

Suffering takes various forms and comes about for various reasons. Except for suffering for our own sin, we can endure all other suffering for the sake of the kingdom of God. The Thessalonian believers suffered because of their faith in Jesus Christ and the encouragement which Paul gave them can be our encouragement, even when the suffering has other reasons, if we suffer for the sake of the kingdom.

I. *The Thessalonians’ patient endurance in persecution and trials was an “evidence.”*

1. “All this” (NIV) or “this” points to the previous verse: “your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring.
2. “All this” is an evidence, that is, patient suffering is pointing to something other than itself.
 - a. This is contrary to natural experience.
 - b. Mature believers can and should be able to think further than the suffering, at least to rejoice, pray, and give thanks (1 Thessalonians 5:16–18).
 - c. But Paul calls the Thessalonians to look still further to that which patient enduring points, which also would offer them encouragement.

II. *The “evidence” points to God’s future righteous judgment when the worthiness of believers will be declared.*

1. This divine judgment is yet future.
 - a. There is present judgment by God upon believers, though that is probably not the reference here (cf. 1 Peter 4:17; Acts 5:1–10; 1 Corinthians 11:29–32).
 - b. The context (vv 6–10) is talking about the future judgment of God.
2. This divine judgment is righteous.
 - a. The ESV better represents the literal word order and sense: “evidence of the righteous judgment of God” and not “evidence that God’s judgment is righteous.”
 - b. Nevertheless it is true that what God will do is just and right.
3. This divine judgment is the occasion when the Thessalonian believers who are suffering such persecution will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God.
 - a. “Counted worthy” is a legal term, which does not mean “make worthy” but “declare worthy,” just as in a courtroom a judge does not make a person innocent or guilty, but evaluates the evidence and declares the innocence or guilt.
 - b. At the future judgment God will declare that those believers who had suffered patiently such persecution are worthy of His kingdom. They were made worthy by God when they came to Christ by faith. Their faith was proven genuine in trials as they endured.
 - c. As a result at the time of the future judgment Jesus Christ will be glorified in His saints (1:10) and believers will be shown to have wrongly been scorned and persecuted, but rather worthy of the kingdom of God (cf. Hebrews 11:38; 1 Peter 1:7).

The Thessalonians were to be encouraged to know that one day, on the day of judgment, the evidence of their genuine faith would be displayed, their true character as children of God would be stated, and they would be declared worthy of the kingdom.

III. *The Thessalonian believers suffered persecution patiently for the sake of the kingdom of God.*

1. The Thessalonian believers had turned to God from idols (1 Thess 1:9) and proclaimed their faith. As a result they were persecuted for their faith, but could be comforted that one day their allegiance to Jesus Christ will be acknowledged.
2. It appears correct that we can extend this encouragement to other types of suffering (cf. James 1).
 - a. In “material” trials, like food and clothing, Jesus said not to worry but to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matt 6:31–33).
 - b. In sickness and loss, Job set the example by worshiping and praising God (Job 1:20–22) and accepting trouble from God as well as good (Job 2:10).
3. To suffer for the kingdom of God is to remain true to God, pursue His priorities, and submit to His rule throughout the suffering.

Is it for the kingdom of God that you suffer? One day it will be made clear that children of God suffered for the sake of kingdom and it will be evidence that they are worthy of the kingdom of God. Know first of all that you are a child of God. Then if you must suffer, suffer for the sake of the kingdom and let it be an assurance of future blessing and glory.