

2Thessalonians 12-10-19b

Let's resume our study now in 2 Thessalonians. I'm threatening to go into chapter 3, but I'm here right at the threshold examining the welcome mat very closely. We've seen the content of verse 16.

It's something we don't want to overlook. Many times you get to one of these doxological sort of wish prayer verses and you just kind of skim over it and miss all of the meat that's in it. So we've tried to slow down and take a close look at verse 16.

And then verse 17, the Lord Jesus and God our Father who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace. Hopefully these words have a bit more resonance and meaning to us after our study in the first session. But he says now may he comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.

Comfort here is our old friend parakaleo, which the noun form is the primary name of the Holy Spirit. The Lord Jesus said when I go I will send another paraclete, paracletos. The paraclete, this is the comforter, the encourager.

This is what the Holy Spirit does. So anytime you see the ministry of comfort, this is going to involve the Holy Spirit. We know how this comfort comes.

You say, well, it's easy for you to wish me comfort, but I don't feel very comfortable. Well, where does comfort come from? Be good to know that, wouldn't it? Or to remember it? If we need encouragement, we need comfort, we need solace, we need someone to pick us up and stand us back on our feet after a nasty fall, whether we tripped ourselves or tripped over someone else, it's God the Holy Spirit. This is one of his primary functions.

If we do not feel comforted, if we do not feel encouraged, if we are downcast and discouraged, guess who we are not cultivating, who we are not listening to, who we are not allowing to do his God-given ministry, the Holy Spirit. It's okay to be, as I like to say, at the tranquility end of the happiness spectrum. There is a happiness spectrum.

I'll paint it for you backwards for me. You know, empty is over here and full is over here, right? This is tranquility. This is ecstasies, and we can vary in between those, but we should not drop below tranquility.

We can recognize that things are not good. We can be enduring. We can be persevering.

We can be churning on through some troubled waters, but there are times when we drop below empty. We drop below tranquility on the happiness spectrum, right? And we should not. Why? Because God the Holy Spirit is there.

He is the comforter. There is always comfort. You say, well, I'm alone.

There's nobody around. There's nobody to talk to. What happened to the Holy Spirit? Did he leave? Guess what? He doesn't leave.

So when it says here that may God give you comfort, what is he really saying? How do you get it? Well, if I'm not comfortable, if I'm not being comforted, if I don't feel encouraged, if I'm discouraged and uncomfortable, whose ministry am I ignoring? God the Holy Spirit. How do I get back into the place where God the Holy Spirit can minister the truth of God to my heart and become the other half of that great duo of power in my soul, the Word of God and the Spirit of God? Well, have I been sinning like a profligate and not paying any attention? Have I taken a direct exit off of the straight path and I'm wandering around in some place looking for gas and all the stations are closed? Have we taken a detour? Have we left the Holy Spirit and are disregarding and ignoring his ministry? Well, it should be no surprise that we lack comfort, we lack direction, we lack stability, we lack purpose, we lack a vision of our good hope. God the Holy Spirit provides the supernatural ability to see God's good hope.

If he is not active, we can't see it. What does Scripture say? The carnal mind cannot understand the things of the Spirit. Why? They are spiritually painted for us.

God the Holy Spirit enables us to see the good. No Holy Spirit, no the good. No the good, we're wasting time.

We are giving time back to Satan, back to darkness, back to emptiness, back to wood, hay and stubble instead of redeeming the time and investing it in eternity. We make this choice every waking moment. What am I doing with this time? We have a switch and it is either sending time into eternity as an investment or we are sending it down the drain to the pit and we can't ever get it back.

It's like you say the wrong thing. Come back words, you can't. They're out and they're gone.

These seconds are ticking by and they're gone. Can't get them back. Have you ever been to what is it nationaldebtclock.com or what is that thing? usdebtclock.com. You go there and all you see is the deficit spiraling into the new uncharted depths of trillions.

National debt, state debt, personal debt, all kinds of red numbers just flying. This is an up-to-the-minute account of our economy. This is like a depth meter for the Titanic.

Don't you think that there is sort of a similar clock on the minutes and the seconds of our life? There is coming a day when either death or the rapture will come. The older we get, the less time is left. That's true of everyone.

Nobody has as many minutes and seconds left right now as they did when we started class or when we started the day or when we started this week or this month. Cannot get those back. All we can do is dedicate ourselves to redeeming what's left.

It's like somebody that wakes up in their 40s and says, I need a retirement plan. I better start putting something away to draw interest and give me some pittance so I can eat crackers and pork and beans when I'm in my 70s and 80s. If you'd started wisely when you were in your 20s and established a savings plan and found some good, long-term, stable, interest-bearing things, Jesus himself said, if I give you a talent, you ought to put it with the bankers and let it draw interest.

It's a biblical principle. Start in your 20s. That thing will build itself.

You can be a millionaire by the time you retire if you faithfully put just a few dollars away every month consistently all through your working life. Well, a lot of us are too dumb to do that, and so we get in our 40s and say, wow, you know, look in the mirror. I think, you know, well, these days I'm going to be one of these old people.

I don't want to be waiting for the next Medicare check to show up or something. I'd better do something, and we start late. Well, a lot of us as believers have to start late, but you know what? If you get with it, chuck in a little extra, you can make it up.

You can be right where you would have been if you'd have been a little more faithful all along. God the Holy Spirit has supernatural, it's better than the magic of compounding. It is the power of God, and it isn't how long, it isn't how, it isn't what happened in the past.

God is going to judge us starting right now on what we do between now and when the final bell rings. So when Paul says, may God comfort your hearts, notice the two members of the Trinity are mentioned at the beginning of verse 16, our Lord Jesus Christ and God, our Father. You know why the third member is not mentioned? Because he's right here in the comfort phase.

And guess who sends God the Holy Spirit? There's this big theological discussion about procession. Does the Holy Spirit proceed from God the Father through the Lord Jesus Christ? Jesus said, I will send the comforter. So does he come from Jesus? And he doesn't come from, who cares? He's here.

He's the third member of the Trinity. All three members of the Trinity are very prominently featured in this two verse passage. Comfort from God is the Holy Spirit.

It comes in no other way. You can't sit there on your own and think up memory verses and get comfort. God the Holy Spirit brings that comfort in and through that truth.

Comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work. Would you love, is there any of us that would not love to stand at the judgment seat of Christ? And when the books are open, it says, here is a child of God that was firmly established. Look at these words and look at these works.

There's agathos leaking out of them. There's agathos overflowing. Look at the words of this person.

Look at the works of this person. Look at the productivity. Look at the fruitfulness.

Talk about abiding in the vine. The father did a little pruning here and there, and look at the abundance of fruit. This thing just took off.

Every once in a while, you know, a lady, just some non-specific lady will go to a nursery or get a bargain on a plant, take it home, and the thing just busts out with the roses. You can't believe how it grows. It's so healthy.

You think, wow, I wish I'd gotten three of those instead of one. And they don't have them anymore. It was kind of a one-time deal.

This is the kind of branch we want to be in the vine of the Lord Jesus Christ. Nobody expected it, but you plug that thing in, you graft it in, and it just burgeons, it blossoms, it fruits, it overflows. May God comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.

This is words and works that funnel into, that support and are a part of God's agathos. This isn't just the French bon mot. This isn't, wow, he got off a zinger there, or that was a funny story they told, or that was a funny anecdote, or that was a pleasant compliment that was paid.

It has nothing to do with that. What are good words? What is a good word? If you were going to say, I'm going to make sure I get in at least one good word tomorrow, tomorrow is Saturday, I'm going to get in a good word. The Bible says, may God establish me so I can have good words.

What would a good word be? How can we achieve this? Well, if God, the Holy Spirit is at work, if we have cultivated and encouraged His ministry in our hearts, if we've got plenty of the Word of God circulating because we've been to Bible class and we've gotten up and meditated on God's Word and thought about different passages, thought about things that we've learned, opened up our Bible, read a little bit, tried to remember. What was that stuff in 2 Thessalonians chapter 1? Anyway, we were just there a few weeks ago. Do I remember any of it? Can I read those verses and have any of those principles and doctrines come back to my mind? And what do they mean to me? What difference does it make in the way I look at my day? Great thing to do in the morning, just five minutes of review.

Pick any recent study, pick any study, pick anything. Get a Go Bible, listen to somebody on the radio, crack open the Bible anywhere, read a few verses and say, what is the Agathos? What is God's overarching plan and purpose? What does this mean to me? That gives the Holy Spirit something to work with. And when that is circulating in our souls, remember what Jesus said, it isn't what goes into a man that defiles him.

It's what comes out. The flip side of that is when good goes into us, when God, the Holy Spirit is fully functional in us and God's word comes into us. It's like Jesus said about the eye.

When your body is full of light, when your eye is full of light, it shines back out. And when we don't have to think about, well, okay, get ready. I'm about to put out a good word.

Stand by now, sit down. So no one gets hurt. I'm going to do a good word here, or I'm going to do a good work.

They will be a natural fruit. Vines don't have to struggle and sweat and grit their teeth and strain to put out fruit. What do they do? They abide right where they're supposed to abide.

They soak up the nourishment that comes from the vine and they take that nourishment and put it where it's supposed to go. They don't leak. They don't fade.

They don't turn away from the light. They use what they're given and they abide. They rest and they produce fruit all by themselves because that's the kind of branch they are.

Well, we have been made this branch. We've been regenerated into a branch. So all we've got to do is abide like we're supposed to.

And the words and the works, we will be established in them. Notice he doesn't say establish yourself in good words and works. Does he? He says, may God establish you.

If you'll just sit still and quit flailing, God will establish you. If you'll abide and if you'll focus on the comfort and on what the traditions have conveyed by way of God's truth, you will fruit. You will flower.

God will do the pruning. God will do the tending. God will do the establishing and it will be a natural.

It'll be as natural as any natural thing we do. Well, this brings us to chapter three. No, you thought I wouldn't get there.

Chapter three, verse one. Finally, brethren, this is, uh, this, uh, phrase that we've seen many times, uh, talking about, uh, Loipos as for the rest. See if I get my Greek text to come up here, but as for the rest, and this is always kind of the signal that the author is about to, uh, wind up his discussion.

Sometimes Paul will say this and then he remembers some things and it's really not the end. We've, we've seen that in some previous letters. He says, finally, brethren, and you look and well, wait, there's three more chapters in this letter that half the letters left to go.

Well, he thought he was wrapping up and then God, the Holy spirit brought some other issues to

his mind and he kept going here. We really are getting close to the end of the letter. So he says, finally, brethren summing up and sort of bringing everything to a close.

And so this is *ta loipon* as for the rest, as for what remains. And whenever you say this, you feel like you've really made your main point in a, in a good novel. You have introduction, you have complication, you have the situation in the plot brought to a climax, and then you have the plot resolved.

The murder is found. Uh, Perry Mason gets them to break down in tears and confess. And then there is the aftermath.

What happened after that? There was never a more graphic depiction of this than in a Jack Webb's, uh, TV shows where afterward, the narrator would come and say, you know, Frank Smith got 14 years in the state penitentiary and they would tell you exactly what happened. Well, that's, that's *ta loipon*. That's as for the rest.

The main thing was, did they catch him and convict him? Well, what's the main thing in this passage? What's the main thing in this letter? Thessalonians are facing a world of hurt. Paul says, be stable, be strong. Remember that God is in his heaven.

God is going to judge and take care of those who are troubling you. He has you going through this for a purpose. Don't think that it's some kind of apocalyptic end time sort of a thing.

It's not. You won't be here for those troubled times. And now you know what it is that suppresses that so that it can't get out of hand.

And what is it that suppresses it? So it doesn't get out of hand. It's the presence of the Holy spirit in God's people, right? So then he says, now may God comfort and establish you. If God is, is keeping the world from becoming too troubled, keeping history from becoming too troubled by the presence of the Holy spirit in his people, the people who are the containers and the temples for that Holy spirit certainly ought not to be troubled and disturbed themselves.

So may God comfort and establish and strengthen you. That is the gist of the first two chapters of this letter. And Paul says, now, as for what remains now that I've pretty much said my main piece, here's, here's a few additional things.

Pray for us that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified just as it is with you. And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men for not all have faith. Finally, brethren pray for us.

We obviously can't accomplish much by praying for the apostle Paul in this day and age. So why is this command even in scripture? Why is it included? Paul says, pray for us. Well, what is the prayer? What was Paul tasked to do? What is his mission? His mission is to communicate the word of God and for that truth to travel, to spread, right? Would you say that's a fair summary of,

of an apostle's mission? He is a fourth teller.

He's going to go and tell. So can we still honor this request? Yes, we can. We can pray that the message first delivered to the apostle Paul first spread by the apostle Paul will continue to spread, will continue to be communicated and distributed effectively and faithfully.

And may I say accurately, accurately. There are great missionary efforts in both domestic and foreign venues where the word of God is very enthusiastically being preached incorrectly. Some of the biggest inroads in the continent of Africa are made by Christian missionaries of the Pentecostal persuasion.

They're going in and sharing the gospel of Christ and immediately fouling everybody up on this central issue of the Holy Spirit. They don't teach the Holy Spirit as the comforter, as the interpreter, as the reminder and encourager in the truth. They teach him as a miracle worker, as a panacea, as a Excedrin pill and a get rich quick power and a dominate your enemies power and a sort of a spooky thing as a substitute for the pagan influences that these people might have been subject to prior to their conversion.

Paul says, pray that the word will run swiftly. And what this literally says is pray that the first of all, this is the word of the Lord. This is the logos of the Kurios.

It doesn't say the word of Jesus. It doesn't even say the word of God. It says the word of the Lord for Paul, the Lord is Jesus Christ.

This is the truth of Christ, not only his saving work, but also his work in entering us into a new and living way, giving us these opportunities, focusing our life on a goal. We have a calling to God's Agathos to the good. There is a strategy in place.

There is lawlessness that is being suppressed so that God's good can be manifest so that righteousness by faith as it's called can be laid hold of by believers. God, the Holy Spirit is integral to that. And Paul is preaching this message into an environment that believes that getting good marks with God has a completely different basis, that it's based on following rituals, that it's based on adhering to Old Testament norms and Old Testament feasts and Old Testament sacrifices.

Old Testament rituals and that people will get real busy and tell you whether or not you have kept the ritual right or not, which has carried over into the New Testament age with the Catholic Church, who has decided that they are now basically the synagogue Jews to tell people, here's your ceremony, here's your sacrifice, here's your ritual, here's your penance. This is how you can please God and have elbowed aside the role of the Holy Spirit and have made themselves equal in authority to the Word of God itself. We're equal.

You read your Bible all you want, but we have equal authority. When the Pope speaks ex

cathedra from the chair, what he says is as good as anything in your New Testament, which is blasphemy. So the correct Word, the Word of the Lord, the actual true Word of Christ with apostolic authority, this Word, not the Word of some guy in a pointy hat, not the Word of somebody who thinks they have it figured out because they get giddy every once in a while, this Word, the Word of the Lord, that it may treco.

This is the word that Paul uses for running, not only here, but when he talks about running the race with patience. Pray for us in order that, this is a purpose clause, you get hena there, in order that, halagas tukuru treke. This is where you get the word trek.

It means you're traveling at a pretty good clip going somewhere. We saw this in 1 Thessalonians 1, verse 8. For from you, the Word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out so that we do not need to say anything.

This is the spread of the testimony of Christ, the truth as Paul has communicated it. There's probably an Old Testament echo here from Psalm 147, 15, where it says, God sends out his command to the earth. His word runs very swiftly.

When God speaks, creation listens. So it speaks of the progress of the gospel. Paul has asked for prayer in this regard in other places.

In the letter to the Laodiceans that we call Ephesians, chapter 6, verse 19, he says, pray for me that utterance may be given to me that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, the hidden things of the gospel, this new truth that was not revealed. These synagogue guys are never going to get it out of the Isaiah scroll. They're never going to get it out of the law of Moses.

You can only get it through the apostolic witness. Paul says, pray for me that this update, this new phase of God's plan unfolding can be accurately communicated everywhere. He goes on in verse 20 to say, I am an ambassador in chains.

Pray that in it, I may speak boldly as I ought to speak. We can still pray that prayer today, that when these epistles are taught, that they're taught clearly and accurately, and that this good teaching goes out to people who need to hear it, who are desperate for comfort, desperate to understand God's good, God's overall strategy and purpose in the human race. Same thing in Colossians 4, 3 and 4, talking to the believers in Colossians, Paul says, meanwhile, praying also for us that God would open to us a door for the word to speak the mystery of Christ, the hidden things of Christ, these new truths that the old Jewish faith could not communicate, speak the mystery of Christ for which I am also in chains, that I may make it manifest as I ought to speak, that it will be clear, comprehensible, that it will make sense, and people can make their decision about it without obfuscation, without resistance.

And of course, you've got the famous passage in 1 Corinthians 9, where Paul uses Trecho, and he says, do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. Well, he's in another way said the same thing in this passage, hasn't he? This is a race. Don't forget the race.

Don't get dazzled by the bystanders and the cameras and the halftime show in the middle that you forget that, hey, there's a race going on. The fact that they're setting up something at the 50-yard line doesn't mean you shouldn't finish the race around the edges. Run the race.

Colossians 2, 2, Paul says, I preach the gospel among the Gentiles, lest by any means I might run or had run in vain. I don't want to run in vain. I want my efforts to count.

So it has the idea of people running, accomplishing God's purpose, but here it's not people running, it's the message itself, that the word will spread, because Paul can already envision that this is going beyond him. He's handed this truth to people in Thessalonica, and he says, we don't even need to tell people. They've already heard the truth from you through your testimony, and it is going to ripple outward, and the word is going to outpace.

I can't remember if I told you that my Guns, Germs, and Steel book that I'm going through, very fascinating. Just one quick snippet, though. The mound builders, you've heard of the mound builders.

They find these big hills all over the Mississippi, lower regions and so on. Well, people thought, oh, it's a long-dead civilization. They died out thousands of years ago.

Maybe the Native Americans, the Indians killed them or something. Turns out, they were alive and well and had fully functional civilizations when Columbus landed in 1492 in Hispaniola. By the way, every single native of Hispaniola was wiped out within 50 years of Columbus landing, because the men had germs.

There wasn't a single native. Their population went from 50,000 to zero in less than 50 years. Every single inhabitant of Hispaniola wiped out by disease because of that insulation.

They had no knowledge of germs that Europeans had been living with for centuries, and survivors had gotten through the plague and everything else. These people were just fresh meat. Those germs killed everybody.

Then the early explorers landed on the coast of America. As the Spaniards tried to move inland and explore and find things, their diseases outpaced them. Their diseases got to the mound builders before the Spaniards did and wiped them all out.

They came and found all these deserted villages because the diseases moved so much faster than they did. It took them years to finally reach the mound builders, but the germs got there in

months and killed them to the last man. Carrying eaters picked all the bones and carried everything off.

They got there and said, it looked like there used to be a civilization here. Well, just a few years earlier, there had been. You can't believe the devastation.

Everybody moans about the Indians getting wiped out by the U.S. cavalry. Listen, we killed 90 percent of them with our germs coming over from Europe. That's what wiped out nearly all of them.

It's just like in warfare. Up until the last century, more people were killed by disease than were ever killed by bullets or swords or axes or whatever. Say all of that to say this.

Paul recognizes that the word of God with its power is going to outpace him, and the word is going to run ahead of him. The word is going to spread. Well, guess what? We are the results of that, and we have the opportunity to similarly support the spread of that word both here and abroad.

And we do that. We do it as a church. We do it as individuals.

And it's a wonderful grace gift from God, the privilege and the opportunity to do that. And we can pray that God will bless it, that the word as it reaches beyond us will find those people who are hungry for it, who will appreciate it, who will glorify it. That's what it means here when it says that the word will run and be glorified, just as it was with you.

Glorified means appreciated. When you glorify God, what are you doing? You appreciate him. You're grateful to him.

Paul says, pray that the word will go and find those people who will glorify it, who will appreciate it, who will recognize it for the tremendous divine gift that it is and avail themselves of it. That's a prayer we can still pray today. This isn't an old out-of-date request.

This isn't passe. This isn't a letter arriving late, and nothing can be done. It's current.

It's meaningful right now. We should pray all the time. Pray for Dr. Eddy and his folks in Indonesia.

Pray for all of those at Village Ministries International in Africa. Pray anybody that comes to your attention, anybody that comes to mind. If you hear good, faithful presentation of the hidden things of the church age, accurately presented, accurately taught, accurately preached, pray that that will reach needy and hungry hearts and that it will be appreciated, that it will be glorified, where they're kindred spirits.

They are others like us who have that enthusiasm and that recognition of just what this is. Well,

this brings us to verse three, the faithfulness of the Lord. And once again, we have that notion of being established.

Sounds great, but what is this establishment? How do I know if I've been established or not? You know, there's usually a little plaque that says established 1846, established 1912. My former roommate used to live in the house, and it's, you know, had a little plaque on the front. I think the year was wrong that they had on there for when the house was established, when it was built.

Well, how do we know if we've been established or not? That's what we'll look at when we return to our second Thessalonian study next week. But let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the truth of your word.

Thank you for the presence of your Holy Spirit. And thank you that the combination of those two divine gifts makes it possible for us to be and to do so many things. We know that as we fulfill these hopes and expressed wishes of the Apostle Paul in being established, in being fruitful, in producing good words and good works, we know that we are accomplishing your will and purpose and reflecting the glory of the Lord Jesus who died on the cross to grant to us these privileges and give to us these opportunities.

We pray that in every effort and in every word that issues forth from us, the Lord Jesus Christ will be glorified and that we will be more fully prepared to reflect his glory in yours, both now and in the ages to come. We pray it in Jesus name. Amen.