

2nd Thessalonians Ch 1 Vs1-12

Maintaining The Proper Perspective

1st and 2nd Thessalonians are the 1st 2 letters that the Holy Spirit authored through the instrument of the apostle Paul. and This 2nd letter that's before us now, was written approximately a year after the 1st letter that we just wrapped up last week.

and As you know (having just been through the 1st one) the church in Thessalonica was an incredibly young church when Paul began to pen the 1st letter to them. Paul had come into the region of Thessalonica and as he began to share the gospel, the Holy Spirit came down, the windows of Heaven were opened and revival broke loose, and people were coming to Christ in droves. So much so in fact that the book of Acts ch 17 records for us that though some of the Jews were persuaded, *a great multitude* of devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women joined Paul and Silas, that is, received their testimony concerning the fact that Jesus is the Christ. But the amazing thing about all of that is that the total time that Paul was in that region was less than a month, the bible says that he reasoned in the synagogues from the Scriptures for only 3 Sabbaths.

and In that short amount of time the Holy Spirit swept through that city like a forest fire out of control, multitudes came to Jesus and as you may well know that stirred the religious community into a boil. Because they didn't believe the fact that Jesus was the Messiah, they just couldn't reconcile in their own beings how the cross could fit into the picture with the Messiah, how anything good, anything noble, or honorable could come from such a depredating, devastating and humiliating act. But the fact is, their very scriptures declared the fact that atonement for sin was found in the shedding of blood, how so, because life is in the blood, Lev 17:11 says, *"For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul."* Yet only the innocent, only the blameless, and the pure can atone for the guilty, it's pointless for someone just as guilty as you to try and atone for your sin, how does tainted blood atone for tainted blood?

But yet at the same time it isn't possible that the blood of bulls and goats (or the blood of animals) could adequately atone for the sin of man, those things were only a foreshadowing, but the substance, the reality, and the actuality is of Christ. and Paul would explain to them how *"just as through one man (that is Adam) sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned."* Rom 5:12 and, *"if by the one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many."* Rom 5:15 *"For (Romans goes on to say) if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.)"* Rom 5:17 and Hey, when the good news of the forgiveness of sins and everlasting life by the grace of Jesus Christ was presented to this people, they responded unlike anything we've ever seen.

But the religious community got so upset they were going to do Paul in, and Paul having caught wind of that reality (after having been there for only 3 weeks) made for Berea. and Then he went shortly after that to Athens, and while he was in preparing to go on to Corinth he sent Timothy (who was with him in Thessalonica as was Silas) back to Thessalonica to find out how they were doing. After all, the whole church from the ground up, establishing leaders and the whole bit, took place in 3 weeks (it was just a radical and supernatural work of God) but there would be some obvious concerns regarding these baby believers and a desire to further establish them.

and So while Paul was in Corinth (he was there for about 2yrs) but Timothy came to Paul with word concerning the Thessalonians and they were doing great, just flourishing, well that prompted Paul's 1st letter. and In it Paul answered some questions and concerns that they no doubt communicated to him through Timothy, and further encouraged them in their relationship with Jesus Christ But it would seem as though having gone through the 1st letter, it sparked some further questions (again understandably so). Not only that but evidently since the time of the 1st letter there have been some people who have crept into that region, who had begun to purport that Jesus Christ had come, gathered the church to Himself and that they were now living in the day of the Great Tribulation. and They were circulating a forged letter that they claimed that the apostle Paul had written verifying that "fact".

Now the church in Thessalonica was a persecuted church, and apparently not in a light way and so upon hearing this news, and seeing this forged letter, they were fairly easily persuaded concerning that piece of deceit. So we come to 2nd Thessalonians whereby Paul is eager to clear up any confusion, set the record straight once and for all, and encourage them in their afflictions to maintain the proper perspective (that is the eternal perspective). and So we read in vs 1.

Vs1-2

Just a couple of things that we want to briefly mention here since this greeting is identical to the one found in 1st Thess and so we've commented upon it there. But even still I would remind you of just a few things and that is that Paul was a man of accountability and ministry partnerships. He wasn't a glory seeker, or a Lone Ranger in the ministry, when he was engaged in ministry he had people with him who were behind him, he didn't launch out on his own. and Since Timothy and Silas were with him in Thessalonica, he's quick to mention them here. Even though *he's* writing the letter and giving them instruction, he's not a one man show just telling them what seems good to him, his life pulsed and had with in it's very fibers good, godly accountability and we do well to learn the necessity of that for us.

But he's writing to the church "of" Thessalonians "in" God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ now we've mentioned this over and over, but it's an ever essential point, it doesn't matter what organization you're "of", or what city or location you're "of" if you're not "in" God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ Because it's "in" Christ that you're a new creation, that old things pass away and behold, all things are made new.

It's in Christ that we find the remission of sins, when we're "in" sin we're dead in our trespasses, but "in" Christ we're made alive, Jesus came to give us life, and that more abundantly, it's that age abiding, everlasting life that we have "in" Christ. We're sanctified "in" Christ, approved by God "in" Christ; we have victory "in" Christ. Forgiveness, equality, God's kindness, compassion, mercies and grace are all lavished upon us "in" Christ.

So being apart of Calvary Chapel "of" Joplin isn't what's important *ultimately*, not that you don't want to be in a good bible teaching, bible believing church in which the Spirit of God is ministering and changing lives and healing hearts, but when it's all said and done what's going to matter is whether or not you've been found "in" Christ. So even though you're apart of Calvary Chapel "of" Joplin, you're "in" God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ It's in Him that we live and we move and we have our being, He is our all in all, and how critical it is that we *abide* "in" Christ, equally important to "being" there is "remaining" there. Jesus taught us in John ch 15 the essential need to abide in Christ, abide in His word and in His love, we're not to be launching out "in" the flesh, but rather we're to walk "in" the Spirit, we're to abide "in" Christ.

We see here the equality of the Godhead, we see 2/3 of the trinity right here, and if you look carefully all 3 parts are right here. But you see, how can you abide "in" God the Father, *and* the Lord Jesus Christ at the same time if they're not 1? and Realizing that the Holy Spirit is the author of the Word of God and Jesus said He'd never draw attention to Himself, it's sufficient evidence of His presence in our text by the very nature of it's lay out in pointing the attention to God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ

The message that the Holy Spirit is sending out to you and me this morning is, "Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" Again, grace being that unmerited favor lavished upon you "in" Christ, by grace you've been saved through faith. and Having experienced God's grace you can know God's peace, but you can't know the peace of God until you've experienced the grace of God, so the order in which they're seen here is significant.

Vs3

Now in vs 18 of ch 5 of 1st Thess Paul said, "In everything give thanks" and let me tell ya, Paul was a man who very definitely practiced what he preached. As you read through his epistles he was constantly offering up to God the praise of thanksgiving, no matter what his situation was. Paul was never a victim "of" circumstance, quite to the contrary he was a victor "in" in the circumstance, he was never a prisoner of *Rome*, he was a prisoner of *Jesus Christ* and In his opinion God just opened the door for him to share the gospel with prison guards, you see it's all a matter of perspective, and it's important that we maintain the proper one.

Here Paul says that he gives thanks, as a matter of fact he's "bound" to give thanks, in other words he feels a sense of personal debt to God for the growth that he sees in the Thessalonian believers, and in that he gives God thanks. But he thanks God for 2 specific reasons and I'm sure you've already noted them in your mind #1 Because your faith grows exceedingly, and #2 The love of every one of you abounds toward each other. These are incredible characteristics to mark *any* church. Especially when you understand the persecution that they're being faced with, Paul could've very realistically been facing a group of people who was about to give up, and were at each other's throats just always on the edge. But man how he thanked God, that in the midst of their fiery trial they were being refined as gold, and precious silver. and Really these 2 go together because it's impossible that your faith should grow toward God, with out your love abounding more and more towards God's one another. Or to understand it another way, you can't grow upward in your faith toward God, with out growing outward in your love toward your brother. Why, because God is love, and "*If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?"* 1 John 4:20

But these are answered prayers of Paul for them, you recall back in his 1st Epistle that he said that he prayed that their faith might be perfected in vs 10 of ch 3, and in vs 12 of ch 3 we read, "*And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all.*" 1 Thess 3:12 So Paul was praying for them specifically regarding their faith and their love, and now he's just praising God, and thanking God for answering those prayers.

But before we move on we need to realize that there's something missing here. You recall that "trinity of graces", or that "triad of graces" that we seen mentioned so frequently in 1st Thess, not only faith, not only love, but also what? "Hope", in vs 3 of ch 1 Paul remembered their work of faith, their labor of love, and their patience of hope. and Even though he speaks of their patience in the next vs, the word "hope" is never mentioned, now what is that biblical understanding of hope? It's an assured expectation, a guaranteed certainty of coming good.

It's like that single lady who goes on a cruise, she gets on the ship, they set out to sea and as she's there on deck she spots this man standing there alone, and she walks over to him and says, "Man, you bear a staggering resemblance to my 3rd husband, I mean this is uncanny," and The man looks at her and says, "Well, how many times have you been married?" and She said, "twice." You see she had hope, she was certain of coming good. Now, what is it that's been rattled, about the Thessalonian believers? They're not sure where they're at with Christ's return, they think that they may very well be going through the Great Tribulation, God's wrath being poured out and they're in the throws of it. Their hope has evaporated, it's been robbed, and part of the reason Paul is writing this letter is to reestablish them in hope, so though he thanks God for their faith, and the fact that their love is still abounding, but he realizes they're losing hope, they're not *sure* what's going on, so he doesn't mention that in his giving of thanks. But regarding their faith and hope, hey, they're excelling there.

Vs4

So Paul continues to commend them here, he says we're aware of your persecutions, we're aware of your tribulations, or your afflictions that you endure, that you persevere through by your faith. (Which by the way is the same way you and I persevere, by faith and patience). You see trouble *for* the church, persecutions and afflictions *upon* the church are nothing new, now here in America we don't see it so much. But the point that Paul will make in all of this is that though they're going through tribulation, don't be deceived it's not the Great Tribulation of Rev 6-19 because the tribulations, the afflictions, and the persecutions that the church experiences currently are nothing new.

People of God have been persecuted from the beginning starting with Abel who was killed by Cain, up to the present day. But when the Great Tribulation takes place, there'll be no doubt, (now I encourage you to get right and stay right with Christ so you won't be here) but my point is that when that comes down *it will be* something new. Jesus said, *“For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.”* Matt 24:21

When you read through the book of Rev and begin to see how awesome and fearful those days will be, it's real clear; we're not there. As a matter of fact what Paul is saying here is that our afflictions, our trials and tribulations really don't work *against* us, they work *for* us. They're producing godly character in us, making us a people of compassion, a people of purity as the refiners fire melts us down and reveals the dross in our lives so that God might scoop it up and throw it away. Trials make us a people of endurance, of perseverance and faith, we learn that we can trust God to the uttermost because He's always faithful, never leaving nor forsaking us. (We've spoken of all of this just recently). and So Paul says here “We're boasting of you among all the churches because you're such an example of patience and faith in the midst of your persecutions and tribulations.”

Vs5

You see there's a side of suffering that actually demonstrates the fact that God has counted you worthy of the Kingdom of God in that the bible says, *“All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.”* 2 Tim 3:12 Jesus said it would happen, we read in Matt 5:11-12 *“Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”* Leave 2nd Thess and turn with me to 1st Pet (Ch4 Vs12-16).

Vs12

How many times we hear things like, “I don't why this is happening to me” or “Why would God let this happen?” and Though we don't always know, don't think it's some strange thing, or something that no one else has ever experienced, that's what Peter is saying here, don't act like hard times in your life are some strange thing that's peculiar only to you.

Vs13-16

In other words, sometimes as believers we get *ourselves* into trouble. Don't think that because you did something you shouldn't have and you got busted that you're partaking in the sufferings of Christ. If you ripped off your employer and got caught and he fired you, you're not being persecuted, you're getting what you deserved, there's no advantage in loss suffered because you've been a gossip or because I've been dishonest. But if you've led a life of integrity and someone comes down on you because you're a believer, *then* there's reason to glorify God. But suffering is a part of the Christian life (the enemy preys upon your life) now it may vary, person to person, according to God's sovereign reasoning, but trials come.

"So where do certain people come up with the mentality that Christians aren't to suffer?" I honestly don't know, not from their bibles. Because as a believer you're going to be troubled from time to time, but that's not to say that the tables will never turn, as a matter of fact we're promised that they will. Notice vs 6

Vs6-7

In other words don't get all uptight about everything and wonder why the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer. That's such a short sighted and temporal perspective, and Paul is encouraging us here to maintain the proper perspective, don't lose sight of the eternal. You might be suffering presently, but it testifies of the reality of Jesus Christ in your life, (Jesus said, *"If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you."* John 15:19)

But these trials are working patient endurance and faith into your life. and The time is coming soon when you'll enter into rest (not the positional rest that you've already entered into in Christ as you've ceased from your own works to try and please God and are resting in the finished work of the cross.) But the eternal state of rest where, *"God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."* Rev 21:4 You see, *"I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."* Rom 8:18 and Believe me we only think that we go through tribulation, the day is coming when God will repay those who trouble you, when His wrath will be poured out, and His holiness will be vindicated on a Christ rejecting world. and He will TROUBLE (all capital letters) those who have troubled (lower case by comparison) you. That's what the right thing for Him to do is, what wouldn't be right is if He did nothing. Now what wouldn't be right is if God included His children in on the time that He was repaying the ungodly, that was Abraham's whole premise in Gen ch 18.

We spoke of that 2 weeks ago, you might get that tape or Cd. But you remember, "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" Ab asked God concerning His destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, now it wasn't the destruction of the cities that was in question, he knew that needed to happen, but the problem was what if there's righteous people in that city, will you destroy the righteous along with the wicked? and As you know, God answered, no.

You see Jesus Christ already absorbed the full fury of God's wrath for you and for me, so there's no need for His body (the body of Christ) to have the wrath of God poured out on us again, God will remove us (and we've spoken recently concerning the rapture) and then pour out His wrath, notice.

Vs8

You see, there's the 2-fold description of the same group of people who suffer God's vengeance # 1 Those who do not know God, and #2 those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These are they which are appointed to God's wrath, not the believer.

Vs9

God's vengeance will culminate in eternal destruction, not annihilation, but the loss of anything and everything good, the book of Rev tells us, "*And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night.*" Rev 14:11 Now we just read how you'll receive rest, but the unbeliever never will, being separated from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power. Now you guys I'm not going to spend a lot of time here developing the truth of the reality of hell. Even though Jesus spent more time teaching on the reality of hell than any other subject (no doubt because He went to such an extent to spare the world such a consequence) but believe me the reality of hell isn't something you'd wish on your worst enemy.

Notice the words that are used to describe the future of the unbeliever #1 in vs 6 "Tribulation" #2 in vs 8 "Flaming fire" #3 vs 8 "Vengeance" #4 vs 9 Punishment #5 "Everlasting destruction" in other words even as we obtain everlasting life in Christ, it's everlasting destruction apart from Christ, no hope. #6 "From the presence of the Lord", and #7 "From the glory of His power." and Really that's the reality of hell, and I believe #6 sums them all up, from the presence of the Lord. That's hell, being eternally separated from God.

Believers, it's a snare to lose sight of the eternal perspective. Read Ps 73 sometime regarding that, you'll stumble if you lose sight. Maintain the proper perspective. Prov 23:17-18 says, "*Do not let your heart envy sinners, But be zealous for the fear of the LORD all the day; For surely there is a hereafter, And your hope will not be cut off.*" The implication being that their hope will be (vs10).

Vs10

Christ is going to be shining *in* you, radiating *from* you, glorified *through* you, in that Day, not because of anything you've done, but because you've believed, you received the Gospel and accepted Christ into your heart.

Vs11-12

What's going to cause you to be worthy of such a calling, seeing Him glorified in you, and you in Him, what's going to cause you to fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power? The grace of our God, and the Lord Jesus Christ

Maybe you're here today and you don't know the peace of God, because you've never experienced the grace of God. and As you've sat here today the startling reality of your future apart from Christ is everlasting separation from all that which is good being separated from the presence of the Lord. Listen, it doesn't have to be that way, God wants to lavish His grace upon you, He wants you to know His peace, but it only comes in the person of His Son Jesus Christ who shed His blood for the remission of your sins, and laid down His life, that you might have life by His grace. All you have to do is believe it, and receive Jesus Christ into your life, are you willing to do that today?