

2Thessalonians 12-08-31a

This is Friday the 31st of August 2012 and we continue our study in the book of 2 Thessalonians where in the closing verses of chapter 1, we'll begin in verse 10 tonight. Let's take a moment to go to the Lord in prayer and we'll begin. Father, we count it as a great blessing, one of many, that you have bestowed on us in your grace to have the opportunity to spend time together in this phase of our spiritual life, the taking in of the truth that's found in your word in the company of believers who share an enthusiasm and appreciation for it.

We thank you for this passage and we pray that as we study it tonight that God the Holy Spirit will superintend, that he will impress it on our hearts and enable us to not only perceive it but to understand it and to see its pertinence in our daily walk before you. We know that this will equip us for every good work, both now and in the ages to come. We pray that all that we say and do tonight will reflect the glory of the Lord Jesus.

We pray it in his name, amen. Let's take a look at our passage, Paul of course writing his second preserved letter to the Thessalonian church after Timothy has returned with a report. Paul knows that they continue to be persecuted and he comforts them saying, just remember that it isn't time to worry about retribution to these people, it isn't time to become subjective or to get your eyes on self and the nature of the tribulation and the persecution, instead remember that God will repay and it is right that he does so.

And we looked at that apodidemy that has the double prefix for repayment and I was looking at some other verbs that also start with that same double prefix and it's interesting that they also have this return idea of something that has happened and then there is a reaction, anti-apodidemy or anti-apo whatever, there is a reflexive idea, something has happened and this is in return. So we've seen that God is not being arbitrary, he's not being inscrutable, there is a judgment coming on people who give the people of God a hard time and it is inevitable, it is right, it is part of God's judgment and we should rest in that. It's one thing when you see injustice in the world and you say that is unfair, it is irreconcilable with any idea of what is good and what is right, in fact people are put off from the whole notion that there is a God because they look around and say, well if there were a God how could there be these unrectified injustices in the world, how could there be child abuse and starvation and all of these horrible things, war and disease and poverty all over the place.

If there were a God, if he were worthy of worship, he wouldn't let these things happen so there must not be a God and they don't stop to think that God's designs and God's purposes are much grander than what they can encompass, all they want is for everybody to have a happy life, God's strategy, God's plan is much, much larger. So we need to trust God, we need to commit these things to him, we do not understand why many of these challenges occur, we think I don't see any reason for this to be divine discipline, I don't see any reason for it to be judgment or correction, it just seems to be superfluous and in some cases egregious suffering, this is just a

hardship and it just seems to be never-ending, how could God possibly have a purpose in it, well just remember the kid in the shopping cart, God can have a purpose that is so far beyond us that there is no hope of us understanding, what you hope is that your child trusts you and when you tell them, look son, look daughter, that toaster you just saw the bread disappear into is now very hot, don't stick your hand in there, well but I like bread, I want that piece of bread, don't put your hand in that toaster, you hope your children will trust you and say okay dad, okay mom and they refrain and they don't decide that they are smarter than you are and that's a box, there is bread in it, I know how to get bread out of a box, jam in their hand and here you go, we have to trust God and this is Paul's encouragement to the Thessalonians believers, they are relatively new believers, they haven't had a whole lot of Bible teaching, Paul didn't get to spend as much time there as he wanted to and so he says look, your patience and faith honor God and God will deal with these that are afflicting you and causing you hardship, trust the righteousness of God, leave it in his hands, same notion we got from Peter when we studied his letters, disinvest yourself, pull back, don't get so caught up and so emotionally committed to the resolution of a problem or the escape from a situation or the solution to a difficulty that if it continues and requires patience which builds our faith, we start coming unglued and we unravel, we have to trust God and these are occasions not for blind faith but for a thinking knowledgeable faith, we know God's ways are higher than our ways, we know his thoughts are higher than our thoughts, we know his power is far beyond ours, we know that he could instantly and immediately solve any difficulty, look at the universe, look at the wisdom of God in the design of biological life, do you not think that he's got control of history, that he doesn't understand the factors that he couldn't strike dead someone that was giving us a hard time, that he couldn't release the binding force of the atoms that make up some obstacle in our way, of course he could, but he doesn't because he has a purpose in it and we have to trust him, faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen, so Paul reminds the Thessalonian believers of this and he says, look, God in flaming fire will be taking vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, because some of the people responsible for this tribulation are believers, they believe in the God of Israel, they believe in the God of Abraham, but they are so far afield, they are so far away from understanding the current plan and program of God which is inclusive of the Gentiles, this is important when we pick up in verse 10, that it includes the Gentiles, that when they are resurrected, they are going to be in for such a shock, these shall be punished away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power. If it was just the end of life and annihilation or eternal conscious torment in the lake of fire, however you choose to see that, why is it talking about the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power, because this is what we should crave, this is what we are working toward, this is our hope, we want to be in the presence of God, look at the difference in the Israelites, as I mentioned before, who fled from the foot of Mount Sinai when they heard the thunder and saw the lightning and Moses who is climbing the mountain to be in the presence of God saying, Lord, show me what? Show me your glory and we are going to be in the presence of God.

Just the hindmost part, the little tiny bit that God let Moses see made him glow in the dark, he had to put a bag over it to keep from scaring everybody, but Moses loved that, the same glory frightens and drives away some people, they want to be as far from it as they can get, others run toward it and embrace it and see the glory of God revealed from faith to faith, that's who we want to be, we want to be in the presence of the Lord, we want to be in the glory and see his power, be a part of his power, be a part of his future kingdom, be useful, be of service, be in a sense worth redeeming, what's the point of redeeming us if we are useless, if we are worthless, we don't reflect God's glory, we don't understand him, we don't appreciate him, we don't thank him, how is that different from the unbelievers who when they know him as God do not glorify him as God and are not thankful but become empty in their imagination and their foolish hearts are dark, very little distance between an unbeliever and a reprobate, wrong-headed, disobedient believer, and they are consistently talked about together, which ought to be scary to us. Verse 10, when he comes in that day for what purpose? Why is he coming in that day? To be glorified. How far from God's purpose can you be when you are destroyed away from, oleathros, removed from, separated from, thrown out with the trash as it were, from the glory of his power when he comes to be glorified in the midst of his saints? We have to be ready to appreciate his glory, or we'll be frightened by it, terrified by it.

To be glorified in his saints and to be admired. It says admired, you know what this word is? It's thaumazo. This is the word that means to be amazed.

Thaumazo, this is the word for thunderstruck, smacked out of your head. Thaumazo, it is routinely translated amazed. The people heard Jesus teach and they were thaumazoe at his grasp of the scriptures and how clearly and persuasively he taught.

They were thunderstruck, and that's the verb here, to be glorified among his saints, and to be admired, to cause amazement among all those who believe. Now this is interesting because when it says all those who believe, this of course is from your word pistou, but this is a present active participle, those who are believers, those who are believing, the believing ones, to be held in awe by the ones who are believing, the believing ones. And this means they had a pattern of belief.

This hopefully is us, ones who routinely believe, are characterized by belief. It's a present active participle, ongoing action, consistent action, characteristic action. Why? Because our testimony among you was believed.

Now this seems a little bit strange to me. Does it to you? They're going to be, all the believers are going to be amazed because our testimony to you was believed. And I think, well, that seems like an odd turn of phrase.

So I was looking at this in Greek and it does say because tati, which is often translated because or that, the testimony of us. And testimony of course is your word from which we get martyr. A

martyr is a testifier, one who testifies and does not recant.

His testimony is sound and sure and it comes from martyreo. And so you have this word testimony in the noun form with the plural first person possessive because our martyreon to you was believed. And in your English, you see, you've got a comma there after believe.

And I think that's part of the problem. But before I lose you in Greek grammar, here's, there are two, I think there's almost a double entendre here. First, who are these believers? These are believers who believe because these testimonies are true.

Some of these first Gentiles believed because the Thessalonians believed. Paul has already said you all are a testimony and a witness. And there are others who believe because they have seen that you believe and that opened their hearts and opened their minds to hear our testimony.

So these who are believers, because you believed you, you had a part in their belief. You believed and your witness and your testimony of faithfulness under persecution and tribulation is part of what God used to encourage them to believe. They are believers because you believed.

You see how it works. The other, what I think is, is a, is another layer of meaning here, at least potentially is in that day when he comes to be glorified among his saints and to be admired among all those who believe. Now, why, why the two descriptions? Saints are what? Sanctified ones.

These are the ones who have washed their robes in the blood of the lamb. This is first John one, nine, Psalm 51, keeping short accounts. You are walking in the light.

You are on the narrow road going through the straight gate, right? That's a saint. In other words, you can be a believer and not be a saint in this sense. You can be a believer.

You can be one who believes, but you're not sanctified. You're not cleansed. You're not washed.

You haven't been washed by self-examination, by judging oneself, by claiming the blood of Jesus Christ, cleansing from all sin on an ongoing experiential basis, right? Does that make sense? Can you be a believer and not be cleansed, not be sanctified? Can you, could you be a person in Israel and have to be outside the camp because you were ritually defiled? Same thing here. You can be a believer and not be one of the white robed number. Your robe is not white.

Your robe is not washed. So what's going to happen? Is he glorified in the unsanctified believers? Does an unsanctified believer glorify God? No. It, those of us who claim God's grace in Christ, who claim the cleansing work of the blood of Christ, this glorifies God.

So he's going to be glorified among the believers who do what they're supposed to do. God's not glorified by reprobate, unholy, uncaring, disobedient, persecuting others, believers. He's not glorified in them.

What is he to them? He is an object of faith. They believe in him. Do the Jews who are persecuting the new Christians believe in the God of Israel, the God of Abraham? Of course.

Otherwise, why would they care if they thought the Christians were messing up the doctrines? They believe, but they're wrongheaded. Paul says, I grant them they have a zeal for God, but it's ignorant. It's not according to knowledge.

They're trying to find a righteousness of their own making instead of submitting to the righteousness of God. They're screwed up with their believers. So what's happening here? The Lord Jesus Christ is going to come and he is going to be glorified in his sanctified ones.

We want to be the sanctified ones, right? We do not want to merely be believers. We want to be saints, but he will also be thunder striking. He will be amazing to all believers and they are going to believe because the Thessalonians believed.

In other words, a lot of these Jewish people are going to be raised and they're going to see as Old Testament resurrection saints who never jumped into the church age because they did not accept the gospel of Christ, but they believed in the God of Israel and they're an Old Testament saint. But when Paul came along, they were too self-righteous. They were too self-interested.

They liked the status quo. They didn't like the idea of the Acrobustia, the Gentiles, the ethnoi coming in and being a part of God's people and they got all high and mighty and they looked down on it and they wouldn't listen and they didn't respond. When are they going to be raised? At the beginning of the millennial kingdom.

All of those who sleep in the dust of the earth, Old Testament saints will be raised. Well, seven years earlier, these Gentile Thessalonian believers were raised. And when those Jews in Thessalonica from the synagogue wake up on day one of the millennial kingdom and look and see the Thessalonians in white robes with the Lord Jesus Christ as a part of his body and bride, they are going to be Thaumazot out of their mind.

And Paul says, this is a part of your recompense. This is what God is going to do for you in the day when the Lord Jesus is glorified in his saints. These other believers who are persecuting you are going to be, they're going to get their comeuppance.

They're going to see that you were right and they were wrong, that the Lord Jesus honors you and his glory is reflected in you. They are believers and they will believe because you believed. They're going to be convinced.

They're going to, some of these believers are going to say, you know what? I was way wrong. Look at this. This is the Messiah.

This is the Lord Jesus Christ. And look what I missed. This is another part of the comfort.

There will be vindication. There will be justification. There will be glorification among those who faithfully, patiently pursue the plan and purpose of God, regardless of the static they get from other people.

Paul says, look, God is not unrighteous to forget. He will vindicate you. You will be a part of the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ in that day.

And you will be those saints. And these other believers are going to believe because you believed. Your faith will ultimately be vindicated.

So just hang on and be patient. Don't think you're just getting the short end of the stick. And notice it's in the day when he comes to be glorified in his saints and to be admired among all those who believe.

And in this day, this is in that transitional age, the apostolic age, where you've got a mix of Old Testament saints and church age believers, those who recognize who Christ is and convert. They jump dispensations. They jump from the Old Testament to the new.

If Saul of Tarsus had not responded to Lord Jesus on the Damascus Road, would he be in hell? No. He would be in the ranks of the dead, dusty Old Testament, recalcitrant, hardheaded, stiff-necked Old Testament saints. He would have missed out on being an apostle.

He would have missed out on being a part of the body of Christ, the bride of Christ, writing all these wonderful letters, being used by God to bless hundreds and hundreds of millions of people all down through history. He would have missed it if he had made the wrong choice. But what's the Hebrews 11 criteria for Old Testament salvation? You believe that he is and that he rewards those who diligently seek him.

Did the Pharisees believe this? Did Paul as a Pharisee believe this? Of course. They had a sticking point at Christ. And we think, well, if you reject Jesus Christ, you're unsaved.

You're going to hell. Now, that is true. But there was a transitional period.

If someone met the criteria for Old Testament salvation and Christ comes along, there is this period where you are either going to die in your sins as an Old Testament saint or you're going to recognize the Lord Jesus after Pentecost and be a part of the body and bride. And it's an odd thing. After that generation is finished, I think this pretty much ended at 70 A.D. I think the destruction of Jerusalem was the end of that generation.

Think about it. 30 A.D., 70 A.D., 40 year generation. There is a generation that has the opportunity to convert, to change from Old Testament to New Testament.

And if they haven't done it by then, they, you know, you are yet in your sins. You're going to die in your sins. You're going to be an Old Testament saint and you miss out on that upgrade, if you

will.

That's just my understanding of it. Anyway, I think that that's another possible allusion or idea that is in this passage. But one thing you can say for sure, when the Lord Jesus comes back, there are two categories of people.

There are saints and there are believers. And not all believers are saints. All saints are believers, but not all believers are saints.

The saints are going to reflect His glory. The believers, in many cases, are going to be thunderstruck because they didn't get it when they were here. And they're going to see it with their eyes later on.

But, you know, the page of your life's record has been written by then. That brings us to verse 11. Therefore, we also pray always for you.

This always fascinates me. There is nothing more interesting than looking at the prayers of the Apostle Paul. Paul understood more church age truth than probably any other believer of this dispensation.

And so if he prays, and we understand that prayer is an expression of understanding to God, understanding God's truth, convincing God with God's own truth to honor a request, to meet a need, right? This is the most effective prayer, is when you bring up to God your understanding of His plan and purpose, and His promises, and His scenario, His priorities. You look at the woman, the Syrophoenician woman, when Jesus went up there to Tyre and Sidon. And Jesus says, well, you know, I'm sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

That's a one level of doctrinal truth. But this woman had been watching, and she had been listening, and she knew that Jesus was going to do more, and that the people who were supposed to be accepting Him were not doing so. And she said, well, you know, if the children aren't going to eat all the bread, and some of it falls off the table, we ought to be able to get some of that.

And Jesus said, for your saying, because you understand this, you've got a better level of understanding than my own people do, that it be to you according to your faith. And the demon was gone that very hour. And this is the most effective prayer you can pray, is to bring up to God His own priorities, His own statements.

Many times He's just waiting for us to pull it together and distill it in our minds and say, well, you know, this is why God ought to answer. This is legitimate. I've got a basis here.

Just like if you're going to go to a small claims court, or you're going to fight a ticket, and you say, look, I've got a case here. The law says I owe a \$150 fine for speeding in a school zone. Hey, it wasn't my fault.

This is effective prayer. We bring up to God what is right from His Word, from His standards. Well, we also pray always for you that.

And I think, wow, here's the Apostle Paul who's got a better grip on the principles and the promises and the doctrines of God than anybody else. When he prays a prayer, this is something worth looking at. What does he pray? If I want to pray for somebody, how can I pray effectively? Well, this is what Paul prays.

He prays that our God will count you worthy of calling. You notice this is in italics? We pray that our God would count you worthy of calling. You notice that would? That's a conditional there.

That's not an indicative that He might. There's a potential there. It's sort of a subjunctive.

It's the mood of potential that God might count you worthy of calling. In other words, all things work together for good to those who love God, who are the called according to His purpose. We pray that God will look at you and say, there's somebody that is called according to my purpose.

They understand the calling and they're pursuing it by faith. Look at their patience. Look at their diligence.

Look at their belief. Look at their perseverance under pressure, under tribulation, under persecution. That person is worthy of the calling.

Many are called, but few are chosen, right? Who gets chosen? The ones who grab the call and exploit it for all that it's worth, right? Sometimes they have these TV shows that come around and they do a casting call. They say, we're looking for contestants. We're looking for somebody for American Idol or for Dance with the Stars or something.

They'll come to your town and they'll hold a call. Well, there's people who really, really want to be a contestant who think they've got a voice or that they can dance, and they'll go down to the call. Everybody is invited to the call.

There's not discriminatory. They don't say, well, I'm sorry, but you're in your fifties. You're too old.

You can't come. They don't say that. They say, look, anybody wants to come, come on down.

Who are the called? They're the ones that show up. And not only show up, but they have a purpose and they've got some skill. They've got a way of fulfilling that calling.

And those are the ones who are chosen. They're not going to choose me. I've never gone to a TV show call for an audience or a contestant.

I've never gone. How could I possibly be chosen? Was I called? Yes. Did I go? No.

Can I possibly be chosen? No. The called according to his purpose. Paul says, I pray that God will look at you and say, there's one that is worthy of my calling.

Because when they heard the call, they responded to the call and they're exploiting the call. They are grabbing the potential of that call. That ought to be us.

We ought to take that call and be there as soon as the doors are open. Stay there until the last door is locked. Be banging on the door.

Giving it everything we've got. Claiming every promise. Applying every doctrine.

Implementing every principle. Praying fervently. Meditating on the word of God.

Trusting in God's provision. Claiming the honor of receiving God's grace and God's son. We pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of calling and fulfill all the good pleasure of goodness.

Notice his is in italics. Fulfill the good pleasure of goodness and the work of faith with power. Because remember, faith is not a work.

So who makes things happen? Is it our faith? No. It is not of him who wills or of him who runs. It is of God who shows mercy.

Salvation, Ephesians 2, 8 and 9, by grace you are saved through faith. But that salvation, that whole system of being saved through faith, we didn't invent it. We didn't go to God and say, God, you know we're sinful and everything.

We're conceived in iniquity, born in sin. But I've got a great plan. Tell you what, if we just kind of trust you and you give us some stuff and we obey it, well then you can relieve us and redeem us and make some atonement for our sins.

We didn't think it up. Salvation by grace through faith is all of God. It is all of grace.

By grace you have been saved through faith. And that salvation by grace through faith is not of yourselves. That's why you've got the neuter for the demonstrative point on there.

That whole thing is a gift of God. And it's not of works. Faith is not a work.

Same thing here. God will count you worthy of calling and He fulfills the good pleasure of good and the work of faith with power. When's the last time we saw this word power? Up in verse 9. Who isn't anywhere near the glory of God or His power? Who is near the glory of God and His power? It's the saints.

It's the cleansed. It's the faithful. It's the called.

That's who is reflecting the glory of God. That's who is experiencing the work of faith. It is God that is at work in you to will and to do for His purpose.

Right? The work of faith with power. And what is the ultimate goal? So that I can have a happy life? So that I can be richly blessed? So that I can be esteemed by my peers and admired by all those who see me? No. That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you.

When's the last time we saw Jesus Christ being glorified in somebody? How about verse 10? He comes in that day to be glorified in His saints. Now in verse 12, that He may be glorified in you and you in Him according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ. It is all of grace.

Faith is not a work, but there is anti-apoditomy. There is recompense that God has built, that God has programmed. And we in a sense earn reward.

We earn blessing. But that earning is not a work. It is a faith and God does the work.

Well, this brings us to chapter 2. We'll pause here and take our break. When we come back, we'll begin at Now Brethren. Nothing like having good biblical truth for right now.

And this is the right now truth coming up.