



No Rest For The Wicked



2 Thessalonians 1:3–4 (NKJV)

3 We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other,

4 so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure,

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2 Thessalonians 1:3-4



Their Testimony Was Helping Others

(v. 4a)

2 Thessalonians 1:4^a

Therefore, among God's churches we boast about your perseverance and faith

- Not only can suffering help us to grow, but we can then help others to grow.

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2 Thessalonians 1:3-4

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God Encourages Us That We May Encourage Others

2 Corinthians 1:4–5 (NKJV)

4 who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

5 For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ.

- We are not to be storage tanks that receive and keep, but channels that receive and share.

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2 Thessalonians 1:3-4

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- The word translated “*faith*” in 2 Thessalonians 1:3–4, can be translated “*faithfulness*.”
- Actually, the two go together; we reveal our faith in God by our faithfulness of life.
- The Thessalonians were faithful to the Lord and to one another, in spite of the troubles they endured.

- When a person in difficulty forsakes the Lord and the church, he shows that either he has never been born again, or that his spiritual life is very weak.
- A true Christian who is growing will be faithful, come what may.

No Rest For The Wicked ^{PART} 2

2 Thessalonians 1:3-4



- Paul had every reason to praise God and give thanks for what God was doing in the lives of these young Christians.
- Notice that one element was missing—hope? *“Faith, hope, and love”* had characterized these believers from the beginning (*1 Thes. 1:3*); but Paul gave thanks only for their faith and love.
- Why? Apparently they were confused about their hope. This leads us to the second encouragement.

The Encouragement of Promise

(2 Thes. 1:5–10)

2 Thessalonians 1:5–10 (NKJV)

5 which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer;

6 since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you,

7 and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels,

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The Encouragement of Promise

(2 Thes. 1:5–10)

8 in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

9 These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,

10 when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed.

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2 Thessalonians 1:3-4

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- No matter how difficult their present circumstances may have been, the Thessalonian believers had a secure and glorious future.
- In fact, their sufferings were evidence, “*a manifest token,*” that God was righteous, working out His great plan for them.
- We are prone to think that suffering proves that God does not care, when just the opposite is true. Furthermore, the way we act in times of trial proves to others that God is at work.

Philippians 1:27–30 (NKJV)

27 Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel,
28 and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God.

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29 For to you it has been granted on behalf of
Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to
suffer for His sake,
30 having the same conflict which you saw in me
and now hear is in me.

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2 Thessalonians 1:3-4



Three Experiences Are Involved In The Promises Of God For His People.

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2 Thessalonians 1:3-4



Reward

(v. 5)

2 Thessalonians 1:5^b

You will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering.

- This was one of God's purposes in permitting their suffering. It does not suggest that their suffering earned them the right to go to heaven, because we know that they were saved through faith in Christ.

The Little Word “*Also*”
Indicated That This
Worthiness Related Both
To Their Present
Experience And Their
Future Entrance Into
God’s Glorious Kingdom.

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2 Thessalonians 1:3-4

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1 Peter 1:3–9 (NKJV)

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

4 to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,

5 who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials,

7 **that the genuineness of your faith**, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,

8 whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,

9 receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls.

- One day Jesus Christ will turn the tables and the wicked will suffer while the believers are rewarded.
- Our Lord never promised us that life here would be easy; in fact, He taught that we would have to face difficulties and fight battles.
- He also promised a future reward for all who were faithful to Him.

Matthew 5:10–12 (NKJV)

10 Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 “Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake.

12 Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Recompense

(vv. 6, 7b–9)

- God will recompense affliction to the lost, but rest to the saved. To *recompense* means “*to repay.*”
- Certainly, the wicked who persecute the godly do not always receive their just payment in this life.

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2 Thessalonians 1:3-4



Recompense

(vv. 6, 7b–9)

- In fact, the apparent prosperity of the wicked and difficulty of the godly have posed a problem for many of God's people (see *Ps. 73; Jer. 12:1; Hab. 1*).
- Why live a godly life if your only experience is that of suffering?

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2 Thessalonians 1:3-4



- As Christians, we must live for eternity and not just for the present. In fact, living “*with eternity’s values in view*” is what makes our Christian life meaningful today.
- “*We walk by faith, and not by sight.*”
- This brings to mind the story of the two farmers, one a believer and the other an atheist. When harvest season came, the atheist taunted his believing neighbor because apparently God had not blessed him too much. The atheist’s family had not been sick, his fields were rich with harvest, and he was sure to make a lot of money.

- *“I thought you said it paid to believe in God and be a Christian,”* said the atheist.
- *“It does pay,”* replied the Christian. *“But God doesn’t always pay His people in September.”*

- What kind of a future does the unbeliever face? Look at the dramatic words Paul used to describe it: tribulation, vengeance, flaming fire, punishment, and everlasting destruction.
- The Christ-rejecting world will receive from God exactly what it gave to God's people! When God recompenses, He pays in kind; for there is a law of compensation that operates in human history.
- Pharaoh tried to drown all the male babies born to the Jews, and his own army was drowned in the Red Sea.

- Haman plotted to wipe out the Jews, and he and his own sons were wiped out.
-
- The advisers of King Darius forced him to arrest Daniel and throw him into a lions' den, but later they themselves were thrown to the lions.
- The unbelieving Jewish leaders who sacrificed Christ in order to save the nation (*John 11:49–53*) in a few years saw their city destroyed and their nation scattered.

- It is a *righteous* thing for God to judge sin and condemn sinners.
- A holy God cannot leave sin unjudged.
- People who say, “I cannot believe that a loving God would judge sinners and send people to hell” understand neither the holiness of God nor the awfulness of sin.
- While it is true that “*God is love*” (1 John 4:8), it is also true that “*God is light*” (1 John 1:5), and in His holiness He must deal with sin.

1 John 4:8 (NKJV)

He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

1 John 1:5 (NKJV)

This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.

- The word *vengeance* must not be confused with *revenge*.
- The purpose of vengeance is to satisfy God's holy law; the purpose of revenge is to pacify a personal grudge.
- God does not hold a grudge against lost sinners. Quite the contrary, He sent His Son to die for them, and He pleads with them to return to Him.
- But if sinners prefer to “*know not God, and ... obey not the Gospel*” (2 Thes. 1:8), there is nothing left for God to do but judge them.

- This judgment will take place when Jesus Christ returns to the earth with His church and His angels (*2 Thes. 1:7*).
- This is not the same event described by Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18.
- We may contrast these two events:

1 Thessalonians 4:13–18

- Christ returns in the air
- He comes secretly for the church
- Believers escape the Tribulation
- Occurs at an undisclosed time

2 Thessalonians 1

- Christ returns to the earth
- He comes openly with the church
- Unbelievers experience Tribulation, judgment
- Occurs at the end of the Tribulation period, the Day of our Lord

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2 Thessalonians 1:3-4

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Rest

(vv. 7a, 10)

2 Thessalonians 1:7 (NKJV)

and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels,

2 Thessalonians 1:10 (NKJV)

when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed.

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2 Thessalonians 1:3-4

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- God will recompense tribulation to the lost, but rest to the saved.
- I believe that the first phrase in 2 Thessalonians 1:7 should be treated as a parenthesis: *“to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you (and to you who are troubled, rest with us) when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed.”*
- The saints receive their rest when the Lord returns in the air and catches us up to be with Him.

- The word rest means “*relief, release, not under pressure.*” It is the opposite of “*tribulation.*”
- The word describes the releasing of a bowstring.
- In this life, God’s people are pressured, “*pressed out of measure*”, and under the burdens of trial and persecution.

2 Corinthians 1:8 (NKJV)

For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life.

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2 Thessalonians 1:3-4



- When we see Christ, we will be released.
- We need not fear fiery wrath and judgment, for God has already judged our sins at Calvary.

1 Thessalonians 1:10 (NKJV)

and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

1 Thessalonians 5:9 (NKJV)

For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,

What Kind Of Future Is There For The Lost?

- They face punishment and eternal judgment (2 *Thes. 1:9*), while the saved shall enjoy the rest and glories of heaven.
- The lost shall be separated from God, while the saved “*shall see His face*” (*Rev. 22:4*).

What Kind Of Future Is There For The Lost?

- Some cultists have tried to dilute the meaning of “*everlasting destruction*,” saying it means either temporary suffering or total annihilation; but both ideas are false. The phrase means “*eternal judgment*,” no matter how men try to twist it or avoid it.

Matthew 25:41 (NKJV)

“Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels:

- Paul encouraged his friends with praise and promise; and he had a third encouragement.

The Encouragement of Prayer

(2 Thes. 1:11–12)

2 Thessalonians 1:11–12 (NKJV)

11 Therefore we also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power,

12 that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

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- Paul prayed for his converts (*1 Thes. 1:2; 3:10*).
- His “*wherefore*” in 2 Thessalonians 1:11 means, “*And because of all I have just said*”—the return of Christ to be glorified in the saints, and to judge the lost.
- The future prospect of glory motivated the apostle to pray for the saints.

- We must never neglect a present responsibility because of a future hope.
- On the contrary, the future hope must encourage us to be faithful today.
- There were three concerns in Paul's prayer.

Their Worthiness

(v. 11a)

- In 2 Thessalonians 1:5, Paul had stated that he wanted them to be worthy of the kingdom when they entered glory in the future. But here he emphasized their present situation.
- God's calling was in grace and love, and Paul desired that they might live up to that calling.
- Trials do not make a person; they reveal what a person is made of. When our faith is tried, we are revealing our worth (*1 Peter 1:6–9*).

Their Worthiness

(v. 11a)

- God certainly knows our hearts even before we are tried, but *we do not know our own hearts*, and others do not know what we are worth.
- We need to pray that God will build our worth and make us more valuable Christians because of the trials we have endured.

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2 Thessalonians 1:3-4



Their Walk

(v. 11b)

2 Thessalonians 1:11 (NIV)

That by His power He may fulfill every good purpose of yours and every act promoted by your faith.

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2 Thessalonians 1:3-4



Their Walk

(v. 11b)

- Character must lead to conduct. Paul prayed that they might have a resolute will, empowered by God, to do what He wanted them to do. Obedience and service do not spring from human talent and efforts, but from God's power as we trust Him.

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2 Thessalonians 1:3-4



Their Walk

(v. 11b)

- Paul had linked faith with *love* (2 Thes. 1:3) and *endurance* (2 Thes. 1:4), and here he linked it with *power*. If we believe God, we will receive His power in our lives.
- We cannot be victorious in tribulations if we only trust ourselves; but we can be victorious through trusting Him.

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Their Witness

(v. 12)

- Jesus Christ will be glorified in His saints when they return with Him (*2 Thes. 1:10*); but He should also be glorified in our lives today.
- Unbelievers blaspheme His name (*1 Peter 4:12ff*), but believers bless His name and seek to glorify it.
- The amazing thing is that the believer who glorifies Christ is likewise glorified *in Christ*, “glorified in you, and you in Him” (*2 Thessalonians 1:12b NIV*).

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- How can this be done? “According to the grace of our God and Lord Jesus Christ” (*2 Thes. 1:12*).
- Grace and glory go together, as do suffering and glory (*see Ps. 45:2–3; 84:11; Rom. 5:2; 2 Cor. 8:19; 1 Peter 5:10*).
- As we receive His grace, we reveal His glory.

- “ *‘There is no peace,’* saith the Lord, *‘unto the wicked’*” (Isa. 48:22).
- No rest for the wicked! But there is rest for those who trust Christ and seek to live for His glory. For the Christian, the best is yet to come.
- We know that *“the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us”* (Rom. 8:18).