

## Endure Persecution

Christians face persecution today in over 40 countries around the world. Violent but non-deadly persecution is the common means of suppressing Christianity in Iran. Many Chinese Christians are becoming prisoners or martyrs because their government wants to completely eradicate Christianity in their land. Christians in North Korea are imprisoned, tortured, and brutally killed.

Why are things like this happening? Why aren't those who do such terrible acts punished? Why isn't there justice? Why doesn't God intervene to stop the persecution of His people?

You and I may never face such severe persecution, but we do have to endure milder forms. How can we (and Christians around the world) endure persecution?

**2 Thess. 1:1** Just like 1 Thessalonians, this letter was sent from \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ to the church at Thessalonica. It was written not long after the first letter, when Paul learned that false teachers were troubling the Thessalonians.

**2 Thess. 1:2** “\_\_\_\_\_ unto you, and \_\_\_\_\_, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

### *Your Endurance Makes Others Thankful*

**2 Thess. 1:3** Why did Paul thank God for the Thessalonians?

**2 Thess. 1:4** The same Thessalonian Jews who persecuted and pursued Paul (Acts 17:13) continued to persecute the church after he left (1 Thess. 1:6 & 2:14). The faithfulness and endurance exhibited by the Thessalonian Christians made Paul very thankful.

### *God Will Avenge Your Suffering*

**2 Thess. 1:6** Skip verse 5 for now; we will come back to it later. What is a righteous thing for God to do?

The word **recompense** means to repay. Do you realize what you just read? **God promises to pay back those who persecute Christians with trouble and tribulation of their own!** God is keeping tabs, and it is a righteous (just, proper, fitting) thing for Him to repay persecutors (Rom. 12:19; 2 Pet. 2:4-9).

**2 Thess. 1:7** What did Paul tell them to do?

Who will be revealed from heaven?

The event described in these verses is the Second Coming of Jesus Christ (at the end of the Tribulation) when He returns as the Righteous Judge to set up His kingdom (Rev. 19:11-21).

**2 Thess. 1:8** How is Jesus' return described?

On whom will He take vengeance?

At that time, **everyone** who doesn't know Jesus will be objects of His awful wrath!

**2 Thess. 1:9** These are terrifying words. How long will those who reject Jesus be punished?

The word **destruction** doesn't mean they will cease to exist; it means they will eternally be in pain, agony, and torment. The Bible describes this as the Second Death (Rev. 20:12-15).

**2 Thess. 1:10** Who will glorify and admire the Lord Jesus on that terrible day of judgment and wrath?

In the Bible, the word **saints** refers to all those who have believed and are genuinely saved. Look back now at verse 5.

### **Benefits of Being Persecuted**

**2 Thess. 1:5** A **token** is a symbol that proves you belong and entitles you to something. The suffering that the Thessalonians endured proved they were worthy of God's kingdom. **Suffering doesn't make you worthy, but it shows (as a manifest token) that you are worthy.** When you suffer persecution for the Lord Jesus, it shows that you belong to Him and will spend eternity with Him. Look now at verse 11.

**2 Thess. 1:11** What did Paul pray for the persecuted Thessalonians?

We should pray for those enduring persecution.

**2 Thess. 1:12** Who receives glory when Christians faithfully endure persecution?

**Concluding Thoughts:** Don't be surprised by persecution. As a matter of fact, the Bible **promises** we will have some (2 Tim. 3:12). God does not ignore the persecution of His children (Rev. 6:9-11), and He **will** punish those who persecute them (Rev. 19:2).

What should we do about persecution?

First, don't worry, because God is watching over all of His children.

Second, if you are being persecuted in any way, thank God that He considers you worthy to suffer for Him (Acts 5:41).

Finally, pray for those who are persecuted.

Why don't you do that right now?

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**Project:** You can learn more about persecution against Christians by visiting the following website: <http://www.persecution.com/>