

THE THESSALONIAN EPISTLES: DIRECTION FOR THE LAST DAYS

VIII. Persevering Amid Spiritual Opposition

(2 Thessalonians 1:1-12)

I. Introduction

- A. Paul's epistles to the believers at Thessalonica addressed new converts out of raw paganism who faced persecution and false teaching, a recipe for spiritual defeat if they failed to get adequate spiritual insight.
- B. When Paul began to write his second epistle to the believers at Thessalonica to correct an errant view on end-time prophecy that had entered their Church, he began in 2 Thessalonians 1:1-12 by encouraging them to persevere in their faith amid the strong spiritual opposition they faced. We view this passage for edification:

II. Persevering Amid Spiritual Opposition, 2 Thessalonians 1:1-12.

- A. After his salutation (2 Thessalonians 1:1-2), Paul expressed his thanksgiving to God for the "exceptional growth" of faith in God and love for other believers that was evident in his readers, 2 Thessalonians 1:3; Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to 2 Thessalonians 1:3-4.
- B. Paul, Silas, and Timothy had complimented these Thessalonian believers before other churches for their patience and faith exhibited in all the persecutions and trials they endured, 2 Thessalonians 1:4 NIV.
- C. That spiritual endurance demonstrated that these believers were indeed worthy of entering the Messianic Kingdom of God, news from Paul that was meant to encourage his readers, 2 Thessalonians 1:5.
- D. Also, since Paul's readers were worthy of entering God's Kingdom as evidenced by their spiritual endurance, that endurance also signaled that their spiritual opponents were destined for God's judgment, 2 Thess. 1:6-10:
 - 1. The spiritual endurance of Paul's readers before their persecutors indicated that God will be righteous to recompense punishment those who troubled them while providing rest for Paul's readers from persecution when Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels at His Second Coming, 2 Thessalonians 1:6-7. (Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 715)
 - 2. At His Second Coming to the earth, Christ will punish (a) those who are ignorant of God regardless of His revelation of His existence in creation (cf. Romans 1:18-32) and (b) those who did not obey the Gospel of salvation by faith in Christ, a greater wrong as their privilege to know that Gospel was greater, eliciting a greater accountability before God to have trusted in Christ for salvation (cf. John 3:36), 2 Thess. 1:8; Ibid.
 - 3. The destruction that both of these groups will face is paying the penalty for rejecting God's grace in everlasting ruin away from God's presence and the glory of His power, 2 Thess. 1:9. "This is 'the most express statement in St. Paul's Epistles of the eternity of future punishment' (Edward Headland and Henry B. Swete, The Epistle to the Thess., London: Hatchard, 1863, p. 137 as cited in B. K. C., N. T., p. 716)
 - 4. This punishment will contrast sharply with the experience of believers who will glorify God and God will be glorified in His saints because believers will mirror God's glory in themselves, 2 Thess. 1:10a; Ibid.
 - 5. As added encouragement, Paul stated that his readers would be included in this group of blessed believers because they had believed Paul's testimony of the Gospel of Christ that he preached, 2 Thess. 1:10b.
- E. Sharing this encouraging information with his readers caused Paul to pray that they might live lives that reflected their high and lofty spiritual calling and destiny, 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12; Ibid.:
 - 1. Paul reported that he and his ministry team always prayed for his readers that God might count them worthy of the calling they had received from the Lord, that is, that they might live righteous, holy lives in view of their glorious future at Christ's Second Coming to the earth, 2 Thessalonians 1:11; Ibid.
 - 2. Specifically, Paul prayed that the name, that is, the reputation of the Lord Jesus Christ might be glorified in the lives of his readers as they lived righteously before the world, that Christ might not only be glorified in their lives, but that the Lord Himself might be glorified in Paul's readers in accord with the program of God's grace that is based in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ, 2 Thessalonians 1:12.

Lesson: *The endurance the Thessalonian believers exhibited in their faith in God and in their love for each other amid spiritual opposition was evidence that they would glory in God and reflect God's glory at Christ's Coming, and that their opponents would be punished by God for rejecting Him from knowing about His existence through creation and others through rejecting even the Gospel of Christ's salvation, a punishment of eternal, conscious torment. Paul thus prayed that his readers might live worthy of their lofty calling and destiny in God's grace.*

Application: *In view of God's glory that we will esteem when we see Christ and that will also be reflected in us as believers, may we endure the spiritual opposition we face and that God will eternally punish and live righteously.*