marvel at His coming and see His glory manifested in His people on that day will be all who have believed in the testimony of the apostles that Jesus is Lord (vs. 10b).

A PRAYER FOR ENDURANCE (2 THESSALONIANS 1:11-12)

After every section of teaching in 2 Thessalonians, Paul offers prayers for this church.

- What that tells us is that while learning sound doctrine through reading Scripture or listening to Biblical teaching is necessary, ultimately it's God the Holy Spirit that has to implant that Word deep into our beings.
- Prayer expresses utter dependence on God to make that growth happen ("it's God that gives the growth," 1 Cor. 3:6).

"...THAT OUR GOD MAY MAKE YOU WORTHY."

We don't deserve to be called by God for salvation, yet God extends His call to us as an act of grace.

- After we receive that call that we're not worthy of, we are compelled and empowered by God to live in such a way that is fitting, or worthy, of such an incredible honor (Eph. 4:1-3).
- It's God that makes and transforms our lives to be this way, yet we have responsibility to be obedient and faithful (Phil. 2:12).

"...MAY FULFILL EVERY RESOLVE FOR GOOD."

We are people who have been touched by and experienced the goodness of God.

- He resolved to show us His goodness through the undeserved sacrifice of Jesus and through the gift of the Holy Spirit.
- He then has resolved to show the world His goodness through us! We are called to display His goodness.

"...AND EVERY WORK OF FAITH BY HIS POWER."

We live lives worthy of His call when we fulfill works of faith by His power.

- That means because we believe and have faith in Jesus, we're willing to obey Him and see His work done in us, through us, and around us.
- Every good work we do in Jesus name is a work of reliance on Him and is done by His power- not ours.

"SO THAT THE NAME OF OUR LORD JESUS MAY BE GLORIFIED IN YOU, AND YOU IN HIM..."

We are called to represent the very character of the Lord Jesus Christ in how we live, how we serve, how we speak, and how we treat those around us.

- We bring Him glory when we represent His character well through our lives, and we bring Him dishonor when we don't.

It's an interesting thought that suffering in this life as a follower of Jesus is actually a sign of our identification with Jesus and participation in the Kingdom of God.

- The willingness of Christians to endure persecution is an evidence that Christianity is true.
- If we say we want to follow Jesus, why is it difficult for us to accept that suffering is also a part of it?

YOU WANT TO FOLLOW JESUS? JESUS WAS...

- Unappreciated and taken advantage of (Luke 17:11-19)
- Surrounded by immature, selfish people (Luke. 22:24)
- Misunderstood and called crazy (Mark 3:21)
- Slandered, maligned, and lied about (Mark 14:56-57)
- Blindfolded, beaten, and mocked (Luke 22:63)
- Whipped & forced to carry His own cross (John 19:1, 16-18)
- Executed by means of crucifixion and died through hypovolemic shock and suffocation (Matthew 27:50).
- Luke 23:34 and Matthew 16:24

A growing, authentic faith in Jesus will be displayed by an increasing love for others and a willingness to be steadfast when it gets hard to follow Jesus (vs. 1-4)

- Someday every bit of the suffering, hardship, and pain we will go through because of our testimony in Jesus as Lord will be rewarded and evil will be destroyed (vs. 5-10).

Let's bring God glory and represent the character of Jesus well by responding to the hardships and sufferings we face in a way that looks like Jesus (vs. 11-12).