



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

Be Encouraged (2 Thess 1:1-12)

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BIBLE STUDY

Location:

123 CAP

Times:

2ND TUESDAYS

MONTHLY @ NOON

Second Thessalonians 2:1-12
"Be Encouraged"

Introduction

Last week we began studying the topic of exemplary behavior, and how this is related to greatness and success. Since the content of 1 and 2 Thessalonians is similar, we are taking the approach of teaching the first chapter of both books since this will help us to understand the major ideas better.

ENCOURAGEMENT BY MATURITY (1:1-4)

Second Thessalonians 1 is a typical salutation for a first-century letter to a local church. As a consequence of the opening salutation, the development of thought begins with verse 3. The believers were growing spiritually in spite of (or perhaps because of) persecution. Nevertheless, they needed encouragement. In verses 3-4, there is an expression of gratitude for spiritual growth. Last week, we learned that the transformation of believers has specific results, and here they are continued.

Believers are encouraged when their faith matures. The language that Scripture uses indicates a faith that grew "more and more." The Greek word represented means very vigorous growth, which was probably the result of suffering. Indeed, that is often how faith increases: as the result of suffering.

Believers are encouraged when their love increases. The same word that was used in 1 Thessalonians 3:12 for prayer is seen as reflecting God's answer.

Believers are encouraged when they endure (persevere). Perseverance means believers endure trials and persecution in a godly manner, that is, they did not complain. Sometimes the word "persevere" is translated "patience" and literally means "to remain or abide under." The preposition "under," of course, is a prefix (i.e. attached to the beginning of the word to modify its meaning) to the word "abide." A word picture commonly given is in which one is

standing, as it were, under an ominous threat or danger but is not moving ("staying put"). The word "persevere" implies bold faithfulness. The true believer needs to have assurance of salvation to the very end of his/her earthly life, yet must also understand that assurance of salvation does not show itself in passiveness but perseverance (a faith that works).

ENCOURAGEMENT BY VINDICATION (1:5-10)

The next element of encouragement is by way of vindication (sc. clearing someone of any wrong by showing they are justified or correct) of believers through the destruction of their enemies.

God will vindicate Himself and believers. The indication is evidence of God's righteous judgment that honors the confident endurance and patience of the model believer: God will vindicate Himself and His people for their suffering. The idea is to declare the believer's worth to be a partaker of the kingdom of God. The verb for "worthy" means "to declare or count worthy," not to "make worthy" (such as to justify or declare righteous). Therefore, believers are urged to regard their endurance as evidence of God working in them and assurance that He would keep His promises concerning their future place in the coming kingdom.

God will repay every injustice. Scripture states, *it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you.* Since God is just (righteous), He cannot allow evil to be unpunished. Those who persecute believers will experience the judgment of God.

God will judge those who reject and rebel. The Lord Jesus will administer retribution to those who do not know God. In other words, the Lord Jesus will personally judge those who reject the gospel message. All who do not know God will receive God's retribution. Some translations may read "vengeance." The word does not mean revenge (which would be the satisfaction of a personal grudge). The word for "retribution" or vengeance means God will satisfy His holy law. According to Romans 1:20, all humanity is accountable to God and without excuse for rejecting Him, *for since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made.* The problem with those who reject God is not that they are innocent, but they *suppress the truth in unrighteousness.* If you reject the revelation of God, you will receive God's retribution: His judgment.

The Lord Jesus will also administer retribution to those who rebel against God. The first group rejected what revelation they had received, while the second group heard the truth of God's Word and rebelled against it. All who reject the gospel and rebel against God will be accountable. Verse 9 reads, *And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.*

If by grace through faith, Christ alone does not pay the penalty for your sin, then you will *pay the penalty of eternal destruction*.

The relief here is the Second Coming of Christ. The Lord Jesus being revealed *from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire* is against the unbeliever on earth. The “relief” (rest) is “relief from affliction” (tension). The knowledge that God will judge wickedness should give believers relief in trials if they experience persecution. Justice and righteousness will right all wrongs when God judges.

God will enforce eternal punishment. The Bible does not teach that when the wicked die they are annihilated. The retribution of the wicked and unbelieving and the reward of the righteous are everlasting, and as the reward is conscious, so is the retribution. It is because God breathed into the nostrils of man the breath of life that he became a living being, and is an eternal, immortal being, and every human being will live forever in the presence of the Lord or in the Lake of Fire separated from the presence of the Lord.

Destruction in verse 9 means separation *from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power*, that is, an eternity of woe or ruin (that which is ruined is the opportunity to ever be restored to fellowship with your Creator for eternity). It is the eternal ruin of everything worthwhile, including the purpose for which man was created. Asked the question of the purpose of man, the authors of the Westminster Confession responded, “to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.” The opportunity for those who God will judge will be ruined and lost forever.

The presence of the Lord and . . . the glory of His power is displayed, at the very least, in creation. What this means is that no one alive at this moment in time has experienced eternal separation from *the presence of the Lord and . . . the glory of His power*. Those who reject and rebel against God have no idea of what they are destined to experience for eternity. The Bible refers to this destiny as the second death in the Book of Revelation. The first death is the separation of one’s soul to heaven or hell from the body. The second death is the eternal separation from *the presence of the Lord and . . . the glory of His power*. These are sobering truths; however, there is a positive, and encouraging, aspect to God’s righteous judgment.

God will grant victory and glory to believers. As terrible as the judgment will be for the unbeliever, there is a positive aspect for the believer. Of course, it is not pleasurable to think of the ruin of the wicked, but it will be a reality and it is an incentive to do the work of an evangelist and be a witness of God’s saving grace. For the believer though, there will be victory and glory.

The Second Coming is the subject of verse 10. While the unbeliever will experience judgment and retribution, the believer will experience victory and glory. In heaven, reigning with Christ during the millennium, and into eternity, the saints of God will forever be trophies of God’s grace, and the glory of Christ will be revealed in the redeemed of all ages. The glory of the Creator is revealed in the disciples He produces, and so Christ’s glory will be revealed in the victorious believers who accompany Him when He returns to earth.

It will be a glorious sight to behold those Christ has redeemed and who radiate His glory.

ENCOURAGEMENT BY PRAYER (1:11-12)

The next element of encouragement is to conduct oneself worthily in spite of difficulties. The final manner in which Scripture encourages believers is by means of prayer.

Pray to be worthy. Difficulties do not produce model behavior, nor do trials make believers what they are. Instead, persecution of believers and the troubles we endure, show what we are. Scripture does not indicate prayer for difficulties to cease, but instead there is prayer for the saints of God to be counted worthy to endure suffering for Christ! Those who are worthy of the calling of Christ, will persevere for His glory, and their faith is revealed as committed and strong when difficulties arise.

Pray to be fruitful. Scripture also indicates prayer for the church to *fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power*. The prayer is that the church would be fruitful during trials. Often when troubles arise, we retreat from service to the Lord, and pray the difficulties disappear. However, there are many in the church today who do not yield to that temptation, but serve God willingly in the midst of many difficult circumstances.

Pray to be faithful. Lastly, Scripture indicates prayer that the church would be faithful, that the grace of God would cause their lives to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ. God has designed a plan whereby He uses limited and weak earthen vessels to accomplish His work. Our response should be as this model church, a life of faith, love, and hope that glorifies Christ. By being in Jesus, we are also glorified, and set forth to receive an honor not self-generated, but given to us by our relationship with Him. Let us pray each and every day that God would fully glory Christ in us, His saints, as we in turn receive our glory from Him in accordance with the gracious calling of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ; therein is greatness and success that endures for eternity.

Thank you for allowing me the honor to provide ongoing Bible studies to you. If you have any questions, please feel free to talk with me, or contact me by email or phone. I am praying for you personally throughout the day and week (1 Tim 2:1-4).

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