

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These questions are designed to help you talk about God's word and Pastor Brian's message with friends and family. You of course can use your own questions, but we'd like to give you this tool to encourage Biblical fellowship and discipleship in your circle of relationships. **Enjoy discovering more about Him!**

"FAITH FLOURISHING, LOVE INCREASING" | 2 THESSALONIANS 1 | PASTOR BRIAN BELL

WARM-UP QUESTION:

If you had to grow up all over again, would you rather be an early bloomer or a late bloomer?

"Thanks to God for this Church" (2 Thess 1: 1-4)

Paul is thankful that God is causing their faith to grow and their love for one another to increase and He's given them patience to endure persecution. **Why does an increase in faith, love and patience seem to go together for mature believers?**

"A Promise that God is Just" (2 Thess 1: 5-10)

Affliction comes to both believers and non-believers. For believers, tough times prepares them for the kingdom of God. For non-believers, judgment will come for not following God. **What does patience in affliction look like for a believer? How can trusting God's judgment is coming help believers endure tough times?**

"A Prayer to God, That He Would Make Them Worthy of His Glory" (2 Thess 1: 11-12)

Paul is praying that the Church would fulfill God's purpose for them, and that Jesus would be glorified through them. **What would Jesus being glorified in someone's life look like in our culture today?**

REFLECTION QUESTION:

Paul knew God had a purpose for the Thessalonians and could Him increasing their faith, love and patience through persecution so that He would be glorified. **Do you believe God has similar plans for you? Are you trusting in God's ability to see you through this process and will make all things right in the end? Pray that God would "make you worthy of His calling".**

2 Thessalonians 1

9-17-23

Faith Flourishing. Love Increasing.

I. Announce:

- A. **Slide1 At Risk:** Join us today 3-5pm, we spend time *praying* for the issue of HT. The fight is both *physical and spiritual*, so let's storm heavens gates together. See you at 3:00 pm in the Agape room.
- B. **Slide2 Baby Dedication (2nd):** *Ana Victoria Valles*. Parents: Carlos & Lili (Benjamin).
- C. **Slide3 Prayer:** God we know this morning you are **useful** to our lives, but we want you to be made **attractive/beautiful** in our lives.

II. Slide4 Intro:

- A. **Title:** *Faith Flourishing. Love Increasing.*
- B. **Dating:** 2 Thes was written only a few months after 1st Thes. [from Corinth also 51,52ad]
- C. **Problem:** Someone shook them up with **a letter** (2:2) stating, since they were experiencing *persecutions/sufferings* they must be already **IN** *the Day of the Lord*.
- D. **Their Confusion:** The timing of Christ's Return.
- E. **It is a letter of correction:** Correcting their views on: *Persecution* (ch.1) *Prophecy* (2) *Practice* (3).
- F. **Outline:** *Thanks to God, for This Church. A Promise, that God is Just. Prayer to God, that He would Make Them Worthy of His Glory.*

III. Slide5a **THANKS TO GOD, FOR THIS CHURCH (1-4)**

- A. Here Paul doesn't thank the church, *but thanks God!*
- B. Paul gives *the church of Thessalonica* **praise** for a number of things, **because of** what **God** has done in/through them.
- C. **Slide5b A FLOURISHING FAITH, HOMEGROWN BY JESUS (3a)** [**faith** growing abundantly. increasing in great amounts, above the norm. *organic growth* as of a healthy plant]
 1. *Be not afraid of growing slowly, be afraid only of standing still.* Chinese Proverb

2. George Macdonald, *All growth that is not toward God is growing to decay*.

a) An advancing Christian grows *surfer* of Jesus every day.

D. Note the **twin truths** in this ch: faith & love (3). faith & steadfastness (4). faith & power (11).

E. A story is told of a dinner party conversation with Albert Einstein and his young neighbor, who asked *the white-haired scientist*, “What are you actually by profession?” “I devote myself to the study of physics,” Einstein replied. The girl looked at him in astonishment. “You mean to say you study *physics at your age?*” she exclaimed. “I finished mine a year ago.”

1. Doesn't that seem how some have handled their Christianity? Some are introduced to a course in **salvation**, others make it a life's calling.

F. **Slide5c A LOVE INCREASING, BECAUSE OF JESUS** (3b) [love increasing. abounding. Growing. developing] (biblical love is a decision, not just a *feeling*)

G. **Increasing** = to overspread. As a fire or a flood covers everything in its path.

1. Rm.5:5 *the love of God has been poured out* (to lavish, gush out, run greedily) in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us. [meditate on that!]

2. Here's a great goal for **CM**, *that the love of every one of you for one another is increasing*.

H. Dolly Madison (not cakes/pastries), wife of the 4th president of the US, was one of the most popular women in American history. Wherever she went, she charmed and captivated everyone obscure and well-known, rich and poor, men and women alike. She was once asked to explain the secret of her power over others. Surprised by the question Mrs. Madison exclaimed, “Power over people. I have none. I desire none. I merely love everyone.” And those who love are richly rewarded by **love returned**.

I. **Slide5d A CONSTANCY TO ENDURE AFFLICTIONS BY JESUS** (4) [they've grown spiritually, in spite of *troubles and trials*]

J. **Steadfastness** - endurance under *trials, pressures, troubles, painful circumstances*.

1. It doesn't just passively bears things that come our way, but is a **constancy** under trial. Barclay
2. It doesn't just endure the circumstance, but **masters** it.
3. It not only accepts *the blows of life* but in accepting them **transforms them** into stepping stones to new achievement.
4. It is not the **steadfastness** which grimly waits for the end, but the **patience** which **radiantly hopes for the dawn**. LKGNT

K. *Oswald Chambers, "*We can never be lilies in the garden unless we have spent time as bulbs in the dark, totally ignored.*"

IV. Slide6a **A PROMISE THAT, GOD IS JUST (5-10)**

- A. The apostle says their trials will be used to accomplish a 2-fold purpose:
 1. Concerning: the Persecuted (5) & the Persecutors (6).
- B. **CONCERNING THE PERSECUTED** (5,7,10)
- C. Their hardships will be used *to prepare believers* for the Kingdom of God.
- D. *That you may be considered worthy* of the kingdom of God - How?
 1. A Christian is made **worthy** by **God's grace**, which he receives as a **free gift** by faith in Jesus Christ.
 2. One **does not** earn **heaven** by **suffering**. But **endurance in trials** does demonstrate one's worthiness.
- E. (7) **Relief** - from tension, or slackening of pressure. [as of **a bow & arrow**. or when you loosen **a violin bow** when you put it back in its case]
 1. **Our relief/rest** comes ... when Jesus does.
- F. (10) **Glorified in** (not by) **His saints**. He will mirror **His glory** in us. *Wow!*
 1. 2 Cor.3:18 NLT: **So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord - who is the Spirit - makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image.**

G. **Slide6b CONCERNING THE PERSECUTORS** (6,8,9)

H. God is *already preparing* judgment and punishment for those who harm believers.

I. Since indeed God considers it just to *repay* with affliction those who afflict you –

1. **Guaranteed**, God will *settle up* one day, He will *right every wrong*.
2. **Slide6c** **“Not one injustice, not one act of pain, not one transaction of torture will ever be overlooked. From one little humiliation, to the horrible Holocaust, not one will be forgotten.”* [you have to release it]

a) Rom.12:19 *Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.”*

J. **Affliction** is coming to those who *afflict*. **Rest & Relief** to those *afflicted*.

1. **Examples: Pharaoh** tried to drown little babies, **but** his own army drowned in the Red Sea. **Haman** ended up hanging on the very gallows he made in his front yard **for his enemy** (75'). **King Darius'** advisors forced him to arrest Daniel & throw him into the lions den, **later** they themselves were thrown to the lions. adapted from Wiersbe

K. (8) **In flaming fire** – describes *His person*, **not His work**.

1. **Emphasizing the glory of the appearance of the Lord**. Same exact wording in Rev.1:14 *His eyes were like a flame of fire*.

L. **Who does He name that His vengeance is against?** [mass-murderers? Terrorists? Serial killers?] It is on *those who do not know God & on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ*.

M. **Slide6d Our Gospel** is based on historical events in a way that *other religions just aren't*.¹

N. There's a big difference between **advice** and **news**. The gospel is about **good news**, **not advice**.

1. **Advice** is about counsel about something to do that *hasn't happened yet*, **but** you can do it. **News** is a report about something *that has happened*.

¹ Timothy Keller quoting, D. Martin Lloyd Jones, from a tape on 1 Cor.15.

You can't do anything about it because it's been done for you and all you can do is respond to it.

O. Eg. A king goes into battle against an invading army to defend his land.

1. **If the king defeats** the invading army, he sends back to the capital city **messengers** (or *good newsmen*). They go back with a good report. They say, *our enemy has been defeated and it all has been done, therefore respond with joy, and now go about your lives, conduct your lives, in this peace which has been achieved for you.*
2. **If the king does not defeat** the invading army (they break through) the king sends back military **advisors** to the city. He says, send marksman over here, horsemen over there. We are going to have to **fight for our lives**.
3. Every other religion sends military **advisors** to people. Every other religion says if you want your salvation you'll have to fight for your life. Every other religion is sending advice (*here's the rites the rituals. here's the laws and regulations*).

P. Jesus sent **heralds/messengers**, not military advisors. [so clarifying]

1. **Both advisors** and **messengers** get an enormous response. **But** one is a response of **Joy**, **and** one is a response of **fear**.
 - a) When you **hear from a messenger** about *a historical event* that has happened. That's already been done for you. Salvation that has been accomplished for you. **What do you want to do?** You want to obey his commandments, you want to pray, you want to please **The One** who did this for you.
 - b) **If on the other hand** you **send military advisors**, saying that *you have to live a really, really, really good life* if do you want to get to heaven. **What do you do?** You want to pray, obey his commandments.
 - (1) **It sounds the same doesn't it?** **But** it's for 2 radically different reasons: one is **joy**, one is **fear**. **In the short run, they look alike**. In the long run *burn out, self righteousness, and guilt and all sorts of problems*.

Q. Saints, we have not been given **Good Advice**, **but Good News!**

R. (9) Everlasting destruction – everything opposite from eternal life. [except the timing]

1. It is **not** annihilation, **but** separation ... **away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His might.** **But not** from His wrath.

a) C.S.Lewis describes Jude's words from Jude 1:13 *wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever*, this way: "in hell, everybody will be at an infinite distance from everybody else."

b) Loneliness & emptiness - the extreme opposite of fellowship & fullness.

S. This is not meanness or cruelty. This is Justice.

a) Ray Stedman called this, **His righteous reaction to cosmic treason on man's part.** See salvation is Exclusive. But think of it this way: **not that there's only one way, but that He made a Way :)**

V. Slide7a PRAYER TO GOD, THAT HE WOULD MAKE THEM WORTHY OF HIS GLORY (11,12)

A. This is the burden of Paul's prayer for the believers: **that** God might fulfill His purpose in their lives, **and that** the name of Christ might be glorified through them.

1. Slide7b He taught the people God's truths, **then** prayed for them to **live out** what he had taught them.

B. Paul finishes with this *breathtaking truth* that **our glory** is **in Christ** and **Christ's glory** is **in us**.

1. **Think of it this way.** The **glory** for **teachers** lies in the scholars they produce. The **glory** for **parents** lies in the children they raise. The **glory for us** is given in *the tremendous privilege and responsibility* that Christ's glory lies **in us**.

2. **We may bring discredit** or we may bring **glory** to **the Master** whose we are **and** whom we seek to serve.

a) Can any privilege or responsibility be greater than that?

C. Keywords: faith, love, persecutors, persecuted.