



**Persecution Yields Perseverance
Keep Looking Up for the Persecutors are Already Judged!
2 Thessalonians 1:1-12**

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When we last looked in on the church in Thessalonica, Paul and Silas had completed their letter of encouragement to them and they thought they had fully answered their questions and cleared up confusion about last things and those who had gone home to be with the Lord before the rapture of the church. 1 Thessalonians emphasized the return of Jesus Christ for His church.



The letter was completed and then sent off to Thessalonica. We do not know who took this letter to Thessalonica, possibly Timothy, but before returning to Corinth where the team was, the letter deliverer spent some time watching and observing the church.

Others may have done the same as as they travelled to Corinth, giving, for the most part, good news to Paul and the team about what was going on in Thessalonica. But the church there was still predominately all baby Christians, even the leadership was.

I have learned that the most vulnerable believer is the new believer. When I say vulnerable, I am speaking about vulnerability to false teaching. There are groups that intentionally prey on new believers trying to make them think they have missed out on something, and they do not have all the truth yet. Mormons do this with their allegation that the book of Mormon is “another” testament of Jesus Christ. It isn't.

Mormonism started out in 1820 when “Joseph Smith Jr. claimed a heavenly vision that he said singled him out as the Lord’s anointed prophet for this dispensation, though it was not until 1823, with the appearance of the angel Moroni at the quaking Smith’s bedside, that Joe began his relationship to the fabulous “golden plates,” or what was to become The Book of Mormon.” So, he alleges an angel is behind what he did. (Martin 2003, 200)

About that.

Galatians 1:8–9

“But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.” (ESV)

Doubly accursed. Wow. Paul’s opinion of those who teach a false gospel and intentionally mislead believers may have begun with what was going on in Thessalonica. This is the second letter to them, and it appears that he received a report that folks had hit town and were misleading the church and doing so intentionally.

This has not ended either. It continues today with those who show up from time to time with their special revelations or teachings by promising blessings, money, health, you name it. Simply follow them, give them money, and only when you do that for their ministry, then you release the blessing of God. That is all lies but it comes from the knowledge that most believers today are Biblical illiterate. That is why we study, here at Calvary, the Bible, chapter by chapter and verse by verse. We want you to know the word so that when you hear the false, you know. At least you know to exercise Acts 17:11 and test what is being said.

The church in Thessalonica is enduring persecution. Some in the fellowship have been killed. In the middle of severe persecution they have shown up, the false teachers taking advantage of the new believers they find in Thessalonica. Again, no different than what we see from various groups who are far from Christian today, but purport to be, as they lie and mislead serving Satan and not the Lord.

Most of the church in Thessalonica was growing and they were remaining faithful to the Lord. But thanks to the false teachers, there is more confusion than before and there are some in the fellowship who have bought into the lies.

False teachers rely on being able to sneak one by believers who are not educated in or aware of the truth of the scriptures. New believers have always been a fertile ground for them to prey on. Today, due to the



vast amount of Biblical illiteracy in the church, we have folks who have been saved for decades being misled.

One of the byproducts of being taught the Word is a move towards a Biblical worldview, and that is a problem today as well.

Peter Jones sums up the problem in his study of Romans 1.

“Western culture, often called Christendom, is being hijacked by a spiritual ideology that I call Neopaganism. The irony is sumptuous. As a culture, we have largely freed ourselves of any restraining notions of God the Creator, but when we need civic pomposity, we claim to “hold these truths to be self-evident.” We recite our official documents of yesteryear, proclaiming that our “rights” (including the right to stick our finger in the Creator’s eye) are “endowed by the Creator.” This disjunction between our past and present creates the great moment for religious paganism to take political and social power. Christianity as a social force is on the decline.” (Jones 2010, Kindle Location 82)

It appears that not a lot has changed in 2000 years. Here at Calvary, we teach the Bible chapter by chapter and verse by verse. We believe the Bible is true and is fully applicable to whatever we run into in life today. George Barna made the recent observation on how many who say they are the church, teach on the topic of abortion.

As Americans have become less clear about and less beholden to their religious faith, opinions on abortion have been less frequently and less deeply tied to religious principles. This is partially explained by most Protestant pastors refusing to teach biblical principles in relation to abortion. It is also a partial result of the nation’s general biblical illiteracy, and more specifically its confusion about biblical teaching regarding life. The growing degree of biblical illiteracy, in turn, is related to the public’s changing views about the reliability and relevance of the Bible, as well as its increasing belief that the most trustworthy source of moral guidance is personal feelings. (Barna 2022, 111)

That wasn’t the problem in Thessalonica. Paul and the team were chased out of town after only a couple of weeks. We, today, though have no excuse.

False teachers today operate the same as those who misled in Thessalonica.

In Thessalonica, “there had been misapprehension, if not misrepresentation, of the apostle’s teaching concerning the coming of the Day of the Lord. Some thought it had evidently begun and that they were experiencing its judgments, whereas he had taught them in the first epistle that they were not appointed unto that wrath. Concerning this, Paul corrected them.” (Ryrie 2001, 14)

False teaching concerning the day of the Lord had entered the church, caused confusion, and was leading some of the Christians to quit their jobs in expectation of the Lord’s imminent return. (Constable 2003)

The reports coming to Paul and the team in Corinth began to reflect this more frequently. As a result, it became necessary for Paul and the team to clarify and correct in another letter.

In terms of timing, this letter may be the third written from Corinth, the first two being 1 Thessalonians and Galatians.

Dr. Ryrie points out that the need for a second letter to the Thessalonians is “to correct misunderstandings or misrepresentations of Paul’s teaching about the future (2 Thessalonians 2: 2) and to correct the readers about certain practices in that church.”



How quickly after 1 Thessalonians? It could have been less than 12 months.

The outline for this book is relatively straight forward.

Outline

- 1:1-2 Salutations.
- 1:3-12 Commendation for remaining faithful under persecution.
- 2:1-12 About the lies you have been hearing. Corrections are in order.
- 2:13-17 Thanksgiving, encouragement, and prayer to stand firm.
- 3:1-5 Pray for us. We will continue to pray for your strengthening.
- 3:6-15 Matters of church discipline.
- 3:16-18 Conclusions.

These are growing believers, but there is severe persecution going on. There are a few who understood Paul's first letter about the rapture and instead of living in anticipation of that event, sold everything and stopped working. That was a problem to begin with due to persecution, but now it was a reaction, from a few, to not getting it.

Then there were those false teachers who showed up lying about the when and where of the rapture and that further confused folks.

The persecution though had become so severe, that there were some who thought they had missed the rapture all together and were now in the Tribulation.

Here is the question? How do you correct a brother or sister in the Lord, who is still growing, still learning, but have begun to stray a little bit into some bad teaching? Yes, they go to church with you and the teaching at church is sound. But once they go home, they are hungry for the word. By the way, this is one of the reasons why we podcast Monday – Friday, this way there is some solid teaching that can be listened to. This is also why we have the notes available online as well. The more content we can provide that can be trusted, the better. There are other great teachers that we could direct you to as well, but for some strange reason, the brother or sister you are working with, found “one of those” teachers.

They discovered and started listening to someone who uses eisegesis to prove their points rather than simply teaching the word. They have discovered someone who tickles the ear of those listening and is playing to increase their following. They are in danger, real danger.

2 Timothy 4:3–4

“For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.” (ESV)

What is more important? Connecting with those who listen to teaching here at Calvary by staying away from nasty little things like accountability to God, sin, Jesus' death and resurrection, and the need to grow in grace while remaining faithful to the word. Or making sure everyone feels loved and comfortable with their lifestyle choices.

Don't get me wrong. Connection is important, but this is a command.

2 Timothy 4:2

“preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.” (ESV)



Correcting and rebuking are not fun to do nor fun to listen to. Yes, Jesus loves us, but He also wants us to be obedient. That leads to exhorting, encouraging the body to follow Jesus rather than the culture and the siren song of the world. He knows what happens when we blow it, He is always there to welcome us back as we repent and return exercising 1 John 1:9. But there are those who. Want you to feel comfortable about some of those sinful choices and that creates confusion. There is a lot of that going around today.

If we stick with straying too long, then the straying may become more permanent. The same goes for the Thessalonians.

That is exactly what Satan wants to do. Confuse the flock and lead them astray. And what better way to do so than Christian television, or You Tube and interactive Q&A sessions where your questions never seem to be answered but left dangling.

Many false teachers have become masters of the redirect and turning the right question, into a question about the faith of the one asking the question in the first place. Can anyone say gaslighting. In other words, they are listening to someone who embodies those ideas Jude warned about, and that Peter referred to in 2 Peter.

2 Peter 2:1–3

“But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed. And in their greed they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.” (ESV)

How do you correct that one who has just begun to stray? Paul here answers that question for us. Tell them what they are doing right, and how the Lord is looking out for them.

2 Thessalonians 1:1–3

“Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers and sisters, as is only fitting, because your faith is increasing abundantly, and the love of each and every one of you toward one another grows ever greater.” (NASB 2020)

The church knows and has great confidence in the missionary team. Paul is doing most of the heavy lifting in this letter but the whole team is involved in it. They are all equally concerned for the church.

We learn something about the church, the ecclesia here. A church which is following the Lord is one that is in God and in Christ. Jesus Christ is God. When Paul makes this reference here, he is alluding back to the change in relationship that took place because of the cross followed by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus personally alluded to this in His conversation with Mary Magdalene in John 20.

John 20:17

““Don’t cling to me,” Jesus said, “for I haven’t yet ascended to the Father. But go find my brothers and tell them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’”” (NLT)

As believers, we are all family now because of Jesus. Paul makes that point in his salutation to the church. As a church, we are all His disciples. There is no place for racism, favoritism, or anything else that elevates or puts down a brother or sister in Christ in the Church. We are all followers of Jesus Christ and learning how to be more like Him as we go about the business of making more disciples, followers of Jesus Christ. Or to put it together a bit more simply, as disciples, we follow Jesus, are being changed by Jesus, and we are committed to His mission. Telling others. Making disciples.



As a church and as His disciples, we are under His authority and direction. He is the one who leads, and we are simply following.

Consider the church in Thessalonica in contrast to what our culture has expectations of today. In Thessalonica, the church was made up predominately of the dregs of Roman society, in fact for the most part, outcasts. They had no building, no place to gather and call their own, no paid staff, no coffee bar, nothing. In fact, they could not offer what most look for today and consider important for a “church” to have. The “church” today must be a comfortable place, entertaining, non-threatening. A place where you can sit down and discuss your views, right or wrong, of who you think God is and what kinds of behaviors Jesus would find to be acceptable. All they could offer is persecution and affliction.

But today, in some churches, we are told that if that takes place, it is a sign of a lack of faith. We simply have not claimed and believed what it is God wants to do for us.

Yes, there are numerous promises of blessings for the believer. But there is also this.

2 Timothy 3:12

“Yes, and everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.” (NLT)

That is not a promise that anyone wants to claim, but it is reality for many today and is becoming a prospect for us in this nation as well.

The church in Thessalonica had those in it who truly loved Jesus. They had believed and were following Him as their Lord. Persecution tends to unify the body and that is indeed the case in Thessalonica. They are busy living in union with Christ, or at least most of them are.

And here is the thing, they are not stagnant. This is not a church sitting around wondering about what the next big event is going to be. They are not showing up to be entertained or fed. They are busy making disciples. The big event is doing life together as brothers and sisters in Christ. It is reflecting what it is the church is supposed to be, a group of people who love Jesus and love each other.

2 Thessalonians 1:4–5

“As a result, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure. This is a plain indication of God’s righteous judgment so that you will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you indeed are suffering.” (NASB 2020)

Paul continues to focus in on what it is they are doing right. After all, he is talking to the majority here in Thessalonica and indeed they are doing many things right. They are persevering in their faith during persecution. As a result, they are a church that can be pointed to as an example of how you do life.

Paul’s Social Network

Sandal net was alive and well in Paul’s day. He managed an extensive social network of churches and information. Thanks to Pax Romana, information moved quickly. Now quickly is relative to what we are used to but for Paul to receive word about events going on in Thessalonica as quickly as he did speak to the effectiveness of the network of roads Rome built. There were many traveling Christians of the time, and they were the link for Paul to those churches he had worked in or founded.

I tend to think if Paul were around today, he would be huge on social networks. His goal would not be likes, but simply getting the word out.



Church growth tip which you will never hear in any church growth conference. There are times where churches grow best, when they are being persecuted. All they have is Jesus and His promises and that is enough.

However, persecution for long periods of time usually sees believers leave and the area of persecution becoming dead. “Across much of the Middle East, the last century since 1915 has been catastrophic in terms of the destruction or annihilation of churches.” (Guthrie 2009, 54)

Satan and his followers have learned that to effectively limit the church, simply kill everyone. That is what took place with the expansion of Islam in most areas they entered in North Africa.

There is more to persecution as well than just that which is imposed from external sources. Today, we see persecution being expressed as more of an “in house” type of persecution. Not all who say they are Christians or in churches would fall into the category of being one, per Paul. What we see is “Christian” versus Christian. Beware of the lies of each election cycle, as they are legion. Not all Christian Nationalism is Christian. This was learned in Germany in the 30’s.

To the surprise and the dismay of most Christians, it is probable that no repellent political figure in modern times ever professed faith in Christianity more than Adolf Hitler. No public official ever championed the separation of church and state more fervently than the Führer. And it is unlikely that any religious leader promoted putting faith into action with more exuberance than the leader of the National Socialist Party. (Krieger and Woodward 2014, 223)

2 Timothy 3:1

“But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty.” (ESV)

Paul uses the word *chalepos* which is translated in the ESV as difficulty. This is only used twice in the New Testament. The first time it is used is in describing the man possessed with legion, thousands of demons, and he is described as *chalepos*. The meaning, “hard, difficult; troublesome, perilous...fierce, violent, dangerous.” (Friberg, Friberg and Miller 2000, 406)

Chalepos also carries the meaning of ferocity. In the social context, it indicates uncivilized behavior, ranging all the way to savagery. (Stearman 2014, 119)

Timothy is told by Paul, that is to be our expectation of living in the last days. Uncivilized behavior is indeed in vogue even in this nation.

This is what was being experienced by those in Thessalonica. Those who had previously been friends, turned to persecutors as a result of turning towards Christ.

It is rapidly becoming, in some states illegal to even teach the word or discuss the truth of the scriptures without being reported as being a purveyor of hate speech and someone who should be watched. In Washington state the following bill was recently signed.

“SB 5427 directs the state attorney general’s office to create a hotline where people can report hate crimes and bias incidents, the latter being defined as a non-criminal “hostile expression of animus” toward someone based on characteristics such as race, religion or sexual orientation. Reports will only be shared with law enforcement if the victim consents. The original version of the bill included a provision for a compensation program that would have provided up to \$2,000 per person for individuals “targeted or affected by a specific hate crime or bias incident” so long as funds were available. It stated that those seeking compensation would file a claim form that would then be evaluated by the attorney’s general office before being either approved or denied. (Goldin 2024)



What this means is that in Washington State, if someone does not like what you're teaching or preaching on what the Bible says regarding sexuality or lifestyle choices, then you can be reported to the authorities as someone who should be watched. Simply expressing concern over what your children are being taught in school may be sufficient. Thought crime?

I suspect that all pastors who teach the word in Washington will be reported within a couple of years. Any believer who happens to speak to someone about their need for salvation, yep, you too as well.

Israel was warned what turning from the Lord would yield.

Deuteronomy 28:28–29

“The LORD will strike you with insanity, blindness, and with confusion of mind; and you will be groping about at noon, just as a person who is blind gropes in the darkness, and you will not be successful in your ways; but you will only be oppressed and robbed all the time, with no one to save you.” (NASB 2020)

Insanity induced from the rejection of Jesus Christ and then fed by Satan. Now we are finally at the source of the problem. Paul makes it clear; the Lord sees this and will indeed act. We need to remember that too. Does it mean I will stop complaining about it when it happens to me or to Calvary? Pray for me.

Paul took notice of those who were engaged in the persecution of the church. He provides a sure promise to them, unless they repent and come to Christ, the persecutor will indeed be judged.

He gives a preview of coming events that John writes even more about in Revelation. Those events that take place right at the end of the Tribulation.

2 Thessalonians 1:6–10

“For after all it is only right for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to give relief to you who are afflicted, along with us, when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God, and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These people will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes to be glorified among His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed—because our testimony to you was believed.” (NASB 2020)

In the city of Thessalonica, the Christians had suffered rejection and dishonor at the hands of their contemporaries (1 Thess. 2:14), but in the plan of God the source of social shame is transformed into a sign of honor. God counts them worthy of the kingdom of God (Luke 20:35; Acts 5:41), and their sufferings are a mark of that dignity. (Green 2002, 285)

Here in verse 6, God promises to repay those who have persecuted the church.

Those who were the afflictors for the church in Thessalonica, Paul tells the church it is only right the God in turn afflicts them. In the middle of it, that is hard to see. When we first began to plant Calvary Chapel, it wasn't blatant, but it was there. Phone calls would not be returned since we are a church, and the real estate agent did not want to business with us. I was told, more than once, that someone else was already interested in the property and they were in discussions.

Now, 10 months later, all those properties we inquired about are still empty. I find that interesting.

In fact, one property, which flat out told us they would not let a church into the shopping center, has lost tenants and not been able to fill any of the space being left.



Here, Paul lets the church know that they will indeed receive relief from the affliction. He then ties that to what will take place after Armageddon when Jesus returns.

This principle is called *lex talionis*, “the law of retribution”—what you do to God’s people he does to you. (Osborne 2018, 159)

If the afflicter does not repent, then they are already judged and will pay the penalty of eternal destruction. The affliction of those in Thessalonica is temporary and ultimately results in glory as we spend an eternity with Jesus. The judgement of affliction on the unrepentant afflicter, eternal.

2 Thessalonians 1:7–10

“and to give relief to you who are afflicted, along with us, when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God, and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These people will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes to be glorified among His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed—because our testimony to you was believed.” (NASB 2020)

This is simply what they have earned. “Here it is judicial, meaning just recompense for crimes committed. The persecutors are standing before the judgment seat of God, hearing the recital of their misdemeanors and receiving the punishment they have earned with their nefarious deeds. The theme is reciprocity, and the absolute justice of the penalty is uppermost (Exod 21:23–25; Ps 137:8; Isa 63:4; 66:4, 6, 15).” (Osborne 2018, 159)

I have heard many times over the years, how could a just God send anyone to hell, in light of what we see here, how could He not. This is a theme throughout the scriptures, those who are judged have earned what they will receive. We also earned that as well, but Jesus paid the price for us to be set free from the penalty and to spend eternity with Him instead.

Jesus made it very clear in His discussion with Nick at night in John 3.

John 3:16–21

““For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but so that the world might be saved through Him. The one who believes in Him is not judged; the one who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the Light; for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light, so that his deeds will not be exposed. But the one who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds will be revealed as having been performed in God.”” (NASB 2020)

Talk about cool promises. As we persevere in the faith, we are promised that because of that, we are out of here when Jesus comes to take his church to be with Him.

If we believe in what it is Jesus has done for us on the cross, we are told here we are not judged. We must be born again. “It takes the death of Christ and the resurrection of Christ—He must be lifted up. Since He has been lifted up, since He bore our penalty, the Spirit of God can regenerate us. And we must be born again—that is the only way God can receive us.” (McGee 1991, 58)

Here are the facts laid out by Jesus:

- Jesus was not sent to judge the world.



- Jesus came to save the world, whoever would believe.
- If you believe, you are not judged.
- If you do not believe, you are already judged, i.e., dead man walking.
- Jesus is the light, and He came into the world.
- Most people though like doing their thing, which is darkness and self-centered, evil.
- If you have not accepted Jesus, it is because you love the darkness.
- Those who love darkness simply do not want their deeds exposed to the light.
- Those who start and keep practicing the truth, come to the light.
- They want the world to know that the way they live is in God.

Paul is simply restating what it is Jesus taught. Those who are doing the persecuting and afflicting like what they are doing and simply see no reason to stop. They have earned what is waiting for them in the future, eternal destruction.

When we take a step back and look at what is happening to us in the lens of eternity, seeing things the way God does, then our perspective changes. We are indeed worthy of the Kingdom of God because of Jesus and His achievement.

“The wicked are “punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power” (2 Thess 1:9, KJV). This reading accurately reflects the ambiguity of the original Greek, which can be interpreted either as causal (the everlasting destruction issues from the presence of the Lord) or as separative (the “destruction” consists of exclusion from the presence of the Lord). The KJV suggests the first interpretation; the RSV, NASB, NIV, and ESV translate or punctuate to indicate the second meaning.” (Fudge 2011)

Paul is taking scripture from the Old Testament and applying it to some of what he has already taught to the church regarding the end of the age. In verse 8 and 9 he is taking liberally from Isaiah 66.

Isaiah 66:15–16

““For behold, the LORD will come in fire, and his chariots like the whirlwind, to render his anger in fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. For by fire will the LORD enter into judgment, and by his sword, with all flesh; and those slain by the LORD shall be many.” (ESV)

Isaiah 66:4

“So will I choose their delusions, And bring their fears on them; Because, when I called, no one answered, When I spoke they did not hear; But they did evil before My eyes, And chose that in which I do not delight.”” (NKJV)

Dr. Fee ties this together for us.

“First, the Lord in both Isaiah passages is Yahweh, while the Lord in Paul’s use of this language is specified as “the Lord, Jesus.” This means, second, that “the Lord” who will come “in blazing fire” to mete out this judgment is now “the Lord, Jesus Christ,” who will thus assume Yahweh’s role in the prophetic text. Third, the reason for judgment in Isaiah is that “they do not obey me,” where Isaiah’s “me = Yahweh”; this is now expressed in terms of “the gospel of our Lord, Jesus Christ.”

What has happened here, therefore, is that Paul has not only identified the Lord Jesus with the “Lord = Yahweh” of Isaiah’s oracle, but the gospel of the Lord Jesus is also what the wicked have not obeyed, and they will therefore be judged by him.” (Fee 2009, 257)

How long is this for, eternal. The text in 2 Thessalonians 1:9 is clear.



Paul expects punishment for all the unsaved. It is to “pay the penalty of eternal destruction,” a reality that is stark and certain, like his phrase “the wages of sin is death” (Rom 6:23), i.e., the wages that sin will pay to the unsaved. All who reject God’s free gift must face this eternal death as they depend on their own works and fall liable to God’s righteous judgment without having Christ’s righteousness to be their surety. (Rosscup 1998, 182)

Paul’s use of the term “eternal destruction” is unique.

““Eternal destruction” is, without a definite article, ὀλεθρον αἰώνιον (olethron aiōnion). Paul’s use is the only NT instance which combines this word for “destruction” with the adjective “eternal.”...The words together convey “complete destruction,” or the derelict stage of wreckage while yet physically alive is followed by the more final, utter temporal ruin in physical death. Another possibility is that the ruin that comes in bodily death also thrusts one on to the utter, irrevocable eternal spiritual ruin (cf. Heb 9:27). The context suggests this as it refers to ultimate destiny (vv. 7, 12, 14, 17, 19).” (Rosscup 1998, 182-183)

2 Thessalonians 1:9–12

“These people will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes to be glorified among His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed—because our testimony to you was believed. To this end also we pray for you always, that our God will consider you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power, so that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified in you, and you in Him, in accordance with the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (NASB 2020)

There are two groups, as described by Paul, who are to be judged. In his encouragement to the church, he wants them to know this. The first group is from verse 6, those who have persecuted or afflicted them. All who have afflicted the church throughout the age are part of this group. The second group is everyone else, those who “do not know God, and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Judgement comes not only to those who have persecuted the church, but to all who have not believed as well.

There are only two groups, saved and those who are not saved. Those who have believed and obeyed the gospel and then everyone else. Many fall on the obeying part. There is no such thing as fire insurance, obedience is an expectation of believing faith. A changed life and fruit showing up in the life as a result.

There is no middle ground. There is no other way.

John 14:6

“Jesus said to him, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” (NRSVue)

Knowing this and seeing this described by Paul should move us to action. The time is short, and Jesus is returning at any second.

We cannot just say a prayer. There is more to the Christian life than a short prayer at the beginning. Our faith must grow, our love must increase, and our hope must remain steadfast. When Paul says that Jesus will inflict vengeance on “those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ,” he is not making a distinction here. Those who do not know God are those who do not obey the Lord Jesus Christ. No matter what we might confess with our mouths, if our life does not line up with our confession, we could be deceiving ourselves. (Grant Jr. 2011, 166)



When Jesus came the first time, it was a rescue mission. He came to redeem us. He achieved everything the Father set out for Him to accomplish, clearly seen in His victorious last words, "It is finished." Paul is talking about what takes place when Jesus returns the second time, He is returning as the avenger of blood. He is returning on behalf of His people Israel and on behalf of His body the church. The church has already been with Him, but even during the Tribulation there are those who believe and are martyred for their faith. When Jesus returns, He will indeed repay, that is inclusive of the Great White Throne Judgement as well.

Looking one more time at verse 9 shows us that eternal destruction includes eternity away from the presence of the Lord and away from His glory and as we have seen earlier. "The wicked also will be raised, but "unto condemnation" and not unto "eternal life." They are not immortal by nature, and God does not give them immortality in the resurrection. Instead, God expels them from his presence to a place where there is weeping and grinding of teeth. Scripture calls this place hell and the lake of fire. It is the site of the second death..." (Fudge 2011, 373) This is forever, that is a very long time to be separated from God's presence.

From verse 10 forward, we get good news. Yes, when He returns, there will be judgement for those who are not believers. But for those who are, glory. The destiny of those Paul is writing to, the church in Thessalonica, is glory. For those of us who know Jesus, we have the same destiny. We already learned about the rapture and the simple fact that Jesus is coming to take us away before judgment comes on this planet. We are part of His glory as He returns. He will be glorified in His saints as His glory will be mirrored in us.

Because of Jesus, they believed. As a result, they will share in that event as will all who believe.

Paul concludes chapter 1 with a prayer for the church, a prayer for their success. Notice what the prayer is for.

To be worthy of their calling. In persecution, that is key. To remain faithful to Jesus. He also prays for them to succeed in everything they do to bring glory to the name of Jesus and they all they do be motivated by faith in Christ, and in power. This is only possible through the power of the Holy Spirit. In the flesh we want to retaliate and strike back, but in the Spirit, no.

Why? ..."so that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified in you."

The secret sauce is this, when in persecution, seek the Lord and allow the Holy Spirit to empower and direct. In our flesh we want to strike back. And the Spirit might indeed lead you while being afflicted to seek a legal remedy on top of the trust and faith already there in Christ.

This requires a walk of obedience to Christ and that is only possible if you know Him. Do you?

Romans 3:21–24

"But now God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets long ago. We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are. For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins." (NLT)

Romans 10:9–13

"If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved. As the Scriptures tell us, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be



disgraced.” Jew and Gentile are the same in this respect. They have the same Lord, who gives generously to all who call on him. For “Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.” (NLT)

ABC's of Salvation

- A. Acknowledge that you are a sinner, tell Him that.
- B. Believe that Jesus died on the cross for our sin and that He rose from the dead.
- C. Confess that Jesus is Lord. Tell someone about what you have done.

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