

“A Church To Be Proud Of”

2 Thessalonians 1:1-12

Our letter starts out with Paul boasting about the Thessalonian Church as a proud father would boast about the accomplishments of his children. He is pleased with the Church.

Your faith is growing (2 Thessalonians 1:3 [4,11]) // Your love is showing (2 Thessalonians 1:3) // You are patient in persecution (2 Thessalonians 1:4-5) // You hope in His return (2 Thessalonians 1:6-10) // You depend on God’s power (2 Thessalonians 1:11-12)

1. YOUR FAITH IS GROWING (2 THESSALONIANS 1:3 [4,11])

- i. *1 John 5:4⁴ For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.*
- ii. *Luke 17:5⁵ And the apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith.”*
- iii. “Sometimes when we read the words of those who have been more than conquerors, we feel almost despondent. I feel that I shall never be like that. But they won through step by step, by little bits of wills, little denials of self, little inward victories, by faithfulness in very little things. They became what they are. No one sees these little hidden steps. They only see the accomplishment, but even so, those small steps were taken. There is no sudden triumph to spiritual maturity. That is the work of the moment.” – Amy Carmichael

2. YOUR LOVE IS SHOWING (2 THESSALONIANS 1:3)

- i. *1 John 4:16(NLT)¹⁶ We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in his love. God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them.*
- ii. *John 13:34–35³⁴ 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.”*
- iii. “God’s definition of what matters is pretty straightforward. He measures our lives by how we love.” — Francis Chan

3. YOU ARE PATIENT IN PERSECUTION (2 THESSALONIANS 1:4-5)

A. Persecution is a normal part of the Christian faith

- i. In 2019 every month, on average: 345 Christians are killed for faith-related reasons. 105 Churches and Christian buildings are burned or attacked. 219 Christians are detained without trial, arrested, sentenced and imprisoned. 1 in 9 Christians experience high levels of persecution today. <https://www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/>

B. Faith and patience are produced through persecution and problems (Verse 4)

- i. *James 1:2–3² My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.*
- ii. Doctor to patient: “I have bad news and worse news.” // Patient: “So let’s have it.” // Doctor: “The bad news is that you only have 24 hours to live.” // Patient: “I can’t imagine what could be worse than that!” // Doctor: “I forgot to tell you yesterday.”

C. Problems are for a purpose when God is in control. You never know. (Verse 5)

- i. *2 Thessalonians 1:5(NLT)⁵ And God will use this persecution to show his justice and to make you worthy of his Kingdom, for which you are suffering.*
- ii. *Romans 8:28²⁸ And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.*
- iii. A man who lost his horse. The neighbor came to talk to him. “I lost my horse – that’s too bad // Horse came back – that’s great! // My son broke his leg riding the horse – that’s too bad // Commander called all the young men to battle but not my son – that’s great! // The battle is over and no one was hurt and all the young men got 50 acres of land free except my son – that’s too bad // Drought came and killed all the crops and the landowners fought but the son was not there – that’s good // Etc. etc.”

4. YOU HOPE IN HIS RETURN (2 THESSALONIANS 1:6-10)

A. His return is HELL for those who persecute Christians (vs.6), do not know God (vs.8) and who do not obey the gospel of Jesus (vs.8) (Verses 6-9)

- i. *John 3:36³⁶ He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”*

- ii. *Matthew 25:46*⁴⁶ *And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”*
- iii. *2 Peter 3:9–10*⁹ *The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.* ¹⁰ *But the day of the Lord will come...”*

B. His return is HOPE for those who believe (Verse 10)

- i. “The best of life on Earth is a glimpse of Heaven; the worst of life is a glimpse of Hell. For Christians, this present life is the closest they will come to Hell. For unbelievers, it is the closest they will come to Heaven.” — Randy Alcorn, Heaven

5. YOU DEPEND ON GOD’S POWER (2 THESSALONIANS 1:11-12)

A. Power through prayer (Verse 11)

B. Because of His good pleasure (Verse 11)

C. For his glory (Verse 12)

D. By his grace (Verse 12 [2])

- i. *Philippians 2:13*¹³ *for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.*

Growth Group Discussion Questions:

- Do you think it’s okay to say that you are proud of someone? What about being proud of yourself?
- Paul was boasting about the Thessalonian Church. He was pleased that they were growing in their faith (vs.3). What do you think are some signs that a person is growing in their faith?
- 1 in 9 Christians face persecution. (It may be helpful to read the statistics at <https://www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/>) Do you think that persecution is a good or bad thing for the Church? In other words, are there any benefits that come from persecution?
- Hell and judgement are not popular topics in many Churches today. Why do you think it’s important to tell people about Hell?
- The final point this week was that we depend on God’s power. How do we practically do this in our daily lives? In other words, what are some practical ways we rely on God’s strength and not our own?
- Bonus Question: What are some ways you are proud of your Church, Calvary?