

INTRODUCTION:

1. [Image] This morning we are starting a new series in the book of 2 Thessalonians. I'm calling this series "Standing Firm at the End of the World." The church at the Greek city of Thessalonica had a lot of questions about the end of the world. They were not just thinking about events off into the future. They were curious how they were supposed to live today. How were they supposed to respond to the affliction and persecution they faced? When we think about the end times and the last days we might think of the 2nd coming of Christ or the anti-Christ, but the last days began with Jesus. In one sense we are in the last days just like the Thessalonians. But how should we live?
2. [Need] When we think about the end we can get anxious. We can wonder about the coming suffering and affliction that we see all over the world. We can be tempted to identify the anti-christ or think that the great tribulation is here.
3. [Subject] I want us to study this book not just to get intellectual answers, but so that we can understand how to live. And today we are going to get answers on why we do not need to be anxious about affliction.
4. [Text] 2 Thessalonians 1
5. [Preview] Three reasons to not be anxious about end times affliction.

The first reason that you don't need to be anxious over affliction is **Because affliction can grow our faith and love. Affliction can grow our faith and love.**

We don't like affliction, persecution, or suffering because it hurts. It is painful and difficult to endure. We are afraid that it is harmful.

But what we see in the example of the Thessalonians Christians is that affliction did not destroy the church, but instead it is increasing.

In order to understand what a miracle this is we might need a little background.

It would be helpful to be reminded, or to learn who the Thessalonians are. We can read about them in Acts 17.

This is where Paul and Silas planted the church in Thessalonica. Silas is also called Silvanus and is one of the authors of the letter.

Paul and Silas show up in this large Greek city to preach the gospel. They follow their normal habit of entering the Jewish Synagogues to explain how the law and Old Testament Scriptures are fulfilled in Christ.

And their evangelism efforts are successful!
Some of the Jews are persuaded,
A lot of the Greeks who have been trying to follow the Jewish law are converted.
Even some of the leading influential women in the city are reborn.

But there is a problem.

Acts 17:5 ***"But the Jews were jealous."***

So they got wicked men together and formed a mob.
The mob went to what was probably a church meeting at Jason's house.
They dragged Jason and other Christians before the city authorities.

They took money from them and kicked Paul and Silas out of the city and told them to never come back.

Why this extreme reaction?

Because the Christians were claiming that Jesus was Lord.
And that is a threat to Roman peace.

The Thessalonians used to be an independent nation.

But now they were under control of the Romans.

But they get left alone as long as they don't challenge Roman authority.

So the churches claims about Jesus are a threat to their own safety.

They feel like they must oppose the church!

The entire city, the government, the mob, even the people seem to be against the church.

And this suffering and persecution continued.

Verse 4 **"in all your persecutions and in the afflictions that you are enduring."**

So the persecution has continued.

It didn't stop after Paul and Silas left,

And it didn't stop even after Timothy went and visited and brought them the first letter to the Thessalonians.

The persecution still being endured.

They are still being afflicted.

The very fact that the church still exists is a miracle.

After only three weeks this church plant is left alone.

So church planting expert would expect the church to last.

They are baby Christians left alone with no elders or pastors.

But the church isn't just limping along, it is growing!

Verse 3 **"we ought always to give thanks to God for you brothers and sisters as it is right because your faith is growing abundantly and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing."**

Did you catch that?

"your faith is growing up abundantly"

Their faith is not being hindered by their affliction.

Their faith is not being hindered by their opposition.

Their faith is not even weakened.

Their faith is growing.

And it's not growing just a tiny bit.

It is growing abundantly!

Their faith is like a tomato seed accidentally dropped behind a dumpster. And when you come back months later it's huge green and vibrant and they are beautiful ripe tomatoes.

It is an abundance faith.

And it's not just their fate that is grown abundantly.

"and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing."

Even in the midst of affliction, their love is growing.

Most of the time love cracks under pressure.

Or at least the love hindered by suffering.

Especially if it's a group of people that you didn't necessarily like before anyway.

The church is not a group of people who came together because they just loved each other.

The church is a group of people who came together because they love Jesus and were convinced that he was the only way to eternal life.

And yet affliction has led them to love each other more.

We can get short-tempered or angry under pressure.

We get anxious when we face affliction or persecution.

Thessalonians are growing in love and faith.

We need to understand that suffering and affliction can actually help us grow.

It doesn't always.

We have to decide to continue following Jesus in the midst of our affliction.

But when we do our love and our faith can grow and they can grow abundantly even in unideal circumstances.

And look at how Paul responds.

In verse 3 he says **"we ought always to give thanks to God brothers and sisters"**

Paul looks at their Affliction and their suffering and he gives thanks.

He doesn't pray that their Affliction and suffering will end.

He doesn't lament how horrible the situation is at Thessalonica.

He gives thanks.

And he says that he should always give thanks.

He should be thankful for how God used their affliction to increase their Love & Faith.

And then how else does he respond in verse 4?

"therefore we ourselves boast about you in the Churches of God for your steadfastness and faith."

Paul is going around to all of the churches that he enters and

bragging about what God is doing among the Thessalonians.

He is boasting about it.

How different is this from our response?

When we hear stories the church is facing Affliction of persecution

What do we do?

I'll tell you what I don't hear.

I don't hear a lot of giving thanks don't hear a lot of boasting of their faith

Usually I just hear a lot of complaining and whining.

I hear a lot of whining about how terrible the world is.

I don't hear good biblical lament, I just hear childish complaints

If I ever do hear any thanks and boasting it's usually not in the cross of Jesus and in the greatness of the church and their faith in the midst of affliction.

Instead, it's giving thankfulness for our freedoms in the United States. And boasting in our protections and how awesome are country is.

Don't miss hear me.

I am not complaining about our country,
I am complaining about the church
I'm complaining about our deficient faith.

Look again at what Paul says in verse 3

"we ought always to thanks to God for you brothers and sisters"

And look at this key phrase here **"as is right" "as is right"** because **"your faith is growing abundantly in the love of everyone of you for one another is increasing."**

Giving thanks is right.

What he's trying to say is that he is obligated by God to give thanks. Paul is impressed and encouraged.

He see something beautiful where we only see something terrible.

And Paul understands that he is obligated by God to give thanks for the beauty of what God is doing.

Not complain about what God isn't doing.

The question we have to ask ourselves is every anxious about Affliction in the world because we are just complaining?

My question for you is are you whining or are you growing?

Affliction doesn't need to lead to complaining and suffering it can lead to growth.

So are you saying things like God can you believe how bad things are today.

Oh just look at the world it's so horrible.

I can't believe the persecution in the affliction.

Are you giving thanks and for how the kingdom of God is advancing in the midst of suffering.

Are you boasting about churches and Christians that you nowhere being faithful even though they have to meet together illegally in places like China?

I don't want to be a complainer I want to be like Paul.

I want to be like the Thessalonians.

I want to grow in the midst of affliction

And when I see those growing in the midst of affliction

I want to give thanks and boast about their growth not complain about their circumstances.

[**Transition**] Affliction can lead to growth that is one reason to not be anxious, but we have two more to go.

The second reason that we do not need to be anxious about affliction is because **God will bring vindication and vengeance. God will bring vindication and vengeance.**

This entire section from verse 5 through 10 is about the return of Christ.

Verse 7 gives us the time **"when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels."**

Jesus is going to return.

And this revealing will bring vindication and vengeance.

First, let us look at the vindication.

The vindication will come for the Bride of Christ.

It will come for the those who have put their faith in Jesus alone for salvation.

Verse 5 **"This is evidence of the righteous judgement of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering."**

Now this verse is a little confusing.
So go easy on yourself if you didn't understand it.
It took me time to figure out what this is saying.

saying that when Jesus returns and brings Vindication and vengeance they are going to be Vindicated because of their faith.

The first phrase **"this is evidence"**

The evidence is their steadfast faith in love that is growing even in the midst of suffering.

And based on that evidence when Jesus returns they will be Vindicated.

They will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God.

Jesus will not pass judgment on them he will vindicate them and reward them.

For them the return of Jesus will in verse 7 **"Grant relief."**

He will relieve their struggles

He will wipe every tear away from their eyes.

Those who put their faith in Jesus.

For those who believe in the gospel of Christ.

For those who have repented of their sins and begged for mercy

They will find and more at the return of Christ.

Verse 10 **"when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints and to be marveled at among all who believed because our testimony to you was believed."**

We will stand in Marvel because what we have believed is true.
We will Marvel because the promises of God that begin with Eve.
The promise that the serpent would not win.
The promise to Abraham the nations would be blessed.
The promise to David that a king was coming who would rule with righteousness and grace.
The promise to the crowds and the disciples did he will come again.
The promise that the world will be made right.
The promise that death will be defeated and all things will be made new.
We will Marvel because we will see those promises true with our own eyes.

What a marvelous day that will be for those who put their faith in Jesus.

It will be a day of vindication.
This wasn't just an idea that somebody made up.
The Bible was it twisted and invented.
God's words were not misunderstood.
But we have believed and given our lives to is true.

But for those who did not believe.
For the Wicked, there will be the vengeance of God.

Verse 6 **"since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you."**

You catch the fun word play there.
The afflicters are going to get some Affliction themselves.
Because God is just.

He's bringing Vengeance but it is not cruel or unfair.
He is bringing upon people exactly what they deserve.
Those who have been unjustly persecuting and afflicting the
Thessalonians will get some of their own medicine.

Seven further describes the return of Jesus in his Wonder
**"when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven Mighty angels in
flaming fire inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God
and on those who do not obey the gospel of Our Lord Jesus
Jesus."**

There is a lot to unpack there.
But you see he says he is coming to bring vengeance.
His vengeance is righteous.
As Christians we believe that vengeance is the Lord's.
It is not our place to try and take revenge on others.
Why don't we?
We don't seek Vengeance because vengeance is the Lord's and his
vengeance is coming.
One day he will bring Justice.
His vengeance will be fairer than ours.
His Vengeance will be just where ours is biased.
His Vengeance will have all the information where ours is limited.
And his vengeance will be terrible.

Part of the reason you don't need to get vengeance is because God's
Vengeance will be bad enough.
and when Jesus returns his Vengeance will be on two groups of
people

First will be **"on those who do not know God."**

Those who do not believe says Lord will find out when he returns that he is Lord.

And they're not going to be punished just because they didn't pray prayer.

They will be punished for all of their sins and all of their Rebellion against the Lord Christ.

They will be judged by God standard.

God will examine all of their bad deeds and of all of their Good Deeds.

And then he will pull out the rubric and the standard of perfect righteousness

And they will get exactly what they deserve.

There's another group of people it is not just **"those who do not know God," but also "on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus."**

These are people who know God

Or maybe they even Proclaim that they know God.

Maybe these are people who claim to be Christians who claimed to Serve and to love Jesus

But they do not obey him.

There are a lot of these people our corner of the world.

I'm willing to bet that most people in and Duncan , and Marlow, and Comanche maybe even in Oklahoma would say they're Christians or that they know God.

Calling yourself a Christian doesn't make you one.

Those who do not obey God.

Those who do not live as if Jesus really is Lord

They will also face God's Vengeance and justice.

Don't miss it

It's not because if you obey rightly then you earn your salvation.
No it is that your failure to obey proves you don't believe in the first place.

If someone says that they love the Oklahoma Sooner football team, but they never watch a game they don't know anybody on the team, they don't know who the coach is you know what the mascot is don't even know where the school is located, you can be pretty sure they don't really love the Sooners.

We obey God because we love him
And because we really do believe him
We take him seriously.

so those who do not obey prove that they don't really know and I don't really believe God.

so what will happen to them?

verse 9 **"they will suffer the punishment of Eternal destruction away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His might."**

They will suffer Eternal punishment.

I don't like to consider myself a fire and Brimstone Hell preacher, I'm just a teacher of the Bible
and 2nd Thessalonians 1:9 tells us is that there is eternal and destruction that awaits those who do not put their faith in Jesus.
It doesn't matter if you don't like it.

I don't like.

I don't think that any of us should like the reality of hell and eternal punishment.

But when Jesus returns you'll find out that it's true.
Your belief on the subject will not affect the reality of its implementation.

We see it's not just a punishment of Eternal destruction we also see it is **"away from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his might."**

We know that God is all present he is everywhere.
This first does not mean that hell is a place that God is not actually located in.
As if he cannot see what is happening there and does not know.
It is a place devoid of the blessings of God's presence.

It is outside of His glory and His Wonder.
And that place his presence would be a curse.

This is what will come when Jesus returns.
And we see again in verse 7 **"what happened when the Lord Jesus is revealed even with his mighty angels in a flaming fire."**

Jesus will be revealed.
It's not him coming down cuz he's never been here before.
It is not God showing up and he's been absent.
It is like a play where the curtains open and the actors are revealed
They have been there the whole time.
But only now you get to see them.

For some that revealing of Jesus will not be a good thing.
For them it will be like the moment can you have been gossiping or saying something unkind about your mother-in-law when it is revealed that they have been behind you for several minutes.

When Jesus is revealed for some it will be Vindication and a Marvel and for others it will bring Vengeance and Punishment.
But it doesn't have to be a punishment for any of you.
Before you were ever born the godhead. Our one God in three persons came up with a plan to save you.
And Jesus took the Wrath and Punishment on himself so that you don't have to.

You have to do is believe that he paid the bill for you already.
But if you think there's no punishment awaiting you
If you think you can just be good enough so that the punishment won't be too bad
Will find yourself horrified revealing of Jesus on that day.

For those of us who are believers this day will not just be a day of Glory but it is our hope.
This day is why we don't have to be anxious.
This day is why we do not have to worry about the Affliction in the suffering that goes on in the world.
why?

Because when Jesus returns he's going to take care of it.
When Jesus returns the wicked will be punished.
When Jesus returns all of the rapists will get what they deserve.
When Jesus returns the tyrants and the murderers will face Justice.
With Jesus returns those who have covered up crimes and hidden their iniquity will find it brought to the light.
When Jesus returns those who's wickedness is so great that even to recount it makes us sick will face the vengeance of God.

So our job is to Hope.
We don't have to try and bring the Vengeance ourselves.
We don't have to fight the world and try to win

Jesus is coming and He will win.

You don't have to win any fights.

We don't need to see Revival or massive churches.

We have to do is keep the faith.

We should have to endure the Affliction until Jesus returns.

Is when he comes he'll bring vindication and vengeance.

[transition] But how can we endure this fight and affliction?

The last reason that we do not have to be anxious about affliction is because **God can make you ready. God can make you ready.**

The last two verses are a prayer.

They are Paul's prayer for the Thessalonians that God would make them ready and be prepared for the end of time.

verse 11 begins **"we always pray for you God may make you worthy of his calling."**

Notice that and God is the one who does this.

You do not have to do this on your own.

You don't have to just be holy enough, spiritually mature enough,

You don't have to just your grit your teeth and try and have the right attitude.

This is something that God does in us.

We just have to work alongside Him.

so the prayer begins asking that God would be the one to make us worthy of the calling.

that he would make us true Christians not just in name but in deed.

the rest of verse 11 **"and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith"**

So the prayer is not just that we would want to do good things.
It's not just that we would desire to do what God wants of us.
But it's that we do works of faith.
It is the prayer that we live that out.

Notice to that our works need to be works of faith.
They can't be works of the law or of Our Own self-righteousness.
These are things that we do Out of Love & Faith in Jesus.
We don't do them because we're trying to earn something
We do them because we've been given something.
We don't do them in order to be seen as super righteous
We do them because we know only Jesus is righteous and we just
want to be like him.

Notice how the prayer continues in verse 11 **"by his power"**
We are not praying that our own power with increase we are praying
that God's power would show up.
We are not praying that we would be stronger we are pray that God
would come and help us.
We're not praying that God would give us more faith we are praying
that he would come and help the little faith that we have.

Because you need the power of God.
This is part of the Gospel.
The gospel is not that Jesus save you from your sins and now you've
got to do everything in your own power and make yourself holy and
good enough.
Now we still need the power of God because our power isn't good
enough on our own.

This is why so many of my prayers in sermons plead on the power of the Holy Spirit to come and enable us to do what God asks us to do.

Because when you were relying on your own power you will find yourself powerless.

It ends in first 12 but the result of our prayers **"so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you you and him according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ."**

We pray that in all things that we do God would be glorified.

We are not praying that we would be glorified.

We are not praying the people would look at us and think wow they seem like such an amazing Christian.

We pray that they would look at us and they would think wow what an amazing Christ.

Beloved you don't need to be anxious about the afflictions that are here in the afflictions to come because God can make you ready.

You don't need to do more, you need Jesus.

But you don't have to be anxious because our God can make you ready if you let him.

CONCLUSION:

1. [Summary] We have seen three reasons that we do not need to be anxious about affliction. We don't have to be anxious because affliction can grow our faith and love, because Jesus is bringing vindication and vengeance, and because God can make us ready to endure it.
2. [Challenge] Take heart Tanglewood. Jesus is coming. All will be made right.