

Does it seem like your life is full of pain and suffering? Are there people who make your life difficult because they can't understand your stand for Christ? Have you ever felt alone in your suffering? Like no one can understand what you are going through? Are you ready to give up?

Paul is here to tell you that you are not alone! Jesus understands your pain. So does Paul. So do the people that made up the church in Thessalonica. So do your brothers and sisters in Christ. Let me say it again. YOU ARE NOT ALONE.

DAY ONE

1. You can't judge a book by its cover or its size. II Thessalonians may only have 47 verses but it has a powerful message for you today. Give this book the time it deserves to be observed and allow it to wash over your heart and mind. Read this letter out loud. Hear what it has to say. When you read something out loud and you read it through many times, you tend to be able to remember it better because you have involved more of your senses, it becomes part of you. This is a good place to start for this week. After you begin with prayer, read II Thessalonians out loud two or three times. Give the words a chance to soak in.
2. Now read through just II Thessalonians 1 on your Observation Worksheets. Make sure that you have all your key words marked from last week. If you missed any, now is the time to mark them. Remember that you are just focusing on chapter 1 at this time. Is there a word or phrase that is repeated just in this chapter? If so, then you want to take the time to mark these as well.
3. Now that your key words are marked, you are going to make a list of everything you learn about each one. Use a separate piece of paper, and write your key word on the top. Then list all that you learn about that word from chapter one. You want to do this for all of your key words in chapter one. Your papers may look something like this.

God

- 1:1 - God is our Father
- 1:2 - God gives us grace and peace
- 1:3 - we should give thanks to God

Afflictions

- 1:4 - need to persevere and have faith amid your persecutions and afflictions
- 1:4 - we need to endure
- 1:6 - God will repay those who afflict us with affliction

4. Is it necessary to suffer as a Christian? I thought life was supposed to be a walk in the park, filled with nothing but good times and blessings if we become a Christian. Isn't that what most people lead us to believe? Let's look at just a couple of verses to see what God's Word says about this subject?

a. Philippians 1:29-30

b. John 16:33

c. II Timothy 3:12

5. Why is there all this suffering and affliction? Where does it come from? Let these verses prepare you for the battle that will inevitably come for those who confess Jesus Christ as their Lord. Keep these verses in context which may mean that you need to read some verses before and after the listed references. Note who is talking in each passage, who they are talking to, and what is being said.

a. Matthew 10:16-25

b. Matthew 10:34-40

c. Luke 12:51-53

d. John 15:16-25

e. John 17:14-18

f. II Timothy 3:10-13

DAY THREE

If suffering has to come, and we are called to endure, there must be a purpose in it all, right? Yes, friend, there is a purpose in it. Let's take time to read through some verses and discover the purpose. Take your time as you work through these verses, and give God the opportunity to teach you through them. Allow God's truth to wash away the wrong and selfish teaching that permeates the world today, including the church.

1. James 1:2-4 - Read these verses carefully and record everything they teach you about suffering. Ask yourself the 5 W's and the H.

2. I Peter 1:6-9 - Do the same thing for this passage.

3. I Peter 4:12-19

a. What do you learn about suffering and judgment from this passage?

b. Did you take note to the phrase "obey the gospel of God" in verse 17? Do you see any parallels to II Thessalonians? What do you think this phrase means?

c. Do you think that people who profess to know Christ would suffer if they did not obey the gospel? Explain why you think they would or wouldn't.

DAY FOUR

1. Are you hurting? Are you suffering? Sometimes, pouring your heart out to God will help you to be able to get through that pain. Verbalizing how you are feeling is part of the acceptance and healing process. Write out your prayer to God. Tell him what you are thinking and how you feel. If you don't feel comfortable doing this in this workbook, do it on another piece of paper.

2. When you suffer, you need to realize that you are not alone. Read Hebrews 5:7-9 and note what you learn.

Again, don't miss the word "obey." How does this compare to what you have seen in II Thessalonians?

3. Let's put some application to these Scriptures. How do you think God uses these hurts to make you "worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering?" What Christlike qualities could be forged in you through your fiery afflictions?

DAY FIVE

1. According to II Thessalonians 1, what is going to happen to those who persecute or afflict Christians? Note how this is described and when this will occur.
2. Do you think that this is fair of God? Explain why you feel this way.

3. What have you learned that can help you through the trials in your life, or help you to minister to others who are suffering?

4. Carefully read through Psalm 73. The first 16 verses of this Psalm could sound like you or me in the midst of our struggles. You can feel the helplessness, the sense of unfairness in the writer's words. He looks around and wonders, "WHY?" Sound familiar? As you come to the end of this passage you see a shift of attitude.

a. What causes this shift in attitude according to verse 17?

b. Isn't it amazing at the change in perspective when we take our eyes off of our problems and focus them squarely on God. Our attitude changes. We realize that God is still in control. From verse 17 to the end of the chapter, list what the writer perceives about the end of the wicked people as well as his position in God.

The End of the Wicked	Position in God

5. When you are hurting, suffering, or confused, run to the Psalms. These are praises to God for who He is and what He has done. They are a reminder to us to keep a proper perspective and focus. Stop looking at the problems and start looking to the sovereign God who is the Creator and Sustainer of all we observe. Let Him reveal to us His majesty, His greatness, and His power. Let Him remind us of who He is and how trivial the burdens of this life truly are in comparison to eternity. As you run to the Psalms, make a list of passages that can help you in your times of distress. Keep adding to your list on a daily basis, and post them where you will be reminded constantly that we serve an awesome and sovereign God, and if He can control the world and the heavens and all we survey, surely He is capable of watching over us as well. I am going to start your list off with a great passage.

Psalm 9:7-10

*But the LORD abides forever; He has established His throne for judgment,
And He will judge the world in righteousness; He will execute judgment for the peoples with equity.*

*The LORD also will be a stronghold for the oppressed, A stronghold in times of trouble;
And those who know Your name will put their trust in You, For You, O LORD, have not forsaken those who seek You.*