

## **Rising Above Average (Part 2)**

### II Thessalonians 1: 1-12

As we continue to look at this wonderful passage, I want to remind you that we find a clear picture of what it takes to make a strong church. The church at Thessalonica had every reason, as far as this world is concerned, to give up and abandon their faith, but they persevered and prospered for the Lord. They chose to rise above the adversity of life and continue in the faith.

Our world is filled with churches that have resigned to defeat. They have given up on accomplishing greatness for the Lord. I refuse to accept that manner of thinking. There is nothing lacking in my God and He is able to empower us to accomplish great things and make a difference in the lives of people. I pray that you have not resigned to defeat and decided that we will never rise above average. I want to press on in the fight. I want Fellowship to achieve great things for the glory of God.

It is not just possible, it is certain if we will apply the characteristics that Thessalonica possessed in our lives and work for Christ. It is time for us to move on to the next level in our service for the Lord. There is nothing that can hinder us but a lack of faith and determination! I want to continue considering the [characteristics](#) of the Thessalonian Church as we conclude the thought: [Rising Above Average](#). If we will resolve to commit ourselves unto the Lord and take an honest look at where we are and what we have available to us through Christ, we can reach new heights that we never imagined.

Just as a reminder, Thessalonica was:

#### **I. A Planted Church**

#### **II. A Prosperous Church**

#### **III. A Passionate Church**

#### **IV. A Promoting Church**

#### **V. A Patient Church**

#### **VI. A Prevailing Church**

There is much more that we need to consider in [Vv.5-12](#).

**VII. A Powerful Church** (5-6) – [Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer: \[6\] Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you;](#) Paul challenged them to keep their focus. There was much that they endured that was painful and discouraging. They were

persecuted for their faith, but they were not alone in their distress. God was well aware of their steadfastness in the face of adversity. He had not turned a blind eye or a deaf ear to the challenges they faced. There would be a day of judgment for those who sought to hinder their work as well as a day of reward for those who served the Lord faithfully.

- A church that rises above average has laid hold on that fundamental truth. We are in this world, but we are not of this world. There is much that we must face and endure, but our strength comes from the Lord. We must not allow the troubles of life to dictate our existence. We are serving the God of heaven, the all powerful Lord. Jesus is the source of our strength and hope.
- Satan and those who oppose the work of God have tried in every generation to stop and hinder the church, but we are still here. There is nothing within the world that can overcome the faithful in Christ. The battles that we face are not ours to overcome; we must recognize to Whom we belong! We are part of the family of God. We are [counted worthy of the kingdom of God](#) because of the blood of Christ.
- There is nothing average about us. We have been redeemed! We are somebody in the Lord! The forces of evil are at work more than I've ever known, but we must remember the power that we have within. Jesus proclaimed that the gates of hell would not prevail against the church. We have power that this world can do nothing to suppress. [2 Pet.2:9 – The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished](#): We can rise above average through the power of Christ!

**VIII. A Promised Church** (7-10) – I'm glad that this world and the trouble it brings is not all that the church has to rely upon. The life that we live is only for a season; we will one day lay down this body of flesh, leaving the cares of life behind. But as we journey through life it is important to keep in mind the promises of the Lord. We can rise above average through the promises we've received. These verses reveal some promises the church can hold on to and find strength to rise above in. We are promised:

**A. A Spiritual Rest** (7a) – [And to you who are troubled rest with us](#). Even in the midst of trouble, there is a rest for the children of God. The world brings much that causes stress and despair, but the saved can rest in the Lord even when trouble abounds. [Heb.4:9 – There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God](#). We have the glorious hope of an eternal rest in the homeland of the soul, but we can enjoy the rest of our Lord even now. In the midst of adversity Jesus is able to supply a peace that passes all understanding. He is able to calm our fears and give us rest in His presence and power.

- Those who rise above and reach great heights have found rest that the world cannot give. There will be times when we are overwhelmed with the difficulties of life, but in those times we must learn to rest in the Lord. We must place our trust and assurance in Christ our Lord.

**B. A Sovereign Return (7b-9)** – when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, [8] In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: [9] Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; It is easy to allow our focus on the work at hand to be diverted by the troubles of life. It seems as if the church faces new challenges each day. There are always new battles to fight and new paths to travel. There are times when we feel as if the world has gained the upper hand, our efforts have been in vain, and we are losing the conflict.

- In those times of dismay, when you feel like giving up and giving in, think about the promise of our Lord's return. As Jesus ascended into heaven, the angels proclaimed that He would return. There is no reason for the body of Christ to resign to defeat and failure. We are victorious in Him! Our Lord is coming again to bring judgment upon this earth and those who have denied Him.

- We may have to endure the persecutions of men now, but Jesus is coming to set things right. One day the sky will split open and the King of glory will step out to call for the bride. After the Tribulation, He will return to judge the earth, setting up His kingdom to rule and reign. We are not a people without hope. We serve the Lord who will come again just as He said. The wicked upon the earth have an appointment with the Lord. There is no reason for us to fear. Jesus is coming soon to take us home!

**C. A Sainted Resurrection (10)** – When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day. There is great joy and encouragement in this verse. Our blessed Lord is coming again to call for His bride and we will shine for Him. In that great day the world will see the bride of Christ rise to meet the Lord in the air. I firmly believe that the world will witness the graves bursting open and the saints being raptured out. The world will be witness to the awesome power of the Lord.

- As we've studied in Revelation, the church will return with Christ as He comes to judge this world. We may be looked down upon, criticized, and rebuked for our faith, but one day the world will see and know that the gospel message was true. It will be much easier to do great things for the Lord if we will live in light of His soon return. The church is heading out of here and we must take full advantage of every day that we have left! A people with such promise surely can rise above the average complacency of the world!

**IX. A Praying Church** (11a) – [Wherefore also we pray always for you.](#) If you study much concerning the ministry of Paul you will soon realize that he was a man of prayer. He reminds the church at Thessalonica that they were always in his prayers. [Rom.1:9 – For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers;](#) I cannot stress the importance of prayer enough. Churches that rise above average have those who are effective in prayer. It is the greatest tool that we have and likely the least used. It is in prayer that we can enter the throne room of God. It is in prayer that we can make our intercessions known to the Lord.

- If we are to achieve anything of value it will involve God's people getting serious in prayer. I fear that we are weak in our ability to get in touch with the Lord. Prayer is something that requires effort and accountability. If we are to have our prayers heard and answered, our lives must be in tune with the Lord. Our prayers won't get above our heads with sin in our lives.
- How dedicated are you in praying for this church and the work of God? How can we expect to experience the power of God and achieve what He desires of us if we are unwilling to pray? I want to challenge each of us to make it a point to pray. If you have to deal with areas in your life, get that taken care of and begin to seek God to move in our midst.
- Pray that God will touch me each time that I stand and that I will be sensitive to His leadership. Pray for the men who serve as deacons here at the church. Pray for the teachers and those who work with our youth. Pray one for the other.
- Do you desire for Fellowship to be more than an average church? Are you willing to pray for that to become reality? We have the promise of God that He will supply if we will agree together and seek Him. [Mat.18:19 – Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.](#) Do you believe God will do what He said? Let's agree and pray for God to help us overcome and I know He will supply!

**X. A Profitable Church** (11b) – [that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power:](#) Paul's desire for Thessalonica was that they would be counted worthy of the calling they had received and live according to the good pleasure of the Lord. Simply he prayed that they would live as they should and honor God in fulfilling the work they were called to do.

- There are enough churches in America who are not walking worthy of their calling. There are those who have abandoned the ways of God and have no interest in His will or His way. Those churches are of no value in a lost and dying world. If we are to be profitable for the Lord we must live according to His will.

- It is God's will for us to be a light in this dark world. I know that I speak of that often, but I fear that the light of the gospel has been hidden and isn't shining as it should. I want us to be a people who fulfill the calling upon our lives. Churches that rise above average and see great things in the Lord are profitable to Him.
- If we are not making a difference in this community and the world around us, what good are we? If this world isn't influenced in a positive way by our existence then we are not a profitable church! Jesus died that we might live. We belong to Him and are obligated to live for Him. The very least we can do is commit to making a difference in the lives of people.
- We are not left here to hold these pews to the floor. We are here to glorify our Savior and reach those who are lost. The church has lost sight of her purpose. How does Christ view us? Are we profitable to Him or does He see a congregation who is sitting idly by as the world plunges deeper in sin?

**XI. A Prominent Church** (12) – [That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.](#) Paul closes with the most important aspect of the church, that it might glorify the Lord. He rejoiced that Thessalonica brought glory to the Lord. They were not a group consumed with satisfying themselves or submitting to the pressures of life, but one that lived for God and influenced the world.

- Think about what the average church possesses. They have little zeal in their worship. Most put nothing in and they take nothing home from the service; they are completely unchanged. Their main focus is resisting change that would upset their way of doing things. Church is about doing it their way and achieving what they desire. There is no growth and no desire for growth. They meet under the banner of Christ, but little they do reflects Him at all.
- Above average churches magnify the Lord. That is their purpose for existing. They want to honor God in everything they do. These are the churches that make a difference. They magnify the Lord and He works among them.

Fellowship can be a prominent church in this county, not in that we have the best preaching or singing, but that we are honoring God in the ministry that we are engaged in. Do you want us to become a prominent church, one where lives are changed and Jesus is lifted up? We can have that if we will desire it and resolve to achieve it. I trust you want more for us than just being average. If you do seek God and He will provide!