

**SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS**  
**Commentary by Michael Sigler**  
**July 11, 2010**

**Glory to Christ**

**2 Thessalonians 1:3-12**

**Key verse: “We always pray for you, asking that our God will make you worthy of his call and will fulfill by his power every good resolve and work of faith” (2 Thessalonians 1:11).**

The movie *Facing the Giants* is about a Christian high school’s football team and their coach, Grant Taylor. In one memorable scene, Coach Taylor challenges one of his key players, Brock, to go the extra mile in his pursuit of team victory:

At this practice, a player asks about an upcoming opponent, “Coach, how strong is Westview this year?”

Before the coach can reply, Brock answers, “A lot stronger than we are.”

The coach says, “You already written Friday night down to a loss, Brock?”

“Well, not if I knew we could beat’em,” Brock replies.

The coach says, “Come here, Brock. You too, Jeremy.”

“What? Am I in trouble?” Brock asks.

“Not yet,” says the coach. “I want to see you do the death crawl again, except I want to see your absolute best.” (The death crawl was a drill where Brock would crawl, with a player on his back, without touching his knees to the ground.)

“What, you want me to go to the 30-yard-line?” Brock asks the coach.

“I think you can go to the 50.”

“The 50? I can go to the 50 if nobody’s on my back.”

“I think you can do it with Jeremy on your back, but even if you can’t, I want you to promise you’re going to do your best.”

“All right,” Brock promises.

“One more thing,” the coach adds, “I want you to do it blindfolded.”

“Why?”

“Because I don’t want you giving up at a certain point when you could go further.”

When Brock takes his position, with Jeremy on his back, the coach calls instructions: “All right, Brock, let’s go. Keep your knees off the ground. Just your hands and feet. There you go, just a little bit left. Show me good effort....That a way, Brock, you keep comin’. There you go, it’s a good start.”

“Am I at the 20 yet?” Brock asks.

**“Forget the 20. You give me your best. Now, don’t stop, Brock. You’ve got more in you than that.”**

**Coach Taylor continues to yell encouragement until Brock cries out, “It hurts!”**

**“Don’t quit on me,” the coach says, “your best—keep driving.”**

**“He’s heavy,” Brock gasps.**

**“I know he’s heavy.”**

**“I’m about out of strength.”**

**“Then you negotiate with your body to find more strength,” yells the coach. “But don’t you give up on me, Brock. You’re doing good. Do not quit on me. It’s all heart from here.”**

**As the entire team watches, the coach shouts: “30 more steps...20 more...10 more...1 more.” Brock collapses on the ground.**

**“It’s got to be the 50-yard-line,” Brock cries. “It’s got to be the 50. I don’t have anymore.”**

**“Look, Brock,” says Coach Taylor, “you’re in the end zone!”**

**The Book of 2 Thessalonians was written, in part, to encourage believers who were facing a great life challenge of their own. Their challenge was to find the strength and grace to stand strong in their faith, while facing persecution and suffering. The encouragement offered to them in 2 Thess. 1:3-12 starts with a word of praise:**

**“We must always give thanks to God for you, brothers and sisters, as is right, because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of everyone of you for one another is increasing. Therefore we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your steadfastness and faith during all your persecutions and the afflictions that you are enduring” (vv. 3-4).**

**Bible scholar William Barclay says of these verses: “Paul’s answer [to the Thessalonians’ discouragement] ...was to pick out their virtues and their achievements, in such a way that these despondent, frightened Christians would square their shoulders and fling back their heads and say, ‘If Paul thinks that of us, we’ll make a fight of it yet.’ Paul knew that, often, judicious praise can do what indiscriminate criticism cannot do; he knew that the praise of those we love does not make us proud; it makes us humble....” (*The Daily Study Bible Series*)**

**Next, the apostle offers a different kind of encouragement. To a people who are being unjustly persecuted by unbelievers, Paul offers these words: “For it is indeed just of God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to give relief to the afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus” (vv. 6-8).**

Throughout history, a question of God's people has been, "Why does God allow good people to suffer while, so often, the wicked seem to get off Scot free and even prosper in their wickedness?"

Though followers of Jesus do not take joy in anyone facing eternity separated from God, we do take courage in the fact that one day this broken world will be made right again. And every person will be judged by a God whose judgment will be entirely fair and just. To those Thessalonian believers being persecuted for their faith, and for people today who witness injustice and oppression, the coming judgment offers motivation to remain faithful to God.

Bishop N.T. Wright wrote: "The word *judgment* carries negative overtones for a good many people...We need to remind ourselves that throughout the Bible, God's coming judgment is a good thing, something to be celebrated, longed for, yearned over. It causes people to shout for joy and the trees of the field to clap their hands. In a world of systematic injustice, bullying, violence, arrogance, and oppression, the thought that there might come a day when the wicked are firmly put in their place and the poor and weak are given their due is the best news there can be. Faced with a world in rebellion, a world full of exploitation and wickedness, a good God *must* be a God of judgment." (from *Surprised By Hope*)

Finally, the Thessalonians are offered encouragement to stand firm in their faith with these words: Paul speaks of a day when the Lord "comes to be glorified by his saints and to be marveled at on that day among all who have believed" (v. 10). Paul's prayer for the Thessalonians is that they will stand the test "so 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" (v. 12).

Barclay offers this insight on verses 10-12: "Paul's uplifting message ends with the most uplifting vision of all. It ends with what we might call *the reciprocal glory*. When Christ comes, He will be glorified *in His saints* and *admired in those who have believed*. Here we have the breathtaking truth that our glory is Christ, and that Christ's glory is ourselves. The glory of Christ is in those who through Him have learned to endure and to suffer and to conquer, to shine like lights in a dark place, to become radiant with goodness and loveliness...We can be such that we can bring discredit or we can bring glory to the Master whose we are and whom we seek to serve. Can there be any privilege and can there be any responsibility greater than that?" (*The Daily Study Bible Series*)

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