

ENCOURAGEMENT FOR A GROWING FAITH

2 Thessalonians 1

Awareness

Before listening, reflect:

- Have you ever set a spiritual goal for yourself? What led you to set that goal? How did it go (or is it going)?
- Reflect on a time when someone encouraged you. What did they say? What effect did their encouragement have on you and your faith?

We're fairly accustomed to assessing progress. Whether it's exams in school or annual reviews at work, as a society we know there is value in looking back to praise what's good and encourage continued growth. How often do you consider and reflect on your spiritual growth? The Apostle Paul intentionally praised the progress of the Thessalonian Christians, acknowledged the difficult circumstances in which they were maturing, and encouraged them to continue growing in faith. Studying his words in the opening chapter of 2 Thessalonians reminds us that God's sovereignty is all we need to help us remain steadfast when life gets rocky.

Listen: [*Encouragement for a Growing Faith*](#)

Reflection

After listening, consider:

- Practice looking for spiritual growth. Consider two fellow believers whose faith and spiritual life you are familiar with. In what ways have you observed them grow in Christlikeness? What would you praise about their spiritual faith, as Paul praises the Thessalonians in 2 Thessalonians 1:3-4? Consider writing a letter or email to one of these fellow believers, in the style of Paul, praising them for their spiritual growth and encouraging them in their faith.
- What do you think Paul would write about you if he were to write about your faith now compared to when you first believed? What growth would he praise?
- Consider this quote from N.T. Wright in his commentary on 2 Thessalonians*: "Christians, however, cannot be complacent as they contemplate the final judgment. God's longing—and that of the apostle—is that the grace of God that has called them by the gospel will now do its full work in them. When that day comes they must not appear as people who began to believe but never got around to working out what it might mean in practice" (p 145). Which of the "great three Christian virtues: faith, hope, and love" would you like to grow in? What type of short term and long term spiritual goals might you set to help foster that growth?
- In segment 3, host Scott Hoezee talks about the tendency of believers to play down their good works. Think about how you respond when someone compliments something you did. Do you tend to play down your good works? How might you instead acknowledge your good works in a way that glorifies Christ at work in you?

* N.T. Wright, Paul for Everyone: Galatians and Thessalonians. Westminster John Knox Press, 2004.

Related Passages

- **John 17:1-5**
- **John 12:31-33**
- **Matthew 5:43-45**
- **Matthew 10:29-31**

Conclusion

Reflect on Scott's assertion in segment 3 that "when we let God work in us to praise him, to live for him, to embody kingdom virtues, that is a blessing to God...When you let God work in you...when you become a showcase display window in your own life of the character of God's kingdom, that is a blessing to God."

How is God glorified in you today and during this season of your life? Give thanks for God's grace in your life and spend time in prayer, praying Paul's prayer in 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12 for yourself and for a few specific fellow believers (maybe the two individuals whose spiritual growth you considered earlier).

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