

## 2 Thessalonians

A Careful Study Of Thessalonians

August 29, 2021

### I. Introduction

A. **2 Thessalonians 1:1-5** . . . Paul and Silvanus and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: [2] Grace to you and peace **from** (*indicates the source*) God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. [3] We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is only fitting, because your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows ever greater; [4] therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure. [5] This is a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering.

#### B. Pray

### II. Grace and peace, conditional thanks, God's righteous judgment

A. Last Sunday we looked at **vs 1-2** and talked about God being our Father and Jesus being our Lord. Before moving on to **vs 3**, I want to return to **vs 2** and spend some time talking about the nature of the grace and peace that comes from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. In general terms, the nature of the grace that comes from God is unmerited favor or undeserved kindness – and it comes in many forms. The nature of the peace that comes from God is genuine tranquility – a tranquility that surpasses all comprehension and remains with you and in you regardless of the circumstances. However, there is more to grace and peace than this.

#### 2. **Undeserved favor – in whatever form it is needed**

a. Grace is essentially spontaneous favor or kindness toward the guilty and therefore undeserving. The word spontaneous means self-motivated or self-generated. And this means that God's favor and kindness are self-generated.

(1) In other words, though we are the recipients of God's grace, we – the guilty and therefore undeserving – are not the cause of His grace.

(2) He is gracious because that is who He is and how He chooses to act in spite of our rebellion against Him and mistreatment of those around us.

- b. Since we are guilty sinners and undeserving, and since we lack any means to purchase or barter for God's grace, our only option is to receive His grace as a gift.
    - (1) And it is this reality that reinforces the fact that God's grace is self-generated – generated by His will and His love.
    - (2) Therefore, though we sing, "He looked beyond my fault and saw my need," it wasn't our need that pulled grace out of God. It was God's character, God's values, God's attitude toward us, and God's ways that compelled Him to respond to our self-imposed troubles with favor and kindness.
  - c. Question: Having received undeserved grace as a gift from God, do you show grace to the guilty and undeserving around you?
3. **Genuine tranquility**
- a. God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ are not only the source of the grace we so desperately need, they are the source of peace as well. However, for us to know genuine tranquility in any and every situation, peace must reside within us. Why? Because it is only when peace resides within that we can remain emotionally and mentally calm regardless of what is happening to us or going on around us.
  - b. Many seek peace through the use of power and control, or by appeasing those in control, or through a manipulative use of resources, or through seclusion and isolation.
    - (1) And though such methods may make your environment peaceful, you are not at peace with those you are controlling, manipulating, appeasing, or cutting out of your life.
    - (2) And certainly you have no peace within – as proven by how quickly and easily you get upset should anyone or anything begin to disturb your peace.
  - c. Therefore, in a sinful world where pride and selfishness, conflict and hostility abound, the only way to experience genuine tranquility in any and every situation is to have God's peace within you.
4. And so if you want grace for facing and enduring the challenges, trials, and tribulations of life, for growing and maturing as a Christian, and for dealing with persecution – look to God your Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. They have the grace you need, and they give it without cost to those who will accept it.

5. And if you want genuine tranquility in the midst of turmoil, conflict, mistreatment, and injustice, seek the peace that comes from God your Father and the Lord Jesus Christ – for the peace they give resides within you so that it is always with you regardless of your circumstances.
- B. [3] We ought (*must, are obligated*) always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is only fitting, **because** your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows ever greater.
1. **Vs 3** was written by Paul, the apostle who said, “Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure” (**2 Corinthians 11:24-27**).
  - a. And yet, notice that Paul does not say, “Look how my teaching, discipleship, letters, and other labors have greatly enlarged your faith and grown your love for one another.”
    - (1) Instead, Paul gives thanks to God for the Thessalonians growth in faith and love. It is as if Paul is saying, “Look what God has done.”
    - (2) Do you see Paul’s humility in this? I do. And I do not believe Paul was trying to be theologically correct in his words while wishing in his heart he could get the glory. I believe Paul not only knew, but wanted to give the glory to God for the results of his labors. And I say this because . . .
  - b. Paul wrote similar words in **1 Corinthians 3:5-7**, “What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one. [6] I planted, Apollos watered, **but God was causing the growth.** [7] So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, **but God who causes the growth.**”
  2. Do you expect to be praised, thanked, or in some way recognized when you help someone in some way? Do you feel a measure of disappointment when you don’t receive the praise, thanks, or recognition that you think your efforts deserve?

- a. These questions are not intended to imply we ought not praise or thank or give recognition to those who help us or serve the good of the community. We should be grateful, and we should let those who serve us or the community know we are grateful.
  - b. And yet, at the same time, we ought to know where the praise and thanks and glory ultimately and finally go.
3. Many years ago a young wife and mother sang this simple song to us, the members of a church she and her husband had been serving as interns for a period of time. I have never forgotten the message.
  - a. **FRIENDSHIP** - by Sonny Salisbury,
  - b. You have brought some beauty to my life you know, or did you know, that you have brought some beauty to my life.
  - c. We have shared a smile, a tear, and now I know how friendships grow, for you have brought some beauty to my life.
  - d. I have not been blind to all the beauties of the earth, But most of all I'm blessed to call you friend.
  - e. God has touched my life in how you care for me, And now I see that God has brought this beauty to my life.
4. Who do you want praised, who do you hope is thanked, who do you think should gain recognition for the good you have done and the help you have given?
  - a. It is pride that wants to be praised, thanked, recognized, and elevated to a higher, more prestigious position.
  - b. However, it is those with an honest view of life and humility that say from the heart, "God has done this. God has made this possible. God has brought about these good results. God has brought this beauty to my life."
5. Pastors, teachers, elders, church leaders, Christian authors, Christian counselors, hymn writers, and even those who sweep the floors, clean the toilets, and carry out the trash provide a much needed service to the Body of Christ – and there are times when their service comes at a significant cost to themselves and to their families.
  - a. Should we be grateful for their efforts on our behalf? Yes! Should we express our gratitude to them? Yes!
  - b. Yet we ought always give our greatest praise and our most heartfelt thanks to God as the ultimate source and enabling power for all that is needed to do the work He has given us to do. And we ought always acknowledge that He is the one who brings good from our labors.

6. I know the work and time I have put into pursuing God and godliness, and serving you and those outside our church who ask for help.
  7. But I also know that only ignorance, pride, and foolishness would dare to say, “Look what I have done.” Those who are wise, honest, and humble know that I am what I am, and I do what I do because of what God has done for me and is continuing to do. And should any good come from who I am and what I do, that too is the result of what God has done or is doing **either** through me and for you, **or** for you in spite of me.
  8. And so I urge you, be grateful to God, first and foremost, for every good and perfect gift that comes to you – including your mind, health, strength, and various abilities. And use those gifts from God to do good – not so that you might be praised, but that God would be glorified.
- C. [4] therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure.
1. Should I follow Paul’s example and speak proudly of you? After all there is so much good here at Redford Church that you deserve to be proudly spoken of to the leaders or members of other churches. For example, there are no open and unresolved conflicts among us, no power struggles, and no fighting over theology. You love each other, serve each other, go out of your way to help each other, support each other, and pray for each other. You willingly put in a hard days work when we give help to Wellspring or other service organizations. You help clean up after Sunday potlucks and church picnics. You stay and fellowship after Sunday meetings instead of rushing off. You financially support the work of the church and our missionaries – and you do so abundantly and seemingly cheerfully. Most of you demonstrate continued and commendable progress toward genuine love, senseable thinking, and spiritual maturity. You are willing to seek advice and counsel in order to be a better Christian, spouse, parent, adult child dealing with aging parents, and worker at your job. And the number of missionaries that have gone out from our group often eclipses the number who have gone out from churches ten to twenty times our size.
    - a. However, I don’t proudly proclaim all the good we have as a church when I am with other pastors or believers who attend

other churches. Not because you don't deserve it, or because I haven't wanted to, but because it seems unwise. Let me explain.

- (1) Out of 13 epistles, Paul only did this in 2 Thessalonians and 2 Corinthians. In addition, 2 Thessalonians was his second of thirteen letters, and 2 Corinthians his fifth. There are no clear references to boasting about any group of believers to other churches in any of his other epistles. One possible explanation is that Paul began to see it was unwise to speak proudly of one church to other churches.
  - (2) Beyond this possible explanation, there are two scriptures that give me pause on this issue:
    - (a) **James 4:6b** says, "GOD is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble."
    - (b) **Proverbs 27:2** says, "Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips."
  - (3) In addition, I want to be careful what I say because I don't always know the reason for the spiritual condition of a particular church or group of believers.
- b. Therefore, I keep silent or only speak in general, undefined terms about how good I have it at Redford Church and how much you have grown toward Christ-likeness. But even then, I acknowledge what God has done and is doing in me, our church, and with our missionaries.
  - c. And here again I want to remind you that in spite of all we do and how hard we work, we ought to make God the first and foremost focus of our praise, thanks, and even boasting – for He is the one enabling and supporting all the good we do.
2. Paul praises the extent of the Thessalonian believer's perseverance and the strength of their faith – which was being revealed by the quality of their godliness in the face of the persecution and afflictions they were enduring.
    - a. To **persevere** as a Christian is to persist in trusting God and doing what you know is right and good – in spite of failures along the way. It is to continue on in spite of the difficulties, to remain steadfast in will, beliefs, values, and resolution.
    - b. To **endure** as a Christian is to bear up under adversity, or to suffer patiently without yielding to distrust of God, despair, anger, bitterness, or some form of returning evil for evil.
    - c. For these Thessalonian believers, persevering and enduring meant suffering the more common troubles in life along with

persecution and afflictions without turning away from God, or turning against God, or despising or becoming bitter or wanting evil to befall those mistreating them.

3. As we all know, life has a way of bringing disappointment and sadness, failure and set-backs, challenges and trials, along with suffering and loss.
  - a. How far does your perseverance take you when faced with such things? How well do you endure the difficulties in your life?
  - b. We can measure the extent of our perseverance, the strength of our faith, and the amount of our endurance by how we deal with trials, tribulation, suffering, loss, and pain.

### III. Conclusion

- A. **James 1:12** . . . Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved (*by passing the test*), he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.
- B. **1 Peter 2:19-20** . . . For this finds favor [with God], if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly. [20] For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God.