

Small Group Notes

Sermon: 14 May 2023



Hope worth living for
2 Thessalonians 1

SCRIPTURE

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OVERVIEW

Paul and his companions were forced to leave Thessalonica before they were ready to, and as a result he was truly concerned about the continued growth of the young church they had established there. His second letter to the Thessalonians follows shortly after the first, and celebrates a flourishing church that was growing in faith and practical love for one another (verses 3-4). Paul's encouragement was timely, because, despite persecution and great suffering, the community of Jesus' followers stood strong in their commitment to Jesus. Paul encourages them further to persevere in the face of trials and afflictions, pointing toward the return of King Jesus, who will set everything right.

Paul, therefore, brings an important lesson to the church about a godly perspective on suffering and sets the records straight that Jesus **will** one day return as a righteous judge (it hadn't happened yet). He wanted the Thessalonians (and all Christians) to know that God is just. He will deal justly with all of their persecutors, and the church need not concern themselves with seeking revenge (cf Roms 12:19). Neither should they worry that their persecutors were getting away with their sins without any punishment. God saw all of what was going on and at the appropriate time, He would punish them.

Paul makes it clear and prays for them and (all of us!), that God gives grace for the Christian

walk especially through times of suffering. And ultimately the **knowledge, hope** and **expectation** of Christ's return encourages us in our suffering and motivates us to live for him.

DISCUSSION

1. Read verses 3-4; Paul makes a significant commendation about the church; "your faith is growing more and more, and the love all of you have for one another is increasing".
 - How can we grow in our faith as a church?
 - What does it mean to you to have love for 'one another' in the church? How have you/can you demonstrate this?
2. Paul's central encouragement to the church is the needed change in perspective, that at the appropriate time, God would give them relief. And setting their minds on this hope, they should continue to persevere while trusting that God had the best in store for them.
 - How does the knowledge that there is relief/rest coming, help you in the midst of affliction? (especially prolonged struggles)? How has your perspective on suffering changed as a result of this encouragement/truth?
3. How should the knowledge about God's final punishment for unbelievers affect our lives? (hint: We must share the good news!)

- How well are we doing? Encourage each other with any practical ideas / ways you are doing this.