

2Thessalonians 12-08-17a

This is Friday, the 17th of August, 2012. We're in the book of 2 Thessalonians chapter 1. We resume this evening in verse 6. Let's take a moment to go to the Lord in prayer and we will begin. Father, we thank you for this opportunity to spend time studying your Word together, enjoying fellowship and the benefit of the gifts and blessings that you have distributed in our midst.

We thank you for those who are present. We thank you for those who are joining us via a link or separated in time and listening through recording. We pray that all of us, as we look at the truth of your Word, will be edified and built up in our faith, that our perception and vision of your plan and purpose will be clarified, and that this will enable us to live, to think, and to act in a way that is pleasing in your sight, that fulfills the good works that you have ordained for us, and that brings glory to the Lord Jesus Christ.

We pray these things in his name, amen. Turn with me to 2 Thessalonians chapter 1. We have covered in extensive detail the first five verses, Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians, in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. We saw the significance of that position, of that identification, of that association with both the Father and the Lord Jesus.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the two of them together, the Father with his plan and purpose, and the Son executing and fulfilling that purpose, securing our salvation and redemption, that makes grace and peace possible for us. We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other.

This is the litmus test. Are we healthy or are we apathetic? Are we growing or are we fruitless and a dead branch? If our faith is growing, how does faith grow? We had a great presentation last night from Paul Jost, and one of the things he talked about was faith, and faith can grow. If you say, well, faith is just believing a thing, well, how can belief grow? Well, you have to have more of an object.

If your belief is going to get stronger and bigger and grow, then whatever you're aiming your faith at, I mean, you either believe a thing or you don't. You either trust it or you don't, but you gain confidence, you gain experience, and you gain knowledge of that thing. I can have confidence in a new car or a new bicycle or a new computer or a new piece of software or almost anything you want to name, but it is through use and through experience and through gaining additional knowledge that my belief and trust and confidence in a thing can grow.

It's the same thing with people. You meet someone, they seem like a good person, but as you get to know them better, your confidence and trust and faith in them will grow. Same thing with the Word of God.

If we want our faith to grow, our exposure to the truth of God has to be more extensive, and our

experience of God has to be more real and more complete. That's how faith grows. It's not just an abstract.

It's not just a nice little trite theological precept. We ask ourselves, well, here I am. This is August.

This is the eighth month of this particular year. In this year, has my faith grown or not? Am I doing any better in belief and in trust and in confidence and in walking in the light and in producing the fruit of the Spirit than I was eight months ago or six months ago or two months ago? Am I making progress? Am I just spiraling like a backwater eddy of stagnant floating detritus? Or am I spiraling downward through some sort of a drain? We have to ask ourselves this question. You can't just assume, well, you know, I sit in Bible class, so obviously my faith is growing.

No, your time sitting in Bible class might be growing, but what is faith? Excellent question. Paul did a great job covering it last night. What faith is, we know that the merit of faith is in the object, and the growth of faith is also in the object.

The Word of God is alive and powerful. So don't overlook Paul's commendation here. He says, we give thanks for you, and it's fitting, and we must do so.

We are bound to do so because your faith is growing. Wouldn't it be great if you had an apostle come up, put his arm on your shoulder and say, you know, every time I look at you, I can't help but give thanks to God because I see over time how your faith is growing. You're becoming more sure-footed in your spiritual walk.

You're drawn closer to God the Father. You have more appreciation for the Lord Jesus Christ. You have a better grasp of the past, and the present, and the future in God's unfolding program in human history.

Your faith is growing. Well done, even better than an apostle. How about the Lord Jesus Christ sitting at the right hand of the Father, the Lord Jesus Christ at His judgment seat looking at us and saying, you know, you had a few ups and downs, but the trend in your life was growth.

You made progress. You advanced. You were heading on the upward way, gaining new heights every day, looking for that higher ground.

That's growing faith. It is commended. Your faith grows exceedingly, and it expresses itself in love.

When faith is growing, love will be manifest. If you aren't loving people, if you aren't forgiving people, if you aren't enduring and suffering long with people, if you aren't a grudge barrier and an old bone barrier and forgetting those things which are behind when it comes to people and their slights and their wrongs and their failures, if you're not doing that, guess what? Your faith is not growing. Growing faith buries the past.

Love suffers long. Love doesn't drag up old injuries. And this love depends upon growing faith.

If the love's not there, it's just like stepping on the gas in your car dying. No fuel in the tank. Love is the proof.

It is the evidence. It is the expression of growing faith. We will get better at treating each other in a Christ-like manner if our faith is growing.

So these things, you almost always find them linked in Scripture. If love is suffering, if we're short and impatient and mean and quick to find fault and negative and just generally antisocial, something's wrong with our faith. We need to fix it.

So, toward each other. Notice this is not love for fellow man, love for the world, love for the environment, love for the snail darter, love for the penguins, love for the ozone layer. This is love for each other.

Love for each other. This is interpersonal love in the community of believers. Most of us are blessed that our family is made up of believers.

Well, this is the first area. This is where this love will show. So how are we treating each other? And notice each other.

This should be a reciprocal thing. We should be in a group that is all doing this. If the group's not doing it, we're in the wrong group.

Family's not doing it, in the wrong family. Get rid of that family and get a different one. Or better yet, set an example, pray and encourage by example, love and good works.

But Paul says, every one of you all abounds in love toward each other, so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in persecutions and tribulations. We covered that extensively. When you see those words, a wealth of information should come to your mind, right? Remember that? Difference between persecutions and tribulations in terms of their source.

And you have the coping mechanisms, patience and faith, two different characteristics, two different aspects of what we should strive for and cultivate and concentrate on when people do us wrong, when the world does us wrong. Slings and arrows of allegedly outrageous fortune, when in fact these are things that God has carefully measured out and allowed into our lives to help us to grow. This brings us to verse 5. All of this is manifest evidence of God's judgment being right.

God was right in calling us to the particular persecution and the particular tribulation that we are experiencing. He didn't pick somebody else to be in our circumstance. He picked us and his judgment was right.

And the fact that we are able to learn and grow and benefit and bear the fruit of the Spirit and grow in faith proves that God was right, demonstrates the rightness of God's judgment in order that we may be counted worthy. And you remember the wonderful passages we went to about being counted worthy and what it means to lay hold of inheritance, to invest in the eternal future by parlaying what looks like trouble and trial in this life. Our momentary light affliction is working for us an eternal weight of glory.

Think about it. Momentary light affliction. This is out of Romans, Romans 8. Momentary light affliction is working for us an eternal weight of glory.

This is like getting the shot that forever inoculates you from polio. That would be sort of a negative example. You take this shot, there's a momentary pain, but you gain the benefit of never being susceptible to that disease.

This, however, is better because we persevere, we endure, we are patient and we are faithful in times of tribulation and persecution and there is a positive accruing benefit. Think how great it would be if every time you had a difficulty, \$1,000 went into a bank account with your name on it. Had a sore elbow today and had to work anyway.

Had to try to maintain a good attitude when I just feel really, really bad. And every time I am not cranky and I'm not short, I'm not self-centered, I'm not self-pitying, \$1,000, cha-ching, into my bank account. Think, wow, maybe I'll bang this other elbow and then I get twice as much money.

Every time either elbow hurts, bing, here comes \$1,000. This is the concept. Tribulation and persecution in this life are momentary light afflictions.

They work for us an eternal weight. This is like, you know, used to be in the ancient world. They kind of valued things if they were heavy.

The word glory in Hebrew, kavod, means heavy. An eternal heaviness of glory, an eternal glory of glory, eternal weight of glory. It's kind of an exponential glory.

Momentary light affliction. I mean, think about it. You just can't imagine until God the Holy Spirit brings it to our minds what an opportunity it is to hit a rough patch.

That's what Paul is referring to here. God was right to judge us worthy of going through these things in order that we might be counted worthy of the kingdom of God. This is why we're suffering.

That's where we ended up last time. And you remember we concluded in Hebrews looking at that assembly, that church of the firstborn ones. This is the club we want to be in.

You don't have to be in any fraternity or association or I was thinking about this when there's been various, I ran across an old, old book I got back in the 70s that was a thing about

genealogy. And they said, here's your family name. And here's some stuff.

They have a lot of general information in there. And they said, now here's all of the organizations based on your heritage that you might be able to join. If you're descended from somebody that did this, you can join this group.

Somebody that was in the American Revolution, you can be a daughter of the American Revolution or a son of the American Revolution. If somebody in your past, there are these hereditary things. George Washington helped to found the Society of the Cincinnati.

And it's a long story. You can look it up who Cincinnatus was. But George Washington was thought of as being this guy because he was a Roman figure who gave up power after his job was done.

And Washington did the same thing. And it was so rare in history. They said, well, he's Cincinnatus.

And so they created this. They said, anybody can join that was an officer in the American Revolution or anybody descended. Well, they had just fought Revolutionary War to try to get out from under nobility and royalty and hereditary noblesse oblige and all the rest of this.

And here they thought, well, now you're going to create another hereditary thing just like we got out from under in England. And George Washington, poor guy, he had no idea. He thought, hey, this is nice.

These guys can kind of keep in touch. And he just got abused for having anything to do with this society because it had this hereditary component. You don't need that.

Doesn't matter who you're descended from. So when he says, the kingdom of God for which you suffer and we become the firstborn, we enter into this company, this association, this fellowship of firstborn ones. And you don't have to actually be firstborn.

Scripture is replete with those to whom God gave that privilege even though they weren't technically the firstborn. God said this firstborn status is based on what you do in a time of suffering. Look at Joseph, the firstborn blessing in terms of the double portion, just reminds me of the old, old carjacks.

They don't have those good old carjacks anymore. You remember the kind that had a big square post with all the little dents in it and you had the little thing? And you crank the car up with your jack handle and you get real high bumper jack. And then when you got finished and you let the car down, as soon as the pressure was off, you could take the handle out and just hit that little thing and it would just go chicka-chicka-chicka-chicka-chicka-chicka all the way down.

And I used to just do that for entertainment. You know, just raise it up and watch it ratchet back

down. Well, this is kind of the idea.

You have the privileges that belong to Reuben initially. They just ratchet all the way down through Simeon and Levi and Judah and all the rest of them all the way down to the 11th son because of his performance under suffering. He was persecuted and he was afflicted and he gets a firstborn blessing and he's 10 down.

There's 10 people ahead of him, but he exceeds and excels in faith and patience and he is in the company of the firstborn. Same thing with Jacob and Isaac and any number of others that you can name. We have this privilege.

Think about it. Suffering is not just suffering. Circumstance is not just circumstance.

Being ill-treated by people is not just a happenstance. God brings it into our path to give us an opportunity to enter into the company of firstborn ones. Is there anybody that doesn't want eternal reward and blessing who doesn't want to bask in the glow of God's glory in the eternal kingdoms of the son and of the father? Is there anybody that isn't interested in living in the new Jerusalem? Having opportunities to serve God in unimaginably great ways in the future? Is there anybody that really doesn't want that? This is how we get it.

This is how it derives. This is how it accrues. This is how it obtains.

This is how we lay hold of it, is when these times of stress come, we respond in faith and patience. Kingdom of God for which you suffer. We covered that in great detail last time.

So we pick up tonight in verse 6. Since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you. Oh, this sounds like just such a spiteful thing, doesn't it? But it says since in verse 6 there. And this, we need to do a little bit of Greek, and I tremble knowing that Paul is listening because he's a lot better in Greek than I am.

But I'll hack my way through it. We have a pair decay on para the oh and the idea here a pair, which is translated since what does this mean? It says look, this is true because of a thing. We're kind of looking back.

This is this is why this pertains. So what did we just cover? What was in verse 5? You're suffering for the kingdom of God, right? And because you are suffering for the kingdom. Now think about this.

You got to get this to get the a pair figured out to get the sense figured out. You got to keep this in mind. Why are you suffering because you're a rascal? Because you need divine discipline because God is using the rod and the staff to get you back in the way because you have strayed.

No, you are one suffering for righteousness for the kingdom. God has rightly judged that you can take it and you can parlay this negative circumstance into inheritance and service and blessing

and glory. God has rightly judged that when he sends these things your way, you're not going to fall apart.

You're not going to come unglued. You're not going to throw up your hands like the children of Israel who in 40 years in the desert wandered around and dropped and never crossed the Jordan into the land. We are not of those who fall back onto perdition, but those who by faith and patience inherit the promises, right? God says you're that guy.

So when I send you tribulation, suffering, affliction, persecution, God's expectation is you're going to make inheritance out of this. You're going to grow your faith in this. You're going to produce patience.

You're going to be as I prune, God says I'm pruning the branch so that you can bear more fruit. Do you ever think about that? That's kind of a painful metaphor. The one bearing fruit God will prune.

You know, people think that plants have feelings and sort of a consciousness and they're kind of you can talk to your plants. You can play music for your plants. And when you trim a plant, it's like, ouch.

Well, think about it. If you're a branch bearing fruit, Jesus said my father will prune you. That's something lopped off, right? The painful process is going to eliminate the unproductive and make us more productive.

We are going to get meaner and cleaner and leaner in the course of suffering. It's going to strip away the dead stuff, right? Wouldn't it be great if we could just remember this every time the pressure hits. The trick is to remember who we are and why we're here.

That's what this is telling us. Since indeed a pair means really this is the deal. It's kind of emphatic.

Since indeed God deems it right. God considers it right. God judges it right.

It is dikaios paratheon. We had a pair, then we've got dikaios. You know what dikaios is? Dikaio sune, dikaios dike, d-i-k-e.

That whole word group talks about what's right. Righteousness is one of these theological King James worn out words. We say, ooh, righteousness.

Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Think about it in real terms. What is righteousness? It's rightness.

It's what's right. It's what's proper. It's what's true.

It is what partakes of the positive, godly, light side of the universe. Not the dark, not the wrong,

not the self-serving. It's right.

So, it is right alongside God. Para. You know what para means? Parallel, alongside.

And the raw literal translation here is, since it is right alongside God, compared to God, with a view toward God. And when you see God and you see this thing, they're compatible. It's right.

The translation here that we end up with is that it is right for God or with God. To repay. This is where it gets interesting.

If I have started to lose you, this is where you want to kind of come back. Come back. Come back and get that sharp focus of attention.

Because it says God is going to repay those who have afflicted us with affliction. And the Greek word order here, it says antapadunai. This is two prepositions and then didymi.

Didymi is the Greek word that means to give. You put apa in front of that. And apadidymi means to give.

You know, apa means sort of upon or for some reason. So you're not just giving a thing because, oh, well, I've got two of these. Here, take one.

Apadidymi means this is recompense. This is reimbursement. This is a payment.

You apadidymi when somebody does work and you give them their daily wage. Somebody does you wrong and they are repaid. Apadidymi.

It's giving for a reason. Okay? Well, this is anti-apadidymi. It's got another preposition in front of it.

What does anti mean? Well, anti-Christos. It can mean against. It can mean instead of.

The anti-Christos is the instead of Christ, right? But this further emphasizes, it makes it very emphatic. And it's a real interesting concept. So here's the thing.

You know, there's accelerating degrees of back and forth. We used to fear this back in the 60s when we were all hiding under our desks and running to the bomb shelter. And, you know, the Russians have nukes and we have nukes and it's going to be global thermonuclear war.

And we would have these drills, you know, run to the bomb shelter. Well, they said, well, you know, it mutually assured destruction. It could escalate.

Somebody sneezes in a meeting and some other guy gets mad and says, well, he knocks his notebook in the floor. And this guy stands up and pushes his drink in the floor. And this guy slugs this guy.

This guy shoves this guy. And first thing you know, the two sides are in 50 cuffs and somebody makes a phone call. Next thing you know, global thermonuclear war.

It just escalates because each payment is excessive, overcompensating. It's not an eye for an eye. It's, well, you poke my eye, I'm going to take two eyes.

You take two eyes, I'm going to chop up your whole family. You take my family, I'm going to burn down your village. Burn down the village, well, you know, wrath of God, fire and brimstone.

It's just this sort of thing. Anti-apodytomy. That's the word that is used here when it says that God is going to repay.

This is actually re-repay. So here's what happened. Who are these people? Who's getting this letter? You can say it.

Starts with TH, ends with Onians. Who is it? Thessalonians, right? Who is it that's giving them grief? Where is the trouble? Go back to Acts 17 and it's the Jews. So what did these people try to do? They tried to believe in Jesus Christ.

They tried to become followers of the good news of the Apostle Paul, Silas, right? And they were repaid for that response by the Jews in their city with all kinds of trouble, right? God says, I am going to repay those who repaid you. There's a double layer there. I'm going to anti-apodytomy these people.

And what's interesting here is it says that God is going to repay the ones thlebusen humos. Thlepsus, it's even a difficult word to say, but it's this is the word translated tribulation. This is trouble.

In this world you shall have thlepsus, T-H-L-I-P-S-I-S. Well, this is the verbal form, the ones who are tribulating you, the ones who are troubling you. Tribulation is really kind of a formation from the root meaning trouble.

And the ones, so God is going to repay with thlepsus the ones who are thlepsusizing you is the idea. Why are they giving the Thessalonians trouble? Because they did something. They responded in faith.

They aren't interested in following Judaism. They aren't interested in supporting the synagogue anymore. They're not interested in going under the law of Moses and recognizing these Jewish people as their authority.

They see the Lord Jesus Christ. They see the word of God. They see the truth from the Apostle Paul.

And they are going in this direction. Well, they're getting paid for that with trouble. And Paul says

God is going to pay them back.

This would be the equivalent of saying repay them back. Repay them back with trouble. Now, why is this important? We've just been talking about isn't it great that you recognize your persecution and tribulation as an opportunity to invest in the kingdom.

We don't want to be getting our eyes on people and boy I sure hope they get their comeuppance and oh God strike them down. Imprecatory prayer. May their sky be brass and their fields be iron and may they, you know, coals on their heads and oh Lord make them miserable and get them back for giving me a hard time.

That's subjectivity, right? So how does this verse fit when we've already seen him and greatly encouraged it? Look, God says vengeance is mine. I will repay you. Let me just concentrate on the kingdom.

Let me turn this into an opportunity to lay hold of inheritance. Let me recognize and keep my sights on the kingdom of God. That's why I'm suffering.

I'm not suffering because this guy's a rascal. I'm suffering because God has judged that I can turn this into kingdom opportunity. Right? So why is this stuff about Philip and Aunt Appa Dusan and all the rest of it in here? Well, we're going to pause and take our break.

When we come back, we're going to see the reason why the Apostle Paul brings this concept in at this particular moment and it will surprise you. It surprised me anyway. Maybe you all may be way ahead of me, but when I got to it, it really surprised me.

So we'll take our break. We'll come back and pick up in verse 6.