

## 1. Paul **Commends** the Persecuted Church 2 Thess. 1:3-4

<sup>3</sup> *We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers, as is right, because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing.*

<sup>4</sup> *Therefore we ourselves boast about you in the churches of God for your steadfastness and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions that you are enduring.*

**Public Commendation:** Their growing faith, their increasing love for one another, and their steadfastness and faith while enduring persecutions and afflictions.

## 2. Paul **Comforts** the Persecuted Church 2Thess. 1:5-12

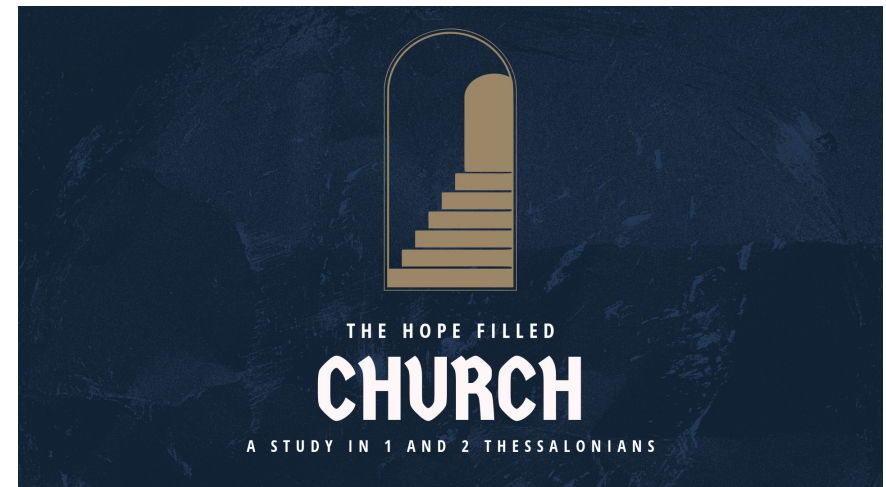
### A. Sweet Comfort foretold: 1:5-7a

<sup>5</sup> *This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering—<sup>6</sup>since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, <sup>7</sup>and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels...*

- The sweet sense that you are considered worthy of the kingdom of God.
- The sweet knowledge that the injustice will end, and turn on itself.
- The sweet relief that comes when the persecution is finally removed.

### B. The Comfort of Standing with the Righteous, when...

- When the One who is Holy and Just comes 1:7b-9  
*...when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels<sup>8</sup> in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. <sup>9</sup>They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, [See Romans 1:18-24]*
- When people get the judgment they deserve. [See Rev. 20:11-12, 15]  
What is Justice? Justice is getting what you deserve.  
What is the Biblical distinction between God's Justice and God's Mercy?
  1. Justice is an obligation for God whose nature is Holiness and Truth; while Mercy is voluntary to God. God is not obligated to show mercy to a rebellious, creature who deserves punishment. [See Romans 9:15]
  2. God is both Just and Merciful but never Unjust. Sometimes God acts Non-Justly by showing mercy to those who don't deserve it; but he is never Unjust.
  3. When God acts non-justly by showing us mercy, he is still being Just, he assigns the just penalty onto Another. Justice is served.
- When we see Jesus as He really is; what a marvel. 1:10  
<sup>10</sup> *when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed.*



2 Thess. 1:1-12  
Paul, Silvanus, and  
Timothy,  
To the church of the  
Thessalonians in God  
our Father and the Lord  
Jesus Christ:  
<sup>2</sup> *Grace to you and  
peace from God our  
Father and the Lord  
Jesus Christ.*

<sup>3</sup> *We ought always to  
give thanks to God  
for you, brothers,  
as is right, because  
your faith is growing  
abundantly, and the  
love of every one of  
you for one another is  
increasing.*

**To the church of the Thessalonians:** The second apostolic letter to the Thessalonians begins almost exactly like the first letter. As was the custom in ancient letters, the authors identify themselves first (Paul, Silas and Timothy), after which the recipients are named. **We ought always to give thanks to God for you:** Paul offers a thanksgiving to God for the church. In the case of the Thessalonians, the apostle recognized the necessity of offering thanksgiving to God for the growing faith and love demonstrated by this church (v. 3b). The presence of such virtues in the congregation was the result of God's activity among them, and for that reason he is the one who is worthy of their thanks. **your faith is growing abundantly:** As in 1 Thess. 1:3, the Thessalonians' faith and love moves him to offer thanks. These believers were noteworthy for their faith in God, especially because it's faith in the face of adversity. Likewise, the apostle notes that the mutual love of the Thessalonian Christians is increasing. This love characterized the believers' relationships among themselves (1 Thess. 1:3; 3:6, 12; 4:9-10; 5:8, 13). Paul had previously exhorted the church to exhibit love toward one another "more and more" and the Thessalonians had taken the exhortation to heart! The mutual care and concern of this congregation and the reciprocal care among the members of this congregation moved the church founders to give thanks to God and stands as an exhortation to those of us who belong to fragmented Christian communities.

<sup>4</sup> Therefore we ourselves boast about you in the churches of God for your steadfastness and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions that you are enduring.

<sup>5</sup> This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering— <sup>6</sup>since indeed God considers it just it repay with affliction those who afflict you, <sup>7</sup> and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels <sup>8</sup> in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God

**boast about you in the churches:** Paul boasted about this church, as well as the other Macedonian congregations (2 Cor. 8:1–5), and was careful to commend this and other churches (2 Cor. 7:14; 8:24; 9:3). Most likely the boasting the apostle did among the other congregations was a great encouragement for them in the midst of the adversity they faced. It also reminded them that they were a part of a movement of many Gospel churches.

**persecutions... afflictions that you are enduring.:** The Thessalonian church's endurance of persecution stood as an example to the believers in the provinces of Macedonia and Achaia (1 Thess. 1:6–7). These believers had displayed a truly noteworthy tenacity, and this perseverance was rooted deeply in the hope in the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ that they held.

**the righteous judgment of God:** The following verses (vv. 5–10) are an expansion of Paul's thoughts on the persecutions the Thessalonians endured and the destiny of both the believers and their persecutors. The sufferings of the Thessalonians and the lack of any apparent intervention by God to bring an end to their undeserved suffering would be enough reason for the apostle to have presented such lengthy and detailed reassurances of the certainty of future judgment.

**evidence:** Exactly what is this clear evidence that God's judgment is righteous? God's judgment is right, or, "just" because in the end he will give to each what he or she deserves. This judgment has already begun (Rom. 1:18; 1 Pet. 4:17) in anticipation of its full realization in the future, as the following verses describe.

**God considers it just it repay with affliction those who**

**afflict you:** The Bible declares that God's judgment is in accordance with his justice (Gen. 18:25; 1 Kings 8:31–32; 2 Chr. 6:22–23; Pss. 7:8–9, 11 [7:9–10, 12]; 9:4, 8 [9:5, 9]; 35:24 [34:24] 2 Tim. 4:8; Rev. 18:6–7; 19:1–2). God is not capricious but rather judges all humans justly. Scripture addresses frequently the theme of divine recompense, at times using the same verb that the apostle employs in this verse (see Ps. 137:8 [136:8]; Isa. 66:4, 6; 3 Rom. 12:19; Heb. 10:30 [Deut. 32:35]). Paul claims that it would be unjust for God to allow the persecutors to escape their deserved judgment; to not receive what they deserve. How could it be just for God to forgive anyone? The answer is that Jesus received the penalty in our place through his death on the cross; Jesus received the justice we deserve. Some ask, "Why doesn't God forgive every non-believer in the same matter as a believer is forgiven?" R.C. Sproul: God is required by his nature to be just to all; but he can chose to be "merciful" to those he choses to be merciful to - he is not required by his nature to show mercy to all sinners.

**grant relief...when the Lord Jesus is revealed:** The promise given to these believers who have suffered so much at the hands

and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. <sup>9</sup> They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, <sup>10</sup> when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed. <sup>11</sup> To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power, <sup>12</sup> so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Resources used or adapted for this outline:** Green, G. L. (2002). The letters to the Thessalonians. Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans Pub.; Apollos. Gordon Fee, (2009) The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians. Eerdmans Publishing, Grand Rapids, MI. R.C. Sproul (1992) Essential Truths of the Christian Faith, Tyndale House Publishing, Wheaton IL.

of their persecutors is that God will reward them with relief at the time of the revelation of the Lord Jesus.

**mighty angels in flaming fire:** The presence of God in Exod. 3:2–3 includes flaming fire. Isaiah foresees God's judgment as flaming fire. (Isa. 66:15–16). In his revelation, the Lord Jesus will be accompanied with his powerful angels. A number of texts describe how these beings will accompany the Lord in his coming (1 Thess. 3:13; Matt. 16:27; 24:30–31; 25:31; Mark 8:38; and Zech. 14:5). They are the executors of the Lord's judicial power.

**inflicting vengeance:** The language of "vengeance" comes from Isaiah 66:15 in combination with Isaiah 66:4 ("Because I called them and they did not obey me"), which describe the wrath Yahweh visits on the disobedient. This "vengeance" is the result of a judicial decision and disposition against those who have rejected God and his gospel. This vengeance is not simple retaliation nor an irrational outburst of anger but an execution of God's just judgment (vv. 5–6).

**the punishment of eternal destruction:** This state to which the judged are assigned is variously described in the NT as a place of "unquenchable fire" (Matt. 3:12), a "fiery furnace" (Matt. 13:42, 50), the "blackest darkness" that "has been reserved forever" (Jude 13), and a "fiery lake of burning sulfur" (Rev. 21:8). The graphic language appears inadequate at each point to describe the horrid nature of this state. No hope is held out for a second opportunity to escape or obtain salvation. The verdict, as its execution, will be final. This punishment means being shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power.

**when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints:** The Thessalonians themselves will take part in this glorification of the Lord, along with the great company of Christians. In his revelation, his people will give him the glory and honor he deserves because of the execution of his judgment on that day.

**be marveled at:** An allusion to Psalm 68:35 (67:36), "God will be marveled at among his saints." The verb "to marvel" in certain contexts meant "to be astonished at," but elsewhere it conveys the idea of "admire" or "honor."