

## 4. A Church That Endures Suffering

*Therefore we ourselves boast about you in the churches of God for your steadfastness and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions that you are enduring. 2 Thessalonians 1:4 (ESV)*

*...and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, 1 Thessalonians 1:9b (ESV)*

## 5. A Church With An Eternal Mindset

*This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering— 2 Thessalonians 1:5 (ESV)*

The New Testament does not look at suffering in quite the same way as most modern people. To us, it is in itself an evil, something to be avoided at all costs. Now while the New Testament does not gloss over this aspect of suffering, it does not lose sight either of the fact that in the good providence of God, suffering is often the means of working out God's eternal purpose. It develops in the sufferer's qualities of character. It teaches valuable lessons. Suffering is not thought of as something that may possibly be avoided by the Christian, for him it is inevitable. The Christian must live his life and develop his Christian character in a world that is dominated by non-Christian ideas. His faith... is to be manifested in the fires of trouble and the furnace of affliction. And not only is it to be manifested there, but in part, at any rate, it is to be fashioned in such places. The very troubles and afflictions which the world heaps on the believer become under God the means of making him what he ought to be. Suffering, when we have come to regard it in this light is not to be thought of as evidence that God has forsaken us, but as evidence that God is with us. — Leon Morris

## 6. Conclusion

### Life Group Questions

1. **Read 2 Thessalonians 1:1-2.** What about this greeting brought comfort to the suffering Christians in Thessalonica? What about it brings comfort to you? *(Review the outline if you are stuck.)*
2. **Read 2 Thessalonians 1:3, Matthew 13:20-21, 2 Corinthians 12:8-10, 1 Peter 1:6-7, and James 1:2-4.** How does suffering function differently for those with fake faith compared to those with genuine faith? How does this help us understand God's purpose in allowing us to face times of persecution or difficulty, like Job?
3. **Read 2 Thessalonians 1:3 and John 13:24-25.** What role does love play in the Christian life? What does the love we have for Christians reveal about our faith?
4. **Read 2 Thessalonians 1:5 and the quote by Leon Morris in the outline.** How does this change the way you think about why God allows Christians to suffer?
5. When you close in prayer, ask God to use the sufferings in our lives to grow our faith in God, increase our love for others, and prepare us for the eternal kingdom of God, which is our hope.



## 2 Thessalonians 1:1-5 – What Kind Of Church Did Paul Boast About?

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*Therefore we ourselves boast about you in the churches of God... 2 Thessalonians 1:4 (ESV)*

*We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers, as is right,... 2 Thessalonians 1:3 (ESV)*

## Background

*Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: 2 Thessalonians 1:1 (ESV)*

### A. Was this letter a group project?

*Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? 2 Thessalonians 2:5 (ESV)*

*I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. This is the sign of genuineness in every letter of mine; it is the way I write. 2 Thessalonians 3:17 (ESV)*

- In this letter, Paul was not using a literal “we” but a literary “we.”

### B. Who were Silas and Timothy?

### C. Where was Thessalonica?

### D. What is the outline of the book?

#### i. Chapter 1 — Persecution And The Righteous Judgment Of God

#### ii. Chapter 2 — The Second Coming Of Jesus

*...not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. 2 Thessalonians 2:2 (ESV)*

#### iii. Chapter 3 — Laziness And Leeching Off The Church

## What kind of church did Paul boast about?

### 1. A Church Of Genuine Christians

*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. 2 Thessalonians 1:1–2 (ESV)*

#### A. Why did Paul greet them with grace and peace?

**Peace** — The Jewish way of saying hello and goodbye. In Hebrew, it is the word *shalom*.

**Grace** — It is similar to the common greeting of *rejoice* in the Roman world.

- This is a Christianized greeting that both Jews and Gentile Christians could appreciate.

#### B. OUR Father

*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. 2 Thessalonians 1:1–2 (ESV)*

#### C. God our Father AND the Lord Jesus Christ

*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. 2 Thessalonians 1:1–2 (ESV)*

*But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Thessalonians 2:13–14 (ESV)*

- **Salvation Past** —
- **Salvation Present** —
- **Salvation Future** —

### 2. A Church With Growing Faith

*We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers, as is right, because your faith is growing abundantly,... 2 Thessalonians 1:3 (ESV)*

#### A. Anything good in us comes from God's work in us.

#### B. Persecution destroys false faith, but it grows true faith.

*As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away. Matthew 13:20–21 (ESV)*

*Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong. 2 Corinthians 12:8–10 (ESV)*

- It is hard for faith to grow without difficulty, persecution, troubles, trials, and stresses because otherwise, God has no opportunity to draw you to himself and display his love, mercy, and care.

*In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 1:6–7 (ESV)*

*Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. James 1:2–4 (ESV)*

### 3. A Church With Increasing Love For One Another

*We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers, as is right, because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing. 2 Thessalonians 1:3 (ESV)*

*But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us the good news of your faith and love and reported that you always remember us kindly and long to see us, as we long to see you— 1 Thessalonians 3:6 (ESV)*

*and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you, 1 Thessalonians 3:12 (ESV)*

*A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. John 13:34–35 (ESV)*