

I. INTRODUCTION.

A. Scripture text: **2Thessalonians 1:1-4.**

Paul and Silvanus and Timothy to the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: [2] Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. [3] We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is *only* fitting, because your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows *ever* greater; [4] therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure.

B. The brethren in Thessalonica were being persecuted. But Paul writes an encouraging letter to them anyway!

C. This morning's lesson will look at the first chapter of this epistle and see:

1. Paul's praise to God for the brethren.
2. Paul's mention of a great promise to believe in.
3. Paul's prayer in their behalf.

II. PRAISE TO GOD.

A. See 2Th. 1:1-4.

B. One of Satan's tools to defeat us is suffering. Satan does not cause all suffering, but he can use it to discourage us from remaining faithful.

C. Prayer is not our only ally against suffering. Here Paul praises the brethren in hopes of helping them overcome.

D. The apostle mentions 4 things they were doing well:

1. **Their faith was growing** (see 1:3).

We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is *only* fitting, because your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows *ever* greater;

a. "A faith that cannot be tested cannot be trusted." Xians must expect their faith to be tried, because in this way they can grow.

b. The positive side of tribulation and persecution is Xian maturity.

2. **Their love was abounding** (see 1:3).

We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is *only* fitting, because your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows *ever* greater;

a. When Xians suffer their faith reaches upward to God, and their love reaches outward to fellow believers.

b. In a world that seems to promote insulation and isolation--Xians are to reach out in love.

3. **Their patience was increasing** (see 1:4).

therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure.

a. God never wastes suffering. Trials work FOR us, not AGAINST us. If we trust God and yield to Him, then trials will produce patience and maturity in our lives.

b. If we rebel and fight our circumstances, then we will remain immature and impatient (Jas. 1:1-5).

4. **Their faith was helping others** (see 1:4).

therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure.

a. God encourages us, so we can encourage others. We are not cisterns that only receive.

b. Rather we are to be channels that give and receive (2Cor. 1:4,5).

who comforts us in all our affliction so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. [5] For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ.

E. May we learn to praise God and each other in the midst of suffering to be encouraged and built-up.

III. THE GREAT PROMISE.

A. See 2Th. 1:5-10.

This is a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering. [6] For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, [7] and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, [8] dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. [9] And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, [10] when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed-- for our testimony to you was believed.

B. Paul gave thanks for their FAITH and LOVE, but what about HOPE? This section of the letter deals with that.

C. Three things to take note of and remember:

1. The Reward.

a. Jesus will return some day and overthrow the wicked. Every wrong will receive its reward, and so will every good deed be rewarded on that day.

b. There is reason to be faithful!

2. The Recompense.

a. To "recompense" means to repay. God will repay the lost with affliction, and the saved with rest.

b. What kind of future does the unbeliever have? Paul said, "tribulation, vengeance, flaming fire, punishment, and everlasting destruction."

c. It is a righteous thing for God to judge sin and condemn sinners. A holy and righteous God cannot leave sin un-judged or unpunished.

3. The Rest.

a. The word "rest" means relief, release, or not under pressure. When Jesus returns it will be to give the faithful rest; our sins have already been judged at Calvary.

b. Jesus promises rest for those who are weak and heavily burdened.

D. The brethren have reason for hope.

IV. A PRAYER IN THEIR BEHALF.

A. See 2Th. 1:11,12.

To this end also we pray for you always that our God may count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power; [12] in order that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

B. In this part of the chapter Paul praises them in prayer and asks God to continue to bless them.

1. Bless them in their worthiness.

2. Bless them in their daily walk.

3. Bless them in their testimony to others.

C. May we learn to pray for our brothers and sisters in this way.

V. CONCLUSION AND INVITATION.

A. There is good reason for our faith, hope, and love.

1. We can refuge in God's blessings (in our faith) even in tribulation.

2. We can have courage in the coming judgment--hope.

3. We can build up each other daily with love.

B. These and all other blessings are found in X.

C. Plan of salvation for non-Xians, erring Xians.