

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians

### *Flourishing Under Adverse Conditions*

Planted in hostile surroundings, where the winds of adversity and the enemy's attacks could have easily shriveled the Thessalonian's faith, we find instead, their faith **growing**. What was it that caused them to flourish like a well-watered garden in the midst of such soul-scorching conditions?

Living in the Upper Midwest, winters can be long and harsh, but as tough as winters are on our gardens, summers can be equally harsh, if not more so. Under a blazing sun day after day with limited rainfall, my plants will quickly wilt, shrivel and die if I am not persistent about watering. Tending to their needs also includes the less-than-pleasant duty of weeding. *Why is it that weeds don't shrivel and die under duress?*

Although I have been gardening nearly two decades, I am still very much a novice. There's just so much to *know* and *do* to keep a garden thriving. I have read books that explain hardiness zones, soil types, fertilizers, and dead-heading; they have taught me which types of plants require shade and which ones are sun-lovers. Yet, in spite of this, I am still so inadequate to the task; I must continually go back and seek the wisdom of the experts.

I also learned early on that I am in an ongoing battle with garden enemies of all shapes and sizes. Slugs love to polka-dot my Hostas with holes, aphids are continually trying to set up shop in my Russian Sage, and our pesky neighborhood rabbits assume the *Liatris* and *Phlox* I've planted are for their snacking pleasure. This means I must make regular inspections and know what trouble signs to look for, as well as how to combat all of their destructive endeavors.

Gardening requires teach-ability, hard work and preparation for inevitable attacks...*and so it is with the garden of our hearts*. If we are going to thrive in this world we must humbly learn all that we can from our Savior and from the godly folks He places in our lives, just as the Thessalonians did from Paul. We must also be prepared to roll up our sleeves and persistently and diligently get at the work of weeding and watering our souls. And we must come to terms with the fact that we are in a battle. Knowing these things will help protect us from being caught off guard by the enemy's wiles and will instead equip us to combat whatever comes our way.



#### **Day One**

- °Grace and Peace
- °Maturing Through Trials
- °Withstanding Persecution
- °Paul's Prayer

#### **Day Two**

- °Unsettling News
- °Events of the Last Days

#### **Day Three**

- °A Firm Foundation
- °A Prayer Request

#### **Day Four**

- °Keep on Working

#### **Day Five**

- °Parting Words

## Day One



*Only at the end of time, after we have attained God's level of viewing, after every evil has been punished or forgiven, every illness healed, and the entire universe restored – only then will fairness reign. Then we will understand what role is played by evil, and by the fall, and by natural law. Until then, we will not know, and can only trust in a God who does know.*

*Faith means believing in advance what will only make sense in the reverse. What faith requires is: trusting God when there is no apparent evidence of Him. Trusting in His ultimate goodness, a goodness that exists outside of time, a goodness that time has not yet caught up with.<sup>1</sup>*

### ***Disappointment with God***

Philip Yancey

### **Read 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians 1:1-2. Grace and Peace**

**1.** In the Greco-Roman world, a letter nearly always included the greeting *grace and peace to you*. The words *grace* and *peace*, however, carry far greater significance to a believer.

Describe what each of these words mean in light of the Cross of Christ:

#### **Grace**

#### **Peace**

In light of the fact that Thessalonian believers were experiencing severe suffering (**1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 1:6**), how would this greeting have been especially encouraging to them?

What do these precious gifts from God mean to you?

### **Read 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians 1:3-4. Maturing Through Trials**

**2.** How did the believers of Thessalonica prove the reality of the following Scripture?

#### **Romans 5:3-4**

**3.** How have the trials you've faced in your life stretched and matured your faith?

### **Read 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians 1:5-10. Withstanding Persecution**

**4.** When injustice and evil seem to continually *win the day*, what comfort do Paul's words give to you?

**Read 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians 1:11-12. Paul's Prayer**

5. The Thessalonians had a powerful prayer warrior standing in the gap for them in the apostle Paul. Who are the prayer warriors in your life - the ones that lift you up in the midst of raging storms? How do their fervent prayers on your behalf encourage you to remain steadfast?

*Day Two* 🌿**Read 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians 2:1-3a. Unsettling News**

6. If the fiery furnace of affliction wasn't enough to destabilize these precious believers, false reports of the Day of the Lord or Tribulation occurring were. Rumors and predictions regarding the *end times* still unsettle folks today. How can we guard ourselves from being led astray by deception as Paul's challenging words in **verse 3a** demand?

**Read 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians 3b-12. Events of the Last Days**

7. To help the Thessalonian believers regain their spiritual equilibrium, Paul explained that certain things would need to take place prior to Christ's return. What were those things according to **verses 3b-8**?

8. What more do we learn about the *man of lawlessness* in **Daniel 11:36-37, 1<sup>st</sup> John 2:18 and Revelation 13:5-8**?

9. According to **2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians 2:9-10**, how will he deceive unbelievers?



*The effectiveness of a counterfeit depends, of course, on how closely it approximates that which it is imitating. A counterfeit \$100 bill produced on a black and white copier will not likely fool anyone, but it is possible using the right tools and equipment (or at least it was, until the new safeguards were introduced), to produce counterfeit \$100 bills good enough to fool even experts on occasion.*

*This is how the "man of lawlessness" will work his destruction: he will so closely counterfeit the coming, power and character of the Lord Jesus Christ, that people will be duped into thinking he is the real thing!<sup>2</sup>*

**NIV Application  
Commentary**



A tree rooted in rich soil produces rich foliage and strong growth. One struggling on sickly, thin, leached-out land will be correspondingly weak and stunted.

In the spiritual realm the strength and stamina of my character will depend upon the sort of material from which it is built. It will be conditioned by the sort of material which I draw sustenance. The decision as to where I choose to sink my spiritual roots and what I prefer to feed my mind and heart and soul rests on me.

One of the interesting things about the root system of a tree is that very often it actually exceeds in size and scale the total mass of the trunk, limbs, and leaves which can be seen above the ground. It is not unusual for a tree to have miles of roots and rootlets...

10. What is the contributing factor that leads much of humanity to believe the enemy's deception? See **verse 1** and **Romans 1:18-23, 25 and 28**.

## Day Three

### Read **2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians 2:13-17**. **A Firm Foundation**

11. In order to stand firm, Paul challenged his readers to hold tightly to the teachings he had passed on to them. What were those teachings, in a nutshell, according to **verses 13-14**?

12. How does calling this to mind encourage and strengthen our hearts when lies and false teaching threaten to undermine our faith?

*In this passage Paul points his readers to one of the most important teachings of our Christian faith - the concept of the Triune God who exists in three Persons - Father, Son and Holy Spirit.*

*When hardships come into our lives, it is encouraging to remember that all three Persons of the Trinity are constantly at work on our behalf. Take a minute to highlight the following phrases in **verses 13 and 14** in your Bibles as a reminder of God's all-encompassing love for you:*

*From the beginning **God** chose you, through the work of His **Spirit** He sanctified you, and because of that, you share in the glory of our **Lord Jesus Christ**.*

**Read 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians 3:1-5. A Prayer Request**

**13.** It can be difficult to *maintain* firm footing and a balanced perspective when confusion and uncertainty prevail. According to the following verses, what more were the Thessalonians to remember, and why would remembering these things help them keep their spiritual foothold?

**Verses 1 and 2****Verse 3***Day Four* **Read 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians 3:6-15. Keep on Working**

**14.** Whether due to rumors of Christ's imminent return or to a general sense of discouragement, some within the Thessalonian church had walked away from their responsibilities and were living off the good will of others. What did Paul have to say about this?

**15.** Define the word **idle** or **idleness**:

**16.** As much as we might be tempted from time to time to pull back from the world and our responsibilities, what impact does an attitude of **idleness** have:

On our relationship with fellow believers?

With Christ?

On our witness in this world?



The great tasks of this underground network are not only to anchor the tree to the ground but - *much more important* - to search out and absorb the available nutrients in the soil.

This is what gives strength and sturdiness to the entire tree. Yet it must be remembered that all this goes on below the ground in silence and without fanfare.

Similarly, *if a Christian is to be rooted in Christ*, there must be a quiet searching of His Word; there must be an assimilation of the riches available to us in secret, diligent study. *As I do this* it becomes incorporated into the very fiber of my makeup. It becomes life and strength to me.<sup>3</sup>

**As A Tree Grows**

Phillip Keller



*Never once in Scripture is irresponsibility excused on the basis of one's confidence in Jesus' return. Anticipation is one thing. Blind fanaticism is quite another.<sup>4</sup>*

## *Day Five*

If this should be my last day on this earth...how then shall I live?

If this should be the last day that I have before I breathe the air of Heaven...let me live it with abandon to the only thing that remains after my last day here on earth.

And if tomorrow comes to find me looking into the face of Jesus...will I hear Him say the words, "well done"?

Because...this **could be** my last day.<sup>5</sup>

### ***All Things New***

Steven Curtis Chapman

### **Read 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians 3:16-18. Parting Words**

**17.** What touches your heart as you read Paul's parting words?

**18.** In our computer age, writing a greeting in our own hand is becoming less and less common. Yet, there is something quite precious about receiving a little handwritten note from someone. Perhaps today you might want to drop a line or two to that prayer warrior friend we stopped to think about in Question 5, to let them how much they mean to you.

**Footnotes**

- <sup>1</sup> **Philip Yancey** [Zondervan] *Disappointment with God* ©1988
- <sup>2</sup> **NIV Application Commentary** [Zondervan]  
*1 & 2 Thessalonians* ©1998
- <sup>3</sup> **Phillip Keller** [Zondervan - **Inspirational Press** / OBBS Publishing Corp., 450 Raritan Center Parkway, Edison, NJ 08837] *Touched by His Hand: The reflections of PK / **As a Tree Grows*** ©1966
- <sup>4</sup> **The Living Insights Bible: NIV Translation** [Zondervan Publishing House] © 1996
- <sup>5</sup> **Steven Curtis Chapman** [CD: All Things New ©2004/ **Sparrow Records**] *All Things New*