**CHOSEN, CHALLENGED, & CHANGED:**

**Living Ready For Christ’s Return**

**2 Thessalonians 1:1-12**

*“Paul, Silvanus, 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. 11 In view of this, we always pray for you that our God will make you worthy of his calling, and by his power fulfill your every desire to do good and your work produced by faith, 12 so that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified by you, and you by him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

**PROVEN WORTHY WHILE WAITING**

**THE BIG IDEA: As we endure hardships faithfully we prove our worthiness for God’s kingdom while looking forward to the promise of deliverance.**

**ENDURING HARDSHIPS FAITHFULLY PROVES US WORTHY OF GOD’S KINGDOM (vss. 1-5)**

* **Growing in faith and love in spite of hardships is the evidence that we are truly born again believers.**
* *“You rejoice in this,[a] even though now for a short time, if necessary, you suffer grief in various trials 7 so that the proven character of your faith—more valuable than gold which, though perishable, is refined by fire—may result in praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”* (1 Peter 1:6-7)
* “Just as the heat of the sun will wither a plant that lacks deep roots, so also will persecution reveal the shallowness of a superficial commitment to Christ. (*See* Matthew 13:3-9)” - Howell

**THE FATE OF EVERY HUMAN BEING IS KNOWN EVEN NOW (vss. 6-9)**

* **Whether Christ-followers experience deliverance from suffering on earth, or in heaven when Jesus returns, deliverance is a promise from God that will be kept.**
* *“Therefore we do not give up. Even though our outer person is being destroyed, our inner person is being renewed day by day. 17 For our momentary light affliction is producing for us an absolutely incomparable eternal weight of glory. 18 So we do not focus on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.”* (2 Corinthians 4:16-18)
* **The unpopular reality that must be acknowledged is that the fate for those who reject Christ and persecute His people is eternal destruction separated from God.**
* *“And anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.”* (Revelation 20:15)

**OUR PRIMARY MISSION IS TO GLORIFY CHRIST (vss.10-12)**

* **God is glorified when we live out our faith in obedience to His word (the Bible) by serving God and others, giving generously to His work, and sharing Jesus with others.**
* “Future promises must always be met by practical obedience.” – Mark Howell
* *“58 Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the Lord’s work, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.* **16** *1 Now about the collection for the saints: Do the same as I instructed the Galatian churches. 2 On the first day of the week, each of you is to set something aside and save in keeping with how he is prospering, so that no collections will need to be made when I come.”* (1 Corinthians 15:58-16:2)

**CONNECT GROUP DISCUSSION**

**Ice Breaker:** Describe a time when you had to wait for something you really wanted, and what the most difficult part of waiting was?

**Start thinking:**

* What does 2 Thessalonians 1:1-12 teach us about persecution and affliction?
* What do these verses teach us about God’s judgement?
* What does it mean to “glorify the name of Jesus?”

**Start sharing. Discuss in depth to create openness.**

* What are the distinguishing characteristics of someone who has truly been born again in Christ?
* How does your hope in Christ and His promises enable you to endure persecution and affliction?
* How does this passage of Scripture challenge you to view persecution and suffering in your life?
* How can and should you be glorifying Christ as we await His imminent return?
* What is one thing you will do differently as a result of this message?

**Pray Boldly**

* Pray for our Church to be an effective Gospel witness in our city that brings about change for God’s Kingdom.
* Pray for each member, and future members, to embrace a biblically transformed life of sacrifice, service, and love for God and others.
* Pray for our church to grow closer with one another and develop true abiding relationships as we live on mission together.
* Pray for our Pastor: That the Lord continue to lead him, shape him, protect him, and give him strength as he shepherds Renew Church.