

The Church and The Blessed Hope **“Encouragement for Last Day’s Suffering”** **II Thessalonians 1:1-12**

Introduction - “Today’s mighty oak was yesterday’s little nut that held it’s ground.”

- The believer’s in Thessalonica were facing persecution and affliction. They were grateful for Paul’s first letter, but their problems had worsened and many were ready to give up!
- Don’t give up!
- Paul wanted their faith to keep growing like an oak tree. So he wrote them this second letter to encourage them to hold their ground.

Why did Paul write Second Thessalonians? Three chapters and three reasons:

- 1. They were persecutors** - In chapter one we have Paul’s *encouragement in suffering*.
- 2. They were false teachers-** In chapter two, we have Paul’s *enlightenment in teaching*.
- 3. They were idlers-** In chapter three we have Paul’s *enablement in living*.

Paul wrote Second Thessalonians to:

1. Encourage the suffering.
2. Enlighten the confused.
3. Exhort the careless.

In chapter one, Paul shares three encouragements:

I. The Encouragement of Praise vv. 1-4

Verses 1-2 are Paul’s greeting.

Verses 3-4 Paul was practicing his own admonition in I Thess. 5:18, “in everything...”

Satan will often use discouragement to defeat us! We forget to thank and praise God! (“Praise as well as prayer changes things..”)

Paul felt an obligation to be thankful vs. 3, “bound” to owe a debt & “meet” or “fitting”.

His thanks was towards God, vs. 3.

He was thankful “for them”. Don’t stumble others, don’t discourage others, but affirm and encourage!

What was Paul thankful for?

1. Their growing faith, vs. 3.

- “growth exceedingly” - Illus.: a tree or plant.
- It’s not “salvation faith” it’s daily faith in a personal God! It’s learning to trust Him!

How does our faith grow?

- Feed it on the word of God. Prayer & praise.
- Exercise it like a muscle.

2. Their abounding love, vs. 3b.

- God had answered Paul’s prayer. I Thess. 3:12.

Note: Growing exceedingly. **Illus.:** Like a tree or plant.

It’s not “*salvation faith.*” it’s *daily faith* in a *personal God!* It’s learning to trust Him!

How does our faith grow?

- Feed it - on the word of God, prayer and praise.
- Exercise it - Like a muscle.

2. Their abounding love, vs. 3b.

Note: God had answered Paul’s prayer, I Thess. 3:12.

- The picture is now of an overflowing river!
- The danger that suffering can make us “*self-absorbed and bitter.*”

“But if we look up to God in faith, we can then look around in love to men!”

3. Their increasing patience, vs. 4.

Note: God allows “*persecutions*” because of their faith. Tribulations, literally “*pressed in a narrow place*” (life is often hard).

Why endure? To test our faith. James 1:3, “*Knowing this that the trying of your faith worketh patience.*”

Suffering helps us grow!

- Is your faith growing?
- Is your love abounding?
- Is your patience increasing?

II. The Encouragement of Promise, vs. 5-10

Paul holds out three promises for them and us as well!

1. The promise of reward, vs. 5.

Note: “God’s judgments are righteous,” vs. 5.

What’s the reward? “*That ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God for which ye also suffer.*” It’s not “*made worthy,*” it’s “*counted worthy*” or “*declared worthy.*”

Endurance is proof of God’s work in our hearts. Suffering fixes us or prepares us for glory.

Illus.: God’s way, contrast with the world’s way! First the cross, then the crown!

2. The promise of retribution, v.v. 6-10.

3. The promise of rest, vs. 7.

III. The Encouragement of Prayer, v.v. 11-12.

The future hope, must never lead us to neglect our present responsibility to pray!

Paul prays for three things:

1. Their Worthiness, vs. 11a - N.L.T. “We keep on praying for you, asking our God to enable you to live a life worthy of His call.” Trails show your worth!

2. Their Work, vs. 11b - N.L.T. “May he give you the power to accomplish all the good things your faith prompts you to do.”

Illus.: My electric razor! God gives us the power to do His will! “Trust Him in the trails!”

3. Their Witness, vs. 12

Note: “Grace and glory go together. Glory is the end; grace is the means to it. There can be no glory without grace,” Jonathan Edwards.

“Grace is but glory begun and glory is but grace perfected,” Jonathan Edwards.

- Jesus is coming in glory, vs. 7.
- Jesus will be glorified in His people, vs. 10.
- Those who reject Jesus will be excluded from his glory, vv. 8-9.
- “Our supreme purpose is to live for His glory,” vs. 12.

It's all by, in and through His grace!

Romans 8:18, “For I reckon that.....”

“The very essence of Heaven is the irradiation of our selfishness, our transformation into Christ's image, and our preoccupation with his glory,” John Stott.