

# Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, November 17, 2021 – First Baptist Church Buda  
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

*Steadfast*  
**CHRISTIANITY**  
*A Study of Second Thessalonians*

**“When God Get’s the Last Word”**  
**2 Thessalonians 1:5-10**

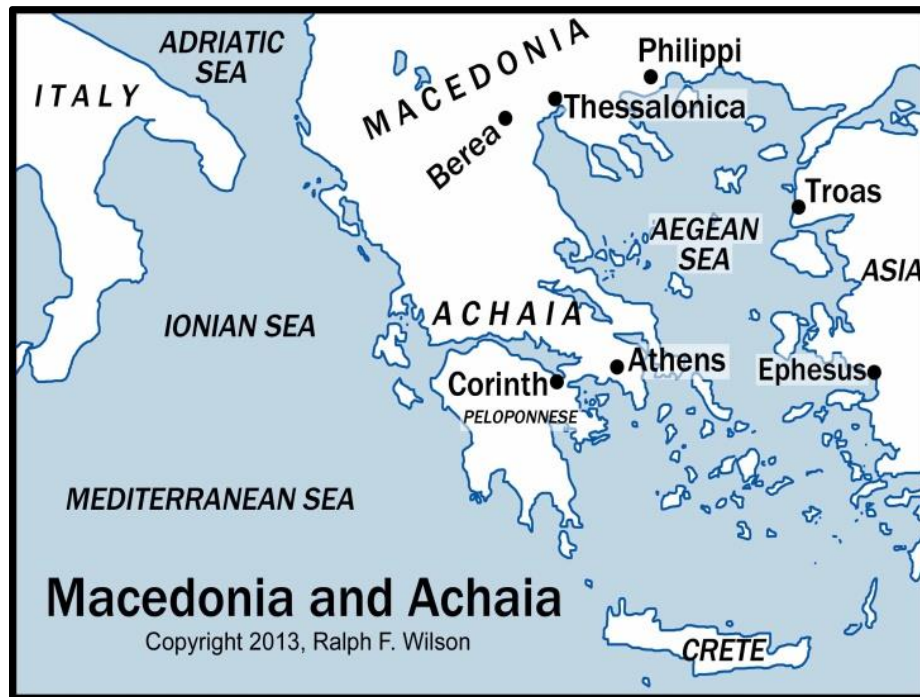
*“<sup>3</sup> We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other, <sup>4</sup> so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure, <sup>5</sup> which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer; <sup>6</sup> since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, <sup>7</sup> and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, <sup>8</sup> in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>9</sup> These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, <sup>10</sup> when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed.” -2 Thessalonians 1:3-10 (NKJV)*

The times were hard. Life was difficult. Pain from misunderstanding and prejudice was increasing. Like wounded deer in the forest, the Thessalonian Christians were living threatened lives under the gun of persecution. Affliction was the order of their day. Knowing their need for affirmation, the great apostle Paul wrote them a brief yet potent letter of encouragement. It has been preserved down through the centuries and appears today in the Bible as 2 Thessalonians... a strong statement of steadfast Christianity.

Perhaps you, too, are feeling the sting of persecution, misunderstand, trial and hardship in some way, suffering, pain, adversity... these may be difficult days for you, days in which you feel misunderstood and “on trial” by others. Perhaps Paul’s words to these Thessalonian believers under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit are just what you, too, need to hear, and be encouraged by. God’s Word is just what the Great Physician ordered for hard times. Let’s give a brief overview of 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians again just to help us get the picture in historical context...

### An Overview of 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians:

- (1) **DATE OF THE LETTER:** 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians was most likely written from Corinth in approximately A.D. 51-52
- (2) **AUTHOR OF THE LETTER:** The Apostle Paul, with Silas and Timothy
- (3) **PURPOSE OF THE LETTER:** The letter served to quell false teaching that had infiltrated the young church in Thessalonica and to encourage and commend the believers in the midst of persecution and suffering
- (4) **BRIEF HISTORY OF THESSALONICA:** The city of Thessalonica is know today as Salonika and is the second largest city in Greece. It came into being in 315 B.C. Founded by the Greek general Cassander, who later became king of Macedonia. Thessalonica developed into a major commercial port and military launching point. At the time that 2 Thessalonians was written, Thessalonica was the capital and the most populous city in Macedonia, boasting over 200,000 people.
- (5) **FOUNDING OF THE CHURCH AT THESSALONICA:** During Paul's second missionary journey (A.D. 49-52), he and Silas persuaded many in this bustling seaport town to follow Christ. The city's jealous religious leaders incited a riot bringing charges of sedition against Paul and Silas for worshipping Christ over Caesar (Acts 17:5-7). The two men were forced to flee by night to Berea (Acts 17:10).



### **A STATEMENT OF OUR STRUGGLE**

#### **A Perspective on Pain**

In his book “When Bad Things Happen to Good People,” Rabbi Harold Kushner asked the question that rises in our minds like a dark, nebulous cloud, “Why do bad things happen to good people? All other theological conversation is intellectually diverting; somewhat like doing the crossword puzzle in the Sunday paper and feeling very satisfied when you have made the words fit; but

ultimately without the capacity to reach people where they really care.” In other words, most of our pat “Religious” (theological) answers to pain and things people are going through can sound like religious platitudes, kind of cliché, empty, and sometimes even insensitive...

*What are some of the cliché statements, or maybe a bit shallow sounding comments, or words we can throw at people when they are going through things or experience pain and heartache in their life?*

➤ **“Don’t worry, tomorrow is another day!”**

[ ] RIGHT [ ] WRONG / Should it be said: [ ] YES [ ] NO

➤ **“You just have to have faith!”**

[ ] RIGHT [ ] WRONG / Should it be said: [ ] YES [ ] NO

➤ **“You know it’s your own fault you’re going through this!”**

[ ] RIGHT [ ] WRONG / Should it be said: [ ] YES [ ] NO

➤ **“Time will heal all wounds!” or “It will get better with time!”**

[ ] RIGHT [ ] WRONG / Should it be said: [ ] YES [ ] NO

➤ **“You just have to find your new normal!”**

[ ] RIGHT [ ] WRONG / Should it be said: [ ] YES [ ] NO

➤ **“Well, they are in a better place!”**

[ ] RIGHT [ ] WRONG / Should it be said: [ ] YES [ ] NO

➤

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[ ] RIGHT [ ] WRONG / Should it be said: [ ] YES [ ] NO

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[ ] RIGHT [ ] WRONG / Should it be said: [ ] YES [ ] NO

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[ ] RIGHT [ ] WRONG / Should it be said: [ ] YES [ ] NO

The problem of pain presents a major stumbling block to our understanding of God. Often, when believers suffer, we begin to doubt our Father’s power and love. Suddenly overtaken by persecution or affliction, we find ourselves, like Jacob, wrestling in the dark with an overpowering force (see Genesis 32:24-26). We strive to know God, understand His will, and receive His blessing. But often He seems distant and alien to us, as we begin to wonder if He really cares.

In his book **“The Problem of Pain,”** C.S. Lewis masterfully addressed the issue of why bad things happened to good people. He articulated the faulty intellectual argument that many people make regarding the problem of pain... namely that we think we shouldn’t have any or experience it as Christians/believers... C.S. Lewis says, **“If God were good, He would wish to make His creatures perfectly happy, and if God were almighty, He would be able to do what He wished. But the creatures are not happy. Therefore God lacks either goodness, or power, or both.’ This is the problem of pain, in its simplest form.”** You see it? This is often how we think.

Rabbi Kushner followed this same basic argument in **“When Bad Things Happen to Good People,”** he recognized the goodness of God, but failed to realize that the Father also requires holiness and justice and that pain results from the effects of human sinfulness in the world, as a consequence of

the Fall. Thus, Kushner wrongly concluded that bad things happened to good people because God lacks the power to prevent suffering.

In contrast, C.S. Lewis focused on God's sovereign purposes that are often revealed in the face of suffering. He noted that God's purpose is not as much to prevent suffering. He noted that God's purpose is not as much to prevent suffering in the world as it is to sanctify people. Jesus prophesied in John 16:33, *"These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."* God is both good and powerful, and He uses human pain and suffering to draw His children back to Him. C.S. Lewis noted, *"Pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pain; it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world."* *What do you think Lewis means by this statement? Do you think there is some truth to his statement... in what way(s)? What do you think He means by God shouting in our pain, and pain is the megaphone to rouse a deaf world?*

### **The Purpose of Pain by Adrian Rogers**

We all experience pain, and even suffering at some time in our lives. While our natural reaction to pain is to avoid it, get rid of it, or numb it; we need to realize that God allows pain. In fact, our suffering is a sign of God's love. Let me explain.

After Adam and Eve sinned, after the infection and sickness of sin came into this world, God said to them Genesis 3:17, "Cursed is the ground for thy sake..."

Notice that God didn't say, "for your punishment," but, "for your sake, for your welfare." The pain of the curse of "for your sake" "for your welfare."

Now, think of this... the worst thing that could have happened would have been for them to have lived in paradise with a sinful nature and be immune to pain, because pain is the signal that something is wrong and needs to be fixed. So pain has a purpose. Dr. Adrian Rogers give us what he calls "2 Purposes of Pain"... let me give these two you.

### **3 Purposes of Pain: (by Dr. Adrian Rogers)**

1. **Pain protects** - Dr. Paul Brand, a great medical missionary, worked with lepers and saw the suffering that they went through. One of the problems with leprosy is that the leper can no longer feel pain in the leprous parts of his body, and Dr. Brand talked about what a tragedy that was. He said, "If I had the power to eliminate human pain, I would not exercise that right. Pain's value is too great." There is a protecting purpose of pain. Dr. Brand said that when a healthy person has an injured leg, he develops a limp that causes him not to put weight down on it. A leper will sometimes wear away a wounded part of his body because he feels no pain. He might burn a cigarette down until it burns his skin and never feel it. He doesn't have pain to protect him. You see, pain is a sign of God's love. Thank God for pain. It tells us something is wrong and protects us from harm.
2. **Pain unifies** - There's also a unifying purpose of pain. Pain unifies the body. Dr. Brand said, "I can tell the health of a human body by its reaction to pain. If the body doesn't react to pain, I know that something there is dreadfully wrong." Have you ever hit your thumb with a hammer? The first thing you do is grab it. Then, you pop it in your mouth. Finally, you do a

little dance. I don't know what your knees have to do with your thumb, but you have to do that dance. When one member suffers, every member suffers with it. What does that say about the church? It's pain that unifies us as a church. The Bible says when one member suffers, every member suffers with it (1 Corinthians 12:26). We are drawn together by suffering. Dr. Brand said, "You can tell something of the health of a church by the way it responds to the hurting, the helpless, the homeless, the broken, the bruised, the battered, the bleeding, and the impoverished. The body is a healthy body when it responds to pain."

3. **Pain corrects** - Finally, there is a correcting purpose of pain. It tells us that something is wrong. If we didn't feel pain, we wouldn't know we were sick, and we wouldn't seek an answer. We live in generation today that feels pain, but rather than trying to get the pain settled, we seek a sedative. That's the reason why many are on drugs. That's why some people look to alcohol or get involved in an adulterous affair. Others watch television and live in a make-believe world because television may be the biggest sedative of all. But as much as we try to avoid it, we need the pain to tell us there is an infection, a sickness. It has to be dealt with.

Are you hurting? Is there pain? Do you have a broken heart? Listen to this. The writer of Hebrews reminds us that Jesus also suffered and therefore understands our sorrows. Listen to the writer of Hebrews in Hebrews 2:17-18, *"<sup>17</sup> Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation (reconciliation) for the sins of the people. <sup>18</sup> For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted."* He has been there and has felt our pain. He came to Earth and became a man that He might be a faithful High Priest, that He might understand and have compassion. Rather than trying to kill our pain with sedatives, we need to turn to our compassionate Savior to bear our pain and suffering.

## PAUL ADDRESSES THE PROBLEM OF PAIN

In the book of 2 Thessalonians, Paul addressed the problem of pain by reminding believers that God uses suffering to accomplish His purposes in their lives. In verses 5-10 of chapter 1, Paul took a step back from the persecution and afflictions experienced by the believers in Thessalonica to view the fragments of their pain in the broader context of a purposeful eternity. From that, a whole picture emerged, bathed in such a glorious light that it banished every shadow ever cast on the character of God. Much has been written concerning pain and suffering, but we'll see that God gets the last word. Here, in 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10, Paul gave us 2 helps/encouragements in the midst of our pain... the problem of pain that affects us all at some point in this life. Let's take a look at these...

**Paul gives us 3 encouragements in the problem of pain: (1) An answer to our questions; (2) A perspective on our problems; (3) A reprieve from our pain**

1. **An answer to our questions** – Through our tears, the image of God often becomes blurred. Our painful experiences cause us to perceive God as standing in some far-off corner of our lives... distant, indifferent, and powerless, and uninvolved.

**How we may misinterpret God in our pain:**

- (1) We may misinterpret God's silence as **unconcern**
- (2) We may misinterpret God's detachment as **unknowing**
- (3) We may misinterpret God's patience as **absence**



- (4) We may misinterpret God's inaction as complicity (collusion, involvement)  
 (5) We may misinterpret God's deferment of judgment as a lack of justice

We misinterpret His patience as absence, His deferment of judgment as deplorable lack of justice. Romans 11:33 refocuses our understanding of God.

Paul says in Romans 11:33, *“<sup>33</sup> Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!”* Think of this... What we label as unjust and unfair, Paul called unsearchable and unfathomable. Since God doesn't set His time by our clock, we often find ourselves out of sync with His purposes. And since He doesn't take His cues from our script, we find ourselves caught up in a drama penned by another Hand (see Isaiah 55:8-9). In the tragic scenes of our lives, we cry out for relief and restitution... now. When we don't get immediate answers, we feel God either doesn't hear, doesn't care, or can't help.

**READ:** 1 Thessalonians 1:5-10, *“<sup>5</sup> which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer; <sup>6</sup> since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, <sup>7</sup> and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, <sup>8</sup> in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>9</sup> These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, <sup>10</sup> when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed.”*

The six verses in this lesson, in 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10, raise the curtain on the time when God, as the Playwright, will have the last word. Then we will find that our discordant (jarring, conflicting, ear-splitting) experiences of pain were but the orchestra warming up for the most marvelous drama in the history of the universe... the return of Christ.

2. A perspective on our problems – As we studied the first portion of 2 Thessalonians 1, we noted that the Thessalonian church had been going through strenuous times of persecution and affliction. Having affirmed the people's faith and perseverance, Paul turned their thoughts toward the glorious kingdom of God. Notice Paul's words there in **verse 5** of our passage, *“<sup>5</sup> which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer.”* As we look at suffering from God's perspective, two observations come into view.

## **2 Observation of Suffering from God's Perspective:**

- (1) **Your trials are not a result of some divine oversight** – Let me restate that one, first, what ever your circumstances, your trials are not a result of some divine oversight.
- To us, suffering seems to deny, rather than prove, that God is working out His righteous judgment.
  - From our perspective, suffering is an evil to be avoided at all costs.
  - But from the perspective of the New Testament, it is the character-building cost of following Christ.

**James 1:2-4** – *“<sup>2</sup> My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, <sup>3</sup> knowing that the testing of your faith produces <sup>4</sup>patience. <sup>4</sup> But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be <sup>5</sup>perfect and complete, lacking nothing.”* How does this passage remind us that our trials/pain is not the result of some divine oversight on God’s part?

**Romans 5:1-5** - *“<sup>1</sup>Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>2</sup>through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. <sup>3</sup>And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; <sup>4</sup> and perseverance, character; and character, hope. <sup>5</sup> Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”* How does this passage remind us that our trials/pain is not the result of some divine oversight on God’s part?

**2 Corinthians 12:9-10** - *“<sup>9</sup> And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. <sup>10</sup> Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”* How does this passage remind us that our trials/pain is not the result of some divine oversight on God’s part?

(2) **Suffering for Christ is an initiation into the kingdom of God** – In verse 5, Paul assures the Thessalonians that they are not experiencing God’s judgment, but an entrance into the kingdom of God. Notice Paul’s words again in verse 5... but let’s back up to verse 3 and get it context so we can see exactly what Paul is telling us... look at it there (2 Thessalonians 1:3-5), “<sup>3</sup> We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other, <sup>4</sup> so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure, <sup>5</sup> which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer.”

- **Why was Paul commended them here?** *Because of their patience and faith in all their persecutions and tribulations that they were enduring (v4)*
- **What is “manifest evidence” and what does this evidence in the lives of these believers prove?** *The “manifest evidence” is the what their patience and faith in all their persecutions and tribulation and what it proved... they are worthy of heaven and the kingdom of God (v5)*
- **What does this say to those who would say that “If you just had enough faith you wouldn’t be going through all the trials and pain and suffering”?** *It says they are wrong... the trials and struggles and pain that Christians in this life actually is preparing them for Heaven and says (according to Paul) that they are worthy (v5)*

3. **A reprieve from our pain** – While our present pain indicates an initiation, we are also promised a future vindication through God’s righteous judgment. **2 Thessalonians 1:6-7** reveals the two aspects of God’s righteous judgment. Notice what Paul says in these verses...

verses 6-7, “*6 Since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, 7 and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels.*” When the Lord Jesus is revealed he will do two things according to these verses.

### **Two Things the Lord Jesus Will Do When He Is Revealed:**

- (1) He will repay those who afflict**
- (2) He will relieve those who are afflicted**

His coming will be the most dramatic event of history. He will be literally unveiled from heaven “*...with His mighty angels.*” When Jesus returns as King of Kings, His purpose will be to administer “*righteous judgment*” according to **verse 5**. His return will be glorious, but His justice will wield a sharp sword of separation... look at **verses 8-9**, “*8 In flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.*”

The Gospel is an invitation from the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Its very offer is a royal compliment of the highest order. On the other hand, refusing the offer is the greatest insult. And no refusal will go unanswered. God will have the last word. Those to whom He says, “Depart from Me!” will be eternally banished from His presence (see Matthew 25:41).

In his sermon “The Weight of Glory,” C.S. Lewis captured the horror of that moment, “We are warned that it may happen to any one of us to appear at the last before the face of God and hear only the appalling words: ‘I never knew you. Depart from Me.’ In some sense, as dark to the intellect as it is unendurable to the feelings, we can be both banished from the presence of Him who is present everywhere and erased from the knowledge of Him who knows all. We can be left utterly and absolutely outside – repelled, exiled, estranged, finally and unspeakably ignored.”

Such is the fate of those who refuse the royal invitation. However, extraordinary blessings await the believer, as C.S. Lewis also noted, “On the other hand, we can be called in, welcomed, received, acknowledged... Apparently, then, our lifelong nostalgia, our longing to be reunited with something in the universe from which we now feel cut off, to be on the inside of some door which we have always seen from the outside, is no mere neurotic fancy, but the truest index of our real situation. And to be at last summoned inside would be both glory and honor beyond all our merits and also the healing of that old ache.”

### **A CONCLUDING APPLICATION**

If you’re a believer, Christ’s return will be your moment to shine... with the King! His glory will bring an end to all suffering. Listen to Paul’s words in **Romans 8:18**, “*18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*” This will not be the closing curtain that ends your life’s drama, but the curtain that unveils a whole new stage and begins a whole new play... one in which persecution and affliction have not part. Because you accepted the Gospel at a decisive moment in time, you can live with a



the sustaining hope and certainty that you will be included in the eternal event described in 2 Thessalonians 1:10. Take some time to meditate on that thought!

If you're not a believer when the Lord Jesus returns, all the glory you've amassed during your life will be like the ephemeral streak of a shooting star falling into the outer darkness, eternally away from His presence. The royal invitation of the Gospel has been sent R.S.V.P. Won't you accept this gracious offer so you can be in heaven to share in His glory? Unless you choose to believe in Jesus Christ, you will someday face the endless horrors of eternal hell at an infinite distance away from God (2 Thess. 1:9). Take some time to seriously consider this thought: "The decision to receive Christ will be the most important decision you will ever make. Seek Him today while He may be found!"