

## 2 Thessalonians 1:1-12

### Three Marks of a VIBRANT Christian

There was this young elementary girl named Alina - who lived in Atlanta.

A) Alina was tall for her age and she loved water.

Aa) Since she was tall and lean and loved to swim – Parents put her on a swim team.

B) Every Saturday was Swim meet day – Alina loved the swim meets

1) She loved being around other swimmers – loved the excitement of the crowd – and she loved to swim.

C) Problem was – for 2 whole years she came in last in every event she swam in.

Going into the 3<sup>rd</sup> season - one Saturday before her swim meet – Alina's mom sat down with Alina to go over the events she was going to swim in.

A) After mapping out the list – Alina's mom looked at Alina and said – **Today I want you to win one of the races.**

B) There was a short pause – Alina's eyes got big – she said with an excited voice –

1) **YOU MEAN IT'S A RACE!**

C) See for two whole years – Alina thought Saturdays were Swim Meets – **Like in Meet other kids .....**

1) Whole purpose – meet other kids – enjoy swimming

She didn't realize it was a Swim RACE!

A) Suddenly everything made more sense to her – the screaming crowds the teams –

B) Why some swimmers got medals at the end of the day.

C) From that Day forward – Alina rarely lost a Race!

Knowing why we are here – why we are doing what we are doing

A) And **what the win is** in the Christian life is really important. –

B) The Win for us – is very different than what MOST OF US – WOULD truly expect.

1) Keep that in mind as we begin our study today in 2 Thessalonians

C) Because In this first Chapter – Paul says something here that is at the heart of what is the Win

1) What this is all about for us.

2 Thess. was written only a few months after 1 Thess. Written from Corinth 51,52 AD

A) **Problem:** Someone shook them up with a **letter** stating that since they were experiencing **persecutions & sufferings** they were IN the Tribulation time.

**B) Their Confusion?** – The timing of Christ's Return.

C) So this is letter was written to clear up their confusion.

1) **THEME OF 2 THESS – STAND FIRM!**

D) PAUL wants them to know that they haven't missed anything –

1) And that they are doing just Fine

E) Here in Chapter 1 he commends them for their walk & testimony – **3 Marks of a Vibrant Christian**

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 are bound to **thank God always for you**, brethren, as **it is fitting**, **because** your faith grows **exceedingly**, and the **love of every one of you all abounds** toward each other, 4 so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God **for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure**,

**3 MARKS OF A VIBRANT Christian – (MAN) any believer.**

#1 A Faith that grows V.3a -

#2 A Love that Abounds V.3b

#3 A Perseverance in difficulty V.4-12

The First mark of a Vibrant Christian is a Faith that is growing v.3 – **their faith was growing exceedingly.**

A) Exceedingly – speaks of it overflowing – off the charts – no boundaries

B) Faith is meant to grow – Like a muscle – muscles are meant to be used

C) Muscles need two things to grow – Food or Fuel and Exercise.

**Same with our faith**

A) ALL food and no Exercise = FAT – muscles atrophy

B) So too those who only eat spiritually and never exercise – Fat and stagnate

C) Lots of knowledge but that's all it is – never been tested – **KNOWLEDGE PUFFS UP** –  
1) Walking Bible encyclopedia – full of pride – look down on others

D) SO All food and no exercise = FAT

E) ALL exercise and no food = WEAK – Food is fuel

**Same true spiritually – some people love to DO – they love to serve/ Identity in what they do for Jesus/ who they are**

A) But if they never get fed - it doesn't take long before they are running on fumes –

**B) Functioning in the Flesh**

1) Remember Martha – Serving – she is all irritated – Why doing this alone - Jesus don't you care

C) Martha one thing is needed..... Mary chosen.... Intimacy

1) MARTHA – was a great servant but she needed to spend time at Jesus' Feet! –

D) All of us – Healthy balance of food and Exercise.

The Food of faith is the Word of God – **Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God Romans 10:17**

A) Faith comes by the word of God and faith grows through the word of God!

**“Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.” Psalm 119:105 - Guides our steps**

B) V.9 **How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word.**

C) V.11 **Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You.**

**“This book will keep you from sin – but sin will keep you from this book.” { Keeps us Pure**

D) So - God's word is the food of Faith

**How do we exercise Faith?: - James “Be doers of the word and not hearers only.” James 1:22**

A) To just hear does no good!

B) Need to ask ourselves - How can I apply this to my life – Marriage – Work – Church – Relationships

B) Take the word and walk in it!

C) What does a growing faith look like? Examples

**Gideon's faith grew –**

A) He goes from questioning God's calling on his life – **who me?** –

B) To Leading God's Army – against incredible odds  
Judges 7 – 32K Vs at least 135K Midianites

C) Those are incredible odds – but Not incredible enough for God –  
1) Gideon – I Don't like these odds – God - me either – too many - 32,000 whittled down to 300

C) Gideon's life teaches us that a growing faith is **willing to obey even when it doesn't make sense.**

**D) Is there something in your life God is asking you to do – doesn't make sense ?**

E) Something reading in the word – irrational ?  
**Something Like Love your wife.....**

A) Lay down your life - Fear says – If I do that – she is going to take advantage of me – walk all over me -

B) You have grown up thinking – leader means CONTROL

C) Encourage: Do what God's word says and watch what happens.

1) Jesus said: **More blessed to give than to receive**

D) You will be amazed when you start making that your practice.

Repeat Gideon's Life teaches.....

David: David's faith grew: Lion and Bear/  
NEXT – GIANT Goliath – “The same God who delivered me from the Lion and the bear will deliver me from.....”

A) David teaches us that a growing faith – learns to rely on God's past faithfulness in order to overcome new enemies

B) We don't fight for VICTORY but from a position of Victory

1) Jesus Victory – Be strong in the Lord and the power of His might

C) Each victory gives us confidence for the next battle

D) **Contagious** – David's men became giant Killers –

1) None of Saul's – Saul never killed a giant / Goliath

**How do our kids become giant killers – watch us**

A) I watched My Dad kill the Giant of Alcohol and Anger

B) New Guy – transformed – Kindest – most generous – most spirit directed – ever known!

C) Older I get – people say: look like my Dad – I just want to be like my dad!

1) David teaches us that a growing faith – learns to rely on God's past faithfulness in order to overcome new enemies

**One more example: Peter's faith grew:**

A) Peter goes from Denying Christ by **a fire and a few** – to Preaching before 3,000 –

B) Later Reaching out to touch a lame man – He was healed!

C) Peter's life teaches us that a **growing faith is one that rebounds after failure and is marked by a fresh boldness !**

D) Perhaps you have been crippled today by a failure: Your life has been placed on the sideline – on the shelf

1) Guilt and condemnation – your constant accusers

E) Lord is saying today: Believe / Forgiven / Forgotten / Rise up – Allow me to use you once more !

**So those are some examples of what a growing faith looks like!**

A) But this is what we need to understand – in everyone of these scenarios the person's faith grew as their understanding of God grew –

B) Lucy to Aslan – you are so much bigger – Aslan **Every year you grow you will find me bigger**

C) Same is true in the Christian life - More we grow the bigger and greater God gets to us!

1) More dependent – reliant

D) So the 1<sup>ST</sup> Mark of a Vibrant Christian MAN – Vibrant Christian - **IS A Faith that grows V.3a**

**#2 A Love that Abounds V.3b**

A) NOTE this – the last two traits are the byproduct of the first one – Faith grows – we get closer to Jesus - more surrendered to Jesus – more like Jesus

B) One of the ways that becomes evident is His love in us Abounds

C) **Abounding** = “to overspread” – as a fire or a flood covers everything in its path.

1) Love is **OOZING OUT OF YOU!**

D) “...the love of God has been *poured out* in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”  
Romans 5:5

**E) God's love has been poured into us by the Holy Spirit and it is His desire that it also be poured out of us !**

1) Love for the Lord/ each other / the lost

John 15 – **Abide in me and my words abide in you – result you are going to bear much Fruit –**

A) Chief Characteristic of that fruit is love - God is Love

B) The nutrients of who He is are flowing into me and you.

1) More connected to Him – MORE LOVING

C) That love is seen the clearest – at how we love the unlovable. {Not our friends – wife – kids

1) Those who are difficult – and test your patience

D) We all have them in our lives!

**I was talking with a guy not too long ago –**

A) He is a difficult guy always having problems with other people.

B) Never sees the problems in his own life – always someone else's fault

C) He had the audacity to question the spiritual maturity of the guys he was having problems with.

1) **“I just don't think they are very spiritual – if they were they would be a lot more patient and loving”**

D) **I responded by saying:** Believe me they have grown because in their BC days they would have beat the heck out of you a few times already.

**Marks of growth – when you are no longer reacting the way that you used to – BC days – or 1<sup>st</sup> saved.**

A) **Marks of growth** – people who would normally make you mad – you feel sorry for – see their problem

B) They are acting the way they are – BROKEN

BAGGAGE –

1) Stuff they haven't given to Jesus yet –

C) If they did – He would do a work in them.

D) Marks of growth: **See people who are LOST** – acting like lost people – compassion – You just like them

1) Mark of growth – when the things that break the heart of Jesus break our heart to.

E) That is what happens the more time we spend with Jesus

**But You know when I am the least likely to be loving**

A) It is when I get my eyes off of Jesus and on to myself – on to others

B) When I get self focused or overly concerned with my needs-

1) I get Critical and condemning – I don't want to serve or give

**C) I want to complain about what isn't happening - things that are not being done**

**So 2<sup>nd</sup> Mark of a Vibrant believer** – the Love of Jesus that has been poured into him/her – is poured out!

A) #2 A Love that Abounds V.3b

**#3 A patient endurance in difficulty V.4-12**

**V.4 again -** we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your **persecutions and tribulations** that you endure,

C) The believers in Thessalonica were encountering great persecution for their faith....Roman World

D) Patience = standing under or standing firm.

**Not passively bearing things that come our way, but a “masculine constancy under trial”. (Barclay)**

A) Masculine: Constancy - Standing firm – not throwing in the towel.

B) Paul was boasting about the **Patient endurance** that was being modeled by this Church in the midst of their Persecution.

C) What Paul says next in v5-12 gives us some incredible insight into how we Endure in the midst of our difficulties, tribulations and persecutions

**D) How do we patiently endure? – Remember 3 things**

**1<sup>st</sup> Remember that God is Sovereign v5-10**

<sup>5</sup> which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer;  
<sup>6</sup> **since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you,**

**Paul is reminding them here that although right now times were tough – The Enemy was brutal.**

**A) In the end – Jesus Wins**

**B) They started the war – but He is going to finish it**

**C) Notice how Paul describes it**

**V.6 it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you,**

<sup>7</sup> and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, **<sup>8</sup> in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God,** and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

<sup>9</sup> **These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,** <sup>10</sup> when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed.

**We look at the world – Crazy – evil is growing**

**A) God is still Sovereign – He is simply letting evil run it's course –**

**B) One day Jesus is going to return and set things RIGHT –**

**<sup>8</sup> in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God,** and on those who do not obey the gospel

**C) ONE DAY – THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD WOULD BE RESTORED**

**Seminary students at seminary in the south – Playing basketball in the gym –**

**A) African American Janitor – wait around for them to finish – clean and close up – read his bible.**

**B) One day – Students finished playing – saw him reading the word – asked what reading**

**1) Too which he replied – REVELATION**

**C) Shocked: Revelation – even understand it.**

**1) Sure: JESUS WINS**

**D) His plan will be carried out!**

**E) Confidence for us – struggling – He who began a good work in you will be faithful to complete it**

**So 1<sup>st</sup> Remember God's Sovereignty**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Remember God's glory**

**11** Therefore we also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith **with power,** **12** that the name of our **Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him,** according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

**Listen friends this is the win! – this is what we are running for – this is what life is all about**

**A) Jesus being glorified in you – and you in Him!**

**B) It is about His Glory? Ok how does that happen?**

**1) Easier than you think**

**C) Often times we think that God is only glorified by those who do something “GREAT” for him.**

**1) Missionary – lead a whole village to Christ –**

**D) Preach at a Crusade - Give a million dollars**

**1) We equate glory with great things – big things – extra ordinary things**

**E) In this day of social media those things get noticed a lot more than they ever did before.**

**Problem is very few of us – ever do anything like that**

**A) Does that mean our lives are not bringing glory to God? - NOT AT ALL!**

**B) THE one human being that glorified God more than anyone was - JESUS**

**C) Jesus on the night of His betrayal – took robe – did something so ordinary – lowest servant**

**1) Washed feet!**

The greatest hindrance in our spiritual life is that we will only look for big things to do. Yet, “Jesus...took a towel and...began to wash the disciples' feet...” (John 13:3-5). Oswald Chambers

- D) God is glorified –
- ❖ Washing dishes
  - ❖ Mowing the lawn
  - ❖ Working hard –
  - ❖ Being faithful –

D) Normal everyday things of life

**Colossians 3:17 – Whatever you do in word or deed do all in the name of Jesus.**

1 Corinthians 10:31 – **Do all to the glory of God**

**Whatever you do – do all to the glory of God**

**Drudgery is the test of genuine character.**

We are not meant to be seen as God's perfect, bright-shining examples, but to be seen as the everyday essence of ordinary life exhibiting the miracle of His grace. Don't always expect God to give you His thrilling moments, but learn to live in those common times of the drudgery of life by the power of God.

**So - Remember God's Glory**

**3<sup>rd</sup> Remember His power v.11-12**

A) We do it all – ordinary and the extra ordinary – his power – **His grace.**

B) His Grace is sufficient – Power is made perfect in our weakness!

C) This is hard for us – Especially men – We grow up being taught – **STAND ON OWN 2 FEET.**

1) One of the first stories we learn is of the **Little engine that could.**

**We carry that into our relationship with God – if I try hard enough – I can do this –**

A) But when it comes to being the Father/ the Husband – the Christian man called to be

B) **The STANDARD IS SO HIGH!**

1) We don't compare ourselves with each other  
**THE STANDARD IS JESUS – I fall way Short!**

C) I will be honest that used to discourage me – Now it encourages me to admit my dependency

**Men we are to live between these two ideas**

A) John 15 Jesus said – **Without me .... Nothing**

B) Phil 4:13 – **I Can do all things through Christ who strengthens me**

Going through it right now!

A) Stand Firm – Patiently enduring

**Remembering God is Sovereign** – His plan  
**WILL BE**

Carried out –

- ❖ **He who began a good work in you will be faithful to complete it!**

**Remember God's glory:**

A) All about His Glory – Jesus being glorified in the very ordinary moments of your life

B) Be Faithful – Do it for Him

**Remember His Grace and Power!**

A) His strength – not yours