

2 Thessalonians 1

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Tape # 8189
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Paul had to leave Thessalonica in a hurry. They were going to arrest Paul. So the brethren there encouraged Paul to leave the city. He had only been there a short time.

So Paul, when they went on to Berea, and ministered there, he then sent Silas and Timothy back to Thessalonica.

Paul went from Berea to Athens. As Paul was in Athens, he was waiting for Silas and Timothy to join him.

When they didn't come, he went on down to Corinth, where Silas and Timothy finally did join Paul.

They told him of the church in Thessalonica, how they were growing, how they were faring. But, there were some problems that came. There was some confusion concerning the coming of Jesus Christ, the rapture of the church, concerning some of the people who had died in the meantime before the Lord came. So Paul wrote his first letter to the Thessalonians.

The one who delivered the letter probably came right back to Paul in Corinth and told him of some other problems, doctrinal problems, that they had in Thessalonica.

There seemed to develop a heavy persecution against the church in Thessalonica. Because they were being persecuted some of them thought that they had entered into the Great Tribulation.

So Paul is writing the second letter to correct that misconception, that they, the church were going and were in the Great Tribulation period. Yes, they were having persecution. They were going through tribulation, but this was not the Great Tribulation, the judgment of the world that the Bible speaks about.

So Paul writes the second letter to assure them that what they are experiencing is not the Great Tribulation. He talks to them in chapter one about the persecution. In chapter two, he assures them that this Day of the Lord has not yet come, that the persecution that they have is really not the Great Tribulation. That won't take place unto the antichrist, the man that is to be revealed, but that is next week. We'll get to that next week.

So, *Paul, and Silvanus* (Silvanus is another name for Silas. Silas is actually just a contraction of the name Silvanus.), *and Timotheus* (Of course, that is Timothy.), *unto the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*. That is the greatest place for a church to be, to be in the God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ. Established in our fellowship with God, established in our fellowship with our Lord Jesus Christ.

²*Grace unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*. These are Siamese twins of the New Testament. They are always coupled together, grace and peace. They are always in that order—it's never peace and grace, because you cannot know the peace of God until you have experienced the grace of God within your life. So it is a typical Pauline salutation, in each of his epistles. It's just the typical, grace and peace, through God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Personal words, ³*We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet (proper), because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity (love) of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth*; What a great church that was! Paul is thanking God continually for them because their faith is growing exceedingly. Now these are young believers. Paul wasn't able to spend much time there. Persecution arose very early. Paul had to leave. And yet these people were sincere and seeking God and their faith was growing exceedingly. Their love toward each other abounded! That is the kind of fellowship that you like to be in. Where there is that faith and there is that love and it is abounding towards each other.

Now again this church was experiencing persecution, heavy persecution, and perhaps that is the reason for their growth in faith and for their abounding love.

It's interesting how that persecution seems to bind the church together. The church in China is the house church. There is of course, the three self-church movement. It's a setup by the Communist Government.

It's a puppet of the Communist Government.

When we went over to visit China, we visited, in fact we spoke in some of the church, the three self movement churches. The Chinese Government gave us a guide while we were there. The guide was a full-on Communist. He was given to us by the government to see that we only saw certain things. We, of course, we had Mike McIntosh with us and Skip Heitzek. We gave the guy a real bad time! But we had a lot of fun. But we realized that this guy was just a government plant. He was there to see that people didn't contact us.

As soon as I was finished speaking, they would, you know, I'm a mixer. I usually just go out and mix with people. When I had spoken there in Beijing, I went out and the people just sort of mobbed us. It was just, of course I couldn't speak Chinese, I don't know what they were worried about. The people couldn't speak English, but there was a beautiful communication of smiles and just handshakes and the communication of love, though not verbally. And yet they were so concerned, they hustled me off to a back room, where all these guys were sitting there very sober and all. They could speak English and all, but they were endeavoring to keep us from the people.

The next church that we spoke in, they had a howl in the sound system, the whole while I was speaking because we insisted on having our own interpreter. They had their interpreter at the church in Beijing. At the next church, I said we brought this young man to be an interpreter for us. And he was good. He would tell me all of the things that I didn't say that they guy said I said, (the Communist interpreter). But this kid was really a very good interpreter, so they messed with the sound system and had, you know, this distracting wail going on while I was speaking. But the Spirit got through the wail. Oh, the people were touched in a magnificent way! And of course right after it was over they started to sort of mob us, so they quickly shooed the people off and got us through. The people waited for two hours to see us! Of course, Jeff, my son, just went out and mixed with the people. He had a great time with them! He sort of slid by them and got out and mixed, but it was an interesting.

But the truth church over there, the home church, experiences tremendous persecution. They have to meet pretty much in secret. I received a letter this week from one of our outreaches from Japan to go in from China to take materials, Bibles, especially to the house church. She said she went to this one area where they wanted her to speak. And so she said, the lady said, just hold on to my hand and follow me. It was at midnight. They went into this dark room and the lady said I will tell you when you can speak! And so they sat down in this dark room. She couldn't see anything. The lady said, you can speak now. So she taught out of the Word of God. Then when it came time to dismiss, no one had said anything. She just spoke for a half-hour or so. Then the people filed out in darkness. She said she was sitting by the door. She could see enough to see the feet of the people going out. She said she counted the feet. There were four hundred, which meant that there were two hundred people, sitting there in darkness, listening to the Word. But they had to just slip out into the night because if the government knew they were meeting, they would come in. They would beat them. They would confiscate their goods and things of that nature.

So those kind of conditions, though, bring you close together. And they have an effect upon you. You don't really serve the Lord unless you have a genuine commitment. It isn't sort of a, well you know, if it isn't raining and if there is not basketball game on, maybe I'll go to church. It is a real commitment to Jesus Christ in those circumstances. Thus, there is usually a tremendous depth of relationship with the Lord. There is tremendous faith. There is a great love for the fellow believers. It's a bond because you realize that you're in it together.

So, was the case in Thessalonica. They had this abounding faith. They had this tremendous love, abounding love for one another.

⁴*So that we ourselves (Paul said) glory in you in the churches,* So wherever I go I am able to tell the churches of what God is doing there in Thessalonica. I glory in what the Lord is doing there in your church, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer. So this is Paul's first mention of the suffering that they are enduring because of their faith in Jesus Christ. So you will be accounted worthy, he said of the kingdom because of the suffering.

So they had patience, we tell them *of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and*

tribulations that ye endure. Sharing with the others what you guys are going through. But yet the patience that God has given unto you, and the faith in those persecutions and tribulations.

⁵*Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God,* Now what Paul is saying is, when God does come, and God does judge the world, the persecution that you are experiencing, the suffering that you are going through for the cause of Christ, those that are afflicting upon you the tribulation and those that are inflicting upon you this persecution, when God judges them, it will be manifest that God's judgment is righteous. The fact that they have so maligned and mistreated you, caused you to suffer. It will actually justify the judgment that God is going to bring upon them.

that ye may be counted worthy (he said) *of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer:* ⁶*Seeing* (he said) *it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you;* Now Paul was talking here about the Great Tribulation, the Great Tribulation that is going to come upon the world. When God is going to judge the world in this period of Great Tribulation, which is described for in us in Revelation chapters six through eighteen. That Great Tribulation period, the cataclysmic judgments of God upon the earth, in which the majority of the inhabitants of the earth will be wiped out in God's fierce wrath that He pours out. So, it is a righteous thing, he said, with God to recompense this Great Tribulation upon those that are troubling you, because of their treatment of the believer, the persecution, it will be a righteous thing for God to do.

⁷*And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels,* Rest in this thought. Our Lord Jesus is going to come with His mighty angels.

He is going to come ⁸*In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:* Jesus is coming in judgment. The Bible teaches us that God has appointed Him as the judge over all things. He will be coming with His angels in fiery judgment taking vengeance on those that know not God and those that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

As we read in Hebrews (Hebrews 10:30-31), vengeance is Mine, saith the Lord. I will repay! It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of a living God.

Paul speaking of them, said, ⁹*Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;* Banished forever from the presence of God and the glory of God's kingdom. What a tragic fate awaits those who obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ! Those who know not God and don't obey the gospel, what a horrible fate! They are banished forever from the presence of God, punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of His power!

¹⁰*When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.* Jesus is coming! He's coming in power and in glory. Then shall they see the sign of the Son of Man, Jesus said, coming with clouds and great glory! He is coming to be glorified in His saints. He is coming to be glorified by the saints. He coming to establish the Kingdom of God upon the earth. He is coming with ten thousands of His saints, first of all to execute the judgment upon a Christ rejecting world and then to establish a world after God's heart and God's desires.

Today as you look at the world, you do not see the world that God created, nor do you see the world that God intended. A lot of people in looking at the world and in the conditions in the world are prone to wrongly blame God. They make ridiculous accusations against God. If God is a God of love, then why do we have so much suffering in the world today? I'll tell you why we have so much suffering in the world today. Because the world has rejected the Lord from ruling over them! The world is under Satan's power and authority and control.

When Jesus came, they said we will not have this man to rule over us. And because the world has rejected the law of God and the rule of God, you see the consequences of man's rebellion against God's law and God's order! You don't see the world that God created nor do you see the world that God intended. Not at all! Not even close to it! Man has done a pretty good job of destroying the beauty that God created. And he has done a great job in destroying the righteous way in which God wanted man to live.

So one day when Jesus comes and He begins to reign over the earth, you will then see the world as God intended it to be! You will not see any handicapped people. The Bible said that the blind will behold the

glory of the Lord! The mute will be singing praises unto God and the lame will be leaping for joy! There will be no sickness. There will be no sorrow! The former things will pass away. You will see a world in which people are living together in harmony and in love. There will be no commercial taking advantage of other people. There will be no huge debt in credit cards that bring people into a bondage of sort. It will be a world that is filled with love, a world of peace, a world of total sharing of the resources of the world. It will be a glorious world, the Kingdom age. And you will see the world that God intended.

So when He comes to be glorified in His saints, to be admired in all of them that believe. Our Lord reigning! What glory that will be. Admired in all of them that believe because, in what you believe, because of our witness to you was believed by you.

11 Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power: Jesus in talking to His disciples about the Great Tribulation and the cataclysmic judgments of God that will be taking place during that period of time, said to His disciples (Luke 21:36), “Pray always that you’ll be accounted worthy to escape all these things that are coming to pass upon the earth and to stand before the Son of Man.” If Jesus told us to pray always to be accounted worthy, then I think it would be a wise thing for us to be praying. Lord I want to be worthy to escape the great judgment that is coming upon the earth. I want to be standing, Lord, before You in glory.

In Revelation, chapter four (Revelation 4:10-5:14), as John is taken into the heavenly scene, he sees the throne of God and the Cherubim around the throne of God as they worship. He watches the response of the twenty-four elders who are sitting on their lesser thrones. And then he sees a scroll in the right hand of Him who is sitting upon the throne, the title deed to the earth. He hears an angel proclaim with a strong voice, who is worthy to take this scroll and to break the seals? John said, I began to sob convulsively because no man was found worthy in heaven or earth or under the sea, to take the scroll and loose the seals. But one of the elders said don’t sob, John. Behold the Lion of the tribe of Judah has prevailed to take the scroll and to loose the seals. John said, I turned and I saw Him as a Lamb that had been slaughtered. And He came and He took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat upon the throne. And when He did, the elders came with their golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of the saints. The prayers of the saints, which were, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven. And they sang a new song, saying worthy is the Lamb to take the scroll and to break the seals. For He was slain. He has redeemed us by His blood, out of every nation, tribe, tongue and people and made us unto our God, kings and priests. We shall reign with Him upon the earth! And John hears a great multitude.

Now, first of all notice the lyrics of that song, worthy is the Lamb to take the scroll, for He was slain and has redeemed us by His blood, out of every nation. That’s the song of the church! Only the church can sing that song. That’s not the song of redeemed Israel. We get that later in the Book of Revelation. That’s the song of the church. He has redeemed us out of all of the families of the earth, out of all of the nations. He has made us unto our God, kings and priests. We will reign with Him upon the earth.

It is not until chapter six, when He begins to break the seals, that the Great Tribulation on the earth is initiated. And we read there in chapter six, where they cried to the rocks and the mountain, fall on us and hide us from the face of the Lamb for the day of His wrath has come and who shall be able to stand?

Back in the last chapter of First Thessalonians, in the ninth verse, Paul told them, God has not appointed us unto wrath. Now he is saying, pray, I’ve been praying that you’ve been counted worthy even as Jesus said, pray that you will accounted worthy to escape these things, that is the things of the Great Tribulation, and that you’ll be standing before the Son of Man.

It is my prayer and my desire that I’m there in that heavenly scene. As He takes the scroll, I’ll be singing, worthy is the Lamb to take the scroll and loose the seals for He was slain and has redeemed us by His blood. I don’t know the tune yet, but I’ll pick up on it in a hurry! I’ve got the lyrics down. All I need is the tune. But, I’ll be there singing. That’s my prayer! Lord, I want to be there in glory to see You in Your glory.

And that’s what Jesus prayed for us (John 17:20-26). Father, I pray for those that will believe on Me through the witness of the disciples, that they might see Me in the glory that I had with You before the world ever existed.

And that's my longing, my prayer! My constant prayer is, Lord, count me in! One of your servants to see You, Lord, when You are glorified there in Heaven!

So Paul said I'm praying always for you, that God would count you worthy of this calling and to fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power! What a wonderful prayer! God, may Your people be counted worthy. May You fill them with all of Your goodness and with faith and with power!

¹²*That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you*, This is his continued prayer. May Jesus Christ and the name of Jesus Christ be glorified in you.

Often times and tragically, the name of Jesus Christ is blasphemed because of the actions of some people who have the claim or the reputation of being Christians. And they do something that brings the name of Christ into disrepute. I think of Jim Baker, Jimmy Swagert and men who have brought the name of Jesus Christ into disrepute. And I pray oh, God, may I never bring shame to the name of my Lord Jesus Christ! Help me Lord, that Your name might be glorified in me and through me.

and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ. It's only through grace, do we stand and can we stand. Were it not for the grace of God, none of us would be saved. God's love and God's grace reached down. It touched our hearts and lives and bestowed upon us the glorious gift of salvation, by our simple faith and trust in His Word and in His promises.

And so this is sort of the opening salutation and sort of the introduction. Now Paul will get into the real issues that he is writing to them about, as he gets into chapter two. He talks about the Great Tribulation and how the antichrist will be revealed. This is all necessary to transpire before the Lord comes to establish His righteous reign over the earth. So read on in chapter two and next Sunday night, we'll move on as we continue through the Bible.

Father, we thank You for the work of Your Holy Spirit in our hearts and in our lives. And Lord, we would pray that it would not take persecution to bring about a greater faith and a greater love and patience. But Lord, develop these qualities in us and help us, Lord, that we might be a credit unto You and that our lives might bring glory to the name of Jesus Christ. Lord, we thank You for the work of Your Spirit in Your church. Tonight, Lord, work by Your Spirit in each of our hearts. Draw us close to You. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.