

FAITH BIBLE FELLOWSHIP of Fairfield Glade

Pastor David Evangelista ~ 4.19.09 ~ Text: 2 Thessalonians 1:1-12

“Is Rest a Possibility?”

The Christians in Thessalonica were grateful to God for Paul’s letter, but it did not immediately solve all their problems. In fact, the persecution grew worse, and some believers thought they were living in the time of the ‘Tribulation’. Other believers concluded that since their Lord’s coming was so near, they ought to quit their jobs and spend their time waiting for Him. This meant that the other members were under an extra burden to care for them. Satan was working overtime; as the lion was seeking to devour. (See 1 Peter 5:7-8). It was in response to these needs that Paul wrote his second letter.

He began with their most pressing need, i.e., the persecution they were experiencing because of their faith. In this first chapter, Paul shared three encouragements with his suffering friends.

The first was the encouragement of praise. (See 2 Thess. 1:1-4). After greeting his friends, Paul launched into a state of praise to God. Paul was practicing his own admonition, “In everything give thanks...” (See 1 Thess. 5:18)

For what blessings did Paul give thanks?

1.) Their faith was growing. (2 Thess. 1:3A) “We ought always to thank God for you, brothers, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more.” A faith that cannot be tested cannot be trusted. New believers must expect their faith to be tried. Because this is the way God proves whether or not their decision is genuine. Faith, like a muscle, must be exercised to grow stronger. Tribulation and persecution are God’s ways to strengthen our faith.

2.) Their love was abounding. (2 Thess. 1:3B) “And the love every one of you has for each other is increasing.” Suffering can make us selfish; but when suffering is mixed with grace and faith, it produces love. (See Gal. 5:6). When Christians suffer, their faith reaches upward

to God and their love reaches outward to their fellow believers. For the Christian, suffering can help produce abounding love. The early believers were only obeying the commandment of their Lord, “Love one another.” Their own suffering did not prevent them from sharing love with others who were suffering.

3.) Their patience was increasing. (2 Thess. 1:4) “Therefore, among God’s churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring.” No Matter how we look at it, the Thessalonian Christians were not having an easy time. But God never wastes suffering. Trials work for us not against us.

4.) Their testimony was helping others. (2 Thess. 1:4A) “Therefore, among God’s churches we boast about your perseverance and faith.” God encourages us, that we may encourage others. (See 2 Cor. 1:4-5). The Thessalonians were faithful to the Lord and to one another despite the troubles they endured.

The second was the encouragement of promise. (See 2 Thess. 1:5-10). We are prone to think that suffering proves that God does not care, when just the opposite is true. Furthermore, the way we act in times of trial proves to others that God is at work. (See Phil. 1:29,30). Three experiences are involved in the promises of God for His people: reward; recompense; and rest. (2 Thess. 1:5) “All this is evidence that God’s judgment is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of the Kingdom of God, for which you are suffering.” This was one of God’s purposes in permitting their suffering. One day the Lord Jesus will turn the tables and the wicked will suffer while the believers are rewarded. Our Lord never promised us that life here would be easy, in fact, He taught that we would have to face difficulties and fight battles. However, He also promised a

future reward for all who were faithful to Him. (See Matt. 5:10-12).

God will recompense. (See 2 Thess. 1:6-10). God will recompense affliction to the lost, but rest to the saved. The wicked who persecute the godly do not always receive their just payment in this life. Living with eternity's values in view is what makes our Christian life meaningful today. The Christ-rejecting world will receive from God exactly what it gave to God's people! It is a righteous thing for God to judge sin and condemn sinners. A Holy God cannot leave sin unjudged. If sinners prefer to not know God and not obey the Gospel, there is nothing left for God to do but to judge them. This judgment will take place when the Lord Jesus returns to the earth with His Church and His Angels. (2 Thess. 1:7) *"And give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with His powerful angels."*

God will give rest. (See 2 Thess. 1:7A & 10) God will recompense tribulation to the lost but rest to the saved. The saints receive their rest when the Lord returns in the air and catches us up to be with Him. T

The third was the encouragement of prayer. (See 2 Thess. 1:11 & 12). The future prospect of glory is what motivated the apostle to pray for the saints. We must never neglect a present responsibility because of a future hope. On the contrary, the future hope must encourage us to be faithful today.

|