

1Thessalonians 12-03-30b

We pick up our study in 1 Thessalonians chapter 3, we're looking at verses 11-13 at this point, where Paul gives something of a benedictory sounding statement. Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus Christ direct our way to you. And this is interesting to me because both of them are mentioned.

He doesn't say may the Holy Spirit direct our way to you, he says may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus Christ direct our way to you. Well, what has kept him from directing his way to them up to this point? What did he tell us several verses back? Who hindered him? Satan. So who is it that can overcome the hindrance of Satan? God the Father himself and the Lord Jesus Christ.

So Paul's basically appealing over Satan's head for the privilege of going back and visiting them. But it also is an indication that Paul acknowledges that there is a plan and there is the means of implementing that plan. God the Father has established the strategy.

The Lord Jesus Christ has communicated and demonstrated and lived out the tactics necessary to successfully wage spiritual war using that strategy. And so Paul looks to them both when he says we hope to direct our way to you. May God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ bring it about.

And it is a recognition of the mediatorship of Jesus Christ. God has a plan and purpose. For example, he wants whosoever believeth in him not to perish but to have eternal life, right? Well, he that hath the Son hath life.

God gives life and that life is in his Son. That light was the life of men, John says. So God's wishes and God's plans are completed and fulfilled in and through Jesus Christ.

And they're inextricable. They're inseparable. When it comes to the human race, when it comes to God's plan and purpose for us, it is accomplished in and through Jesus Christ.

That's the reason Paul mentions them both. It's a helpful thing for us to remember because... Why? If I don't finish that sentence, how would you finish it? Why is it important for us to observe that and to know it? Who do we pray to? God the Father in the power of God the Holy Spirit in the name of Lord Jesus Christ, right? Well, what if we just leave the Lord Jesus out of it? We say, well, look, I'm praying to God the Father. God the Father can make this happen.

So may God the Father direct our way to you. Why doesn't he just say that? Why doesn't he just say, may the Lord Jesus Christ direct our way to you? There's a reason for this. There's a reason it's stated the way it's stated.

There's a reason both the Father and the Son are included. And it needs to be meaningful to us.

Here's my suggestion.

Here's my thought. When we think about what God's plan and purpose is for us, circumstantially, circumstantially, this is a circumstance, right? Paul may or may not get the chance to visit these believers. Paul thinks there are wonderfully good reasons for doing so.

He would love to be there, strengthen him in the faith. He'd rather not work secondhand through Timothy. If he had his choice, he would go himself.

Now may God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ direct our way to you. Why does he say that? He recognizes that it is not enough just to pray to God the Father, and it's not enough just to appeal to the Lord Jesus Christ. This plan and purpose circumstantially involves them both.

We tend to think, well, here's a situation. Somebody's sick. I want to pray for them.

I've got a need. There's a shortfall. There's a crisis.

There's a challenge. There's a decision to be made. Maybe it's a good decision.

I'm thinking about marrying this person. I'm thinking about taking this job. I'm thinking about going to this school.

I'm thinking about moving to this town, making this large purchase, moving in this direction, making something that could potentially be a big decision in my life. Let me pray to God about it. And we pray to God the Father.

And we generally have a perfunctory in Jesus' name, amen, at the end. Paul features them equally here, and we should do the same in our meditations, in our prayers, in our thoughts. Yes, we appeal to our Father who art in heaven.

Hallowed be thy name. But when it comes to our circumstances, you cannot leave out the Lord Jesus Christ. Why? He is the one who has showed us how to live a human life according to God's plan.

You don't live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. He performed His works and was sustained spiritually and even physically by God the Holy Spirit, right? He's our example. And we want to focus on and take into our calculations and our thoughts, not just the plan of the Father, but also the means of living out and implementing the plan as shown to us through the Lord Jesus Christ.

It's not abstract. We don't just toss a request up to God and wait to see what falls out. There is a mechanism.

There is a means. There is a bridge from heaven to earth, and it's Jesus Christ. So this is not accidental.

It's not incidental. It's not a happenstance that Paul mentions them both. When Paul has this intense longing to go back and see these people, he thinks of both the Father and the Son in terms of the fulfillment of that desire.

It needs to be part of the program of God the Father, and it needs to be accomplished in a way that reflects the example and the teaching and the glory of Jesus Christ. This is why we pray in Jesus' name. Everything we do is reflection back on our Savior, who died for us, who redeemed us, in whom we live and breathe and have our being, who is our righteousness and our peace and our sanctification.

Everything we do reflects on Him. Now, this is not an idle thought. I'm not just stretching something here.

Look at the rest of the passage. May the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another, so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His other holy ones. May you be as holy as all the rest of them that He's going to appear with is sort of the connection here.

Well, I said before the break that there was something that you really can't see here in English. I had not seen it, and I think I've even been through this in Greek, but it wasn't until I looked at it this time in verse 13. There is a great body of teaching and doctrine and discourse and so on having to do with the coming of Jesus Christ.

The Greek word here is parousia. P-A-R-O-U-S-I-A. Parousia.

I can tell you how that breaks down with para at the beginning and ousea and so on. But it means or is almost always translated coming. However, there's an interesting feature of this word.

It primarily means presence. You know, the paraclete is one who comes alongside. He's para.

He's there. Because there's a perfectly good Greek word that means to come and has a noun equivalent. And a lot of you know what it is.

It's erchimi. Ace erchimi, come in. Ex-erchimi, go out.

Erchimi is the standard one that means to come to a place, to appear, to arrive, to enter, to exit. The act of coming or going is erchimi. Erchimi is not used here.

It's parousia. Parousia is often translated coming, but the emphasis in this word is on the fact that because a coming has taken place, there is a presence. In fact, it is many times translated present.

Let's take just a brief look at this word as it is used and translated in the New Testament. I looked

this up in the lexicon and just start going down the list of places where it is used. And one of the first ones they list when they say that the first definition in your Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, and Danker lexicon is the state of being present at a place.

This is definition number one for parousia. The state of being present at a place, presence. First citation here is 1 Corinthians 16, 17.

Paul says, I am glad about the coming of Stephanus, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, for what was lacking on your part, they supplied. Oh, how interesting. What was lacking on your part, they supplied.

Guess what the word is for lacking. It's the very same word we had in our passage. Hustarema means something that's not quite all that it could be, hasn't reached its full potential.

Guess what the word is for supplied. It's not our word. Here it's plerao, to fill up what was lacking.

Different word. But what we're focusing on is I am glad about the coming of Stephanus, Fortunatus, and Achaicus. Now, is Paul glad that they made the trip or is he glad that they're there? I am glad at the presence of.

I'm glad that they are here now. So, yes, they weren't here and now they are, they have come. But the emphasis on the word is I'm glad these guys are now present because they are doing something useful.

They are filling up a lack because they are here. So the focus isn't on I'm sure glad they made the trip. I'm glad the trip resulted in them being here.

The next passage that is cited here is Philippians 2.12. Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, you can quote this, can't you? Therefore, my beloved, as you have obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, right? Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my parousia only, but also in my apousia, not as in my parousia, but also my apousia, not as in my presence, not as you did when I came and stayed, but now that I have gone and left. See the emphasis there. It isn't that your parents walk in the room when you're a little kid and you suddenly straighten up and stop wrestling in the house or playing with matches or whatever it was you were doing, but the entire time they are there, you don't do those things.

It's their presence, not just, oh, I hear them coming, quick, hide the evidence. It's while they are present. And when the cat's away, the mice will play, not when the cat leaves.

When the cat's away, so long as he's away, there's duration there, there's presence involved or absence. That's parousia in Philippians 2.12. This is going to be important, so bear with me. Second Corinthians 10.10, Paul is addressing again some of the critics who are trying to undermine the messenger so that they can dismiss the message in Corinth.

His letters, they say, are weighty and powerful, but his bodily parousia is weak and his speech is contemptible. What do you think, coming or presence? His letters, they say, are weighty and powerful, but his bodily parousia is weak and his speech is contemptible. Real strong emphasis there on his presence.

We talk about this in the military, command presence. Can you dominate by your attitude and your behavior? This is what some of the great generals have had. The troops are starting to fade, they're losing their will, they're starting to think about turning tail and running, and here comes Stonewall Jackson or some other guy and he grabs a standard, he whips out his sword and he says, charge, and he goes forward.

It's his presence, it's his example, it's his force of personality in many cases that is at issue. Presence, command presence. Well, this is our word.

Now it is other times legitimately translated coming in the sense of arrival, because the arrival establishes your presence. You know, Elvis has arrived, Elvis has left the building. Don't waste your time clapping for an encore.

He has appousiad, he's not present. Paul, we talked about Philippians 2.12, but he used the same word in Philippians 1.26 when he said that you're rejoicing for me that he may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again, which you could easily translate by my being present with you again. You have passages that talk about that you be not ashamed at his coming.

What's interesting about that is that in Greek, the preposition is not at, it is in, E-N. You don't say ace or oppa, you say in the parousia, in the parousia. So that you be not ashamed at his coming or that you be not ashamed in his presence.

At the point that he has come. Equally well translated either way. You have 1 Corinthians 15.23, each one, you know, talking about the resurrection, each one is raised in his own order.

Christ, the first fruits, afterward, those who are Christ's at his coming. In parousia, auto, at his coming, or those who are Christ's in his presence. Equally valid translation either way.

2 Thessalonians 2.8, the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of his mouth and destroy with the brightness of his parousia. Is it the brightness of his coming or the brightness of his presence? The answer is yes. So I think we've sufficiently established the validity of our translation.

We saw this, by the way, in 2 Peter 3.4, those who say, where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they have from the beginning. Where is the promise of his coming? Where is the promise of his presence? Where's the promise of his

parousia, his coming and staying, his newly manifested presence? You can trace the rest of the usages of this. You can find a good Strong's and do it.

But back to our passage in 1 Thessalonians 3, to establish, this is stereizo, to solidify, to fix your heart's blameless, amemptus. We've seen this before, amemptos, the idea of there is blame and the alpha privative means no blame. Blameless in hagiosune, at the coming of the hagioi.

You see the relationship there, the hagioi, the holy ones, the sanctified ones. Blameless in hagiosune. Now look at the intervening phrase there that we haven't talked about yet.

Before our God and Father. Did you notice that? So that he may establish your hearts blameless in sanctification, in hagiosune, before our God and Father at the coming of, or in the presence of, our Lord Jesus Christ with his sanctified ones. This parousia, I would suggest to you, and if you lost me in the fog up till now, here's what I'm getting to.

We tend to think, well, he will establish our hearts blameless at the rapture, at the coming of Christ, when he comes to us. But whose presence are we talking about here? This is emprosthen, before the face of God the Father. This isn't establish you blameless in holiness when Jesus appears at the rapture.

This is establish you, stereizo you, as one of the sanctified ones when the Lord Jesus comes into the presence of God the Father with his bride. This is the coming of Jesus Christ into the presence of his Father with his holy ones. He's already come and collected them.

And he says, your love toward one another and toward those who are outside, the establishing of your hearts in faith, will ensure, will fix, will establish you as one of those who will accompany Christ into the throne room of God the Father. That's the parousia here, I would argue. And I'm probably the only one that argues it.

But look at the preposition, in the presence of God the Father. This isn't in the air. This isn't in the presence of the slain troops of Antichrist.

This isn't in the presence of those who are gaping at the dead in Christ rising. This is before the face of God the Father. When Jesus Christ comes and his presence is before God the Father with his holy ones, you have been established as one of them.

You know what this tells me? All Israel is not Israel. Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, is going to be inside when he sits down to eat the meal. Not everyone in the church is going to accompany Jesus Christ.

Remember, he said, if you are ashamed of me before men, I will be ashamed of you before my Father. And it's interesting, because the word ashamed before literally says shamed from, apa, away from. That you be not ashamed away from the presence.

That's what it literally says in Greek. These things that we have seen over and over in book after book and passage after passage are serious. Whether or not we are living with hearts established in the faith, hearts that are producing love toward one another, is the basis upon which we either will or will not be among these that will be with the Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of God the Father.

Not when he comes at the rapture. Not when he comes at the second coming. When he comes to present himself and his bride before the Father.

Not all of us are going to be in that group. Paul says, may the Lord make you increase and abound in love so that he can sterezo you, establish you, fix you, qualify you to be in that group. As it says elsewhere, that ye be not ashamed at his coming.

I think it's, let me make sure my memory hasn't failed me here. Yes. 1 John 2, verse 28.

Now little children, abide in him that when he appears we may have confidence and not be ashamed upon him. When he is manifested, when he is shown, this is a different word, when he is revealed, when his manifestation is made, we might have boldness and not be put to shame from him. Apa, autu.

Be shamed away from him. Not being sanctified, not being ready, not being established moves us away from the Lord Jesus. We're not going to be with him.

En te parousia autu. In the presence of him. We not be ashamed from him in his presence.

Come into his presence and move away. Come to Sinai, move away. So this is a really interesting development in our passage.

Paul says, let me tell you the key to not being ashamed, to being qualified, to being assured, to being established in his presence. It is faith that results in and is manifested in love. So you can say, well, I've got faith all day long.

I believe the promises of God. I believe everything you hear in Bible class. I'm trusting.

I'm praying what I know. I'm doing all these things. Well, how's the love thing working out? If you handed out a quiz to everybody that knows you, and they said, well, how would you rate this person in the area of sacrificial toward self, beneficial toward others? Love.

What kind of a score would there be? Before God, in the presence of the Holy Spirit and the angels on high, what's going on in your heart as you interact with one another and with all? What's the level of love? That's the litmus test. That's the telltale. That's the test result.

Can't fool it. Can't fake it. Can't cheat it.

Can't scam it. Can't buy it. Can't borrow it.

It is what it is. And this is how we will be measured to determine if we are or are not in His presence when He goes before the Father. It illuminates Jesus' statement, if you deny me before men.

It's not necessarily verbal denial. Our ne'omai encompasses a whole range of things. If you don't live in your faith, if you don't live out your hope, if you are not operating on the information that God gives, you're denying Jesus Christ.

Remember what Paul said? Now may God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ direct our way to you. Paul's life is a reflection of the Father and of the Son. So this is something we can use that will help us.

Something we can think about that will help us. It's always great if you're getting your education, you're getting training or something, and there's going to be a big test and it's going to determine whether you pass or fail and so on. It's great if there's like a practice test or you can test yourself before the big test comes.

You go get one of these books that says here's a practice SAT or it used to be practice ACT or here's practice for this, that, or the other kind of test. Practice. Test yourself.

Find out your weak areas and fix them before the actual test comes where you pay 80 bucks or whatever it is now and the score goes on record. Test yourself. Examine yourself.

Well, we can test ourselves. I don't want to wait until the Lord Jesus returns and gets ready to gather His group to go in before God the Father to find out that I don't qualify. I'd like to know that now while there's time to do something to be established blameless before Him and to come in love and by love and through love.

Have my faith encouraged and established. This is Paul's hope and goal for the Thessalonians. And he says as you all complete this, we rejoice.

Our ministry is vindicated. We live when you do this. And the great thing is any teacher who presents this truth and if anybody responds to it, the teacher says I'm glad God was able to use me to put that piece of information out there because it has had a benefit.

It has been useful and helpful to somebody. So this is Paul's thought and that's why he ends the chapter in this way. And Peter says, in other words, the same thing.

John says, in other words, the same thing. The Scriptures attest, Old Testament and New, that we are determining by our thoughts and actions, our priorities, our values, our goals, that we live by day by day. We are determining our fate in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Well, it would be nice to know a way that we could ensure that it's good. This is it. This is the answer.

You need look no further. It's right here. We need our hearts established in love toward one another.

That's how we can tell if this faith thing is working. Is my attendance at Bible class doing any good? Is my praying and my meditating doing any good? Is my cycling of what I know through my soul, my memorization of verses and trying to think about them and apply what they mean in my daily life, is this doing any good? The measure is love. How are you treating other people? How patient are you? How long-suffering? How gentle? That's the measure.

What other information do we need? Paul has just told us exactly what we need to ensure that we are not ashamed at His coming, that we are qualified to be with the Lord Jesus when He comes into the presence of, before the face of, God the Father. Some people say, you know, that's kind of a scary place. I'm kind of like the Israelites of the Old Testament.

I don't want to be in the presence of God. I just as soon be in the rear with the gear. Well, seriously? You're content with that? The Lord Jesus died for you.

God the Father included you in His plan and purpose, rescued you from loss and hopeless condition, transferred you from darkness to light, provided for you, gave you 36 things to the point of salvation and all you want to do is hang out in the back? You don't want to serve? You don't want to reflect glory? You don't want to be useful? You don't want to enter into these fabulous things? Find out more about God? What's the matter with you? That would be my question. Well, this brings us to the end of chapter 3. Establish your hearts blameless in holiness. How can anybody be blameless in holiness? What if you mess up once? What if you sinned earlier today? Does that mean your chances of being blameless in holiness are forever gone? Well, I didn't do too good on the whole sanctification thing yesterday, so it's all over.

No point continuing. Just give it up. How can we be blameless? Same question you can ask, think about another one of our memory verses, that he might present it to himself, a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy, haggios, and without blemish.

How can you be no wrinkles, no spots, holy without blemish? Well, when you get the blemish, when you get the smudge, when you get the stain, when you incur the guilt and the shame and the corruption and defilement, you apply the remedy, right? This is our old friend, Psalm 51, 1 John 1.7, 1 John 1.9. We avail ourselves of the precious blood of Christ that not only purchased us, but also cleanses us from all unrighteousness if we acknowledge our sins. And when that cleansing is done, let it go. Leave it behind.

If God separates your sin as far as the east is from the west, if God says you are now cleansed

from all sin and you are now blameless and holy, why would you go back and say, Oh, but I used to be such a rascal. Oh, you don't know what I've done. Oh, I did a terrible thing.

This is a stain that cannot be removed. It's like a big tattoo on my face. Evil.

Unclean, unclean. I'm like a leper. I can never hold my head up in society.

Nonsense. You cannot sully yourself beyond God's ability to cleanse. Paul goes on to say, Well, if God's grace is that great, shall we sin so that his grace will really be manifest? Heaven forbid.

We don't abuse that. But the fact remains that once we have acknowledged our sin, there may be repercussions. There may be offenses to men.

There may be relationships that have been damaged. We may have consequences that come from it. But we are cleansed.

We are forgiven. We are now blameless with regard to that. And if we walk in the light, if we avail ourselves of God's grace, God will find a way to turn that curse to blessing.

Just don't follow it. Don't dig it up like an old bone. Don't dig it up like an old carcass.

Had a fish die once. Buried it in the backyard. Major dug it up.

You don't want to do that. Don't be digging up your old dead, half rotted away. Well, and then he ate it.

Those of you that remember Happy, Happy made one more trip after he left the aquarium. Right through Major's digestive system. Don't be digging up your old sins.

Don't be digging up the old dead fish. When it's buried, leave it down there. See, you should remember this now.

I don't remember anything else about that class, but I sure remember that fish. We want to be blameless. We want to be established as holy because we want to be with the Lord Jesus.

We want to be part of the great reflector. You know how they paint Jesus and he's got that halo behind him? He's got that, you know, the Catholics put a dish behind his head. Shows that he's, you know, along with Mary and the others, all the saints, they get that little golden dish behind their head.

The Lord Jesus has a genuine reflection of his glory, and it's us. And there is no greater honor than to be standing near the Lord Jesus and be a maximum reflector of his glory. What else would you want to do? Well, you don't want spots.

You don't want scuffed places. You don't want non-shiny places. You want to be blameless,

spotless, holy, and we can do it.

Paul has told us how. There's a way to do it, and it's right here in this chapter. So this is our mission.

This is our calling. This is our purpose, that we be with the Lord Jesus, serve the Lord Jesus, be a part of the plan and purpose of God as it is accomplished in and through the Lord Jesus, as Paul has emphasized in this letter. May God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ direct our way.

That's our goal. What we'll pick up next time in chapter 4, we're rapidly running out of Thessalonians to look at. We've only got a couple of chapters left, but not as much of Thessalonians have we run out of as we have Isaiah.

Isaiah is going to get the coup de grace here the day after tomorrow. So be sure you're ready to put on the brakes because after 66 chapters, we will have finally finished that thing on Sunday. But let's close here in a word of prayer.

Father, thank You for the truth of Your Word. Thank You for how rich in detail and fullness and substance it is, how meaningful and inspiring it is, how cleansing and encouraging and motivating it is to us. We thank You for the ministry of Your Holy Spirit who takes these things and transcends the presentation and the limitations of our flesh and causes them to flame and to live in our hearts.

We pray that as we meditate on these truths that the application will become clear to us, the opportunities will be manifest to us, Your plan and purpose will be clear to us in the hours and days that remain to us in this life. We ask it in Jesus' name, amen.