



## II Thessalonians 1:1-4, 11-12 New Revised Standard Version

<sup>1</sup> Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy,

To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

<sup>2</sup> Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

<sup>3</sup> We must always give thanks to God for you, brothers and sisters, as is right, because your faith is growing abundantly and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing. <sup>4</sup> Therefore we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your steadfastness and faith during all your persecutions and the afflictions that you are enduring.

<sup>11</sup> To this end we always pray for you, asking that our God will make you worthy of his call and will fulfill by his power every good resolve and work of faith, <sup>12</sup> so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

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“Be an encourager.  
The world has plenty of  
critics already.”  
Dave Willis

Willis’ words are quite appropriate when we think about life and the many messages which are communicated day after day. There are more than enough people to tell us when we get something wrong or are happy to let us know when “the sky is falling.” For some reason, criticism and negativity seem to be more natural these days.

I am not suggesting this is anything new as I am pretty certain Paul had his share of discouragers; just that it appears easier, if not more popular, to cut someone down rather than lift him or her up. The Christian faithful in Macedonia’s capital city of Thessalonica (Northern Greece) found themselves in an unspecified period of opposition which resulted from their relationship with Christ. Under these circumstances, the Thessalonians may have wondered about their contributions to the Kingdom of God and whether their efforts were of any value.

While we can only speculate concerning some of the issues before the Thessalonians, we hear in this week’s Epistle Lesson the words of an apostle concerned for and also complimentary of a group of faithful believers. If they had any doubts about their efforts, the words of Paul seem to counter those concerns. Paul believed in the Thessalonians and was grateful for all that they had done and were doing for the faith in spite of any external pressure.

Over the past few Sundays, we have been focusing upon living a life which honors God and Paul has challenged us to: treasure our calling, recenter our focus, execute our ministry, and leave our mark. As we walk this earth and minister to the needs of others, one of the most important works which we can offer is that of encouraging those who labor alongside of us. Paul reminds us:

- 1. Those who are doing deserve our appreciation.**
- 2. Those who are struggling need our inspiration.**
- 3. Those who are discouraged desire our prayers.**

**Prayer Pebble:** Lord, not only does my life and work have need of encouragement, but you have challenged me to be an encourager for others. Help me to offer gratitude, inspiration, and support for others and their contributions. Amen.