

Session 5 Paul's Prayer in 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12

I. UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT OF PAUL'S PRAYER TO BE COUNTED WORTHY

- A. Paul prayed for the saints to walk in the glory and benefits of wholeheartedness (2 Thes. 1:11-12). He prayed for believers to be inspired by the Spirit to respond to Jesus in a way *worthy of Him*—in wholeheartedness. He also connected this with the ability to *fulfill all of God's will* in their lives.

¹¹Therefore, we also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power, ¹²that the name of our Lord Jesus...may be glorified in you, and you in Him... (2 Thes. 1:11-12)

- B. ***Therefore:*** We gain understanding of this prayer by understanding what Paul said just before it.

⁴...[I boast of]...your patience [perseverance] and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure, ⁵which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom... ⁶since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, ⁷and to give you who are troubled rest... ¹⁰when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired [marveled at]... (2 Thes. 1:4-10)

1. Paul affirmed their perseverance in persecution. Earlier, he wrote that he sent Timothy to encourage them not to be shaken in their afflictions (1 Thes. 3:2-4).

²...Timothy...to encourage you...³that no one should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this. ⁴For, in fact, we told you before when we were with you that we would suffer tribulation, just as it happened... (1 Thes. 3:2-4)

2. Paul went to cities to strengthen believers—reminding them that they would be persecuted.

²²...strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God." (Acts 14:22)

- C. Paul identified three ways that the Lord has wisely or righteously determined to use persecution and the sinful mistreatment of others to strengthen and transform the saints. It is manifested evidence or proof of God's righteous or good leadership. It is proof that God is judging or leading His people in a wise way that leads to their greatest benefit by appointing them to endure persecution in this age.

⁴...all your persecutions... ⁵which is manifest evidence of the righteous [wise] judgment of God... (2 Thes. 1:4-5)

1. It requires spiritual insight to agree with His judgments (leadership decisions) to appoint us to endure persecution as part of His wise leadership to enable us to give Him a worthy response.

¹Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. (Heb. 11:1)

2. We must cultivate God's view of how persecution "works for us" to our great benefit.

¹⁶...we do not lose heart [get offended]. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷For our light affliction, which is but for a

moment, is working for us a far more exceeding...weight of glory¹⁸while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen... (2 Cor. 4:16-18)

D. **Evidence #1:** God weans us from worldliness to **make us worthy** or fit to glorify Jesus. The word “worthy” here doesn’t mean “deserving of,” but rather “suited for,” “prepared for,” or “fitted for.” To walk worthy of the Lord is to walk in agreement with His heart and ways. We give a *worthy response* to God by resisting compromise and embracing God’s ways, thus, being prepared and in position by the grace of God to walk in the fullness of our calling.

⁵...which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment [leadership decision] of God, that you may be counted worthy of [suited for] the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer. (2 Thes. 1:5)

1. This is how John the Baptist used this call to act in a way that is “worthy” when calling Israel to “bear fruit worthy of repentance” (Mt. 3:8). He was not saying “deserving of repentance”—which would not have made sense—but “as fits” or “is according to” genuine repentance.

⁷When he [John the Baptist] saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them... ⁸“Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance...” (Mt. 3:7)

2. The first way in which persecution gives “manifest evidence” or proof of God’s wise or righteous leadership is in how it leads us to align more with Jesus and His leadership. God appointed the saints to endure persecution so that they may be “counted worthy” or “transformed in a way befitting” of His kingdom. This is evidence of God’s wise leadership.

3. Pressure changes the conversation that we have with God. We get connected more and more to the fact that we are living for something far more glorious and bigger than what we experience in this life.

E. **Evidence #2:** God will eventually **repay** or punish those who persecute His people. Thus, we do not get into a wrong spirit by seeking our own vengeance nor do we “give in” to being like those who afflict us. It is right that He afflicts those who afflict you. There is a cry for justice in the human spirit—we can be assured that justice will be done, yet it will happen mostly after Jesus returns.

⁵...evidence of the righteous judgment of God...⁶since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you...⁷when the Lord Jesus is revealed... (2 Thes. 1:5-7)

F. **Evidence #3:** God gives His persecuted people **rest**. We will receive a 100-fold recovery of all that we lost in being persecuted. This sure hope purifies, prepares, and makes us suited to meet Jesus—this increases more as persecution causes us to look to our glorious, eternal future.

⁵...manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God...⁷to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels... (2 Thes. 1:5-7)

¹¹“Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. ¹²Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven...” (Mt. 5:11-12)

²“...we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him...”³Everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. (1 Jn. 3:2-3)

- G. Each of these three manifest evidences of His good leadership have a corresponding domino effect in progressively changing how we think, feel, and process pressure and His leadership in our life.
- H. **Glorified in His saints:** Those who are transformed so as to respond in a way that is worthy of Jesus will bring glorify to Him on that Day that He returns. They will be “trophy of His grace.”
- ¹⁰...**when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired** [marveled at]
...¹¹**Therefore, we pray...that our God would count you worthy...** (2 Thes. 1:10-11)
1. **Not ashamed:** We are to live a way so we will not be ashamed of our lifestyle at His coming.
²⁸...**abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.** (1 Jn. 2:28)
 2. **Admired or marveled at:** As we endure persecution, the Spirit redirects our marveling from the things of this world to marvel on the beauty of Jesus. It will be understood as we see the wisdom and glory of having marveled at Christ before He comes—to prepare us for that Day.
 3. **Therefore:** In view of the three benefits that give manifest evidence that enduring persecution results in long term benefits for God's people, Paul prayed that God would make them worthy of this calling—which includes preparing and making them fit to glorify and marvel at Jesus.

II. RESPONDING IN A WAY THAT IS WORTHY OF JESUS

- A. Paul prayed that God would release the optimum environment (blessing and pressures) and increase the activity of His Spirit to result in strengthening His people **until** they respond to God in a way that He esteems as worthy of Jesus, thus enabling them to walk in mature partnership with Him.
- ¹¹**We pray always...that our God would count you worthy...according to the grace of God.** (2 Thes. 1:11)
- B. Being counted “worthy” by God has two applications in Scripture that are “according to grace.”
1. First, by the blood of Jesus we are made worthy to be accepted into God's family by receiving the gift of salvation. No one is “worthy” in the sense of deserving to be forgiven. Salvation is a free gift because of Jesus' worthiness—we are justified by faith alone (Rom. 3:28; 5:1).
 2. Second, we respond to Him with obedience that is “worthy” of Jesus and His leadership (Mt. 3:7-8; 10:37-38; Lk. 21:36; Acts 5:41; Eph. 4:1; Phil. 1:27; Col. 1:10-11; 1 Thes. 2:12; 2 Thes. 1:5, 11; Rev. 3:4). It is the Lord's plan to transform those whom He freely justifies.
- C. The Lord gives a greater measure of grace to the humble who draw near to Him (Jas. 4:6-8).
- He gives more grace...to the humble...Draw near to God and He will draw near...** (Jas. 4:6-8)
- D. God's people must be strengthened to escape the snare of sin and to stand in victory (Lk. 21:36). The phrase *be counted worthy* (21:36, NKJV) is translated as *have strength* in most modern translations. The idea is to be *strengthened to respond* to Jesus in a way that is *worthy* of who He is and to *stand in victory* as overcomers instead of falling into sin. By watching, we will receive greater insight into what God is doing, and by praying we receive greater *strength* to love and obey Jesus unto victory.

³⁴“Take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life...³⁶Watch...and pray always that you may be counted worthy [have strength] to escape all these things...and to stand [with victory] before the Son of Man.” (Lk. 21:34-36)

III. FOUR BENEFITS AND RESULTS OF WALKING WORTHY OF THE LORD

- A. Paul requested four specific benefits when asking God to strengthen them to walk worthy.

¹¹We pray always...that our God would count you worthy of this calling and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power, ¹²that the name of our Lord Jesus... may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of God. (2 Thes. 1:11-12)

- B. **#1 Fulfill all the good pleasure:** Our vision is to walk in the *fullness of all that God has ordained*. It is God's pleasure to use His people as vessels to release His kingdom power. He is not reluctant; thus we contend with confidence for the *full release* of His purposes—individually and corporately. Even after David stumbled, he rose and fulfilled “all” of God's will for his life (Acts 13:22)

³²“Do not fear...for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” (Lk. 12:32)

- C. **#2 Work of faith with power:** He releases His power in response to our “partnership of faith” in connecting with His heart and contending for the fullness of His purposes. The measure of our partnership with Jesus is affected directly by the measure of our responsiveness to His leadership.

¹²I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has laid hold of me. (Phil. 3:12)

- D. **#3 Jesus may be glorified in you:** God desires to put Jesus' glory on display through the dedicated lives of His weak people so that Jesus may receive the glory due His name. God promised to release a greater measure of the Spirit's activity (Joel 2:28) as we turn to Him with all our heart (Joel 2:12).

¹²“Turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning.” ¹³So rend your heart...for He is gracious...and of great kindness... ²⁸“And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh.” (Joel 2:12-13, 28)

- E. **#4 That you are glorified in Him:** Believers are glorified in Christ in two ways.

1. First, in this age, we experience His glory that enables us to walk in Christlikeness.

¹⁸We all...beholding...the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. (2 Cor. 3:18)

²⁸We know that all things work together for good...to those who are the called according to His purpose...²⁹to be conformed to the image of His Son... (Rom. 8:28-29)

2. The manifest presence of God's glory increases on our lives in times of persecution.

¹⁴If you are reproached for the name of Christ...the Spirit of glory...rests upon you. (1 Pet. 4:14)

3. Second, in the age to come, we will live in a city—New Jerusalem—that is filled with glory.

- F. ***If we don't have something to die for, then we don't have anything to live for.*** The resolve to love and serve God with all of our heart is essential to our emotional well-being. Many seek in vain to enjoy contentment without seeking to be fully committed to His leadership.