

November 12, 2023

2 Thessalonians 2:16-17 ESV

16 Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, *17* comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word.

Scriptures for further study:

1 Thessalonians 1:6

1 Thessalonians 2:14

2 Thessalonians 2:14

Ephesians 1:18

1 Thessalonians 4:14

Hebrews 12:2



Hope

2 Thessalonians 2:16-17

BIG IDEA: Let our certain and prolific future in Christ shape and inspire all we do and say in a difficult and unexpected present.

OUTLINE

1. The Difficult and Unexpected Present

2. Our Certain and Prolific Future

3. Every Good Work and Word

“Fear, isolation, pain, purposelessness, despair . . . these are the symptoms of a society that is broken and hurting, and they can lead to an early death not only from suicide but from very real damage to the heart, immune system, GI system, and brain—the entire body goes into states of low-grade inflammation that can increase our vulnerability to disease by up to 75–95 percent when we are in a constant state of turmoil...more and more research is showing how the absence of hope and the lack of resources to deal with our most basic emotional and physical needs are coming at a great cost.”

-Caroline Leaf

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

In Acts 17, Luke writes how Paul, Silas, and Timothy founded the church in Thessalonica. In the short term, the church was growing, and Paul and his associates were teaching the foundations of the faith. Something happened that caused a significant disruption to the life of the church. Opponents of Paul started a riot in the city. They sought to have him arrested or killed. And so this very young church is facing a difficult and unexpected present. The leadership had been stripped away, and they needed someone to teach and nurture them. The persecution intended for Paul and his workers was now being turned on them. He mentions this in both letters to the church.

Praise to Jesus. Praise the Lord for the glory of walking with God in a place where there is no more crying, mourning, or pain. For a place of infinite beauty and relational stability. For a time in which we will run and not grow weary, walk, and not be faint. Praise the Lord because Jesus let this hope inform all of his decisions, as well as how he handled every difficulty you can, too, by his righteousness, which is yours through Christ.

Repentance through Jesus. Repent for securing your confidence and comfort in anything other than the eternal comfort and good hope in the glory of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Confess and repent for losing sight of a profound vision for your glorious future in Jesus, the hope and help of the early church and for you today.

Consecration for Jesus. Meditate on Ephesians 1:17-23. Pray that the eyes of your heart will be enlightened, that you may know the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, so that difficult or unexpected news causes you to envision a reality that the life death and resurrection of Jesus Christ which provides confidence in the sustaining security in a living hope which is inescapable.

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. Bad news. How has difficult or unexpected news been shared with you? Did the way the news was communicated affect how you responded when you received it?
2. What has your difficult and unexpected present looked like lately? How have you dealt with it?
3. Read 2 Thess. 2:16-17, 1 Thess. 1:4, and 1 Thess. 2:14. How did Paul speak to the Thessalonians in light of their difficult and unexpected circumstances?
4. In 2 Thess. 2:16, Paul writes about “eternal comfort and good hope.” Review 1st & 2nd Thess. To what eternal comfort and hope was Paul pointing?
5. Read 2 Thess. 2:17. *Paul prays in verse 17 that the God who has given us a good hope would use that to establish our hearts in every good work and word.* Read Hebrews 12:2. How can your certainty in your future in Christ reframe how you handle the difficult and unexpected present?

“Human life is fatally fragile and subject to forces beyond our power to manage. No amount of money, power, and planning can prevent bereavement, dire illness, relationship betrayal, financial disaster, or a host of other troubles from entering your life. Life is tragic. No one is immune.”

- Tim Keller

“Their future hope becomes the lens through which they seek to face their present circumstances.”

-Gene Green

“Hope for the Christian is a confident expectation of a guaranteed result.”

-Paul David Tripp

FOR FAMILIES AND YOUNG CHILDREN

1. Who is the source of the “eternal comfort and good hope” mentioned in verse 16 *(God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ)*

a. What difference does this source make to our lives? *(Since the source is God, then we know it is not temporary and will not falter or go away.)*

2. How did God grant this “eternal comfort and good hope?” *(God accomplished this through His redemption plan. God the Father showed His love for the broken world by sending His Son, Jesus, to save us from our sins. Jesus showed His love through His life, death, resurrection, and ascension. This reminds us how God willingly sacrificed to save us.)*

3. Who do you go to when you face a stressful situation? Would you go to someone you know loves you or someone you are not sure of? *(When we need help, we turn to the friend or family member who have shown their love and sacrifice for us. Paul wanted the Thessalonians and us to be reminded of how we can trust God in all situations.)*

4. What does the word “eternal” mean? How does “eternal comfort” help us face difficult situations? *(Eternal means to go on forever. There will be no end to God’s comfort, therefore we can have peace in all situations.)*

5. Knowing the wonderful truths from verse 16, what does Paul write in verse 17 will be the result in our lives? *(Paul writes that we will have comfort in our hearts. The word, “comfort,” means that we have will have encouragement. Paul also writes that God will “establish them in every good work and word.” This gives us a picture of what the Christian life will produce. We live a Godly life that includes works of service and words that bring God glory.)*

Scriptures for further study:

Galatians 2:20

Ephesians 2:8-10

FOR STUDENTS

1. Make a list of Paul's prayer requests for the Thessalonians, starting at 1: 3 (see particularly 1:11-12, 2:13-17; 3:5, 16, 18). What were Paul's main concerns for them, and what were the spiritual ambitions he had for them?
- 2 How easy do you find it to "feel and own" God's love for you? What could help you with this?
3. What "good work and word" do you need God's help with this week?
4. Who could you pray for using the words of Paul's benediction? (2 Thess. 2:16-17)

FOR NON-BELIEVERS OR NEW BELIEVERS

This passage offers us important truths that can inform the way we pray:

1. It is clear from this passage that the Father and Son are equal and one. And yet, it is also appropriate, based on this passage, to make distinctions within the Godhead. God is one in nature and yet existing in three persons (Father, Son, Holy Spirit). When it comes to our prayer life, therefore, we may 1) address our prayers to the Father, or to the Son, or to the Spirit directly. Or, 2) we may offer our prayers TO the Father, THROUGH the Son, and BY the power of the Holy Spirit.

Pray: In your prayers this week, try addressing your prayers to God according to both of these frameworks. Whatever you do, just make sure that you actually pray! God will hear!

2. This passage indicates that our salvation has past, present, and future aspects. “Loved” and “gave” are past tense, probably referring to what Christ has already done for us on the cross. Being strengthened in our deeds and words indicates an ongoing work of salvation in our lives. “Eternal encouragement” and “hope” refer to the permanent and lasting nature of God’s grace, and the certainty (grounded in God’s promises) of our eternal future.

Pray: Spend some time this week thanking God for what he has already done, what he is currently doing, and what he promises to do for us in our (guaranteed) future.

3. Our Christian faith is based entirely on God’s grace. But once saved by his grace, our Christian faith is not something that is passive. We are ever growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (as Paul puts it elsewhere). This passage reminds us that we are to be growing in every good deed (both large and small), and every word, all of which comes from hearts encouraged by the Lord.

Pray: This week, pray for God to move powerfully in your heart, and pray that out of your heart comes a desire and strength to glorify him in all your deeds and words. And may our deeds and words, in turn, encourage others in their faith!

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



Sunflowers, Vincent Van Gough, 1888

About 2 Thessalonians: 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.

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. To symbolize his thankfulness and happiness, Van Gogh painted a series of sunflower paintings and hung them in his room. The sunflower reflected his surprising joy towards achieving a dream. The apostle Paul was probably not an artist. Still, he produced a letter expressing his surprising joy, thankfulness, and happiness. This letter was his "sunflower" to the church Thessalonica. It's Paul's verbal painting of Gospel Gratitude. What are the things you are 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 due to 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 can make a difference in your life now.

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

- Pastor Bill Pardue