

“Counted Worthy” (2 Thessalonians 1)(3.6.22)

2 Thessalonians 1 (NIV84)

1 Paul, Silas and Timothy,

To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

²Grace and peace to you from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

³We ought always to thank God for you, brothers, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love every one of you has for each other is increasing.⁴Therefore, among God’s churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring.

⁵All this is evidence that God’s judgment is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering.⁶God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you⁷ and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels.⁸He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.⁹They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the

presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power¹⁰ on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you.

¹¹ 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. ¹² 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.

The word of God for the people of God.

LET US PRAY.

Title: **"Counted Worthy"**

INTRODUCTION:

The world does not seem to make very much sense. In many ways, it seems upside down. Why should these faithful Thessalonians suffer for following Christ? Why should Christians today suffer in many places around the world? When people are blessed and the nation becomes affluent, they take God for granted. They forget God or even rebel against the things of God.

We see the wicked prosper and bullies ascend to some of the most powerful positions in the world. Can you imagine your neighbor taking your home by force – with guns and fire? That is exactly what is happening in the Ukraine right now. Why is lawlessness abounding all the more? Last week, the Philadelphia news stations reported they have already had over 220 carjackings this year.

What does it say about the world when the so-called leader of the free world, who professes to be a Catholic, in a State of the Union speech, rebels against God's commandments? Instead of calling for the protection of the most vulnerable, he advocates for the right to choose to kill them. Instead of upholding biblical standards of marriage and families, he advocates for a time warned about in 2 Timothy 4:3-4 (NIV84)

³For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.⁴They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.

So, how do we make sense of our times? We must rely on God's holy word. We must feed our souls the truth found in our Bibles.

Thy Word is Like a Garden By Edwin Hodder

Thy Word is like a garden, Lord, with flowers bright and fair; and ev'ryone who seeks may pluck a lovely cluster there. Thy Word is like a deep, deep, mine, and jewels rich and rare are hidden in its mighty depths for ev'ry searcher there.

Thy Word is like a starry host—A thousand rays of light are seen to guide the traveler and make his pathway bright. Thy Word is like an armory where soldiers may repair and find, for life's long battle-day, all needful weapons there.

O may I love Thy precious Word, may I explore the mine; may I its fragrant flowers glean, may light upon me shine. O may I find my armor there, Thy Word my trusty sword! I'll learn to fight with ev'ry foe the battle of the Lord!

BODY:

This is Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians. Their persecution has continued well after the first one. Surely, we can see how they might become discouraged and worn out. To add fuel to the fire, we read in the opening verses of the next chapter, that there was a prophecy, report, or letter given to the Thessalonians. It was a forgery claiming to be from Paul, Silas, and Timothy. This forgery said that the day of the Lord had already come.

This was Fake News and Paul has done the fact checking. You see my brothers and sisters,

⁹ What has been will be again,

what has been done will be done again;

there is nothing new under the sun.

Did you know that was from the Bible (Ecclesiastes 1:9 (NIV84)? Paul writes this letter to dispel the damaging lies and encourage the church of the Thessalonians, individually and collectively.

Paul praises them for their flourishing faith and the love they have for each other. To say “ought always” to thank God is a little awkward. The New Revised Standard Version says, “must always thank God;” and, the King James says, “We are bound to thank God always.”

My Preacher’s Sermon and Outline Bible asks:

“What does it mean to have a growing faith? Faith in Christ simply means that a person believes in the Lord Jesus Christ; **he trusts Christ to take care of his life.**

Do you trust Jesus to take care -

- of your past life (sins and transgressions)?

- of your present life (to provide the necessities, protection, deliverance, and guidance needed in life)?
- of your future life (deliverance from death and judgment and the gift of eternal life)?

A growing faith in Jesus Christ simply means that **a person learns to trust and depend upon Christ more and more:**

⇒ to provide for our daily necessities - Matthew 6:33 (NIV84) **“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”**

⇒ to deliver us through the trials and temptations of life - 2 Corinthians 4:15–18 (NIV84)

¹⁵All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God.

¹⁶Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. ¹⁷For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. ¹⁸So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen.

For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

⇒ to comfort us through the losses of life -
Psalm 23:4 (NIV84)

⁴ Even though I walk

through the valley of the shadow of death,

I will fear no evil,

for you are with me;

your rod and your staff,

they comfort me.

⇒ to teach us the truth - 2 Thessalonians
2:15 (NIV84) So then, brothers, stand firm and
hold to the teachings we passed on to you,
whether by word of mouth or by letter.

⇒ to guide and help us to hold fast to the
teachings of Christ - 2 Thessalonians 3:4 (NIV84)
We have confidence in the Lord that you are doing
and will continue to do the things we command.

⇒ to strengthen us to walk a life that is
separated from the world and totally dedicated to
God -
1 John 5:4–5 (NIV84)

⁴for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. ⁵Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.”

“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 and comforts, supports, and encourages one another regardless of differences or circumstances.

This was the kind of love that the model church at Thessalonica had. This is what an *abounding love* is. This is the kind of love every single believer is to have for all other believers.

John 13:34–35 (NIV84) Jesus said,

³⁴“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

1 Peter 1:22 (NIV84) Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart.

1 John 4:21 (NIV84) And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.

Most of us live in the lap of luxury when you consider how much of the world lives. Any persecution we have experienced because we are Christians is innocuous in comparison to these Thessalonians. Yet, could Paul write such a commendation for us - Therefore, among God’s churches we boast about your perseverance and faith. Do we model a life-saving gospel? Do we love like our Bibles tell us to love?

In what ways could these persecutions and trials they were enduring give evidence that God’s judgment is right? Jesus tells us in the Sermon on the Mount:

Matthew 5:10–12 (NIV84) Jesus preached

¹⁰ Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,

for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. ¹²Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

And in the Gospel of John 15:18–19 (NIV84) Jesus said,

¹⁸“If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. ¹⁹If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.”

Question: What can possibly sustain suffering saints?

Answer: The **Grace** and peace of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul opens this letter with that greeting. Today’s 12th verse ends, “according to the **grace** of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.” The last two

verses in the next chapter: 2 Thessalonians 2:16–17 (NIV84)

¹⁶ May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his **grace** gave us eternal encouragement and good hope,¹⁷ encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word.

And Paul closes the letter in a similar fashion: may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The **grace** of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

As you know, Grace, most simply defined, is God's unmerited favor extended towards mankind. There is prevenient grace that draws us towards God. There is justifying grace that brings us to a saving faith. There is sanctifying grace that transforms us into the likeness of the Lord Jesus. I will mention two more aspects of grace: restraining grace and sustaining grace. Of course, God the Holy Spirit is at work in all of these.

John Wesley preached in his sermon "Means of Grace:" "The chief of these means are prayer, whether in secret or with the great congregation; next, searching the Scriptures; (which implies reading, hearing, and meditating thereon;) and finally receiving the Lord's Supper, eating bread and drinking wine in remembrance of Him: And

these we believe to be ordained of God, as the **ordinary** channels of conveying his grace to the souls of men.”

My friends, you and I by ourselves could not hold up to serious persecution. We need God’s grace, a grace without limits. We need the mutual support we find in the Body of Christ. But, by taking hold of God’s grace; by clinging to God’s grace; not only can we persevere, our faith will grow and grow; our love will be evermore expansive.

In the fifth verse, Paul says, “as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God.” In addition to God’s grace, Paul tells us that God’s **power** is integral to our perseverance in persecution and suffering. God’s **power** is integral to our growing faith. God’s **power** is integral to our being found worthy of God’s calling.

Verse 11: “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.” Notice that Paul, Silas, and Timothy constantly pray for them. Are we praying for Christians who are being persecuted? Are we praying for the Communion of Saints in any way?

CONCLUSION:

Brothers and sisters, Lent is a season of serious reflection for Christians. I invite you to examine your own heart. Alexander Maclaren, in preaching this text, speaks about the criticality of the inward motivations:

“Paul says, in effect, first, that God will fulfil every desire that longs for goodness. He is scarcely deserving of being called good who does not desire to be better. Aspiration must always be ahead of performance in a growing life, such as every Christian life ought to be.

To long for any righteousness and beauty of goodness is, in some imperfect and incipient measure, to possess the good for which we long. This is the very signature of a Christian life -- yearning after unaccomplished perfection.

If you know nothing of that desire that stings and impels you onwards; if you do not know what it is to say, 'Oh! wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' if you do not know what it is to follow the fair ideal, realized in Jesus Christ, with infinite longing, what right have you to call yourself a Christian?

The very essence of the Christian life is yearning for completeness, and restlessness as long as sin has any power over us. We live not only by admiration, faith, and love, but we live by hope;

and he who does not hunger and thirst after righteousness has yet to learn what are the first principles of the Gospel of Christ.”

My friends, is it the desire of your heart to be counted worthy in the sight of your Creator and God? Do NOT wait to be in CRISIS to grow your faith: While it is true that trials and tribulations are opportunities to exercise our faith and grow our faith, we should be in training in the meantime. Learn to love now with a wholehearted and supernatural love.

Amen and amen. Let us pray.