



FAITH BIBLE FELLOWSHIP of Fairfield Glade
"All Things New Series" ~ "Growing Pains"

Text: I Thessalonians 2:13-20 ~ Pastor Dave Evangelista ~ Feb. 15, 2009

As we continue in our "*All Things New*" Series, we will be taking a look at 1 Thessalonians 2 where 'believers' in Christ faced and endured persecution and suffering for their bold faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Yet in the midst of suffering, these saints experienced joy! Why? Because they were redeemed, forgiven, and accepted! Paul certainly was burdened for his brothers and sisters in Christ, but he also had a level of joy according to 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20: "*For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when He comes? Is it not you? Indeed you are our glory and joy.*"

As far as the persecution was concerned, it was a fulfillment of our Lord's promise in John 16:33—"In the world you shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." Churches do experience "GROWING PAINS" as they seek to win the lost and glorify the Lord. In this paragraph, Paul explains the *Divine resources* we have in times of suffering and persecution.

1.) God's Word Within us. "*And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.*" 1 Thess. 2:13. The church has been founded on the word of God, the message of the gospel of our Lord Jesus. The same word that brings us salvation also enables us to live for Christ and endure

suffering for His sake. Paul was thankful that the saints in Thessalonica had the right spiritual *attitudes* toward the word of God. This helped them endure in the hour of suffering. **First of all**—they appreciated the word of God. The Psalmist wrote: "*Your word Oh Lord is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens.*" Psalm 119:89. See also 1 Peter 1:23 & 25; Job 23:12; Psalm 119:14 and Psalm 119:148. **Second**, they appropriated the Word of God. They did not only hear the word; they took it into their inner man and made it a part of their lives! The Lord Jesus repeatedly warned the people about the wrong kind of hearing. The Lord gave another warning where He said—"Take heed to what you hear—and how you hear." Too many churches have substituted entertainment for the preaching of God's word—many do not welcome the Bible. How do we appropriate the word? By receiving it into our hearts and meditating on it. Meditation is to the spiritual life what digestion is to the physical life! This is what a growing, healthy church is doing! **Third**, they applied the Word. We are to apply the word to our lives and be hearers and doers of the word (See James 1:19-25). The word of God has in it the power to accomplish the will of God as nothing is impossible with God! It is a great source of power in times of testing and suffering!

2.) God's People Around us. (*Another Divine source*). (See 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16)

It is too true however that suffering people can become very self-centered and think they are the only ones going through a trial. Everyone goes through the normal human suffering such as illness, pain and bereavement. But I am referring to the suffering we endure because of our faith. Not only were the Thessalonian saints imitators of the Lord and of Paul, but they also became imitators of the Jewish *believers in their experience of persecution.* (See Acts 24:17 & Romans 9:1-5).

God called Israel to be a blessing to the entire world. Through Israel, our Lord Jesus came into the world. Jesus said in John 4:22: "*Salvation is of the Jews.*" The first Christians were Jews!

3.) God's Glory Before us. (See 1 Thessalonians 2:17-20). Paul made every effort to return to them, though Satan was racing ahead of him and putting up obstacles. But the great apostle did not look back and give in to regret and remorse. Instead he looked ahead and rejoiced! He lived in the future tense, as well as in the present. Because these Christians were suffering persecution, Paul encouraged them to lay hold of the spiritual resources they had. They had the word of God within them—the people of God around them and the glory of God before them—there was no need to give up!

Today's challenge: Don't let your "growing pains" hinder your progress—keep on keeping on in and through the power of the Holy Spirit.

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