

How an Eye on Eternity Enables Endurance

Sunday, August 11, 2024 ▪ Nick Braitto

What to do in hard times: _____ **ways you see Christ at work.** (vv. 1-4)

How to think in hard times: _____ **the promises of Christ.** (vv. 5-10)

How to pray in hard times: _____ **to the purposes of Christ.** (vv. 11-12)

2 Thessalonians 1:1-12

¹ Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

² Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

³ We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers, as is right, because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing. ⁴ Therefore 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.

⁵ 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— ⁶ since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, ⁷ and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels ⁸ 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. ⁹ They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction,

away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, ¹⁰ when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed.

¹¹ To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power, ¹² 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. (ESV)

Personal Reflection or Group Discussion Questions

Open: What are some ways you see God at work in and through other believers in Neighborhood Church?

Read & Discuss: 2 Thessalonians 1:1-12

1. As you reflect on Paul's introduction to the Thessalonian church in verses 1-2, how does it affect believers to think of God as "our Father" and Jesus Christ as "Lord"—especially in times of hardship or affliction? What might Paul have desired for these believers when he said to them "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 2)?
2. Why would it be "right" for Paul and his team to "give thanks" for ways God was at work in the lives of the Thessalonian believers (v. 3)? What does giving thanks for such things do in our hearts and in the hearts of those who hear us give thanks?
3. Paul speaks of boasting about what was happening in the Thessalonians' church to other churches (v. 4). What did Paul expect to happen as a result of this? How can we aim to boast about others in ways that glorify God and that do not fuel pride in those we praise or cultivate envy in those who hear us boast about others? (Or is the response of others something beyond our control?)
4. In times of hardship, why do you think that some people's faith and love grows (as it did for the Thessalonians), while for others their faith and love weakens? How were the eternal promises described in verses 5-10 meant to encourage the Thessalonian believers to continue to endure persecution and affliction? Are these promises sufficient to fuel endurance in you? Why or why not?
5. According to this passage, what makes a person "worthy of the kingdom of God" (v. 5) or "worthy of [our] calling" (v. 11)? How would you explain why this is different from doing something to earn or deserve a place in the Kingdom of God?
6. How would you put Paul's prayer in verses 11-12 in your own words? If God were to answer this prayer for your own life, what's one specific way your life might change?

Pray: Pray that God would cause us to go through life—especially during times of trial—with our hope firmly anchored in heaven. Pray that through the grace and power of God, we would each grow in our likeness of Christ as we anticipate our eternal union with Him.