**Worthy of the Kingdom of God**

**by Pastor Fee Soliven**

**2 Thessalonians 1:1-10**

**Wednesday Evening**

**November 10, 2021**

**2 Thessalonians 1:1-10**

1 Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: 2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 3 We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other,

4 so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure, 5 which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer; 6 since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you,

7 and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, 8 in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,

10 when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed.

**1 Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:**

This second letter to the church in Thessalonica begins just like 1 Thessalonians. Paul was the head of the missionary team that had brought the gospel to that city. Silas is called a prophet and was highly regarded in the Jerusalem church.

**Acts 15:32**

“Now Judas and Silas, themselves being prophets also, exhorted and strengthened the brethren with many words”

Saints, Paul had chosen Silas to accompany him on his second missionary journey (Acts 15:40).

**Acts 15:40**

“but Paul chose Silas and departed, being commended by the brethren to the grace of God”

Saints, Silas is mentioned in the salutation of both letters to the Thessalonians, and he worked with Timothy in Corinth. At this point, all three of these men were in Corinth.

**Acts 18:5**

“When Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia, Paul was compelled by the Spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ”

**2 Corinthians 1:19**

“For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us--by me, Silvanus, and Timothy--was not Yes and No, but in Him was Yes”

Thessalonica was the capital and largest city of the Roman province of Macedonia. The most important Roman highway—extending from Rome to the Orient—went through Thessalonica. This highway, along with the city’s busy seaport, made Thessalonica one of the wealthiest and most flourishing trade centers in the Roman Empire.

Thessalonica was a free city, meaning it was allowed self-rule and was exempted from most of the restrictions placed by Rome on other cities.

**2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.**

Saints, Paul often would begin his letters with a greeting of grace and peace. “Grace” is God’s unmerited favor bestowed upon sinful people; “peace” refers to the peace that Christ made between believers and God through his death on the cross.

By calling God our Father, Paul presented God as the Father of all believers, shown by God’s sovereign authority and his loving care for his children. Paul calls Jesus Lord, meaning master, one who deserves obedience.

The young Thessalonian church experienced God’s grace and peace during a time of trial. This strengthened their faith, and made them an example to the rest of the believers in other cities across the empire.

**3 We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other,**

Saints, Paul had prayed that the Thessalonians’ faith would deepen and that their love would grow and overflow.

**1 Thessalonians 3:10**

…night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face and perfect what is lacking in your faith?

**1 Thessalonians 3:12**

“And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you”

Saints, in the months since he had last written them, Paul could see that their faith was flourishing and they were all growing in love for each other. That was quite a testament to the faith of these believers—especially considering the persecution they continued to endure.

No wonder Paul always thanked God in his prayers for these believers, knowing that such thanksgiving was right. Paul was not flattering them; the praise he gave them, both in the last letter and here, was sincere. God had truly been working in these believers’ lives.

**4 so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure,**

Apparently, it was not Paul’s pattern to proudly tell God’s other churches about one group of believers in order to boast about certain characteristics. In the case of the Thessalonians, however, Paul sang their praises, just as others had already been doing.

**1 Thessalonians 1:7-10**

7 so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe. 8 For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything.

9 For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, 10 and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

Saints, the word

**hupomone,**

translated endurance, is the same word used in:

**1 Thessalonians 1:3**

“remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father”

Saints, it pictures not passive acceptance in the face of difficulty, but active strength against it, exhibited by faithfulness.

The Thessalonian believers remained faithful to God even in all the persecutions and hardships they were suffering. Paul had been persecuted during his first visit to Thessalonica (Acts 17:5-9).

**Acts 17:5-6**

“But the Jews who were not persuaded, becoming envious, took some of the evil men from the marketplace, and gathering a mob, set all the city in an uproar and attacked the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. 6 But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, "These who have turned the world upside down have come here too.

Saints, no doubt those who had responded to his message and had become Christians were continuing to face persecution.

**5 which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer; 6 since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you,**

Persecution and suffering are unavoidable for those who want to follow the Lord (see John 15:20-21).

**John 15:20-21**

20 Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also. 21 But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me.

Saints, therefore, the fact that the Thessalonians were being allowed to suffer for their faith, and the fact that in doing so their faith, love, and hope were increasing and strengthening was evidence that God was using this persecution to show his justice.

Through suffering, God’s people are strengthened. In suffering, they can remember that they would be made worthy of his Kingdom. Suffering is not a prerequisite to salvation, but suffering and subsequent faithfulness through suffering shows God’s work in believers’ lives and thus their worthiness for his Kingdom.

Sufferings also set up the perpetrators for punishment. In his justice, God will punish those who were persecuting them. God will act with complete justice when he punishes sinners. God will see to it that those who inflicted persecution and suffering will themselves receive much worse.

**7 and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, 8 in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

Saints, not only will God punish the evildoers, but he will also provide rest for those who were being persecuted. Paul placed himself and his companions along with the Thessalonian believers as people who needed “rest” from God. There are two dimensions of this “rest.”

Believers can be relieved in knowing that their sufferings are strengthening them, making them ready for Christ’s Kingdom. They can also be relieved to know that all wrongs will be righted when God’s final judgment is executed.

So when will this happen? While those enduring suffering would wish for a quick judgment, it may be that the payback does not occur in this life. But this will happen for sure when the Lord Jesus appears from heaven.

Saints, the flaming fire is a picture of God’s holy presence:

**Exodus 13:21**

“And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so as to go by day and night”

**Deuteronomy 4:12**

“And the LORD spoke to you out of the midst of the fire. You heard the sound of the words, but saw no form; you only heard a voice”

**Isaiah 66:15**

“For behold, the LORD will come with fire And with His chariots, like a whirlwind, To render His anger with fury, And His rebuke with flames of fire”

**Revelation 1:13-14**

13 and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. 14 His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire;

**Matthew 25:31**

“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory”

Saints, when the Lord Jesus returns, he will bring judgment on those who don’t know God and on those who refuse to obey the Good News. The act of punishment belongs to God alone; he will deliver the vengeance that sinners deserve.

**9 These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, 10 when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed.**

Paul has explained when and who will be punished; this passage explains what that judgment will be. They will be punished with everlasting destruction, forever separated from the Lord. The word “punished” pictures what God will do to those who have been rebellious.

At Christ’s return, there will only be two groups of people. Those who belong to him and those who do not. Jesus told a parable about this; it is recorded in Matthew 25:31-46.

**Matthew 25:31-46**

31 "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. 32 All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats.

33 And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. 34 Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: 35 for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in;

36 I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.' 37 "Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink?

38 When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? 39 Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' 40 "And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.'

41 "Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: 42 for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink;

43 I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.' 44 "Then they also will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?'

45 "Then He will answer them, saying, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.' 46 "And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

There are no gray areas in God’s judgment. Those who have not identified with Christ and confessed him as Lord will have no hope, no second chance, no other appeal, the place of eternal destruction means eternal separation from God—being “separated” from his presence.

The unbelievers will be banned or excluded from the presence of God, who is the Source of life. It is banishment from God—just what rebels deserve. The believers, persecuted and weak as they may be, however, have the Lord and his glorious power on their side.

The power of the oppressors is meaningless when compared to the mighty power of God. When Christ returns, he will receive glory and praise from his holy people. The day of grief for the rebellious will be a day of celebration for believers. The Thessalonian believers would be among those praising him on that day—as will everyone across the ages who has believed the message of salvation in Jesus Christ.

Saints, Soon and Very soon, Jesus is about to appear, we are almost out of here!

**1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**

13 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

**1 Corinthians 15:50-54**

50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. 51 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed-- 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

**Short Movie Slide>**

**Acts 2:38-39**

38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

**Let’s Pray!**

**Benediction**

**"May The LORD bless you and keep you, May The LORD make His face shine upon you, May The LORD be gracious to you, May The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you His (Shalom) peace.” In Jesus Name!**