

With This in Mind

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Have you ever felt depressed? How about just feeling down and out? At times we may start to feel overburdened with trials and problems of life. Sometimes, we need some encouragement from people who have already gone through tough times.

“Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experience of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, ambition inspired, and success achieved.” – Helen Keller

This quote is from someone who went through much suffering and trials since she was born blind and deaf.

“A gem cannot be polished without friction, nor a man perfected without trials”. – Seneca

This saying was from a past great philosopher. He tried to get people to think in the right manner when dealing with trials and sufferings. To this philosopher, we need trials and sufferings because they help to shape and strengthen our character and our mind. When things go bad, who do we look to for strength and comfort? Do we go to a 10-year-old boy who has not yet had to handle adult type of trials and suffering or do we go to a sixty-year-old person who has been through a lot and is still smiling? I think I would go to the sixty-year-old. There are so many people all around us who can't handle the problems of life. CDC states that about 16% of Americans are on some type of antidepressant drug (2025). The homeless situation is growing by leaps and bounds with no end in sight. Many can't handle the stress of life and become depended on the government and churches for all their needs. Suicide accounts for about 20% of all kids' deaths and is the second leading cause of death for youth aged 10 to 14. People have a hard time dealing with suffering and trials and Christians do as well if we

are honest with ourselves. For a Christian, suffering and trials can weaken our faith till we become numb to sin. We are not alone in this battle. Believers, starting with Adam to now have had to deal with trials and sufferings, not just physically, but spiritually and mentally as well. Paul had to address this issue with the churches during his day. In fact, Apostle Paul talks about suffering about 150 times in his letters in the New Testament. It's an issue we have and must deal with. I really believe the biggest problem we have with suffering and trials of life is the mental part. We have a hard time dealing with suffering and trials mentally. We have to be honest with ourselves on this. When we have issues, our minds will focus on that suffering or trial until we almost crack under the pressure. Paul didn't want to see the people to suffer any more than they already were because of the trial or suffering. As we start with Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians, we see that Paul starts right away into the topic of suffering. So, let's take a look into what Paul has for us.

Let's turn to 2 Thessalonians 1: 1-4 where we read this, "1 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 always to give thanks to God for you, brothers *and sisters*, as is *only* fitting, because your faith is increasing abundantly, and the love of each and every one of you toward one another grows *ever* greater. 4 As a result, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your ^[a]perseverance and faith ^[b]in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure. (NASB – www.biblegateway.com)"

Now, we must look at verses 3 and 4 together because they go together. The church's faith is growing and Paul is very happy about that. At the same time, Paul is happy about how they are dealing with persecutions and afflictions. These persecutions and afflictions actually are helping to build up the Thessalonians' faith. In fact, Paul tells us that their love for each other is growing at the same time. In other words, the people in this church are handling persecution and suffering in the right way. They saw it as Peter saw it. In 1 Peter 1: 6-7, he states this, "6 So be truly glad.^[a] There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you must

endure many trials for a little while. ⁷ These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world. (NLT – www.biblegateway.com)” We could look into James as well and he would say the same thing as Paul and Peter did about how to deal with suffering and trials. The early church had a very different view on suffering and trials than we do today. How can we develop this positive mindset during suffering and trials because most of the time, our minds suffer as well. These people saw suffering and trials as an opportunity for their faith to grow. If we go back to Paul, Paul gives thanks to God that this is happening to them. Paul, Peter, and the Thessalonians had a different mind set on this stuff. This is huge and we don’t understand how huge this is. If you take the Scripture we’ve looked at so far and put it next to Romans 12: 2, you’ll get to see the bigger picture here. In Romans 12: 2, we read, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. (NASB – biblegateway.com)” The Greek term used for “renewing” does mean “renewing”. So, when we are going through suffering and trials, we must pray for a renewing of our minds. Our minds are about the same as our phones. Just this week, I had the screen pop up on my phone that it had an update that needed downloaded and it would take several minutes. They drive me up the wall because they pop up when you don’t have time for an update. I scrolled down the ad and the update was for security updates. So, I downloaded the update because criminals are always changing their tactics to get our personal information out of our phones and some of these updates try to meet these criminal changes. The same goes with renewing of our minds. When a new trial or suffering comes our way, we need to pray for a brain update because we may have never gone through this suffering or trial before. We need Jesus to have the Holy Spirit reset our mind to handle the suffering and trial. We do this so we can see the benefit of our faith grow because of the suffering or trial. What we usually do is dwell on it until we get ourselves so worked up that we are no good to anyone around us including ourselves. It’s not in our DNA to look at suffering and trials as a good thing for building up our faith. When has been the last time you thanked the Lord that your faith was made stronger because of a suffering or a trial? I think most of us would say never. The reason is we are not in the right frame of mind. We need to pray right away at the very beginning for a renewing of our minds. Then we’ll get

to see what the will of God is for this suffering and trial we are going through. What's great about this is no update is the same. What do I mean by this? Well, the Holy Spirit will renew our mind that fits our thinking and the situation. We all think differently – some more than others. So, when we read Peter and Paul and we think they are out of touch on suffering and trials, we must remember they are seeing and thinking about suffering through the Holy Spirit and they see and think about it differently. We can do the same thing which requires us to pray to Jesus for the renewal of our minds.

Let's continue on. Let's look at 2 Thessalonians 1: 5 – 10 where we read, *"⁵ This is ^[c]a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you indeed are suffering. ⁶ ^[d]For after all it is *only* right ^[e]for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, ⁷ and to give relief to you who are afflicted, *along* with us, ^[f]when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with ^[g]His mighty angels ⁸in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God, and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. ⁹These people will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, ¹⁰when He comes to be glorified among His ^[h]saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed—because our testimony to you was believed. (NASB – www.biblegateway.com)"*

Now, Paul focuses more of the suffering from persecution here. Those who persecute Christians, do so out of their hate for Jesus. Jesus tells us that plainly in Matthew 10: 22, "And you will be hated by all because of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end will be saved. (NASB – www.biblegateway.com)" Jesus gives us a great promise here and Paul carries that on by adding that those who hate Jesus will be punished at the end. That is why we turn the other cheek because we have the faith Jesus will take care of those who persecute us because of Jesus. They will be made miserable through conviction and if they still refuse Jesus till the end, then they will be punished by God. This goes back to Romans 12:2 again because we need the renewal of our mind to see persecution in this light – Jesus will take care of the one who is causing the persecution. Our culture tells us that we are the ones who should be punching back, not turning the other cheek. Again, we need to be in the right frame of mind for this kind of suffering. I remember when I was in high school, in one of my classes. I had a bully who sat behind me in class. He liked to flick my ear or flick the back of my head. After awhile, I went to the teacher and asked if I could be moved to another desk and

he asked me why and I told him about the issue. The teacher told me there was nothing he could do and he didn't want to talk to the bully. I said ok. I got so mad, I waited till the teacher left the room to get something and I then turned on the bully. All I remember was I kept bashing his head against the wall. I stopped before the teacher came back and the bully didn't bother me again. The problem is I could have caused him serious brain injury (if he had a brain) and I could still be sitting in prison today. When we ask for the renewing of the mind through Jesus, we get to see the bigger picture and we know He is more than capable in handling the bad actor. During this event with the bully, not once did I pray for help or wisdom to handle the situation. I'm glad the bully was not seriously hurt.

Let's finish up with 2 Thessalonians 1: 11-12, "¹¹To this end also we pray for you always, that our God will consider you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power, ¹²so that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified in you, and you in Him, in accordance with the grace of our God and *the* Lord Jesus Christ. (NASB – www.biblegateway.com)" Now, one of the things we do very well is pray for those who are suffering or going through trials. We see that Paul tells the church that he and his fellow Kingdom workers pray for them always. We must start not only praying about the physical issues that cause suffering, but pray for the renewing of their minds as well to be able to handle whatever it is that can build up their faith which will give honor and glory to our Lord Jesus Christ. Actually, our suffering and trials bring opportunities for us to witness to others about Jesus Christ. This again, requires us to be in the right frame of mind – the mind of Christ. Maybe this is what Paul meant in 1 Corinthians 2: 16, "But we understand these things, for we have the mind of Christ. (NLT – www.biblegateway.com)" When has been the last time you prayed to Jesus that you wanted a renewing of the mind? When has been the last time you prayed to Jesus when you were suffering or going through a trial for the renewing of your mind so you could see it as Jesus would see it? Maybe that is what Paul means by having the mind of Christ. Let's pray more for the renewing of our minds through Jesus.