

From Glory to Glory

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- [0 : 00] and you can take out your Bible and turn on over to 2 Thessalonians, and we are right at the end of chapter 1, and so we are a third of the way through after today, one-third of the way through this preaching series in the book of 2 Thessalonians.
- And you are looking for verses 11 and 12. Chapter 1, 2 Thessalonians chapter 1, verses 11 and 12, and my dear Lois is going to serve us this morning.
- In view of this, we always pray for you that our God will make you worthy of his calling, and by his power fulfill your every desire to do good and your work produced by faith, so that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified by you and you by him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.
- What was it like that day when Jesus said to Peter and James and John, I want you to come with me.
- I want to show you something. Not all 12 of the disciples got this invite. Just three. Peter, James, and John.
- [1 : 20] It must have started out like a very ordinary day. But then Jesus says, come on, I want to show you something. And they go up on the mountain.
- And suddenly, Jesus' appearance is changed. We call this the transfiguration.
- Matthew says that his face was shining like the sun, and that his clothes, which I have to imagine were dingy and gray, like everybody's clothes at that time, because they didn't have fancy Tide Pods and all the things, right?
- And his clothes were shining. They were like light. They were so white. It must have been an utterly shocking experience, right?
- Like it's an ordinary day. You get up there, and suddenly this guy that you've been following around, this Jesus, your rabbi, your teacher, your master, suddenly he doesn't look anything like the rest of us.
- [2 : 27] That day, when Jesus says, come with me, I want to show you something. Well, Peter, Peter says, let's build some tabernacles.
- Let's build some tents. Let's stay here on the mountain. Let's keep things exactly as they are. This is great. And Peter had the right idea, but his timing was off.
- He wanted to stay there in that moment and continue to experience the glory of Jesus. But Jesus has not yet suffered.
- He hasn't yet gone to the cross. The cross must come first. Have you ever heard the phrase, that person is so heavenly minded that they are of no earthly good?
- When you hear somebody say that, it means that they kind of have their head in the clouds. They're thinking about the future.
- [3 : 42] They're thinking big thoughts, but as a result, like they're not in the moment. They're not present. They're so heavenly minded that they are of no earthly good. This does not seem to be a concern of scripture.

You know, that a person could be so heavenly minded that he would stop being of any earthly good. In fact, Paul writes to the Colossians, chapter three, verse one, and he says, set your mind on things above, not on things of the earth.

It doesn't seem to be a problem for the authors of scripture that one would be too heavenly minded to be of any earthly good. And the writer of Hebrews says, let's fix our eyes on Jesus.

Where's Jesus? He is at the right hand of the throne of God. It doesn't seem to be a concern of scripture that someone would be so heavenly minded that they would be of no earthly good.

I wonder actually, if we have the opposite problem. I wonder if our pain and our adversity and our suffering and maybe our hardship and someday perhaps persecution, I wonder if these things cause us to lose perspective.

[5 : 03] Pain has a way of doing that. When your world stinks, your perspective shrinks and suddenly you become self-centered, self-focused, self-absorbed, demanding of others, short-tempered, abrasive, brittle, prickly, like a porcupine.

And if you don't reset your perspective in that moment, you may find that you just lose your purpose. I don't know what I'm doing. I don't know what I'm living for.

None of this seems important. None of this seems value. And the pain just hurts too much. It's not worth it. If we don't reset our perspective, we may lose our purpose.

Here's why. Because God's promises provide perspective on our present pain. I love the way that we are able to study small portions of Scripture.

You know? A few verses at a time. A paragraph. Maybe a longer section if we're feeling really up for it. But this can lead to a loss of flow.

[6 : 28] A loss of flow between the various thoughts that the human author of Scripture has. We may lose the argument, the logic of the argument, as we are working our way through a portion of Scripture.

Sometimes we miss out on repeated ideas or parallelism that we might see if we took a more broad look at a text. So I want to zoom out for just a minute before we look at these two verses.

And I want us to hover for a moment over this chapter one like a drone. and I want to make a few preliminary observations. Here's why.

Look at verse 11, number one. Paul says, in view of this. We should ask, in view of what?

In view of what, Paul? In view of, verse number 10, look in your Bible, verse number 10, in view of this future day. When Jesus is revealed.

[7 : 31] In view of this future day when the saints are found to be glorifying Jesus. In view of this. Well, who are the saints?

Well, the saints are those, verse number four, who persevere in their faith. They persevere in faith right through persecution and suffering.

And as a result, verse number five, their steadfastness is clear evidence that God's judgment call on their lives is right.

That God's verdict about them in light of the life and death and resurrection of Jesus is right. These are the saints. Perseverance is proof.

It's like the ticket to get you into the event. It's not the payment itself. Jesus made the payment. But your perseverance in faith is like that ticket that sees you into the event.

- [8 : 42] Perseverance is the proof that Jesus really has paid the price for your salvation. And so the question that we ought to ask ourselves, if in view of this, in view of this day when the saints are glorifying Jesus, and if it's a saint, is one who has persevered in faith and been steadfast in faith, then we should ask ourselves, am I one of the saints?
- And we can dig a little deeper into that, verse number eight. Well, how would I know? How would I know? Well, are you one who knows God and as a result obeys the gospel?
- Verse number eight. If you don't know God and you don't obey the gospel, then you are not one of the saints. And therefore, your future is a future that we looked at last week.
- It's a future of vengeance from Jesus. Because of your stubborn heartedness and your unwillingness to believe, oh, I urge you, come and believe this gospel.
- Come to Jesus. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. Now, the flip side of this, if you are a saint, then your future is certain.
- [10 : 05] Your future is secure. And in view of this certain secure future, God's promises provide perspective on your present pain.
- We should remember this. The Christians that Paul addresses are being persecuted for their faith in Jesus and not a little bit.
- I had forgotten about this verse until yesterday when I listened to 1 and 2 Thessalonians when I took a walk. 1 Thessalonians chapter 1 and verse number 6. Paul says this, to this church perhaps just a couple months before he is now writing this second letter to them.
- Verse 6, and you yourselves became imitators of us and of the Lord when, in spite of severe persecution, you welcomed the message with joy from the Holy Spirit.
- Severe persecution. This is a church that is experiencing pain and suffering and adversity and hardship and persecuting. Some of them are being martyred for their faith in Jesus.
- [11 : 22] They may be tempted to quit. They may be tempted to give up. They may be tempted to stop believing. Wouldn't you? I mean, wouldn't you?
- Wouldn't you? That's hard. To press on in faith, to be steadfast in our faith when all that means for you is more suffering, more adversity, more persecution, more hardship.
- Wouldn't you be tempted to quit? Just to give up? Notice how Paul encourages and motivates these suffering, persecuted Christians.
- But I want you to notice he does not motivate them and encourage them by telling them what to do. Notice that in the text. No imperatives in this text. He is not motivating and encouraging them by telling them what to do.
- He doesn't say toughen up. He doesn't give them a how-to guide for enduring persecution. He does not give them seven steps to a happier life. No.
- [12 : 34] Paul encourages and motivates them by sharing with them how he and his ministry partners are praying for them. Verse 11 again.
- In view of this, we always pray for you. what is the first prayer request?
- We always pray for you that our God will make you worthy of his calling. Now, if this little phrase make worthy makes the discernment hairs on your body stand up a little bit, that's probably a good thing.
- It maybe ought to catch your attention a little bit that this says make worthy. The New American Standard, dear sister, gets this one better, I think, than the other modern versions because it says count you worthy.
- and that really is the way that this word is translated every other time that it's used in scripture. So I think some of the modern translations may have missed this.

[13 : 47] Count or consider. Zoom out again. Hover. Hover like a drone and let's see if we can find any validation to what I've just said. Verse number five.

You will be counted worthy. Do you see it there in verse five? You will be counted worthy. When? When will I be counted worthy? Verse number 12.

Sorry, verse number 10. On that day when Jesus is glorified by his saints. Do you see it? Paul is setting up a parallel thought here.

He says there's a day coming when you will be counted worthy. All of the saints will be counted worthy. But notice this parallel idea in our text.

Verse number 11. We always pray for you that our God will make, our God will count you worthy of his calling. Do we see a parallel here?

[14 : 47] Well we do because look in verse number 12. So that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ will be glorified. Paul's talking about the same event.

In verses 3 through 10 he says God will count you worthy on that day when Jesus returns and that will lead to the saints glorifying Jesus.

And then in verse number 11 and 12 he says it again. We are praying for you that God will count you worthy and on that day you will be among those who glorify the Lord Jesus Christ.

perhaps in verses 3 through 10 this counting worthy and this glorifying of Jesus. It's at a global level. It's the saints. It's all those Christians who have been saved over time.

All of the saints. And it seems to be that Paul is referring to with their lips. They're glorifying Jesus. Verses 3 through 10. And then in our text verses 11 and 12 Paul seems to zoom this down in a little bit.

[15 : 56] And now he is addressing this one suffering persecuted church. And he says we're praying for you specifically. That God would count you worthy.

And that on that day you will glorify Jesus. Do you enjoy doing hard things?

I don't. I don't enjoy doing hard things. I could make a list of a dozen things that feel nearly impossible to me that there are probably a dozen people in this room who could do in two minutes.

And they just feel hard. How about when you have to do a math worksheet that you don't fully understand? That's hard, isn't it?

How about when you are cleaning up after dinner? And not just a simple dinner but a dinner that has lots of dishes. You know, like tacos or burrito in a bowl or something like that where there's lots of little condiments and there's lots of things to be cleaned up and someone's built some cheese and it's just a big mess.

[17 : 13] It's hard to do hard things. We don't enjoy them. Cleaning the bathroom. Cleaning the bathroom. Hard things. Dealing with misbehaving children. Hard things.

Maybe at your job you manage a customer who has issues that you are not able to solve. It's hard to pick up messes that are caused by others.

It's hard to have difficult conversations, isn't it? It's hard to have difficult conversations. Conversation you don't know how is this going to turn out. Nervous about it. It's hard to make a choice when none of the options sort of float to the top as being good options.

It's hard to suffer unfairly. It's hard to receive consequences for someone else's wrongdoing. It's hard to do what honors Jesus.

And then to find out that what honors Jesus leads to you being laughed at and ridiculed and mocked. Jesus speaks the truth.

[18 : 23] And Jesus says this to his disciples, Matthew 26, the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. a willing spirit but a weak flesh is why Paul prays this second request.

This persecuted church, they are enduring hardship. They're suffering severe persecution. Perhaps they are weary. Maybe they are contemplating whether following Jesus is even worth it.

And they are tempted to respond to those who are hurting them in less than Jesus-y ways. And so Paul says verse 11, in view of this future day, we always pray for you that our God will make you worthy of his calling and, second prayer request, by his power, fulfill your every desire to do good and your work produced by faith.

Do you see it? There it is. That God, by his power, will fulfill your every desire. That when your spirit is willing, when you have the desire, but your flesh feels weak and you want to quit, Paul's second prayer request for this persecuted church is that God would strengthen them and, by his power, fulfill their every desire to do good and give them the strength to do works that are produced, not in their own strength, but in works that are good works that are produced by faith.

Paul prays that what they want to do, God would empower them to do. That what they know should be done, actually would be done.

[20 : 43] That God's power in them would produce all kinds of good works through them. so that, so that, verse number 12, so that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ will be glorified by you and you by him according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Who will get the glory when these Christians do the hard things? Well, God will get the glory, won't he?

Because it's God who is answering Paul and his ministry partners' prayer, that God would fulfill their every desire, that even when they want to quit, they won't quit, that when they want to respond with harshness or brutality to those who are hurting them, that they will instead respond with love and compassion.

Who gets the glory? God gets the glory. No glory for myself, no glory for our accomplishments, nor glory because we're such kind-hearted, loving people.

No, no, all of the glory goes to God. God. Paul has even more to say. Verse number 12, look at it again, so that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ will be glorified by you and you by him.

[22 : 35] What does this mean? God when desires to do good lead to actually doing good and when faith results in good works and when you respond to those who misunderstand you with humility and when you respond to those who persecute you with mercy when you respond to those who gossip and slander you with forgiveness when you respond to those who betray you with compassion when you respond to those who push your buttons with patience and gentleness when you respond to those who are not like you with love rather than frustration and condemnation then little by little day by day even decision by decision and moment by moment

God is making you more like Jesus Paul talks about this in 2nd Corinthians chapter 3 we are being changed from glory to glory an ever increasing kind of glory happening to the saints to the believers not because we are so much more glorious but because we increasingly look and think and talk and respond and act like Jesus as you glorify Jesus with your life right here right now you are glorified by Jesus how because Jesus is glorious and every time you respond like Jesus you look a little more like him and that's glorious to resemble one who is supremely glorious that's glorious for us you say

I don't I don't know if I am following this whole thing and here's why you don't know my history you don't know my secrets my dark suppressed secrets you don't know my temptations you don't know about my sins this is true my brother and my sister I may not know these things about you but I do know your savior and it is my privilege to tell you about him and I promise you this all of his work in you is of grace it was of grace when he came as a baby it was of grace when he lived a perfect life that you and I struggle to live it was of grace when he went to the cross and stayed on the cross despite despite in his humanity experiencing all of the pain and all of the brokenness and all of the hurt it was all of grace it was all of grace when he rose from the dead so that you could be declared right with

God because your sins have been dealt with forever it was of grace that now he is ascended to the right hand of God and he intercedes for you I don't know your past I don't know your secrets I don't know your temptations I don't know your sins!

But I know your Savior and I promise you his ways with you are all of grace you don't have to earn this you don't have to be worthy of this you don't have to deserve this you don't have to maintain a flawless record hear this grace fills in all the gaps all the gaps grace fills in all the gaps do you see it there at the end of verse 12 all of this all of what he has been talking about through this entire chapter so far culminates in this according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ grace fills in all the gaps can you imagine a day when

[27 : 49] I am like Jesus perfectly I am imagining some of you coming up to me on that day and saying you look an awful lot like Jesus and I am frankly a little surprised because Jesus is getting all the glory anyway in that day right now we can flip this around right because I don't know everything about you but we know some things about each other we know some things in our past we know some of our sins and some of our temptations can you imagine a day when the saints are gathered together and they look around this great throne room that we read about in our call to worship they look around at one another and they're like you look a lot like Jesus frankly a lot more than I'm expected this is amazing this is wonderful and all of us are looking around at Jesus no longer as

Paul says are we using a mirror suddenly that mirror has been just turned into a transparent pane of pane of glass and God looks at us and he doesn't just see Jesus now he sees us because we have been glorified by Jesus what an amazing wonderful awe inspiring shocking surprising day that will be imagine the glory that we are going to experience on that day even better than that day on the mountain when Jesus was transfigured because unlike Peter James and John we will never have to leave we will have entered into eternity with our God and with our Savior and we are in the new kingdom and we will never have to watch the glory fade from

Jesus face as we go down the mountain back to normal life because our real life our true life has begun!

God whatever your present pain I believe this is the perspective that you and I need it is through our suffering that God makes his children more like Jesus it is through our suffering that God makes his children more like Jesus this is the perspective that we need in our pain to keep our eyes fixed on this future day to be so heavenly minded that we are so wonderfully earthly!

useful earthly good all to the glory of our God and our Savior the Lord Jesus Christ so when your world stinks and I know it does sometimes when your world stinks by God's grace and by God's power ask the Holy Spirit that your perspective not shrink that you don't become brittle and short tempered and abrasive and self absorbed and instead that by God's power and the work of the Holy Spirit and according to his grace that fills in all the gaps that you would respond like Jesus because it is in those moments of suffering when our world stinks that God is glorifying Jesus by us and we are being glorified by

[32 : 01] Jesus be so heavenly minded that every moment of earthly suffering is Jesus glorifying let's do this now and until that day as we remember that God's promises provide perspective on present pain let's pray good father we are grateful to be here this morning grateful to have the privilege of lifting our voices and our hearts and our hands together and celebrating the 10,000 reasons that we have to worship you father we feel it we feel the temptation that our labor maybe is in vain please forgive us for doubting your good promises to us please forgive us for becoming self-absorbed and brittle and prickly!

Would you give us the strength so that our desire to do what is good and what is right and what glorifies Jesus so that desire inside of us would actually result in glory for Jesus we are weak we are frail we are fickle we need all of your strength in us thank you that in all of our weakness your grace is sufficient thank you that your grace fills in all of the gaps in us oh how we need you father as we prepare to celebrate communion to take the Lord's supper together to be reminded again of the grace that is ours through our Lord Jesus would you please stir up in us repentance confession a desire to make things right would you stir up in us fresh love fresh appreciation fresh worship for what you father son and holy spirit have done blessed holy spirit please do work in our hearts as we pause for just a few moments to be quiet before you father thank you for changing us from glory to glory we want to be more like

Jesus please make us more like Jesus today than we were yesterday and please continue to do this for as long as you give us life and strength anchor our perspective on this future day we give you thanks in Jesus name amen