



Being a Church Worth Boasting About 2 Thessalonians 1:1-4

Paul wrote the first letter to the Thessalonians about AD 51 from Corinth. It seems he wrote the second letter soon after the first also from Corinth. Paul wrote the first to tell them they had not missed the Rapture. He writes the second to tell them they weren't in the Great Tribulation. The church was facing great persecution and not surprisingly wondered if they were in the midst of the Great Tribulation Jesus prophesied about.

Flourishing Faith (1:3a)

After Paul's greeting, like in 1 Thessalonians he mentions, himself, Silvanus (Silas in the book of Acts) and Timothy, Paul again thanks God for this amazing church (see 1 Thess 1:2). One reason Paul and his companions thank God for the Thessalonians is their flourishing faith. (Paul had prayed for this in 1 Thessalonians 3:10). The word translated "flourishing" is a Greek word only used here in the entire New Testament, and it means "growing exceedingly" and indicates organic growth like a healthy plant. What is spiritual growth? In short, being more like Jesus or growing in our knowledge of God and in godly living. Growing in faith takes time and effort. Paul and the writer of Hebrews rebuked believers for not growing. They hadn't put in the effort (Hebrews 5:12; 1 Cor 3:1-3). Paul said church leaders shouldn't be new converts since they hadn't had time grow in their faith (1 Timothy 3:6). How do we grow in faith? Trusting God more and obeying Him more (which necessarily includes reading, studying and applying the Bible). See 2 Peter 1:3-11 for a list of Christian qualities that increase as we mature.

Increasing Love for One Another (1:3b)

Another reason they thanked God for the church was their love for one another was increasing. Paul had prayed for this increase in love in 1 Thessalonians 3:12. Genuine faith in God is always accompanied by love for others (James 2:14-17).

Perseverance and Faith in Persecution (1:4)

We usually think that spiritual growth and love for one another would only happen in an ideal environment. For example, one with little stress, no problems, multiple resources, and friendly treatment from people outside the church. However, the Thessalonians faced the opposite. They were under severe persecution for their faith. So much in fact they wondered if they were enduring the Great Tribulation. Contrary to human logic, often spiritual growth happens because of persecution and suffering. Why? During persecution you can't make it on your own. You are more likely to rely on God and fellow Christians during persecution than you are when things are going well. In persecution they learned to endure and be patient. These qualities can only really be learned in difficulty. If you receive everything immediately, you won't be a patient person. If you have nothing to suffer through, you won't learn endurance.