**2 Thessalonians, Chapter 1**

Based on [2 Thessalonians 1:1-12](https://biblia.com/books/esv/2Th1.1-12)

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Advent Midweek 1

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In 2 Thessalonians Chapter 1, Paul begins with thanksgiving to God for their faith and steadfastness in the face of persecution and suffering. Paul writes, “**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. This suffering is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God.”**

This scripture teaches (1) that enduring persecution and affliction is *evidence* of faith, and (2) that this faith is evidence that you will be considered worthy to inherit God’s kingdom.

For the first several hundred years, the Christian church was pretty much illegal. It stands to reason that there were no ChrINOs at that time…Christians in Name Only. Because to confess Christ was to literally to stake your life on him, because in doing so you put your life on the line and no one would do that for a mere label.

Once Christianity became legal and the religion of the Empire, for the first time ChrINOs became a problem. Because then, for the first time, to confess Christ became socially advantageous, commendable, good for business.

What persecution does is help to reveal the hidden church, and believers can truly see with their eyes, true faith. To say “**I believe in Christ**” is not a sure sign of faith. It is a necessary sign of faith, but not very reliable in a faith friendly environment. But to say, “I believe in Christ” when someone with a gun to your head tells you not to…that is an infallible sign of faith and assurance. It is the greatest good work. It hallows God’s name among us and shuts Satan’s mouth.

To be clear, it is not suffering that is the good work. Everybody suffers. It is enduring suffering, willingly, when you could avoid it by denying Christ or any of his Words. And this endurance is given to faith by the Spirit. You may have heard that a **baker might lose his business license because he won’t write on a wedding cake words blessing a gay marriage.** It is within his power to do so, but he won’t write blasphemy to save his business. A Judge in Wyoming lost her job because she wouldn’t give her legal signature to a same-sex marriage license. This is not a gun to the head, but it is enduring suffering and stress, rather than compromising the faith for material gain.

**“In all your persecutions and in the afflictions that you are *enduring*---*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 Thes. Chapter 1 also teaches that God makes sure that in the end, Justice will reign. Justice is simply the process of repaying what is owed a person for what he has done. Paul writes, “**God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven.”**

Elsewhere, Jesus tells story about Lazarus, a poor beggar and a Rich Man who ignored him. They both die, Lazarus goes to heaven, the rich man to eternal torment. An this is said to the Rich man who begs for relief from his agony, “**Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish**.”

God is just, and any accounts that are unsettled now will be settled on the day of reckoning…the day ”**when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who believed, because their testimony to you was believed.”**

“Vengence is mine, says the Lord. I will repay.” On the last day he will settle all accounts, because God loves justice. God exacts punishment and vengeance even now, albeit through an imperfect instrument. He has given governments to the world. Scripture says, that the government “is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God’s wrath on the wrongdoer.”

Injustice will be greater closer to the Last Day, but that will only serve to glorify God even more when he settles accounts swiftly and makes everything right. The contrast will be magnificent. On that day, the testimony that you believe now through faith, will be seen with your eyes. After thousands of years of a fallen creation…in a moment the world turned from total disarray and wickedness to Godly perfection. These things are told to you so that you do not lose heart, but be strengthened and uplifted and prepared by his grace for every good work.

**“To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolv**

**ae for god and every work of faith by his power, so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.”**