

October 22, 2023

2 Thessalonians 1:11-12

11 To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power, *12* 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.

Scriptures for further study:

Ephesians 4:1

2 Peter 1:10

1 Corinthians 1:9

Acts 13:2

Philippians 2:12-13

Mathew 5:16

Romans 8:29

Philippians 2:14-15

“Paul is constantly praying that in the case of the Thessalonians no resolution that springs from the good disposition which the Holy Spirit had given be unfulfilled and that no faith-inspired work be left unfinished.”

-Simon Kistemaker

“A man’s real belief is that which he lives by. What a man believes is the thing he does, not the thing he thinks.”

-George MacDonald



Calling

2 Thessalonians 1:11-12

BIG IDEA: If God's grace is so lavish it not only enables us to fulfill His calling but causes creation to blush at our beauty in Christ, let us endeavor to live out every good desire and work of faith by the Spirit.

The abundance of God’s grace to me in Jesus moves me by the Spirit to be beautiful and courageous.

OUTLINE

1. God’s Calling

2. God’s Enabling Grace

3. God’s Adorning Grace

“Any concept of grace that makes us feel more comfortable about sinning is not biblical grace. God’s grace never encourages us to live in sin; on the contrary, it empowers us to say no to sin and yes to truth.”

-Randy Alcorn

“We should therefore learn that the only good we have is what the Lord has given us gratuitously; that the only good we do is what He does in us; that it is not that we do nothing ourselves, but that we act only when we have been acted upon, in other words under the direction and influence of the Holy Spirit.”

-John Calvin

“The present prayer anticipates the evaluation of their conduct in light of God’s calling, yet it rests on the security of knowing that God is the one who enables them to do what is good and right.”

-Gene Green

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Shortly after writing 1 Thessalonians, the apostle Paul received a report (2 Thess. 3:11) that the Thessalonian church had accepted the strange claim that “the day of the Lord has come” (2:1–2). Paul sent them this second letter in A.D. 49–51. He was probably in Corinth at the time.

-ESV Gospel Transformation Study Bible

The Thessalonian church was suffering persecution. He writes to them and encourages them to keep doing what God called them to do. 2 Thess. 1:11–12 is Paul’s prayer report. Paul’s prayer for the Thessalonians is that God will make them worthy of their calling so that Jesus may be glorified in them.

-ESV Study Bible

Praise to Jesus. That God has placed a call on your life, a call to fellowship with Him through Jesus, a call to serve Him in Jesus, and a call to shine the beauty of Christ through your good desires and works of faith.

Repentance through Jesus. Spend some time repenting for the many ways in which we ignore the calling of God and accept the invitations to feast at the world’s table instead of the table of God’s grace in Jesus Christ.

Consecration for Jesus. Rededicate yourself to seek God’s enabling grace and prayerfully ask for his power to be at work in you, to walk in faith in the various duties and responsibilities to which he has called you, to relationships you have in life, and finally, continue to fix your eyes on Jesus as God conforms you to his image so that His beauty would be magnified in your attitudes and actions for the glory of His name!

“We do not want merely to see beauty, though, God knows, even that is bounty enough. We want something else which can hardly be put into words – to be united with the beauty we see, to pass into it, to receive it into ourselves, to bathe in it, to become part of it....For if we take the imagery of Scripture seriously, then God will one day give us the Morning Star and cause us to put on the splendour of the sun...At present we are on the outside of the world, the wrong side of the door. We discern the freshness and purity of morning, but they do not make us fresh and pure. We cannot mingle with the splendours we see. But all the leaves of the New Testament are rustling with the rumour that it will not always be so. Some day, God willing, we shall get in.”

-C.S. Lewis

DISCIPLESHIP DURING THE WEEK

These “Sermon discussion questions” are designed for study during the week for believers in a wide variety of ages & stages in their walk with Christ.

1. Have you experienced something so beautiful that it produced an emotional response? Did it change you or cause you to do something out of character?
2. List activities people resolve to do, and they do them. Now, what are some activities we resolve to do, but don't do them? (Read 2 Thess. 11 and 12) What is the connection between resolve and action?
3. What are some of the good desires and courageous actions God calls Christians?
4. How does God enable a Christian to fulfill the good desires and courageous actions he calls us to?
5. (Focus on 2 Thess. 1:12) What is the effect of God's adorning grace in your life? (Refer to Matt. 5:16, Romans 8:29, Phil. 2:14-15) How does what is beautiful to God challenge how we often think about beauty?
6. How are we beautiful to God?

“O Lord, command what you will but give what you command.”
-Augustine

“God performs his artwork upon his people throughout their lives...reflecting God's marvelous handiwork and radiating back upon Christ the glorious virtues that Christ, together with the Father, worked in them.”

-G.K. Beale

“Makato's work doesn't have an intensity that loudly calls people's attention but it has beauty that resonates deeply and slowly. I think that this way to think about beauty is going to become more and more needed in our world today.”

-Norihiko Saito

FOR FAMILIES AND YOUNG CHILDREN

1. Paul starts 2 Thessalonians in a similar way to what he did for 1 Thessalonians. *(He gives thanks for them and tells them how he prays for them.)*

- a. How do you feel when you know that someone is praying for you?
- b. Take time this week to pray for a family member and a friend. Ask them how you can pray for them and let them know that you are praying.

2. At the end of verse 12, Paul wrote, “according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.” What does this phrase tell us about the source of power for Christians to live out Paul’s prayer? *(Paul reminds the Thessalonians and us that it is only through God’s grace given to us that we can live the Christian life. This is one of the most important things to understand as a Christian. We can only follow Christ and glorify Him by the grace given to us in Christ.)*

3. In verse 11 who is it that makes the Thessalonians and us “worthy of His calling”? *(It is God, not us. Again, this is crucial to understand that God is the source for all things in our faith journey.)*

4. What does it look like to live “worthy of His calling”? *(It doesn’t mean that mean we live in way to deserve or merit God’s love and power. We follow God because of His grace not for His grace. Living a worthy life means living in a way that is fitting or appropriate of God’s children. This would mean following His will declared in His Word.)*

5. What does it mean that God “may be glorified in you, and you in Him”? *(You may have to draw this out or answer this first. We glorify God when people see God through our lives, or people ask us about God. When God is glorified, then He gets the credit as the source of all good things. In Romans 8:30, in discussing the salvation of God, Paul wrote that believers would be glorified. This doesn’t mean that we are equal to God. This means the glory that God’s people get is connected to the glory God receives. God made us as His image-bearers; therefore, people are meant to see God in us and through us. Remind your children that God is sovereign, and He ordains the end of all things and the means for all things. Paul’s prayer was part of the means for the Thessalonians to be in a relationship with God such that He gets the glory, and we get glory due to our connection with Him.)*

6. What is the “work of faith” mentioned in verse 11? *(This is not the work for faith. It is the work that flows from and out of our faith in Jesus. A great passage that reminds us of this is Ephesians 2:8-10.)*

Scriptures for further study:

1 John 3:1-2

John 15:5

Matthew 5:13-16

FOR STUDENTS

1. What are the events, including those described in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12, that will take place prior to Christ's Second Coming? (See Matt. 24:10-12, 14, 21, 29-30; John 14:1-3; Rev. 20:7)
2. Study James 5:13-18 and note: 1) when prayer should be made (vv.13-14); 2) the connection between true prayer and confession (vv.15-16); 3) the power of the prayer of faith (vv.16b-18).
3. Read Romans 1:9; Ephesians 1:15-23; Philippians 1:4-6; Colossians 1:9-12; 2 Timothy 1: 3; Philemon 6. From Paul's prayers, list the goals that God wants to be achieved in all those who believe.
4. What kind of suffering might you face—however slight---because of your faith in Christ? When is it especially tempting to try and avoid that suffering and turn away from Jesus?
5. How does the doctrine of God's final judgement help us when we are suffering injustices?
6. What will you pray for yourself in light of Paul's prayer in verses 11-12?

*Selected questions borrowed and adapted from *1 & 2 Thessalonians for You* by Ligon Duncan and *Opening up 2 Thessalonians* by Ian McNaughton.

FOR NON-BELIEVERS OR NEW BELIEVERS

1. In verse 11, Paul begins with the phrase “with this in mind.” Notice that this refers to the preceding passage (verses 3-10). We need to read this crucial teaching of Scripture as it relates to the Second Coming of Christ. His return will be visible and powerful, and it will be a time of judgment. The two different experiences for those who believe in him and those who do not could not be more drastic. To one, it will be a time to marvel (verse 10) and be lost in amazement. To the other, a time of punishment that will lead to destruction and infinite and irreparable loss (verses 8-9).

Question: Believing in him means gaining everything; not believing in him (and “disobeying the gospel”) means losing everything. “With this in mind,” what is the clear decision you must make? What would keep you from putting your faith in Christ today?

2. Christ’s returning should also have a bearing on how we as Christians live our lives today. While God has already “called” us to salvation (v.10) by his grace and has declared us to be worthy, we must also now live a life that is “worthy” of that calling. This does not mean we must earn or merit our salvation (which has already been given by grace). But it does mean we are to live in a way that is appropriate and serious, given our understanding of what Christ has done for us on the cross.

Question: Are you living in such a way that when Christ returns, he will commend you for having lived a life worthy of his calling?

3. Another way to think about the word “worthy” is to think in terms of weightiness. If we understand the weightiness of the gospel (doctrine), there should be a corresponding weightiness to our Christian lives (practice). If we truly appreciate and delight in our salvation by grace, then that faith will prompt us to action (verse 11). We will live with practical vitality. We will desire to see the name of Jesus Christ glorified in us (verse 12).

Question: Are you giving equal weight to both your doctrine (faith) and your practice (living)?

4. If our initial salvation is by grace alone, then our continued progress in our salvation is also a work of his grace. It comes about as a result of his “power” (verse 11). Notice that Paul prays constantly for God’s power to be at work in their lives.

Practice: Spend some time praying today, and then pray continually for God’s power to enable your faith and obedience to grow more and more.

A Sustaining Gratitude: The Abundant Growth of Faith, Love and Hope in Thessalonica



Sunflowers, Vincent Van Gough, 1888

About the artist and painting: In 1888, the Dutch painter Vincent Van Gogh moved to southern France with a dream. He wanted to establish an art community where painters could live, work, and inspire one another. One of his mentors, a man he deeply respected, Paul Gauguin, agreed to come and live in this community. As a symbol of his thankfulness and happiness, Van Gogh painted a series of sunflower paintings and hung them in his room. The sunflower meant to reflect his surprising joy towards achieving a dream.

The apostle Paul was probably not an artist but he did produce a letter expressing his surprising joy, his thankfulness, and happiness. This letter was his “sunflower” to the church Thessalonica. It’s Paul’s verbal painting of Gospel Gratitude. What are things you a most grateful for in your life? Has the Gospel taken root in your heart? If so, what fruits of gratitude are being produced and overflowing in your life as a result of Jesus?

In his opening words from Paul to the Thessalonians, he writes:

2 We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers,
3 remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. The same faith, hope, and love that made a difference in the lives of believers then can make a difference in your life now. **“I’m excited for what God has in store for us First Presbyterian Church, as the Spirit washes us in these words of Gospel gratitude. May Christ be our hope for the world to come, our faith for today, and our love for a lifetime”** Pastor Bill Pardue

A Sustaining Gratitude: The Abundant Growth of Faith, Love and Hope in Thessalonica

About 2 Thessalonians: Paul writes to express his GRATITUDE for the church's continued growth in faith and love. At the same time, he encourages them to stand firm amidst persecution, seeks to correct a false teaching concerning the return of Christ, and addresses an idleness problem.

Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians to commend them for their continued spiritual growth while encouraging them to progress. He deals with misinformation about the 2nd Coming and an emerging problem of idleness. The letter's focus is eschatology, or the theology of end times. While this is a prevalent theme in 1 Thessalonians, instead of continuing a discussion about what will happen to the dead, the Thessalonians were confused and disturbed by false teaching that said Jesus had already returned invisibly and the church missed it. Paul provides much-needed clarity about when Jesus will return.

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May Christ continue to be our hope for the world, our faith for today, and our love for a lifetime.

- Pastor Bill Pardue