

Katameros: 1:1-12

## **1:2 *God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ***

### **OF THE FATHER AS WELL.**

AMBROSE: For while I say that similar things are written of the Son as of the Spirit, I am rather proceeding to the following point. My claim is not that because something is written of the Son, therefore it would appear to be reverently written of the Holy Spirit. Rather, I am contending against the argument that because the same is written of the Spirit, therefore the Son's honor is lessened because of the Spirit. For they say, Is it not written of God the Father? <sup>1</sup> But let them learn that it is also said of God the Father, "In the Lord I will praise the word," <sup>2</sup> and elsewhere, "In God we will do mighty deeds," <sup>3</sup> "My remembrance shall be ever in Thee," <sup>4</sup> and "In Thy name will we rejoice," <sup>5</sup> and again in another place, "That his deeds may be manifested, that they are wrought in God," <sup>6</sup> and by Paul, "In God, who created all things," <sup>7</sup> and again, "Paul and Silvanus and Timothy to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." OF THE HOLY SPIRIT 2.8.75–76.8

## **1:3a *We Are Bound to Give Thanks***

### **NOT OUR OWN DOING.**

AUGUSTINE: There could be no merit in men's choice of Christ, if it were not that God's grace precedes any faith or action on their part in his choosing them. This is why the apostle Paul pronounces to the Thessalonians this benediction, "The Lord make you to increase and abound in love toward one another, and toward all men." <sup>10</sup> This benediction to love one another he gave us, who had also given us a law that we should love one another. Then, in the salutation addressed to the same church where some of its members possessed the disposition which he had wished them to cultivate, Paul says, "We are bound to thank God always for you, brothers. This is quite fitting, because your faith grows robustly, and your mutual charity abounds." ON GRACE AND FREE WILL 1.18.38.11

## **1:3b *Your Faith Is Growing Abundantly***

### **HOW CAN FAITH GROW?**

CHRYSOSTOM: And how, you say, can faith increase? It does so when we suffer something horrible for the sake of faith. It is a great thing for faith to be solidly established and not to be carried away by some sophistry. But when the winds assail us, when the rains burst upon us, when a violent storm is raised on every side and the waves follow upon one another, that fact that we are not shaken is a proof that faith grows, grows abundantly and becomes more exalted. HOMILIES ON 2 THESSALONIANS 2.12

## **1:5 *That You May Be Made Worthy***

### **NO ONE IS SPARED.**

AUGUSTINE: Lastly, there is the matter of Faustus' crafty insinuation, that the Old Testament misrepresents God as threatening to come with a sword which will spare neither the righteous nor the wicked. If the words were explained to the pagan, he would perhaps disagree neither with the Old Testament nor with the New; and he might see the beauty of the parable in the Gospel, which people who pretend to be Christians either misunderstand from their blindness or reject from their perversity. The vine's great farmer uses his pruning hook differently on the fruitful and in the unfruitful branches. Yet he spares neither good nor bad, pruning one and cutting off the other. <sup>13</sup> No one is so just that he does not need to be tried by affliction to advance or to establish or prove his virtue. Do the Manichaeans not reckon Paul as righteous, who, while confessing humbly and honestly his past sins, still gives thanks for being justified by faith in Jesus Christ? Was Paul himself then spared of suffering by God whom fools misunderstand? He says, "I will spare neither the righteous nor the sinner." <sup>14</sup> Hear the apostle himself, "Lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelation, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me. For this I asked the Lord three times, that he would remove it from me; and he said to me, My grace is sufficient for you, for strength is perfected in weakness." <sup>15</sup> ... Paul also, besides recording his own experience, says that the afflictions and persecutions of the righteous exhibit the judgment of God. REPLY TO FAUSTUS THE MANICHAEAN 22.20.<sup>16</sup>

## **1:6 *Repay with Affliction Those Who Afflict You***

## **1:7 In Flaming Fire**

### **GENTLE SHOWERS AND VIOLENT RAINS.**

EPHREM THE SYRIAN: But why instead of a stern reproof did our Lord speak a parable of persuasion to that Pharisee? <sup>19</sup> He spoke the parable to him tenderly, that he, though stubborn and resistant, might unawares be enticed to correct his perversities. For the waters that are frozen by the force of a cold wind, the heat of the sun gently dissolves. So our Lord did not oppose him harshly, that he might not give occasion to the rebellious to rebel again.... Our Lord, then, did not employ harsh reproof, because his coming was of grace. He did not refrain from reproof, because his later coming will be of retribution. Even though he had come in humility, he nonetheless caused men to be afraid, because “it is a fearful thing to fall into his hands” <sup>20</sup> when he shall come “in flaming fire.” But our Lord most often helped others by way of persuasion than by reproof. For the gentle shower softens the earth and penetrates all through it. But violent rain binds and hardens the face of the earth, so that it does not receive it. THREE HOMILIES 1.22.21

## **1:9 The Punishment of Eternal Destruction**

### **ULTIMATE CONSEQUENCES.**

CHRYSOSTOM: But where, I ask, will be the location of hell? Somewhere, I think, far removed from this world. For as the prisons and the mines are at a great distance from royal residences, so will hell be located far from this world. We aren't interested in finding its location but in escaping it. And just because God doesn't punish everyone here, don't doubt things to come. For God is merciful and patient. That is why he issues warnings and doesn't immediately cast us into hell. For “I don't desire,” he says, “the death of a sinner.” <sup>22</sup> These words have no meaning, however, if sinners never die. And I know, indeed, that there is nothing less pleasant to you than these words. But to me nothing is more pleasant... Let us, then, continually discuss these things. For to remember hell prevents our falling into hell. Do you not hear St. Paul saying, “Who shall suffer everlasting punishment from the face of the Lord”? HOMILIES ON ROMANS 31.4–5.23

## **1:11 *Our God May Make You Worthy***

### **ONLY BY GRACE.**

AUGUSTINE: I said, “Salvation through this religion, through which alone true salvation is promised and truly promised, has never been lacking to anyone who was worthy of it, and the one to whom it was lacking was unworthy of it.” I did not mean this as though anyone were worthy according to his own merits, but as the apostle says, “God’s purpose in election” does not depend on deeds but is applied according to him who calls—Rebekah was told, “The elder shall serve the younger”<sup>25</sup>—and he asserts that this call depends on the purpose of God. Hence Paul says, “Not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace.”<sup>26</sup> Similarly, he says, “We know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.”<sup>27</sup> Concerning this call he says, “that he may consider you worthy of his calling.” RETRACTATIONS 2.31.<sup>28</sup>