

## II Thessalonians 1:11-12 The Prayer of Paul

Well this morning we are in II Thessalonians chapter 1 verses 11 and 12 as we finish out this chapter, this first chapter.

Remember, the second letter to the Thessalonians, which was written a few months, maybe even a year, after the first letter was written to them - but it was written concerning trials and afflictions. Paul had received word as it is told to us in chapter 2 verse 2 - Paul was told there was a false letter circulating in Thessalonica. And this false letter was supposedly signed by Paul, which it was not - Paul never sent the letter. And in this letter false teachers addressed their afflictions and persecutions and hardships, their trials in life. And the false teachers said, "You are not just going through Christian trials, you are going through the tribulation period."

Now Christian trials and hardships are for growth, Christian growth. The tribulation period, which is a seven-year period that God brings judgment upon the earth that starts when the Lord removes the church, brings seven years of judgment, and then His second coming. We come back with Him at His second coming when He sets up His kingdom upon the earth for one thousand years. So these false teachers said that you are under God's judgment, this is not for growth, this is for judgment. That you are suffering the hardships of the tribulation period. So in this first chapter Paul addresses first the instructions concerning their afflictions, concerning their hardships. And there are a couple of basic principles that we have studied from this text to apply to our own situations, our own hardships.

Paul said in verse 2, **Grace to you and peace from God our Father and *the* Lord Jesus Christ.** God's grace is the answer. God told Paul, **My grace is sufficient for you,** when he prayed concerning his hardship and its removal. God's grace is sufficient. He is sufficient. It does not need to be removed, the hardship and the difficulty, except for the guidance of God's Spirit.

He says verse 3, **Brothers, we are indebted to always thank God concerning you, according as it is fitting.** So he is thanking God for two things: **Because your faith is increasing exceedingly,** that is Christian growth. Through the hardships your trust in the Lord is growing. And secondly, **The love of each one of all of you is abounding toward one another.** There is more concern for the spiritual welfare of other people because of the hardships that you are going through, it is developing in you a compassion and a love for your fellow brothers and sisters who are suffering.

As a result verse 4, **So that *for* us to boast ourselves in you in the assemblies of God on behalf of your endurance and faith in all your persecutions and the afflictions which you are holding up under.** So Paul would use the Christians in Thessalonica and the things they were suffering through as an example to the other churches. The other churches were suffering too but they were complaining and they were backing off from the things of the Lord. Paul was saying, "Look, you do not need to back off. God's grace is sufficient to keep you and to minister to you." But he says his boasting was **for their endurance and faith in all your persecutions and the afflictions which you are holding up under.**

Then last week we took verses 5 through 10, The Promise of the Lord, found in the coming judgment. **Which is evidence** verse 5, that is the afflictions and persecutions of verse 4. **Which is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, for you to be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, on behalf of which also you are suffering.** So he says, "Your suffering for the sake of Christ is proof, it is evidence that you belong to Jesus." It is the natural propensity of man, of human beings, and it is even in the church today with our teachings on claiming the promises of God to get rid of the hardships. Now God might get rid of the hardships, but God wants us to learn to endure by faith and let Him remove the hardships.

But the hardships themselves are evidence and proof. So you do not want to be persecution and affliction free, because it is evidence that you belong to Christ. If you are suffering for the sake of Christ, you are counted worthy of the kingdom of God. That is what makes you worthy. I do not know that we have ever considered that before we actually took this text last week. The fact that what makes me worthy of the kingdom of God is not my performance but hardships and afflictions. Enduring these sufferings for belonging to Christ, and for identification with Him, and for obeying Him, that is what makes me worthy.

God's judgment in verse 6, **Since indeed *it is a righteous thing with God to repay affliction to the ones afflicting you.*** So the first thing is when God's judgment comes, God is going to take care of the people who were afflicting you, the people who are persecuting you, the people who are giving you a bad time. God will take care. His vengeance will come and take care of the ones who are afflicting you.

And secondly, verse 7, **And to *give to you, the ones being afflicted, rest with us, in the revelation of the Lord Jesus from Heaven with angels of His power.*** So the rest - the word *rest* as we presented to you last week means *to come to an end, to be free, to rise up in victory.* So when Christ comes, I will be at rest, the hardships will be over. But he is saying in this letter, "Not until Christ comes," because we are in hostile territory. We are living in a system, and in the world which is against Christ.

So He is going to come from heaven with angels of His power, verse 8, **In a flame of fire, giving vengeance** to people with two characteristics: **to the ones not knowing God.** It is knowing Him. It does not say *believing*, it says *knowing*. **The ones not knowing God, and, secondly, to the ones not obeying not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.** The word *obey* means *to put your hearing under*. They are not listening. They are not receptive to the word of God, **the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

Verse 9, **Who will pay *the penalty, eternal destruction, from the face of the Lord, and, secondly, from the glory of His strength.***

This should happen, in verse 10, **Whenever He should come to be glorified in His saints, and to be marveled at in all the ones believing, because our testimony was believed by you, in that Day.** He says, "You believed our gospel. You know God. You know Jesus Christ. And so you are suffering for it, in the human, in the flesh, in the world, in your circumstances. That makes you worthy of the kingdom of God." So he says, "I look back at that

time when you believed." Because you believed it, we are going to see Him when He should be glorified in the saints and marveled at in all the ones believing.

Now for today, II Thessalonians chapter 1 verses 11 and 12, The Prayer of Paul. This finishes out this first chapter as he deals with the afflictions and the proper approach; the proper view, the proper belief of afflictions for the believer, here in this first chapter. And then next time, in chapter 2 we study about the tribulation period. He is going to give the proper instruction over against the false teaching by the false teachers, as relayed in chapter 2 verse 2. So now Paul's Prayer for them, verses 11 and 12 of II Thessalonians chapter 1.

Verse 11, **For which also we always pray concerning you, in order that our God might count you worthy of the calling, and might fulfill every good pleasure of goodness and fulfill work of faith all in power.** First of all, he is praying for them in order that our God would count you worthy of the calling. And second, He might fulfill every good pleasure of goodness. And thirdly, and work of faith and power.

Prayer for believers. First of all, that he is always praying for them that God would count them worthy of the calling, that is, of the calling of God. Now the word *worthy* that we have discussed before has to do with the balance weights down at the marketplace. They sold goods based on the value that is placed on the weight of the item. So on one balance scale on one side you put the item you want to buy, you put your money on the other side until they match, until they weigh out even, and equal. That is what you have to pay for the items down at the marketplace. What is equal. What matches. It has nothing to do with performance, but our worthiness of the calling. That is, how we match up with the calling.

Paul gave an in-depth study of this back in Ephesians chapter 4. If you have your Bibles, you might want to turn with me there, or just listen. Ephesians chapter 4, as to what does it mean to be worthy of the calling. He is not talking about performance. Ephesians chapter 4 beginning in verse 1 he says, **I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, I beseech (or I encourage) you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called.**

So here is what he is talking about, verse 2. **To walk worthy of the calling, verse 2, with all lowliness,** which is literally the word *humble mindedness*, **ταπεινοφροσύνη** (*tapeinophrosunē*). The word *humble* means *to realize one's need for Christ*. And the word *mind* is the word for *frame of mind*. So it means to have a frame of mind that is always under the realization of one's need for Christ. So *lowly*, it is a humble frame of mind, knowing that **Without Christ I cannot do one thing.** That is what it means to walk worthy. To walk worthy of the calling means it is not me. It is nothing of me. For me to be worthy of the calling of which I have been called means to realize that without Him, without Christ, I cannot do one thing. I am not sufficient within myself. He is my sufficiency. So that is point number one.

Second, verse 2 of Ephesians chapter 4. **Not only with all lowliness, but also, and gentleness.** Interesting this Greek word means *openness* or *receptivity*. It means *to be open*. To be open to one another, to be open to others. It does not mean *compromise*. It just means do not close your mind; to be receptive with the mind to what others have to say.

So we have humble mindedness, second, and openness or receptivity. Now according to the Greek text in verse 2 these two things are to be accompanied by what the text says, **with longsuffering**. The word *long-suffering* has to do with *patience toward people*. **μακροθυμία** (makrothumia) is the Greek word and it means *to be slow in human reaction towards someone*. Not losing our temper, not losing our patience. It is all accomplished with **walking worthy of the calling with which we are called**. So with long-suffering, slow in human reaction towards others.

And now we have these two participles that are to be going on while doing those three things. First of all, **Bearing with one another in love**. The word *bearing* means *support*; holding each other up, continually holding each other up. So it is not what you can do for me but what can I do for you. Support.

All of this: the lowliness / humble mindedness, the openness, and slow in human reaction towards other people while at the same time being in support of one another in love. This is the last thing that you need in Christ is for my flesh to react to you and cause distress for you. The last thing you need from me is for me to be closed to you and not open.

Verse 3 of Ephesians chapter 4, the second principle is in verse 3. **Endeavoring** (or *being diligent, top priority*) **to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace**. What makes us united in Christ is Christ. Now everybody who has Jesus Christ in their heart they are united with everybody else who has Christ. Whether they are at odds with them or not, we are united.

He goes on to say in verse 4, **There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling**; verse 5, **one Lord, one faith, one baptism**; verse 6, **one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all**. So there is only one; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one hope of your calling. So everybody who has Christ is united in this oneness. So there is only One. We make the divisions. We choose the churches, and the church names, and the doctrines, and we divide ourselves up from everybody else who names the name of Christ. We are the ones who make the divisions. Spiritually there are no divisions whatsoever among believers in Christ.

So he is saying to function within the unity that we have in Christ. Christ has united us. If Christ is in you, He is in me too. He is in you in all of His fullness, and He is in me in all of His fullness. So we are one in Christ.

Here is what it means to walk worthy, here is what it means to balance out and be even with the calling with which He has called us. Humble mindedness. Openness. Long-suffering or slow in human reaction. While supporting one another in love continuously, and being diligent (making it top priority) to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. It is to keep the unity, not make the unity. The unity is already there. With Christ in the heart, that person is one with all others who have Christ in their heart. It is not up to us to make the unity, it is up to us to keep it. We already have it, this unity. So walk in worthiness of the unity in Christ with one another.

Back to II Thessalonians chapter 1 verses 11 and 12. So Paul prayed in verse 11, first of all, **For which also we always pray concerning you, in order that our God might count you worthy of the calling.** Second thing he prayed for, **And might fulfill every good pleasure of goodness and work of faith in power.**

So we will take the second one, and again I invite you to turn back to Ephesians with me. This time to Ephesians chapter 1 beginning at verse 3. He says, **Blessed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places** (which is the spirit realm) **in Christ.** Verse 4, not only has He blessed us with every spiritual blessing, **just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.** Do you know the that He has chosen us in His goodness? The day that I stand before Him I'm going to stand before Him blameless.

Verse 5 of Ephesians chapter 1, **Having predestinated us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself,** notice this, **according to the good pleasure of His will.** What is God's good pleasure? God says, "I am pleased to do this for you. I am pleased that through My Son Jesus Christ and His sacrifice on the cross to adopt you into My family to choose you to stand before Me as holy and without blame one day."

Notice in verse 6 of Ephesians chapter 1. This is all:

- 6) to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.**
- 7) In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace,**
- 8) which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and understanding,**
- 9) having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself,**
- 10) that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth — in Him.**
- 11) In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, having being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will.**

Interesting God works everything according to the counsel of His will. It is not based on our performance, it is what He is making us to be. So one day we are going to stand before the Lord, and throughout eternity we are going to be giving praise to Him because just out of His grace and favor towards us, basically God says, "Through My Son I have chosen you to be this way." It has nothing to do with performance. It has nothing to do with whether we deserve it or not. It has nothing to do with our worth or our worthiness. He has chosen us to be this way. That is a great promise.

Back to II Thessalonians verse 11 and this second thing, **And might fulfill every good pleasure of goodness.** God is pleased to pour out His goodness, and for that we must suffer in the flesh.

And third, we see in verse 11, **to fulfil also the work of faith in power.** Faith, James says in James chapter 2 verse 26 that, **Faith without works is dead.** Faith has power. Not our faith. According to the Scriptures it is God's faith that God gives to us. That faith has power with it, it is active.

Reading verse 12, **So the name of our Lord Jesus Christ might be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.** He gives us a purpose for these three things in verse 11. So, **That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ might be glorified in you.** That is the purpose of it all, that people might see Christ. That people not see us, they might see us suffering, but they see Christ sustaining us. That is the whole purpose - to keep us under so that others can see Christ manifesting Himself. The whole purpose is not to make us great, the whole purpose is to not exempt us from hardship.

Paul says everything that God does in your life - all of the goodness that He pours out upon you; all of the working of His faith and His power in your life; and the blessing of choosing you, and calling you, and appointing you to stand before Him holy and without blame is so that as it says in verse 12, **that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ might be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.** What comfort for people who are going through hard times, God's provision. As it is God providing for them and putting them through trials. Do not worry, it is not the tribulation, it is not the tribulation period. It is not God's judgment, it is growth.

And third, the purpose of it is to be an encouragement, and an example, and a ministry, and a help to other people. But do not worry, God has promised one day you will be at rest with Him at His coming and He will be glorified in you. And God's vengeance and judgment will be upon those who have caused the persecutions and the afflictions. And they will be banned from the presence because they have not known Him, nor have they believed and put their obedience in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

So he says, "Therefore my prayer for you is that all of God's goodness would have its fulfillment according to the pleasure which He has already chosen to do." It pleases Him to do this for us. Then all His goodness and His promises according to His good pleasure will be fulfilled in our lives. Then in doing so in our sufferings we may be counted worthy of the calling which He has given to us. And what is the calling? That through the sufferings that we might suffer with Him. And that we might be humbled, and gain a humble mind, and an open mind, and an open heart slow in human reaction towards other people in a supportive role because of our concern about people's spiritual welfare.

So next week we will start II Thessalonians chapter 2. We are going to study about Paul's correction concerning the tribulation.

Let's close with prayer.