

WORTHY OF HIS CALLING

What Will Happen to You When Jesus Returns?

2 Thessalonians 1:1-12

Give thanks to the Lord when faith and love grows in the persecuted church (1-4).

- *The church is founded and sustained by the grace and peace of God (1-2).*
- *The church that stands fast in love and faith is worthy of praise and thanks to the Lord (3-4).*

Mirroring his introduction to the church in his first letter, Paul opens his second letter to the Thessalonians by reminding them of who they are by God's grace and encouraging them in what they are doing right as the church of God in the Lord Jesus Christ. It's never a waste of time to reinforce the reality of who we are as God's people. We are the church! Paul re-emphasized this fact with the Thessalonians. He wanted them to always think of themselves as the church of God in the Lord Jesus Christ. He also continued to restate that they were the church that is founded and sustained by the grace and peace of God. God's grace not only saved them from their sin, but God's grace sustains them and sanctifies them for their good and for his glory. God's grace brought them peace with God, destroying the dividing wall of hostility because of sin, and God's peace was what sustains and sets them apart as the Lord's children: His church! As a result, Paul praised and thanked the Lord for what he saw in the church in Thessalonica. They were continuing to stand fast in love and faith, growing by God's grace in these things even in the midst of persecution for those very things! Paul boasted about the Lord's grace in this church as he thanked the Lord for the Thessalonians. In all of this, the Lord reminds us today that it is good to give thanks to the Lord when faith and love grow in the persecuted church, which it will always do when the church is faithful to look to the Lord in faith and love!

1. How does Paul address the Thessalonians? What one word does he use to identify them as a group? Use the BlueLetterBible app to do a word study on that word. Discuss how it describes us today as a group of believers who are called out and gathered together?
2. Paul uses the phrase "God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" in both verse 1 and verse 2. If you remember from 1 Thessalonians, what do the names reveal about God, specifically about God the Father and God the Son, Jesus? After discussing the meaning of these names, ask these questions: Is God your Father? Is Jesus your Lord and Christ?
3. Is your faith growing? Is your love for one another (believers) growing? Why, or why not? Why is it important for these things to be held onto even in hard times (testing, trial, persecution...)? Can faith and love grow in the hard times in life? If so, how?

When Jesus returns, there will be eternal punishment for the lost and eternal glory for the saved (5-10).

- *Persecution in the church today is evidence of the righteous judgment of God (5a).*
 - *It displays the worthiness of the redeemed who suffer (5b).*
 - *It justifies the righteousness of God's judgment against sin (6-9).*
 - *It magnifies the joy when Jesus will be glorified in his saints (10).*

Verse 5 starts in an incredible way: What came before in Paul's letter was a plain indication or clear evidence of God's righteous judgment! What does that mean? It means that his work of continuing to protect and grow his church even in the midst of persecution is building the evidence that's needed to justify his judgment against the very sin that underlies persecution. In other words, it is the evidence that justifies the righteousness of God's judgment against sin. Additionally, that very

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persecution and the Lord's work in his church through it also displays the worthiness of the redeemed who suffer. Believers in persecution who hold fast to the Lord in faith and love, allowing the Lord to grow them and use them to grow his church, prove themselves worthy by God's grace. They also have the hope of the return of Jesus when their joy will be magnified as Christ is glorified in them! What a blessed hope we have in Christ! When Jesus returns, there will be eternal punishment for the lost and eternal glory for the saved. This is the motivation of the church for their mission of the kingdom of God, knowing the reward that awaits them at the return of Christ, the stakes of their mission in the souls of the lost, and the comfort of God's judgment that will make all things right in the end.

1. When Jesus returns, what will happen to those who don't know Jesus and to those who have rejected Jesus? Use this passage to get your answers, and discuss. Do you believe this?
 - a. How is the evidence to support God's righteous judgment being gathered and collected today when the church is ridiculed and even persecuted?
2. When Jesus returns, what will happen to those who believe and follow Jesus? Use this passage to get your answers, and discuss. Do you believe this?
 - a. How does God's future judgment at the return of Jesus encourage the persecuted church today? How does it motivate believers to share the gospel even with those who persecute them? How does the Lord's return give you hope right now?

Until Jesus returns, pray that God will make us worthy of his calling, fulfilling his work in us to the glory of his Son (11-12).

Paul ends his introduction with a reminder of his constant prayer for the church, which had two components. First, Paul's prayer was that the Lord would make the Thessalonians worthy of his calling. God's call in Christ Jesus is a high calling that is extended and received in grace. For the called who have received the grace of God in the forgiveness of sin and in new life in Jesus, the call is an upward call, pursuing Christ and living for him each and every day. It's a call that gives the believer a new identity and a new direction. It's a call that empowers the believer to grow in the Spirit to look more and more like the Lord. Living worthy of his calling is something that requires the Lord's power and presence to accomplish. Paul understood this, so he prayed that "God may make you worthy of his calling!" Second, Paul knew that living worthy of the Lord's calling means living on mission for the Lord, doing his work in this world. So Paul also looked to the Lord to be the one to "fulfill every resolve for good and work of faith by his power!" It's the Lord's power at work in the called that enables them to do his work, and just as Paul understood this and prayed for this, we need to do the same today! Why? Because it is through the work of the Lord in his people that the Lord Jesus Christ is glorified in his church. Until Jesus returns, pray!

1. What does it mean to live worthy of the Lord's calling? Discuss in general, and then ask this question in your group:
 - a. Are you pursuing a life that's living worthy of the Lord's calling?
2. Why does Paul ask the Lord to make them worthy of the Lord's calling? Should we pray for this for one another? Why, or why not?
3. What is a resolve for good and a work of faith? Discuss, and then ask these questions:
 - a. How do those things connect to our lives as believers and together as the church? Are you resolved for good? Do you want every work of faith in your life?
4. Why does Paul ask the Lord to do these things? Should we pray for this for one another?
5. How do these two prayers impact the glory of God in his church? Discuss, and pray!