

2 THESSALONIANS 1:1-5

A Healthy Church

We come to Paul's 2nd letter to the church in Thessalonica.

Silas and Timothy mentioned in the letter are with Paul in Corinth. **Acts 18**.
So a few months, maybe a year have passed since Paul's first visit to the Thessalonica.

Paul came from a wealthy home, he was well educated, from the tribe of Benjamin and a member of the Sanhedrin. He is from Tarsus of Cilicia. **Acts 21:39**
(Tarsus today is southern Turkey)

Sometime in his life, he learned a trade as a tentmaker. Cilicia was well known for producing and exporting a goat-hair cloth for making tents.

Paul's father was a Pharisee. He has a sister and nephew, all are mentioned in **Acts 23**

The amazing thing about the Apostle Paul was his conversion.
Saul was on the hunt. He hated the church and his passion to remove anyone that was teaching something other than the traditions of the Jews was to be eliminated.

Act 9:1-6

Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" Then the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads." So he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what do You want me to do?"

Paul wasn't moved by Stephen's death. He wasn't influenced in the least by all of the people that he imprisoned or had put to death.

We will so often try to manipulate people to come to faith OR to get believers to do something for the Lord.

We are not the Holy Spirit! We are never instructed to do His work.

Remember, the most important thing that you can EVER do for anyone is to pray for them. Let the Holy Spirit do the work.

For you? Be obedient to what the Lord has called YOU to do!

The outcome is on the Lord's shoulders, not yours!

So the Lord speaks to Saul, and his response is question that every single person ask!

"Who are You, Lord?"

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"Lord, what do You want me to do?"

We need to get to know who Jesus is and find out what He wants us to do!
The more time you spend in God's word, the more secure you will be in Jesus and know His plan for your life!

Some of you ask yourselves that question every day! You are spending time in God's word, you are looking for the Lord to speak into your life and change you. Keep it up!

2 Thessalonians 3:13

But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary in doing good.

Others might want to evaluate your motives.
Are you really wanting the Lord to tell you what He wants you to do?
Is your walk with Jesus stale? Is your time reading and studying more of a checklist of things to do, rather than intimate time with the Lord?

If this is you, I want to encourage you! God is not concerned about your list. Time with the Lord is so much more than a list and ticks to accomplish something.

Listen, I am a list guy! I understand. Let's take David's advice:

Psalm 27:4

***One thing I have desired of the LORD, that will I seek:
That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life,
to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in His temple.***

Let all that you do, even your list, become ***beholding the beauty of the Lord!***

FYI Paul/Saul

Jesus didn't change Saul's name to Paul at his conversion.

In **Acts 13:9**, as Paul is getting ready for his ministry to largely Greek-speaking Gentiles in Cypress.

We read these words: ***"Then Saul, who was also called Paul..."***

From this time forward, Luke, the author of Acts, continues to call him Paul. He has been referred to as Saul previously.

- One idea is that "Saul" is his Hebrew name, while as a Roman citizen he also bore the biblical Greek name of Paul.
- It was not uncommon in that time for people to have two names. The presumption is that Luke began calling his fellow missionary "Paul" because that would be the more familiar name to the Gentiles to which they were ministering.

Again, this is a speculation but we do know that God did not change his name from Saul to Paul.

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Silas (Silvanus)

Silas comes on the scene in **Acts 15** when the church leaders are proposing a letter to go out to all the churches about Gentiles becoming believers.

Remember, the church started in Jerusalem with Jews.

Jewish people that have followed traditions for 1000's of years. So as Gentile believers were getting saved, the Jewish believers thought that the Gentiles should be come Jews also. The debate was on with how to deal with this issue. So it was decided to send a letter out to all the churches, that for these new believers, they should teach the following:

Act 15:28-29

For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well.

Gentile believers could worship together with Jewish believers without division! The commonality was Jesus!

And today, as then, our common ground for all believers is Jesus!

No matter who you are, where you come from, the color of your skin or your social status. **We are all one in Christ!**

Silas was one of the leaders in the early church **Acts 15:22,32**. He was a Jew and a Roman citizen, **Acts 16:37**.

Silas joined Paul after Paul's dispute with Barnabas about taking John Mark along on this journey. They could not agree and it is described in **Acts 15**.

Act 15:32

Now Judas and Silas, themselves being prophets also, exhorted and strengthened the brethren with many words.

Timothy

It is likely that Timothy came to the Lord on Paul's first missionary journey.

On Paul's 2nd missionary journey, Paul and Silas return to Lystra.

Timothy has matured in his reputation and his walk with the Lord. **Act 16:1-2**

Paul sees something in Timothy and invites him to continue with him and Silas.

After they leave Thessalonica and Berea, Paul sends Timothy back to Thessalonica to encourage them. Timothy returns with wonderful news of how that church is growing. Prompting Paul's first letter to them.

1 Timothy 4:12

Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

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Now Paul writing to them a 2nd time.

2 Thessalonians 1:1-5

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy,

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

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

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, 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, 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;

2 Thessalonians 1:3

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,

Paul is telling us that they are bound, **bound to thank God**.

This Greek word for **bound** means to owe, or to be indebted to.

Missy and I rent a terrace home.

We live there, and because we live there, we pay rent.

We owe our landlord monthly because they allow us to live there.

We are indebted to them BECAUSE they allow us to live and make that place our home.

Paul is bound, he owes or is indebted **to thank God** for them always.

There is a principle here about being thankful to the Lord. The word here means to express gratitude.

Psalm 105:1

Oh, give thanks to the LORD!

Call upon His name; Make known His deeds among the peoples!

There are things in our lives that we need to express gratitude, to give thanks for.

1. A Healthy Church is Thankful

Why is Paul thankful to the Lord for them?

There are 2 reasons:

Because of their **faith** and their **love of everyone**

because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other,

The 1st reason: **Faith**

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2. A Healthy Church has Faith that Grows- faith that grows exceedingly!

Remember this church is now 2 months to a year old. God is doing a work here!
But we need to see WHY their **faith** is growing.

Look at verse 4.

2 Thessalonians 1:4

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,

Paul is boasting about them to the churches, he is proud of them.
Because they are going through ***persecutions and tribulations*** and these things are producing ***faith and patience***.
They are growing in the struggles of life.

3. A Healthy Church Struggles

We know from ***Acts 17*** that not everyone in Thessalonica received the Gospel. Some of the Jews there were not having anything that would disrupt their traditions.
Paul, Silas and Timothy were run out of town.

We get that way sometimes.
This is the way it's done, and no one is going to change it.

Act 17:5

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.

The new believers were being persecuted for their walk with Jesus.
Yet they are growing!

Jason is dragged out of his house and threatened.
They were experiencing ***persecutions and tribulations***.
This Greek word for ***tribulations*** means pressure or affliction, anguish or burdened.

I think we can all relate to this description of ***tribulations***.
But can we relate to pressure that ***tribulations*** we have experienced testing our faith?

If you haven't, talk to a person that has left a cult, left Islam?
A spouse that has become a believer and they ridiculed for their faith.
Any of them could tell you what ***tribulations*** are like.

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I remember when Missy and I really decided to commit and follow the Lord.
Many of our "Christian friends" ridiculed us.

When you become a Christian, your problems do not go away.
Often there is more drama in your life than before.
Why? Because something is different about you. The Spirit of God is living inside of you!

God is working to change you into the image of Christ!

Ephesians 4:22-24

that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

We are never promised health, wealth and happiness.
Anyone that tells you that is misrepresenting the truth of the Gospel.

Look at verse 4 again.

2 Thessalonians 1:4

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,

Paul is proud of them; he is boasting because of their endurance!

4. A Healthy Church Endures

The 1st reason Paul was ***bound to thank God*** for them- ***Faith***
The 2nd reason: ***Love***

2 Thessalonians 1:3

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,

And in spite of the ***tribulations and persecutions*** they are going through.
They are being stretched and growth is happening.
Tribulations and persecutions can wear you down.
Yet, these young believers are getting stronger in the Lord.

And in spite of all of this, they are loving each other.

the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other,

These people are not only enduring challenges in their lives, they are choosing ***to love***.

It is so easy to love people that we want to love.
To love people that will love us back.

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But is that *agape* love? No!

John 15:10-12

"If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full. This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

John 15:17

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

Do you want to be happy? To have joy? Love people!

**Agape Love-giving unselfishly to meet the needs of others without expecting anything in return.*

Love people!

- When they don't love you back
- When you don't like them
- When you think they haven't earned it.

Love them!!

One thing that Jackie DeShannon almost had right with her song in 1965-
"What the world needs now, is love, sweet love!"

What the world needs now more than anything is JESUS!
And a church that is representing Jesus. The church is you and I.

5. A Healthy Church Loves People

Let' read this all in context.

2 Thessalonians 1:3-5

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, 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, 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;

Finally, verse 5

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2 Thessalonians 1:5

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;

which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God

God's righteous judgment was at work among the Thessalonians.

What does this mean?

1 Peter 4:17

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?

God's righteous judgment is made evident in us, the church through our ***tribulations and persecutions***. Our response to these trials is evidence of God in us.

If God isn't working in our lives as believers, will the world see Jesus?
Does the rest of the world see anything different in our lives by the way we live, than the way they live?

Romans 12:2

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

As the Lord is changing their lives and purifying them as followers of Jesus.

The good result – ***showing them worthy of the kingdom of God*** – described in

2 Thessalonians 1:4

was manifest evidence that God was good in allowing them to suffer the persecutions and tribulations.

Christians usually think that God is absent when they suffer, and that our suffering calls God's righteous judgment into question.

Paul took the exact opposite position and insisted that the Thessalonians' suffering was evidence of ***the righteous judgment of God***.

Where suffering is engaged with righteous endurance, God's work is done. (repeat)

The fires of ***persecution and tribulation*** were like the purifying fires of a refiner, burning away the dross from the gold, bringing forth a pure, precious metal.

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2 Thessalonians 1:5

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

The idea Paul is teaching behind ***counted worthy*** is not "seen as worthy" but "reckoned as worthy" as in a judicial decree.

Paul's prayer was that the worthiness of Jesus may be accounted to the Thessalonian Christians.

6. A Healthy Church Suffers (this is a good thing)

Signs of a healthy church?

A Healthy Church is Thankful
A Healthy Church has Faith that Grows
A Healthy Church Struggles
A Healthy Church Endures
A Healthy Church Loves People
A Healthy Church Suffers (this is a good thing)

Let's make this a bit more personal.

Signs of a healthy believer?

Going through struggles in life is not a bad thing. You will never get stronger and grow in your walk with Jesus until you learn to trust Him in every area of your life.

God is glorified in our Thankfulness
God works as our faith grows
God reveals His power when we struggle
God gives us strength as we endure
God reveals His love for us, thru us.
God reveals His strength in us when we suffer