

2 Thessalonians 1
A Continuation of the Study of the Formation
Of the Church

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There were probably only a few months that had passed since Paul wrote the first letter to the Thessalonians. He had received more input as to the condition of the Christians there and it prompted him to immediately write this second letter while he was in Corinth with Timothy and Silas. The problems seemed to be that a counterfeit letter from Paul had been circulating that misinformed the people about the second coming of Jesus Christ. Some thought that the rapture had already occurred because of the increased level of persecutions they were receiving. Some of the people had also stopped working since they thought that Jesus would soon come and there was no need to work anymore! Although he had addressed these problems in the first letter he needed to discuss it further in this letter.

2Thes 1:2 “Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
2Thes 1:3 We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is only fitting, because your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows ever greater;
2Thes 1:4 therefore, 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.”

True grace and peace can only come from God and that is what he asked for these people. He first praises them for their work and love that they show each other. He then speaks about how proud he is of them for their perseverance and the showing of their faith even in the midst of terrible afflictions. Paul sets a wonderful example for us in dealing with fellow Christians as we should first find ways to complement them before proceeding to discuss items that need improvement. Paul is very proud of them as if they were his own children. But as a good father we must not hesitate to give guidance when we see the children deviating from the true path and to provide discipline when it is needed. As we well know, faith is a gift of God to His children but it is not a stagnant gift. Faith grows as we mature in the Lord and we mature as we make progress in sanctification. As we mature we also grow in our love for our fellow Christians. Paul had already complemented them in their love for each other in the first letter and he emphasizes it more here. The word translated “faith” is probably better translated “faithfulness” in this context with the difference being the actions present in the people that indicate their faith is being used properly. Perseverance is a trait that allows us to make progress in our situations without regard to consequences. By demonstrating perseverance we show that we trust our sovereign Lord to make all things work together for good for the situations even if we cannot clearly see the evidence. Persecutions are sufferings that occur because of our faith in Jesus Christ whereas trials are troubles of any kind.

2Thes 1:5 “This is a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering.

2Thes 1:6 For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you,

2Thes 1:7 and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire,

2Thes 1:8 dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.”

The “this” to which Paul refers is the perseverance demonstrated by His people. We are not worthy because we endure suffering but because we are worthy we will endure suffering. The perseverance then demonstrates to others that indeed we are worthy of the kingdom of God. Perfect justice will be done! It is sometimes wonderful to just think about the perfect justice that will be delivered by the perfect judge in His time. The “eye for an eye” will be done perfectly by the perfect Judge. All of the perfect justice and perfect rewards will be shown when Jesus comes again. Jesus discussed the end times with his disciples in the Olivet Discourse of chapter 24 of Matthew. Paul here talks of two categories of people: those who do not know God and those who do not obey Jesus. The first group would be the Gentiles and the second group would be the Jews who would not accept Jesus as the Christ. Both of these groups gave these early Christians much anguish. I would say today that we can also include in this second group the people who are members of churches where Jesus is not obeyed.

2Thes 1:9 “And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,

2Thes 1:10 when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed-- for our testimony to you was believed.

2Thes 1:11 To this end also we pray for you always that our God may count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power;

2Thes 1:12 in order 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.”

He does not say that their destruction will be immediate and that they will be no more. He says that they will suffer destruction forever. In this state of total, absolute, and everlasting destruction they will not be in the presence of the Lord and they will not experience His power.

Luke 16:24 “And he cried out and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue; for I am in agony in this flame.'

Luke 16:25 "But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony.

Luke 16:26 And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, in order that those who wish to come over from here to you may not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us."

There will be an uncrossing chasm between the people receiving the total destruction of the Lord and those who receive the eternal blessings of the Lord. Although there will be this wonderful time for us we need to also remember that God has a purpose for us here. Paul prays that God may make them worthy of their calling (sanctification) and that He may complete every desire for goodness in their hearts. He also prays that their every desire for their work of faith be completed with power (God's power).

Paul concludes this section by reminding us all that the only purpose for all of our works here is that the name of Jesus Christ will be glorified in us and that we will be glorified in Him. In the end we will share the moment of glorification with Him!!!!

References

- 1.) "1 & 2 Thessalonians", John McArthur, Moody Press, 2002.
- 2.) "The Expositor's Bible Commentary Volume 11", Edited by Frank E. Gaebelin, 1978.
- 3.) "World Biblical Commentary, 45, 1 & 2 Thessalonians", F. F. Bruce, Nelson Reference & Electronic, 1982.