



(Sermon Notes)

How Long Will Your Suffering Last?

2 Thessalonians 1:1-12

Background Details

- Continuing series of 1 and 2 Thessalonians
- From Paul, Silas, Timothy
- To Church in Thessalonica in Greece
 - Written shortly after 1 Thessalonians, around 50 AD.
 - Galatians (48 AD), 1 Thessalonians (49-50 AD), 2 Thessalonians (50-51 AD)
 - Likely heard a report from Thessalonica after the first letter was delivered.
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 - 2 Thess. 3:11 “For we hear that there are some among you...”
 - Some of the topics covered in 1 Thessalonians are touched on again in 2 Thessalonians.
 - 3 Themes:
 - -Hope in Persecution
 - -The Day of the Lord
 - -A Challenge to Idle Believers

Suffering | When will it end?

- **Persecution**
 - Thessalonians
 - The Jews were angered by the preaching of Jesus as the Messiah and stirred up the community against the believers.
 - They thought it was part of the Great Tribulation that Jesus said would come around the time of his second coming.
 - Likely discussed, “When will this persecution end?”
 - Modern Day Suffering of Persecuted Believers
 - More believers are persecuted today than ever before.



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Open Doors report, 2022

In 2022, advocacy group Open Doors said that at least 360 million Christians experienced “high levels of persecution and discrimination.” This was 20 million higher than 2021.

The group also estimated that the number of Christians killed for their faith rose to 5,898 in 2022, up from 4,761 in 2021. Afghanistan, North Korea, Somalia, Libya, and Yemen saw the highest rates of persecution globally.

Pew Research Center

The number of countries in which Christians had been harassed rose every year bar one from 2013 to 2019, increasing from 102 to 153 (77% of the 198 analyzed countries).

- Persecution in the West
 - Social ostracizing / ridicule
 - Dismissed or Hated because of following the Bible
 - Nothing near the rest of the world.

John 15:18

“If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you.” -Jesus

- How will we respond to persecution if we ever face it?
- For sure we will ask the question, “When will this suffering end?”
- **Extrapolation to other forms of suffering**
 - Although we may not face persecution, we probably ask the same question when we face suffering from other sources.
 - Suffering because of the fallen creation
 - such as illness, pain, loss, grief, loneliness, lacking
 - Suffering at the hands of fallen people:
 - indiscriminate or indifferent harm or evil
 - intentional harm targeted at us
 - No promise of end of suffering in this life.



Hope | Where does it come from?

- When we suffer we need hope in order to continue on. Where does that hope come from?
 - For the follower of Jesus that Hope comes from a relationship with God through Jesus.
 - Faith in God, his person, his power, his presence.
 - Love for the people of God for encouragement, camaraderie, mutual support.
 - Trust in the justice and deliverance of God.
 - We don't often see true justice in this life.
 - We have a promise of ultimate, final, and complete end of persecution and suffering.

Revelation 21:3-4

Then I heard a loud voice from the throne: Look, God's dwelling is with humanity, and he will live with them. They will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them and will be their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; grief, crying, and pain will be no more, because the previous things have passed away.

- This is the promise Paul points the Thessalonians to.
- Brought about by the power of Christ as his second coming.
- The vengeance of God at work:
 - On those who do not know God or follow the Gospel
 - Flaming fire of judgment
 - Penalty of eternal destruction
 - Exclusion from the presence of God

For we know him who said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge his people." It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Hebrews 10:30-31

- Promise of relief and deliverance not in this life, but at the coming of Jesus and entry into God's eternal Kingdom.



Perseverance | What does it look like?

- Steadfastness v. 4
- Endurance v. 4
- Made worthy of his calling v. 11
- Filled with resolve v. 11
- Good works of faith and power v. 11
- Glorify the Name of Jesus v. 12
- Be glorified in Jesus v. 12

- Make Jesus the highest in your heart and life:
 - Highest pursuit
 - Highest source of joy and satisfaction
 - Highest value
 - Highest relationship
 - Highest longing, aim, goal, priority

- When Jesus is all you want you can suffer and not abandon faith.
- When Jesus is all you have, will Jesus be enough?

Takeaways

- We participate in the Kingdom of God when we face suffering along with Jesus.
- What you hope for shapes what you live for.
- Persecution often leads to the growth of the church, and suffering often leads to the growth of the believer.

Next Steps

- Pray for the persecuted Church / believers around the world.
- Serve and encourage others who are suffering.
- Prepare yourself by making Christ the highest in your heart and life.
- Persevere until Christ returns in peace, in persecution, and in suffering.



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Additional Resources

- Voice of the Martyrs - persecution.com
- Open Doors - opendoorsus.org
- *The Hiding Place: The Triumphant True Story of Corrie Ten Boom* (book)

(For Website)

Prayer Points

1. Pray for the persecuted Church around the world. Some of the greatest persecution is happening in North Korea, India, Northern Africa, China and Middle Eastern countries.
2. Pray for the believers in your life or in the church who you know are facing suffering of various kinds.
 - a. Pray that God would send them relief.
 - b. Pray that God would sustain their faith.
 - c. Pray that they will persevere until Christ returns.
3. Pray for your own heart and those of your family, that God will help you put Christ as the highest source of joy, satisfaction, and hope. Then you will be prepared to face persecution or suffering.
4. Pray that our church will grow in peace or persecution and that we as believers will grow whether we suffer or live in safety.

Discussion Questions

1. What is a story of the persecution of believers that has made an impression on you?
2. How does learning about the persecuted Church change your perspective on what it means to follow Jesus?
3. How is it comforting to know that God will bring ultimate justice and judgment on those who do evil to others?
4. When has your faith in the justice of God been tested nearly to breaking?
5. How can you prepare for suffering, even suffering because of persecution?
6. In what ways have you sought to put Jesus at the highest place in your heart and life?
7. Who is someone you know now who needs to be encouraged and served because they are suffering?