



## Perseverance in Adversity

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COVID-19 has been with us for over 6 months now and with no end in sight. Some are hospitalized or have lost loved ones, and many have been impacted financially. So how should we live in this adversity? How can we be steadfast in our faith, love, and hope? The Thessalonian church gave us a good example.

That church wasn't perfect, but it was a source of joy for Paul. "We ought always to thank God for you.... Therefore, among God's churches we boast about your perseverance and faith..." (2 Thes 1:3~5) So what prompted Paul for the praises since that church wasn't noteworthy in its outward appearance or name recognition? We can find some answers in the passage.

**1. A growing faith.** Paul said he should thank God because their faith was "growing more and more". The believers there were under persecution; some have lost wealth while some lost freedom and life. However, they didn't complain to God or abandon their faith, instead they continued their fellowship and preached the gospel. Even as our belief brings pain or suffering, if we hold firm to our faith then it'd be a sign of true faith to God and the world. Persecution can destroy false faith, but adversity produces a purified church because it pushes true believers closer to God. This is exactly how faith grows in all of us.

The term "Church growth" is often connected to numbers such as offerings, saved people, or church size, but none of these is a proper metric for church growth. In the past six months I've seen some Chinese churches in the U.S., Brazil, and South Africa that didn't grow, and even shrunk, in size. But if brothers and sisters grew spiritually with the love for one another, then that would be a growing church, because only spiritual growth is everlasting.

**2. Ample love.** When Paul praised their "love every one of you has for each other is increasing" he didn't mean sympathy for a fellow believer's predicament. Instead he meant the selfless love that's rooted in true concern for the others; a love that supports Christians during a time of suffering, test, or persecution. I've witnessed such love in action in my church during the COVID-19 lockdown – young people proactively helping elders with shopping chores, meal preparations for a pregnant sister, people helping with online funerals or weddings, increased love offerings, etc. I believe many churches, including my own church, are robust in teaching and holding the Truth, but are lacking in love for one another and the reliance on God. We often insist on our perspective but forget to love one another. By being a living example of the Truth, and not just insisting on the Truth, leads to faith and love.

**3. Hope that perseveres.** Paul's praises also included "perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring." Thessalonian Christians were under great pressure as they lived in a hostile environment, yet they received Holy Spirit's message with joy in spite of severe suffering (1 Thes 1:6). The believers were joyous because, like the apostles, they were counted as worthy of suffering for the Name of Christ (Acts 5:41). Have we been through any rigorous test for Christ and God's kingdom? Or are we peacetime soldiers of Christ living comfortably and untested? Can our faith hold up in the face of severe persecution and adversity? We live in a relative safe environment for our belief, but we could still experience some level of persecution if we pursue a devout life style or try to share the gospel with others.

In 1 Thes 1:3 Paul praised the church for their "endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ" through their faith and love. Perseverance to the hope enables us to feel fulfilled as we produce spiritual fruits in persecution or suffering. As we hold steadfast, our faith is strengthened. Lord Jesus expects us to be firm in our faith during adversity, which would make us worthy of God's kingdom.

Would apostle Paul be proud of our church? How would he rate our church? I pray our work of faith, toil of love, and perseverance of hope would also resemble the Thessalonian believers.

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## PRAYER REQUESTS

1. Please continue to pray for Rev. Douglas Wu and Whitney as they face the challenge to revert back to in-person meetings. Ask God to lead a smooth transition, or to have both online and in-person meetings in parallel.
2. Rustenburg Baptist Church reported positive COVID-19 cases and thus the two-week quarantine is required, please remember this in your prayers. Please also pray for the meetings scheduled with the host churches in Rustenburg and Johannesburg to discuss when the venues are available again. Hopefully the sanitation requirements can be resolved so in-person meetings can resume. Ask the Holy Spirit to act by abiding God's will.
3. Please remember the Tuesday and Wednesday night Bible study groups in Johannesburg which have suspended meetings. They had asked Rev. Douglas Wu to postpone his planned visit out of fear of infection. Please pray for their faiths could be strengthened and for the Lord to bestow peace upon them.
4. Ask God to lead the ministry of Alex and Nicole Ko in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, and to protect them during their visitations, as well as to remove obstacles such as power outage or app usage in their online meetings.
5. Pray for the evangelical ministry and expansion of all churches in South Africa in 2021 and ask God for mercy in guidance.
6. Pray for Thursday night Bible study in Belo Horizonte and Machala churches in Brazil.
7. Pray for the planned visitations in new fields for 2021—the cities of Sao Luis and Santa Cruz La Serra
8. Pray for the president of Brazil to have Godly wisdom in managing the COVID-19 epidemic
9. Pray for the mayoral and city council elections in Brazil in November and may God's will prevail.
10. Pray for CIM Canada's cross-cultural evangelical ministry in Ghana, Togo, and Ukraine. Ask God for wisdom and guidance on the timing for the STM team to go to work in the harvest field.
11. Pray for God to provide CIM Canada more financial support in 2020. Although much of their ministry has been suspended, but they still must bear the financial obligations to their working partners in supporting pioneering work in local churches and teachers in village schools.
12. Ask God to provide wisdom to CIM co-workers in performing their duties in the ministry entrusted by the Lord. Pray that God will move more brothers and sisters to join the service so God's kingdom would be more prosperous. Pray for God's abundant provision for all the financial needs of CIM.

*Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.*



*--Romans 5:3-5*

## FINANCIAL REPORT

September 2020

	Income	Expense	Balance
<b>General</b>	\$8,710	\$6,538	\$2,172
<b>Missions</b>	\$10,034	\$6,415	\$3,619
<b>Total</b>	\$18,744	\$12,953	\$5,791

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