



God-Worked Good to Jesus' Glory

2 Thessalonians 1:11-12 With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that our God may count you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may fulfill every good purpose of yours and every act prompted by your faith. 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.

It's not any fun or very fulfilling to sit around and wait. While waiting for a long-anticipated guest to arrive even the most mature among us can turn into impatient children, "When will they get here? It feels like this is taking forever!" At times like these one of the most helpful things we can do is find something to occupy our attention and pass the time: listen to some music, read a book, play a game, go for a walk.

As we wait for Jesus to return and give us his eternal rest, it can feel like we've been waiting forever. Especially when we're enduring persecution and troubles, time can pass at an agonizingly slow pace, but through the pen of the Apostle Paul our heavenly Father would have us know that he intends to fill the intervening time with something more than idle distractions: his goal is to empower us to be active agents of good to Jesus' glory.

Paul prayed for the Thessalonians (and we would do well to pray for each other) that God would consider us worthy of his calling us to faith. Since no word of Scripture can be broken, we know that this worthiness cannot mean that God takes our good deeds into consideration when he converts and saves us. Such an understanding would totally overthrow salvation by grace without works (cf. Eph. 2:8-9). Instead, Paul is praying that the Thessalonians would be found worthy of faith and the name of Jesus that they now bear. When we sinners become sons and daughters of God, we are given a high and heavenly status. As a result of God's grace and love for us we then want to live honorable and holy lives in public and private that openly declare we are Christians in all we do, wherever we go. In this way we are correspondingly made "worthy" of our calling. As Paul writes elsewhere, "Let us live up to what we have already attained" (Philippians 3:16). We are children of God; let's live like what we are!

But the Lord knows that if godliness were up to us to accomplish by our own puny sin-weakened powers, we would certainly fail and bring shame upon him. That is why in grace he energizes us with his Spirit, and he alone blesses and brings to fruition our efforts prompted by faith in our hearts. For apart from his cooperation, no good we hope to achieve will succeed or endure. Here we have another Biblical definition of what "good works" are. These are anything done by a believer, begun in faith, empowered by God, to his glory.

The sinful nature in us does good so that others will see and give us an ego boost, but by faith our prayer is that we may glorify the name and reputation of Jesus Christ, whom we represent and serve. Likewise, Jesus once told us to let our lights shine before people that they may see our good deeds and glorify our Father in heaven (cf. Matt. 5:16). In this way we bring glory to Jesus, and we in turn are glorified in him by the good God works in us.

***Prayer:** Heavenly Father, in pure grace you have called me to be your child. I pray that you would empower me and make me your instrument of good to the glory of Jesus. Where there is anger, let me proclaim your peace; where there is guilt, give me words of forgiveness; where there is need or suffering, give me the compassion to provide help and healing—all according to the strength you give me in Christ Jesus. Amen.*