

2Thessalonians, Chapter One, Lesson Two

ETERNAL DESTRUCTION 2Thessalonians 1:5-12

STIMULATE

** In our study together last week we saw our obligation to notice three things about the lives of Christians who faithfully walk with the Lord around us. Those three things were:

1. Their "**Enlarged Faith**" - growing "greatly"
2. Their love growing "ever greater"
3. Their perseverance in trials

** Having noticed these three things about the lives of other Christians, what two things were we obligated to do?

1. Give thanks to God for His work in them (V.3)
2. Tell others about the glory due God's name for the growth of a fellow believer. (V.4)

If you have seen growth or perseverance in another Christian this past week, were you faithful to encourage the hearts of others by sharing that information with them, to the glory of God?

MOTIVATE

** We know that we are to encourage one another, that is clear from God's word. Today we are going to learn a new way to do just that. What do you suppose is the single most unpopular element in the Christian life today, which is rarely spoken of from the pulpits of our country?

It is the fact that godly Christians are called to suffer for the advance of the Kingdom and for the glory of God. cf. 2Timothy 3:12, 1Peter 2:21

Today we have the privilege of seeing God's view of our suffering and how it can actually be used to encourage us in our daily walk with Him. Paul will explain the meaning and purpose of "**Eternal Destruction**" for us in the passage we are about to consider; and in so doing; strengthen our walk with the Lord. Let's read about it together as we tune our hearts to understand the Word of God.

Read passage (V.5-8) (V.9-12)

Opening Prayer

Eternal Destruction

INVESTIGATE

V. 5 ** Our passage begins with "This is a plain indication of God's righteous judgment". To what is Paul referring with that statement?

He is looking back to verse four from last week where he said, "your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure."

** How could that be an indication of "God's righteous judgment"?

God had called the Thessalonians unto salvation "through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth" (2Thessalonians 2:13) and had equipped them to stand firm as proof of the genuineness of that salvation! cf. Philippians 1:27-30

****** Is our gracious God a righteous judge?

Absolutely! Unlike the judgments of men, our God is and always will be, just in all of His judgments. cf. Psalm 7:11, 11:7, 50:6 and 2Timothy 4:7-8

God will use His righteous judgment to put Himself on display through Christian suffering. It is only because of His strength that any Christian can endure suffering for the cause of the gospel, and thus it is all for His glory. All see - Acts 5:26-29, 38-41

****** By God's grace, the Thessalonians had been given the opportunity and the strength to suffer for Christ. According to verse five, what did that accomplish?

It proved that they had been made "worthy of the Kingdom of God". Even some of the unsaved watching their lives, would have to come to the conclusion that something supernatural was going on here and consider these Thessalonians as worthy God's kingdom.

V. 6 ****** Is that the only way that God's righteous judgment will be seen by men?

No - God is going to balance the scales! "...it is only just for God to repay..." Jesus knew this about His heavenly Father - read 1Peter 2:23
cf. Genesis 12:3, Exodus 23:22, Colossians 3:25, Romans 12:19

Our gracious God protects us, defends us and deals out "affliction" upon those who would choose to afflict us.

V. 7 ****** Alright then, God shows His righteous judgment by allowing Christians to suffer for the truth and by repaying the wicked with affliction. How else does He put His righteous judgment on display?

He gives "relief to you who are afflicted..."

****** We do enjoy that relief here and now, as we rest in the Lord, trusting Him only for the outcome of our lives; but when will we fully realize this relief?

"...when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed..."

****** What three phrases does Paul use to describe the Lord being revealed?

"from heaven"

"with His mighty angels"

"in flaming fire"

****** To what event is this referring?

The Second Coming of Christ in glory, not the first coming where He was gentle and mild.

V. 8 ****** In these next two verses Paul describes for us how our relief will manifest itself. What is going to happen?

Christ is going to deal out "retribution" upon the unbelievers of this world. Our suffering is going to be vindicated by Christ Himself!

** How are they (the unbelievers) described?

1. They "do not know God" cf. Matthew 7:23
2. They "do not obey the gospel" cf. John 15:14

Jesus is going to judge them "righteously" for their sin of unbelief. cf. John 5:22-23

V. 9 ** What form is this retribution going to take as Christ balances the scale for the suffering we endure?

It will be a penalty!

** What are the two elements of this penalty?

1. "Eternal Destruction" - olethros literally means "to destroy". Is this talking about annihilation or going out of existence?

No, these are bodies fit for ongoing destruction throughout eternity!
cf. John 5:28-29 and 2Peter 2:1-3

2. "away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power" - as joyful as our eternity will be due to the fact that we are in His presence, to that same degree, knowing that you are not in His presence will be punishment. cf. Matthew 22:13 and 25:30

V.10 ** Well that is the "form" of retribution, but when will it take place?

At the same time as our relief mentioned back in verse seven, "when He comes". The Second Coming of Christ will produce "relief" for Christians and "righteous judgment" against the unsaved. cf. Luke 16:23-24 and Revelation 6:9-11

** Even though we will experience relief when Christ judges the wicked, according to verse 10, what will be our main preoccupation when He returns?

...we will "marvel at" the splendor of Christ and worship His glory.

** Why is that? What did we do to prepare our hearts?

We (by the grace of God) believed the gospel!

V.11 ** Paul now shifts gears and describes his prayer life on behalf of these Thessalonians. He prays for that which most people would never even think to pray. What is it?

"That our God may count you worthy of your calling"

** In the context of verse five, what does that mean?

1. God would recognize their willingness to suffer for His name and "count them worthy".

2. Paul is asking God to give Christians the privilege of suffering for Christ, to prove they should be counted as worthy. That is the basis for our encouragement, knowing we are His and that the normal byproduct will be suffering. All see - 1Peter 4:12-13

** Before we leave verse eleven, for what else does the apostle pray on behalf of the Thessalonians?

That God would fulfill every desire for godliness in our hearts and fulfill the "work of faith" with power. cf. 1Thessalonians 1:3 and Ephesians 3:14-16

V.12 ** What will be the ultimate outcome of our lives, if God answers Paul's prayer in the affirmative?

We will become vessels of God's glory! "...the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you and you in Him..." cf. 2Corinthians 3:18

** What a wonderful outcome, for the life completely dedicated to the glory of God. How is it all made possible for sinners such as we?

"...according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ". Do not be mistaken, even when we bring glory to God, we did so by His loving grace.

EXTRICATE

** What is a defining characteristic of Christians, which has been so eloquently pointed out to us in this passage?

If we are genuine and desire to live godly, the world is going to hate us. That will bring about persecution which will vary from social exclusion to the taking of our lives, if God should so design. (Remember - 2Timothy 3:12)

DELINEATE

** What are the results of our suffering?

First - On our persecutors...

They will receive the Lord's retribution, eternal destruction and darkness, away from the presences of His glory.

Second - For Christians...

We are considered (or counted) worthy, by God Himself, to be recipients of the Kingdom of God. He fulfills our desires for goodness and completes our "work of faith" with His power. cf. Philippians 1:6

EVALUATE

** How willing are we to suffer for Christ and the truth of the gospel? That is a serious question! Could we join Paul in verse eleven and ask God to count us worthy of our calling, based upon our willingness to suffer for His name's sake?

If I am willing to suffer for Him, then I am most certainly willing to stand for Him and speak up for Him, whenever the truth of God's word is being reviled by the lost world around us.

ACTIVATE

** We are not to take what we have learned today and then become "self-imposed" martyrs. We simply are supposed to be willing to suffer, if that is God's expressed will for our lives.

Paul said in Galatians 2:20, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me."

If we will allow Christ to live unrestricted in our hearts, then we will be prepared to suffer for His name, if and when He asks us to do so.

In the meantime, we should be willing to boldly stand up for His gospel truth. May we so live for His glory sake.

Closing prayer