

2 Thessalonians 1:1-5

Introduction

1

Introduction

Churches take pride in many things: large membership rolls or attendance, buildings, wealth, music, social status of their members, the prominence of their pastor, their creativity, or their zeal for a particular theological cause. Many have compromised theology for different forms of entertainment to create an inoffensive, nonthreatening atmosphere for the unbelievers and nominal Christians in their congregations. These have become the model churches many seek to emulate.

2

Introduction

Judged by such superficial standards, the Thessalonian church certainly had little to commend it. It had no buildings, programs, performers, or publications. It was not a large or wealthy church. The congregation lacked social and political influence. They did not have a famous pastor – the names of the leadership are not even mentioned. They could not offer prospective converts a comfortable, entertaining, nonthreatening environment of a modern “user-friendly” church but merely “persecutions and afflictions” (1:4). Yet they were a church to which the apostle Paul gave thanks and boasted of!

3

2 Thessalonians 1:1-5

Paul, Silas and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: ² Grace and peace to you from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

³ We ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love all of you have for one another is increasing. ⁴ Therefore, among God’s churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring. ⁵ All this is evidence that God’s judgment is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering.

4

Introduction

1 Thessalonians 1:1a
Paul, Silas and Timothy,

Only a few months have passed since Paul's first letter. From the context of the letter, they are experiencing severe persecution, yet the church is growing and maturing.

Paul is the author of the letter. Notice that he does not state that he is an apostle but simply uses his name Paul. Unlike many of the other churches, Paul's authority was not in question here. **Silas and Timothy** were with Paul when the church was planted, and they are included in the greeting.

5

The Churches' Standing in Christ

1 Thessalonians 1:1b

to the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is important to notice how Paul describes the church. Notice that **the church of the Thessalonians are "in" God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.** To be "**in God and Jesus**", one's sins must be dealt with. When a person comes to Jesus and asks Him to forgive him of their sins because of the sacrifice of the cross, they are forgiven, redeemed, sanctified, and placed into the body of Christ. To be "**in**" Christ requires one to have been saved.

6

The Churches' Standing in Christ

1 Thessalonians 1:1b

to the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

It should also be noticed that the way that Paul referenced **God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ** is to place them on equal terms. Paul is reinforcing Jesus' divinity.

Paul, in this passage speaks of God "**our**" Father. Both Paul and the Thessalonians (and us) share the same Father.

There is only ONE God, and we only have access to Him though the sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross which paid our sin debt in total.

7

The Churches' Standing in Christ

1 Thessalonians 1:2

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

It is because believers are in **God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ** that they can receive the blessings of Grace and peace.

Grace is the divine blessings given to us to help us in our needs, protection, and ministries.

It may seem strange that Paul gives "**peace**" since they are undergoing persecution. It does not mean that things will be easy, but that they can have confidence knowing that God is in control.

8

The Churches' Increasing Faith

1 Thessalonians 1:3a

We ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters, and rightly so,
because your faith is growing more and more,

The term **ought**, refers to a deep obligation, debt, or responsibility. Paul had no choice but **always to thank God for** the Thessalonians; he was bound under compulsion to do so. God deserved all of the apostle's gratitude, for His grace alone made the Thessalonians what they were.

9

The Churches' Increasing Faith

1 Thessalonians 1:3a

We ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters, and rightly so,
because your faith is growing more and more,

What made Paul most grateful was not the size of the Thessalonians' congregation, buildings, budget, or popularity.

The apostle praised God most of all because their **faith** was **growing more and more**. The term could be translated "increased beyond measure," or "grown beyond what could be expected." Paul had prayed that God would complete what was lacking in their faith (1 Thess. 3:10). Timothy's report revealed that Paul's prayer for the Thessalonians had been answered. This had taken place despite the persecution.

10

The Churches' Growing Love

1 Thessalonians 1:3b

and the love all of you have for one another is increasing.

Paul commended the church because the **love all of you have for one another** was **increasing**, like a healthy plant. Love permeated the entire congregation despite the persecution.

Love is the eager, sacrificial service that marks true believers. In John 13:34–35 Jesus said, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵ By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (Rom. 5:5; 1 Thessalonians 4:9; 1 John 2:10).

11

The Churches' Persevering Faith

1 Thessalonians 1:4

Therefore, among God's churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring.

The Apostle Paul and his coworkers **boasted** of the Thessalonians **persevering faith**. Paul wrote this epistle for Corinth which was one of the most troubled, spiritually immature of all Paul's churches and must have found great encouragement from Timothy's report of their spiritual growth.

Specifically, Paul, Silas, and Timothy were thankful for the saints' **perseverance and faith in the midst in all the persecutions and trials [they were] enduring**. **Perseverance** is not resigned, stoic acceptance but patient, courageous enduring of trouble. The word literally speaks of “remaining under,” or sustaining hope under difficulty. It is not a grim waiting but a joyful hoping.

12

The Churches' Persevering Faith

1 Thessalonians 1:4

Therefore, among God's churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring.

The church of Thessalonica was vibrant and growing. There is a long war between God and Satan. The church was letting God's light shine into the darkness and the world did not like it. Satan's strategy is **persecutions** (hostility from enemies of the gospel) and **trials** (afflictions and suffering resulting from persecution). Paul boasted about the churches' **perseverance** (endurance) **and faith**. They had set their sights on the reality of the things to come and placed their hope there. The church refused to renounce their faith, let their love grow cold, or abandon their hope.

13

The Churches' Kingdom Attitude

1 Thessalonians 1:5

All this is evidence that God's judgment is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering.

In contrast to the man-centered atmosphere that pervades many churches today, this young church had a God-centered outlook. Instead of being consumed with personal happiness, fulfillment, comfort, success, or prosperity, they were living out Jesus' command to "seek first His kingdom and His righteousness" (Matt. 6:33). That perspective enabled them to successfully endure the inevitable persecution that comes to the bold faithful.

14

The Churches' Kingdom Attitude

1 Thessalonians 1:5

All this is evidence that God's judgment is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering.

That kingdom attitude was **evidence that God's judgment is right**. God allows difficulty (persecution and trials) to work His plan and purpose. When persecution comes, the marginal uncommitted person finds the cost too high and abandons Christ. Those that remain are refined and **counted worthy of the kingdom of God** (Hebrews 12:7-10; Acts 14:22; cf. 1 Thess. 2:12; 1 Peter 1:6-9; 5:10).

15

So What ...

The American church has become obsessed with themselves, rather than Christ. The American church needs to repent, or God will allow persecution to come. Suffering is part of this life. Look around the world and see what our brothers and sisters are facing (Voice of the Martyrs). Prayerfully consider your walk and faith. Are you committed to the eternal hope in Christ?

Let us endeavor to be a church that lives our faith regardless of culture and that we strive to show our love for each other more and more!

16