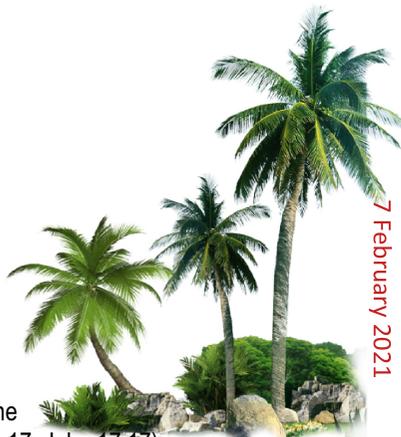


Growing As Disciples/A Church

2 Thessalonians 1:1-3

Psalm 92

Ephesians 1:15-23



Paul's Second Letter

- ① The Word of God.
 - Do we believe that the Bible is the Word of God? (2 Timothy 3:16-17; John 17:17)
 - Do we do the Word of God? (James 1:22)
 - Do we live our lives in accordance with every word that proceeds from the mouth of God? (Matthew 4:4; Luke 4:4)
- ② Paul, an apostle, writes with the authority of God Himself!
 - Do we believe that we must obey Paul?
- ③ "Imitate me just as I imitate Christ." (1 Corinthians 11:1)
 - MEDITATE on this! Do we believe that we must imitate Paul?

The Church of God (2 Thessalonians 1:1, 4)

- Who is the Church:
 - ἐκκλησία ekklesia {ek-klay-see'-ah} "called out"
 - "Called out" by God: (Romans 8:28-30)
 - "Called out" of darkness. (1 Peter 2:9; Colossians 1:13)
 - "Called out" to praise. (1 Peter 2:9)
 - "Called out" unto His eternal glory. (1 Peter 5:10; John 17:22)
 - This is a PERSONAL call. (John 11:43)
 - Paul called it a HIGH CALLING. (Philippians 3:14)
- Who is the Church:
 - A BODY - by definition a body does **needs** every one of her members, does **everything** together, and **grows** together. (1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Romans 12:4-5; Ephesians 4:11-16)
 - The Temple of God - living stones **being fitted together** being **built up together growing** together for a dwelling place of God. (Ephesians 2:20-22; 1 Peter 2:4-5)
- It is called the "church of God" because HE purchased the Church (souls) with His own blood. (Acts 20:28; 1 Cor 6:19-20; 7:23)

God's Church at Thessalonica (1 Thessalonians 1:1-3)

- Their faith was a WORKING faith. (James 2:14-26)
- Their love was a LABORING love. (1 John 3:16-18)

- They **endured** with **perseverance**. (Romans 8:25)
- Their **election** was **visible** to others! (Colossians 3:12-17)

GRACE and PEACE (2 Thessalonians 1:2)

- Always in this ORDER. You cannot have PEACE with God without the GRACE of God.
- BOTH have God as their ultimate SOURCE.
 - God is the GIVER of His GRACE.
 - God is the GIVER of PEACE.
- Without the PEACE of God you are an **ENEMY** of God. (Romans 5:10)
- The only way to have PEACE with God is by GOD granting His GRACE on you.
- Paul prayed for **more** grace for the saints at Thessalonica and that they would **experience** God's peace, His peace that "surpasses all understanding". (Philippians 4:7-9)
- MORE Grace - James 4:6
- What is GRACE?
 - Sunday School answer: **God's Riches At Christ's Expense**
 - Disciple's answer: God's power bestowed on undeserving sinners.
 - To pray for "more grace" is to pray for the **power** (ability) to **do** what God has commanded.
 - To pray for "more grace" is to pray for the **power** (ability) to live one's life on "every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." (Luke 4:4; Matthew 4:4; Deuteronomy 8:3)
- The grace of God - 1 Corinthians 15:10
- MY GRACE sufficient - 2 cor 12:9-10
- Do we believe we need God's grace to run with the horses?
- Do we believe we need God's grace to live **for** Him?
- Will God give us grace if we do not pray for it?

Give Thanks (2 Thessalonians 1:3)

- Thanksgiving is directed **to** GOD and God alone.
 - "we are bound" – to owe; be in debt to; one's duty.
 - Failure to give thanks to God is GREAT SIN with severe consequences.
 - Failing to give thanks to God leads to a reprobate mind. (Romans 1:21-28)
 - Refusing to give thanks ALWAYS is taking God's gifts, grace, and mercy for granted.
 - "always" – We are to give thanks for ALL THINGS! (Ephesians 5:20)
 - It is the will of God (remember Matthew 7:21; 12:5; 1 John 2:17) for us to give thanks in everything. (1 Thessalonians 5:18)
 - Whatever we DO we are to DO **and** give thanks to God. (Col. 3:17)

- “as is fitting” – worthy; right; good.
 - Whatever we have we have from above. (1 Cor. 4:7; James 1:17; John 3:27)
- Do we take for granted our food, air, water, clothes, lives, things, God’s unconditional love, His mercies, our freedoms, etc., etc., etc.?

Reason for Thanksgiving to God (2 Thessalonians 1:3)

- Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy **thanked GOD** for the GROWTH of the Thessalonians’ FAITH and LOVE.
- Faith is towards GOD and LOVE is towards man.
- “The missionaries never took the growth and spiritual change in the lives of those they ministered to for granted or foolishly attributed it to anything in their own ministry (hard work, methods, plans).”
- NOR did they attribute the Thessalonians’ growth in faith and love to the Thessalonians!!!
- Notice: The Thessalonians’ faith was growing **EXCEEDINGLY!** – despite constant PERSECUTION. (vv. 3-4)
 - **TRUE FAITH** grows stronger in the midst of TROUBLE!
- Christians GROW. Meditate on this!
 - A Christian meditates on God’s Word day and night and he/she is a like a TREE that bears fruit. (Psalm 1:1-3)
 - (Psalm 92:12-14) The righteous (children of God who practice righteousness) shall:
 - Flourish like a palm tree.
 - Grow like a cedar tree.
 - Planted and flourish in the house of the LORD.
 - Bear fruit unto their Lord unto their old age. They shall be fresh and flourishing!
 - (Jeremiah 17:5-8) Blessed in the one who trusts (trusts that God’s Word is true by living it) in the LORD, he shall:
 - Never cease from yielding fruit.
- **GROWTH IS THE WORK OF GOD!!**
 - Our Christian growth is as much the work of God as our rebirth is.
 - God has planted the principle of growth in His gift of faith.
 - Consider Hebrews 6:1-3.

Growing Faith

- 1 PRAY. The disciples asked Christ, “Increase our faith.” (Luke 17:5)
- 2 Increase KNOWLEDGE. **BE DISCIPLES.** (2 Peter 3:18; Romans 10:17; Luke 16:29-31)

- 3 MEDITATE on the WORD. Thinking!! Studying!!! “revolve in the mind”. (Psalm 1:1-3; 119:15, 23, 27, 48, 78, 99, 148)
- 4 EXERCISE – Do the Word. (Hebrews 5:12-14; James 1:22; Mark 4:24; 1 Timothy 4:7-8)
 - The more we USE (obey) the Word the more will be given to us. (Mark 4:24)
 - Only those who HEAR and DO the Word are BLESSED. (Luke 11:28)
- 5 FOLLOW Christ’s example. (Luke 9:23; 1 Peter 2:21; **1 Corinthians 11:1**; 1 John 2:6; Hebrews 12:2)

Evidence of Growth

- When we are becoming more and more depended on God and not own self. (Proverbs 3:5-7)
- When we are becoming more and more like Christ – in spirit, works, and words. (Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 1 John 3:2)
- When we discern the difference between FAITH and FEELING. Our ANCHOR must be in the WORD of GOD – NOT our feelings.
- When we are living the Word of God. (Matthew 4:4; Luke 4:4)

Examining Ourselves

- 1 Do I believe the Bible is the very word of God? My obedience, not my words, answers this question. (Matthew 7:21; 1 John 2:15-17)
- 2 By God’s definition of church, are we the Church of God? Our obedience, not our words, answers this question.
- 3 I have been saved by faith. **SAVING FAITH WORKS!** (James 2:14-26) “christians” who **say** and do not **do** what the Word of God says will one day hear, “I never knew you. Depart from Me you who do lawlessness.” (Matthew 7:21-23)
- 4 Are WE growing in faith and love? If we want to see our faith grow we need to FEED it and EXERCISE it. Sitting at a dinner table will not grow us. We must EAT **and** EXERCISE. (1 Timothy 4:7-8; Hebrews 5:13-14; James 1:22)
- 5 Are we thankful TO GOD for ALL things? Do we thank God always?