

"PRAYER, POWER, AND PURPOSE" 2 THESSALONIANS 1:11-12

As Christians, God has called us to enter his kingdom and glory. Paul tells the Thessalonians: "For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory" (1Th 2:12). What's more, he assures us that we "will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God" (2Th 1:5) when our Lord returns in glory and prays that in the meantime God will "make us worthy of his calling" (v. 11). He expresses the gist of his prayer/wish in terms of sanctification in 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24: "May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it." Although our future is certain, as one pastor writes: "We must never neglect a present responsibility because of a future hope. On the contrary, the future hope must encourage us to be faithful today" (Warren W. Wiersbe, "2 Thessalonians," in *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, 2:195).

This Week's Core Competency

Life Purpose – I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in God's kingdom purposes for God's glory.

Participating in God's kingdom purposes for God's glory is every believer's life purpose—a

If our life is Christ, our future will be gain; otherwise not.

– William Hendriksen

purpose not unrelated to sanctification, the process we go through to become like Jesus, a process that involves effort on our part. And while it involves effort on our part, it cannot be accomplished by our effort alone. The Holy Spirit, who lives in us, is the one who enables us, so while sanctification is his work, it is also our work. The fact that sanctification is a joint effort is subtly implied in 2 Thessalonians 1:11. The New Living Translation renders this verse: "May he give you the power to accomplish all the good things your faith prompts you to do."

Commenting on 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12, one commentator writes: "The God who calls his people 'into his own kingdom and glory' (1 Thess 2:12) requires in them conduct worthy of that call, and he provides the necessary motive power for such conduct by his Spirit who indwells them. If their Lord is to be glorified in them at his Advent, he must be glorified in their present way of life. Yahweh spoke in earlier days of 'the people whom I formed for myself that they might declare my praise' (Isa 43:21)—declare it with their lives as well as with their lips—and these words are adapted and applied by another NT writer to the community of Christ's disciples: 'God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds (excellences) of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light' (1 Pet 2:9), Those who bear the name of Christ must glorify God in that name (cf. 1 Pet 4:16), and they can do so only by living in such a way as to reflect credit on the name. The missionaries' prayer has the Advent in view, but it will be fulfilled here and now into the image of Christ, 'from one degree of glory to another' (2 Cor 3:18)" (F. F. Bruce, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 45, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 157).

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Now it stands to reason if on the day of judgment, we are to be counted worthy of entering his kingdom and glory, we must here and now conduct ourselves in harmony with our gospel call. As one commentator warns, "If our life is Christ, our future will be gain; otherwise not" (William Hendriksen, "Exposition of I and II Thessalonians," in *Thessalonians, Timothy and Titus*, NTC, 162).

day **1** ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

2 Thessalonians 1:11-12

11 With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may bring to fruition your every desire for goodness and your every deed prompted by faith. 12 We pray this so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Cf., another translation

11 So we keep on praying for you, asking our God to enable you to live a life worthy of his call. May he give you the power to accomplish all the good things your faith prompts you to do. 12 Then the name of our Lord Jesus will be honored because of the way you live, and you will be honored along with him. This is all made possible because of the grace of our God and Lord, Jesus Christ. (NLT)

Cf., corollary passages

All this is evidence that God's judgment is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering. (2Th 1:5)

For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, 12 encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory. (1Th 2:11-12)

May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24 The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it. (1Th 5:23-24)

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. (Eph 4:1)

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Circle "this" in v. 11.
- * Underline "that," and "and that" in v. 11.
- * Circle "make" and "bring" in v. 11.
- * Bracket "your every desire for goodness and your every deed prompted by faith" in v. 12.
- * Box "so that" indicating *purpose/result* in v. 12.
- * Circle "name" in v. 12.
- * Bracket "glorified in you and you in him" in v. 12.
- * Box "according to" indicating *result* in v. 12.
- * Underline "our God and the Lord" in v. 12.

day 2

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. Paul writes "with *this* in mind" (v. 11). To what does "this" refer?
2. Identify the *word* that marks or introduces the two-fold content of Paul's prayer for them.
3. Put what the *first* thing he asks for means in your own words.
4. Put what the *second* thing he asks for means in your own words.
5. Why should the Thessalonians pray for something Paul assures them will be the case when Jesus comes?
6. How can Paul's prayer for the Thessalonians have any relevance to us?
7. What do you think about praying this prayer for yourself?
8. How do you think Paul wanted his readers to respond to his prayer report?
9. Jesus will be glorified *in us* and *us in him* when he returns. How so?
10. **Discussion:** Talk about a Life Purpose suggested by the message of this passage.

day 3 **EXAMINE** – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

2 Thessalonians 1:11-12 contains the content of Paul's prayer for his readers. One commentator labels it a "prayer report" rather than a "direct prayer" because it simply states that Paul, Silas, and Timothy pray constantly for the Thessalonians (Bruce, 155). They report praying that God will do *two* specific things for the readers (v. 11), each marked by "that," so *one* specific purpose, marked by "so that," might be accomplished (v. 12). That being the case, what relevance could this report possibly have for contemporary readers of the letter? What possible application could Paul's *specific* prayer for *specific* people *then* have for us *now*?

The answer lies in understanding Paul's *terms of address* (see Elliott E. Johnson, *Expository Hermeneutics*, 204 ff.). The apostle addresses his readers neither in terms of their specific place and time nor in exclusive terms of the content of his prayer for them. He addresses them as *Christians*, so the specific content of his prayer for the Thessalonians expresses his apostolic wishes for Christians *inclusively* without respect to place and time, which implies we should respond to this report like Paul expected the Thessalonians to respond to it—not *passively* but *actively*. He no doubt expected them to be encouraged by it, but more than that, he expected them to make an effort to be worthy of God's calling and to pursue their "every desire for goodness" as well as their "every deed prompted by faith." This they were to do through God's power so that the Lord Jesus might be glorified in them and they in him (v. 12) when he returns.

In the previous paragraph, Paul assures his readers that they "will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God" (v. 5; cf., 1Th 2:12) and then goes on to describe events that will take place in connection with the Lord's return before the coming of the kingdom. When he comes, he will give relief to the righteous (v. 7), especially those suffering persecution and trials, and will punish the unrighteous (v. 8). The righteous will enter his kingdom but the unrighteous "will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might" (v. 9). When he comes, he comes "to be glorified in his holy people" and "to be marveled

at among all those who have believed" (v. 10). This includes the Thessalonians (v. 10) and, of course, us as well. With this in mind, Paul and his coworkers pray constantly for the Christians in Thessalonica.

In the present paragraph, Paul specifies the content of the two-fold petition for his readers: 1) that God will make them worthy of his calling, and 2) that he will bring to fruition or fulfillment their every desire for goodness and every deed prompted by faith. One commentator explains: "The missionaries are constantly praying that in the case of the Thessalonians no resolution that springs from the good disposition which the Holy Spirit has created in their souls be left unfulfilled, and that no faith-inspired work be left unfinished. They are praying that God may accomplish this 'by (his) power' (*en dunamei*), the power of his grace working within them" (Hendriksen, 163). But why, Paul being confident that the Thessalonians *will be counted worthy* of God's calling and entrance into his kingdom (v. 5), would he pray that God *make them worthy*? Perhaps, because Paul refers in the first place to the outcome of sanctification and in the second to its process. The same commentator answers: "Paul knew from the evidences that as a result of constant prayer (their own prayer-life and the prayers of others for them) the Thessalonians would live and act as it becomes those who have received the call, so that [*sic*] on the day of judgment God would count them worthy of entering the kingdom. In the chain of salvation, which connects one eternity with another, constant prayer and daily sanctification are indispensable links" (163). Put differently, the future outcome of sanctification on display at the return of Jesus is arrived at only as believers are progressively transformed by the Spirit here and now into the image of Christ.

In the present paragraph, Paul also identifies the one purpose behind the two-fold prayer, namely, that on the day Jesus comes, just as he will be glorified in them on account of what they have become, so they will be glorified in him on account of who he is. "This 'he in you' and 'you in him' is probably based directly upon the teaching of Jesus. (See Jn 15:4; 17:10, 22.) It indicates the

closeness of the fellowship between the Lord and those who are his own. His work in their hearts reflects glory on him. Their nearness to him means glory for them. Moreover, the glory which they receive is not given according to the standard of human merit, for then there would

be none. It is given according to the standard of 'the grace of our God and of the Lord Jesus Christ'" (164)—that is, not by human merit but by the grace of God and of the Lord.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

The Message of the Passage

Live a life worthy of the Lord, trusting God to give you the power to accomplish all the good things your faith prompts you to do, so that the Lord might be glorified in you and you in him when he returns.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22. Reflect on the message of Romans 1:1-7 and your response to it.

What would you say is your Life Purpose?

Compare your Life Purpose with the one you discussed in question 9.

How might you respond to the comparison?

notes STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 1 **with this in mind** "That is, with a view to the realization of the expectations mentioned in verses 5-10 (namely, that on the day of judgment you may be counted worthy of entering the kingdom, that you may then receive rest, that he may at his coming be glorified in you, etc.)" (Hendriksen, 162). Or perhaps, "this" refers more specifically to "worthiness for the kingdom mentioned in v.5" (Robert L. Thomas, "2 Thessalonians," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 11:317).

v. 11 **that, and that** The two occurrences of "that" mark the content of Paul's twofold petition for the Thessalonians. "Two petitions are indicated by the subjunctives *axiose* 'make you worthy,' and *plerose*, 'may fulfill,' after *hina* [that]" (Bruce, 155).

v. 11 **make you worthy** Cf., "you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God" (v. 5). In verse 11, the NIV translators, with many other English versions, render the Gk. work, *axiose* ("count worthy") "make worthy." "Not content with the certainty of coming glorification, Paul now prays for its realization . . . Though the worthiness of the Thessalonian believers was confirmed (v.5), certainty in the security of God's purposes does not diminish the need to keep on praying" (Thomas, 316). "When men are called they are completely unworthy of their call (Gal. 1:13-15 is perhaps the classic instance of this). But God does not intend them to continue in such a state. They are to walk worthily of the calling wherewith He calls them (Eph. 4:1). Since this is not something that can be accomplished in any human strength Paul prays that God will count them [or make them] worthy" (Leon Morris, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, NICNT, 210).

v. 11 **bring to fruition** Cf., "fulfill" (ESV; GNT; HCSB; NET). "When Paul asks that God would 'fulfill' these things he implies that no human power is adequate. The divine is necessary. He reinforces this by adding 'with power' with which the verse ends" (Morris, 210). "If [the desire of goodness] is theirs (as is probable), God alone can bring it to fulfillment: every 'desire of goodness,' like every 'work of faith,' is wrought in them effectively by the Holy Spirit (cf. Gal 5:22, 23)" (Bruce, 156).

v. 12 **your desire, your deed** Cf., "all the good pleasure of His goodness" (NKJV). "It is hardly necessary to point out that Paul has in mind the believer's resolve [desire] (cf. in Rom. 10:1; Phil. 1:15) and the believer's (not God's) work [deed]. If that is the meaning when the latter phrase is used in I Thess. 1:3 (see on that passage), why not here? Moreover, since the two phrases ('resolve prompted by goodness' and 'work resulting from faith') form a pair, it follows that not only the latter but also the former refers to the Thessalonians, not to God" (Hendriksen, 163). The NLT merges "every desire for goodness" and "every deed prompted by faith" to read "all the good things your faith prompts you to do."

v. 12 **name** In verse 10, the Lord is to be glorified in his disciples; here his name is to be glorified, leading one commentator to remark: "Christ's name is Christ himself as he has revealed himself: for example, as God's Anointed One, the Savior and Lord of his own" (Hendriksen, 164).

v. 12 **glorified in . . . and in** Cf., v. 10. "Several have chosen to understand 'in you . . . in him' causally: 'because of you . . . because of him' (Frame, p.241; Best, pp. 271, 272); i.e., glory comes to the Lord because of the saved and to the saved because of the Lord. It is unnecessary to resort to this rare meaning of *en* ('in'), however. The more common locative meaning allows us to see this as the '*en* of mystic indwelling' (Robertson, RHG, pp. 587, 588). A technical expression initiated by Jesus (John 15:4; 17:21), this was taken up by Paul and developed more completely (Rom 6:11, 23; 1 Cor 1:5; 2 Cor 13:4; et al.). The thought is that of reciprocity resting on the union of the Lord with his people. They are to share the future moment of glorification together—as a unit" (Thomas 316).

v. 12 **according to** The Greek proposition, *kata*, often connotes the idea of *norm* ("in accordance with"), but from there the meaning can easily pass to *reason* ("because of"), *result* ("as a result of"), or even *means* ("by means of"). Here any one of these connotations makes sense.

v. 12 **our God and the Lord** Lit., "our God and Lord." "Since there is an article before 'our God' and none before 'Lord Jesus Christ,' it is grammatically possible to understand the expression to mean, 'our God and Lord, Jesus Christ.' However, the expression 'Lord Jesus Christ' occurs so frequently that it has almost the status of a proper name. Therefore when 'Lord' is used of Jesus it is not necessary for it to have the article. This being so, it seems likely that we should understand the present passage to refer to both the Father and the Son. At the same time we should not overlook the fact that Paul does link them very closely indeed" (Morris, 212; cf., Bruce, 157-58; Thomas, 317). Most modern English versions, with a few exceptions (e.g., EHV; GW; ISV; NLT), translate the expression like the NIV.

Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

There is no question on the importance of a dad in the family. There are many studies that have proven the benefit of having an active, present father in the home. Statistics show that kids who are raised in a home with a loving dad are more likely to be well adjusted, secure and compassionate. They are less likely to engage in risky behaviors and suffer from various emotional challenges. There are countless valuable lessons we can learn from our fathers and other godly men in our lives. Of all the benefits, one stands above the others. When a dad points a child to God as his ultimate Heavenly Father, he has done an eternal work. As great as they are, earthly dads and moms will make mistakes. God never will. He is the Father who provides (Philippians 4:19). He will protect His children (Matthew 10:29-31). He listens and encourages us (Psalm 10:17). He comforts us in our troubles (2 Corinthians 1:3-4). He disciplines us when we need it (Hebrews 12:10). And like the prodigal son's dad, He longs for us to return to Him when we wander and embraces us when we do (Luke 15:11-32). Your church is praying for you, men, as you lead. For those of you who are raising children and for those of you who are pouring into kids who are not your own, we are grateful. You are a blessing and we hope you feel loved and appreciated!

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Read 2 Th 1:11-12

1. How often did Paul say he was praying for the people in Thessalonica?
2. How did he say their purpose was fulfilled?
3. According to verse 12, why is he praying for them?

What Do You Think

Our passage today and verses like Philippians 2:13 instruct us that it is God who works in and through us to accomplish good. What is your role in the relationship?

What R U Going To Do

The Lord has been so good to us by placing men who love Him in our lives. Write the names of all that come to mind. Take time to personally thank a few of them this week by either making a card or saying thank you when you see them!

Core Comp

Life Purpose - I believe all I am and have belong to God, so my purpose is to live for him.

Memory Verse

Proverbs 3:5-6 - *Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.*

KIDPIX COUPON

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30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith *Ephesians*

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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