

I Thessalonians 2:19–3:8

I Thessalonians 2:19 For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?

PAUL reveals here his great hope for the Thessalonians, that those whom God had given him to care for would be found abiding in Christ at His coming. This was the apostle's hope, and it would ultimately be his joy and crown of rejoicing at Christ's return since it is purposed to be the salvation of God's people that will be accounted as the minister's crown. This spiritual hope is what prompts servants of the Lord to abandon their own personal freedom so that others might be saved—knowing that at Jesus Christ's return, if God's people are fully welcomed into His presence and received into heaven, then all the spiritual labor done in Christ's name will be proven to have been worth it.

The spiritual degree to which the apostle was willing to sacrifice personal freedom to *gain the more* unto Christ's name and thus *save some* is recorded in I Corinthians.

I Corinthians 9:19–25 For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more.²⁰ And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law;²¹ To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God,

but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law.

²² *To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.*

²³ *And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you.*

²⁴ *Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.*

²⁵ *And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.*

The effort to win others to Christ is compared to a great contest in which a contestant holds the hope of gaining a crown of victory and honor for his efforts. Such games were common in the apostle's time and can be likened to our Olympics, in which individuals train for long hours and many years to gain praise, recognition, and respect for their accomplishments. Yet for the Olympian this energy is exerted for a mere corruptible crown, one that will quickly fade away and be forgotten. The apostle sought a different reward than this, an eternal crown given by Jesus Christ at His coming. This crown and emblem of spiritual achievement is said to be everlasting. Like all things of God, everything in God's everlasting kingdom is eternal in nature. This undoubtedly includes rewards given for fruitful Christian service. The Scriptures list five heavenly crowns through which God will recognize believers for

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their faithful service to Himself. They are the crown of rejoicing, as in I Thessalonians 2:19; the incorruptible crown¹; the crown of righteousness²; the crown of glory³; and the crown of life.⁴ Each one of these crowns reveals a distinct blessing that will be awarded to those found faithful in their service to God.

1. The crown of rejoicing is the crown that ministers of the gospel will receive when those whom they have pastored are found worthy of Christ at His coming. This celestial crown is a selfless crown, simply because it is directly related to not merely pursuing one's own walk of being found worthy of the Lord but also possessing sufficient spiritual love for the brethren that they also may be found accepted by Christ at His coming. This crown is referred to as a crown of rejoicing because great spiritual joy will be experienced when those we have hoped to be saved by Christ actually are.

(*Matthew Poole's Commentary*, I Thess. 2:19)

Here the apostle gives the reason of his desire to see them. He first calls them his hope; that is, the master of his hope, that among others they should be saved in the day of Christ. Secondly, his joy: he at present rejoiced in their ready and sincere receiving the gospel preached by him. Thirdly, his crown of rejoicing, which signifies the triumph and height of joy: and seeing he mentions the *presence and coming of Jesus Christ*, he looks to the crown that he should receive at that day, which he speaks of, 1 Corinthians 9:25;⁵ and these Thessalonians, among others, would

help to make up this crown of rejoicing to him. And in the words we may observe an eminent gradation, as also that the crown of ministers will arise not only from Christ, but from their people also.

2. The incorruptible crown is the crown that will be given when men are willing to sacrifice their own lives and forfeit personal freedom in order that others might be saved. *And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible* (I Cor. 9:25). There is nothing of more worth in heaven than the saving of a man's soul, and thus those willing to exert the effort and undergo the sacrifice of self in order that others might be saved will receive a crown of heavenly recognition that will never fade away. That which Christians run for is of so much more worth and has so much greater and lasting value than what those of the world labor to attain. The world passes away,⁶ and as such all worldly deeds on her will suffer the same doomed fate, if not rooted in God and the eternal heavenly realm.

3. The crown of righteousness is the crown promised to be awarded to those whom the righteous one, Jesus Christ, designates as righteous at His return. A characteristic of these saved ones is that they will love Jesus Christ's appearing. *Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his*

1 I Cor. 9:24–25 *Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.* ²⁵*And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.*

2 II Tim. 4:8 *Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.*

3 I Pet. 5:4 *And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.*
4 Rev. 2:10 *Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.*

5 I Cor. 9:25 *And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.*

6 I John 2:17 *And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.*

appearing (II Tim. 4:8). The crown of righteousness is also the spiritual reward that will be given to those who have struggled for the gospel's advancement, who have been faithful to their calling and not deterred in keeping the faith. The righteous throughout Scripture are spoken of as being rewarded by God.⁷ Hence, those who pursued God's righteousness while on earth⁸ will be rewarded with a crown of righteousness after their entrance into heaven. Just as pursuing unrighteousness will be punished, so shall the pursuit of righteousness be rewarded. The crown of righteousness therefore is that distinct heavenly recognition that will be given to all those who because of their love for the Lord pursued His righteousness. This crown is pursued to recognize when believers have remained faithful to Christ's calling throughout their lives and faithfully finished the spiritual course that God has called them to. It is an eternal and everlasting crown designating and

recognizing faithful Christian service and loyalty to God.

Jesus' return in glory will spark different reactions in different people. Those who love Christ will rejoice; those who have rejected him will both fear and mourn.⁹ In Jesus' earthly ministry, when sinners recognized His spiritual power and authority, fear often filled them.¹⁰ This fear will be greatly magnified in sinners when Jesus returns to this world to execute the judgment of God.¹¹ Hence, in contrast to those who love Christ's appearing will be those who because of choosing sin will greatly fear it.

4. The crown of glory is that heavenly crown directly related to the feeding and care of Christ's flock.¹² *And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away* (I Pet. 5:4). To feed the flock is to take the oversight of those who are the Lord's sheep.

⁷ Prov. 11:18 *The wicked worketh a deceitful work: but to him that soweth righteousness shall be a sure reward. Prov. 13:21 Evil pursueth sinners: but to the righteous good shall be repayed.*

⁸ Matt. 6:33 *But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*

I Tim. 6:11 But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.

⁹ Matt. 24:30–31 *And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. ³¹And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.*

Rev. 1:7 Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.

¹⁰ Mark 11:18 *And the scribes and chief priests heard it, and sought how they might destroy him: for they feared him, because all the people was astonished at his doctrine.*

Luke 5:26 And they were all amazed, and they glorified God, and were filled with fear, saying, We have seen strange things to day.

Luke 7:16 And there came a fear on all: and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God hath visited his people.

Luke 8:35 Then they went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus, and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid.

¹¹ John 5:22 *For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son:*

Acts 17:31 Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

Ps. 96:13 Before the LORD: for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth.

¹² *I Pet. 5:2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;*

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All sheep are prone to go astray,¹³ and the Lord's people are no different. Thus, there remains a heavenly reward for spiritual leaders who because of their love for their Master have assumed the task of caring for and tending to the Lord's flock. This shepherding must never be motivated because of monetary gain, which undoubtedly would cancel out any spiritual reward. Ultimately all reward for Christian service must be willingly performed because of love and not merely religious duty or monetary gain. Any also who are given authority over Christ's people are commanded to be examples to the flock and not lords over it.¹⁴ If these conditions are met, then glory, yea, a crown of glory, awaits all true ministers of the gospel who have yielded their lives to Christ, proven also by caring for His own.

(Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers, I Pet. 5:4) A crown of glory that fadeth not away.—It might perhaps be more closely, though less beautifully, represented by the glorious crown of amaranth, or the amaranthine crown of glory. Amaranth is the name of a flower which, like our immortelles, does not lose its colour or form. St. Peter immediately adds "of glory," lest we should think too literally of the wreath of immortelles.

The gospel of Jesus Christ, for both its members and its ministers, is a gospel of glory. By this it is meant that beyond the

sufferings of this life there awaits eternal and everlasting glory¹⁵ for those who instead of serving themselves served the Lord of glory. Peter knew that he would be a partaker of his Lord's glory, as will all who follow Peter's path of personal sacrifice in order to care for the children of God. *The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed* (I Pet. 5:1). It is love for Christ that compels a man to both feed and care for Christ's people. It was also this standard of caring for His sheep that Jesus set for Peter to prove true love for Himself.¹⁶

5. The crown of life is given to those who remained faithful to their religion though having it tried. *Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him* (Jas. 1:12). When men truly love the Lord, there is no worldly temptation that can separate them from Him. For these faithful men a crown of life is promised. It is also sincere love for the Lord that allows a man to pass all tests and trials in this life that are purposed to separate him from God and heavenly things. It is also true that when men possess no true love for Jesus Christ, then there is nothing to prevent them from yielding to worldly

13 Isa. 53:6 *All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

I Pet. 2:25 *For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.*

14 I Pet. 5:3 *Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock.*

15 Rom. 8:18 *For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*

II Cor. 4:17 *For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;*

I Pet. 5:10 *But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.*

16 John 21:15–17 *So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. ¹⁶He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. ¹⁷He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.*

temptation—teaching us that when any do not sincerely love the Lord, there is nothing to prevent them from the spiritual temptation to turn away from God’s will for their lives.

I Thessalonians 2:20 For ye are our glory and joy.

(Barnes’ Notes on the Bible, I Thess. 2:20) ... the joy of a minister in the day of judgment will be measured by the amount of good which he has done, and the number of souls which he has been the means of converting and saving; 1 Thessalonians 2:19.¹⁷ It will not be the honor which he has received from people; the titles which they have conferred on him; the commendation which he has received for eloquence or talent, or the learning which he has acquired, but it will be found in the number of those who have been converted from the error of their ways, and in the evidence of the good which he did on the earth. And will not the same thing be substantially true of all others who bear the Christian name? Will it then be a source of joy to them that they were richer than their neighbors; or that they were advanced to higher honors; or that they had a more splendid mansion, or were able to fare more “sumptuously?” The good that we do will be remembered certainly with pleasure in the day of judgment: of how many other things which now interest us so much can the same thing be said?

Few rewards in heaven can compare to the ones that Christ gives to those who have sacrificed their lives for the conversion of His people. Since it is a selfless undertaking, it will be rewarded with exceeding glory. Similar to Jesus Himself, Who died for the sins of others and then

was granted power and authority over all things, God will fairly compensate all who have forfeited much for the cause of Christ. God’s judicial fairness demands that He reward everyone and everything that has been done both in His name and for His cause.¹⁸

The Scriptures state that *he that winneth souls is wise*.¹⁹ Nothing is more precious on this earth than a human soul, and nothing is more worthy to sacrifice for than the sinner’s salvation. For this reason, all works done for God and His people will follow His people upon their entrance into heaven. It is thus the promise of Scripture that when men enter into heaven, their good and sincere Christian works will follow them. *And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them* (Rev. 14:13).

(Benson Commentary, Rev. 14:13) the words, *τα εργα αυτων ακολουθει μετ’ αυτων*, properly signify, *their works follow with them*, or follow them immediately; that is, the fruit of their works; they reap this, in some measure, immediately on their admission into paradise. Observe, reader, their works do not go before, to procure for them admittance into the mansions of joy and glory, but they follow or attend them when admitted.

While evil men and their works will be burned,²⁰ good men and their divinely inspired works will remain and accompany them when they depart from this earth. It is a unique characteristic of Jesus’ ministry that He has promised His fol-

17 I Thess. 2:19 For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?

18 Heb. 6:10 For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.

19 Prov. 11:30 The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise.

20 II Pet. 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

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lowers that their fruit will remain, just as His own has. *Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you* (John 15:16). Because Christ is eternal, all heavenly inspired works done in His name will likewise extend throughout eternity and be remembered. This is a promise of the gospel, which will one day be proven as a truth of the gospel.

I Thessalonians 3:1–2 Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone;
² *And sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellowlabourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith:*

Because Paul was unable to return to Thessalonica as he had hoped, he did the next-best thing—he sent in his place a *brother*, a *minister of God*, and a *fellow-labourer* in the gospel.

Brother. Timothy was a brother, one who, like the Thessalonians, had been begotten of God through his belief in the Savior. Timothy also shared the same love and affection for God's people as the apostle Paul.²¹ Hence, the apostle refers to Timothy as *my own son in the faith*. Because Paul had raised Timothy in the faith²² and because Timothy possessed the same spiritual love for the brethren as Paul, Paul likened him as his Christian son.

(*Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers*, I Tim. 1:2) *My own son in the faith.*—Timothy was St. Paul's very own son. No fleshly relationship existed between the two, but a closer and far dearer connection. St. Paul had taken him while yet a very young man to be his companion and fellow-labourer (Acts 16:3).²³ He told the Philippian Church he had no one like-minded (with Timothy) who would care for their affairs. He wrote to the Corinthians how Timothy was his beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who would put them in remembrance of his ways in Christ.

Religious bonds are the strongest bonds when faith in God's Son and the Holy Spirit forms them. Spirit is thicker than blood, and spiritual ties are greater than earthly ones, so that if men share the same heavenly Father and are bound together by the same Holy Spirit, great spiritual love and loyalty will exist between them. And just as we innately and internally love our earthly family, so shall we possess even greater love and loyalty to our heavenly family.²⁴

Minister of God. Jesus had purposed Timothy for Christian ministry. The title *minister of God* is a weighty one, yet due to his exemplary spiritual life, Timothy rightfully deserved it. God's will is also the reason for the appointment of all true ministers. Since no one can properly hold a position in the body of Christ unless Christ first ordains him for it, we know that Timothy was chosen by the Lord to carry on His work. Because the Lord sets the members in His body as it pleases Him,²⁵ all offices in the church must conform to His own divine will. Ul-

21 Phil. 2:19–20 *But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state.* ²⁰*For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state.*

22 I Tim. 1:2 *Unto Timothy, my own son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.*

23 Acts 16:3 *Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek.*

24 I John 3:14a *We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.*

I John 4:21 *And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.*

25 I Cor. 12:18 *But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.*

timately, it is God Who chooses men for ministry;²⁶ it cannot be they themselves. Jesus chose the twelve apostles, and He likewise chooses all purposed to serve in Christian ministry today. It is the Son of God, Who is the direct source for every true minister's appointment. Because also it is Jesus Who chooses men for ministry, He will equip them with sufficient spiritual power and wisdom to be effective in it.²⁷ *And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ* (Eph. 4:11–13).

(*Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers*, Eph. 4:11) *He gave.*—In the original “He” is emphatic—He and He alone, as the ascended Head of humanity. The word “gave,” instead of the more obvious word *set*, or *appointed* (used in 1 Corinthians 12:28²⁸), is, of course, suggested by Ephesians 4:8.²⁹ They who are ministers of His gifts are themselves gifts from Him to the Church.

Fellowlabourer. Those whom Christ has called to serve Him will, as in Nehemiah's day, be given the mind to work. *So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work* (Neh. 4:6). Just as Paul, who was shown divine grace and responded by laboring more than all those around him,³⁰ so shall those whom Christ has ordained today likewise labor just as strongly for the gospel's advancement. It is also through laboring for God that our love for Him is proved. But if men do not labor and are unwilling to expend personal sacrifice for the gospel, then it is unrealistic to conclude that they possess any true genuine affection or love for its Author.

I Thessalonians 3:3 That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto.

One of Paul's initial reasons for sending Timothy was so that the Thessalonians would not be moved from their faith because of the persecutions directed against them.³¹ The main objective also of devilish religious persecution is to produce spiritual apostasy in those who are be-

26 John 15:16 *Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.*

27 Matt. 10:1 *And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.*

Mark 3:14–15 *And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach,*¹⁵ *And to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils:*

Luke 10:19 *Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you.*

Luke 21:15 *For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.*

Eph. 3:7 *Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power.*

28 1 Cor. 12:28 *And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.*

29 Eph. 4:8 *Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.*

30 1 Cor. 15:10 *But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.*

31 1 Thess. 2:14–16 *For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews: ¹⁵Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men: ¹⁶Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.*

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ing persecuted. This was Satan's intent in persecuting God's servant Job,³² and the evil one continues the same pattern today. Therefore, whenever there is spiritual persecution toward the church, its main intent is to pressure those in it to depart from the faith. *And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness; and have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended* (Mark 4:16–17).

(Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible, Mark 4:16–17) *afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended.* As soon as any small degree of trouble comes upon them, and especially when there is a hot persecution of the professors of religion, because of the Gospel

they have embraced; such hearers are stumbled at these things, and cannot bear the loss of any thing, or endure any thing severe for the sake of the word they have professed a pleasure in; and therefore, rather than suffer, they relinquish at once their profession of it.

Ask a man to endure long hours at work for his own gain, and he will gladly spend himself, but ask him to suffer for Christ's name and the extension of the gospel, and rarely will he joyfully respond to do the same. It is also by divine appointment, and not mere chance, that the children of God will need to undergo affliction. This is God's will for their lives and must preclude their being received into glory. Every saved soul, therefore, that is purposed for heaven will entail some form of persecution and suffering along the way.³³ This was certainly the case with the apostle³⁴ and the Thessalonian saints he

32 Job 1:8–11 *And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? ⁹Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? ¹⁰Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. ¹¹But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face.*

Job 2:3–7 *And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movest me against him, to destroy him without cause. ⁴And Satan answered the LORD, and said, Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life. ⁵But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face. ⁶And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life. ⁷So went Satan forth from the presence of the LORD, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown.*

33 Matt. 5:11 *Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.*

Phil. 1:29 *For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake; I Pet. 5:10 But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.*

34 II Cor. 11:23–30 *Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. ²⁴Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. ²⁵Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; ²⁶In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; ²⁷In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. ²⁸Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. ²⁹Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not? ³⁰If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities.*

II Cor. 12:10 *Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.*

Phil. 3:8–11 *Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, ⁹And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: ¹⁰That I may know him, and the power of*

was writing to, and so shall it be similarly true for any who follow Jesus today. This is what the Lord Jesus revealed to the apostle Paul concerning the long and arduous walk before him, and it will likewise be experienced in those who walk in his footsteps today. *For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake* (Acts 9:16).

(Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary, Acts 9:16) how great things he must suffer for my name—that is, Much he has done against that Name; but now, when I show him what great things he must suffer for that Name, he shall count it his honor and privilege.

The greater the responsibility that Jesus gives a man to testify for the truth, the more vehemently sinners will set themselves against him. Yet even in the midst of religious persecution, saints should remember that though Christ's enemies are numerous and the pain they seek to inflict is real, the Lord (and the strength He imparts to His people) is greater.³⁵ It was this reality that the Lord revealed

to Joshua, and it is applicable to all who have the Spirit of the true Joshua (Jesus Christ) living in them today. *There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee* (Josh. 1:5). Because Christ is both with³⁶ and in His people,³⁷ no worldly force is able to actually overcome them. It is also not merely human strength that allows believers to continue in faith in the midst of persecution, but rather the power of God's Spirit within them. Ultimately the Lord is the strength of His people's hearts,³⁸ and time will prove that His presence is more than sufficient to sustain their ability to endure all that has been purposed for their lives. *My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever* (Ps. 73:26).

(Benson Commentary, Ps. 73:26) My flesh and my heart faileth—I find, by sad experience, my own weakness and inability to encounter such temptations, and bear, with becoming patience and resignation, such troubles, as I frequently meet with; yea, I find myself a frail, dying creature, that shall

his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; ¹¹If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

³⁵ *I John 4:4 Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.*

Phil. 4:13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

³⁶ *Deut. 31:6 Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the LORD thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.*

Deut. 31:8 And the LORD, he it is that doth go before thee; he will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed.

Josh. 1:9 Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.

Ps. 23:4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

Matt. 28:20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

Heb. 13:5 Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

³⁷ *John 14:23 Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.*

Col. 1:27 To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:

³⁸ *Hab. 3:19 The LORD God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places. To the chief singer on my stringed instruments.*

Ps. 18:1–2 I will love thee, O LORD, my strength. ²The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.

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shortly return to the dust. Both my flesh and heart, my body and soul may, and, unless supported by God, will soon fail. *But God is the strength of my heart*—I have found him so; I do find him so, and hope I ever shall. As if he had said, Though I have no strength in myself, I have it in God, my never-failing refuge, to whom I will trust as long as I live.

The apostle knew that if the Thessalonians' faith did not faint, then Christ would not fail in strengthening them. Through their genuine and sincere faith in the Lord, Jesus would prove Himself as the real strength of their lives. *Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us* (Rom. 8:37).

(*Barnes' Notes on the Bible*, Rom. 8:37) *We are more than conquerors*—We gain the victory. That is, they have not power to subdue us; to alienate our love and confidence; to produce apostasy. We are the victors, not they. Our faith is not destroyed; our love is not diminished; our hope is not blasted. But it is not simple victory; it is not mere life, and continuance of what we had before; it is more than simple triumph; it augments our faith, increases our strength, expands our love to Christ. The word used here is a strong, emphatic expression, such as the apostle Paul often employs (compare 2 Corinthians 4:17),³⁹ and which is used with great force and appropriateness here.

Through him ... —Not by their own strength or power.

The strength that lies in the Christian is that of his Savior. Because Jesus overcame the world, He gives His people the same spiritual strength and ability to do the same. *These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be*

³⁹ II Cor. 4:17 *For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;*

⁴⁰ John 16:11 *Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.*

John 12:31 *Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.*

John 13:31 *Therefore, when he was gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him.*

of good cheer; I have overcome the world (John 16:33).

(*Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers*, John 16:33) *But be of good cheer: I have overcome the world.*—The pronoun is strongly emphatic, “I have Myself overcome the world.” He speaks of the assured victory as though it were already accomplished. (See Note on John 16:11 and John 12:31; John 13:31.)⁴⁰ Here is the reason why they should take courage and be of good cheer. He is the Captain of their salvation, and has already won the victory. The enemies they fear, the world in which they have tribulation, are already captives following in the Conqueror's train. They themselves have pledges of victory in and through His victory.

I Thessalonians 3:4 For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know.

(*HELPS Word-studies*, I Thess. 3:4) [*tribulation* #2346] *thlibō* (the root of 2347 *thlipsis*, reflecting an original “b”/bēta)—properly, rub together, constrict (compress), i.e. pressed together; (figuratively) oppressively afflict (distress), i.e. like when circumstances “rub us the wrong way” that make us feel confined (hemmed in); restricted to a “narrow” place.

Satan's ultimate aim is to apply so much spiritual pressure on saints that they feel restricted and tempted to believe that there remains no real avenue or path for them to escape. The reality, though, is that there is no temptation from which God will not provide an avenue for escape. *There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the*

temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it (I Cor. 10:13).

I Thessalonians 3:5 *For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain.*

(Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers, I Thess. 3:5) *The tempter.*—See Matthew 4:3.⁴¹ The word and the tense in the Greek imply, not only that it is his character to tempt, but that it is his constant *occupation*.

In a few short verses the apostle used two titles to define his spiritual opponent: first it was *Satan*⁴² and now it is *the tempter*. Both titles are connected to the subtlety of the devil. The devil tempted our first parents to sin against God,⁴³ and through the same subtlety Satan regularly attacks their descendants today.

I Thessalonians 3:6 *But now when Timothy came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us, as we also to see you:*

Paul knew that the Thessalonians were faithful in Christ through the spiritual characteristics they continued to evidence in their lives, which included (1) their *faith*, (2) their *charity*, and (3)

their *good remembrance* of the apostles. By these credible evidences the apostle knew that the devil's purpose to discourage them and turn them from the faith had failed. It is also the fruit of the Spirit,⁴⁴ which are what faith and love actually are, that reveals that men are continuing to be led by the Spirit. Hence, whenever the fruits of love and faith are seen in Christians' lives, we have these as proof that they are both being led and strengthened by the Holy Spirit. When also believers maintain good remembrance of those who have brought them the Word, we see proof of their remaining faithful to it—as none can truly love the Word of God and not love those who are both critical and essential in assisting them to understand Its spiritual message.⁴⁵

I Thessalonians 3:7 *Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith:*

Whenever believers stand fast in the Lord, they inspire and encourage others to do the same. Few things are more comforting to spiritual leadership than when those who have been espoused to Christ prove themselves as true Christians, by remaining loyal to Him.

(Barnes' Notes on the Bible, I Thess. 3:7) *We were comforted over you*—See the notes, 2 Corinthians 1:3–7; 2 Corinthians 7:6–7.⁴⁶

41 Matt. 4:3 *And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.*

42 I Thess. 2:18 *Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us.*

43 Gen. 3:1–5 *Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? ²And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: ³But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. ⁴And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: ⁵For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.*

44 Gal. 5:22–23 *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, ²³Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.*

45 Acts 8:30–31 *And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou redest? ³¹And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him.*

46 II Cor. 1:3–7 *Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; ⁴Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in*

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The sense here is, that their steadfastness was a great source of comfort to him in his trials. It was an instance where the holy lives and the fidelity of a people did much, as will always be the case, to lighten the burdens and cheer the heart of a minister of the gospel. In the inevitable trials of the ministerial office there is no source of comfort more rich and pure than this.

I Thessalonians 3:8 For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.

What gave Paul, Silas, and Timothy increased reason for living was the steadfastness of those to whom they had imparted the gospel—teaching us that the minister's life is so closely tied to that of

the Lord's people, he can only rejoice and find life worth living when those he has espoused to Christ continue growing in even greater faith in Him. It is this fruit of the minister's labor that makes his earthly life worth living.

(Barnes' Notes on the Bible, I Thess. 3:8) The meaning here is, that Paul now enjoyed life; he had that which constituted real life, in the fact that they acted as became Christians, and so as to show that his labor among them had not been in vain. The same thing here affirmed is true of all faithful ministers of the gospel. They feel that they have something that may be called life, and that is worth living for, when those to whom they preach maintain a close walk with God.

any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. ⁵For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. ⁶And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation. ⁷And our hope of you is stedfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation.

II Cor. 7:6–7 Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus; ⁷And not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me; so that I rejoiced the more.