

THE WICKED
BIG IDEA: One day believers will get rest from suffering while the wicked get judgment.
DATE: Wednesday, November 4 and Sunday, November 8, 2026
SCRIPTURE: 2 Thessalonians 1:1-10 (CSB)

OPENING QUESTION

Let's test your idiom knowledge! *Are these sayings from the Bible or not?*
Bite the dust; broken heart; caught red-handed; by the skin of your teeth; spill the beans; can a leopard changes its spots; beat around the bush; a drop in the bucket; the apple of his eye; rub someone the wrong way; the writing is on the wall; basket case; no rest for the wicked

SETTING THE STAGE

The Christians in Thessalonica were grateful to God for Paul's first letter, but it did not immediately solve all their problems. In fact, the persecution grew worse, and some believers thought they were living in the time of the tribulation. Then a letter arrived claiming to be from Paul, stating that the day of the Lord was actually present. Needless to say, the assembly was confused and frightened by this prospect. Some of the believers concluded that since the Lord's coming was so near, they ought to quit their jobs and spend their time waiting for him. This meant that the other members were under an extra burden to care for them. Satan was working overtime; as the lion, he was seeking to devour, and as the serpent, he was seeking to deceive. It was in response to these needs that Paul wrote his 2nd letter.

SCRIPTURE READING

2 Thessalonians 1:1-10 (CSB)

Paul, Silvanus [Silas] and Timothy: To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. [2]Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

[3]We ought to thank God always for you, brothers and sisters, and rightly so, since your faith is flourishing and the love each one of you has for one another is increasing. [4]Therefore, we ourselves boast about you among God's churches – about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and afflictions that you are enduring. [5]It is clear evidence of God's righteous judgment that you will be counted worthy of God's kingdom, for which you also are suffering, [6]since it is just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you [7]and to give relief to you who are afflicted, along with us. This will take place at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with his powerful angels, [8]when he takes vengeance with flaming fire on those who don't know God and on those who don't obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. [9]They will pay the

penalty of eternal destruction from the Lord's presence and from his glorious strength [10]on that day when he comes to be glorified by his saints and to be marveled at by all those who have believed, because our testimony among you was believed.

DISCUSSION

THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF PRAISE
READ: 2 Thessalonians 1:1-4

How did Paul encourage the believers through thanksgiving? For what specific blessings did he give thanks?

How can praise or words of affirmation from others grow our faith? How can it address feelings of frustration or inadequacy in a believer's faith life?

An easy life can lead to a shallow faith. What do think of that statement?

THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF PROMISE
READ: 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10

Why are believers tempted to believe suffering means God doesn't care? How is suffering evidence of God's work in us? How does the way we act in times of trial prove to others that God is at work?

Paul described the future for unbelievers in vivid and dramatic terms (tribulation, flaming fire, punishment). How might the young church have responded to hearing this? Is fear a reasonable motivator to turn people toward faith? Explain.

What kind of future is there for the lost (2 Thess. 1:9)? For the saved (Rev. 22:4)? What does the phrase *everlasting destruction* mean? (See Matt. 25:41).

GROUP DISCUSSION: Gather with 3-4 or around your table to discuss the following.

- Describe a time you struggled in your faith because you were suffering. How did you get through that season? How did your faith weaken or grow in the midst of that time?
- What are the circumstances in life that test your faith most? What are some practical ways you persevere in your faith?
- What are some positive motivations to seek a relationship with God (in contrast to the "fire insurance" approach that brings some to Christ)?

GOING FORWARD

One day there really will be no rest (or peace) for the wicked but those who have put their faith in Jesus will know *true* rest. We will be released from the pressures of this life. While we wait for that day we have work to do – share the Gospel with the lost and encourage the faithful. Who needs to hear about the saving hope and rest they can find in Jesus? Who is a believer that is facing a trial right now? How can you bring encouragement and hope?

Wiersbe, Warren. *Be Ready: Living in Light of Christ's Return.* David C. Cook, ©1979
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