

FINDING PURPOSE IN LIFE / Sunday School- July 11, 2010

Unifying Topic: GLORY TO CHRIST

Lesson Text

I. Purpose In Praise (2 Thessalonians 1:3)

II. Purpose In Persecution (2 Thessalonians 1:4-8)

III. Purpose In His Presence (2 Thessalonians 1:9-12)

The Main Thought: Wherefore, also we 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 (2 Thessalonians 1:11, KJV).

Unifying Principle: People often commit to someone or some thing because their commitment serves a purpose. What purpose does a particular commitment seek to fulfill? The text implies that God wants our Christian commitment to aim always at giving glory to Christ.

Lesson Aim: To encourage believers to be faithful in serving the Lord and to give Him glory despite persecution and trials.

Life aim: To help students understand that even in difficult times one can find meaning and purpose by serving Christ.

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- 1:3 We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith growth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth;
- 1:4 So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecution and tribulations that ye endure.
- 1:5 Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer.
- 1:6 Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you;
- 1:7 And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels.
- 1:8 In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:
- 1:9 Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;
- 1:10 When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day:
- 1:11 Wherefore, also we 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
- 1:12 That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

HISTORY:

2Thess1:1-2 As we continue on to ¹Paul's second letter, to the Thessalonian body of Christ, it begins in a customary way. Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy are introduced as the people that the epistle is from. Paul is the specific author. He has the apostolic calling and authority. He also places his name first, which is typically a custom of signifying importance. As he ends his letter in 1Thessalonians 5:28, he also begins his greeting in his second letter to the Thessalonians in the same customary way. Both grace and peace are blessings. Paul is wishing extra favor upon them from God, and the *peace* that passes understanding in the midst of persecution. There can be no true peace until we recognize that God has bestowed His grace upon us in completely forgiving us of all our sins in Christ Jesus.

LESSON:

2 Thessalonians 1:3 Purpose In Praise

Paul was in constant thanks to God. The believers should have a love that abounds and overflows toward one another. In the letter of 1 Thessalonians 4, Paul had exhorted the church to grow more and more in love for one another. They needed the message because there was some tension in the church surrounding the Lord's return. Paul's exhortation had worked: The word "*exceedingly*" (*huperauxanei*) means to grow beyond measure; to grow far beyond what would be expected. The church had straightened out the differences and the differing parties were now walking hand in hand with one another, overflowing, abounding, and growing in love for one another.

¹ <http://www.bridgewaybiblechurch.com/index.php/sermons/1-thessalonians-study/133-1-thessalonians-1-1> (Also taken from June 6, 2010 lesson—Witness In Daily Life.

This is the reason Paul thanks God for their overflowing love. What does it mean to overflow with love for one another? An overflowing love is the kind of love...

- that binds individuals together as a family—as the family of God
- that binds individuals in an unbreakable union
- that holds individuals with the deepest affection
- that nourishes and nurtures one another
- that shows concern and looks after the welfare of one another
- that always cherishes one another, comforts, supports, and encourages one another regardless of differences or circumstances

Paul had a purpose in praising the Thessalonians. Their faith and love grows exceedingly and abounds. This was just that kind of love that the model church at Thessalonica had. This is what an abounding love is. This is that kind of love every single believer is to have for all other believers. The initial seed of faith that sprouted when they first became Christians had been fertilized and now was exploding with growth. Most of us have some boundaries in our minds of how far we will go in loving someone. Limitless love is love that goes beyond those barriers. Paul gives thanks for the increase of all those graces, that they were not only true Christians, but growing Christians. A flourishing faith in Jesus and a limitless love for other people are two vital signs for a growing spiritual life.

2 Thessalonians 1:4-8 Purpose In Persecution

Paul also glories in them before the churches of God. Paul did not glory in his own gifts, nor in his labor among them, but he gloried in the grace of God which was bestowed upon them, and so his glorying was good, because all the commendation he gave to them, and the pleasure he himself felt, centered in the praise and glory of God. Why did he esteem them and thank God? -Namely, for the increase of their faith, love, and patience. The believers should have strong patience and faith in facing persecution and tribulation. The word "*patience*" (*hupomones*) means to be steadfast, to endure, and to persevere. The Thessalonian believers endured and held fast to their faith in Christ through all the persecutions and tribulations thrown against them. The word "*tribulations*" (*thlipseis*) is a more general word than persecutions, and refers to any kind of trial or trouble. The Thessalonian believers were persevering and holding fast to their faith through all the trials of life: temptations, peer pressure, disease, accident, loss of job, death—whatever the trial was, they remained faithful to Christ. They did not buckle under and give into the crowd, nor to discouragement, and despair. They held on to their faith in Christ.

1. Their endurance and faith was a strong testimony to others that Paul and the others boasted of them.
2. Their endurance and faith was a sign of God's coming judgment upon unbelievers. The believers received a supernatural strength—God's strength, when they were persecuted.

They demonstrated a serene peace and responded in an active love, exhorting and encouraging their persecutors to trust the Lord—all the while they were in the midst of being mistreated. What a testimony! Persecution is a clear sign of God's coming judgment. So, the keys to surviving suffering are patience and faith. **The point is this:** the presence of God and His glory in the believer is a clear sign that God exists and is and is going to vindicate His dear believer.

1:5 Scripture, "*Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God...*" "*Token*" (*Gr endeigma*) refers to the result of a demonstration and thus means a "*sign*", "*proof*" or "*evidence*." It would seem that from *verse 4*, it is not the suffering, but it is their patience and faith in the persecutions and tribulations was proof or evidence of God's righteous judgment. Rather you do right or wrong, he is always going to be righteous and judge righteously! He **will** judge righteously. How? God's wise process of purging, purifying, and perfecting through suffering was working to make His beloved people worthy of the kingdom. Therefore, it was evident that God was with them perfecting them and developing Christian character. What happened because of this? Paul and the apostles gave "*praise*" or "*glory*" to the Thessalonians, which could also certainly be understood as a sign of the way God would look upon endurance (with praise or glory) in His righteous judgment at the coming of Christ. They endured persecution and tribulations, with patience and faith in God by having the right attitude.

3. Their endurance and faith proved that the believers were counted worthy of God's kingdom. Note the phrase "*counted worthy*" (*kataxioo*) means to count, reckon, and declare worthy. A believer is not saved because he remains faithful through the sufferings of this life. He is saved because he believes **in** Jesus Christ as his Savior and Lord. However, when he suffers in this world and endures through the suffering, with a right attitude, he is counted worthy of God's kingdom. He does not disappoint God. He proves his grit—that he is truly a man or a woman of God. He is worthy to enter heaven, for he has proven his

faith. Therefore, there is a purpose in persecution when the believer's patience and faith endures to bring Christian character to give God glory.

1:6 Why is there to be judgment? The purpose of judgment is to rectify injustices. Much of the world's behavior (man's behavior) is evil and unjust. Therefore, God must judge, for judgment is the righteous and just thing. Not to judge would be the wrong and an unjust thing. He Himself is just and righteous! Therefore, His very nature demands that all the injustices and wrongs that men have inflicted upon others be judged and punished. The word "*recompense*" (*Gr antapodidōmi*) means to reward or pay back. The enemies of the gospel, those who are now troubling the Thessalonians, will be paid back by God for the suffering they caused; they will suffer themselves. God will repay those who trouble you with trouble. Just as righteous judgment of God works to perfect believers, so it works to repay the wicked. It is all determined by Him!

1:7 Jesus Christ is coming to give "*rest*" (*Gr thlibō*) to the believer as well as to judge the world. The word "*rest*" (*Gr anesis*) means primarily "*release*" or "*relaxation*." The believer will be released from the injustices, sufferings, and death of this world. Note: the Person who will execute judgment is Jesus Christ Himself.

1. His return in judgment shall be a spectacular appearance from heaven. The word "*revealed*" (*apokalypse*) means to be unveiled and uncovered.
2. His return in judgment will be with His powerful angels. The angels will return with Him for several purposes.
 - a. To add to the majestic glory and triumph of His person and presence.
 - b. To carry out His orders and to execute His justice and mercy.
3. **1:8** His return in judgment shall be "*in flaming fire*." Fire is a symbol of judgment. This is a reference to the brilliance and glory and holiness of His appearance—so brilliant that it will be the flaming fire of God's pure holiness. He comes with the sword of God's vengeance to destroy. Who are those to be destroyed?
 - a. Those who do not know Him; who do not have a personal relationship with Him through Jesus Christ. Instead of seeing God and coming to know Him, men have rejected Him.
 - b. Those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ will be judged.
 - i. Every person who have heard the gospel of Jesus Christ and rejected it.
 - ii. Every person who have professed the gospel of Jesus Christ but does not obey the commandments of the gospel.
 - iii. Every person who have been baptized but does not obey the commandment of the gospel.
 - iv. Every person who has joined the church and holds a membership in the church but does not obey the commandments of the gospel.

The purpose in the Thessalonians was their obedience to the gospel of Jesus Christ no matter what.

2 Thessalonians 1:9-12 Purpose In His Presence

The penalty of judgment will be terrible but it will be deserved. Why? Because those who are to be judged had the opportunity to know God, but they chose to deny and curse Him and to walk as they desired throughout life. Note three significant facts about the penalty and punishment of judgment.

1. The word "*who*" (*hoitines*) means persons "*who are such as*" deserve this punishment.
2. The phrase "*shall suffer punishment*" (*diken tisousin*) means to pay the penalty.
3. The words "*eternal destruction*" (*olethron aionion*) do not mean annihilation or ceasing to exist. They mean complete ruin and loss; to cut off, excluded, removed, separated, extinguished, deprived, abhorred, and banished from all the good things of life.
 - *complete ruin and loss* : from all that life should be
 - *to cut off*: from all presence of God and from the glory of His power and of heaven.
 - *excluded*: from all joy, pleasure and satisfaction. It is utter emptiness.
 - *removed*: from all companionship and associations and from all possessions. It is being left all alone and left with nothing. It is utter loneliness.
 - *separated*: from the presence of all goodness and righteousness—from God and from all those who sought after righteousness. And there is no prospect of the separation ever ending, not even for an hour.
 - *extinguished*: from love and affection. It is a hell of passion let loose.
 - *deprived*: from the Holy Spirit restraining the force of evil. It is a hell of lawlessness.
 - *abhorred*: from the bodies of glory. It is a decayed carcass.
 - *banished*: from all hope. It is being eternally lost forever, and there is no prospect of the banishment ever ending—not even for one hour.

Hell is the absence of God's presence and glory of His power.

1:10 The time of the judgment is set. Note the word "in" (en). When Jesus Christ returns, His glory is going to be seen in His saints. The entire world will see the wonder and glory of...

- The height of His love.
- The depth of His mercy.
- The length of His grace.
- The breadth of His power.

He will not only be glorified but will be admired. In that day, all believers will adore and worship Him, including those in the Thessalonian church who believed Paul's testimony of the gospel.

1:11 Paul's prayers are the encouragement he desires to impart to them. Only God can accomplish His will in the lives of the believers.

1. A person must be counted worthy by God. How can a person be counted worthy? No person has any worthiness of his own. If a person is to be acceptable to God, he is to approach God through faith in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. God only accepts a person as worth only if he comes in the name of Jesus Christ—believing in and trusting Jesus Christ to save him. God counts and credits us with righteousness because we come to Him in the perfect righteousness of His Son.
2. God must complete the work of faith in us. We age, deteriorate, die, and decay. We cannot complete anything, not permanently. God has to take our initial belief in Christ...
 - a. and complete the good pleasure of His goodness in us
 - b. and complete the work of faith in us—complete it with omnipotent power
3. **1:12** The name of Christ must be glorified in us and we in Him. This simply means...
 - a. we must let Him live and move and have His being in us—everyday
 - b. we must live and move and have His being in us—everyday.
 - c. We must let Him be glorified in us.

The result of the answer to this prayer would be that God will be glorified in the believers and that the believers will be glorified in God. All this will be accomplished by God's wonderful grace. His presence in our lives makes all the difference in the believer.

SUMMARY:

Paul's Second Epistle to the Thessalonians is in one sense a follow-up to the first letter. The Thessalonians were undergoing dreadful persecution. Though persecuted, their faith did not fail, but became stronger. The apostle at least rejoiced at the increase of their faith, and the abundant exercise of their love. These people are the fruit of Paul's ministry. They were walking well, but the false teachers profited by their condition to mislead them by means of their sufferings. Their sufferings not only proved a judgment to come, but tried them, purified them, and proved them worthy that would perfect and develop character. However, it was not to make His own suffer that He was coming - it was to punish the wicked. It is a righteous thing for God to punish those who trouble you. We are to leave judgment and vengeance in God's hands. God will bring rest to the believers who are persecuted. We will see God's vengeance on those who reject His Son.

²Two principles here are established:

- *First*, the righteous judgment of God: it is righteous in His eyes, on the one hand, to reward those who suffer for His kingdom sake: and, on the other, to retaliate (pay back) those who persecute His children.
- In the *second* place, the glorious manifestation of the Lord Jesus: All believers will look upon Him with wonder and admiration.

In flaming fire—the intense fire of God's holiness will consume and destroy evil. He shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels. None will be able to resist at the final judgment. Two reasons for judgment--they did not know God, and they did not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. The wicked will not be annihilated, as some suppose. However, Hell is real and is a continual state of destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power. The righteous in contrast will be with the Lord forever.

On that final day, The Lord will be glorified in the Thessalonian believers by the power of faith, which would shine the brighter through their persecutions; and that afterwards they might be glorified in Him at the manifestation of His glory according to the grace of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. This includes us also. Because the Thessalonian Christians were in the midst of persecution and tribulation, they needed prayer. Paul assured them that he and his associates pray always for them. When God sees that we are real and count us worthy of this calling, the name of Jesus is glorified. The calling is to see Jesus glorified in us at His coming. We find God's awesome purpose in life

² <http://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/john-darby-synopsis-of-the-new-testament/2-thessalonians/2-thessalonians-1.html>
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

when He is glorified. Who we are in Jesus is more important than who we are in anything else.

There is purpose in praise, because of the work God has done in us. There is purpose in persecution when our character is being perfected and developed even during injustices. And there is purpose in God's presence especially in that final day of His Second Coming when evil will be no more. We don't want to forever lose the opportunity to connect to "*Who*" gives meaning to life. Our eternal fate will not be like those who have troubled and persecuted us. They will be punished with everlasting destruction. And we will find rest. When our life is committed to bringing glory to God we find true purpose in life.

APPLICATION:

Can you pass the test of persecution and tribulation with patience and faith? It can only be done by the power of God. Do not hesitate to embrace the Savior.