

II Thessalonians 1:5-10 The Promise of the Lord

This morning we are returning to II Thessalonians, after taking a few months off. II Thessalonians, not I, but II Thessalonians. Last time we met for the study in II Thessalonians we took verses 1 through 4. We saw, first of all, in this second letter that Paul wrote to the Christians in Thessalonica, written within a few months after the first letter, written by the same three: Paul, Silvanus or Silas, and Timothy.

Remember the first letter was written because of Paul's concern over their afflictions and also ministering to them about the coming of Christ, that is, the rapture of the church. The second letter that we are in, was written according to chapter 2 verse 2 because of a false letter that false teachers had circulated and said this false letter was from Paul and that the hard times that they were going through was actually the tribulation period. So Paul is ministering concerning the tribulation period in this second letter.

In chapter 1, **Now therefore**, he gets to it. Chapter 1 is him explaining to them what trials are all about. That they are not in the tribulation period, that this is a time of growth. So we have to understand that there is a tribulation period, which is a religious designation for the seven-year time of judgment after the church is taken up. As we saw in I Thessalonians chapter 4, after the church is taken up there are seven years of tribulation judgment upon the earth, upon nonbelievers. And then there is the second coming of Christ after the tribulation, where we come back with Him and He sets up His kingdom on the earth for one thousand years. But this is different than just general tribulation of the Christian, which we have translated more accurately - **qliyi**~ (thlipsis) is the Greek word, and it means *stress* and *pressure*. And so Paul is saying to them that you are going through affliction. You are going through tribulation, but it is not the tribulation period. But these false teachers were circulating this false letter saying it was written by Paul and that the affliction they were going through is the tribulation period. That they are actually experiencing the judgment of God.

We have that today there are those who hold the doctrine that what is going on in the world today is all found in the book of Revelation as being the tribulation period. And this is just a foretaste, this is not the tribulation period at all. If you study Revelation, you know that at least a third of the earth is affected by each judgment that comes, a third of the population. So we are just getting samples of what it is going to be like when the judgment comes, but we are not in the judgment. And whatever we are going through as Christians, as believers, it is not because of judgment, as we will see in a moment. This is a time of growth. Going through affliction now, going through tribulation now, is a time of growth for the believer. The tribulation period is not a time for growth. The tribulation period is judgment by God, it is not a time of growth.

He is comforting them concerning their trials in chapter 1. Then he is going to correct the situation about the tribulation period in chapter 2. Then chapter 3 he is going to give some commands concerning the testimony they are to have until the coming of Christ.

But today in verses 5 through 10 he is going to explain the promise of the Lord to both unbelievers and to believers. Then lastly in verses 11 and 12, that we will take next week, for the

prayer of Paul for them as he finishes up the section on comforting them concerning their trials. We read verse 2 as a reminder of what we have studied, verse 2 from last time says, **Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.** We saw last time God's grace is sufficient for all of our needs. II Corinthians chapter 12 verse 9, especially when God told Paul, **My grace is sufficient for you.** God's grace is sufficient.

Secondly look at verse 3, **Brothers, we are indebted to always thank God concerning you, according as it is fitting, because your faith is increasing exceedingly, and the love of each of you, of all of you is abounding toward one another.** He uses the word *indebted*. The word *bound* in some English translations means *to be indebted*. So he is telling them the time of trial of God is actually proving you. That it is putting you through a test to cause your faith to abound and to cause love to grow towards one another. That is what trials are for. It is the proving of the Lord, or testing of the Lord. So he is telling them that God's provision of grace is sufficient. That what they are going through is actually causing their faith towards God to grow.

Then in verse 4, **so that for us to boast ourselves in you in the assemblies of God on behalf of your endurance and faith in all your persecutions, and the afflictions which you are holding up under.** Their endurance. They were boasting of the endurance, the remaining under hard circumstances. The purpose is that they would be an example. Paul used them and said to the other churches that whatever hardships these Thessalonians were going through, that they may use over there in Thessalonica from the very time that they received Christ they experienced trials. So the purpose of trials is not only for growth but for an example. Afflictions are an example, remaining under those afflictions.

Now for today verses 5 through 10, **The Promise of God.** Verse 5 is actually a continuation of verse 4. Verse 5 reads, **Which is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, for you to be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, on behalf of which also you are suffering.** So now he is talking about persecutions and afflictions in verse 4. So he is picking up that in the last phrase in verse 4 and he starts out with verse 5 by saying, **Which is evidence.** The persecutions and the afflictions are evidence of a person's salvation. When they suffered the persecutions and afflictions is what makes them worthy of the kingdom of God. It is not their performance that makes them worthy, it is their suffering and the remaining under as an example. And because you are suffering afflictions right now, as I write, and I know you are, that is evidence that you are worthy of the kingdom of God. Well, according to Paul the worthiness of one is found in suffering.

Now you do not want to go and try to suffer to make yourself worthy. Peter said in I Peter chapter 4 verses 11 and 12, he says, **Do not think it strange if some fiery trial comes to you because you have become partakers of the sufferings of Christ.** They are not our sufferings, they are Christ's sufferings. They are for identification with Christ and being a follower of Christ. When you have Christ inside of you, you have the power of His resurrection to function in, but you also have the fellowship of His sufferings, according to Paul in Philippians chapter 3 verse 10.

So we both have the power of the resurrection, and we have the fellowship of His sufferings. Why? Because He lives inside, it is His sufferings. The Lord is saying, "It is not

your performance that makes you worthy. It is your submission. It is your remaining under. It is your identification for the sake of believing in Jesus Christ." The suffering and the persecution in the trials make them worthy of the kingdom of God. That is an interesting concept, opposite of what we hear today: that we need to get rid of all of our hardships. The Bible says if you have Christ living inside of you, you will suffer the hardships, but they will be the hardships for identification with Christ. They are His sufferings. They are His afflictions that we partake in.

Interesting in Acts chapter 5, strange language for us, in Acts chapter 5 verses 40 through 42. The disciples were preaching and they were continually being warned by the leadership among the Jews. One time they were thrown into prison and an angel of the Lord let them out of prison and they started preaching again. This really made the leadership mad. So they gathered them together and said, "You cannot keep doing this." So Gamaliel, who was a member of the Sanhedrin, Gamaliel asked the disciples be put out of the room. And he told the council, he says, "Look, if this is of God you cannot stop it. But if it is not of God it will fade away." You have to figure that with the people these preachers are very popular and you can get in trouble over what you do to them, especially go to extremes to get them to stop preaching. So the council said, **And to him they agreed**, that would be *agreed with Gamaliel*. They said, "Okay, that is a good idea."

And when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and they let them go. And the apostles departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. They rejoiced over the sufferings that they had to endure because they figured that they were counted worthy and they rejoiced over that. You have to understand that in the early church it was an honor to suffer for the sake of Christ. It was evidence that a person belonged to Christ. So what about your suffering for Christ? And Paul says, "It is evidence that you have been counted worthy of the kingdom of God for which you also suffer."

The disciples were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. They were beaten. *They were beaten* does not mean that they got beat up. This activity had to do with a small building that they put them in, and they tied them up, took their shirts off, took the top part of their garments off; and in this building was a trough right down in the middle of the building underneath so that the blood can flow out of the building when they whip you. You were whipped with a cat-o-nine tails. A whip with metal pieces, and wood spikes in the whips. So they were not just beat up. They were not just beat up they were whipped badly, and they left rejoicing.

So it is interesting that after they were beaten and counted worthy to suffer shame for His name, the text says, (verse 42) **They were daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.** So not only did they rejoice over their beatings to suffer for His sake, but they kept preaching. They did not stop it.

So verse 5 of our text today says that these afflictions and persecutions are **evidence of the righteous judgment of God, for you to be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, on behalf of which you also are suffering; Verse 6, since indeed *it is a righteous thing with God to repay affliction to the ones afflicting you.*** The word translated *affliction* is this Greek word

qliyi~ (thlipsis) that we have mentioned to you. So it is God's judgment to repay people. So whatever they have measured out to you, whether it be for a few hours, or a few weeks, or a few months, or a few years, it is going to be resting on them throughout eternity as the promise of God. God says that whatever they have measured out to you is what they are going to have upon them throughout eternity.

In verse 7, **And to give to you**, that is the second thing. **The ones being afflicted, to give to you rest with us, in the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with angels of His power.** Notice the literal translation there, *with angels of His power*. So he says in verse 7, **And to give you who are afflicted, to give you rest.** And again the word *affliction* is the word **qliyi~** (thlipsis), for the *stress* and *the pressure of the trials*.

Now the second promise - the first promise is judgment upon those who are afflicting God's people. And the second promise in verse 7 is to give to those who are in affliction rest with us. Literally, **the revelation of the Lord Jesus from Heaven with angels of His power.** So when the Lord comes here is the promise of the Lord for His saints. Now, He gives us peace on the inside now but the word *rest* that is in the text is not the word for *peace*. It is a word for *the ending*, bringing something to an end, *to be set free*. It is going to be a time of rest, that is, set free from the trials. When Christ comes back for us in the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ we are going to find rest, cessation of the **qliyi~** (thlipsis), *the affliction*. He says, "I will promise I will take care of it later."

God says, "I will give you the grace and the sufficiency to go through it now. Do not worry about that. You will never be overwhelmed. I will take care of you." But He promises first of all the judgment will be on them. Whatever they have measured out to you is going to be on them throughout eternity. And second, when He comes you going to be at rest. He will take care of it.

So again verse 7, **And to give to you, the ones who are being afflicted**, who are put through the trial, **to give you rest with us, in the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with angels of His power.** This is how it literally reads. When He comes with His angels to get us, in His salvation we are finally going to be at rest.

Verse 8. Not only is He going to come to give rest, He is going to come, verse 8, **In a flame of fire, giving vengeance on the ones not knowing God**, first of all, **and to the ones not obeying not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.** When He comes with the angels of His power in the flame of fire taking vengeance on the ones who have not known God, and secondly, on the ones who are not being obedient to the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. So He is going to come with angels, angels of power, with flame of fire showing judgment. Fire is always a symbol of and an expression of judgment in the Scripture. That is why in the early Gospels when John the Baptist was preaching, he said of Jesus Christ, **He is going to come and baptize you with the Spirit and with fire.** Well, He is going to baptize people with the Spirit who believe in Him. He is going to baptize people with fire who do not. Fire represents judgment.

And so in our text He is going to come with the angel of the power. We are going to be at rest but that is when the earth experiences tribulation or hardship. So everybody that has not

known God - interesting the judgment will be upon those people who do not know God. They are going to receive the vengeance of God. There is a reason why they have not known God, **And to those who are not in obedience to the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.** The word *obedience* is the word *to put your hearing under*. They refused to put their hearing under the gospel. God tried to speak to them and they would not listen to it. And so those people are the people that God is going to come and bring judgment upon the earth, but He is going to bring rest for His people.

Verse 9, **Who will pay *the* penalty, eternal destruction, from the face of the Lord, and from *the* glory of His strength.** So they are going to be punished with eternal destruction. And it is eternal destruction. It shows you how long it is going to be. It is not going to be an instantaneous thing when they are destroyed. They are going to be punished with eternal destruction from the presence of the Lord. The word *presence* is literally the word *face*. From the presence, that is, from His face and from the glory of His power.

Now what is interesting is the word *power* is not the word **δυναμις**~ (dunamis) for *power*, but the word is *the sufficiency of strength*, **ἰσχυς** (ischus), the sufficiency of strength. The Lord is going to tell them - basically is what the text is saying - that the gospel message went out and it said God's power is sufficient to save you, God's power is sufficient to keep you, but they refused. They refused to put their hearing under. They refused to trust the Lord and go through the afflictions and wait for His coming so that they can be at rest.

Verse 10, **Whenever He should come to be glorified in the saints, and to be marveled at in all the ones believing, because our testimony was believed by you, in that Day.** What is the promise to believers? The promise to the believer is that the person who is causing trouble, and causing the affliction and persecution against them, that person God is going to take care of them. The judgment of God will be upon nonbelievers for not having known God, for rejecting the gospel, for causing persecution of God's people. They will suffer the persecution and affliction and even the banishment from the presence of the Lord and from the sufficiency of His power to keep them and save them throughout eternity. Their loss. They will be in darkness where there is constant weeping and gnashing of teeth.

The book of Revelation says for God's people right now God's grace is sufficient to keep us. But also when He comes, we are going to be at rest. And verse 10 says that He is going to be glorified in us. It means that His sufficiency and strength in the provision of the Lord, one that kept us. And His glory, you are going to be examples and testimonies of His glory and His keeping power to praise the glory of His grace.

He says, **Because our testimony among you was believed.** They put their hearing under the gospel. They responded. And for the Christians in Thessalonica they came under persecution and affliction by the city, by friends, by family, as soon as they received Christ. As soon as they started giving themselves over and putting their hearing under the gospel of Jesus Christ, they began to experience persecutions and began to experience afflictions from the very beginning. You remember Paul was concerned about them so he sent Timothy to find out what their condition was. He was concerned that all these afflictions and sufferings would chase them away, make them quit. Timothy came back with words, he says, "Oh no, they are growing in

faith, and they are growing in love towards one another." So he rejoiced over that and in turn used them as examples to the other churches. The other churches where the Christians were complaining and moaning about the hardship they have to go through to identify with Jesus Christ. And so he would use the afflictions and hardships of the Thessalonians as an example.

So that is what he is doing for them here. The false teachers have come in and said, "Your afflictions are because you are going through the tribulation period, the time of judgment." And so he takes chapter 1, before he starts talking about the tribulation period, he takes chapter 1 and instructs them and says, "No, you are suffering what is natural, what is normal." Those are the things that the positive thinking movement and the prosperity gospel movement are trying to get rid of. Hardship. If you are going through hardship, if you are going through afflictions, if you are going through suffering for your identification and following in obedience to Christ, then you need to get rid of it. Think positive. Claim the promises of God and get rid of all those hardships.

Some call it the gospel of the preservation of flesh, which is more accurate. That is what positive thinking is. That is what the prosperity gospel is. How to make it better for you in the human life. When in reality Paul says, "For you to suffer the sufferings of Christ, it makes you worthy of the kingdom of God." That is quite a concept that we do not quite hear nowadays because we are trying to get rid of those hardships. That is because of our culture. That is because of our Western world mindset.

Next week we will finish out the chapter by studying the prayer of Paul at the end of chapter 1.

Let's close with prayer.