Grace Fellowship; GBC; Emmaus EFC: CIC 10th Ann; Hebron; WV Field Lead Dr Rick Griffith

Title

12 July 87; 4 March 01; 8 April 01; 6 Nov 16; 10 Feb 19; 6 Mar 19 Single Message

NIV 30 Minutes

**Affirming the Afflicted**

**2 Thessalonians 1:1-4**

**Topic:** Affirmation

**Subject:** Affirming the afflicted

**Complement:** will encourage them to mature in Christ.

**Purpose:** The listeners will reach out in a tangible way to someone who is hurting.

**Reading:** 2 Thessalonians 1:1-12

**Attribute:** We Worship Our God Who Affirms

**Meditation:** 2 Corinthians 1:3-4

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God."

### Interest: Lately I have been thinking a lot about how we all need to be affirmed.

Affirmation

#### The past weeks both Susan and I have had the most health issues ever in our 35-year marriage. Last month was the first time we both ever missed church. My voice just wasn’t in shape to preach, I didn’t have the energy, etc. I won’t give you all the details lest it become “an organ recital.”

#### That’s not what is important. What is more significant is that some reached out to us and genuinely affirmed us! Susan’s eye operation to correct her double vision did happen and was a success, despite our doubts about it going through with her rapid heartbeat days before the operation. Now, instead of seeing two husbands with her double vision, she is back to having only one husband!

#### Curious about this concept of affirmation, I began looking up the word “affirmation” on Google to see what I could find. To my surprise, nearly all of the affirmations were about *self-affirmation!*

Self

(5 slides)

### Need: That raises a question: Do you think it will be sufficient for you simply to recite a mantra of 1000 self-affirmations?

Don’t Deserve

Enough

#### What if you don’t feel that you *deserve* self-esteem?

Math

#### What do you do if you say, “I am not sure how many problems I have because math is one of them”?

#### Isn’t it far better for others to praise you than for you to praise yourself?

#### More than that, isn’t even better for you to praise others on how valuable they are to you? Are you affirming others?

### Background: Today we will look at a church caught in the “winepress of persecution” that had yielded to God, resulting in a fragrant display of God’s grace. The Thessalonians still had “persecutions and trials” about a year after Paul had established the church but they were bearing under it, though crushed.

Bkgrd

### The church was located in northern Greece on a peninsula as both a key port city and also on the main east-west land route in the Roman Empire called the Via Egnatia.

Down With Paul

Overview

(3 slides)

3 Ways

Focus

(3 slides)

1:1-2

(9 slides)

1:3-12

(15 slides)

Persevere

Marbles or Grapes

Port & Land

(2 slides)

### Paul established the Thessalonian church amidst great difficulty. The background is in Acts 17. Paul only stayed there about three months, but the Jews who kicked him out over to Berea even followed him to Berea and kicked him out of there too!

Map

### Need: Love means seeing needs. I wonder if we see when others have genuine needs—physical issues are easier to see, but spiritual needs are a greater challenge.

Spiral

#### Life goes so fast, often it’s tough to take care of ourselves let alone others. I struggle with this—don’t you?

#### Do you struggle with how to help those who are in tough straits? Do you know anyone afflicted in their relationship with their spouse, in financial woe, struggling with children or work or something else?

### Subject: How can you help those who are going through tough times? How to ease the pain rather than add to it like Job’s counselors? How can you help those struggling?

Subject

### Text: Today we're going to take a brief look into the first four verses of 2 Thessalonians to see *how Paul affirmed* the afflicted believers at the ancient city of Thessalonica in order *to encourage them to grow in Christ*. How did he comfort them to help them grow?

How to Affirm

### Transition: The text gives three tips on *how to affirm the afflicted*. Here’s the first…

# I. See God’s perspective on trials.

MP

**[View difficulties with the Lord’s eyes.]**

## Paul saw affliction from God's perspective (1:1-2).

1-2

### You may be wondering why I say that these verses teach us to help afflicted people see God's perspective. Aren't they just the preliminaries to the letter that follows?

### Yes, but see how many times Paul mentions God in this one sentence in the Greek text—four times!

#### Twice he refers to the Father and twice to Christ, who is placed on equal level with the Father since He, too, is God.

#### Each of the 3 chapters in 1 Thessalonians note the "Lord Jesus Christ" 3 times! In fact, 1-2 Thessalonians has 136 verses but mentions God 149 times!

Ps 121

God Focus Chart

## We also need to help others focus on the Lord in their difficulty.

Sad Girl

### We all have peaks and valleys in our lives—peaks when it's easy to see the Lord and valleys when it's difficult to see Him. Swindoll writes…

Jesus Cares

By looking to our lofty Lord Jesus Christ we realize that He is not looking away from us in complacency but looking down on us in compassion.

• Quote

I will lift up my eyes to the mountains;

From [where else] shall my help come?

My help comes from the Lord,

Who made heaven and earth (Ps. 121:1-2).

Valleys

Do you look to the peaks when you’re in the valleys? Or are you so rutted in the valleys that you’ve forgotten the mountains are even there? People who fail to affirm usually do so because they fail to see the Lord in the midst of it all. When we look up, we are reminded that God is not removed… not absent… not out of touch. And then we get a glimpse of the divine perspective on our circumstances—which can only be seen from the peaks, not in the valleys.

Look up

Rom 8:28 Love God

Man on Ladder

Title

Title

—Charles R. Swindoll, *Steadfast Christianity* (Fullerton, CA; Insight for Living, 1986)*,* 4

### Aren't you encouraged when you're around people who always talk about the Lord?

#### They see life from God's viewpoint—and there's no more encouraging view!

#### Granted, there's balance here, too. This doesn't mean you go around blabbing all the time, "Well, all things work for the good!"

Rom 8:28   
For Good

#### The French atheist, Voltaire, made fun of such people in his novel *Candide*. He constantly belittles the Christian in the story, Dr. Pangloss, every time something awful happens, saying, "Well, all things work for the good!"

Voltaire

Pangloss

#### Voltaire quotes, of course, only a portion of Romans 8:28, omitting where this applies only to those who love God. Even Christians only quote part of the verse too.

Rom 8:28   
Love God

#### It actually applies this optimism only to those who both love God and are called according to his purpose. We must be “the called ones” who know Him and love Him.

Rom 8:28   
Full verse

### There are ways of turning people's sights to the Lord without always quoting Scripture and saying, "Praise Jesus, Praise Jesus…"

Hands

#### Sometimes we affirm and turn others to God by saying nothing at all.

• Say nothing

#### Often just writing down a Scripture reference for the person and encouraging him to look it up later is best—or writing a letter like Paul did right now.

• Bible reference

### We need to realign ourselves towards God because his plan is perfect!

Special Olympics

#### A few years ago, at the Seattle Special Olympics, six contestants, all physically or mentally disabled, assembled at the starting line for the 100-yard dash.

#### At the gun, they all started out, not exactly in a dash, but with a relish to run the race to the finish and win. All, that is, except one little boy who stumbled on the asphalt, tumbled over a couple of times, and began to cry.

Olympics  
Fall

#### The others heard the boy cry. They slowed down and looked back. Then they all turned around and went back ... every one of them.

Olympics  
Look Back

#### One girl with Down's Syndrome bent down and kissed him and said, "This will make it better." Then all six linked arms and ran together to the finish line. Everyone in the stadium stood, and the cheering went on for several minutes. People who were there are still telling the story.

Olympics  
Front

Olympics  
Back

#### Why? Because deep down we know this one thing: What matters in this life is more than winning for ourselves. *God’s view* on life is helping others win, even if it means slowing down and changing our course.

#### "A candle loses nothing by lighting another candle." You can be that candle to share God’s view and bring light to others without in the least diminishing your own light.

Candle

MPI

(So these first two verses show that seeing God's perspective helps us to reach out and affirm others. There’s another way to affirm others in verse 3…)

# II. Thank God for others' growth.

MP

**[Others benefit in their spiritual walk when they hear you praise God for them.]**

## Paul thanked God for two things—their faith and their love (1:3).

3

## I wonder how often you thank God for others’ spiritual growth during their difficulty.

Title

Title

### When someone is going through trials how do we generally pray?

#### We may hate to admit it, but most of the time we ask God to remove the trials.

#### Notice the focus of Paul's prayer here—not a request that God take away their trials but **thanksgiving**!

#### He affirmed them by praying not for the **removal** of the trial but for character development **through** the trial.

#### Paul doesn't focus on what's going on **around** them—he looks at what God is doing **within** them—building qualities like faith, love, and perseverance mentioned in verse 4.

### He affirmed them that their love for one another kept increasing—so we see Paul affirming their affirmation!

Outstretch Hands

### Prayer for others is no doubt the best way to affirm others. That's why Paul did it!

#### I hope as a church you'll grow to pray beyond a focus on the circumstances and pray that God will use difficulties to build the character of Christ within us.

Prayer Affirms

#### The three qualities Paul notes are a great starting place—faith, love and perseverance.

#### I think our prayer times together as a church would be even better if we make it a point to thank God for others' growth right there in the group.

MPI

(So verses 1-2 showed us that helping others see God's perspective is a great way to affirm them. Then in verse 3 we saw how Paul's thanking God for the character development in the Thessalonians also affirmed them. Now for the third way Paul shows us we can affirm others…)

MPII

# III. Publicly brag about others' spiritual growth.

MP

**[Make your praise common knowledge to help others persevere.]**

## Paul told *others* how well they hung in there (1:4).

4

### He could have been negative—“Man, you should see those Thessalonians’ hassles. Their theology is messed up so much they think they’re in the Tribulation!”

### Not Paul! He said, "Wow! You should see how the church at Thessalonica continues to reach out, deepen in their love, make great strides in trusting God, and endure—despite the most intense persecutions in the Roman Empire. They're doing grrrrrrrreat!"

## People often become what you tell them they will become—especially children.

Looking Right

### Children tend to become what their parents tell them they will become. Major league baseball catcher Jim Sundberg said that his father was always telling Jim, “Jim, one day you’re going to be a great major league catcher.”

Jim Sundberg

### Evangelist Bill Glass asked a group of 1000 inmates, “How many of you had parents that told you that you would end up in prison one day?” Almost every one of the inmates raised their hands.

Bill Glass Prison

Subject

(So what’s this text saying?)

# Conclusion

MI

### Affirm the afflicted to help them to mature in Christ (MI). Encourage others to grow!

Class Picture

### A Catholic nun named Sister Helen P. Mrosla relates this story about affirmation…

He was in the first third grade class I taught at Saint Mary's School in Morris, Minn. All 34 of my students were dear to me, but Mark Eklund was one in a million. Very neat in appearance, but had that happy-to-be-alive attitude that made even his occasional mischievousness delightful.

Mark talked incessantly. I had to remind him again and again that talking without permission was not acceptable. What impressed me so much, though, was his sincere response every time I had to correct him for misbehaving - "Thank you for correcting me, Sister!" I didn't know what to make of it at first, but before long I became accustomed to hearing it many times a day.

Sister Mrosla

One morning my patience was growing thin when Mark talked once too often, and then I made a novice-teacher's mistake. I looked at Mark and said, "If you say one more word, I am going to tape your mouth shut!"

It wasn't ten seconds later when Chuck blurted out, "Mark is talking again." I hadn't asked any of the students to help me watch Mark, but since I had stated the punishment in front of the class, I had to act on it.

I remember the scene as if it had occurred this morning. I walked to my desk, very deliberately opened my drawer and took out a roll of masking tape. Without saying a word, I proceeded to Mark's desk, tore off two pieces of tape and made a big X with them over his mouth. I then returned to the front of the room. As I glanced at Mark to see how he was doing, he winked at me. That did it!! I started laughing. The class cheered as I walked back to Mark's desk, removed the tape, and shrugged my shoulders. His first words were, "Thank you for correcting me, Sister."

• Taped

At the end of the year I was asked to teach junior-high math. The years flew by, and before I knew it Mark was in my classroom again. He was more handsome than ever and just as polite. Since he had to listen carefully to my instructions in the "new math," he did not talk as much in ninth grade as he had in third.

One Friday, things just didn't feel right. We had worked hard on a new concept all week, and I sensed that the students were frowning, frustrated with themselves - and edgy with one another. I had to stop this crankiness before it got out of hand. So I asked them to list the names of the other students in the room on two sheets of paper, leaving a space between each name. Then I told them to think of the nicest thing they could say about each of their classmates and write it down.

It took the remainder of the class period to finish the assignment, and as the students left the room, each one handed me the papers. Charlie smiled. Mark said, "Thank you for teaching me, Sister. Have a good weekend."

That Saturday, I wrote down the name of each student on a separate sheet of paper, and I listed what everyone else had said about that individual. On Monday I gave each student his or her list. Before long, the entire class was smiling. "Really?" I heard whispered. "I never knew that meant anything to anyone!" "I didn't know others liked me so much!"

No one ever mentioned those papers in class again. I never knew if they discussed them after class or with their parents, but it didn't matter. The exercise accomplished its purpose. The students were happy with themselves and one another again.

That group of students moved on. Several years later, after I returned from vacation, my parents met me at the airport. As we were driving home, Mother asked me the usual questions about the trip - the weather, my experiences in general. There was a slight lull in the conversation. Mother gave Dad a side-ways glance and simply says, "Dad?" My father cleared his throat as he usually did before something important. "The Eklunds called last night," he began. "Really?" I said. "I haven't heard from them in years. I wonder how Mark is."

Dad responded quietly. "Mark was killed in Vietnam," he said. "The funeral is tomorrow, and his parents would like if it you could attend." To this day I can still point to the exact spot on I-494 where Dad told me about Mark.

Uniformed

I had never seen a serviceman in a military coffin before. Mark looked so handsome, so mature. All I could think at that moment was, Mark, I would give all the masking tape in the world if only you would talk to me.

The church was packed with Mark's friends. Chuck's sister sang "The Battle Hymn of the Republic." Why did it have to rain on the day of the funeral? It was difficult enough at the graveside. The pastor said the usual prayers, and the bugler played taps. One by one those who loved Mark took a last walk by the coffin and sprinkled it with holy water. I was the last one to bless the coffin. As I stood there, one of the soldiers who had acted as pallbearer came up to me. "Were you Mark's math teacher?" he asked. I nodded as I continued to stare at the coffin. "Mark talked about you a lot," he said.

After the funeral, most of Mark's former classmates headed to Chuck's farmhouse for lunch. Mark's mother and father were there, obviously waiting for me. "We want to show you something," his father said, taking a wallet out of his pocket. "They found this on Mark when he was killed. We thought you might recognize it." Opening the billfold, he carefully removed two worn pieces of notebook paper that had obviously been taped, folded and refolded many times. I knew without looking that the papers were the ones on which I had listed all the good things each of Mark's classmates had said about him.

"Thank you so much for doing that," Mark's mother said. "As you can see, Mark treasured it."

Mark's classmates started to gather around us. Charlie smiled rather sheepishly and said, "I still have my list. It's in the top drawer of my desk at home." Chuck's wife said, "Chuck asked me to put his in our wedding album." "I have mine too," Marilyn said. "It's in my diary." Then Vicki, another classmate, reached into her pocketbook, took out her wallet and showed her worn and frazzled list to the group. "I carry this with me at all times," Vicki said without batting an eyelash. "I think we all saved our lists." That's when I finally sat down and cried. I cried for Mark and for all his friends who would never see him again (http://assumptionofmorris.org/site/about/ourviralnun/).

### The affirmation *you* give this week just might meet such a specific need that the person will remember it as long as he or she lives.

How ‘bout you?

### Let’s bow. Who needs your affirmation this week, today? One with family struggles? Work issues? School trials? Raise your hand if someone comes to mind. Take time now to tell the Lord *who* you are going to encourage and *how* you’re going to do it—

#### Take that person out for a meal?

#### Offer a helping hand? Send a card or note?

#### Phone him or her to show that you care?

#### Make it simple—but most of all, make it genuine affirmation.

#### Maybe you need to ***receive*** affirmation today more than to ***give*** it. Even if people fail to affirm you, God doesn’t. He sent his own son for you to affirm you—so tell him thanks! If you need human affirmation, we are up here to talk afterwards.

Black

### Prayer

# Preliminary Questions

**Verses Questions**

# Context: What did the author record just prior to this passage?

# Purpose: Why is this passage in the Bible?

# Background: What historical context helps us understand this passage?

# Questions

# Tentative Subject/Complement Statements

Text

# Possible Illustrations

### ENCOURAGEMENT produces great feats [story of how Nathaniel Hawthorne started writing at the encouragement of his wife].

### "Children Learn What They Live" plaque in Kurt's room

### Optional: [ENCOURAGEMENT everyone needs (Suzuki training)]

### Interest: [We all need help when we’re in tough times [Fleming & Churchill.] BUT THIS STORY IS A HOAX SO NOT USED IN 2016!

#### His name was Farmer Fleming, and he was a poor Scottish farmer. One day, while trying to make a living for his family, he heard a cry for help coming from a nearby bog. He dropped his tools and ran to the bog.

#### There, mired to his waist in black muck, was a terrified boy, screaming and struggling to free himself. Farmer Fleming saved the lad from what could have been a slow and terrifying death.

#### The next day, a fancy carriage pulled up to the Scotsman's sparse surroundings. An elegantly dressed nobleman stepped out and introduced himself as the father of the boy Farmer Fleming had saved.

#### "I want to repay you," said the nobleman. "You saved my son's life."

#### "No, I can't accept payment for what I did," the Scottish farmer replied, waving off the offer.

#### At that moment, the farmer's own son came to the door of the family hovel. "Is that your son?" the nobleman asked. "Yes," the farmer replied proudly.

#### "I'll make you a deal. Let me provide him with the level of education my son will enjoy. If the lad is anything like his father, he'll no doubt grow to be a man we both will be proud of." And that he did.

#### Farmer Fleming's son attended the very best schools and in time, he graduated from St. Mary's Hospital Medical School in London, and went on to become known throughout the world as the noted Sir Alexander Fleming, the discoverer of Penicillin.

#### Years afterward, the same nobleman's son who was saved from the bog was stricken with pneumonia. What saved his life this time? Penicillin.

#### The name of the nobleman’s son?

#### Sir Winston Churchill.

**Affirming the Afflicted**

**2 Thessalonians 1:1-4**

**Exegetical Outline**

***Exegetical Idea:***

# I.

# II.

# III.

**Homiletical Outline** (Cyclical inductive form)

# Introduction

### Interest: We all need help when we’re going through difficult times (Fleming).

### Need: Do you struggle with how to help those who are afflicted?

### Subject: How do you help those who are going through tough times?

### Background: Why did Paul write another letter to the Thessalonians?

#### He had just written 1 Thessalonians probably only months before.

#### Evidently Paul got wind of the situation at Thessalonica—the persecution hadn't let up so he wrote them to affirm them for their steadfastness.

### Text: Today we're going to take a brief look into the first four verses of 2 Thessalonians to see how Paul affirmed the afflicted believers at the ancient city of Thessalonica in order to encourage them to grow in Christ. How did he comfort them to help them grow?

### Transition: Here are three tips on how to help others deal with difficulty.

# I. See God’s perspective on trials.

## Paul saw affliction from God's perspective (1:1-2).

## We need to help others focus on the Lord in their difficulty.

# II. Thank God for others' growth.

## Paul thanked God for them (1:3).

## I wonder how often you thank God for others’ spiritual growth.

# III. Publicly brag about others' spiritual growth.

## Paul told *others* how well they hung in there (1:4).

## People often become what you tell them they will become.

# Conclusion

### Affirm the afflicted to help them mature in Christ (MI).

### How are you doing in affirming others (review MPs)?

### Mark Eklund story

### Who needs your affirmation this week, today? Take some moments now to tell the Lord who you are going to encourage [Application]

Grace Baptist Church Dr. Rick Griffith

4 March 2001 Single Message

NIV 30 Minutes

**Affirming the Afflicted**

***2 Thessalonians 1:1-4***

***Complete Outline for Worship Planning***

**Topic:** Affirmation

**Subject:** Affirming the afflicted

**Complement:** will encourage them to mature in Christ.

**Purpose:** The listeners will reach out in a tangible way to someone who is hurting.

**Reading:** 2 Thessalonians 1:1-12

**Attribute:** We Worship Our God Who Affirms

**Meditation:** 2 Corinthians 1:3-4

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God."

# Introduction

Subject: How do you help those who are going through tough times?

# I. See God’s perspective on the situation so you can help others do the same.

# II. Thank God for others' growth because it affirms them in their faith and love.

# III. Publicly brag about others' spiritual growth to affirm that they can hang in there.

# Conclusion

### Affirming the afflicted will encourage them to mature in Christ (Main Idea).

### How will you affirm someone this week?

Dr. Rick Griffith

**Affirming the Afflicted**

***2 Thessalonians 1:1-4***

***Outline with Blanks for Bulletin***

# Introduction

Subject: How do you help those who are going through \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ times?

# I. See \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ perspective on the situation so you can help others do the same.

# II. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ God for others' growth because it affirms them in their faith and love.

# III. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ about others' spiritual growth to affirm that they can hang in there.

# Conclusion

### Affirming the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ will encourage them to mature in Christ (Main Idea).

### How will you affirm someone this week?

Grace Fellowship EFC Series on 2 Thessalonians Rick Griffith

July 12, 1987 Message 1 of 8

NIV 25 Minutes

**Affirming the Afflicted**

**2 Thessalonians 1:1-4**

**Topic:** Affirmation

**Subject:** Affirming the afflicted

**Complement:** will encourage them to mature in Christ.

**Purpose:** The listeners will reach out in a tangible way to someone who is hurting.

**Attribute:** We Worship Our God Who Affirms

**Meditation:** 2 Corinthians 1:3-4

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God."

**Children's Story:** "The Devil's Blindfolds" (adapted, in *Teaching with Objects*, pp. 29-30).

**Introduction**

1. You probably noticed that the title of today's message is "Affirming the Afflicted." When you come across rarely used words like that it's always good to use the dictionary, but since you probably don't have your dictionary with you I'll tell you what Webster says…

a. To "affirm" means "a. validate, confirm, b. to state positively."

b. The person who is "afflicted," of course, has in mind one who has "continued pain or distress."

c. So affirming the afflicted means to help people going through difficulty to see how God can help them grow through the experience.

2. Everyone has afflictions and the last two weeks Susan and I have had our share:

a. The air-conditioning in both our Toyota and Mazda went out.

b. Thursday the Toyota rear right tire blew apart on the freeway.

c. Our VISA credit limit hit peak so that we couldn't postpone expenses into the future.

d. We received our lowest school support in four years.

e. Our Mazda battery needed replacement and the seats started falling apart.

f. I fell 13 lessons behind in studying French for my exam next month.

g. At this moment our checking account balance is -$311.14.

h. Our roof began to leak—again.

i. Susan's grandmother with whom she was very close passed away.

3. People respond to affliction in various ways. This is well stated by Richard C. Halverson, chaplain of the United States Senate in his book *No Greater Power*…

[When crushed…

a. Some shatter like marbles

b. Some bring forth fragrance like crushed grapes]—in "Steadfast Christianity," p. 1.

4. [Read *Swindoll, Steadfast Christianity,* p. 1 \*]

M.I. 5. Today we're going to take a brief look into the first four verses of 2 Thessalonians to see how Paul affirmed the afflicted believers at the ancient city of Thessalonica in order to encourage them to grow in Christ. How did he comfort them to help them grow?

**I. Some general considerations about the letter…**

A. Why did Paul write another letter to the Thessalonians?

1. He had just written 1 Thessalonians months, weeks, or even days before.

2. Evidently Paul got wind of the situation at Thessalonica—the persecution hadn't let up so he wrote them to affirm them for their steadfastness.

(So what does the letter say?)

B. Let's get a brief, bird's eye view of these 47 verses in three chapters…

1. Chapter 1: Affirmation: "You're doing great! Keep it up!"

2. Chapter 2: Explanation: "Don't worry—you haven't missed the Rapture!"

3. Chapter 3: Exhortation: "Hang in there—your discipline will pay off!"

(Now let's turn our attention to the first 4 verses of Paul's letter where we see that…)

**II. Affirming others helps them to see how God is working in their life (1:1-4).**

**Paul affirmed the church in three ways to help them mature spiritually.**

A. Paul saw affliction from God's perspective (1:1-2).

See God's perspective and you'll be able to reach out and affirm others.

1. You may be wondering why I say that these verses teach us to help afflicted people see God's perspective. Aren't they just the preliminaries to the letter that follows?

a. Yes, but notice how many times Paul makes mention of God in this one sentence: four times! Twice referring to the Father and twice about Christ, who is placed on equal level with the Father since He, too, is God.

b. Each of the 3 chapters refer to the lofty name of the "Lord Jesus Christ" 3 times!

2. We all have peaks and valleys in our lives—peaks when it's easy to see the Lord and valleys when it's difficult to see Him (ENCOURAGEMENT God's perspective gives) [cf. *Swindoll, Steadfast Christianity,* p. 4].

a. Aren't you encouraged when you're around someone who is constantly talking about the Lord?

b. They see life from God's perspective—and there's no more encouraging viewpoint.

3. Granted, there's balance here, too. This doesn't mean you go around blabbing, "Well, all things work for the good!" all the time.

a. The French atheist, Voltaire, makes fun of such people in his novel *Candide*. He constantly depicts the Christian in the story, every time something awful happens, saying, "Well, all things work for the good!"

b. There are ways of turning people's sights to the Lord without always quoting Scripture and saying, "Praise Jesus, Praise Jesus…"

1) Sometimes we affirm people and turn their thoughts to God by saying nothing at all.

2) Oftentimes just writing down a Scripture reference for the person and encouraging him to look it up later is best.

(So these first two verses have demonstrated that seeing God's perspective enables us to reach out and affirm others. Paul affirmed the church in another way in verse 3…)

B. Paul thanked God for them (1:3).

Thank God for others' growth because it affirms them in their faith and love.

1. When someone is going through trials what do we generally pray?

a. I hate to admit it, but most of the time we **request** that God will remove the trials.

b. Notice the focus of Paul's prayer here—not a request that God take away their trials but **thanksgiving**!

c. He affirmed them by praying not for the **removal** of the trial but for character development **through** the trial.

d. Paul doesn't focus on what's going on **around** them—he looks at what God is doing **within** them—building qualities like faith, love, and perseverance mentioned in verse 4.

2. He affirmed them that their love for one another kept increasing—so we see Paul affirming their affirmation!

a. "Affirmation is like a peanut butter sandwich—the more you spread it around, the better things stick together."

b. Investigate church problems and inevitably you will discover that little criticisms, here and there, all put together added fuel to the sparks so that whatever problem there was ended up as an inferno out of control.

3. Prayer for others is no doubt the best way to affirm them. That's why Paul did it!

a. I hope we as a church will develop in our prayer to see beyond afflicting circumstances and pray that God will use difficulties to build the character of Christ within us.

b. The three things Paul mentions are a great starting place—faith, love and perseverance.

c. I think our prayer times together as a church would be even better if we make it a point to thank God for others' growth right there in the group.

(Verses 1-2 showed us that helping others see God's perspective is a great way to affirm them. Then in verse 3 we saw how Paul's thanking God for the character development in the Thessalonians also affirmed them. Now for the third way Paul affirmed the church…)

C. Paul told **others** how well they hung in there (1:4).

Publicly brag about others' spiritual growth to affirm their ability to hang in there.

1. The important principle here is that people will become what you tell them they will become. This is especially true in parenting children.

a. [ENCOURAGEMENT, BY PARENTS (EPHESIANS 6:4) example of criticism]

b. [ENCOURAGEMENT, BY PARENTS (CHILD-REARING) children become what parents say]

c. "Children Learn What They Live" plaque in Kurt's room

2. Do you think the Thessalonians were encouraged to hear that Paul boasted about them to other churches? You bet! Paul knew that this principle works in the church, too. The church would become what he said it was. That's why he praised the Thessalonians before all the other churches.

a. He could have taken a negative approach—"Man, you should see all the hassles those Thessalonians are going through. They must really be botching something up!"

b. Not Paul! He said, "Wow! You should see how the church at Thessalonica continues to reach out, deepen in their love, make great strides in trusting God, and endure—despite the most intense persecutions in the Roman Empire. They're doing grrrrrrrreat!"

**Conclusion**

M.I. 1. Today's passage tells us a great deal about affirmation. Basically it says this: affirming the afflicted will encourage them to mature in Christ.

2. How are you doing in affirming others?

a. By our words and actions let's help people focus on the Lord not on their problems.

b. Let's thank God—even in front of the very people we're thanking Him for—for His character work in their lives.

c. Let's affirm people by boasting about them to others.

3. As these characteristics increase in our lives we'll find people being affirmed, feeling affirmed and then affirming others as a natural response.

4. ENCOURAGEMENT produces great feats [story of how Nathaniel Hawthorne started writing at the encouragement of his wife].

5. The affirmation **you** offer this week just might meet a specific need and inspire hope too.

1. Who needs your affirmation this week, today? [Application]

Emmaus Fellowship Dr. Rick Griffith

8 April 2001 Single Message

NIV 30 Minutes

**Affirming the Afflicted**

***2 Thessalonians 1:1-4***

***Complete Outline for Worship Planning***

**Topic:** Affirmation

**Subject:** Affirming the afflicted

**Complement:** will encourage them to mature in Christ.

**Purpose:** The listeners will reach out in a tangible way to someone who is hurting.

**Reading:** 2 Thessalonians 1:1-12

**Attribute:** We Worship Our God Who Affirms

**Meditation:** 2 Corinthians 1:3-4

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God."

# Introduction

Subject: How do you help those who are going through tough times?

# I. See God’s perspective on trials.

# II. Thank God for others' growth.

# III. Publicly brag about others' spiritual growth.

# Conclusion

### Affirm the afflicted to help them mature in Christ (Main Idea).

### How will you affirm someone this week?

Emmaus Fellowship Dr Rick Griffith

**Affirming the Afflicted**

***2 Thessalonians 1:1-4***

***Outline with Blanks for Bulletin***

# Introduction

Subject: How do you help those who are going through \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ times?

# I. See \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ perspective on trials.

# II. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ God for others' growth.

# III. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ about others' spiritual growth.

# Conclusion

### \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ the afflicted to help them mature in Christ (Main Idea).

### Who will you affirm this week? How?

Download this sermon PPT and notes for free at BibleStudyDownloads.org/resource/new-testament-preaching/





**Rick Griffith**

6 November 2016

10th Anniversary Message

**Affirming the Afflicted**

***2 Thessalonians 1:1-4***

# Introduction

### We all need help when we’re going through difficult times.

### How do you help those who are going through \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_times?

### Paul wrote the Thessalonians to affirm them for their steadfastness in trials.

# I. See \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ perspective on trials.

## Paul saw affliction from God's perspective (1:1-2).

## We need to help others focus on the Lord in their difficulty.

# II. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ God for others' growth.

## Paul thanked God for them (1:3).

## I wonder how often you thank God for others’ spiritual growth.

# III. Publicly \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ about others' spiritual growth.

## Paul told *others* how well they hung in there (1:4).

## People often become what you tell them they will become.

# Conclusion

### \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ the afflicted to help them mature in Christ (Main Idea).

### Mark Eklund Story (http://assumptionofmorris.org/site/about/ourviralnun/)

### Who needs your affirmation this week, today? Take some moments now to tell the Lord whom you are going to encourage.

**Thought Questions**

1. Read the passage. Contrast the Thessalonian situation with Paul’s description of them:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **What They Faced** | **How Paul Described Them** |
| Text | Text |
| Text | Text |
| Text | Text |
| Text | Text |
| Text | Text |
| Text | Text |
| Text | Text |
| Text | Text |
| Text | Text |

1. Why do you think God brought you to Crossroads?

Text

Text

Text

Text

1. Who should you affirm today?

Text

Text

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Hebron Bible-Presbyterian Church Dr Rick Griffith

**Affirming the Afflicted**

***2 Thessalonians 1:1-4***

***Outline with Blanks for Bulletin***

# Introduction

Subject: How do you help those who are going through \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ times?

# I. See \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ perspective on trials.

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# Conclusion

### \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ the afflicted to help them mature in Christ (Main Idea).

### Who will you affirm this week? How?

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