

II THESSALONIANS 1:11-12
OUR PRAYERFUL WITNESS!

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to II Thessalonians chapter 1 as we continue our study through Paul's second letter to the church in Thessalonica.

As we have seen in our study of II Thessalonians chapter 1, Paul's focus is ***ENCOURAGEMENT IN SUFFERING!*** You see, that is what these believers were facing and they needed encouragement that what they were going through was not abnormal, it was normal for those who love the Lord. They will suffer persecution for their faith!

And in verses 1-5 we saw ***HOW A CHRISTIAN GROWS*** and we saw that this growth is seen in the suffering, the persecution, the difficulties we go through or I should say we ***GROW*** through!

In these difficult times our faith grows, our testimony grows, our patience grows and in the end, the suffering, the difficult times we go through, they help make us into the man or woman that God wants us to be.

But it is difficult and at times we can lose our focus, we can become discouraged, we can drop out of the race that God has us in, the race of faith. So, in II Thessalonians 1:6-10 Paul focus them back on the end results, he wants them to have a correct perspective of things and thus, he speaks of the ***ETERNAL DESTINIES*** that are out there, and there are only two!

Yes, there will be those who come down hard upon you for your faith, but in the end, those that do, will lose everything. Their eternal destiny is found in the Lake of Fire eternally separated from God! Paul put it like this in II Thessalonians 1:9, "**These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.**"

Now we don't want to see anyone punished like that and thus, we share our faith that those who are coming against us will come alongside with us as they repent of their sins and ask Jesus to be Lord and Savior of their lives. They become believers!

And Paul wants them to understand that it is bad out there, it is difficult, but for believers, this is the worst it will get. This life, which is brief, is nothing compared with eternity with the Lord! But for the unbeliever, this is the best it will get for them and even with the best, when compared to eternity, it will mean nothing!

Therefore, Paul tells them that **“when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed.”** II Thessalonians 1:10.

What a glorious day that will be when we are gathered together with our Lord, worshiping Him for all He has done, for who He is!

As Paul closes out this chapter he speaks of prayer and the focus here, again remember the theme of this chapter, ***ENCOURAGEMENT IN SUFFERING***, is prayer and the idea here is ***OUR PRAYERFUL WITNESS!***

But again, it is easy to become overwhelmed, discouraged because of all that you are going through and you lose the perspective of the situation you are in. You have taken your eyes off the prize and you are focused on the here and now!

But we don't have to be. Let me show you what I mean with this true story. It is about the Wisconsin Badges, in a sense, and I am sure there are many Wisconsin Badger football fans here. And this is a true story that took place way back in 1982, some 35 years ago. We are told,

On a balmy October afternoon in 1982, Badger Stadium in Madison, Wisconsin, was packed. More than 60,000 die-hard University of Wisconsin supporters were watching their football team take on the Michigan State Spartans. It soon became obvious that MSU had the better team.

What seemed odd, however, as the score became more lopsided, were the bursts of applause and shouts of joy from the Wisconsin fans. How could they cheer when their team was losing? It turns out that seventy miles away the Milwaukee Brewers were beating the St. Louis Cardinals in game three of the 1982 World Series.

Many of the fans in the stands were listening to portable radios - and responding to something other than their immediate circumstances. Paul encourages us to fix our eyes not on what is seen but what is unseen (2 Corinthians 4:18). When we do, we can rejoice even in hardships because we see Christ's larger victory.

- <http://www.preachingtoday.com/illustrations/1998/july/4466.html>

That is the perspective we are to have. There is a bigger picture than what we see with our eyes. Yes, things are difficult, things can be very discouraging, but what is the big picture? God is on the throne, He is in control, and He is coming back to set up His Kingdom here on this earth, in Jerusalem, one day and that day is getting closer!

Here in II Thessalonians 1:11-12 there are five points we will be looking at.

First of all, ***THE FREQUENCY OF PRAYER – ALWAYS!***

Secondly, ***OUR WITNESS AND TESTIMONY – WORTHY OF HIS CALLING!***

Thirdly, ***COMPLETE THE WORK – FULFILL ALL!***

The fourth point, ***OUR REASON FOR SERVICE – JESUS GLORIFIED!***

And the fifth point, ***BASED IN GRACE – OUR PRAYERS ARE BASED IN GRACE!***

So, with that as our background, let's begin reading in II Thessalonians chapter 1 beginning in verse 11 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word and look at this topic of ***OUR PRAYERFUL WITNESS!***

II THESSALONIANS 1

VERSES 11-12

Remember, when you come to the word, "**Therefore**" ask what it is there for! This word is used to link us to what Paul has just said. All the persecution that they were facing and Paul encouraging them that this persecution was helping them to grow in the faith. Don't be weary in doing good, your service for God is not in vain in the Lord. God is working and He will accomplish His plans and His purposes in our lives!

And the perspective was that the ungodly, those who are doing this persecution will not get away with anything. In the end, they will lose.

And now, as Paul is finishing this section up, he is going to let them know that he is praying for them so that their faith will grow. That the enemy will not snatch away what God has begun in them.

Not that they would lose their salvation, but their witness as they drop out, as they do nothing for the Lord!

The New American Standard puts these words like this, and I think it will help give us a clear picture to what Paul is saying. It reads, "**To this end also we pray for you always.**" In other words, "***with this in mind***" we are praying for you.

In spite of all you are going through, all the difficulty you are going through, Paul is telling them that he is praying for them. Which leads us to our first point here in these verses!

Paul speaks of *THE FREQUENCY OF PRAYER – ALWAYS!* Notice what he says, **“Therefore we also pray always for you.”** II Thessalonians 1:11.

Now you may just want to read over that and not give much attention to what Paul just said. But think about it, is Paul saying that night and day he is praying for them? That he never stops praying for them?

If that is what Paul is saying that would mean that Paul was lying to someone, because he used that expression often, that he was praying for different believers and if he was praying always for them, someone was going to get left out.

So, obviously that is not what Paul is speaking of here. Then what does he mean when he says that they are praying for these believers always?

The idea here is that he is on their mind and when he prays he remembers them regularly. Think about it. Maybe you are at work, or at the store, or at a football game, and all of a sudden you are thinking about someone in the church and you begin to pray for them. God has placed that upon your heart and you are responding to what He is showing you.

I think that is the idea here with Paul. He remembers them regularly in prayer and it seems, as you read Paul’s letters, he had a long prayer list to go through and yet, he prayed for them because he loved them and wanted them to grow in the Lord! Keep in mind that their journeys were long, slow and they had time on their hands to pray!

And as you read these two verses you see something that is kind of strange. Paul is not praying for the persecution to stop! But he is praying for their faith to grow in the midst of this persecution as he is encouraging them during this difficult time.

Faith, to me is like a muscle. If you don't use your muscles then your muscles will get weaker. And you can get to the point where the muscles begin to atrophy and you have trouble walking.

I have worked in ICU's for some 30 years and I have seen the effects of people who are in a coma for weeks. Slowly, over time, their muscles do atrophy and if they come out of that coma, they have to have physical therapy to strengthen those muscles. They have to learn how to walk all over again!

I think the same is true with faith. We love to have everything going well in our lives. We get up to the sun shining, it is a beautiful day. The kids are dressed and ready for school. They have eaten their breakfast. All their homework is done. Everyone gets to the places they need to go and they are on time. Work is great, you just got a promotion and it doesn't include more hours or harder work. It just is a great day!

Do you know what I call that? Fantasy! It is not real life. There are always issues, problems and when it comes to our faith, the same is true. Our faith will be challenged and we have to decide if we are going to go forward or just drop out.

But the only way faith will grow is when you exercise it, even when it hurts. If you don't, then the problems will become more overwhelming to you. In fact, you may come to that place where it is hard to walk the Christian life because your faith muscle has not been used and it has atrophied!

So, Paul wants these young believers to know that he is praying for them during this difficult time because he wants their faith to grow. He does not want them to give up.

I see that same thought in I Peter 4:12-19 where he wrote, **“Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people’s matters. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter. For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? Now ‘If the righteous one is scarcely saved, Where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?’ Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.”**

Peter uses the word **“suffering”** and its derivatives some twenty-one times in this epistle! Why was this such a big deal? Because Nero was having Christians covered with tar and burned at the stake to light up his garden. It was a difficult time for Christians and Peter wanted them to know that this was not something strange or out of the ordinary! He was trying to encourage them during this difficult time! He wanted them to know how to respond to what they were going through!

You see, suffering for Christians is not something that is strange or out of the ordinary. It is what happens as you serve the Lord and some are persecuted more than others, but the persecution for your faith is there and we are to commit our lives, our actions to the Lord. We are not to respond like the unsaved do, but to show the love of Christ, manifest His nature in our lives.

I know, it is impossible to do that! That is very true, it is impossible for us to do this on our own. But God never tells us to do this on our own. He does tell us that as we surrender to the Holy Spirit He will empower us to accomplish the impossible.

And understand that this suffering, it is **“according to the will of God”** and God is using this to help us to mature in the faith, to trust in Him. Don’t run away, don’t drop out, but forge ahead in the battle! Shine for Jesus and the only way you will reflect His nature is as you spend time with Him!

So, this first point is simple, ***THE FREQUENCY OF PRAYER – ALWAYS!***

The second point that Paul makes is this, ***OUR WITNESS AND TESTIMONY – WORTHY OF HIS CALLING!*** Notice what Paul says in II Thessalonians 1:11, **“that our God would count you worthy of this calling.”**

And this really links us to the first point because as we are suffering for the Lord, and as people are lifting us up in prayer during these difficult times, our witness will shine brightly!

And please understand that we are not **“worthy”** because we do this and we don’t do that! We are worthy because the Lord has made us worthy! We have been saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone and that grace gift is the only reason we are worthy! Paul will talk more about grace as he closes this section out.

And Paul's point is this. Since God has done this in your life, then continue to display that standing so others can see your faith lived out!

Paul wrote in Philippians 1:27-30, **“Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel, and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God. For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear is in me.”**

Let me say this. If we only shine for Him when things are going well, are we any different than unbelievers? Absolutely not. They rejoice when things are going well, and they are upset, angry, mad, and-so-on when things are not going well.

But as Christians, our joy comes from the Lord and that never changes. Thus, that joy should fill our lives. I see some Christians that sit in anger, there is no joy and I am thinking, “Man, I don't know what is going on in their lives but I hope they don't tell anyone they are a Christian!”

And I am not saying we don't go through times like that, but for some Christians, that is the norm, and it should not be! And we are to try to comfort them, encourage them when they are going through these times. But for some, week in and week out they have that scowl on their face, they look just plain angry and we should be rejoicing in the Lord!

Now, here in Philippians, the Greek word Paul uses for **“conduct”** is POLITEUOMAI (pol-it-yoo'-om-ah-ee) and the idea is “to behave as a citizen.”

Remember, Philippi was a Roman colony and thus enjoyed all the benefits of Rome. Thus, the people were not only proud of this but they also obeyed the rules of Rome so they would not lose their status with Rome.

Paul is calling the Philippian believers to a higher standard for they are citizens of heaven and thus they should walk according to the high calling by which they have been called.

We are to live as faithful citizens of heaven according to God's Word. Think about it, one of the greatest testimonies we have to a lost world is our integrity, that what we believe has impacted our lives in such a way that it is manifested in what we say and what we do!

Jesus put it like this in Matthew 5:43-48, **“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.”**

Not something we can do apart from God because, if we do try to accomplish this without God, look out you are going to blow up, explode in anger, yell, scream, whatever and that is not of God!

Our witness will shine in the most difficult of times because people will see that we are different!

And we see here that Paul also gives them some words of encouragement and accountability. He calls for them to conduct themselves in a godly way whether he is there or not. But he also tells them he is watching them. Why is that, did Paul not trust them?

Not at all, but again, it has to do with accountability. We should all be accountable to each other so that if we start going astray, doing something that is not pleasing to God and we don't see it, or don't want to see it, a brother or sister in the Lord will let us know it in love!

In fact, Paul tells us we are one in Spirit, the Spirit of God.

We are one in mind, we have the mind of Christ.

And we are **“striving together”** and the Greek word that Paul uses is a compound Greek word that is composed of a preposition, SUN (with) and the noun ATHLEO that speaks of competing in a contest, such as a sporting event. It is the term from which we get our English words “athlete” and “athletics”.

Here's the thing. We are a team working together for a common goal, spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ, seeing the kingdom of God grow. We are working together, giving it our all.

Also, Paul wants the Philippian believers to remain focused and not be **“terrified”** or startled by the enemy. Paul uses the Greek word PTURO (ptoo'-ro) and the idea here is of an uncontrollable stampede of startled horses.

Horses can be startled by something as small as a bee and the same is true for us as Christians. And Paul wants them to stay focused, not be startled by anything the enemy might throw at them, be it persecution or even imprisonment or death! Remember what Paul said in Philippians 1:21, **“For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”**

Now I don't know how often you hear this in churches today but the Lord has given to us the *privilege* to suffer for His sake! Paul tells us in Romans 8:16-17, "**The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs - heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.**"

Thus, we should not be surprised when difficult times come as Paul tells us, "**that no one should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this.**" I Thessalonians 3:3.

Think of what Paul has said like, this, "Brothers and sisters in the Lord, for you and for me the battle is on; let us not lose heart but let us do something great for the Lord!"

Paul is trying to encourage them not because persecution might come but it has come and more is coming so don't give up, don't fall back, it is time to stand up and fight for the faith which has been entrusted to us! And may we not just stand up and fight for the faith but may we do it with joy in our hearts!

Our witness and testimony is important. People need to see where we came from but don't dwell on the past. Don't make it sound great, it wasn't! And focus then on what God has done in your life. When you go through difficult times, you don't have to be stoic about it but don't live your faith as if God died. He didn't, He is in control and He knows what you are going through. Let your light shine that all you do your Father in heaven will be glorified!

So, the second point is that ***OUR WITNESS AND TESTIMONY – WORTHY OF HIS CALLING!***

The third point is this, ***COMPLETE THE WORK - FULFILL ALL!*** Paul makes this third point in II Thessalonians 1:11 where he says, **“and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power.”**

The word **“fulfill”**, in the Greek, is PLERRO, (play-ro'-o) and it simply means, “to complete or accomplish.”

So, the question we need to ask ourselves is this. “What does Paul want these Thessalonian believers to accomplish?”

The first thing he wants them to complete or accomplish is **“all the good pleasure”** or ***“every desire for goodness.”***

So, Paul wants these believers to fulfill all that is good, don't leave anything out! In other words, what God is doing on the inside we are to manifest in our outward actions. It is not just a bunch of talk but it is walking the walk. It is showing that our faith is real!

I look at an organization, like Samaritan's Purse, and how they go and help people they don't know. In fact, people volunteer to go to places like Houston, Texas to help out the victims of this last hurricane.

Think about this for a minute. They leave for a week or so, not working on their job, pay to get down to Texas from whatever part of the United States they are living in, to go and help people they don't know, to sleep on floors of churches and work hard rebuilding houses or removing parts of these homes that have been destroyed.

They get no recognition. Most people are not even aware that they are down there. Why do they do it? It is their love for God that has filled their hearts, their lives, that has then caused them to go forward and do this. The love of God in them reaches out and touches others with the love of God, which is found in Christ Jesus!

You see, you just can't keep that love that God has poured into your life all bottled up inside of you. It will burst forth and reach out and touch others, and I believe that is what we see with those who are serving others.

I was blessed to see the number of people from our church, from this area that went down there to help out. They are living what they say they believe!

Not only is this goodness seen in them as they help others, but we also see the second point of completing this work, and that is "**the work of faith.**"

And really, if you think about it, this goes along with fulfilling the goodness or every desire of goodness that is manifested in your life. This work of faith is just living what you say you believe!

Let me give you this example of what one man can do. We are told,

Reporter Jacob Riis's vivid descriptions of poverty in 19th-century New York City horrified a generally complacent public. His book *How the Other Half Lives* combined his writing with his own photographs to paint a picture so vivid that the public could not escape the certainty of poverty's desperate existence. The third of fifteen children himself, Riis wrote so effectively because he had lived in that world of terrible despair.

Shortly after the release of his book, he received a card from a young man just beginning his political career. The note read simply, "*I have read your book, and I have come to help Theodore Roosevelt.*" (This politician later became a US President.)

True faith responds to the needs of others, according to James (1:19-27). May our hearts be moved from inaction to action, from words alone to deeds that back them up. Compassionate action not only aids those mired in life's difficulties, but it may also make them open to the greater message from our Savior who sees their need and can do so much more for them.

- <https://odb.org/2015/08/10/ive-come-to-help/>

That is faith in action, that is real faith!

Listen carefully to what James has to say about faith and works, how they go together. And please keep in mind that works don't save you but they are the evidence for your faith. They show that your faith is real and not empty.

In James 2:14-20 we are told, **“What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,’ but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, ‘You have faith, and I have works.’ Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe - and tremble! But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?”**

James is speaking of a person who is all talk and no walk – their actions show they are not saved. And the way this is structured in the Greek, a negative response is anticipated!

Think of it like this. If I told you there was a bomb in this building that was to go off in just 2 minutes and I said that I was 100% sure of this happening but then I just continued talking and not running out of the building, then my faith is empty, it is not real because my actions reflect that.

Faith alone saves but a saving faith is never alone, it is reflected or manifested in our actions, the things we do!

Don't take my word on this. I think the Scriptures speak for themselves. It is not faith and works that save us. Paul said in Ephesians 2:8-9, "**For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.**"

You see, that is how we are saved, by Grace through Faith and not by the Law through Works. But then that saving faith is worked out in our lives, in the things that we do as Paul goes on to say in Ephesians 2:10, "**For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.**"

Also, notice what Paul says in Titus 3:8, "**This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men.**"

May our faith in Christ be manifested in our outward actions as we minister to people, as we show them the love of Christ!

The seventeenth-century English Preacher Thomas Brooks wrote the following words.

He said,

Christ hath freed you from all your enemies, from the curse of the law, the predominant damnatory power of sin, the wrath of God, the sting of death, and the torments of hell; but what is the end and design of Christ in doing these great and marvelous things for his people? It is not that we should throw off duties of righteousness and holiness, but that their hearts may be the more free and sweet in all holy duties and heavenly services. . . . Ah, souls! I know no such arguments to work you to a lively and constant performance of all heavenly services, like those that are drawn from the consideration of the great and glorious things that Christ hath done for you.

- Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices, Banner of Truth Trust, 1984, pp. 123-124

You see, if our faith is living, if it is real, then it will have life to it, it will be seen in the things we do for people.

But there are those that are not moved. For example, we are told in regard to not ministering to or being moved by those in need, the following story. We are told,

This is a well-chosen analogy, because compassion is one of the evidences of true regeneration. The story is told of a European queen several centuries ago who left her coachman sitting outside during the winter while she attended the theater. The drama was so heart wrenching that the queen sobbed throughout the entire performance. But when she returned to the carriage and discovered the coachman had frozen to death, she did not shed a tear! She was deeply moved by a fictional tragedy but completely untouched by a real one with which she was directly involved and for which she was even directly responsible.

It is amazing that so many people can become emotionally involved in a movie, play, popular song, or TV program, weeping over tragedies and becoming incensed at wrongs and injustices, and yet show no concern or compassion for the plight of a neighbor or acquaintance who is in real need. In our artificial, self-centered world, fantasy often becomes more meaningful than reality.

- John MacArthur

Make no mistake about it, you can't see faith without works, that is the point that James is making here!

And let me be clear on this. We can't do this on our own. The flesh nature won't allow us to do these things. That flesh will get in the way and stop us.

Then what can we do? Notice that Paul says, "**and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power.**"

The Greek word that Paul uses for "**power**" is DUNAMIS, (doo'nam-is) and it is that explosive power to move the Gospel message forward. It is that explosive power to live out our faith. And that power comes as we surrender to the Holy Spirit. He enables us to do the things that we need to do. It is not our strength, our might, our power but the Holy Spirit working in us and through us for God's glory and we will see that in a minute!

So, the third point that Paul is making is that we must ***COMPLETE THE WORK – FULFILL ALL!***

Now you may be wondering why, why do all these things? Why suffer all these things? That is the fourth point, ***OUR REASON FOR SERVICE – JESUS IS GLORIFIED!*** Paul put it like this in II Thessalonians 1:12, **“that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him.”**

The glory of God is spoken often in the Scriptures. And here Paul speaks of the **“name”** of the Lord being glorified. What does that mean?

I believe that it speaks very clearly and it identifies Jesus as Yahweh of the Old Testament. To glorify the name of the Lord means to honor and exalt all that He is.

So Paul is speaking of the totality of Jesus, that in His name is all that He is, Almighty God! And thus, when Paul is saying this he is telling us that we are to show the world what the Lord is like, who He is, for we are His ambassadors!

Now what does it mean to glorify God? Listen carefully.

To “glorify” God means to give glory to Him. The word *glory* as related to God in the Old Testament bears with it the idea of greatness of splendor. In the New Testament, the word translated “glory” means “dignity, honor, praise and worship.” Putting the two together, we find that glorifying God means to acknowledge His greatness and give Him honor by praising and worshiping Him, primarily because He, and He alone, deserves to be praised, honored and worshipped. God’s glory is the essence of His nature, and we give glory to Him by recognizing that essence.

The question that comes to mind is if God has all the glory, which He does, how then do we “give Him” glory? How can we give God something which is His in the first place? The key is found in 1 Chronicles 16:28-29, “Ascribe to the LORD, O families of nations, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength, ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name. Bring an offering and come before him; worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness.”

In this verse, we see two actions on our part that make up the action of glorifying God. First, we “ascribe” or give glory to Him because it is His due. No one else deserves the praise and worship that we give to glorify Him. Isaiah 42:8 confirms this: “I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols.”

Second, we are to “bring an offering” to God as part of the worship that glorifies Him. What is the offering we bring to God to glorify Him?

The offering we bring to God as we come before Him in the splendor or beauty of His holiness involves agreement, obedience, submission, and rehearsing His attributes or extolling Him. Glorifying God begins with agreeing with everything He says, especially about Himself. In Isaiah 42:5, God declares, “I am the Lord God. I created the heavens like an open tent above. I made the earth and everything that grows on it. I am the source of life for all who live on this earth, so listen to what I say.”

Because of who He is, holy and perfect and true, His proclamations and statutes are holy and perfect and true (Psalm 19:7), and we glorify Him by listening to and agreeing with them. God's Word, the Bible, is His Word to us, all that we need for life in Him. Listening to and agreeing with Him, though, will not glorify Him unless we also submit to Him and obey the commands contained in His Word. "But from everlasting to everlasting the LORD's love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children's children - with those who keep his covenant and remember to obey his precepts" (Psalm 103:17-18).

Jesus reiterated the idea that glorifying and loving God are one and the same in John 14:15: "If you love me, you will obey what I command."

We also glorify God by rehearsing His attributes and His deeds. Stephen, in his final sermon before he was killed for his faith, retold the story of God's dealings with Israel from the time Abraham left his country in obedience to God's command, all the way to the coming of Christ, the "Righteous One," whom Israel betrayed and murdered.

When we tell of God's work in our lives, how He saved us from sin, and the marvelous works He does in our hearts and minds every day, we glorify Him before others. Even though others don't always want to hear our glorifying God, He is more than pleased by it. The crowd who heard Stephen hated what he said, covering their ears and rushing at him to stone him. "But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God" (Acts 7:55).

To glorify God is to extol His attributes - His holiness, faithfulness, mercy, grace, love, majesty, sovereignty, power, and omniscience, to name a few - rehearsing them over and over in our minds and telling others about the singular nature of the salvation only He offers.

By our actions, the things we do and the things we say, we bring glory to God. He alone is worthy and we need to remember that. We need to remember not to take away His glory, it is all about Him and we are to glorify Him in the things that we do and the things that we say!

Now Paul also says that we will be glorified, “**and you in Him.**” I thought we are not to take away the Lord’s glory? We are not and I think that we need to look at this as honor, that the Lord will elevate us through Him as we serve Him! In fact, in all that we do for the Lord, He does get the glory because we understand we could not accomplish this on our own.

Now we see this in I Samuel 2:30 where we are told, “**Therefore the Lord God of Israel says: ‘I said indeed that your house and the house of your father would walk before Me forever.’ But now the Lord says: ‘Far be it from Me; for those who honor Me I will honor, and those who despise Me shall be lightly esteemed.’**”

And in the New Testament, in John 12:26 Jesus tells us, “**If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.**”

And Paul said in Romans 8:16-17, “**The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs - heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.**”

And here in Romans I believe Paul is speaking of being taken to glory with Jesus, that we will be with Him. But what about the other two verses we looked at?

Think of it like this,

Not only is Paul's prayer for the name of the Lord to be glorified in the Thessalonians; it is for the saints to be glorified in Christ (you in Him," v. 12) On one hand, the lives of the Thessalonians were to demonstrate and would display the greatness of the Lord Jesus. His perfect majesty and character would be made known through their own work of faith. On the other hand, the status of the Thessalonians would be revealed through Christ. Just like Christ, they, too, would be honored and elevated through Him.

- Mike Stallard, First & Second Thessalonians, p. 161

The problem comes when we try to lift ourselves up and God will allow us to do that. But also understand we will fall. And God will allow us to do that as well. Not because He is mean but He wants us to understand that He alone gets the glory and as we humble ourselves before God, He will lift us up.

That is what James tells us, "**Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.**"

So, what Paul has in view here, are both eternal glory and temporal honor.

So, the fourth point is ***OUR REASON FOR SERVICE – JESUS GLORIFIED!***

And just so we don't miss out on this, it is ***BASED IN GRACE – OUR PRAYERS ARE BASED IN GRACE!*** Paul said, "**according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.**"

Make no mistake about it, we deserve nothing from the Lord except eternal punishment! And when we lose sight of that then we will try to accomplish in the flesh that which only the Spirit will be able to do!

Paul put it like this in Galatians 3:3, **“Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? Have you suffered so many things in vain - if indeed it was in vain?”**

Paul is making a strong point here. He is saying that after all that God has done for them, all that God has given them, they think they can be more spiritual, they can grow in the Lord by adding works to Grace – not at all!

It is foolish to think that way. Listen carefully to this, it is important. If your salvation is based on the Law then you are blessed and you will grow spiritually by *EARNING* and *DESERVING* it! You see, God owes you in a sense.

On the other hand, under Grace, you are blessed and you grow by *BELIEVING* and *RECEIVING* it! You see, we don't deserve it, but God gives it to us freely! That is what grace is all about!

You see, you don't earn blessings from God you receive them by faith! God can't love you any more than He already does and He can't love you any less! His love is unconditional!

Yes, we are blessed when we obey God and when we don't, we are not. But hear me out on this. Those blessings are not something you earned, you received them by faith, never forget that or you will see yourself better than you are. And let me be clear, you are not better but because of God's grace, you are blessed!

And specifically, Paul is speaking of prayer here and answering our prayers. It is not that we deserve this, God does not answer our prayers because we are so good. He answers our prayers out of grace, we don't deserve it but He freely gives to us the things that we need so we may glorify Him in all that we do!

Praise God for His grace towards us.

And make no mistake about it, prayer is important for our lives, as we know, as the Scriptures teach. Listen to what the godly Puritan John Owen had to say regarding prayer. He wrote, “He who prays as he ought, will endeavor to live as he prays.” How true that is!

As I bring this study to a close, let me share this story regarding the Pony Express. I think most if not all of us have heard about the Pony Express but I don’t think we realize the dedication of these men.

And as you listen to this may this minister to your hearts and cause all of us to be that dedicated in our prayers and as we pray that what we are praying will be manifested in our lives as we step out in faith and live for Him, bringing glory and honor to Him!

Just listen to what they were all about and then apply that to your life, their dedication, their willingness to lay it all on the line to deliver the mail! We are told,

The Pony Express was a private express company that carried mail by an organized relay of horseback riders. The eastern end was St. Joseph, Missouri, and the western terminal was in Sacramento, California. The cost of sending a letter by Pony Express was \$2.50 an ounce. If the weather and horses held out and the Indians held off, that letter would complete the entire two-thousand-mile journey in a speedy ten days, as did the report of Lincoln’s Inaugural Address.

It may surprise you that the Pony Express was only in operation from April 3, 1860, until November 18, 1861 – just seventeen months. When the telegraph line was completed between two cities, the service was no longer needed.

Being a rider for the Pony Express was a tough job. You were expected to ride seventy-five to one hundred miles a day, changing horses every fifteen to twenty-five miles. Other than mail, the only baggage you carried contained a few provisions, including a kit of flour, cornmeal, and bacon. In case of danger, you also had a medical pack of turpentine, borax, and cream of tartar. In order to travel light and to increase speed of mobility during Indian attacks, the men always rode in shirtsleeves, even during the fierce winter weather.

How would you recruit volunteers for this hazardous job? An 1860 San Francisco newspaper printed this ad for the Pony Express: “Wanted: Young, skinny, wiry fellows not over 18. Must be expert riders willing to risk [death] daily. Orphans preferred.”

Those were the honest facts of the service required, but the Pony Express never had a shortage of riders . . .

Like the Pony Express, serving God is not a job for the casually interested. It’s costly service. He asks for your life. He asks for service to Him to become a priority, not a pastime.

- Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, pp. 109-110

Folk’s, the point of Paul’s prayer is that we would ***PRAY ALWAYS***, that ***OUR WITNESS AND TESTIMONY WOULD BE WORTHY OF HIS CALLING***, that we would ***COMPLETE THE WORK – FULFILL ALL***, that ***OUR REASON FOR SERVICE IS TO GLORIFY JESUS***, and never forget, it is ***BASED IN GRACE – OUR PRAYERS ARE BASED IN GRACE!***

Folks, may we grow in faith, trusting in God, believing in His promises to us, looking at all He has already done for us and believing that He is not done yet! May we grow in love, receiving His love and giving His love to others. And may we grow in hope of His soon return for us, His bride, the church! You see, service is costly but as you serve, it will bring glory to God and your faith, love and hope will grow!