

SUFFER PERSECUTION WITH HOPE

PLEASE do not read these comments until you have prayed and read the Bible for this lesson to learn what the Holy Spirit wants you to teach your students. Then let Him guide you in using these notes. When you follow this procedure you will be a better teacher of your students.

Lesson Aim: Expect to suffer when you live a godly life and boldly witness for Jesus Christ.

Suggestion: The teacher's lesson will highlight important truths in this week's lesson. After teaching, give your class next week's student lesson so they can share their answers in class next week.

Introduction: Paul received Timothy's report about the Thessalonian church's sound faith. It was a blessing to him. He encouraged them to remain firm in their faith in spite of the persecution that they were suffering. "All that live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." (2 Timothy 3:12)

Who worked with Paul on his second missionary journey? 1:1

Paul chose Silas to replace Barnabas and work with him on his second missionary journey. He was a leader among the brethren in Jerusalem (Act 15:22). He was a prophet and was chosen to deliver an important message to the church in Antioch, Syria (Act 15:32). When he was allowed to return to Jerusalem, he decided to stay in Antioch (Act 15:33-34). God used that decision to have Silas in the right place at the right time to work with Paul on this mission trip. When Paul arrived in Lystra, he found Timothy, his convert, and asked him to join them. Luke also traveled with them until they reached Philippi, where he may have been their first pastor, and then rejoined Paul's team when he completed his third mission trip. (Note the "we" verses in Acts 16, 20, 21 that Luke wrote. These show he was with Paul). We need to ask ourselves, "Am I spiritually ready and in the place where God can use me?"

What did the believers in Thessalonica do that caused Paul to thank God always? 1:3

The believers were growing exceedingly well in their faith, which impressed Paul. So how do believers grow in faith? They hear the Word of God (Rom 10:17) and obey his voice (Deut 13:4). Also, these believers were abounding in love for each other, a sure sign that the Spirit was in control of their lives (Gal 5:22). Parents want to see their children grow mentally, physically, spiritually and socially as Jesus did (Lk 2:52). Likewise, Paul thanked God when he heard that his converts were growing well in their spiritual lives. He knew God was working in them to will and to do what pleased Him (Phil 2:13).

How did these believers handle the persecution from wicked unbelievers? 1:4

They took the persecution with patient endurance and faith in God to care for them. They expected persecution and tribulation when they received Christ as their Savior. They saw the persecution that Paul suffered. No doubt he told them what he later wrote to the church in Philippi: "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake" (Phil 1:29; cf 1 Pet 4:12-14). They were able to endure the present persecution because they looked ahead to the future glory that would be theirs in the Kingdom of God (see 2 Cor 4:17-18). Today, many Christians in Moslem countries expect to die for Christ when they accept Him as their Savior, but most Christians in Christian lands are afraid to witness for Christ lest they are rejected or ridiculed by unbelievers.

How will unbelievers be judged when Christ returns to earth to set up His Kingdom? 1:5-10

Jesus Christ will come with His mighty angels to judge those with flaming fire who persecuted His people. Jesus taught this truth in His parable of the wheat and tares, weeds that looks like wheat in the early stage of its growth (Mt 13:24-30; 36-43). This fire will punish two groups: all those that know not God and those that obey not the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ (these know the truth, but reject it). They will be punished with everlasting destruction (ruin); it is not eternal annihilation, but eternal separation from the presence (face) of the Lord. All that is good and glorious is withheld from them. This will happen when Christ returns with His saints after the Tribulation to rule the earth.

How did Paul pray for the believers in Thessalonica? 1:11-12

He prays that God will count them worthy of their calling (to rule with Christ in His Kingdom) and fulfill all His desires for goodness by their work of faith in His power. Then Christ would be glorified in them and they would be glorified in Him according to the grace of God and Lord Jesus Christ.