

“Paul’s Second Letter to the Thessalonians — ‘No Second Chances!’”

Introduction:

- ***As we have seen, the trials and the sufferings of the Thessalonian saints were so great that they were still disheartened even though they had Paul’s first letter to encourage them. Probably the false teachers had continued to attack and to sow discord with their many lies and heresies. They had Satan’s empowering as well and that surely made a significant difference.***
- ***It seems as well that another error had been promoted by them and that it had been well received by some. That was the teaching that those who had not believed the true gospel, some of whom had in some cases arisen from their very midst and who may have become their persecutors, would at least have a second chance to believe after the Rapture had occurred. But, the apostle teaches here in chapter 2, that will not be possible. As indeed Paul writes elsewhere, “... now is the day of salvation!” 2 Cor. 6:2***

Outline:

- ***The Sufferings of the Church Are A “Token” of God’s Coming Judgments***
- ***God’s Coming Judgments During the Tribulation Are Not For Us Today***

I. The Sufferings of the Church Are A “Token” of God’s Coming Judgments:

- ***Our main teaching last time was focused here and it is a major one indeed. Chapter 2 in this second letter is a direct followup to this teaching here so we will repeat that teaching now. There are no chapter divisions in the original text, remember that. So 2:1 immediately follows 1:10-12.***

2 Thess. 1:4-10

4 So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure:

5 [Which is] a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer:

6 Seeing [it is] a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you;

7 And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels,

8 In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:

9 Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from 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.

- “a manifest token [*ἐνδειγμα*] of the righteous judgment of God ...”: *Lit., an “indication” or a “sure evidence”. The wording here is very interesting, isn’t it?* “... counted worthy of the kingdom of God”.

So they were being in what sense “counted worthy of the kingdom of God”? By virtue of that very fact, that they they were being persecuted as they were, for their righteousness, not their unrighteousness, and for their heavenly hope no doubt. Phil. 1:28 says the same. We looked at that last time with some other scriptures that teach the same. The word “worthy” means something that is undeniable, something “axiomatic”. The root word here is just that, “axiom”. No one could reasonably doubt that they were the heirs of the heavenly kingdom. For their persecutions “proved” it, he writes so powerfully here.

- *Verse 5 does answer the question: “for [on behalf of] which ye also suffer”: This language settles it! It was due to their suffering that was ordained. These had suffered more than we can understand and so have the saints down through the centuries. Another compelling verse would be this:*

Rom. 8:17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with [him], that we may be also glorified together.

- *Phil. 1 teaches the same:*

Phil. 1:27-30

27 Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;

28 And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God.

29 For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;

30 Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear [to be] in me.

- ***So, we do suffer — but our time of glory shall surely come. They, who reject the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, may not suffer now — but their day will come. That is Paul’s magnificent teaching here in this first chapter. Amen and amen. To be on the right side of that equation is so critically important.***
- ***And there is a fundamental principle at work here that we may never have realized. Suffering “to be glorified together”, or, “to be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye suffer” demonstrates a fundamental principle of the working of our God, and one we may not have properly considered before:***

- ***This principle is stated directly in chapter 1, verse 6 and part of 7. We suffer physical trials now but heavenly glory then while they enjoy our trials at their hand now but will suffer incalculably later and forever, separation from the Lord and from the glory of his power:***

1 Thess 1:6-7a

6 Seeing *[most assuredly it is]* a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you;

7 And to you who are troubled rest with us (when [in] the Lord Jesus [shall be] revealed from heaven with his mighty angels,

8 In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:

9 Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power)

- ***The principle is clear then. We suffer physical trials now but heavenly glory then. They enjoy persecuting us now but will suffer later and forever. God is NOT mocked!***
- ***Unfortunately, as I pointed out last time, this is one of the places where the KJV translators allowed their views of the end times scenario to improperly direct with their translation. Parentheses need to be added to clarify the meaning for us non-Greek speaking readers like they did in verse 10, but they put them in the wrong***

place, I believe. The structure of the Greek language requires this for the benefit of our understanding.

- ***The parenthetical section begins with the word “when” meaning “in that” in verse 7 and ending just before the same word in verse 10, and this is a bold statement again of the Blessed Hope, the Rapture of the Church which is His Body:***

Verse 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.

- ***How blessed indeed. Rejoice. His grace is always sufficient. The hope and expectation of believers today is the Rapture of the Church into heaven to be with Christ forever. This is not so for those that have rejected the gospel and are left behind as we shall now see in chapter 2.***
- ***So the contrasts between our hope and expectation and that of the unbelievers who will not believe the blessed gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is like black and white. And the continuation of this theme in chapter 2 will underscore this contrast in a most fundamental way as we shall now see. For the apostle will now characterize the times of the coming Tribulation period in which those that reject the preaching of the gospel of grace will be living. There will be no second chances there.***

II. God’s Coming Judgments During the Tribulation Are Not For Us Today:

- ***Paul concludes here by restating the teaching given before but with additional details that would have now been very significant for these believers.***

[READ] 2 Thess. 2:1-2

1 Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and [by] our gathering together unto him,

2 That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, **as that the day of Christ is at hand.**

- ***False teachers were still being listened to by the Thessalonians, but as the apostle has already said multiple times, the word of the false teachers should not be believed. Prophecy is NOT being fulfilled today nor was it then. The Dispensation of the Grace of God was in***

effect and that meant that the signs, wonders and miracles had ceased. Even the signs of an apostle had ended since the apostles are no longer with us today.

- ***Of course, these judgments are for those not caught up into heaven in the rapture, in other words, those who were unsaved. Those judgments are for unbelievers who will find themselves living in the Tribulation period during the Time of Jacob's Trouble. They are planned for the vast majority of earth's children at that time during sacred history.***
- ***God's mercy towards sinners has been long and plentiful indeed. But he will, as the apostle writes here, bring his accounts into balance. Yes, the coming times of his judgments will be very hard for Israel and for the Gentiles both. There will be trouble and wrath through Satan and his willing servants and also directly by God in his appointed time and way. But those times and seasons are not for us! And so this gracious exhortation is so appropriate here"*** "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and [by] our gathering together unto him"!
- ***How could they have been so confused, one might rightfully ask? Well, there were several factors, no doubt. First there was the great persecution they were living with. Then, the lies of the false teachers. And these lies were compelling mixed, it seems, with wonders and miracles.***

What about today? We live in similar times, it seems.

[READ] 2 Thess. 2:3-5

3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for [that day shall not come], except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;

4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

5 Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?

- ***This is all about the revelation of anti-Christ occurring at the mid-point of the seven year Tribulation period. [See Rev.]. The false teachers had apparently taught that they were at that time in the first half of the Tribulation having missed the Rapture somehow. But that was far from what they had been experiencing then. Rather,***

something else was going on that the apostle makes them aware of here.

- ***He now refers to what was revealed in Daniel, Revelation, and Matthew and Luke's gospel in detail. But those writings were not yet available to the Thessalonians probably.***

[READ] 2 Thess. 2:6-10

6 And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time.

7 For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth [will let], until he be taken out of the way.

8 And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:

9 [Even him], whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,

10 And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

- ***We will consider the details of this next time, Lord willing. But for now, let's look simply at the overall teaching:***
 - ***They were living NOT near the Day of Christ because the False Prophet and the Beast HAD NOT BEEN MANIFESTED OPENLY as prophecy demanded.***
 - ***Yes, there were signs and wonders but they were not of God! They were "lying" wonders therefore and need to be clearly understood as exactly that and nothing more.***
 - ***The enemy of their souls was working them in counterfeit and was able to deceive many thereby. For the "mystery of iniquity [or lawlessness] was already at work. This working of Satan through his servants would continue until the "withholding" force was taken out of the way [the church itself] and the anti-Christ's power might be clearly revealed. "Withhold" = "let" here in the original language of these verses, the same word but different translations here.***
- ***Well, let's finish for today with a strong statement that there will be no second chances as it were for those that have not believed during this dispensation of the grace of God.***

[READ] 2 Thess. 2:11-12

11 And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a [the] lie: ***[What is this lie? Evolution or some variant of it, perhaps?]***

12 That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

- ***So there will be no “second chance” for unbelievers left behind. The popular movies and TV series are so wrong about this. Think about it: rejecting the grace of God and the gospel of grace now but accepting that grace under the trials of the Tribulation? That would be hardly consistent with the essence of the grace message. Right?***
- ***No, blindness will be on the heart of those rejecting the truth and they will accept the Mark of the Beast and be lost eternally “... because they “believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”***

[READ] 2 Thess. 2:13-14

13 But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:

14 Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

- ***We have not been appointed to wrath, as 1 Thess. 5:9 makes so clear, but to obtain salvation. But suffering also for his sake is our privilege.***
- ***Enjoy the Lord and all the glories of his abundant grace! Amen.***